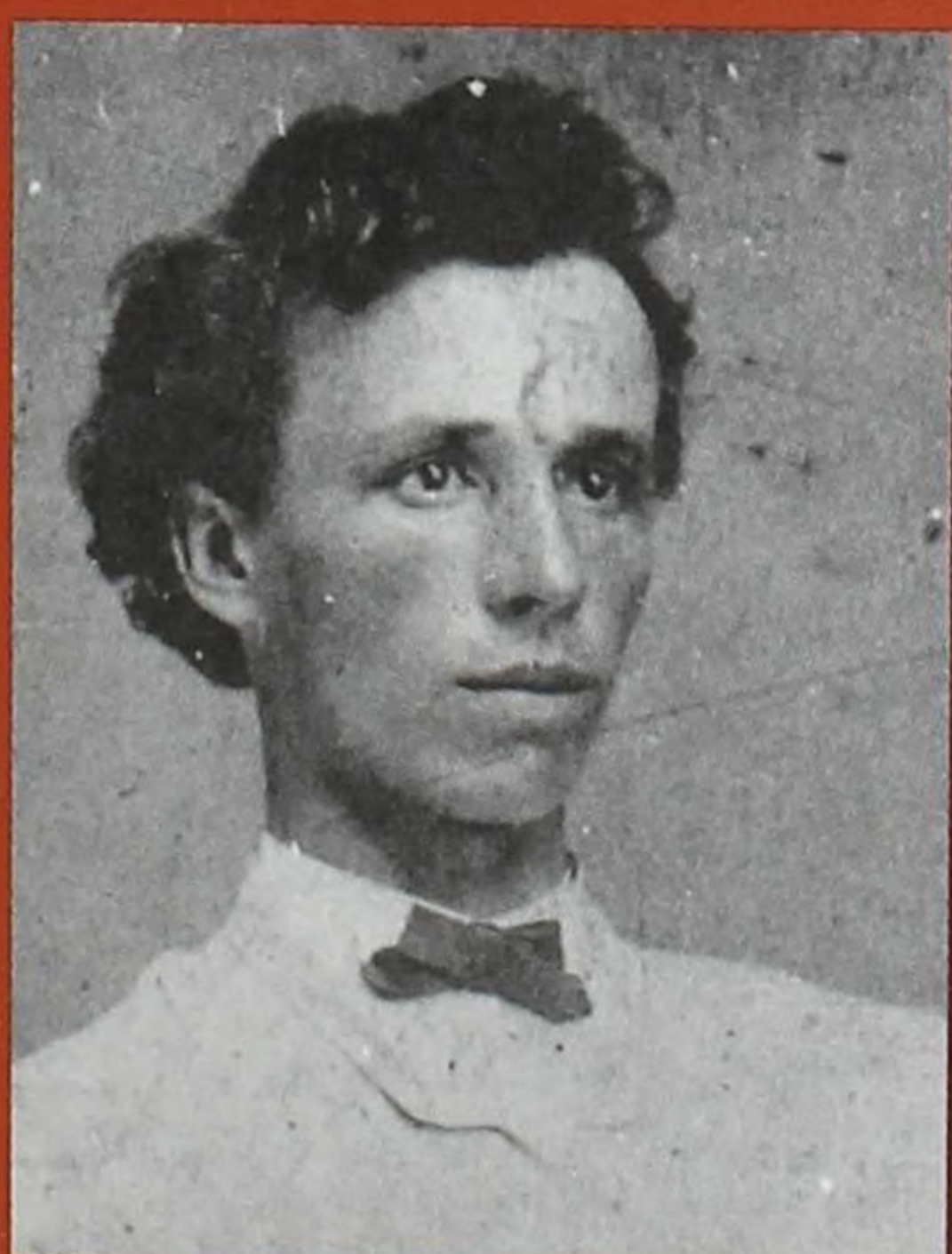
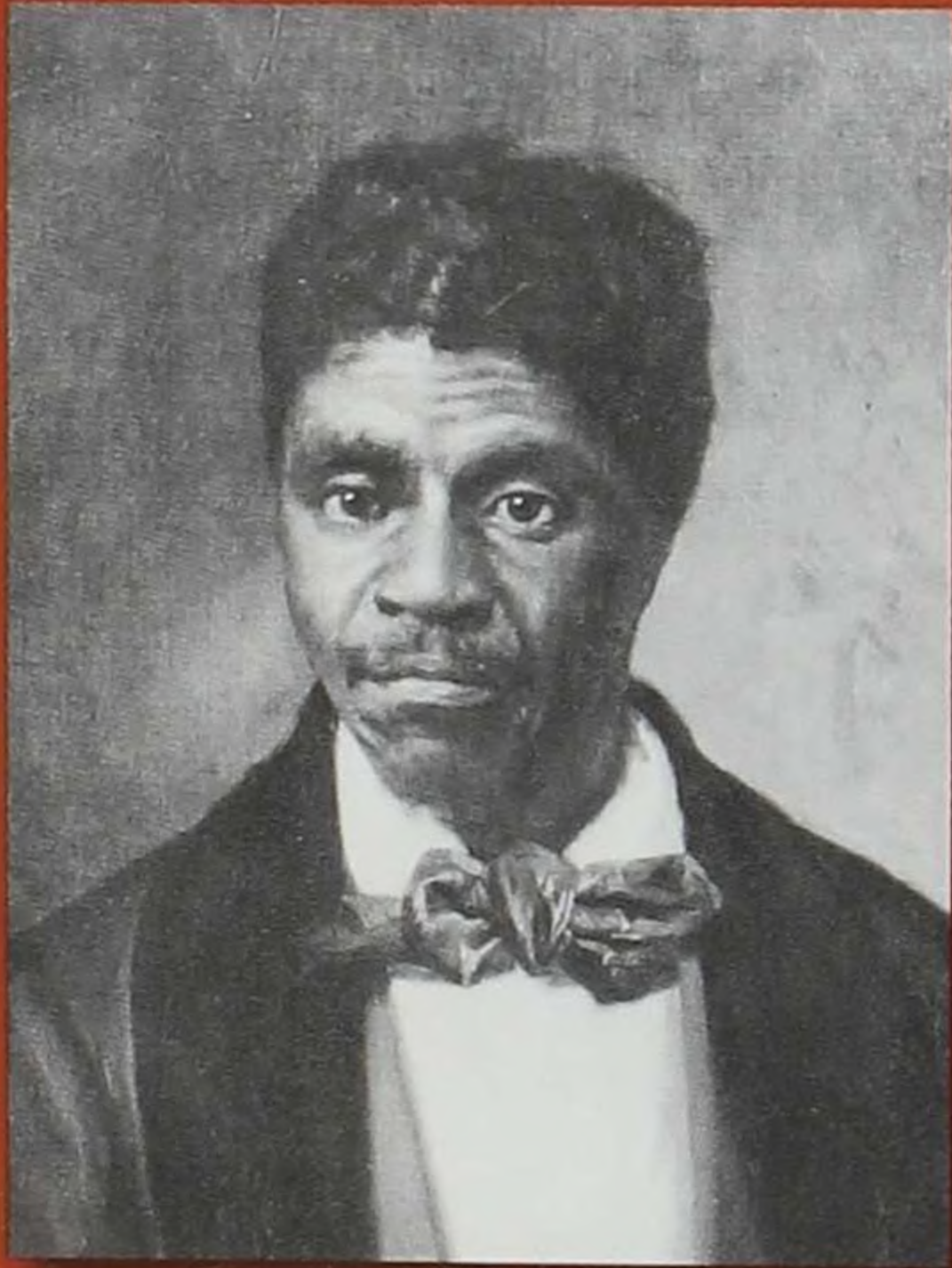


African Americans • Civil War • Woman Suffrage • The Meskwaki • Child Welfare • World War I
Summer & Fall 2004 • \$10

Iowa Heritage

ILLUSTRATED



Front Porch

I must have been in about fifth grade when I came home with the assignment to ask my parent "what I was"—my ethnic heritage. My mom answered "mostly German" and "all German" on her side. Pencil poised, I asked my next question: Did she remember any German customs or traditions from her childhood? Not really, she answered. Her parents had occasionally spoken Low German, and she taught me a phrase that translated to "keep your fingers out of the pot!"—meaning, don't you dare taste the food until it's served. I was hungry for traditions, but this surely wasn't much on which to build my new sense of ethnic identity and heritage.

Later, as I learned more American history, I asked about her memories of World War I (she was born in 1910). "Some people got their barns painted yellow because they were slackers," she told me. That's all she said she remembered.

I've often wondered if Mom's reticence about her German ethnicity had grown out of the virulent anti-German feelings in Iowa during World War I. As one of our articles relates, the public use of German—of any foreign language—was forbidden in wartime Iowa. Phone conversations in German were reported to the authorities. In New Liberty, near where my mom grew up, the bank changed its name from German Savings Bank to Liberty Savings Bank. Ten miles north, Lowden citizens clashed, sometimes violently, over incompatible expressions of ethnicity and patriotism. There are dozens of examples of conflict over this.

Place, language, and customs maintain and nurture cultural identity, but they can't always survive the pressures of society and change. Had my mother as a child absorbed the tensions and taboos of expressing any "German-ness"? Or perhaps her ancestors—the Arps and Wieses—had long ago assimilated. Maybe in Scott County, where it seemed that nearly everyone was German American, it was hard to even recognize any "German-ness" in your sense of self or identity; it was just the norm.

This double issue presents six Iowa stories about cultural and personal identities. The first looks at African Americans in Iowa before the Civil War and one of the most pivotal U.S. court cases—about whether a human being on "free soil" could still be identified as another human's property. The next story follows nine Iowa men into the Civil War. Belonging to the Ninth Iowa and going through battle together sharpened their identities as soldiers and Americans. They were different men at the end of the war.

A third article looks at the restrictive cultural identities of gender in the 1870s. When suffragists stepped beyond the "woman's sphere" of house and family and demanded their right to vote, others feared this new definition of womanhood would unravel the social fabric. Fear won out.

The fourth story tells how anthropologist Duren Ward encountered and documented a particularly strong enclave of cultural identity when he studied the Meskwaki Settlement and its people in 1905. About the same time in Des Moines, as the next recounts, Cora Bussey Hillis was shaping a new identity for herself as she discovered her life's work. In the concluding story, Governor Harding's wartime proclamation undermined cultural identity, religious expression, and individual freedoms.

Longtime readers of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*—and *The Palimpsest*, its original name—may recognize some of these stories. Indeed, all six are drawn from the rich archives of this magazine; some have been out of print. (Although the articles may be illustrated differently than when they first appeared in print, we have largely retained the original editorial style of each, despite inconsistencies with each other or with our current house style.) All have proven useful to historical researchers and insightful to readers. These stories take us into the cauldrons in which personal or group identity is forged or challenged—injustice, tragedy, war. We witness Iowans as they create or cling to, shed or subsume, their identities during times of stress and upheaval. And the issues they wrestle with continue to resonate with meaning for Iowans today.

—Ginalie Swaim, editor

Iowa Heritage Illustrated

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This magazine is a benefit to members of the State Historical Society of Iowa. One-year membership of \$50 includes additional benefits. Contact Betsy Shelton (515-281-6911) Betsy.Shelton@iowa.gov State Historical Society of Iowa, 600 East Locust, Des Moines, Iowa 50319

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Iowa Heritage

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Formerly The Palimpsest

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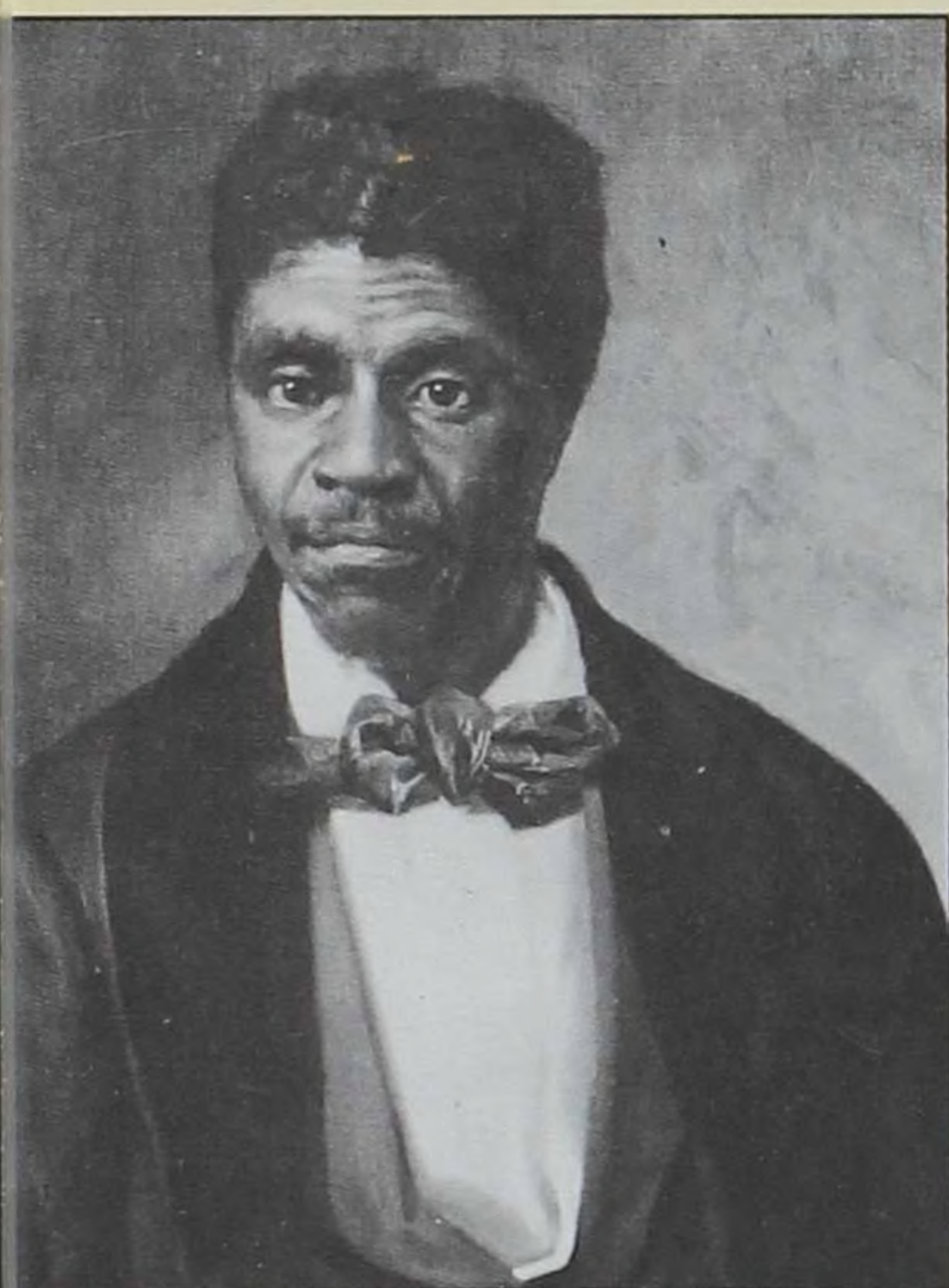
Pulling from its rich archives of past articles, the magazine presents, in this special double issue, six fascinating articles about this state and its people—from antebellum Iowa through World War I—and the challenging issues and pivotal events of those times. Historical figures from these six dramas fill our front cover. Top row, left: Dred Scott, Li-li-ya-pu-ka-chi and child, and William L. Harding. Bottom row, left: Cora Bussey Hillis, Vinson Holman, and Annie Savery.

Dr. Emerson's Sam

Black Iowans before the Civil War

by Robert R. Dykstra





TOWN SCENE: SHS (IOWA CITY); INSET: SHS (DES MOINES)

In the second decade of the nineteenth century two young slaves, Samuel Turner's boy Nat and Peter Blow's boy Sam, both of them slight in build and coal-black in color, approached adolescence in Southampton County, Virginia, a low, heavily wooded rural backwater abutting the North Carolina line. Both lads, in separate acts of rebellion against the world the slaveholders had made, created for themselves historic roles in the events leading to civil war.

One hot midsummer night in 1831 the elder of the two, now a moody Baptist preacher much given to visions and revelations, unleashed his personal apocalypse on the neighborhood of his birth. Twenty-four hours later he and his black companions had coolly butchered nearly sixty whites, mostly women and children, in the bloodiest slave uprising in American history. The slaughter electrified the entire white South, smothering the indigenous abolitionism of the region, stimulating an increasingly furious political defense of slavery against its critics and one last doomed effort to reform it as a way of life more bearable to blacks. The dogs of war, let slip in southern Virginia, ultimately led America to Harpers Ferry and Sumter and Bull Run.

Young Sam Blow would partake of neither the Nat Turner Rebellion nor its equally grim aftermath. He had gone west in his master's entourage to the Alabama frontier. A mecca for failed Virginia planters in the agriculturally depressed years following the War of 1812, Alabama unfortunately proved no promised land for the Blows. In 1820, after four seasons of hard-scrabble farming, Peter Blow, his family, and his slaves moved once again, locating this time in the burgeoning western city of St. Louis. Here Peter Blow purchased a boardinghouse where Sam spent his young manhood helping wait on guests. And here, a decade later, Peter Blow died, leaving many debts. To meet creditors' claims against the estate, "the Blow boy Sam," the frailest of the late proprietor's bondsmen, was sold at public auction, where he fetched the humiliatingly low price of five hundred dollars, less than a third of what slaves his age normally brought. The successful bidder in Sam's case was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania medical school, a struggling young St. Louis physician named John Emerson. After acquiring a commission as an army medical officer, Dr. Emerson took his wife, his daughter, and his new black manservant along with him when reporting for duty as post surgeon at Fort Armstrong, Illinois, in the winter of 1833-34.

View from Davenport, overlooking Fort Armstrong and Rock Island, 1844. Inset: Dred Scott—earlier known as Sam Blow.

Fort Armstrong commanded strategic Rock Island at the rapids of the upper Mississippi River, where during the War of 1812 a British cannon, three gunners, and the local Sauk and Mesquakie Indians had ambushed an American flotilla under Zachary Taylor. For Dr. Emerson, as for young Major Taylor before him, Rock Island turned out to be more than he'd bargained for, especially when subzero gales out of Canada hurtled down the frozen, snow-swept expanse of the great river. Pleading ill health, Emerson petitioned his superiors and his political friends for transfer to some more salubrious post. The surgery back at the St. Louis arsenal would do nicely, he suggested, but he did so to no avail. Spring came at last, the willow-shrouded riverbanks and islands greening in the bright April sun. As Emerson impatiently considered alternatives to Fort Armstrong, other members of the garrison drew his attention to the promising entrepreneurial prospects in real estate just across the river on the Iowa shore.

Two years earlier a rebellious faction of the Sauk had been decisively crushed in the Black Hawk War. Their cousins, the largely uninvolved Mesquakie (who would learn to loathe the connective term "Sac & Fox" insisted on by the government) had been forced to surrender an enormous swath of the Iowa country, a cession that included the site of Chief Poweshiek's village opposite Fort Armstrong. In the summer of 1833, six months before Emerson's arrival, Poweshiek's people had peaceably vacated the crescent-shaped flood plain below the bluff, joining the general Indian exodus into the interior. Before leaving they had insisted, however, that the ground on which their village stood be granted as a gift to Antoine LeClaire, their interpreter. The government honored this demand. Other whites, however, began moving across the river as squatters in the wake of the Mesquakie retreat. They built log shanties and cleared small corn patches in the cane and underbrush, hoping to establish claims that would qualify them, in due time, to buy prime riverfront land at the minimum government price. And so it was that Dr. Emerson pre-empted 640 acres of shoreline a few miles upstream from LeClaire's reserve. Years later, old-timers professed to remember that the good doctor's slave, a diminutive black man, occupied the shack on his master's behalf.

In the spring of 1836, however, War Department orders peremptorily closed Fort Armstrong and sent Dr. Emerson north to Fort Snelling. Sam went with him, never to return to Iowa. Emerson himself did. The army's medical corps suffered a cutback in strength at the close of the Seminole War, and Dr. Emerson found himself without a job. Pending reinstatement, he returned to the old site of Poweshiek's village, now a flour-

ishing young city named Davenport. While once again attending personally to his land claim, Emerson offered himself as physician to the local folk. Then, late in 1843, he died rather suddenly, possibly from an advanced case of syphilis. Emerson's wife, who inherited the bulk of his estate, returned to St. Louis, where three years later the slave she had known as Sam insisted that she sell him his freedom. Mrs. Emerson refused. Sam therefore brought suit against her, his attorneys arguing that Sam's onetime residence in the State of Illinois and the Territory of Wisconsin—both off-limits to slavery—had nullified their client's status as a slave.

By this date Sam also insisted on answering to the name Dred Scott, and for the next several years the litigation over his freedom drew increasing national attention as it slowly worked its way up toward a judgment, ultimately, from the highest court in the land.

In the meantime, Dr. Emerson's Sam had not been the only black to take up residence on Iowa soil. In the mid-1830s men and women who had set themselves to pioneer a new land crossed the great river, fashioned tiny urban enclaves along the Mississippi shore, and then began to scatter inland, following the northwestward inclination of rivers into the southern Iowa drift plain, a country of level lowlands, timbered slopes, and grassy upland divides. From the level crests of these ridges curious land-lookers gazing westward could sometimes glimpse an illusion that the ancient, pre-alluvial contour of the earth's surface had somehow reconstituted itself, stretching ahead of them like some calm midwestern seascape, receding toward a flat horizon beneath the big pale sky. Upriver, above the Racoon forks of the Des Moines, the north bend of the Iowa, and the rapids of the Cedar and the Wapsipinicon, the streambeds finally opened out, their enclosing landforms giving way to the gentler roll of the great prairie. Here the land rose more authentically to an uncluttered skyline, its sweep suggesting the awesome infinity of space. It was, they were to discover, the most uniformly rich agricultural region of its size, perhaps, anywhere on earth.

Blacks accompanied these first pioneers. One such individual, a tall, very dark frontiersman, was reported to be living at Poweshiek's village on the Iowa River in 1838. The Mesquakie seem to have called him Magaahkwa, or "Big Timber," a good-humored reference to his build. Other blacks, their precise numbers unknown, came as slaves. In the early thirties, Isaac Campbell's John, his owner a prosperous Indian trader and merchant at Keokuk, the newly founded settlement



Nothing is known about the African American woman in this tintype labeled only "favorite slave" and donated to the State Historical Society of Iowa in 1935, along with other images and manuscripts of the Jerome Dutton family, who settled in eastern Iowa during the 1850s.

at the mouth of the Des Moines, was "hiring out his own time," the phrase universally applied to slaves whose owners allowed them to work for wages and keep all or part of the proceeds. John, they say, was saving to buy his freedom. In 1834 a slavewoman came to the Iowa country with the household of the famous army officer, Stephen Watts Kearney. The first recorded death at the town of Bentonsport, founded on the lower Des Moines in 1839, was that of Shapley Ross's slave, "Aunt Mornin." Ross, an early surveyor who stoutly maintained that the area actually lay within Missouri, a slave state, also owned at least two other slaves. Forty miles upriver at the new Sauk and Mesquakie agency, two female slaves cooked meals for the construction gang putting up agency buildings. Two others, purchased in Missouri, belonged to a white trader and his Indian wife. The Indian agent himself, General Joseph Street, owned several slaves; all were freed at his death in 1840.

Iowa's achievement of separate territorial status in 1838—under a constitutional instrument that specifically forbade slavery—did not entirely suppress the tendency of owners to bring slaves with them from southern states. For a few years such transgressors included the two top officials in the territorial government. Ex-Congressman John Chambers of Kentucky, appointed governor by President William Henry Harrison, disembarked at Burlington in 1841 accompanied, wrote an eyewitness, by "a small troop" of slaves. The territorial secretaryship, also a presidential appointment, fell to O. H. W. Stull of Maryland. A visiting Illinoisan was shocked to learn that the Burlington quarters of the two federal officials contained "seven or eight colored people" who were flogged, otherwise treated as slaves, "and kept in profound ignorance of the fact that, when they touched the soil of Iowa[,] they were free."

Since Chambers objected to the remoteness of the raw new territorial capital, Iowa City, both he and Stull sojourned there only during legislative sessions. During such visits the governor would be admirably attended by his elegant black bodyservant, "Uncle Cassius," and Stull decided that he, too, should display a style appropriate to high office while among the legislators. Luckily, he found a slaveowner willing to sell. The household of Richard Chaney, a suburban Iowa City sawmiller from Virginia, included a likely mulatto boy less than ten years of age whom Stull purchased for \$250, sealing the bargain in the lobby of a local hotel. When Stull was dismissed in a patronage dispute in 1843, he sold this young man to a brother-in-law, a fellow Mary-

lander, who promptly took the lad south. But when Chambers's own term of office ended two years later, at least two of his slaves, Cassius and a young woman named Carey Bennett, claimed their freedom and remained in Iowa.

By this date slaveholding was fast becoming as socially unacceptable in most of the territory as it was illegal. As early as 1837 the Keokuk merchant and slaveholder, Isaac Campbell, responded to criticism by moving to the right bank of the Des Moines River from where, safe on Missouri soil, he continued to direct his many Iowa business ventures. A few years later, Shapley Ross angrily decamped to Texas after some of his Bentonsport neighbors interfered with his attempt to recapture a runaway slave. Other Iowa slaveholders simply dissembled. The territorial census takers counted 188 black Iowans in the summer of 1840, but less than 10 percent of them went into the record as slaves. Many owners, such as Chaney the miller, obviously mislabeled their chattels, for the benefit of the enumerators, as "free colored." Ten years later the census takers recorded no slaves at all in Iowa, though it is known that new settlers crossing the Missouri line occasionally brought slaves with them. In the early fifties, for example, an alcoholic farmer from North Carolina, a music-lover named L. P. ("Tune") Allen, brought into Ringgold County two teenaged slaves, a male and a female. He worked them a year before taking them south for sale. Settlers also held a number of slaves in adjoining Decatur County in the years just before the war. One of these blacks, John McDaniel's George, died in slavery and was buried in the village cemetery at Pleasanton. Years later some humane citizen, touched by George's story, erected a small monument to his memory.

Only at Dubuque could blacks be said to have constituted a community in Iowa's earliest years. Here a booming frontier village had blossomed by virtue of rich deposits of top-grade lead ore in the high wooded hills surrounding what had been, a few years before, an important Mesquakie town. The French-Canadian trader Julien Dubuque had been permitted to mine lead there from 1788 until his death in 1810, after which the area was closed to outsiders. Adventurous newcomers extracted ore from the site as early as 1830, only to be twice driven out as illegal squatters by the army. Settlement resumed in 1833, swelling the town to some five hundred souls, many of them tough Irish immigrants or hardbitten veterans of the southern Missouri diggings. Such men, often drunk on corn liquor or cheap brandy, sometimes well-armed,

made early Dubuque a kind of prototype of the legendary mining camps of the American West.

In June 1834, Dubuquers organized a vigilante court and tried, sentenced, and ceremoniously hanged a quarrelsome Irishman, Pat O'Connor, for putting five slugs into the chest of his young partner. Three days later the town's Methodists sought to elevate the spiritual tone of the place, commencing erection of the town's—and the territory's—first church. At least six local blacks, some of them said to have been slaves, pledged modest sums to the Methodist building fund and had their names dutifully, if not always very suitably, inscribed on a circulating subscription paper: "Uncle Tom" (50¢), Caroline Brady (12½¢), Walton Baker (25¢), Sam Welsh (25¢), Nathaniel Morgan (50¢), and Tilda (25¢). A black woman, Charlotte Morgan, wife to Nathaniel, was one of the seven charter members of the congregation. Six years later Dubuque's blacks numbered seventy-two, probably about 5 percent of the town's population but enough to constitute the largest black aggregation in the territory.

In only two instances, both of them unusual, does history record the specific circumstances of blacks' coming to Dubuque. One case was that of Ralph, a Missouri slave. In 1834 Ralph entered into a written agreement with his owner, a Mr. Montgomery, promising that on December 31, 1838 he would pay Montgomery \$550 plus interest, in return for which the owner would grant Ralph his freedom. With Montgomery's permission, Ralph then set off to the Dubuque mines, intent on striking it rich. But by the spring of 1839 luck still eluded him and the note was overdue.

Ralph's contract with Montgomery was evidently no secret at the diggings. Two Virginians, viewing the slave's predicament as more than just a good joke, wrote to Montgomery, offering to return the defaulting black to Missouri for a hundred-dollar fee. Montgomery, by no means inclined to write Ralph off as a bad debt, agreed.

The Virginians swore out an affidavit that Ralph was a fugitive slave, then presented the document to a local justice of the peace, who obligingly ordered Ralph's arrest and extradition. Accompanied by the sheriff, the Virginians surprised Ralph at his mineral claim west of town, clapped him in handcuffs, and lifted him into a wagon. Thinking it best to avoid Dubuque, they took the road for Bellevue, where they delivered him to the captain of a riverboat for transport south. But a Dubuque grocer, Alexander Butterworth, had happened to witness Ralph's arrest while plowing a field on his suburban farm. His blood boiled at the sight of the hapless black in the grip of slave-catchers. Armed with a writ



19TH-CENTURY ILLUSTRATION OF UNIDENTIFIED SLAVE-CATCHER AND BLACK

of habeus corpus hastily obtained from District Judge T. S. Wilson, and accompanied by the reanimated sheriff, Butterworth galloped to the rescue. He and the officer reached dockside just in time and forced the captain to return Ralph to Dubuque for a hearing, whereupon Judge Wilson, recognizing the far-reaching implications of the case, urged its prompt transfer to the newly organized Iowa Supreme Court at Burlington, of which he himself—at a politically precocious twenty-four years of age—happened to be a member. All parties agreed.

In re Ralph (1839) became the second piece of litigation to come before the Iowa court. Representing the defendant was David Rorer, a Virginia-born former slaveowner from Arkansas, a short, barrel-chested individual who nine months earlier had put a fatal pistol ball through the body of a political enemy. Rorer also happened to be one of the brightest legal lights in the territory. Legal talent, however, proved in this instance to be less important than that the plaintiff had a very strong case, American jurisprudence offering ample precedent for the freedom of a slave whose master intended to make free territory the slave's place of residence either by carrying him there or permitting him to

locate there on his own. The supreme court of Missouri, in no less than a dozen cases, had been particularly zealous in applying this doctrine to freedom suits resulting from slave residence in Illinois. The facts of one such case, *Ralph v. Duncan* (1833), were similar to the Iowa case in more ways than just the name of the plaintiff, who had won his freedom on grounds that his Missouri master, in return for a promissory note, had allowed him to hire his own time at the Shawneetown salt works and Galena mines.

Rorer's most powerful argument involved reminding the court that the famous Missouri Compromise, wherein Congress had granted Missourians statehood in 1821, had also specified that in the lands of the Louisiana Purchase north and west of Missouri's boundaries "slavery and involuntary servitude, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes, . . . shall be, and is hereby, forever prohibited." The color of legality had been given Ralph's arrest by a supplementary clause providing that "any person escaping into the same [free territory], from whom labour or service is lawfully claimed, . . . may be lawfully reclaimed and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labour or service as aforesaid." But by no stretch of the imagination, Rorer noted, had Ralph been a fugitive.

The court's Lincolnesque chief justice, Charles Mason, had a decade earlier graduated at the top of his class at West Point, just above the brilliant Robert E. Lee. He now rendered the court's decision that Ralph was neither fugitive nor slave. Once permitted by his owner to establish a residence on Iowa soil he had become free—automatically manumitted by the Missouri Enabling Act. That Ralph had not paid Montgomery a lawful debt was certainly true, but the courts couldn't reduce a man to slavery for that, at least not in Iowa. Having issued their verdict, the justices adjourned, appropriately enough, on Independence Day. Ralph went forth a free man.

One fine spring morning several seasons later, more or less on the anniversary of Ralph's arrest, Judge Wilson discovered the former slave at work in the garden behind Wilson's house. Asked to explain himself, Ralph obliged. It was his way of saying thanks, he said. "I ain't paying you for what you done for me," he added. That, both he and the judge knew, would have been improper. "But I want to work for you one day every spring," he said, "to show you that I never forget you." And he was as good as his word. As Judge Wilson recalled half a century later, Ralph "afterwards struck a big lode, but gambled it away, and died with the small-pox." Not, however, before gaining a modest immortality in the history of Iowa jurisprudence.

A far less pleasant fate awaited a second Dubuque black man a year after Ralph's case had been heard. Nathaniel Morgan and his wife Charlotte had come to the diggings from Galena, the Illinois mining town that was the immediate place of origin of many early Dubuquers. In 1833 a Dubuque boardinghouse owner offered them both employment. The Morgans accepted and, as already noted, played small roles in organizing and funding Dubuque's first church. By 1840 they were among the community's oldest residents. Nat was apparently in his early thirties, Charlotte a few years older. They shared their house with a boarder, a free black adult male. Nat now worked as cook and waiter in a local hotel, Charlotte as a laundress. Some said Nat occasionally pilfered cigars and other small items from hotel guests. Others later denied this, but by then it no longer mattered.

One day in early September 1840, Nat had just cooked dinner and was carrying it to the guests when a group of angry men burst into the hotel, seized him, and accused him of stealing a trunk full of clothes. Nat denied personal knowledge of the theft, but a mob gathered, growing in size as the excitement emptied the bars. Colonel Paul Cain, a thirty-five-year-old miner from New York, the commander of the local militia unit and a failed candidate for sheriff, took charge. He and the crowd rushed Nat down to the riverbank, where they secured him to a post, bared his back, and began to whip him to make him confess.

At first Nat screamed his innocence, then his guilt. He confessed, according to an eyewitness, several times, saying whatever his tormentors seemed to want him to say but thereby contradicting himself, which brought renewed applications of the rawhide. After some hundred lashes the upper part of Nat's body must have been literally flayed. But now Cain demanded that Nat lead them to the stolen trunk. Nat agreed, as he now agreed to everything, and they cut him down and dragged him to the confessed hiding place. No trunk was to be found. Thirty-nine more lashes fell upon Nat's lacerated back. Had he possibly hidden the trunk at his house? Nat cried yes. They dragged him there, where Charlotte's sobs no doubt accompanied the gruesome choreography of the mob. Once again the quest proved fruitless. Again the lash. Nat no longer cried out, but now, in a whisper, he named a place up on the bluff. He would show them the place, he said, if they would just let him rest a moment. This was denied.

Our eyewitness may have been Dr. Ambrose Crane, who warned that further punishment would kill the victim, only to be told by the mob to back off unless he wanted some of the same. In any event, the eyewitness



SHSI (IOWA CITY)

In this illustration off of a three-dollar bank note from the State Bank of Iowa (circa late 1850s), an African American participates in a husking bee. The black population in Iowa before the Civil War included both enslaved and freed people.

stayed behind as the mob half-led, half-dragged Nat Morgan into the woods. When they brought him home again he was dead, testified the eyewitness, "his back broken, and his ribs and sides all stove in!" The stolen trunk was never found.

The authorities charged Colonel Cain and several others with murder. The killers stood trial, but were acquitted on the grounds that their intent to commit so gross a crime had not been proved. They went free.

An attempt to reconcile the Dubuque that championed Ralph's freedom in 1839 with the Dubuque that in 1840 took Nat Morgan's life confronts a dilemma: which incident appears to provide the truer insight into the town's underlying racial attitudes?

Lucius H. Langworthy, one of the brothers usually considered the founding fathers of Dubuque, once commented publicly on both the Ralph case and the lynching. Given Langworthy's membership in the town's business and professional elite and the deference due him as one of the community's oldest residents, and given also the fact that he spoke to a local audience, his words would appear to possess a special authority. In this prepared address of 1855, published many years later, Langworthy first discussed the Ralph incident, praising the black man's rescuers as "liberty-loving citizens" who did not allow "the fear of being called abolitionists" to deter them from their humane and historic task. Dubuquers are reminded to be proud of them. In the next breath Langworthy considered the lynching,

and his message here was that Nat Morgan's killers were not bad men—only misguided. Implying that the martyred Nat may in fact have been guilty of the theft, Langworthy proved extravagantly judicious in his censure of Cain *et al.*, whose savagery, he cautioned, was simply "a mistaken zeal, and with entire ignorance, perhaps, of the injury they were inflicting, or, with reason blinded by prejudice." "No doubt," he added, "the men who inflicted this wrong, regretted their rashness and folly when too late." His concluding moral was that there is simply no accounting for man's inhumanity to blacks, beasts, and females: "some men consider negroes, oxen, women and mules of like endurance and fit subjects for the cruel master's lash."

Langworthy, in short, tempts one to discount Ralph's rescue, insofar as it occurred at Dubuque, as something of a fluke, and to see Ralph's liberators as not only good men but, given the peculiarly virulent racism that must have infected the community by the late 1830s, men of absolutely reckless heroism. And two additional items of evidence from the year 1840 support this interpretation.

First, Iowa's territorial assembly passed an act incorporating Dubuque, thereby providing for its governmental reorganization. The customary clause setting the rules for the town's first election, however, did not specify voter eligibility in the language usual to such acts. Instead, presumably at the behest of Dubuquers themselves, the act asserted—much more stridently than

necessary—that only “free white” males would vote. A small case in point, but ominous. Second, only in and around Dubuque lived Iowans callous enough in 1840 to identify to the census marshals the servile status of their household blacks. Elsewhere, slaveholding Iowans at least had the grace to lie. Nothing daunted, Dubuquers nonchalantly called a slave a slave. Eleven Dubuquers headed households containing slaves, dividing among them the ownership—or at least the supervision—of sixteen slaves: six males, ten females.

Evidently the largest slaveholder in town was none other than the Honorable George Wallace Jones, one of Iowa Territory’s two delegates to the United States Congress. Back in 1837, in eagerly assuring U.S. Senator John C. Calhoun that Iowans were not, as a rule, abolitionists, Jones had told the white South’s most powerful advocate that in fact he himself owned ten or a dozen slaves. That may have been stretching it a bit for the benefit of the beetle-browed South Carolinian. Three and a half years later, at least, Jones’s Dubuque household included three female slaves, one of them a child, as well as a free black adult male.

A second very prominent Dubuquer, the Virginia-born receiver of the local United States land office, Thomas McKnight, had a slave couple in residence, in addition to a free black male. The household of Jack Thompson, a prosperous Dubuque merchant, included a young male slave. And so on. Most appear to have been employed as domestic servants, as was probably also the case of the fifteen free blacks residing in white households, since they are distributed singly or in pairs suggestive of live-in help.

The ill-fated Nat Morgan and nine other free blacks headed Dubuque households of their own in the summer of 1840. Such household heads, their families, and their lodgers totaled forty-one, or nearly 60 percent of the local black population. The degree of cohesiveness within this black aggregation—free and slave—is of course difficult to judge. Of distinctly black institutions at this time, virtually nothing is known; although an African Baptist Society had formed by the late 1840s, Dubuque’s first independent black church edifice would not be built until after the Civil War. Neither is there evidence of a black leadership structure. A case might be made that the relative value of contributions to the Methodist fund indicates some gradation of status and seniority among Dubuque blacks in 1834. That notion would, not implausibly, place Nat Morgan and “Uncle Tom” at the top of the black hierarchy—the one a cook whose services were in demand by local whites, the

other a presumably venerable figure about whom nothing else is known. If this were true, Morgan’s lynching takes on another tragic dimension, since it deprived the black community of an important leader.

What is suggested by the absence of record is a black community beset by a degree of fragmentation and disarray, and on whom the frightful lynching must have had a profound impact. That infamous episode, or the general decline of lead mining in the early forties, or both, probably had some relationship to the dispersal of the black Dubuquers of 1840. Of the ten free black household heads in the census of that year, only two can be identified as still there in 1850: Aaron Baptiste, a Kentucky-born laborer, and Charlotte Morgan, Nat’s widow, who at fifty years of age was the live-in housekeeper for two immigrant miners, a Briton and a Scot.

Not only had the number of Dubuque blacks declined by well over half in the 1840s, but the twenty-nine survivors showed little evidence of a collective well-being. A fourth of them lived in white households. The “nuclear” household—that is, father and mother and children (if any)—predominated over the “augmented” household—a nuclear family plus lodgers. But this is best interpreted as evidence not of socioeconomic health, but simply of an out-migration of blacks that had considerably eased the pressures on available housing. No black child had attended school in the 1849–50

Evidently the largest slaveholder in town was none other than the Honorable George Wallace Jones, one of Iowa Territory’s two delegates to the United States Congress.

academic year. All eight of the black adult males claimed occupations; one was a carpenter, one a miner, one a barber, in addition to two servants and three laborers. But only three of them owned real property. Thomas C. Brown, the black barber, claimed \$1,100 worth of land; a laborer, Anthony Arthur, claimed \$1,000 worth; and Aaron Baptiste, \$600 worth.

That the climate of race relations in Dubuque had improved much since the lynching is questionable. On election day in August of 1856 a respectable Dubuque businessman made so bold as to remark publicly that he considered a black person to be as good as himself, “or as an Irishman, if he [the Irishman] behaved himself.” Infuriated onlookers knocked him to the sidewalk,

seriously injuring him, and would doubtless have killed him, it is said, had not the unfortunate man been rescued by the police.

In 1840, 42 percent of all black Iowans lived in Dubuque. Ten years later that percentage had dropped to 9. The new capital of Afro-American Iowa in 1850 was Muscatine, a Mississippi River settlement some eighty miles to the south.

Originally a small trading post at a site convenient for landing water-borne supplies for the Sauk and Mesquakie of the interior, Muscatine had been platted as a townsite in 1836 and early became an important stopping place for general steamboat traffic. In the 1840s it became, like Dubuque, a leading lumber-milling center fed by the vast pineries of northwest Wisconsin. Young Samuel Clemens, who apparently worked there for a few months in his brother's newspaper office, remembered Muscatine for its fabulous summer sunsets.

In 1840 the census taker counted only twenty-five blacks in Muscatine, a figure amounting to perhaps 5 percent of the total village population. All lived in households headed by whites. Fifteen of them, in fact, lived in the house of David Warfield, a young sawmill owner, the males probably being employed at the mill. The town's other blacks appear mainly to have been house servants living in the homes of leading business and professional men.

In the following decade Muscatine's blacks doubled in number at the same time their proportion of the town's total population shrank to 2.5 percent. They also had been relatively successful, meanwhile, in establishing residential independence from local whites. In 1850, with the exception of two hotel boarders and a mulatto child evidently living with her white kinfolk, only one of the town's sixty-two blacks lived with a Caucasian family. This, it may be imagined, was indispensable to the development of a true black community possessing its own institutions and structure of leadership. Unlike the Dubuque blacks of the 1840s, Muscatine's Afro-Americans made this transition, and an important event of 1849 reflected their social maturation. In October of that year they met to organize an African Methodist Episcopal church. Accepting the deed to a lot on Seventh Street, where the A.M.E. edifice would rise, the congregation's leaders evidently embraced the town's most prominent blacks.

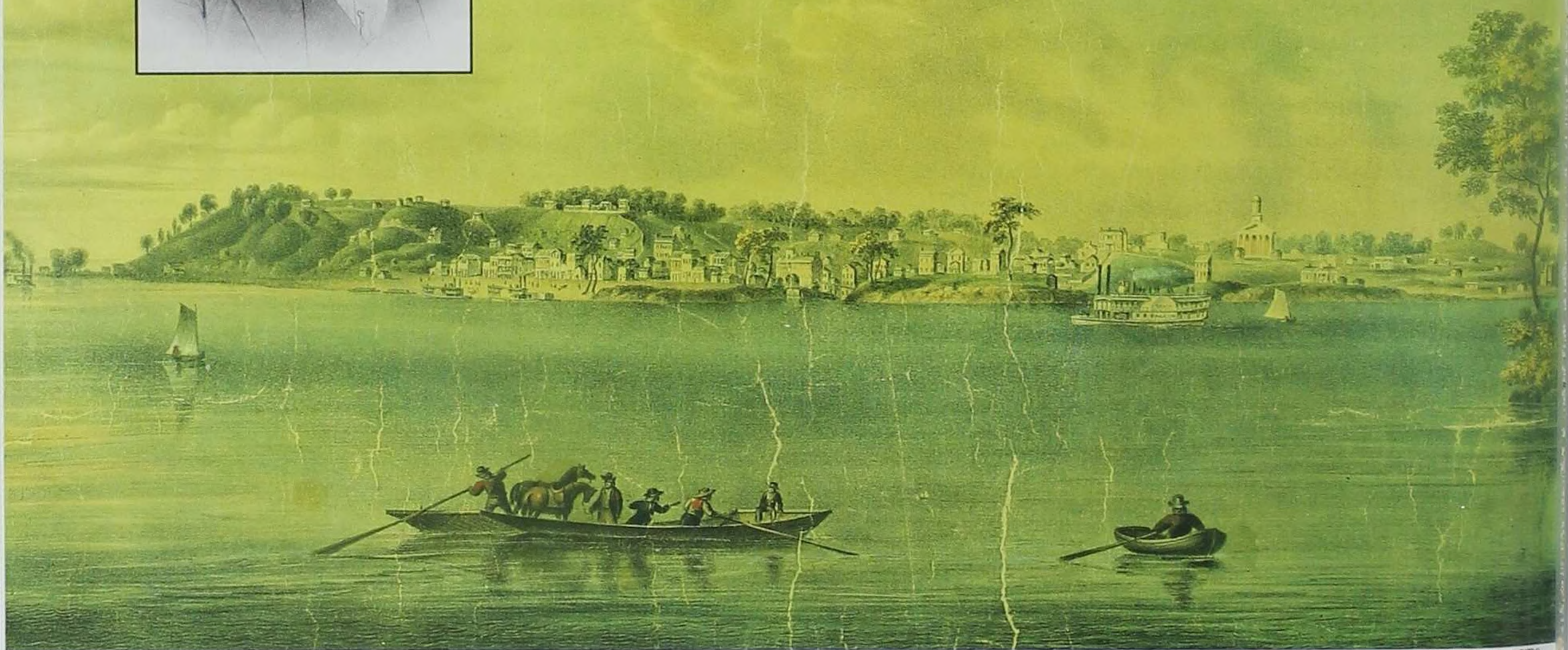
Three important figures within the congregation represented a ten-member kinship group that had migrated from Maryland to Iowa in the late 1830s and had probably helped swell David Warfield's household in

1840. Ten years later the Mathews clan occupied three separate cottages. Its matriarch, Ellen ("Aunt Nellie") Anderson, lived alone with her second husband, Daniel Anderson, a whitewasher by trade who served as the new congregation's first steward, class-reader, and local preacher. Aunt Nellie's forty-year-old son, "Uncle Ben" Mathews, a teamster, and Edmund Mathews, possibly her brother, were both charter members of the A.M.E. board of trustees.

Another charter trustee, a Maryland-born barber, Thomas C. Motts, arrived in Muscatine at about the same time as the Mathewses. Late in 1846 he began to advertise his barbershop—"on Second Street, two doors south of the Drug Emporium of Fenimore & Peterson"—in the local newspaper. As an apparently lucrative sideline, he also sold and delivered coal. By 1850, at age forty-six, he was the town's wealthiest black, owning real estate worth six thousand dollars. He was also a new father, his second wife, Mahala, a light-skinned native of Delaware, having just given birth to their son Job. Little Jo Ann Motts, probably a daughter by his deceased first wife, lived next door, and two unmarried women, possibly T. C. Motts's sisters, lived in a separate cottage nearby.

Another prominent individual, Alexander Clark, served the new church as recording steward and Sunday-school superintendent. Clark had been born near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1826, the son of an emancipated slave couple. He was also, thanks to an Irish grandfather, at least one-quarter white. At age thirteen he sought his fortune in Cincinnati and briefly attended grammar school while living with an uncle who taught him the barbering trade. Two years later he served a brief stretch on the Ohio as a riverboat bartender. Then, one spring day in 1842, the sixteen-year-old Alex Clark stepped off the boat at Muscatine and stayed the rest of his life. Resuming work as a barber, he also invested in real estate. One purchase, a tract of timberland, led to profitable contracts for supplying firewood to various steamboat lines. By his mid-twenties he had married a light-skinned, Virginia-born Iowa City girl, had fathered a daughter, and with twelve hundred dollars' worth of property was the second most prosperous black in town.

A youthful member of the Mathews clan, ten-year-old Charles, boarded with the Clarks, suggesting the hospitality by which the overflow from one black household might be accommodated by another. That Muscatine's black families remained cramped for space is suggested by this sharing of homes. Of the fifteen dwellings inhabited by black folk in 1850, ten enclosed at least one person whose surname differed from that



BOTH: SHS (IOWA CITY)

By 1850, Muscatine had replaced Dubuque as the Iowa town with the highest black population. Inset: Alexander Clark arrived in Muscatine when he was sixteen. Through barbering, real estate, and selling firewood to steamboats, he became its second most prosperous black resident.

of the household head. Yet the average number of occupants per dwelling was only four—an indication of the small size of housing available to families of relatively modest income, one would suppose. The so-called augmented household, emblematic of a black community experiencing population growth, predominated. No house contained more than one married couple, however, and no inter-generational “extended” households were in evidence. Even within the Mathews family, each couple, as already noted, maintained a household of its own.

In 1850 the black community included eighteen children of school age (that is, five through fifteen), of whom a third had attended classes the previous winter. Black parents may well have sponsored a private grammar school, inasmuch as twenty-two-year-old Sarah Davidson, a Kentucky-born black, identified herself as a teacher. Muscatine’s black adult males constituted a work force not dissimilar to Dubuque’s. It included a

blacksmith, three cooks, four barbers, two teamsters, a painter, and a laborer. A relatively higher proportion (eight of twenty) reported no occupations, however, something usually taken to imply unemployment. Any plausible comparison of property holdings among the blacks of the two towns seems precluded by T. C. Mott’s relatively enormous realty valuation. Indeed, any very specific economic or demographic comparisons between Muscatine and Dubuque blacks—or between either group and its associated white community—would be naive; the numbers involved are simply too small for sophisticated use. But it can probably be said that in terms of general socioeconomic configuration the blacks of Dubuque and Muscatine did not differ appreciably from urban Afro-Americans elsewhere in the antebellum North.

In the winter before local blacks organized their church, a Muscatine version of the Ralph case served to

emphasize the relatively benign racial ambiance of the town. Dr. Samuel H. Merry was a St. Louis physician who in 1833 had helped his good friend and colleague, Dr. John Emerson, obtain an army appointment. Fifteen years later, at sixty years of age, Merry followed Emerson's example and moved to Iowa, locating in rural Muscatine County. Perhaps thinking to avoid the kind of trouble the late Dr. Emerson's heirs were now having with the Dred Scott litigation, Merry left his own young slave, Jim White, behind in St. Louis, entrusting Jim to his daughter, Mrs. Thomas Hughes. Mrs. Hughes hired Jim out as a worker on a steamboat. But soon word came to Dr. Merry that Jim had suffered a severe head injury in a brawl with the boat's steward. Under the circumstances, it seemed best that Mrs. Hughes send him north to Dr. Merry for a medically supervised convalescence in the fresh country air.

As it turned out, however, Jim White had worked away from home just long enough to gain a strong sense of independence. Now he proved so impudent a patient that the exasperated Merry ordered him off the premises. Jim readily obliged. He trudged the dozen miles to Muscatine, where he asked for and received a job at a local hotel, the American House.

Though Dr. Merry seems to have washed his hands of the obstreperous Jim White, Mrs. Hughes and her husband insisted that Jim return to St. Louis and slavery. Jim refused. In October 1848 the Hugheses dispatched a St. Louis detective named (ironically enough) Horace Freeman to bring Jim home. Freeman stepped ashore at Muscatine, located young White at the hotel, and promptly detained him at gunpoint preparatory to calling in the law. But the burly hotel proprietor laid hands on Freeman and roughly divested him of his pistols while Jim took to his heels. Jim sought refuge at the house of Alex Clark, the barber, who had Freeman arrested for kidnapping. The detective countered by having Jim arrested as a fugitive slave. The arresting officer brought Jim White before D. C. Cloud, a local justice of the peace, a self-educated lawyer shortly to become Iowa's first attorney general. Cloud ruled in Jim's favor on the grounds that, as in the Ralph case nine years earlier, the black man's owner had permitted him to come north, whereupon he became no more a slave than he was a fugitive.

The angry detective refused to give up. He seems to have concocted a scheme to have Jim kidnapped by stealth, only to be outwitted by Alex Clark. He then tried another tack. He obtained a precept for Jim's arrest from J. J. Dyer, the federal judge for the District of Iowa, then resident at Dubuque, intending that the subsequent hearing be held in an atmosphere much less protective

toward blacks. But Freeman's new plan leaked out, and no sooner was Jim rearrested than his supporters—both black and white—filed for a writ of habeas corpus, preventing removal of the prisoner to Dubuque. Judge S. Clinton Hastings of Muscatine, acting chief justice of the state supreme court, granted the writ, obliging Freeman to appear before him to justify Jim's arrest. After learned counsel had argued the pros and cons, Hastings ruled that the arrest had been improper, since Judge Dyer's court was a court of concurrent jurisdiction, under the United States Code, with that of Justice Cloud. Dyer's court could not, therefore, entertain the case once it had been disposed of by Cloud. Judge Hastings also refused to force Cloud to grant an appeal, and thereby quashed further litigation in the matter.

Later, on the front steps of the American House, Judge Hastings dramatically placed his hand on Jim White's arm. "Gentlemen," he announced to the knot of interested onlookers, "here is a free man."

In mid-century yet another numerically important black community assembled on the frontier northwest of Dubuque. In central Fayette County, fifty miles from the Minnesota line, a rural enclave known as "the colored settlement" constituted, in 1854, the largest aggregation of blacks in the state.

A light-skinned people of mixed ancestry, they were understood never to have been slaves. Their original patriarch, Sion Bass the elder, had been born in Virginia in the early 1780s. He and his wife Sarah crossed into the freer social environment of North Carolina in the 1790s—either as fugitives or, more likely, as manumitted slaves induced to leave a commonwealth increasingly hostile to free blacks. Sion Bass the younger was thus of North Carolina birth, as was Sion the younger's son, T. R. Bass. In the 1820s two households of Basses came north, probably under the auspices of a Quaker program for resettlement of North Carolina freedmen, spending the 1830s in Indiana before crossing into Illinois in the mid-forties. Here, in the countryside south of Kankakee, they comprised a community of some eighty free persons of color.

During the Indiana sojourn one of the Bass girls, Melinda, married Joel J. Epps, a recent migrant (or fugitive) from Georgia. The Epps thereafter joined the Basses in serving as the community's nucleus. By 1850, six of the colony's twelve cottages contained household members surnamed Bass or Epps. Dwellings averaged seven residents each, rather more crowded than among Muscatine's blacks that same year, although as in Muscatine the multi-generational household had been

successfully resisted. Sion Bass the elder, for instance, maintained a separate dwelling, as did Sion the younger and T. R. Bass. The augmented household predominated, as in Muscatine. Seven of the settlement's dwellings contained occupants whose surnames were not that of the household head. Only two houses appear to have sheltered more than one married couple each.

Although precise family relationships are difficult to tease from the 1850 census manuscripts, it is likely that family size was the most important demographic difference between the blacks of the Illinois colony and those of Muscatine. We do know that Melinda Bass, for example, married at age twenty-one, gave birth a year later, and averaged a child every 2.6 years through the first thirty-seven years of her marriage to Joel. And herein lay probably the colony's most important problem. In 1850 fourteen of the settlement's children were of the ten-to-nineteen age bracket. As potential candidates for matrimony within a culture that apparently cherished the independent family farm as an ideal, they would soon need to be provided land in a manner that, if possible, would not force them to sever their ties with the community's kin network. In fact, a lack of sufficient farmland already troubled the colony. Twenty male members called themselves farmers or farm laborers in 1850; only six of them owned land. Those who reported real estate valuations to the Illinois census enumerator averaged thirty-eight years of age, while nonowners were substantially younger, averaging twenty-seven. A potentially dangerous socioeconomic fissure had appeared that could only get worse as a rising generation of young persons married within the group. The best solution would be for the colony, or at least a substantial portion of it, to move to a region in which farmland was cheap and abundant.

A frontier preacher, David Watrous, a middle-aged New Englander of the United Brethren faith, provided the catalyst. Although a Caucasian, Father Watrous had once ministered to the Illinois colony and knew of its pressing need. In Iowa he glimpsed the magnificent prairie uplands stretching northwestward from the heavily timbered left bank of the Volga River, and he wrote immediately to his former flock about the local availability of high-quality government land. He urged them to come to Fayette County and see for themselves. In response, Sion Bass the younger, his son T. R. Bass, and a third member of the community, Ben Anderson, traveled west in 1852 to view the possibilities. They liked what they saw and each staked out a claim before returning home. The follow-

ing spring Joel Epps and a young friend, Seymour Wilson, toured Fayette County. Epps at once entered a claim, and both men, as the county's historian puts it, "wrote back for all to come along as soon as possible."

At seventy years of age, Sion Bass the elder evidently felt himself too old to migrate once again, but he gave his blessing to the new exodus. Nearly half the Illinois colony moved west to Iowa. Except for T. R. Bass, none of the migrating adult males had owned property in Illinois. Within three years Fayette County's black settlement sheltered fifty-nine souls, most of them having come directly from the Illinois colony but with a sprinkling from Indiana and other parts of Illinois. All but one of the men were farmers, as in the Illinois colony, the only nonfarmer among them being Sion Bass, the new settlement's blacksmith. In their household arrangements, only one married couple per dwelling was now the norm as well as the ideal. The nuclear house-

Fayette County's black settlement sheltered fifty-nine souls. . . . All but one of the men were farmers.

hold now predominated; only three of the settlement's dwellings contained occupants with surnames different from those of the household heads.

Fayette County's black settlers made up a small minority—less than 4 percent—of Westfield Township's population in 1856. Nevertheless, they soon encountered race prejudice. Strongly antislavery their white neighbors might be; they would, in fact, cast nearly 75 percent of their ballots for the Republican party's first presidential candidate in November 1856. But, testifies the local historian, "the coming among them of these colored people was not looked upon with favor, and there were, at times, various consultations among the [white] settlers to see what had best be done about it." When Seymour Wilson died in a well cave-in, his body was not welcomed at any Westfield Township cemetery. His mourners laid him to rest on his own premises. Thereafter, a wooded knoll on Joel Epps's property became Pleasant Hill Cemetery, the settlement's burying ground, in a self-segregating initiative that helped defuse local racism.

The high value placed by the settlement's adults on the education of their young also helped lessen racial tension. Back in Illinois less than half the colony's adults could read and write, and only four of their twenty-four children of school age had attended classes in 1849–50.

Now Westfield Township's School No. 4, a stone structure standing just down the road from Pleasant Hill Cemetery, was built, apparently designed by a kind of tacit public consent for the exclusive use of the settlement. It thereafter functioned as its school, its church, and the center of its social life.

In the meantime Dred Scott's case finally came before the United States Supreme Court. In March 1857—some twenty years since Dr. Emerson's Sam had sojourned on the brushy flats opposite Rock Island—the justices announced their decision: Dred Scott was still a slave. And since the Founding Fathers had not intended that blacks qualify for American citizenship, Dred had never been entitled to sue for his freedom in the first place. But Dred Scott's fate was of little import in and of itself; the Court's bombshell was its opinion that the Founding Fathers had never granted the United States Congress the right to prohibit slavery in Wisconsin Territory or any other portion of the federal domain. In the words of the elderly Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, the only power conferred on Congress in the matter of slavery in the territories was "the power coupled with the duty of guarding and protecting the owner in his rights."

As the reverberations spread across the nation, most Democratic party spokesmen lauded this "solution" to the divisive issue of slavery in the West. Republicans reviled it as simply another paragraph, by no means the most profound, in a political testament by which the South, in urging the legitimacy of its peculiar institution, condemned itself. "Have you [seen] the decision of the Supreme Court of the U.S. in the Dred Scott case?" inquired Iowa's Samuel J. Kirkwood of another Republican loyalist, state senator Aaron Brown. "It is infamous," Kirkwood added, his pen furiously underscoring the words. He himself took comfort only in a kind of grim conviction that he passed along to Senator Brown: "Well thank God there is a better day coming."

Had Kirkwood been clairvoyant, he might have phrased the thought differently while still holding to the truth of it. Within five years he himself, as governor, would lead Iowans through the appalling first years of the Civil War. His correspondent, Aaron Brown, would be the third man from his county to offer himself to the Union army, and he would rise to command the gallant 3rd Iowa Infantry Regiment in time to lead it into the heart of his native state, Mississippi, until falling—his thigh torn by a gunshot wound from which he never fully recovered—in the great sacrificial charge of Pugh's Brigade into the massed rebel guns defending

Jackson. But Aaron Brown's rendezvous with destiny, like Kirkwood's, lay ahead of him. For the moment, a southern-born, Ohio-bred physician-turned-realtor approaching middle age, he dwelt peaceably with his wife and three children in the village of Fayette, within two miles, as the crow flies, of Westfield Township's black settlement. Among the neighbors Colonel Brown would ride south to represent in the struggle to reform the Union were—fittingly enough—the descendants of Sion Bass.

The citizenship of black Americans, what the high court had denied in the Dred Scott case and what all too many white Americans collectively denied again and again, the individual conscience could not always, even when it tried, deny. In a township just west of Fayette County there lived one Andrew Felt, a local justice of the peace and militant Democrat. Time in the prisoner-of-war pen at Andersonville would ultimately bring a change in him, and dramatically so, but in the late 1850s he remained an outspoken southern apologist who strongly defended the Dred Scott decision, frequently quoting Chief Justice Taney's opinion in the case that blacks "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."

It seems that a black man living in the village of Bradford had his watch stolen by a white neighbor, and he therefore commenced a suit of replevin before Judge Felt to recover the watch. It was a clear-cut case, but counsel for the defense, a lawyer named David Babcock, cleverly moved for a dismissal on grounds that the plaintiff was black and the Supreme Court had ruled that blacks had no rights a white man was bound to respect.

Judge Felt thought that over for a moment or two, then turned to Babcock. "Look here, Dave, that may be good politics," he said, "but Dred Scott decision or no Dred Scott decision, this nigger's going to have his watch." ❖

This article first appeared in the May/June 1982 Palimpsest and served as the basis of the first chapter of author Robert R. Dykstra's Bright Radical Star: Black Iowans and White Supremacy on the Hawkeye Frontier (Harvard University Press, 1993). The author is Professor of History Emeritus at the State University of New York-Albany.

NOTE ON SOURCES

This article is based on data collected from federal and state censuses, county histories and historical atlases, and local newspapers of the period. Other sources consulted include Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in Law and Politics* (New York, 1978); Ruth A. Gallaher, "Slavery in Iowa," *The Palimpsest* 28 (May 1947); and William J. A. Bradford, ed., *Reports of the Decisions of the Supreme Court of Iowa* (Galena, Illinois, 1840). For annotations, see chapter 1 of Robert R. Dykstra's *Bright Radical Star: Black Iowans and White Supremacy on the Hawkeye Frontier* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

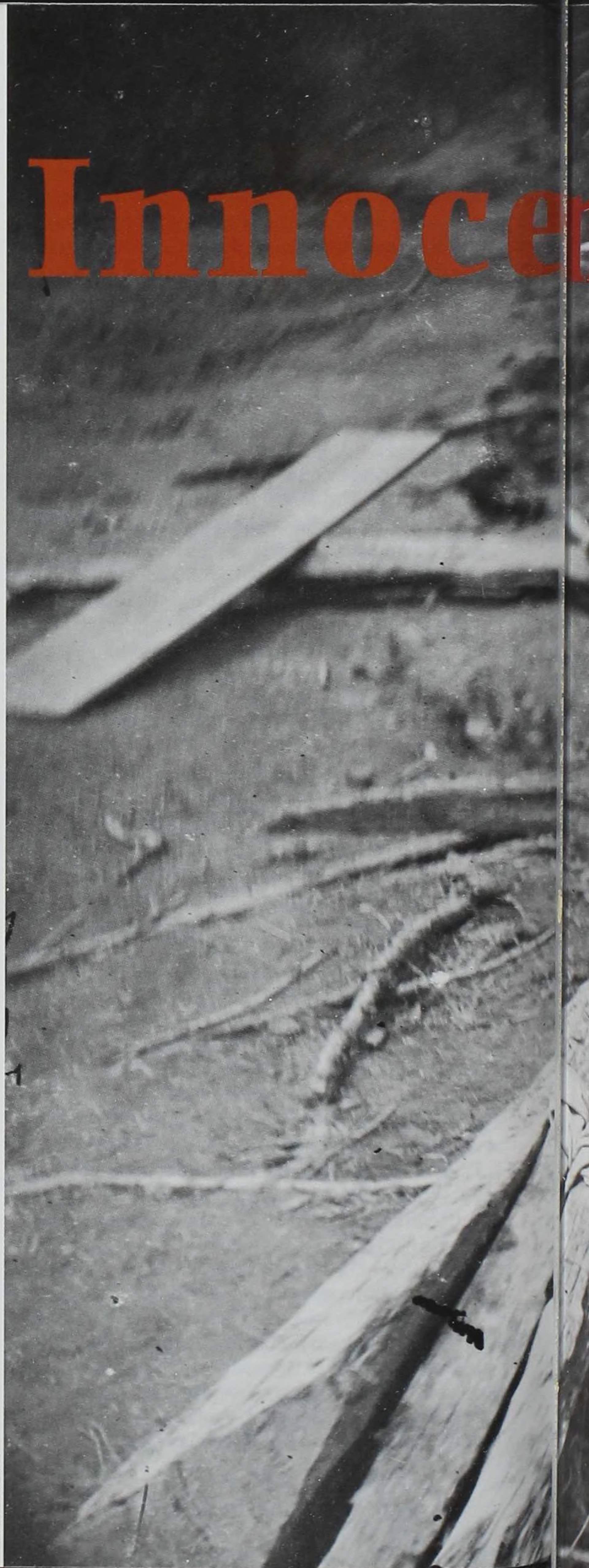
End of Innocence

by Sharon Ham

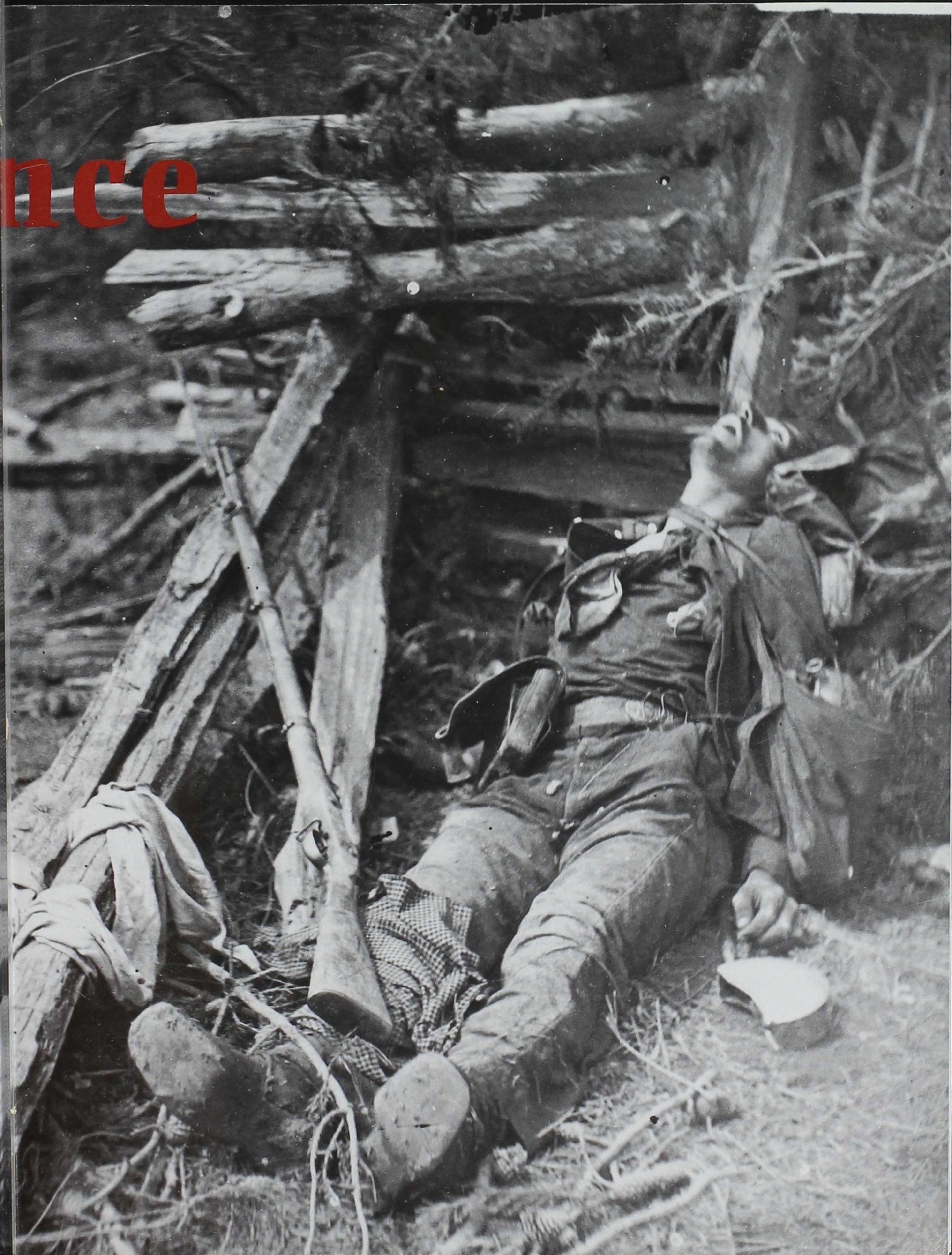
Only one of the nine Iowa boys lasted the war. They had enlisted together in Independence, Iowa back in August, 1861—nine farm boys from Spring Grove, soon to lose their common past on the battlefield near Elkhorn Tavern, Pea Ridge, Arkansas.

Historians describe Pea Ridge as the culminating battle of the earliest campaign on the Civil War's bloody Western Front. In estimates of a battle's tactical importance and historical significance, the image of the individual soldier often fades. If lives are lost in combat, personal histories are too often buried in the discussions that follow. Through the welter of strategy and statistics, perhaps we can recover a part of the fading images of Isaac Arwine, John Cartwright, Isaac N., Stephen, and Vinson Holman, Pierce Walton, William Whisennand, John Leatherman, and Eli Holland.

Their fathers had been drawn to the fertile land of Iowa as theirs before them had been



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Their fathers had been drawn to the fertile land of Iowa as theirs before them had been



drawn to Indiana and Ohio. They brought with them the agrarian values of their ancestors along with a deep religious faith, and they attempted to reconstruct in Iowa the communities they left behind. Soon after their arrival, they hewed farms from the wilderness, gathered themselves into congregations, built schools, and organized township governments, placing their hopes for the future in the families they raised. Partaking of the century-old American pioneer tradition, they brought to Iowa an abiding belief in the sanctity of their nation's Union.

Sometime before 1850, Henry M. Holman joined the mounting exodus from the states of the Old Northwest, bringing his family to Cedar County from Lawrence County, Indiana. That summer he rented a few acres of land in what would become four years later Newton Township, Buchanan County, and raised a log cabin. Son Vinson and his brother found employment making rail fences for a dollar a hundred. Over the next five years, Henry continually added to his farmstead, purchasing 40 acres for \$50 in September, 1852 and adding another 120 acres at \$220 in the next three years.

Within a year of his first purchase, sometime before February, 1853, Henry's brother Nathan, with his wife and children—among them sons Isaac and Stephen—arrived from Indiana. The two elder Holmans—Henry and Nathan—helped to organize the Christian Church on February 26, 1853. In August of '54 Nathan was elected one of the first judges for Newton Township, but like his brother Henry, Nathan's primary interest was in farming. Between May and August of 1855, he paid \$315 for 165 acres of land in Buchanan County.

Andrew Whisennand, Henry and Nathan's brother-in-law, came to Iowa in 1851. For \$145, he bought 80 acres in Spring Grove Township, Linn County and added 40 more in December, 1855 at a cost of \$75. Ten-year-old William, the second son among seven children, was expected to help his older brother feed and watch over the family's few cattle and hogs. Andrew's family probably joined the Christian Church founded by his brothers-in-law. In June, 1853—along with Henry Holman and a man named Long—Andrew Whisennand built a fish-trap dam across the Wapsipinicon River. Recognizing the area as a potential site for a water mill, the three men paid a \$60 entry fee to the Federal Land Office in Dubuque and an additional \$55 for 40 acres. They began operating the mill on September 5, 1855 at the site of present-day Troy Mills. By August of the year before, Andrew Whisennand had already been elected judge of nearby Newton Township at the same time his brother-in-law Nathan was elected.

Daniel Leatherman brought his wife and son to Iowa



COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

John Leatherman was 22 when he left tiny Spring Grove, Iowa, with eight other men for the Civil War. A year later he returned, "his body nearly wasted away."

from Allen County, Ohio around 1852. He first purchased 160 acres in Spring Grove Township for \$100 on January 25, 1853. Just over a year later he bought 20 acres in Newton for the same price. Daniel Leatherman died sometime in 1854, leaving his widow and a 15-year-old son John. After 1856 the boy was living with his mother and her new husband, but by 1860, John had left home to work as a hired man for a neighbor.

Like Leatherman, John Walton emigrated from Allen County, Ohio. He brought his family, including his son Pierce, to a ten-acre farm in Newton Township purchased from Reuben C. Walton, probably a relative who had settled in the area around 1847. In 1853, a Methodist congregation began meeting in Reuben's home, most likely attended by John and his family. In August, 1855 John had paid \$75 for his modest farm; by 1860, he owned real estate valued at \$2,000.

John Holland paid cash for his land, \$750 in February, 1856 for 135 acres in Newton. In April he paid \$250

cash for 75 acres in Linn County. On September 9, he added another 15 acres at \$150, also purchased with cash. Obviously a man of some means, an emigrant from Bedford, Lawrence County, Indiana, probably a Wesleyan Methodist, he brought with him to Iowa his son Eli. The Hollands may well have been related to the Holmans, since Eli—who would become a Methodist minister after the war—referred to an “Uncle Henry Holman” in a letter dated 1912.

The Turner Cartwright family came from Union County, Indiana around 1857. On Christmas of that year, Cartwright paid \$160 for 40 acres in Newton Township. He served as the second postmaster of Newton Center, although the exact years of his service are not known. His son John was about 16 when the family arrived in Iowa.

Isaac Arwine was born in Tennessee. Sometime before 1840, the Arwine family had moved to Lawrence County, Indiana. Isaac came to Iowa alone around 1855, and before the year was out married Nancy Jane Holman, Henry’s daughter. In 1856, Nancy gave birth to a son James. Arwine owned no property or real estate, but according to his great-granddaughter, he farmed with his father-in-law from the time of his marriage till his enlistment in the Union Army. Born on March 29, 1834, he was the oldest of the nine volunteers.

Nine families, whose individual lives were joined by blood, by marriage, by common origin, by shared business interest, and by the community they created from the land and spiritual values they shared, each sent their sons to war. Some died, some were wounded, others fell ill, all lost their innocence.

They came, and settled, and established themselves in the decade before the Civil War. Having only recently become a state, Iowa showed few of the ominous signs of the conflict to come. Its quiet prairies and gentle streams seemed far removed from the impassioned oratory of Washington and Charleston.

Before the outbreak of the War, life in the small settlement of Spring Grove was typical of life throughout

rural Iowa. Religion played a most important part in the day-to-day existence of these pioneers. At least seven of the nine young men fated for combat worshipped in the same church. Isaac, Vinson, and Stephen Holman were regular members of the Christian Church, as was most likely William Whisennand. In 1859, John Leatherman married Matilda Jane Peyton in the Christian Church organized by her father along with Henry and Nathan Holman. Isaac Arwine married regular church-member Nancy Jane Holman. John Cartwright’s father, Turner Cartwright, was a deacon, and in a letter home from the battlefield John referred to Christina Peyton’s prospective husband as “Brother” Huntington.

Fundamentalist in doctrine, practicing total-immersion baptism, with nine the usual age of acceptance, the church was organized along presbyterian lines. Each adult member had a vote on church business, including the choice of a new minister—though there was no real need for an ordained minister since any member was entitled to preach. Members found guilty of offenses against the church, such as swearing, dancing, gambling, and card playing, could be expelled by vote of the congregation. Sometimes, after doing penance, members were reinstated by the congregation.

But the most urgent moral issue of the day—slavery—did not seem a pressing concern for the church members. Nowhere in the letters from any member of the Christian Church—including those written after the start of the war from the Holmans, John Cartwright, and William Whisennand, fighting for the Union—is the cause of abolition championed. More than mere apathy, the lack of abolitionist fervor reveals a moral ambivalence. Stephen Holman wrote to Jane Peyton on August 5, 1862 about the “Damned Abolitionists”: “I will say no more on this, I am getting too harsh on them [slaves] . . . I am very much puzzled in regard to the war and slavery question and will leave that for you to settle.”

Slavery was a concern, however, for the Methodist organization in Spring Grove, founded sometime in 1858 by Charles and Martha Hoover. The Hoovers had withdrawn from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1843 “on account of indifference toward the race of a darker

*“I am very much puzzled
in regard to the war and slavery question
and will leave that for you to settle.”*

color" within that fellowship, and they united with the Wesleyan Methodist Church. The members of the Hoover Church were active in the cause of abolition. In Stephen Holman's letter to Jane Peyton, he commented that "the freeing of the negroes is just what the Hooverites wants." Unlike Holman, Eli Holland, the future Methodist minister, seems to have known what he was fighting for. As he said in a letter long afterward, he had been fighting "to save the nation from the slave ologarchy of the south."

The calm prosperity of the Iowa frontier was shattered when news of the outbreak of the fighting reached the state soon after the attack on Fort Sumter. An editorial in the *Linn County Register* on April 20, 1861 reported that southern forces "are marshalling their hordes in a seditious manner, tearing down our fortifications and offering the greatest insults to our flag." South Carolina had seceded from the Union soon after Lincoln's election; Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, and Georgia followed in January, Texas on February 1. Until the Sumter attack, some still hoped for compromise and conciliation on both sides, but now war had become inevitable.

On April 15, President Lincoln issued a proclamation calling forth the state militias to suppress the insurrection. Reaction to the President's proclamation was immediate. Shortly after the call to arms, the states of the Upper South followed their sister states out of the Union. The *Linn County Register* reported that: "Already some seventy-five persons in the vicinity of Marion alone have signified their intention to volunteer under the call of President Lincoln. We are informed that the same enthusiasm is prevailing at Mount Vernon, Cedar Rapids, and other points in the county."

According to the *Buchanan County Guardian*, the response in Buchanan County was much the same. The enthusiasm grew through the summer of 1861 as numerous editorials continued to call for more volunteers. The July 6 *Register* reported that the Fourth of July celebration in Jackson Township was attended by some 2,000 people from Jackson, Boulder, and Spring Grove. The highlight of the event was an appearance by a "cavalry company seventy strong and one of infantry, fifty-six."

The following month Governor Samuel Kirkwood

authorized Congressman William Vandever to organize the Ninth Iowa Infantry Regiment from the counties of his district under the President's proclamation. Ten companies were to rendezvous at Dubuque in September, there to be outfitted and trained for military service. On August 23, Isaac Arwine, John Cartwright, Isaac N., Stephen, and Vinson Holman, Pierce Walton, and William Whisennand volunteered for three years' service. John Leatherman and Eli Holland followed their example on August 24 and August 27 respectively. Their ages ranged from 17 to 27. Caught up in the enthusiasm for a cause far removed from the daily concerns of their community, the men recruited from Buchanan County left Independence, Iowa by train on August 28, 1861. Some 2,000 people saw them off at the station with a cannon salute and martial medley provided by the Independence Band. There were crowds waiting to cheer them at every station they passed along the route to Dubuque.

On the day the men arrived at Camp Union they were divided into groups of six and supplied with cooking and eating utensils, a double woolen blanket, and a daily candle. A shortage of arms and equipment forced the men to drill with brooms, shovels, or even sticks of wood. A lack of weapons for training was not the camp's only shortcoming. One historian describes the early camps in Iowa as "hastily constructed, with little regard to sanitation." According to the *Independence Civilian*, on the other hand, "Camp Union is considered the best in the state—water is close at hand and everything is convenient." But despite the accolade, Camp Union, like its counterparts throughout the North, was rife with disease. On September 24, Cartwright wrote: "I have been sick for three or four days but I am about well now." On that same day, William Whisennand wrote to his brother that "Vinson Holman has bin sick a few days but his face is not half so long as it was." But for those who escaped illness, camp life was tolerable. John Cartwright wrote to the Peyton sisters: "I am enjoying myself very well at present and have all the time only when I have to cook or march this makes me grin."

*"one of the offalst meanist days I ever saw . . .
there was an inspection of our things but it did not
amount to nothing."*



"Refugees from southern Missouri driven from their homesteads by the Confederates encamped near General Sigel's division at Rolla" (from Frank Leslie's *Illustrated Famous Leaders and Battle Scenes of the Civil War*).

The Ninth left Dubuque September 26 on the steamships *Canada* and *Denmark* for Benton Barracks in St. Louis, where they were to remain for less than a month. The men still had not received weapons when they left Camp Union. On October 6 Cartwright wrote: "We have got our uniform but we have not got our guns yet but we are looking for them everyday." At Benton Barracks the men received "such instruction in military drill as could be given in so short a time." Finally, on October 9, they were issued guns described by one observer as "old muskets, which were undoubtedly in the Revolution, and perhaps have not been shot since." Immediately they were told to report to Brigadier General Harding at Pacific City, Missouri on the tenth. The order read: "They will take their tents with them and rations for ten days."

Ten days became three months. The Ninth camped at Franklin Junction, and its companies were detached to different points in order to guard the railroad between

Pacific City and Rolla. Company C, with the nine boys from Spring Grove, moved just north of the town of Franklin. Sometime in December new guns—the improved Minnie muskets—were issued, and for a while, at least, spirits were raised. But conditions here became no better than at Camp Union. Here, too, men sickened as the result of constant exposure and the unsanitary environment of their temporary camp. On November 21, William Whisenand wrote: "I and [illegible] and Vinson and John Cartrite and John leatherman were all sick at once and we're all at one place." On December 5, he reported: "The boys is all well except Steve holman and Vince holman they have the mumps they have bin in the hospittle 4 weeks to day I came out last Sunday." One-hundred-seventy-five soldiers in the regiment were hospitalized, mostly suffering from measles, mumps, pneumonia, and typhoid. By the end of the year, 17 of them had died and seven had been discharged due to disability.

Anxious to see action, bored by the monotonous duty in miserable weather, Vinson Holman began a diary on January 1, 1862:

"Jan the 1 1862 Was a Stormy day it Snowed Rained hailed froze and blowed

"Jan 6th 1862 was cold and it is colder than I have seen in this State . . . Some five or six of the Boys was taken down with bad Colds or something else."

Vinson wrote repeatedly of "fatigue dity," "filling up ditches," drills and dress parades. On January 8, "one of the offalst meanist days I ever saw . . . there was an inspection of our things but it did not amount to nothing." Camp life no longer made the boys grin.

The first, faint hint of excitement came January 18 when "a Rebel fired on one of the gards but did not hurt him only the gard fired on him in return but didnt hit him." The lust for action was evident in a soldier's letter to the January 18 *Buchanan County Guardian*: "We are hoping . . . we shall hear of a forward movement soon, and I most earnestly trust we shall. Why this backwardness and delay? Are we waiting for disease to thin our ranks and paralyze our energies? Or are we waiting for our enemy to fortify and make themselves impregnable?"

Rumors began to spread about orders to move, and indeed, the regiment broke camp January 21, headed for Rolla, Missouri. The boys from Spring Grove had been together since the day of their enlistment—training together, relaxing together, caring for each other through various illnesses. Now two of them—Pierce Walton and Isaac Holman—had to be left behind in the camp hospital at Pacific City. Walton was ill with dysentery; Holman had suffered a scrotal hernia.

The troops left at 9:00 in the evening, transported by rail, and arrived in Rolla at 4:00 the next morning. The Ninth made camp a half mile south of the town. At dusk, Vinson "took a little tramp up to the Fort and on the hill. It was a great sight to see so many Tents ocipied by soldiers." Three days later, Brigadier General Samuel R. Curtis, commander of the District of Southwest Missouri, inspected the outfit and "pronounced us that Best regiment in the department of Missouri." That evening Vandever came into camp, adding to the general excitement of the rumor they were to leave for Springfield the next day.

Miles away in Springfield, the military situation was this: in December, Confederate Major General Sterling Price, of the Missouri State Guard, had taken the town with his rag-tag troops and was sitting there, awaiting reinforcements from Arkan-



Vinson Holman wrote that Union Brigadier General Samuel Ryan Curtis (above) "pronounced us that Best regiment in the department of Missouri." Curtis, from Keokuk, was elected to Congress in 1856. When the war broke out, he raised the Second Iowa Infantry and was assigned to St. Louis.

sas and Tennessee, reinforcements he could be using to overrun the whole of Missouri he had once held, and take St. Louis. Early in the war, control of the border states was crucial. The *Rolla Express* of January 27 reported Price to have between 8,000 and 10,000 men.

The opposing Union forces, under General Halleck, had been somewhat depleted by sending troops to aid Grant at Fort Donelson and east to join McClellan. Since late December, Curtis had been assembling the "Army of the Southwest" at Rolla to join Halleck and meet Price. That force now consisted of four divisions under Generals Franz Sigel and A. Asboth, and under Colonels Jefferson C. Davis (not the President of the Confederacy, but an officer in the Union Army) and Eugene A. Carr. Colonel Grenville M. Dodge, of the Fourth Iowa Infantry Regiment, commanded Carr's First Brigade, while Colonel Vandever had been given charge of the Second Brigade containing the Ninth Iowa, now commanded by Lt. Colonel Francis Herron.

Curtis's march from Rolla to Springfield began in a miserable rain on January 28. The men marched over rough roads, camped that night in a muddy field, and gathered brush to make beds. Vinson recorded each day's march, a march through alternating snow and rain, until the regiment reached Lebanon on February 5. During the march, Curtis had written to Halleck's assistant adjutant: "The Ninth Iowa has gotten over the worst of the road, having been out in the worst weather. The storms continue, but our men and animals so far bear up with great fortitude and success." According to S. H. M. Byers in *Iowa in War Times*, Curtis spoke to the troops on their arrival in Lebanon: "You have already endured much. You have moved through the coldest and most stormy period of a cold winter and brought your trains and equipment through snow, mud, floods and frosts without a murmur."

For five days the army camped at Lebanon and watched the build-up of troops and equipment for a major campaign. Halleck's desperate situation was made clear in his early February communication to Curtis: "I must leave him to you. I must leave Price to you." Now Curtis was within striking distance, his troops sufficiently strong, and he moved to take the Confederate forces General Halleck had left to him.

At 7:00 AM, February 10, 1862, Colonel Carr's forces, including the Ninth, left Lebanon for the 50-mile march to Springfield. It took them only three days. On the 12th, eight miles outside Springfield, the Union pickets skirmished with the enemy until about 6:00 PM. Hearing the gunfire, Vinson recorded in his diary that his outfit had marched two miles closer to Springfield, and he had spent the night on fatigue duty. After the build-up, Carr entered Springfield the next day only to discover that Sterling Price had evacuated the town.

Instead of trading fire with Rebel soldiers, Vinson found himself at leisure to describe Springfield: "The Town is situated on a nice piece of ground, Some nice Buildens . . . was 4 or 5 nice Buildens Busted in Town tonight. I couldnt hardly find a House that any one was living in—all deserted." The Union troops sporadically vandalized the town, but Vinson did not write that he or any of his friends had participated.

The next morning, February 14, battle-frustrated Eugene Carr began his chase of Sterling Price. He stripped his troops of tents and all unnecessary equip-

ment (which could be transported later by special trains), and with only three days' provisions, headed south. The Third and Fourth divisions, which included the Ninth Regiment, took Telegraph Road out of Springfield, toward Cassville, Missouri. At 10:00 AM they crossed Wilson's Creek battlefield and stopped for the night nine miles southeast of Springfield. They had just begun to make camp, when, according to Vinson, they received word that "Advance gards of the two Armies was Fighting." The troops, then, went another three miles, before they "laid out till morning."

The following morning Carr's pursuing troops came upon Price's deserted camp, finding several hundred huts and "Beef and corn and broken guns and wagons . . . Meet on the fire in the kettles cooking." They were close, very close, and they continued the hunt all day along a trail littered with "broken down Wagon[s] or something of there lost goods." On the third day, the 16th, they passed through Cassville and caught Price's rearguard near Keetsville, at a place called Flat Creek. Two cavalry units and some artillery engaged in a small skirmish, but the infantry, once again, did not see action. At about 3:00 PM on the 17th another skirmish occurred a mile-and-a-half from Sugar Creek, Arkansas. Carr's official report states that Vandever's Second Brigade was involved, but the men of the Ninth probably never reached the fighting. Vinson recorded only that "our advance Gards were fired on By the Rebels and had a short Skirmish . . . but routed them compleatly with but Five killed on our side."

Out of provisions, the Union troops again halted, this time for two days, remaining at Sugar Creek until Sigel's division joined them. During the wait, Vinson walked over the battleground: "I Seen Severl Ded Horses, plenty of Hats and Caps and Blood that the Rebels was Shot and other things that the Rebels lost in thair rappid flight."

Meanwhile, Price had found what he was running toward. In a deep canyon called Cross Hollow, some 12 miles south of Sugar Creek, he, too, stopped, and was joined by Confederate Generals Benjamin McCulloch and Albert Pike. Now Curtis estimated his enemy's strength to be between 20,000 and 30,000 men, but it was probably no more than about 16,000. Curtis himself commanded "12,095 men and 50 pieces of artillery, including 4 mountain howitzers," but since these fig-

*"I Seen Severl Ded Horses, plenty of Hats
and Caps and Blood."*



Union General Henry Halleck commanded the Department of Missouri. His depleted forces were reinforced when Curtis assembled four divisions, including the Ninth Iowa and the nine young men from Spring Grove, Iowa.

ures included the garrisons at Marshfield, Springfield, Cassville, and Keetsville, the actual number of soldiers available to fight in Arkansas was "not more than 10,500 cavalry and infantry, with 49 pieces of artillery," according to his report.

On February 20, the Union troops marched to Osage Springs, flanking Cross Hollow and forcing the Confederates to evacuate. Carr's division occupied the hollow on the following day and renamed it Camp Halleck. General Curtis ordered news of the Northern victories at Roanoke Island, Fort Donelson, and on the Tennessee River be announced "for the encouragement of our troops." He congratulated his men for "their endurance and heroism." They remained at Camp Halleck for just under two weeks. These were the last days of innocence, quiet days spent resting, with an occasional drill. From Vinson's diary:

"Febr 25 drilled in the Manual of arms. there was nothing of any Importance going on in Camp. We all feel fine and in good spirits.

"March 1 we had no drill today. Company fell in and went about three miles to a big Spring and took a wash . . ."

After abandoning Cross Hollow to the Yankees, Price and his Confederate generals encamped in the northern foothills of the Boston Mountains, south of the Union forces. Finding his own position weak in relation to the Confederates, Curtis ordered Union troops to move south of Pea Ridge and just north of Little Sugar Creek—the First and Second Divisions under Sigel and Asboth, and the Third Division under Davis. The Fourth Division, under Carr, he kept with him at Cross Hollow. Spreading the troops out would keep him from being flanked as he had done to Price earlier.

On March 4, Curtis ordered Colonel Vandever to take an expedition toward a small village called Huntsville. His force consisted of "350 of the Ninth Infantry, 150 from Colonel Phelps' Missouri regiment, one battalion of the Third Illinois Cavalry, one section of the Dubuque Light Artillery, and one section of Bowen's mountain howitzers." According to Vinson, March 4 was a "tolerable cold day." The troops began their march on short rations over 18 miles of the "roughest Country that I ever saw in my life" at six in the morning. By nighttime, without tents or shelter, they were miserable. Up at three the next morning, by five they were on the march again, 15 more miles to Huntsville. There they stacked arms and rested for three or four hours before launching forth to take "some Secesh prisoners and horses and two Secesh flags and Started back for our old Camp at Town some 4 miles we hav road back and camped the night without our tents or any Shelter . . . Cold tonight. Provisions very scarce rough time no excitement in camp."

Meanwhile, the Confederate Army, too, had begun to move. At 2:00 in the cold night of March 5, Curtis received word at his Union headquarters in Cross Hollow of the "rapid approach of the enemy to give [him] battle." Immediately, he ordered Sigel, Carr, and Vandever to Sugar Creek. Having spent two full days on a wearying march, Vandever got the order on the night of March 6. The maneuvering, with its long marches, took its toll on the troops. As Vinson recorded: ". . . We got up about three oclock and started about four oclock in the morning and travled all day and went 45 miles over very rocky road . . . Last night a dispatch came. Last night about midnight that old Price has come on to us and our men retreated back twelve miles to Sugar Creek to the Battle ground and we had to go Thoe

*"tolerable cold day. . . roughest Country
that I ever saw in my life"*

made it very hard on us. We at last reached the Camp as tired and Stiff as a foundred horse with the rheumatism . . . there are some excitement in camp. Laid out last night on the ground without no Shelter and Snow and mud on us. We travled all day with out anything to eat only a little mush in the morning. huntry as hungry dogs."

Curtis, worried about Vandever's distance from him, was right when he guessed that the Huntsville "detachment will . . . be in before the enemy can reach me. We will give him the best show we can." He himself arrived at Little Sugar Creek in the middle of the afternoon on March 6, and immediately began preparation to meet the enemy he supposed advancing up Telegraph Road from Fayetteville, without waiting Vandever's arrival. The Third and Fourth Divisions were to form the left line defending Telegraph Road to the southeast of Pea Ridge and the Huntsville road, down which Vandever would come, almost due east from Pea Ridge before turning south.

At the juncture of these two roads, at the furthest eastern edge of Pea Ridge, sits the Elk Horn Tavern. The Union forces stored supplies and held prisoners there. The First and Second Divisions formed Curtis's right along the Leetown Road, running east-west and joining Telegraph Road three-quarters of a mile south of Elk Horn Tavern. Near that junction Curtis made his headquarters. He located the main Union camp another three-quarters-mile southwest and just north of Little Sugar Creek. By that evening Vandever was in, Sigel and Carr present, and all was in readiness to meet the enemy when he entered the Sugar Creek Valley.

But the enemy never entered the Valley. During the night, Major General Earl Van Dorn, now in command of Confederate forces, turned his troops sharply to the west, completely flanking Curtis's right. In the early morning hours of March 7, Curtis learned the enemy was advancing up the road from Bentonville to Keetsville and would be attacking him from his rear. He was trapped. Trapped, with his entire force, between the Rebels at his back and the rugged Boston Mountains dead ahead.

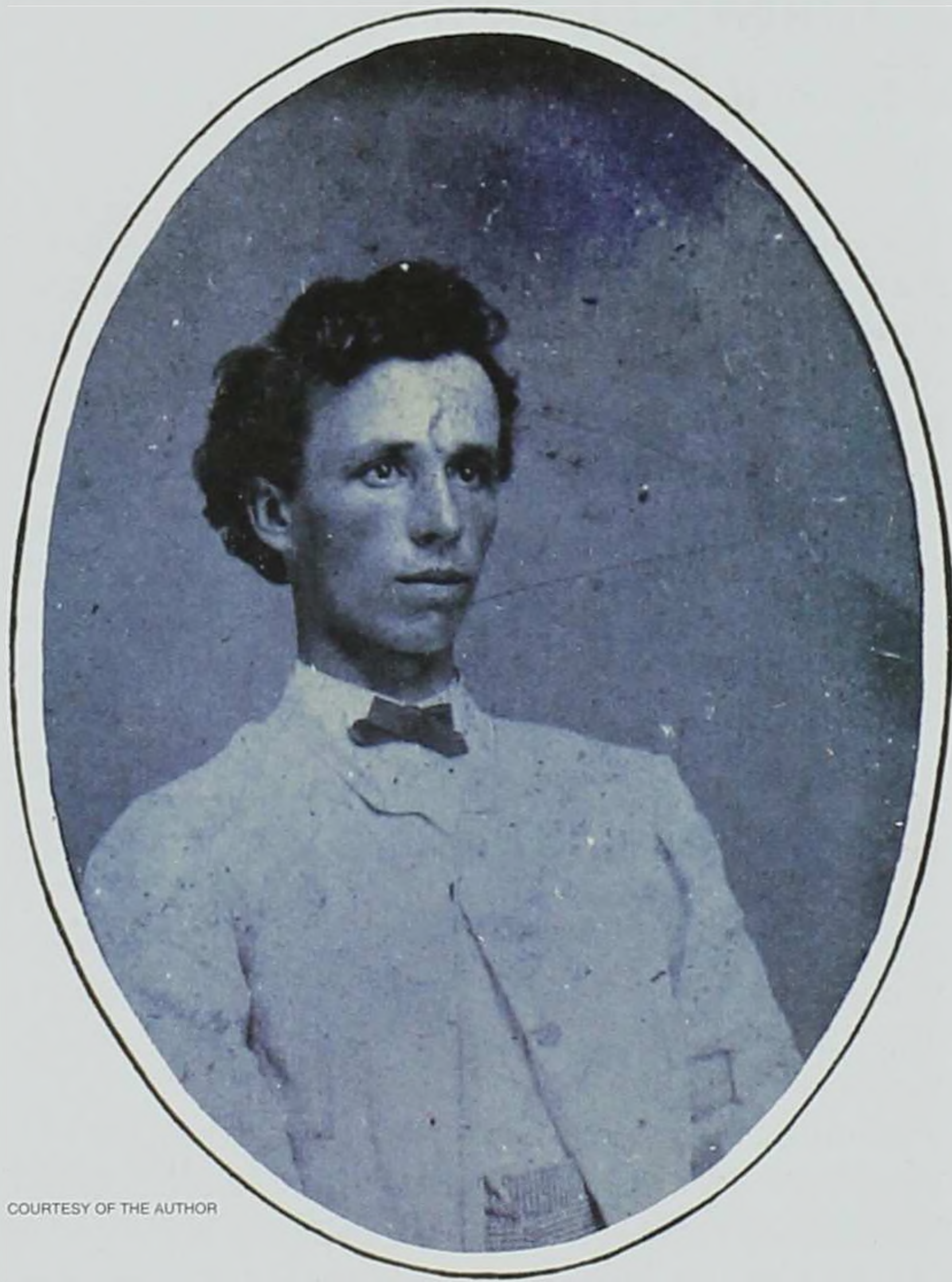
Automatically, Curtis ordered "a change of front to right on my right, my right thus becoming my left . . ." Now, the Union line stretched from Sugar Creek Valley to Elk Horn Tavern. Separated from the rugged hills by

a heavily wooded ravine called Cross Timber Hollow, the northern slope of Pea Ridge became the battleground for Confederate forces under Van Dorn and Price and the extreme Union right, defended by Carr's Fourth Division. West of Pea Ridge in the fields between the Ridge and Leetown Road, the Union left met Confederate troops under McCulloch and Pike after the latter had turned south at Twelve Corners. The waiting was over; the drilling and the marching at last culminated in a major battle; the enemy was engaged.

Carr's First Brigade under the command of Colonel Dodge met the first Confederate charge just east of Elk Horn Tavern. Around 10:00 AM Carr sent Vandever's Second Brigade up to the tavern to strengthen Dodge's left. Vandever set down his artillery "near the main road [Telegraph Road] . . . infantry forming mainly on the left . . ."

During the battle, Carr's brigades bore the brunt of the enemy attack. For nearly seven hours the fighting dragged on around Elk Horn Tavern and out in Cross Timber Hollow. Early in the afternoon Carr called on Curtis for reinforcements. Curtis "urged Colonel Carr to stand firm." He promised "that more force could be expected soon." But troops did not arrive soon. When Curtis discovered mid-afternoon that Sigel and Asboth on Sugar Creek had not been attacked, instead of sending them to Carr's aid, he ordered them to reinforce Davis in the center, and only if they discovered they were not needed there to go on to help Carr on the right. Meanwhile, Carr fought his pitched battle.

His men retired from the range of the Confederate battery, and there was a short lull in the fighting. Then the enemy rushed forward for another "desperate encounter" but failed to drive the Union troops from the edge of the timber they had retreated to and, instead, the Rebels were forced back. This brought another lull, a long one, while the Confederates gathered their strength for a final attack. From the tavern, Union soldiers could not see the Southern troops because of the thick underbrush. But to the right of the tavern, Dodge saw them plainly, saw them moving deliberately forward, setting up their batteries, and outflanking the Northern forces. Still, knowing how important Elk Horn Tavern was, Carr determined to fight it out, despite the heavy losses he had suffered already. The Southerners



COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

These words appear on the back of this image of Vinson Holman: "This is the man mother intended to marry but he died in the war."

charged, "swarming up the road and hollow and through the brush in front. . . ." Carr found it impossible to check the onslaught, the sheer overpowering number of the Confederate forces. He retreated half-a-mile back across the field, rallying along a fence, there finally to meet at 5:00 PM the reinforcements from Curtis he had called for what now seemed ages ago.

They fought till dark. They gained nothing but casualties on both sides. The exhausted troops fell back a few hundred yards from each other, and dropped to rest. The Confederates had taken Elk Horn Tavern and the Huntsville Road. The cost to the Fourth Division for maintaining what ground it did was very high. Of the Spring Grove boys, only Vinson Holman and Eli Holland escaped injury: "Bill Whisennand was wounded in the Sholder. John Cartrite was wounded in the first Charge in the instep. I heard them boath holler at that time. the Second Charge Isaac Arwine was wounded very bad in the Sholder. the Ball entered the

right Sholder and lodged in the left Sholder. now at present he is in very bad misery and is thought that he wont live. He also thinks so himself. he only fired three times till he was Shot. he fell over. Boys retreated back. he looked back saw that we was retreating. he said he thought he would shoot before he started back. he got about half loaded again and ball struck him. he fell. he said he thought he was a dead man. he tried to get up. he made out to get up—Walked about one hundred yards before he got to us. then some of our Men took him to the Hospittle and now at present he is in great misery and has given up ever geting well. the Second Charge Steve Holman was wounded in the thy with a grape Shot made a very large hole. it dont seme to hurt him much. he is in good Spirits and is geting along fine at present. in the Second charge John Letherman was wounded above the ancle broke his leg and its expected that his leg will hafta come off. He is in great pain. Me and Eli Holund is the only ones that escaped a wound although they would blow my hair. There was nineteen of Company C was wounded and two kiled. with our wounded and kiled was half our Company. all fighting ceased about dusk to have a good ready in the morning everything was Silent. This is only a Sketch at that."

Sometime that evening Eli Holland and some others were sent back to the rear for food and coffee. In a letter written January 21, 1912, he described what happened to him: "When we reached the teams we first stopped to see Dr. McClure amputating a limb for some poor boy. But almost immediately the Doctor turned and picked up several canteens and handing them to me told me to go and get water for the poor wounded boys—I did so. But he set me to doing something else and so on till two or three o'clock in the morning. All this time I had not had a bite to eat. I then grabbed my gun and put on the cartredge box and started rapidly for the front but when I had dodged around and got some sixty rods away he called to me to come back. I replied to him I was under detail and must report back to the Co. To this he replied saying, I need you and detail you for duties at this hospital to assist the doctors.

"That settled the matter. You know a doctor in the regiment can detail any man from any company of that regiment when he needs help. His authority is on this line, above any officer. This will help explain to you how I came to be helping with the wounded, and later at Cassville. One thing more—When I went with the Canteens to get water I had to go to Sugar Creek. But for my life I cannot recall a single item, or event connected with filling the canteens and not until I got back to the light of the fires. You know what a march we made on the 6th of 46 miles and then on the 7th in a terrible battle

all day, the nerves strung to the highest pitch. It's no wonder to me that I got that water when I was more asleep than awake and besides it was dark and I had to go 40 rods or more over an unknown road and I believe that after I started with the canteens and got away from the light and from others that I drifted into an unconscious, or somnambulistic state, and filled those canteens all unconscious to myself and did not awake until I came to the light of the fires."

At sunrise the next morning, March 8, the Union artillery opened fire on the enemy. Curtis had moved the First and Second Divisions to new positions just west of the Telegraph Road. The Union line was now continuous and facing the northeast. Under heavy artillery cover the left wing moved forward and began to ascend Pea Ridge. Then, Curtis ordered a general attack. At noon, the Confederate line broke, apparently retreating north up Telegraph Road toward Keetsville. General Sigel pursued them, but it soon became clear that the Confederates had made their escape to the east and south down the Huntsville Road.

During the final advance, Colonel Carr reported, his division "did not come into contact with the enemy." Vinson described the second day: "early in the morning. We marched out to where they was to give them some more pills. which we did Old Segal about eight o'clock opened his Canons on to them. they commenced on us and fought like tigers The Iowa Ninth stood in line all day. They was cut up shamefully the day before. We had orders not to fight any that day without exstreme necessary. We fought on till about noon. then old Price begain to think his days few and scating so he broke ranks and ran like a grayhound and old Segal after him." The battle was over. The Rebels were routed.

How did it happen that the Confederate Army, later famous for its tactical brilliance in the face of overwhelming numbers, now so superior in numbers, lost the Battle of Pea Ridge? To begin with, Generals McCulloch and McIntosh were killed on the first day—March 7—destroying the morale of troops who, like their Union counterparts, were already exhausted by three days of marching on rough terrain with very little to eat. Finally, the Rebels simply ran out of ammunition. On the morning of March 8, Confederate

General Martin E. Green, commander of the Southern supply train, started toward Elk Horn Tavern, but received orders to take his supplies to Elm Springs and await further instructions. This mistake proved disastrous for the Confederates.

But the Union Army paid dearly for its victory. Curtis's troops suffered some 1,300 casualties. Carr's Fourth Division lost nearly twice as many men as any other—682. The Ninth Iowa sustained the highest losses of any regiment on the field—of 560 who went into battle, 218 were reported killed, wounded, or missing, a casualty rate of approximately 40%. Colonel Dodge's Fourth Iowa lost 160, his regiment having fought side by side with the Ninth in the attempt to hold Elk Horn Tavern. The Spring Grove boys had indeed received "the baptism of blood."

For a week following the battle, the Spring Grove boys remained at Pea Ridge. They had grown up together, become soldiers together, and faced battle together. Now they faced suffering and death together. On March 10 Vinson reported that the wounded were being moved to Cassville. "I am still in Camp waiting on Arwine and the Boys that is wounded." Spirits were high in the first exhilaration of victory, but as the days went on, Vinson wrote only of the misery and death around him.

"March 10 There is any amount of legs, arms, Hands lying around in Camp that had to be cut off on account of thair bons being broken . . . I hope to god that I won't have to Witness the same again. it is to horable to think of . . . Still Dying evry day.

"March 11 Men still Dying evry day. evry where is Blood and dead Men. I dont know of any excitement in camp . . . the wounded has nothing to lie on but leaves and rocks and nothing to eat but some Brisket made with water and some coffee without any cream and cornbread not lite. it looks hard for a sick man to eat such victuals but could not be helped—I am going to stay with Steve and Bill and the Boys and take care of them

"March 12 the Doctors are stil taken Legs and Arms off evry day there is no excitement . . . Arwine is in great misery and isent exspected to live."

On March 13 Vinson watched helplessly as his brother-in-law died: "March 13 today about eleven o'clock Arwine died. We laid him on a hard board out of doors and Buried him about three o'clock. We put a cople

"he was very sorry that he could not get home once more but he said it was the fate of war and his time has come and he must go."

*"happiest hours I ever had
was with the Spring Grove singers."*

of blankets around him and put him in a big grave and covered him up. it looks hard but cant be helped. We had no boards to make any kind of a box. there wasent no Man that suffered any more while he lived—his pain was so great that it gave him the lock Jaw—he was in his rite mind all the while—half of his breath came out of the wound on his back—he smelt awfal—it was enough to make any body sick to be around. He wanted the Doctor to give him something to ease him and put him to sleep so he would never wake up again. he said he was very sorry that he could not get home once more but he said it was the fate of war and his time has come and he must go. he got so along towards the last that he could not spit nor swallow on account of the lock Jaw. I dont bleive he would have suffered any more if he had been burnt up."

On March 15 Vinson left for Cassville, Missouri "with Stephen and some more wounded Soldiers . . ." For them the "baptism of blood" continued. Evidence Vinson's angry outburst that day: "We came to Cetsville [Keetsville] that night and stoped for the night and some of the Boys and Steve had to lie in the Waggons all night it is redicklous how Bad the wounded is taken care of perhaps the Doctors wont look at a Man for four or five days . . . We had nothing for the wounded to eat only a little Bread."

When they arrived in Cassville the next day, Vinson noted the wounded had been given 60-day furloughs. On March 17, John Cartwright left for Iowa. He would never reach Spring Grove. On April 26, he would die in Dubuque of gangrene. William Whisennand, Vinson's cousin, did not even make his furlough—he died at Cassville on March 27. The weeks spent watching the death and agony around him took effect on Vinson. He tersely reported Whisennand's death: "March 27 William was very bad all night and suffered great pain. This morning about 6 o clock he Died. We washed him and laid him out and was Buried this evening about three o clock and that was the Last of him. Nothing more today." John Leatherman and Stephen Holman got their furloughs. Wounded, disabled, veterans now, they went home.

The Ninth did not see action again until December, 1862. The troops spent the spring at Cassville, and five months at Helena, Arkansas, while the regiment was brought back to full strength.

The battle at Pea Ridge came six months after the nine boys from Spring Grove had left Dubuque "to whip

the Secesh." At a terrible cost, they had helped to save Missouri for the Union. The fighting on the border of Missouri and Arkansas had left three of the nine dead and three disabled. Isaac Holman and Pierce Walton had not even made it to the battle. Left behind with disabling illnesses, they were finally discharged on May 22, 1862 and April 2, 1862, respectively, without having recovered from their sicknesses. After the furlough, John Leatherman, wounded at the battle, was discharged October 17, 1862, and Stephen Holman, recovering from his wound, rejoined the regiment in July. For him—along with Vinson Holman and Eli Holland—the war continued. Vinson Holman would die on December 7, 1863, in Memphis, after nearly two months of hospitalization for jaundice. Surely, for the five survivors, scarred physically and mentally, life would never be the same.

These young men sacrificed much to go to war. The difficult question is: exactly what led them to volunteer? Their families for the most part followed the usual pattern of migration to Iowa: three came from Kentucky through Indiana; two from Tennessee through Indiana; one from Pennsylvania through Ohio; and one from Vermont through Ohio. Their fathers were small farmers, fairly prosperous ones, able to pay cash for the land they purchased. Only Isaac Arwine emigrated alone and did not buy land. Except for Pierce Walton, and possibly Arwine, they were all literate.

We do not know what political party their fathers belonged to, but they all migrated from historically Democratic areas. Lawrence and Union Counties in Indiana and Allen County, Ohio usually produced heavy Democratic pluralities until 1865. Some members of the Holman family had been and continued to be active in Democratic politics back in Indiana, but if either Henry or Nathan Holman was a Democrat, he certainly was no active Democrat. These families came to Iowa during times of momentous political ferment in the country and in the state. They witnessed the birth and rapid growth of the Republican Party. By the spring of 1858 Spring Grove Township had already given its "usual majority to the Republican cause." Newton Township moved more slowly into the Republican column. The Democrats received a small majority of the votes in the October, 1858 election, but the Republicans changed that

a year later, winning by an almost equally small majority. In 1860 both townships returned Republican majorities—by 21 and 26 votes, respectively.

Existing letters and Vinson Holman's diary show how large a part religion played in Spring Grove life and how strong was the feeling of community among the people. With no major town in the area to draw them together, the churches provided the one sure community bond. Before, during, and after the war, the community's young people met on Sunday evenings at the Christian Church to sing. On February 23, 1863, Vinson Holman wrote to his cousin, Nathan Whisennand, about a "singing Fesst" in Spring Grove: "you must keep up that golden sircle Till we all git Back There Then we will kill the fated calf." Stephen Holman wrote that the "happyest hours I ever had was with the Spring Grove singers." William Whisennand wrote to his brother and sister-in-law from Camp Union that he wished he could be there to hear the Sunday preaching. But perhaps it is what the young soldiers do not write that is most telling. None of the boys mentions any of the activities usually associated with young soldiers away from home for the first time—gambling, drinking, womanizing. Throughout most of the Pea Ridge campaign supplies were short, but at no time did Vinson write of stealing anything, even from the enemy.

Abolition, the burning moral issue of the 1850s when these young men arrived in Iowa, would have been kept constantly before them by growing conflict between the Republican and Democratic parties. The presence of the Hoover Church, whose members were active abolitionists, may have influenced some of the men. Strong condemnations of slavery appeared often in area newspapers. Editor J. Rich, in the first issue of the *Quasqueton Guardian*, December 13, 1856, announced the paper would be "devoted to the interests of the Republican Party" whose "fundamental principle, non-extension of Slavery, is a principle of Right and justice, and must Triumph." Rich hammered away at this theme for nearly two years in Quasqueton, and continued to do so when he moved the paper to Independence in 1858 and renamed it *Buchanan County Guardian*. The *Cedar Valley Times* and the *Linn County Register* also supported the Republican Party and opposed slavery. An editorial in the *Register* on April 20, 1861 urged all able-bodied men to take up arms against "... the gigantic sin of slavery

holding, before which all other sins pale in comparison." Such editorial appeals were couched in a moralistic language designed to stoke righteous fires. Attacks on Republican "nigger-lovers" in the area's two Democratic papers—the *Independence Civilian* and the *Cedar Rapids Democrat*—seem tame by comparison.

How each of the nine young men responded is a purely speculative question. As we mentioned earlier, with the exception of Eli Holland writing of saving "the nation from the slave ologarchy" years after the war, the cause was never mentioned favorably in either their letters or Vinson's diary. In truth, most references to the Blacks are negative. In a letter dated August 5, 1862, Stephen Holman wrote bitterly of the "40,000 contrabands" now following the army. He says: "... we could of had the money that has been expended for there support and armed more troops." The only trace of simple acceptance of abolition appears in a letter Holman wrote in response to Jane Peyton on September 1, 1862: "You spoke of the Negroes. I have a few words to say. I endorse your sentiment but I fear they will get up north."

During the 1840s and '50s many people in the North, especially in the Northwest, opposed slavery not out of sympathy for the slaves, but because the expansion of slavery threatened their dream of acquiring western land. They thought the small, independent producer the backbone of the nation, and they feared the expansion of slavery would force the small farmer out of business. The Free Soil movement reached its peak in the years immediately before the war and might well have influenced these young men, coming as they did from pioneer families who had been moving ever westward.

In light of their own words, however, the principal reason they went to war seems to be their belief in the sanctity of the Union. William Whisennand wrote on October 25, 1861: "I am Determin to keep that Star Spangled banner whear it has stood . . . if I see that the Stars and Strips are to fall I am willing to put all the help to the assistance that is in my power . . . this is whear all true hearted men will stand that is willing to come out and do servis for his Country"

Stephen Holman wrote on May 3, 1863: "I am waiting impatiently to get revenge for the men they have

"I am Determin to keep that Star Spangled banner whear it has stood . . . this is whear all true hearted men will stand"

killed of ours But I will not say get revenge this is what is carrying on this war I hope there will be no more getting revenge and Retaliation But united on one word the Union Forever."

In his letter of January 21, 1912, Eli Holland wrote about his experience at Pea Ridge for "your [John Leatherman's] children and grandchildren and [to] give them an idea what it all ment to save the nation from the slave ologarchy of the south and preserve the union and the old flag from dishonor." In two other letters he wrote of "remaking and redeeming the Republic."

The first page of Vinson Holman's diary offers the following evidence:

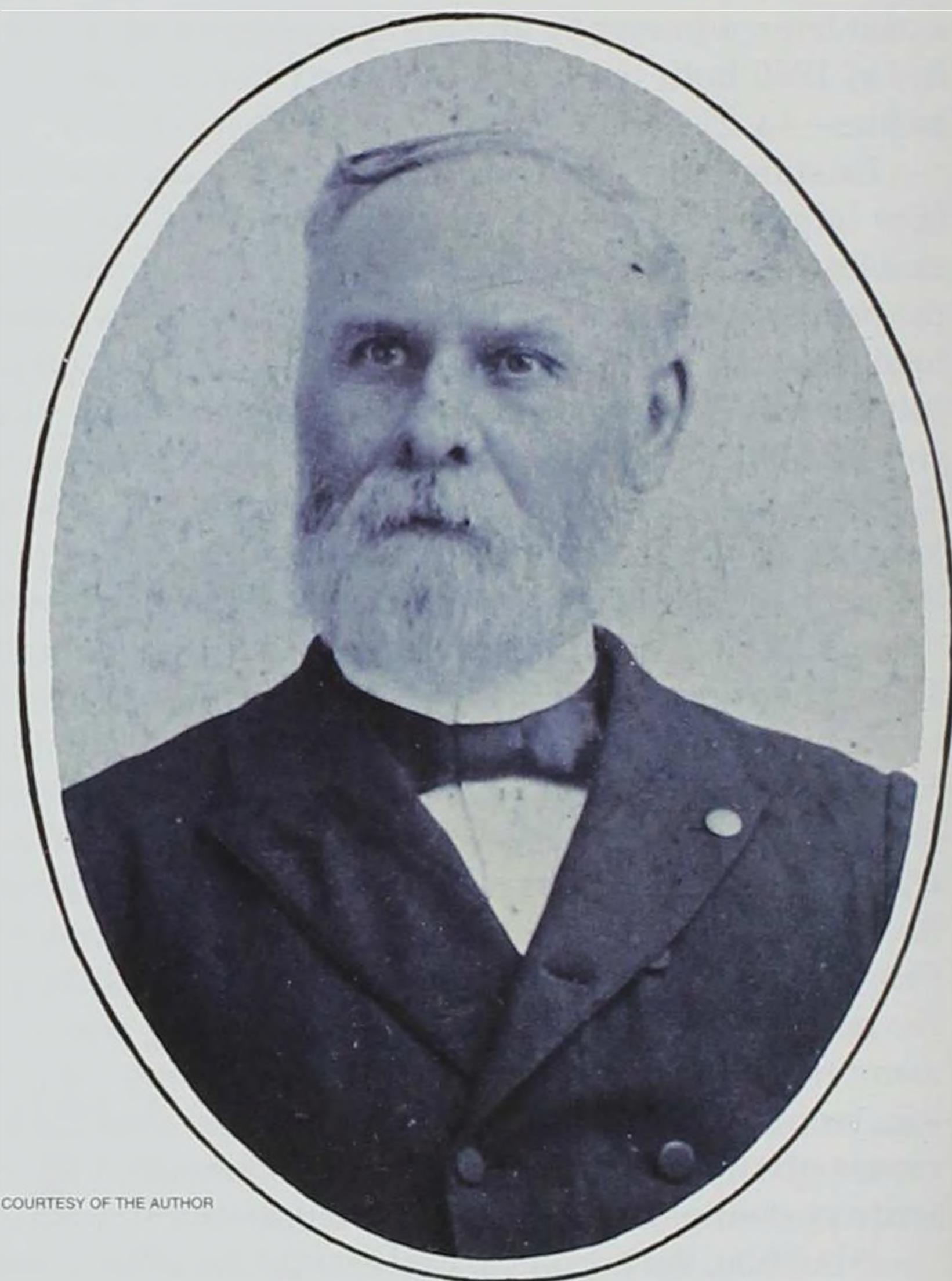
The Star Spangled Banner
O Say can you See
By the dawns early light
What so proudly we hailed
At the twilight or last gleaming
Whose red Strips and bright Stars
This is My moto
Forever it shal Wave O
Them

On the second page Vinson described his feelings in the strongest possible way:

The War for the Union
That flag is our Liberty
For ever it shal Stand
Long as the Blood flows in these
Arms of mine.
That is the Star Spangled Banner
Them Strips I have fought under
And may I do it again.

For that reason, to preserve the Union and the nation they loved, nine Iowa boys left their families, their friends, and the security of their homes in the fall of 1861. True, for the five who returned, life would never again be the same, but surely they also had the great satisfaction of knowing they had accomplished what they set out to do.

Soon after the end of the war, the five survivors were reunited in Spring Grove. Pierce Walton, the first to return, in April, 1862, had attempted to enlist in the Ninth Iowa Cavalry, but was rejected because of his poor physical condition. Toward the end of the war, he was drafted into the 15th Iowa Infantry Regiment, but served only two weeks on active duty in Georgia before a recurrence of his old injury forced him into the hospital.



COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Eli Holland, age 55, three decades after the Civil War. As a Methodist minister in Kansas, he stayed in touch with his comrade soldiers from Spring Grove.

He was discharged on June 2, 1865. Back in Spring Grove once more, he went to work on his father's farm. In February of the following year, he married Louisa Ramsey Holland, Eli Holland's widowed sister-in-law.

Like his friend and comrade before him, Isaac Holman came home to the family farm and married soon after his discharge in 1862. In October, 1865 he bought 80 acres in Newton Township and settled down to raise his growing family.

John Leatherman had come home in the fall of 1862, his body "nearly wasted away." For several months he remained bedridden at his mother's home, but like Pierce Walton, he was anxious to return to the war. After working as a hired man in the Spring Grove area for nearly a year, he enlisted in Company D of the 47th Iowa Infantry Regiment in May, 1864, served his 100 days, and was mustered out September 28, 1864. For years, he continued to work as a farm laborer, before he got married January 1, 1869.

While home on leave in the spring of 1864, Stephen Holman married Mary Emma Curtis and soon afterward bought a 40-acre tract in Newton Township from his parents. In September of that year his enlistment was up, and he did not choose to re-enlist, perhaps because of his marriage, perhaps because the war and the deaths of his friends and his relatives had become too much for him. As early as July, 1862, he had written: "I and Vince [Holman] has had a good time since I got back . . . we do not enjoy ourselves as when all the Spring Grove boys was with us." In the same letter he says he has "lost all hopes the war closing soon." Nearly a year later he wrote from Vicksburg: "I have stopped most all correspondence where I once lived in happyness Springgrove forsaken a great many of my true friends and been forsaken." In describing the fighting around Vicksburg he wrote: "there war only 27 of that Company of us that left Independence in the Battle and there was Eight of them killed and wounded." In the fall of 1864 Stephen Holman came home for good.

At war's end, Eli Holland was the only Spring Grove boy left in Company C of the Ninth Iowa Infantry. Now deaf in one ear, Eli came home sometime in late 1865 or early 1866, having worked in Chicago for some months after his discharge "caring for some sick comrades and taking them by street cars to or near the depot." In Independence, on July 1, 1866, he married Anna Sargent. The last home, he was the first to leave. In July, 1867, he buried his young wife in Paola, Kansas. Eli Holland spent the rest of his life as a Methodist minister in various Kansas towns, but he never lost touch with his old friends in Spring Grove. He carried on a life-long correspondence with John Leatherman, and he returned at least once, in August of 1899, for a reunion of the old Ninth.

Gradually the settlement known as Spring Grove disappeared. By the 1870s two small towns had grown up to take its place—Troy Mills and Walker. Very soon Spring Grove would be no more than a township name in Linn County and a pleasant memory for five men who had grown up there together. Whether out of a desire for more or better land or whether the age-old desire to move West came upon them, the men began to leave their homes much as their fathers had left Indiana and Ohio for Iowa. The old ties were slowly broken. In 1875 Isaac Holman's wife died. Six months later he remarried and moved his family to a farm near Center Point, Iowa. Sometime in 1877 the family moved to Monona County in far western Iowa.

In 1880 Pierce Walton took his wife and eight children to Davis County, Kansas, where he spent the rest of his life. Sometime in 1883 Stephen Holman with his

wife and three sons moved to the Dakota Territory. Of the nine who had gone off so proudly together, only John Leatherman remained. He died in Troy Mills on November 26, 1912.

They had come together to a new land in the decade of the 1850s. They had felled the timber, plowed the fields, worshipped their God, and helped build a community together. The heritage of America was very deeply a part of them with roots going back to before the Revolution. When war came, threatening the nation they loved so dearly, they did not hesitate to volunteer—they did not hesitate to fight and die for their country. After the war, the survivors slowly drifted apart, but surely each one carried his memories of a place called Spring Grove and of the friendship between nine young men who had boarded a train together on a hot August day in 1861 with the sounds of a brass band and the cheers of their neighbors ringing in their ears. ❖

This piece first appeared in the May/June 1979 Palimpsest. Its author, Sharon Ham, received an M.A. in history from the University of Iowa.

NOTE ON SOURCES

Many sources have entered into the preparation of this article. Among the primary materials consulted, the diary of Vinson Holman, and the letters of the Holmans, John Cartwright, Eli Holland, Dick Peyton, Absalom Peyton, Micajah Peyton, and William Whisennand have been most important. Additional primary sources include military records, pension records, county land and marriage records, state and federal census records, and church records of the Disciples of Christ Church, Troy Mills. Contemporary newspapers were consulted, and personal interviews with Mr. and Mrs. Walter Baty, Mr. Ross Cherry, Mrs. Lowell Dudley, Mrs. Donal Graham, Mrs. Dean Hoover, Mr. Emory Melton, Mrs. Ethel Schantz, and Mrs. Wilma Walton proved very helpful.

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An annotated version of this article is on file at the State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City).

Suffragists, Free Love, and the Woman Question

by Diana Pounds



*"There is something revolting and unwomanly
in this uproar and clamor for the ballot."*

Letter to the editor, *Daily Iowa State Register*,
October 26, 1871

In the pages of Iowa's newspapers of the 1870s, they were cheered as society's best class of women. They were jeered as ugly old maids and floozies. And they were feared as emasculating radicals out to destroy the happy American home. They were woman suffragists and they burst into the limelight and the headlines in the winter of 1871/72.

It was indeed news when proper nineteenth-century ladies, quiet homebodies for so long, began noisily to demand the vote along with other rights—such as the right to good jobs and educations. Among the newspapers closely following the activities of the reformers were the Des Moines *Daily Iowa State Register*, the *Dubuque Herald*, and the *Burlington Hawk-Eye*. During the winter of 1871/72, as Iowa suffragists pushed their campaign for the ballot, the three newspapers printed hundreds of articles about suffrage as well as other women's rights issues.

From the suffragists' standpoint, however, the press coverage left something to be desired. While suffragists got some good press, many news stories painted most unflattering pictures of the women who wanted to vote. The intensity of the anti-suffrage sentiments suggests much more was at stake in nineteenth-century America than the mere depositing of a feminine vote in a ballot box. A likely explanation for the strong negative reaction to the suffragists is that both the press and the public viewed woman suffrage as a threat to

a way of life, to the very traditions held dear by nineteenth-century Americans.

Iowa suffragists were certainly bucking tradition when they went after the vote in the 1870s. No state in the Union had yet granted women the right to vote, but things looked promising for would-be female voters in Iowa in the winter of 1871/72. The previous year, the Iowa General Assembly had passed a resolution to amend the state constitution, giving women the right to vote. Two hurdles remained. The same resolution had to be passed by the 1872 General Assembly. Then it needed the approval of voters in a general election.

Iowa suffragists, sensing a good opportunity to lead the way to the ballot box, mounted a heavy campaign to persuade both lawmakers and the public that women should have the vote. Nationally known suffragists lent a hand. During the summer of 1871, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, on a cross-country speaking tour, spent three days in Des Moines. Iowa suffragists hoped to further their cause at the first state convention of the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association in Des Moines in October.

Much of the discussion of the suffrage issue was carried on in the newspapers. Readers of the Des Moines *Register*, *Dubuque Herald*, and *Burlington Hawk-Eye* had

Right: Illustration from L. P. Brockett's *Woman: Her Rights, Wrongs, Privileges, and Responsibilities* (1870).



THE WIFE AND MOTHER AT A PRIMARY,



THE FATHER STAYS AT HOME, ATTENDING TO THE CHILDREN.



The “woman’s sphere” in the nineteenth century was the well-ordered home in which children were raised, husband was comforted, and morals were maintained. Because women were considered pure and pious, these duties fell to them. Above, “QUEEN OF THE FAMILY. The most important office in the world” from *Woman: Her Rights, Wrongs, Privileges, and Responsibilities*.

good exposure to arguments of both suffragists and their opponents as they debated what was often referred to as the “woman question.” Although the woman question ostensibly referred to the question of whether women would be allowed to vote, there was considerably more to it than that for many nineteenth-century men and women. In addition to the ballot, some women were pushing for other rights—better educations, jobs outside the home, wages comparable to men’s, and more liberal divorce laws. While some Victorians—both men and women—favored giving women more freedom and opportunities, others worried that such actions would destroy the family. They feared that women with the political clout of the ballot, good educations, and a chance at well-paying jobs no longer would be willing to stay home and be good mothers and wives.

Nineteenth-century women lived in the straitlaced era of England’s influential Queen Victoria and were expected to abide by a restrictive set of Victorian traditions that tended to subjugate women to men. Such traditions reflected Victorian society’s attitudes about the

sexes. Preachers pointed to passages in the Bible, instructing women to obey their husbands. Scientists maintained females were both physically and intellectually inferior to males. And doctors claimed women were creatures of passion rather than reason because they had smaller brains and more finely developed nervous systems. Women were neither expected nor encouraged to get as much education as men. Some believed too much education could damage a woman’s reproductive organs.

While Victorians doubted that woman could compete with man physically or mentally, most agreed she bested the male of the species in spirituality. Woman was believed to be naturally pure, pious, and sexually prim. It supposedly was easy for her to be good, because she was simply built that way. Because of her innate righteousness, woman was put in charge of her family’s morality. Just as it was her duty to keep a nice home, it was her duty to raise upstanding children and set a good example for the rest of the family.

Woman’s place was so well defined in nineteenth-

century America that there was a special phrase for it—the “woman’s sphere.” A proper nineteenth-century American woman operating within the confines of this sphere conducted herself purely and demurely at all times, got just enough schooling to become a good wife and mother, and worked within the home. Her primary task was to turn her home into a quiet haven where man could recuperate from the stresses and chaos of the outside working world.

The image of the ideal Victorian lady was a powerful one for nineteenth-century Americans. Magazines, books, and newspapers reinforced the tender picture of the genteel lady, happy in her proper sphere, making a warm home for her husband and children. “A neat, clean, fresh-aired, sweet, cheerful, well-arranged house exerts a moral influence over its inmates,” the *Dubuque Herald* enthused in one news story.

Many who opposed woman suffrage feared the vote would destroy this Victorian ideal, dragging her down into the dirty world of politics and somehow causing her to lose interest in taking care of her home and her children. Suffragists attempted to refute such arguments, maintaining their allegiance to home, family, and traditional nineteenth-century morality. But it was difficult business. While the Victorian lady was portrayed as pure, feminine, and submissive, the suffragist was sometimes tagged as masculine, ugly, and domineering—or at least likely to become so if she got the vote.

Articles in the three Iowa newspapers reveal a recurring debate about whether women would be soiled by contact with the dirty world of politics. “Throw women into the political arena and some of the fairest features of their moral superiority will be exposed to a rude and perilous test,” a *Register* article quoted author Carl Benson.

Another oft-expressed fear was that politics would make women more masculine. Typical is this Des Moines *Register* item: “A writer in the *Woman’s Journal* ‘hopes we may never get over the feeling that a woman is made to be gentler than man.’” In another *Register* story, the *St. Louis Christian* complained about “feminine men, husbandly wives, paternal mothers, matronly lawyers, delicate doctors, dowager divines, statesladies, city mothers, alderwomen, bearesses and bulleses in Wall street” who were “determined to see the universal petticoat wave triumphantly over a subjugated world.”

It was but a short step, in some minds, from the macho female voter to the macho female voter bossing her henpecked husband. Such imagery is evident in a

Register account of a woman who pressured a poll clerk into taking her vote during a New York election: “Mrs. Muller, being no joke in physique, the clerk didn’t care about telling her that he could not take her vote. The policemen around giggled. . . . She went home and informed her weaker half, who, in turn, went to the polling place and deposited his vote, no doubt on the same ticket.”

In addition to masculine females and overbearing wives, suffragists were sometimes portrayed by their detractors as “old maids.” An example of such sniping is this *Register* account of a Connecticut suffrage meeting: “At the late woman suffrage meeting at Trumbull, Connecticut, all ladies in favor of the movement were requested to rise, whereupon one old maid responded—the last rose of summer.”

Suffrage supporters sought to counter arguments that woman suffragists would change women for the worse or damage traditional family life. A *Burlington Hawk-Eye* article quoted Philadelphia suffragists who maintained that woman suffrage would bring “greater purity, constancy and permanence in marriage.”

Suffragists also appealed to democratic ideals. Women have a right “to a direct voice in the enactment of those laws by which they are taxed and the formation of that government by which they are governed,” the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association declared in an article submitted to the *Des Moines Register*, *Dubuque Herald*, and *Burlington Hawk-Eye*. Denying women the vote “is unjust, unconstitutional and a direct insult and wrong to more than one-half the entire population of the United States.”

All three Iowa newspapers gave considerable space to those on both sides of suffrage and women’s rights during the fall and winter of 1871/72. Both editorialists and letter writers had the chance to have their say:

“The only logical reason that sustains the right of man to vote is equally applicable to woman,” a *Hawk-Eye* editorialist wrote.

“Let us . . . speed the day when America shall become the first Republic, i.e., a government of the people, for the people, by the people,” wrote well-known suffragist Lizzie Boynton Harbert in a *Register* letter urging Iowans to attend the state suffrage convention.

Those of the religious persuasion often attempted to interpret God’s position on women’s rights, and several *Des Moines Register* letter writers brought the Almighty into the woman question.

“God made man, and woman also, to be active and useful, and it was never meant that there should be any line drawn as to their privileges and rights—the woman is equal to the man and should have the same rights

—social and legal,” letter writer James Ellis wrote.

“You may look at this matter in whatever light you will,” wrote one anti-suffragist, “but simmer it down, and it is but a quarrel with the Almighty that we are not all men.”

Des Moines *Register* editor James Clarkson seemingly could not quite decide where he stood on the issue of woman suffrage. On October 18, 1871, the first day of Iowa’s first statewide suffrage convention, Clarkson asked Iowans to “give serious consideration to the importance” of the convention and praised Iowa suffragists as some of “our best educated and better class of people” who “seek to give to women, as to men, the right to vote, securing for all citizens alike that equality of rights which all citizens should have.” A few days later, Clarkson again praised the women at the convention for their good sense, dignity, and intelligence. “We have never seen a Convention conducted with more decorum or a greater degree of intelligent accord,” he pointed out in an editorial. “All who attended it were impressed with the conviction that its

SHSI (IOWA CITY)



James Clarkson, *Register* editor, praised Iowa suffragists in October 1871. By the new year, he had changed positions and opposed woman suffrage.

SHSI (IOWA CITY)



Des Moines suffragist Annie Savery tackled difficult questions, such as whether women should be soldiers and officeholders.

members were earnest and honest, and could see that they were intelligent and well armed.”

For suffragists, the October editorials were perhaps the high point of *Register* coverage of their winter campaign for the vote. Shortly after this initial show of support for the suffragists, Clarkson apparently began to have second thoughts. In a January 21, 1872, editorial, Clarkson offered several arguments against woman suffrage. It provoked a response from a leading Des Moines suffragist, Annie Savery, and the editor and the suffragist were soon engaged in an editorial-page battle. The two crossed swords—or pens, in this case—in what came to be known as the “woman warrior question.” Clarkson editorially maintained women should not be allowed to vote because they could not be soldiers. “Women, while they could and perhaps would use the ballot, in bringing war on, could not and would not use the sword after war had come,” he pointed out.

Taking a swipe at Civil War draft dodgers, Savery

replied: "If the laws compelled all who vote, to perform what is voted for, voting, I imagine, would soon be at a discount, and all those who now claim that special privilege, would doubtless avoid the polls, as they did the draft office during the war!" Savery added that, if necessary, "there could doubtless be found" women "willing to carry the musket."

Clarkson countered by pointing out that "the peculiar organization of woman makes it impossible for her to be a soldier" and "the world's several thousand years of history proves it."

From the woman warrior question, Clarkson and Savery moved on to the issue of women officeholders. Clarkson maintained that once they got the vote, women would want to hold office. The editor worried that women could not hold office and properly care for their families. Few women could satisfactorily meet "the duties of office and the duties of maternity," Clarkson wrote.

Few women would seek office under such circumstances, Savery replied in a letter to the editor. However, should a woman find herself in such circumstances,

Savery asked Clarkson if he would "make a new rule for her not now applied to men, for is it not quite common for incompetent men to hold office?"

Because Clarkson's editorial battle with Savery came just three months after he had kicked off the statewide suffrage convention with glowing reports, Iowa suffragists now found themselves on the defensive, fighting with Clarkson and others they had counted as friends. What happened in those ninety days to so turn things around? Some blamed a public relations disaster that hit the suffrage movement hard in the early 1870s. This disaster came in the form of an attractive, eloquent woman reformer with a flair for bad publicity—Victoria Woodhull.

When Woodhull joined the national suffrage movement in the early part of 1871, she brought publicity, fire, and money to the cause. She also brought an unsavory reputation that would haunt the movement for years. For Iowa suffragists, the haunting began in the winter of 1871/72, when



Contending her constitutional right to vote, reformer Victoria Woodhull is ejected from New York City polls in late 1871.

news of Woodhull's "wild" lifestyle began to appear in Iowa newspapers. In light of her upbringing, it is little surprise that Woodhull had some problems fitting into the mold of the modest and demure Victorian lady.

Born Victoria Claflin in 1838 in Homer, Ohio, she spent her youth wandering the Midwest with her family, a shiftless group that told fortunes, held seances, sold alcohol-laced "cure-all" potions, and, it was rumored, ran an itinerant house of prostitution.

By the early 1870s, Woodhull and her sister Tennessee Claflin were living in New York City. With the help of wealthy financier Cornelius Vanderbilt, they had become Wall Street's first female stockbrokers and launched a daring weekly journal—*Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*. The journal advocated numerous reforms, such as socialism, licensing of prostitutes, and sexual freedom.

A strong suffragist, Woodhull also supported the "free love" movement, which advocated open sexual encounters between willing partners. Although national suffrage leaders had misgivings about Woodhull's free-lover reputation, her energy and eloquence won them over and they welcomed her into the movement. Rumors about Woodhull's wild lifestyle, however, gained credence in May of 1871 when her own mother testified in a police court hearing that Woodhull was sharing her New York mansion with "the worst gang of free lovers" that "ever lived."

The subsequent scandal created headlines and shock waves throughout the eastern press, and then headed west. For Iowa suffragists, it hit home at the worst possible time—just as they were gearing up for their October 1871 state convention. To the Iowa suffragists trying to focus attention on their convention and the ballot during the winter of 1871/72, it must have seemed at times that the Des Moines press was interested in nothing but "the notorious Mrs. Woodhull." From October 1871 through January 1872, the three Iowa newspapers printed nearly seventy articles about Woodhull or the free-love movement she espoused. A lively combination of sex, scandal, and suffrage, Woodhull would have been hard for any editor to resist. The dull, gray columns of the Des Moines *Register* now fairly sizzled with Woodhull's fire in a November account of a boisterous speech she gave in New York. In one notable passage, the *Register* printed Woodhull's defiant reply when a heckler at one of her lectures shouted the question: "Are you a free lover?"

"Yes, I am a free lover," Woodhull responded to loud hisses. "I have an inevitable, constitutional and natural right to love whom I may, to love as long or as short a period as I can, to change that love every day, if I prefer,

[renewed hisses] and with that right neither you nor any law . . . have any right to interfere."

The free-love issue unleashed a storm of controversy about the wisdom of giving women the vote, and Iowa suffragists suddenly found themselves guilty by association with a free lover who lived hundreds of miles away. One of the first shots in the press was fired by anonymous letter writer "R.W.T." of Four Mile Township. In a lengthy letter to the editor of the *Register*, R.W.T. pointed out Woodhull's "poisonous sentiments" were fast "being imbibed by suffragists," then added, "there is something revolting and unwomanly in this uproar and clamor for the ballot, and demanding all of men's so called privileges—free love not excepted." "Are we to infer," sniped the *Dubuque Herald*, "that the women's suffrage convention of Iowa is to be run as a kind of branch of Mrs. Woodhull's?"

Free love—not suffrage—had suddenly become the issue in the Iowa press. Iowa suffragists found themselves again on the defensive, trying to allay fears that the ballot would turn women into promiscuous, marriage-spurning free lovers. Some local woman-suffrage organizations scrambled to pass resolutions disavowing free love. The Polk County suffrage association, via the Des Moines *Register*, felt it necessary to publicly condemn free love and divorce and point out that the ballot would only make marriage "more pure and more sacred." The Marshall County suffrage association, in the same newspaper, called for the resignation of current state officers who favor "free love and free lust and easy divorce laws." In letters in the *Register*, the *Herald*, and the *Hawk-Eye*, state suffrage leaders publicly denounced "lewdness and licentiousness and every form of impurity, whether practiced by man or woman" and affirmed their conviction that "the ballot in the hands of woman will lead to greater happiness in the married state, greater purity of life and more elevated morality."

Marriage and morality were of considerable concern to free-love critics. In a *Dubuque Herald* article, one writer sarcastically suggested that Woodhull's favored method of selecting the father of her children was to choose from a "dozen suspicious characters" long after

Right: A page from the 1871 newspaper published by Victoria Woodhull and her sister. "Freedom does not mean anarchy in the social relations any more than it does in religion and politics," explained an 1871 broadside for a Woodhull speech, "also that the advocacy of its principles requires neither abandoned action nor immodest speech."

WOODHULL & CLAFLIN'S WEEKLY.

PROGRESS! FREE THOUGHT! UNTRAMMELED LIVES!

BREAKING THE WAY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

VOL. 2.—No. 21. WHOLE No. 47.

NEW YORK, APRIL 8, 1871.

PRICE TEN CENTS.

VICTORIA C. WOODHULL & TENNIE C. CLAFLIN
EDITORS AND PROPRIETORS.

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THE NEW REBELLION.

The Great Secession Speech

OF
VICTORIA C. WOODHULL,

BEFORE THE

National Woman's Suffrage Convention,

AT

Apollo Hall, May 11, 1871.

THE Cosmo-Political Party.

NOMINATION FOR PRESIDENT OF THE U. S.,
IN 1872.

VICTORIA C. WOODHULL

SUBJECT TO

RATIFICATION BY THE NATIONAL CONVENTION.

TO ALL WOMEN WHO WOULD BE VOTERS

AND TO

ALL MEN WHO RESPECT THEIR RIGHTS AS CITIZENS.

THE CONSTITUTION, THE LAW AND WOMAN'S
RIGHTS, AND REDRESS UNDER
THEM.

THE TIME FOR ACTION COME.

OFFICERS OF ELECTIONS, BEWARE!

VICTORIA C. WOODHULL
WILL DELIVER HER ARGUMENT FOR
CONSTITUTIONAL EQUALITY,
"THE GREAT POLITICAL ISSUE."
AT THE
MUSIC HALL, BOSTON,
MONDAY EVENING, MARCH 27.

News comes from Iowa that there is not one woman convict in the penitentiary. This speaks well for the morality of the woman citizens, or for the equity of the men judges and jurymen who will not condemn "persons" that have no votes, they are so clearly irresponsible. Good for Iowa, either way.



SHSI (IOWA CITY)

In this February 17, 1872, cartoon Woodhull is caricatured as “(Mrs.) Satan,” tempting a wife burdened by an alcoholic husband. *Harper’s Weekly* noted that this cartoon by Thomas Nast should “convey a great moral lesson to those who may be tempted to accept the pernicious doctrines of the free-love school of our day.”

the child had been born. Free love, according to the disapproving *Des Moines Register*, was "such a love as the flies have that cross in the air, love that is no more a love than is the sexual passion of the beasts." The *Register* also proposed that "Woodhullism" be the name given to a new kind of marriage that lasts "only while fancy shall bind or lust incline."

Woodhull was criticized or ridiculed in the bulk of the news stories about her. She was, to the news writers of the day, the "notorious and miscellaneous married," the destroyer of the "foundation of society," and the proponent of "monstrous doctrines."

Not everyone, however, was so quick to judge Woodhull. In a letter to the *Register*, one writer suggested that those who were "smoking out" free lovers ought to include such Biblical characters as Solomon, David, Moses, and Abraham as well as some current "patrons of the thousands of assignation houses in our Bible loving land."

Another female letter writer waggishly asked the *Register* to enlighten her on the free-love issue: "I notice the gentlemen continuously insinuate that the ladies

need nothing more than the ballot to make them all violently opposed to all marriage restrictions. Don't think, dear Register, that I am an advocate of woman's rights—far be it from me, I am one of the 'Woman's Sphere' people, but I can't help wondering why the gentlemen should think the effects of the ballot would be so vicious; they have it and I don't suppose they ever stray from the path of rectitude, do they?"

As the controversy over free love and suffrage raged on, Iowa suffrage leaders struggled, through the newspapers, to put the issue to rest. In a letter to the editor of the *Register*, Annie Savery wrote: "The Woman Suffrage party is made up of the mothers, wives, and daughters, who believe that the marriage bond is to the social what the Constitution is to the political union. . . . The woman suffrage cause because of its inherent justice can well afford the company of Victoria Woodhull. But from carping friends, who in the name of Christianity offer us a menace with their friendship, we shall ask to be delivered."

In another *Register* letter, Amelia Bloomer, a long-time Iowa suffragist from Council Bluffs, pointed out that men's political parties "gladly welcome all to



FROM LOUISE NOUNS' STRONG-MINDED WOMEN; ORIGINAL IN LESLIES (FEBRUARY 4, 1871).

Woodhull presents her arguments for woman suffrage to the United States House Judiciary Committee and rapt listeners.



"HOW IT WOULD BE IF SOME LADIES HAD THEIR OWN WAY." In the imagination of this *Harper's Weekly* cartoonist, fathers would have to stay home to sew, knit, and comfort babies, while women socialized and smoked in the public sphere.

their ranks, and accept their aid, without questioning their religious or spiritual beliefs, or the doings of their private lives" and the woman-suffrage party should be able to do the same.

But try as they might, the Iowa suffragists could not shake the free-love connection. In a December 1871 editorial, the *Register* claimed that "Woodhullism," with its "free love, free divorce, free lust and other disgusting deviltries" had crippled the suffrage movement and set it back years: "Utterly unjust though it may be, the women who shall this winter ask the Iowa legislature to submit the question to the people, will be held as responsible for, and as a party to, all the wild, unwomanly and indecent actions of this female and her free-love gang." The *Register* declared that submitting suffrage to a vote of Iowans would result in its "utter and overwhelming defeat."

Iowans would not get an opportunity to prove or disprove the *Register's* prediction on their voting behavior. In March 1872, the Iowa Senate, on a 22–24 vote, turned down the proposed suffrage amendment, thus denying Iowa voters the chance to vote on woman suffrage.

Press coverage of Victoria Woodhull and the free-love issue undoubtedly hurt the suffrage cause in Iowa. But the *Register's* claim that Woodhull killed the movement seems an exaggeration. There simply was too much uncertainty about woman suffrage during the winter of 1871/72, and most of it involved, in one way or another, the woman's sphere.

The notion of a woman's sphere was surely a comforting one to many nineteenth-century Americans, both male and female. There was a reassuring orderliness to a world in which man had his sphere—making a living, politicking, intellectualizing—and woman had hers—running the home, raising the children, tending to the family morals. Woman suffrage appeared to threaten all that.

News articles, editorials, and letters to editors reveal considerable fear that the ballot would inevitably lead to the demise of the woman's sphere—that voting women would develop a taste for political office and a distaste for housework, that they would become more masculine and less virtuous, that they would embrace a promiscuous lifestyle and abandon their families. Those who saw the ballot as the beginning of the end for the woman's sphere, worried about what lurked beyond that sphere.

The idea of women out of their sphere and on the loose must have been a frightening one to many, and those who feared the worst, found the worst—in the notorious, free-wheeling, free-loving Victoria Woodhull. For many, Woodhull must have seemed the evolutionary end-product of the future woman, emboldened by the ballot and freed from her sphere. Woodhull was seen as aggressive, intelligent, promiscuous, mouthy, and outrageous. The bitter attacks on Woodhull reveal the depth of concern among media and others about the threat she presented to marriage, to family, to life as nineteenth-century Americans knew it. Many of those who feared Woodhull also feared the suffragists, with whom she had so closely aligned herself.

But Woodhull or no Woodhull, it appears that nineteenth-century Iowans simply were not ready for voting women and, particularly, any changes in the social order that might result. Despite suffrage activities throughout America during the 1870s, women did not have the ballot in any of the nation's thirty-seven states, and as it turned out, they weren't close to getting it. In 1890, when the Territory of Wyoming achieved statehood, it became the first state in which women had equal suffrage.

Iowa suffragists had a particularly long wait. It would be fifty years before they would cast the ballot, which had seemed so near at hand in 1872. The Nineteenth Amendment, giving women the right to vote, took effect August 26, 1920. One day later, Mrs. Jens G. Thuesen, voting in a Cedar Falls school election, became

the first woman in Iowa and probably the first in the nation to vote under the amendment.

At the time, Victoria Woodhull, the wealthy widow of an Englishman, was living on her estate in the English countryside. Many of her fellow suffragists—Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Iowa's Annie Savery—had not lived to see women armed with "that little piece of paper . . . that sacred gift of liberty," as Savery once called it.

The reformers of the seventies called themselves suffragists. Their granddaughters would call themselves "voters." And their granddaughters' granddaughters would call themselves "feminists." Whatever their labels or their causes, the women of the twentieth century and beyond owe something to those rather "unlady-like" females, many of them Iowans, who dared to break out of their traditional sphere in the early 1870s. They may not have been immediately successful. Those who left their home chores to lobby lawmakers or make speeches one month most likely were back home the next. But, with the help of the Iowa press, they made some headlines. And if they didn't exactly break the woman's sphere wide open, they at least made a crack or two in it. ❖

This article first appeared in the Spring 1991 Palimpsest and was adapted from author Diana Pounds's 1990 master's thesis in journalism (Iowa State University), titled "Booze, Ballots, and Wild Women: Coverage of Suffrage and Temperance by Three Iowa Newspapers, 1870–1875."



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The Mesquakie Indian Settlement in 1905

by L. Edward Purcell

In the summer of 1905, Duren J. H. Ward, an Iowa City minister and lecturer, spent two months at the Mesquakie Indian Settlement in Tama County. During that time he attempted to record the history and culture of the tribe. He was sponsored by the State Historical Society of Iowa which wished to learn more about the Mesquakies, sometimes mistakenly called the Fox, or the Sauk and Fox. These Indians had lived in Iowa since at least the last decades of the eighteenth century. When Ward visited them 125 years later, they still kept many of the ways of their forebears—living on their own land, disputing and discussing, working and loving.

The Mesquakie story was unusual. By the turn of the twentieth century, most Indian tribes in the United States had been removed from their native places and herded onto government-controlled reservations. The Mesquakies barely escaped such a fate.

The tribe had lived since the 1600s in the Green Bay area of what was to become the state of Wisconsin. During the early eighteenth century, they fought a long series of wars in Wisconsin with the French. Resisting the encroachment of the white fur traders, the Mesquakies—

never numerous—were at last defeated by the combined forces of the French and their Indian allies. By the late 1700s, only a handful of Mesquakies had survived the killing. Gathering with their cousins, the Sauk, the remnants of the Mesquakies abandoned the forests and lakes for the prairies along the Father of Waters. While white Americans disputed with the British the right of the colonies to be free and independent, the Mesquakies migrated down the Mississippi in search of the same goals. When, in 1803, events in the faraway courts of Europe handed political control of their new home to the United States, the Mesquakies were concerned with little but summer planting, winter hunts, and warring upon the Sioux and the Osage.

The Mesquakies signed their first treaty with the United States in 1804. This touching of the quill by several Sauks and Mesquakies (all of whom were none the better for drinking brandy) set a precedent. The U.S. Government by this treaty established formal relations with a tribe it called the "Sauk and Fox," an idea which persists to the present day. Although closely related by language, custom, and common war-making, the Mesquakies and the

Na-na-wa-chi, a Mesquakie woman born in 1862, stands beside a traditional wikiup made of overlapping mats of cattail reeds, on the Mesquakie Settlement about 1905. (Editor's note: In 1974, when this article was first published, Mesquakie was the spelling used by most historians. Today, Meskwaki is generally preferred.)



ALL PHOTOS, PAGES 92-115, SHSI (IOWA CITY)



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ALL PHOTOS: PAGES 92-116, SHS (IOWA CITY)

Sauks thought of themselves as two distinct tribes.

The Mesquakies considered themselves at peace with the United States, although many Sauks fought with Tecumseh at Tippecanoe and with the British in the War of 1812. The Sauks harbored a band of discontents led by Black Hawk. Black Hawk's anti-American belligerence and the fumbling of white politicians and militia led to the disastrous Black Hawk War in 1832. The repercussions of the War jolted both tribes and led to their removal from Iowa. The punitive treaty fixed on the Sauks after the War took Mesquakie land as well. A further series of treaties in the 1830s and 1840s took more land, and Iowa soon became the white man's domain.

In 1847, the Mesquakies were removed with the Sauks to a reservation in Kansas. While many small groups remained behind, a large contingent of the tribe took up new homes along the Osage River. The new setting was far from congenial, and soon the Mesquakies planned a return to the lush environs of Iowa. The plan became a reality in 1856 when the General Assembly of the State of Iowa, sitting in special session in Iowa City, passed a law allowing the Mesquakies to live and buy land in the state. Governor James Grimes acted as trustee for the tribe in signing the deed to the first eighty acres of bottom land purchased along the Iowa River in Tama County.

The gathering of the tribe in Iowa, which had begun even before the legislators acted, continued during the next several years. By 1867, several hundred Mesquakies lived on their own Settlement. Surviving difficult years when the Federal Government refused to pay the annuities due from the original sale of the Iowa prairie, the Mesquakies eventually won the right to remain in Iowa.

Remarkably, the Mesquakies enjoyed the long-term support and protection of the state government. Governor Grimes's successors in office seemed to regard seriously the trust placed upon them for the well-being of the tribe. At the behest of state officials the Federal Government agreed to pay the tribe their annuities in Iowa. When the money was finally and reluctantly paid, it was used to purchase more land. Whenever troubles threatened, the Mesquakies usually turned first to the Great Father in Des Moines.

Despite the fact that corn fields and livestock were rapidly occupying open land, the Mesquakies continued throughout most of the 1800s to follow their traditional cycle of summer farming and winter hunting. Roaming far from the Settlement, family groups hunted



Left: Tribal secretary Cha-ka-ta-ko-si (C. H. Chuck) holds the manuscript history he prepared for anthropologist Duren Ward (right), who visited the Mesquakie Settlement in the summer months of 1905.

the disappearing game which provided food and clothing. They camped in the fields of the early white settlers and occasionally begged a hand-out. There was a remarkable tolerance for the Mesquakies among the growing white population of the state. Even during the panic years of the so-called Spirit Lake Massacre and the Great Sioux Uprising, the Mesquakies were left in peace. By 1905 and Duren Ward's visit, the tribe was firmly rooted.

Prompted by Ward's interest in anthropology and sociology, the Historical Society undertook a systematic study of the history of the tribe. While many in the state knew of the Mesquakies and their background, little formal attention had been paid to them.

Ward was an ideal choice for the assignment and, indeed, probably suggested the project. Born in Canada, educated at Hillsdale College and at Harvard University, Ward spent several years of study in Germany and held a Ph.D. from Leipzig University. His career ranged from the classroom, to the lecture hall, to the pulpit. He had been called to the ministry of the Iowa City Unitarian Church in 1902. Moving easily among the intellectuals of the University town, Ward was instrumental in forming the Iowa Anthropological Association. The key members of the State Historical Society's Board of Curators were members both of his congregation and the Association. They were also, to a man, professors at the University of Iowa, which at the time housed the Historical Society.

Ward had undertaken several archaeological field trips under the auspices of the Society in 1904. When one of his trips took him along the Iowa River valley into Iowa County, he probably first encountered the

Mesquakies. This had been native ground of the tribe for several generations, and the Indians' friendship with the German religious community in the Amanas was longstanding. At about the time the tribe purchased its first parcel of land, the Community of True Inspiration, as the Amana colonists called themselves, was founded fifty miles further down river. The Mesquakies traded game and pelts for medical care and the wonderful woolen fabrics woven by the religious colonists.

After a brief visit to the Settlement in 1904, Ward began to plan a full-scale expedition for the summer of the next year. The Curators of the Society appropriated \$200 for the project, and Benjamin Shambaugh, Chairman of the Board's Executive Committee, solicited letters of introduction for Ward from Iowa Governor A. B. Cummins. In the meantime, President George MacLean of the University appointed Ward Lecturer in Anthropology. Ward chose a student, Leroy Elliott, to assist him during the summer. Elliott, also a member of Ward's church, proved to be invaluable. Following a preliminary visit early in June, Ward and Elliott moved into a frame house on the Settlement on July 7. There followed two months of observation, research, and discussion with tribal members.

For the Mesquakies, 1905 was a relatively peaceful year. The struggle for recognition by the U.S. Office of Indian Affairs had been won, although as late as the 1880s officials in Washington continued to insist the tribe belonged in Oklahoma, where the Sauks had been moved in 1869. The Settlement comprised 2,998 acres by 1905, bought in twenty-six different land purchases over the previous fifty years. Ward set Elliott to the task of ferreting this information out of the county land records in the Tama County Court House in Toledo, and the assistant drew up a table of purchases which detailed the growth of the Settlement. He learned that the tribe had paid \$85,635—an average price of \$28.50 per acre—for its land. (The Settlement would grow to its present size of approximately 3,300 acres within the next few years.) The question of the permanence of the Mesquakies' home seemed at rest.

However placid the summer of 1905, the memories of recent events—often bitter memories—were fresh in the minds of the tribe. When he spoke to tribal leaders, Ward found evidence of the political and economic problems which had occupied much of the Mesquakies' energies.

A good deal of credit must be given Ward for the manner in which he set about collecting information. The recording of interviews was less than common in Ward's day, but he saw the value of a precise written record of orally transmitted history. He hired a local ste-



Push-e-to-ne-qua, born in 1842 along the Iowa River near present-day Marengo, was the tribal chief in 1905 and one of the first Mesquakie interviewed by Ward.

nographer and also engaged two interpreters, Me-skwa-pu-swa (Joe Tesson, the official U.S. Government man) and Pye-pa-ha (Jim Peters). Ward then sought out tribal spokesmen and had their statements interpreted and recorded on the spot. The typed transcriptions of these statements form the bulk of the Ward Mesquakie Manuscripts Collection now held by the

State Historical Society of Iowa. Ward was an early practitioner of what is known today as oral history.

One of Ward's first formal interviews was with Push-e-to-ne-qua, the recognized chief. As head of the tribal council, Push-e-to-ne-qua had been the center of a longstanding political dispute among the Mesquakies. Shortly after the last hereditary chief, Ma-mi-nwa-ni-kwa, had died in 1882, a break in the chiefly line occurred. The next heir, Mu-kwa-pu-shi-to, was passed over by the tribal council in favor of Push-e-to-ne-qua. The new chief was the adopted son of Poweshiek, the leader who had sold the last parcel of Mesquakie land in 1842 and led his tribe into Kansas exile. Despite the fact that Push-e-to-ne-qua had assumed leadership, a faction among the tribe supported Mu-kwa-pu-shi-to as the true chief by birthright. Push-e-to-ne-qua consolidated his position by a slick maneuver in 1896 when he persuaded the U.S. Indian Agent, Horace Rebok, to lobby for federal recognition of Push-e-to-ne-qua's status. Rebok and J. R. Caldwell, a local jurist, secured for Push-e-to-ne-qua recognition as the Mesquakie chief and an additional personal annuity of \$600 per year.

Push-e-to-ne-qua was an astute politician, and he knew when and how to cultivate the whites who surrounded the Settlement. When Rebok gave up the office of agent in favor of William Malin in 1902, Push-e-to-ne-qua continued his policy of friendship with the new official. Although he could neither speak nor read English fluently, the chief was well informed about local white politics. As Judge Caldwell put it: "He mingles freely with the whites of the surrounding country, and judiciously courts the friendship and favor of influential men of the neighboring towns."

The chief was aided by the tribal interpreter, Joe Tesson. (Many Mesquakies were beginning to adopt English names, especially if they had frequent contacts with whites.) Tesson was half French and had traveled extensively. He had served in the Nebraska volunteer cavalry on the Devil's Lake Expedition in 1862 and lived previously in both Nebraska and New Mexico. He had been the official interpreter of the tribe since the 1880s. He sat on the tribal council and served as the chief's aide in dealing with whites.

Ward met the chief and Tesson on July 17 for dinner and discussion at the Clifton House in Tama. Elliott and W. S. Stoops, a former teacher on the Settlement, joined the party. Push-e-to-ne-qua, speaking through Tesson, informed Ward of the background of the tribe and the political dispute. He told Ward that the Mesquakies desired harmony, but that there could be no forcing of the issue, since: "The Meskwaki [Ward's spelling] never yields to coercion. Only fair play and open recognition

can settle their disputes or change their public opinion." Push-e-to-ne-qua explained that the opposition party was strong and stubborn. The new pretender to the chieftainship was Ta-ta-pa-sha, Mu-kwa-pu-shi-to having died in a recent small-pox epidemic.

Ward met again with the chief and with most of the tribal council on July 20. Benjamin Shambaugh traveled from Iowa City to join the discussion. Both men spoke at length on the mission of the Historical Society and how they wished to honor the tribe. Shambaugh's speech must have been paternal if not patronizing. In an earlier letter to Governor Cummins he had suggested that the Governor not mention that Ward was on a scientific inquiry, "as that might scare the Indians," and the Governor should include his official seal to impress their "Red Brethren."

One of the major issues Ward discovered in the tribal dispute was education. The conservative faction of the tribe, which backed the dispossessed chief, was against any cooperation with white man's ways, since they believed this would lead to the loss of Mesquakie identity. The tribe had long resisted enumeration and earlier had refused to enroll with the agent even though it meant the loss of annuity payments. The same attitude held for education.

Rebok, while he was agent, had formed the local Indian Rights Association, a group of whites devoted to the cause of Indian "welfare." The major goal of the group was to educate Indian children in white-run schools and thus equip them to live in the white world. It was to this end that Rebok lobbied for a new state law which would relinquish Iowa's official responsibility for the Mesquakies to the Federal Government. The return of responsibility to the Indian Office in Washington would allow Rebok to receive Federal funds to build an Indian training school at Toledo, Iowa. The agent was successful, and in 1896, the Iowa General Assembly voted to turn trusteeship and responsibility for the tribe over to the U.S. Department of the Interior. Even though \$35,000 was appropriated to build the school in 1899, the official transfer did not occur until 1908. In that year, the Secretary of the Interior assumed the role of trustee for the tribal lands, the position originally held by the governor of the state.

The building of a school was one thing, but getting the Mesquakies to attend proved to be another. Rebok, Malin, and A. G. Nellis (the superintendent of the Toledo Indian Training School) met serious resistance. While their motives may have been pure and worthy, the group failed utterly to understand that few



Children stand in uniform at the Toledo Indian Training School. They are probably all Winnebago and Sioux. The Mesquakie had resisted forced assimilation; a court case won by Li-li-ya-pu-ka-chi (below) ruled that Iowa could not compel their attendance.

Mesquakies were interested in becoming white. The older members of the tribe, especially those like Ma-ta-wi-kwa, the last war chief who had led parties against the Comanche and Pawnee during the Kansas interlude, were committed to preserving the traditional Mesquakie way of life. Realizing the resistance of the elders, Rebok made an attempt to capture the children. The local court appointed Malin the guardian of several Mesquakie children who the Indian Rights group claimed were orphans or unattached to a family. As their guardian, Malin compelled them to attend the school.

This plan did produce students for the school, but was upset when a sixteen-year-old girl, Li-li-ya-pu-ka-chi, ran away from the classroom and sought refuge in the

Mesquakie village. Malin brought her back by force, but was served with a writ of habeas corpus from the Federal court at Dubuque. A local Tama attorney, John W. Lamb, filed a suit on behalf of the girl. The decision of the court held that neither Rebok nor Malin had any right to compel attendance at the school. Rebok's



strategy had backfired, since the court's decision was based on the fact that the state of Iowa no longer had jurisdiction. Iowa had relinquished authority in 1896 at Rebok's prodding. Since the state had no power, the guardianships made by a state court were void.

Several more suits were brought by the conservative faction of the tribe with the assistance of Attorney Lamb. Even the pretender to the chieftainship attempted to have his place restored by the court, unsuccessfully, however. The upshot of all this was that the Mesquakie children fled the Toledo school, leaving Rebok and his cohorts with a building, but no pupils.

Following his interview with Push-e-to-ne-qua, Ward also contacted the dissident faction and held a long conference with about a dozen of the conservatives at the wikiup of Ta-ta-pa-sha, Push-e-to-ne-qua's rival. Ward asked those present to recall for him the history of the tribe's return to Iowa. He recorded their remembrances and listed the groups which were living in Iowa when the main body of the tribe came back. He also found that some of the rival faction based their claim to power on the original purchase of land.

Several speakers pointed out that it was the old chief, Ma-mi-nwa-ni-kwa, who had instigated the purchase of the Settlement land. Therefore, they reasoned, the heirs of the old chief should still control the land and the tribe. As one put it: "Ma-mi-nwa-ni-kwa bought this land. He was the head, the main Chief. This is the reason why Ma-mi-nwa-ni-kwa's grandson is now the controller of this land. Ta-ta-pa-sha is the Chief or controller. That is all there is to it. That is the fact."

This division of the tribe was a prominent part of Mesquakie political life, and it was typical of the history of the tribe. There had always been disputation among the Mesquakies. Earlier splits had been pro- or anti-French, pro- or anti-American, pro- or anti-British, pro- or anti-Black Hawk.

When compared with most other American Indian tribes, the Mesquakies were all conservatives, even the more white-oriented Indians such as Push-e-to-ne-qua. Despite their internal bickerings, the tribe kept the Indian way. The Mesquakies were able to do so because of their tribal land. The possession of a home, which they had purchased, gave the Mesquakie people a concrete symbol of pride and security. This firm hold on their identity allowed the tribe to resist the influences of white culture to a degree unusual among American tribes at the time. Even though many of their white neighbors deplored their "savagism," there was a grudging respect for the Mesquakies. Attachment to the land was something that white Iowans not only understood, but valued highly.

Relationships with white farmers were generally cordial. The Mesquakies were not too interested in farming themselves, for the most part limiting their production to truck gardening. Mesquakie men did, however, hire out to white farmers. For example, a Mesquakie assisted W. B. Cooper during the summer of 1905 as a hay hand. On occasion, there was conflict with white farmers, especially when the packs of Mesquakie dogs bothered local livestock.

Ward found that the economic status of the tribe was relatively stable. The men of the tribe were beginning to find occasional work in the white economy, and the women continued the routine of domestic tasks which had occupied their mothers and grandmothers and great-grandmothers.

Even though the U.S. Government had made prolonged efforts to turn the tribe to farming, the statistics for land cultivation show that the Settlement was primarily a home and not an exploitable resource in the eyes of the Indians. Only 560 acres of land were planted in crops such as field corn or wheat. About two-fifths of the total were in oats, which probably went as feed for the 315 horses and ponies of the Settlement. There were, however, over fifty acres of gardens. Indian corn, beans, squash, and potatoes, the vegetables which had been staples of the Mesquakie summer-time diet for generations, were grown under the care of the women. The Mesquakies also raised cattle, swine, and chickens.

There was an adequate supply of farm wagons and buggies on the Settlement and all the necessary equipment to handle farming. There was one cooking stove or heater for every ten people on the Settlement, and nearly the same ratio of sewing machines. Ward also noted the lone telephone and single typewriter.

For the most part, the tribe in 1905 was able to operate at a low level of cash income. The land still supplied most needs. Of course, the big game which had once supplied meat was scarce. Small game such as rabbit and squirrel supplemented the domestic cattle and chickens. In years to come the Mesquakies would be forced to buy more and more of their food supply, but as late as Ward's visit they were relatively self-sufficient.

Housing on the Settlement in 1905 was still predominantly the traditional wikiup. Ward counted sixty-five of the bark- or rush-covered structures and estimated about six people to each home. The most "primitive" houses were built on a framework of saplings which were sunk butt-first into the ground and then bent to form an oval structure. About half of



ME-SKWA-KI SUMMER SHADE

these were covered with bark, the rest constructed of rush matting. Usually from twelve to twenty-five feet in width, the wikiups could be as long as forty feet or as short as fifteen.

The traditional wikiup appeared crude to Ward, but it was a time-tested and practical form of shelter. All of the materials for such a home were readily available from the natural vegetation of the river bottom. The rush-covered wikiups in particular afforded a snug winter home. The rushes held natural air pockets which provided insulation from the severe Iowa winters, especially if overlapped in several layers. A small hole was provided at the center of the roof for ventilation of smoke from the central cooking and heating fire. In cold weather, dirt was thrown up around the base of the wikiup to seal it from drafts. Low platforms around the

Above:The Mesquakie built open-air shelters called "summer shades" and lay cut boughs over the top, to provide relief from the hot Iowa summer. The summer shade was a family gathering place—a place for cooking and eating, for beadwork and other hand work. **Below:** A wikiup "skeleton," before it's covered with mats made of cattails and rushes. The dome design made the wikiup stable enough to withstand heavy snow and wind.



walls provided sleeping and storage areas. Some Mesquakies altered the design to a wikiup with board sides and rush-matting gable roofs.

In addition to the traditional wikiups, there were about fifteen clapboard frame houses. These were small, generally two or three rooms, and had shingled roofs. The frame houses only recently had been introduced to the Settlement, the first being built by a Pottawattomi who had married into the Mesquakie tribe.

In the summer, additional frame structures were built adjacent to the wikiups which were covered with cut brush and boughs. These summer shades provided relief from the sun and were a place of work and leisure, especially for the women of the tribe.

Until a few years before Ward's investigation, the homes of the Mesquakies were grouped in village fashion according to time-honored custom. However, the small-pox epidemic which swept the Settlement in 1901 altered this plan. Medical authorities quarantined the Settlement for six months and burned all the dwellings and clothes. For protection from a recurrence of disease, the homes were rebuilt in a scattered fashion. Most were strung out along the floodplain of the Iowa River or tucked under the protecting bluff line. The contours of the land and the heavy timber provided natural protection from the elements.

During his visit, Ward learned little about the tribal religion, which seems strange for a man of his theological and philosophical interests. The Mesquakies were reluctant to discuss the details of religion, generally regarding such matters as private. The tribe practiced a religion which was uniquely Mesquakie, but shared basic beliefs with other tribes. Religion was not a formal undertaking, rituals and ceremonies being important, but not frequent. Religion pervaded the daily life of a Mesquakie. As one white historian put it: "If St. Paul could visit the Mesquakies in their Iowa home, he would probably observe that in all things they are too religious."

Both the social and religious organization of the tribe revolved around the clan system. Each member of the tribe became at birth a member of a particular clan. The clan was a social and political unit, but also was responsible for certain religious ceremonies and traditions. When a clan member died, another person was adopted into the clan within a year, which resulted in social and kinship patterns which were confusing to whites.

Missionaries had been singularly unsuccessful at Christianizing the tribe. The first attempts were by the

French in the seventeenth century. Throughout the last half of the nineteenth century, several church groups had tried to convert the Indians of the Settlement, but with little success. The conservatism of the tribe and attachment to the traditions of Mesquakie culture formed a barrier to missionary efforts.

The Presbyterians were the most persistent group to attempt the Christianization of the Mesquakies. As of 1905 they had a permanent mission on the Settlement staffed by two women, the Misses Campbell and Taylor. During the summer, Miss Campbell's nieces from Pennsylvania visited the Settlement on what must have been an interesting vacation. The two missionaries could boast of little "progress" in winning converts. The following year, the United Presbyterian Board of Iowa sent a full-time, ordained missionary and built new quarters for the church; results, however, were the same.

The Presbyterian ladies faced competition in July of 1905 from a group of visiting Winnebagos. A local Toledo paper called the visitors "revivalists." The Winnebagos brought with them ceremonies, dances, and songs which were probably part of a pan-Indian religious movement. They were joined by Chippewas and Kansas Pottawattomis. The Mesquakies were similar in culture to these tribes and there had been extensive inter-marriage among them.

The mid-summer festivities coincided with a traditional religious festival of the Mesquakies. When the early-maturing Indian corn came to harvest, the tribe held a several-day observance which was basically religious, but had some of the trappings of a holiday. In earlier years, this festival had marked the end of the summer growing season and the time when the village broke up for the winter hunt. By 1905, the festival had begun to attract the interest of local whites, since the native dancing and singing offered attractions of color and sound.

Chief Push-e-to-ne-qua, quick to see the potential of the festival as a source of cash income for the tribe, established a policy of charging interested whites a small admission fee. In 1905, the white visitors paid 10¢ each to witness the dancing and singing. Young people from the surrounding towns attended the dancing in excursion groups. The presence of the visiting tribesmen must have added a fillip of inspiration in 1905. The *Tama Herald* reported old-timers agreed "the dances of the past week have surpassed anything they had ever seen before." The mid-summer festival continued through the years and was formally organized in the 1920s as the now well-known Pow-Wow.

In general, the social contacts of the Mesquakies with the local white communities were friendly. This



Presbyterian missionaries, Misses Campbell and Taylor (in chairs), rest with guests at their home on the Mesquakie Settlement.

was especially true of the smaller Tama County towns such as Montour or Townsend. There was some antipathy towards the tribe in the larger cities of Tama and Toledo—although there was friendship as well.

The smaller and perhaps more informal communities welcomed the presence of the Indians. Just prior to Ward's arrival, the town of Montour included the Settlement people in their Fourth of July celebration. The traditional parade was followed by baseball between the Mesquakie team and the men of Ferguson. The Mesquakies were adept at many white sports, including the national pastime. It is recorded that on that day the Indians prevailed over the Ferguson team by the score of sixteen to ten. The festivities also included racing. Mesquakies took the honors in the fat man's gallop and the sack race, and Jim Bear placed second in the hundred yard dash.

The course of events in the summer of 1905 ran smoothly, an almost dull interlude compared to earlier years when the excitement of the school controversy or the small-pox epidemic had claimed attention. Young Bear, the chief's son, found a pearl in the mussel beds of the Iowa River; a child drowned while playing on the riverbank; the annual government payments were made, giving each Mesquakie \$24.36 for the year. Perhaps the most interesting event occurred when a band of Sioux traveling with a Wild West Show was housed and fed on the Settlement. As the summer began to fade

into autumn, Ward prepared to conclude his visit and compile his observations.

The results of Ward's stay were impressive. He not only met with many individual Mesquakies but also collected and compiled extensive information. One of the results was the systematic table of land purchases which was compiled from the county records. Using the table, Ward had Leroy Elliott draw a map of "Meskwakia," Ward's term for the Settlement. It was probably the first such map.

Working with the tribal council, Chief Push-e-to-nequa, Agent Malin, the Presbyterian missionaries, and many Mesquakie heads-of-household, Ward put together a complete census of the tribe. This list showed every member as of the summer of 1905, their birthdates, family relationships, and in some cases biographical information. While the list may have smoothed over many of the nuances of Mesquakie kinship, it was a major achievement.

Ward also enlisted the help of several of his University of Iowa colleagues, notably George T. Flom, a trained linguist and Professor of Scandinavian Languages at the University of Iowa. Flom joined Ward for a few days during the summer and accompanied him during two subsequent fall visits. Together they drew up notes on the Mesquakie language and compiled a

word list. The Mesquakies had long been able to write their language in a system of notation which probably had been learned from the French. The writing was a form of verbal transcription which recorded the sounds of the spoken tongue, and changed as rapidly as did the spoken language.

In order to preserve history from the Indian point of view, Ward requested the secretary of the tribal council, Cha-ka-ta-ko-si, or C. H. Chuck as he was known to whites, to write a manuscript history of the tribe. The result was a twenty-seven page document written in the Mesquakie syllabary. After their return to Iowa City, Ward and Flom published the manuscript. Unfortunately, they neglected to have it translated. Although the manuscript is still in the collection of the State Historical Society, it is now virtually impossible to translate. The spoken language has changed so much in the past sixty-nine years that few present-day members of the tribe can decipher Cha-ka-ta-ko-si's meaning. Those who have examined the document believe that the tribal secretary did not take the assignment too seriously. There is even a suggestion that he was pulling Ward's leg.

On a more tangible level, Ward collected several artifacts. [See photos.] A model wikiup, a child's bow and arrow set, a wooden ladle, and antler utensils were packed up and removed to the State Historical Society of Iowa, where they still remain. The most striking result of the visit was a collection of photographs of the Settlement and the tribe which Ward commissioned or in some cases borrowed.

In the fall of the year, Ward and several others made two follow-up trips to the Settlement. In November, he presented his official report to the Curators of the Historical Society and prepared to close the books on the investiga-



tion. The Society sponsored, in conjunction with the Anthropological Association, a two-day program of lectures and presentations on the Mesquakies in February 1906. Ward lectured on the tribe and illustrated his talk with lantern slides. Both Benjamin Shambaugh and Professor Flom contributed papers. The final day was highlighted by the presence of several members of the tribe who answered questions.

Ward was soon to leave Iowa, moving in 1906 to Colorado where he took up a new position as minister of the Unity Church in Ft. Collins. He also became Instructor of Physics at the State Agricultural College. Eventually, he settled in Denver where he concentrated his efforts on writing and publishing. He founded his own company, the Up the Divide Publishing Company, and continued to write on philosophical topics into the 1920s.

As for the Mesquakies, they continued to live quietly on their land. They belied the widely expressed opinion that American Indians would either become like





MESKWAKI LACROSSE STICK
 70 YEARS OLD IN 1905
 USED BY CHIHIHA'S (JENNIE
 DALENT) GRANDFATHER
 OBTAINED BY DUREN J.H. WARD
 FOR
 STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

white men or become extinct. As the twentieth century moved on, they continued to battle with the Federal Government over annuities and education. As Iowa's economy matured, more and more Mesquakies began to work in factories or related industrial enterprises. The political disputes of the tribe did not die with old chief Push-e-to-ne-qua in 1919, but continue to be issues of concern. The tribe grew in numbers, and although some have moved to cities, the majority of the Mesquakies

still live on the Settlement. Despite the changes since the visit of Duren Ward in 1905, the Mesquakies remain an enclave of authentic Indian culture, a proud people. ❖

A selection of Mesquakie portraits begins on the next page.

This article first appeared in the March/April 1974 Palimpsest, with a different selection of images. Its author, L. Edward Purcell, was also the magazine's editor from 1973 through 1977.

NOTE ON SOURCES

Unfortunately, there is no one, comprehensive, published account of Mesquakie history. William T. Hagen, *The Sac and Fox Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1958) is concerned mostly with the Sac. There are several specialized articles which have been published in the *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* and the *Annals of Iowa* (third series), many of which have been helpful, most notably: Ruth Gallaher, "Indian Agents in Iowa," *IJHP*, 14 (1916), 359-97, and Edgar Harlan, "An Original Study of Mesquakie (Fox) Life," *Annals of Iowa* (third series), 19 (1933-35), 115-25, 221-34, 352-62; 20 (1935-37), 123-39, 510-26. The most useful brief anthropological account is Nancy F. Joffe, "The Fox of Iowa," in Ralph Linton, ed., *Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes* (NY: D. Appleton-Century, 1940), 249-331. I have drawn heavily on unpublished material, primarily the Duren Ward Mesquakie Manuscripts of the State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City). Also useful were the Archives of the Governor's Office—Miscellaneous Correspondence (Indian Affairs), held by the State Historical Society of Iowa (Des Moines). The Governors' correspondence throws much light on the history of the tribe from the 1840s until the early twentieth century. The A. B. Cummins Papers (also at SHSI-Des Moines) were also consulted. Much of the specific material on the summer of 1905 was drawn from several Tama County newspapers, amplified by the recollections of some Mesquakie tribal members, notably Harvey Lasley. J. R. Caldwell, *A History of Tama County, Iowa*, Vol. I (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1910) gives much information on the school controversy from the perspective of one of the participants, as does Horace M. Rebok's *The Last of the Mus-qua-kies and the Indian Congress* (Dayton, Ohio: Funk Publishers, 1900) and Rebok, et al., *History of the Indian Rights Association of Iowa and the Founding of the Indian Training School* (Toledo, Iowa; circa 1900). The Archives of the University of Iowa were also helpful in supplying correspondence between Ward and President MacLean.



MESKWAKI BEAD BELT.
 MADE BY CHI K I K A
 [WIFE OF WHITE BREAST]
 OBTAINED BY DUREN J. H. WARD
 FOR
 STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 1905

The Ward-Mesquakie Photograph Collection



Above: Sha-wa-na-kwa-ha-ka (Jim Morgan). The beadwork medallions on the long strip attached to his headband were made by Mesquakie women.

Opposite: Ha-na-wo-wa-ta (James Onawat) was born in 1837, and his grandson, Po-kwi-ma-wa, in 1888. Their clothing reveals more of Mesquakie women's skills in beadwork—on moccasins, garters, sashes, and belts, in the tribe's traditional geometric and stylized floral designs.

There are over one hundred photographs of the Mesquakie people and the Settlement in the collection of the State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City). They were obtained by Duren Ward during his 1905 visit. Ward commissioned J. S. Moore, a well-known Toledo, Iowa photographer, to take portraits of several of the tribal leaders on August 14, 1905. Ward also borrowed a number of photographs from Ha-she-ta-na-kwa-twa (George Morgan), who had been tribal secretary for eighteen years prior to Ward's visit. Other photographs were borrowed from John W. Lamb, the successful Tama attorney who had argued the Mesquakie school case in Federal court. In addition, it is likely that Ward and his assistant, Leroy Elliott, themselves took pictures on the Settlement. Oddly, none of the members of the Historical Society expedition appears in the photographs. When Ward returned to Iowa City in the fall of 1905, he submitted his report to the Society's Board of Curators and asked that the photographs be preserved. The Board approved funds for this purpose. In order to illustrate the lectures he planned to give on the tribe, Ward had Lucy M. Cavanaugh of Iowa City make one hundred lantern slides from the photographs.

In addition to the slides, the Society turned the negatives of the Moore portraits over to T. W. Townsend, a local photographer, for printing. Townsend printed 11 x 14 inch, mounted versions of the portraits, which were preserved in a large album in the collection of the Society. When the lantern slides were uncovered in 1973, the portraits in the album were correlated with the slides. It was evident that the slides had been made from the original portraits. Other prints were discovered in the photographic files of the Society which corresponded to the remainder of the slides. Several pictures which were never copied as slides were also discovered. Thus the Ward collection is made up of several kinds of photographic processes: small paper prints, large portraits, and glass slides. Following are a few examples of the Collection.

—L. Edward Purcell







Ma-ka-ta-wa-kwa-twa (Black Cloud) wears an otter skin around his neck and tubular shell necklaces. Held in place with a beaded headband, the traditional roach is made of fur from a deer's tail, dyed red with vermilion.

Opposite: Mesquakie mothers routinely used cradleboards (te-ki-na-ka-ni) to keep their babies nearby while they tended to other duties. The cradleboard could be suspended aboveground on a pole or wall, keeping the infant safe from nuisances and animals. It was open to ventilation and breezes, was adjustable as the baby grew, and provided a good vantage point for the child to observe life as it happened around the village (instead of seeing only the ceiling or sky if the child was lying on its back). The bent-wood projection served as a handle; it also deflected falling objects and protected the head in case of a drop. Functioning like a mobile to amuse the child, small items tied to the projection dangled in front of the child's face. The gently swaying items, kept in motion by the baby's breathing, also kept flying insects away. Being bound in this snug fashion gave the child a sense of security.



Ko-ta-to, born in 1890. She is adorned with many necklaces and with ribbonwork applied down the front of her blouse. The traditional yoke-style blouse, like the shirt in the opposite photograph, was made from bolts of cotton purchased by the Mesquakies.

Opposite: Mu-kwa-pu-shi-to (Old Bear) was the younger brother of the last hereditary chief of the Mesquakies. In 1882 his claim to the chieftainship was passed over by the tribal council in favor of Push-e-to-ne-qua. The ceremonial bearclaw necklace he wears symbolized honor and prestige.



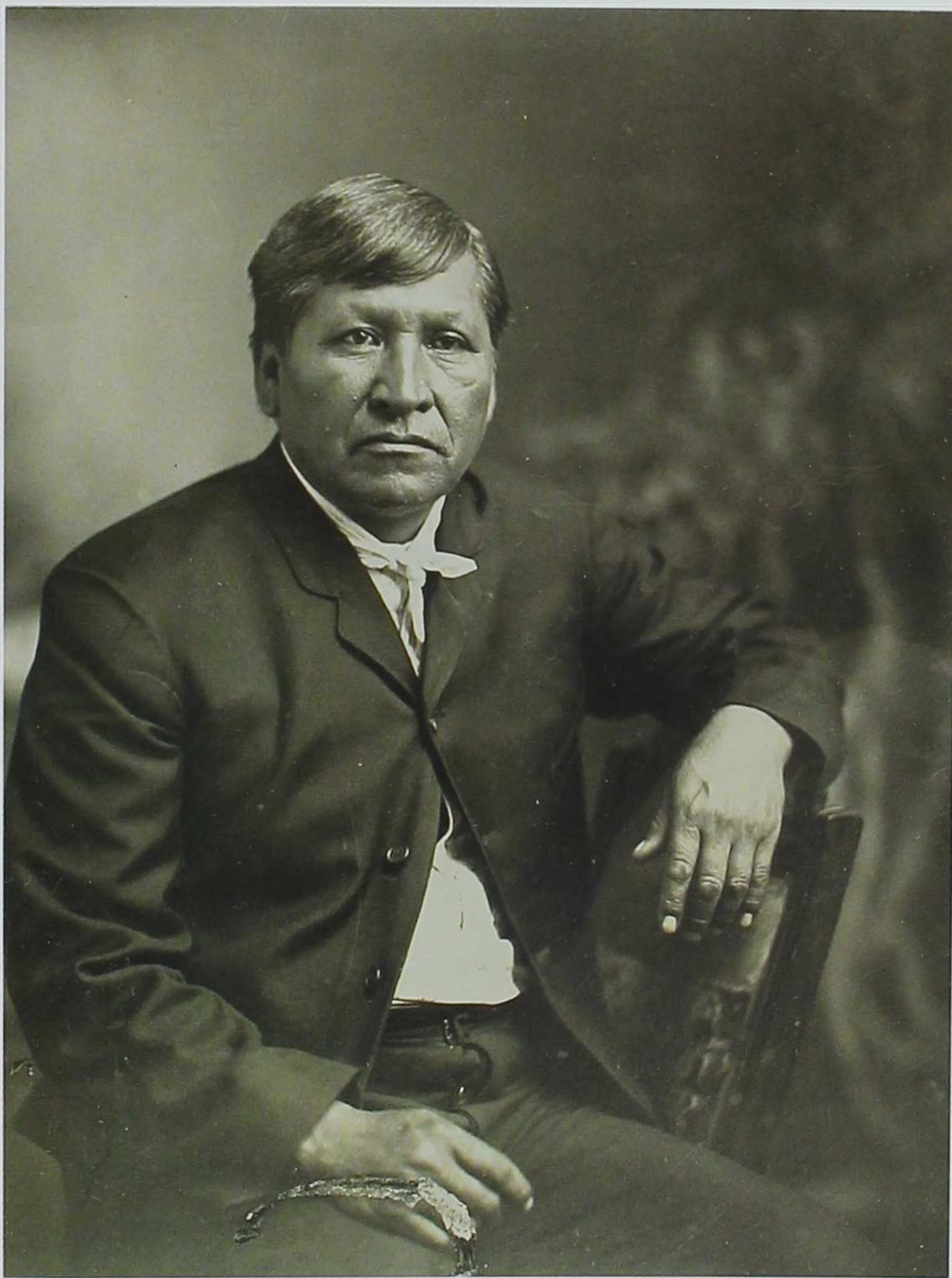




This photograph of Li-li-ya-pu-ka-chi and child was taken before Ward's 1905 visit. When she was sixteen, she fled the Toledo Indian Training School and became the focus of a court battle over compulsory attendance. The blanket she wears was probably made in the Amanas; the Mesquakies often traded with the communal society.

Opposite: Me-skwa-pu-swa (Joseph Tesson) was part Ioway and part French. Born in 1841, he served with the U.S. Army during the Civil War, and lived in Kansas, Nebraska, and New Mexico. He was the official government interpreter for the Mesquakie and a member of the tribal council. He dressed in full Mesquakie regalia for this formal studio portrait taken August 14, 1905. The photographer placed a pipe, spoon, beadwork, furs, and other items at his feet to add to the ambiance.





Kwi-ya-ma, photographed on two different occasions. Born in 1833, he was a warrior who had fought the Comanches in Kansas in the 1840s and 1850s. His medallion was probably made of "German silver," an alloy of copper, zinc, and nickel. The woolen yarn sashes woven by Mesquakie women were worn by men as belts or turbans (as he wears them) or over the shoulder.





Left: Na-sa-pi-pya-ta (John Allen) was born near Iowa City in 1839. He returned to Iowa from Kansas in 1862, where he had been a warrior against the Comanches. He was brother-in-law of Push-e-to-ne-qua and a member of the tribal council. The blanket is probably from the Amanas. He holds the traditional Meskwakie eagle feather fan. At the time of Ward's visit, he was one of the last living Meskwakie warriors; most had died in the recent small-pox epidemic.

Opposite: Meskwakie youths wear European-American clothes in this studio portrait, yet three have feathers in their hats, and one has traditional Meskwakie ribbon work sewn down the front of his shirt (left, seated). From left, back row: Ma-ta-kwi-pa-ka-ta, Ka-ke-no-se (Earl D. Morgan), unidentified. Front row: Ki-wa-to-sa-ta, Ni-ka-na-kwa-ha-ka (Joe Tesson, Jr.), and Ki-ya-kwa-ka (John Young Bear).

Documenting the history of the Meskwaki did not end with the work of Duren Ward in 1905. The State Historical Society of Iowa has continued to record and preserve the history of the Meskwaki, the only American Indian tribe still residing in Iowa in large numbers. "The Society has one of the richest and most distinctive collections of materials on the Meskwaki nation in the world," says Mary Bennett, special collections coordinator. "Unfortunately some members of the tribe are unaware of the resources available and seldom get to examine this evidence of their own cultural history."

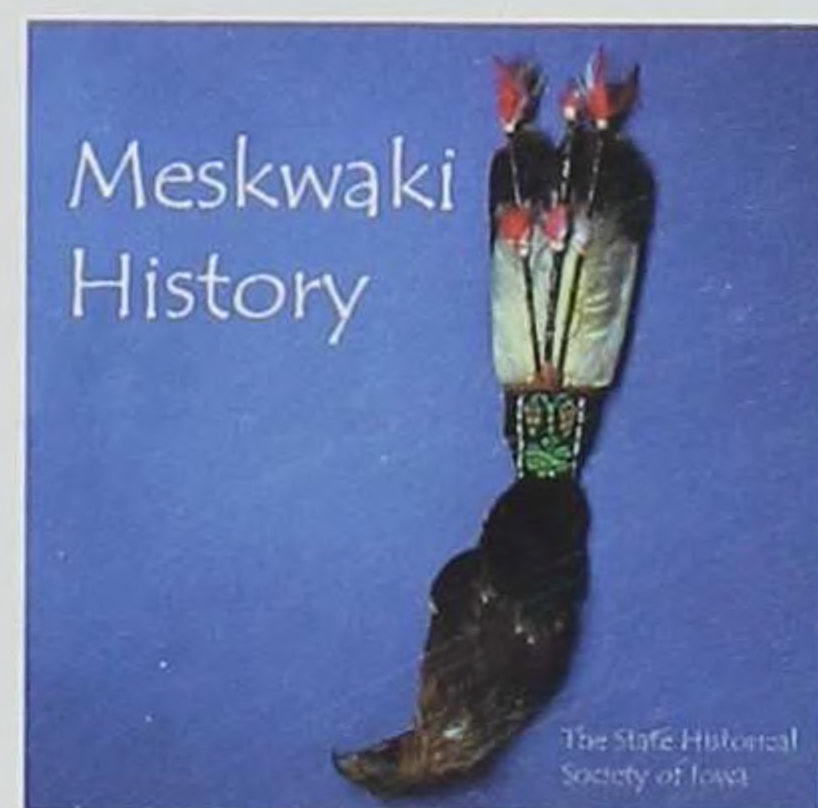
Partnering with Johnathan Buffalo and Dawn Suzanne Wanatee of the Meskwaki nation, Bennett, Charles Scott, and other Society staff have produced an interactive CD-ROM on the tribe's history. Of special interest to educators, the CD (right) features photographs and film clips, artifacts, audio recordings of the Meskwaki language, lesson plans, maps, primary documents, and cultural and historical information. Humanities Iowa and the National Endowment

for the Humanities helped fund the CD-ROM.

The public and educators will be able to access the *Meskwaki History* CD through an interactive kiosk in the State Historical Building in Des Moines (600 E. Locust) or by purchasing the CD. Contact Mary Bennett at 319-335-3916 for details.

Also of interest to educators, a traveling resource box, developed by Lynn Alex of the Office of the State Archaeologist, provides hands-on learning about Meskwaki history through artifact facsimiles, videos, books, and lesson plans. Grants from Humanities Iowa and the Fred Maytag Family Foundation helped fund the project box. To borrow the *Time Capsules from the Past* resource box, contact Lynn Alex, 319-384-0561.

—The Editor





Iowan Cora Bussey Hillis (inset) and the National Mothers' Congress in Des Moines, May 1900.

CONGRESS PHOTO: SHSI (DES MOINES); INSET: SHSI (IOWA CITY)

Cora Bussey Hillis

Woman of Vision

■ by Ginalie Swaim

It was another hot summer day in Des Moines. Young Cyrus Hillis sneaked out of the house, ran through the morning shadows and down to the Des Moines River. His friends were already there, their feet squirming in the mud, their voices full of nervous excitement. The bridge looked higher than usual that morning, and far below, the spring rains had filled the river to the top of the banks. The current was dark and fast. After dares and double-dares, the first boy ventured out, inching his way along the siderails on hands and knees. He was

a yard out when the next boy hoisted himself up to the rail. Then the third.

Back home, Cyrus's mother, Cora, sensed something was wrong. Checking his room, she found he was gone. All day she wondered where he'd gone off to. As darkness settled, wonder turned to worry. She sat up waiting, her thoughts returning to her own childhood and a haunting memory when she was 17 on an Eastern beach. The undertow had swept a young girl out beyond her depth. Finally, the girl had been pulled to shore, blue

and swollen, and laid on the sand. Cora had wiped the sand from her face while rescuers revived her.

Eventually Cyrus came home. Cora was relieved, but she couldn't take her mind off of it. Every summer there were drownings in the river. Boys will be boys and Iowa summers could be miserably hot, Cora decided, so it was time to do something.

That summer—1894—Des Moines watched as 36-year-old Cora Bussey Hillis set out to create a safe public swimming facility for the children of Des Moines. She campaigned for building funds, enlisted the support of the press, and rounded up a huge supply of rental bathing suits for poor children. The bathhouse on the river was a success, judging from the 4,000 who dashed in and out that first week.

It was a simple, sane idea, one that Des Moines could be proud of. The citizens sat back, relieved, watching their children splash safely in a supervised swimming area. But Cora could not sit back. She knew that children needed more than a bathhouse. In the years to come she would become their spokesperson. She would prod legislators to pass more humane child welfare laws, teach parents how to create healthy, stimulating home environments, and inspire educators to establish a major research center for the study of children. Nationally she would win respect and prominence. And yet, in her own home, she would suffer incredible personal losses that would weaken her health but strengthen her resolve to improve the lot of the child.

Born in Bloomfield, Iowa in 1858, Cora and her parents, Cyrus and Ellen Bussey, moved to New Orleans after the Civil War. Her father was successful in business and sent her to a private girls' school run by the niece of Jefferson Davis. As the daughter of a Union brigadier general, Cora won friends slowly. But, like her classmates at the Sylvester Larned Institute, she grew to fit their image. She adored fancy gowns, read volumes of Sir Walter Scott, and played croquet under the magnolias. She observed her friends' flirtations, wryly recording each episode in her journal: "Then the indignation within her broke its bonds. . . . I felt that I was 'de trop' but could not reasonably leave them alone together. He emphatically denied ever having spoken of her save as a most prized friend. He said that he would as soon think of blaspheming his mother as of her. . . . I enjoyed their quarrel exceedingly. Tea was announced and after that an hour more of dispute."

Of her own flirtations less is recorded. She hoped to find a man who would "weigh the great things of the world," a noble man, because she considered herself,

matter-of-factly, "worthy of a great good man. I feel within myself a power undeveloped which in future years shall command homage for me. I have a delicate sensibility. Some things which I see little affect others—give me actual pain."

Cora's two-year diary when she was 17 and 18 shifts between detached, objective observations of society's trappings and subjective, over-descriptive adolescent sighs, a polarity that shows up in her writing all her life. Traveling to the northeastern coastal cities with her family, she dismisses Yale University as a "line of dusty, rusty, dingy, dirty four story ordinary red brick buildings with an old forlorn looking chapel in the middle." She writes off her friend's fiancé as "a foppish conceited little fellow who parts his yellow hair in the middle and looks dissipated." She learned to expect eloquence from the pulpit, and was disappointed when ministers delivered weak sermons. Indolence she labeled her major weakness, but the Southern leisure class did not offer her much of a challenge to change her ways.

In Isaac Hillis, a young lawyer she met on a family vacation in Keokuk, Iowa, she found her noble man, and married him in December, 1880 after a long engagement. Cora and Isaac moved to Kansas City, only to be called back when her mother was struck ill with Bright's Disease. In less than a year Ellen Bussey died, leaving invalid sister Laura—"Lollie"—in Cora's hands to raise. That same year General Bussey lost most of his fortune in a business venture.

After their first child Ellen was born in 1883, Isaac and Cora, Ellen and Lollie moved to Des Moines, where he was an attorney and an abstractor. Cyrus was born, and then Philip. Cora settled into her role as wife and mother. But she could not confine her energies only to her children and home. Needing the stimulus of society as well as the

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Cora, as a new bride.



Attorney and husband Isaac Lea Hillis.

warmth of home, she helped incorporate the Des Moines Women's Club in 1887 and raised funds by lecturing on the fine arts at teas held in her home.

The family moved to a bigger house, then to another after fire destroyed that one. By the mid-1890s, they had settled into a large Victorian house on the north edge of town—at 1625 Sixth Avenue. Within the next 30 years, a flood of letters bearing that return address would awaken Iowa to its greatest resource—children.

About this time—early in 1893—Cora and the three children set out by train to visit Isaac's parents in California. In late April they headed back home, full of new experiences and ideas. But tragedy awaited. Philip, nearly two, contracted meningitis. Near Denver the train wrecked and the child was thrown from the berth. Baby Philip came back to Iowa in a coffin.

Several months later Isaac was born, and Cora's heartache eased a bit. She poured her energies—what were left after mothering three children and Lollie—into the women's club, the bathhouse, and a rose parade in Des Moines, which she modeled after the Ventura Floral Parade in California. She began to write, selling stories to *Midland Monthly* and a regular column to *Iowa Homestead*. Her days were busy, full of tender mothering and good-hearted civic responsibilities, but she lacked a central focus, a cause.

Philip Hillis was Cora's and Isaac's third child.



Then, in 1898, a batch of news stories and cartoons from Eastern papers arrived at Cora's door. General Bussey, now prominent in the Republican Party in Washington, D.C. had clipped them out for his daughter, thinking she might be interested in this event called a "mother's congress." She was.

Sifting through the journalists' sarcasm and ridicule, Cora found an idea that struck home: "to save the race through the child." Perhaps here was a purpose that would answer her sense of loss over Philip's death. She read on: "We aim to substitute enlightenment for ignorance in regard to maternity—to make of every household a home by educating the fathers and mothers in true parenthood by bettering the conditions of the home,

multiplying its pleasures and creating more ideal surroundings for the children."

Cora was intrigued. She convinced her editor at *Iowa Homestead* to send her to cover the next National Mothers' Congress in 1899. She served as the delegate from the Iowa Child Study Society, a group of about 200 members who at that time were distributing educational pamphlets to teachers. At the University of Iowa two professors were beginning psychological investigations of children. And H. E. Kratz, president of the Child Study Society and superintendent of Sioux City Public Schools, wrote her, "There is a willingness to listen to discussions of this kind, and on the whole, the outlook for advanced work on Child Study is very encouraging."

Cora set out for Washington in February. On the 13th, the day before the congress was to convene, 35 inches of snow fell on Washington. While the blizzard slowed other delegates and postponed the conference until February 16, it didn't stop Cora. On the morning of the 14th she was the first delegate to arrive.

During that week, Cora became close to Mrs. Theodore Birney, who, with Mrs. Phoebe A. Hearst, "a millionairess of most generous impulses," had founded the congress three years earlier. Midweek Cora overheard Mrs. Birney and another board member discussing proposed sites for the next congress. The women considered Kansas City, Chicago, Denver, San Francisco. To Cora, the choice was obvious: Des Moines.

That day Cora wired the board an invitation from the mayor of Des Moines to hold the next congress there. Then she wired the mayor to tell him what he had just done. She asked for backing of her idea from the Des Moines Women's Club and got it. The congress ended in a few days. Having done what she could in Washington, Cora set to work back home, gathering letters of invitation from prominent Iowans and literature describing Des Moines's hospitality. These she forwarded on to Washington.

Sixteen cities in the western half of the United States were competing for the congress. But Cora and her hometown won. By early April Mrs. Birney wired her



As both mother and social activist, Cora Bussey Hillis valued Iowa's children.

announcing Des Moines as the next site. The press was jubilant, calling it the "most interesting national convention of modern times" and "a triumph for the most wide-awake city in the west." The congress would draw three times as many visitors to Des Moines as any Chautauqua had, they predicted, and a good deal of money. And all the credit went to Cora, "one of the brainiest and original of Iowa women." Cora had given Des Moines another reason to be proud of itself.

Now that she had won the congress she had to produce the Iowa delegates, and so set out to organize mothers' clubs across the state. She didn't expect it to be easy. Years later she recalled, "Here was I, bidden to preach a new gospel to a state full of mothers, the majority of whom really believed they already knew all there was to be known about child-care." Everywhere she announced that "the coming of the Congress to Des Moines means that for the coming year we will be the center of interest to all the educators, professors and club people of the country. The attention of people in all the colleges and schools will be turned towards us, and the thought of all the great intellectual minds will be given to the city. It will give Des Moines more prominent advertising than any city of the west has ever had before."

Through a pyramid structure, Cora, as state regent, appointed county regents who appointed regents in each town to form clubs. Hints for setting up clubs, enlisting the interest of fathers, and coordinating with teachers were mailed out, and programs and reading lists prepared. "There was not a penny to buy stamps, and I could give little beside myself and my personal allowance and what I could raise by personal effort. Yet the work prospered," she wrote. "I tell all this to you who are working to encourage you to forget yourselves in your work—your limitations—your fatigue and discouragement over slow results. Keep before you only the righteousness of the cause and its ultimate success."

She cautioned women not to create a club for the sake of having a club, but to help parents and teachers in need, to improve conditions in the schools, to provide for neglected and delinquent children—in short, to focus on children. Clubs sprang up across the state, generally after her encouraging visits, and took on various projects. Some provided clothes for needy children; some made sanitation inspections at the schools. A rural club obtained a covered vehicle to transport young children to the one-room schoolhouse; others dealt with temperance. Clubs instructed girls in home economics, boys in manual labor skills, and impoverished mothers

in the healthiest and easiest ways to care for house and family.

When the National Congress opened in Des Moines May 21, 1900, Iowa boasted 644 mothers' clubs (under various names) representing 21,200 members. The Des Moines auditorium had a capacity of 4,500 and in some daytime sessions speeches were repeated to overflow audiences in the YMCA. Hotels were booked up and Des Moines families hosted delegates in their homes.

Civic pride and anticipated profits must have generated the overwhelming support that the press had given the congress in the previous year. For when the congress actually convened, the press reacted with confusion and complaint to the issue—a congress of *mothers*. It must have been a confusing, threatening redefinition of an age-old social role, and many were not yet clear what it meant.

Ever since the Industrial Revolution had pulled more women into factory labor forces, and the development of "domestic machinery" had reduced the workload of the housewife, women were growing aware that they could participate more in the daily goings-on of society, instead of being cloistered in the home. But tradition was strong and Iowa was largely rural. Granted, Susan B. Anthony and Iowa's own Carrie Chapman Catt had their followings in the state, but women were still 20 years away from winning the right to vote. And now 3,000 mothers were descending on Des Moines, for what purpose? One paper reassured that the meeting "was not made up of ancient maiden ladies who wanted to vote, and women with double chins who demanded equal rights and all the seats in the cars. With few exceptions the delegates were wives or mothers or both, who consider it enough to devote themselves to the business of running things in a satisfactory way at home, leaving politics and mercantile affairs generally to their husbands and sons."

Perhaps these women would not upset the vote or close the saloons, but to many the congress was still a "useless expenditure of money and lavender perfume." The *Council Bluffs Nonpareil* refused to take the congress seriously, reporting: "Opening day Mothers' Congress—pink roses—prayer—pink and blue ribbons—address of welcome—white organdy with lace insertions and pink satin ribbons— . . . health as influenced by dress—marguerites with pink frosting—child study a leading science—fawn colored novelty cloth, embroidered in white silk, yoke of white mousseline and jet— . . . elevating home life—black lace over grey silk bodice—music by the mandolin club—all permanent improvement of the race must come through the mothers." A New York *Tribune* cartoon titled "Mother's Congress"



The Iowa State Regent drumming for delegates to the Mothers Congress at Des Moines

"SO, YOU SEE, THERE ARE SEVERAL THINGS THAT WOULD INTEREST YOU, AND I'M SURE YOU WOULD ENJOY YOURSELF VERY MUCH. NOW, CAN'T I PERSUADE YOU TO COME TO OUR NEXT MOTHERS' MEETING?"
"WELL, YER LEDDYSHIP, YOU'RE VERY KIND; BUT I WAS NEVER A SOCIETY WOMAN!"—(Punch.)

Pasted into Hillis's scrapbook was this cartoon, with the handwritten comment, "The Iowa State Regent drumming for delegates to the Mothers Congress in Des Moines."

portrayed a haggard, ragged mother in the slums replying to a well-dressed matron's invitation to join a club: "Well, yer [ladyship], you're very kind; but I was never a society woman!"

Several newspapers applauded the concept of the congress and assumed the delegates to be as intelligent and competent as any group of professional men brought together, but others accused mothers of abandoning children and husbands at home so they could attend a national tea party. One paper conceded that the congress "has a mission if nothing more is done than to call a halt on the new woman who has invaded every occupation except breaking prairie, and they say she does that in Kansas."

Inside at the congress, speakers and delegates, too, were dealing with this conflict of tradition and new roles for women. Mrs. Birney clarified the congress's stand that women should realize the opportunities of domestic life when considering other careers, and that the goal was to "keep women with families of children from falling behind the times, getting 'rusty' and growing old

before their time. The central object of the whole organization is the child."

The delegates were choosing motherhood, but in the 20th century it was to be an informed, carefully examined decision. One speaker traced back the cultural values attributed to women—delicacy, weakness, and dependence—and studied the paradox of the holiness of motherhood and the impurity of actual pregnancy and birth. It was time to discard stereotyped assessments of male and female roles. When Professor Oscar Chrisman, a speaker from Kansas State Normal School, maintained that men never love and women never reason, that women dress for sexual attraction and that they should be educated mainly for motherhood, his remarks were followed by choruses of hisses and delegates demanding the floor to refute his statements.

The congress was breaking new ground, asking that parenting be recognized as a profession that demands creativity, responsibility, and commitment, and that women, as primary caretakers of the nation's children, had just as much need and just as much right to come together for educational, social, or political goals as did any other profession.

Cora declared the opening day of the congress to be the proudest day of her life. On the closing day, she was unanimously elected president of the newly formed Iowa Congress of Mothers and lost no time in turning her ideas into realities by inspiring and organizing the women of Iowa. Soon after a free children's ward was set up in Des Moines's Iowa Methodist Hospital. Through the Penny Saving System, Des Moines schoolchildren learned to save money—nearly \$2,500 in four months in a city-wide account, in fact. Sewing circles were mobilized to help flood victims or truant children who needed clothes.

Meanwhile, despite meager finances, Cora prepared for the 1902 Iowa congress, focusing on an issue introduced in the final speeches at the last congress—legislation creating juvenile courts. Cora had been corresponding with other states which had passed similar bills, and in the 1901 *Suggestions*, the publication of the congress, she quoted extensively the Honorable Harvey B. Hurd. Hurd had coauthored with Lucy Flower the Juvenile Court Act of Illinois, the first state to pass such a law. Before juvenile courts were established, children had been dragged through the long

legal process as adults—detained in police stations and jails, tried as adults, and often sent to prisons. There they had received “an education sufficient to have made them pretty well-posted criminals by the time they got out,” wrote Chicago juvenile court judge Richard S. Tuthill. A juvenile court system, on the other hand, would provide separate courts, detention homes, and probation officers. Hurd argued that it was the state’s duty to act as *parens patriae* for neglected children. Mature judgment could not be expected of a child, nor should he be punished as harshly as an adult.

When the 1902 Iowa Congress of Mothers convened, Cora led the 200 delegates to the Capitol. During short recesses she addressed the House and Senate, giving notice that “Two years hence we will present a juvenile court and probation law, and earnestly request the legislators to study the literature of the movement as it appears in the current press.”

Within those next two years Cora generated a lot of press. About her hometown she discovered, “In Des Moines we have a miserable system of taking care of these little folks. The only place for the detention of these young people is one small room, the most of which is cut up into pigeon holes just large enough for a cot and a chair. In these the children sleep and during the day are all allowed to mingle in the small remaining space. The contaminating influence of a few bad boys in this cage with a number of little girls can readily be realized. There have been as many as thirty there at once. These children are fed but black coffee with bread and molasses with soup for dinner.”

She urged ministers to sermonize on the issue. Support from labor unions, civic clubs, welfare groups, and professionals poured in. In December she presided over a symposium at the YMCA, quoting Judge Tuthill: “Heretofore the state has only given the policeman with his club, police cells, jails and prisons to children, who, before they knew what crime really was, committed some act which in an adult would be a crime; punished them for it, and threw them into constant companionship with mature criminals where their delinquency speedily developed into criminality.” Judge Gifford L. Robinson of the State Board of Control brought the issue home, stating that 20% of Iowa convicts were under age 20 and 90% from the poorer classes.

The next month Judge Ben B. Lindsey came into the picture. The 34-year-old judge of juvenile court in Denver was known for both his enthusiastic, eloquent speeches and for his successful system. He claimed that only nine out of 359 first offenders came back through his courtroom on a second offense. Other states with juvenile courts claimed similar success rates.

By February 3, the bill had been drafted by Cora and Chester C. Cole, a former Iowa chief justice and then dean of the Drake Law School. The bill called for a juvenile court in every county for children under 16. It created probation officers and detention homes. It forbade the confinement of children with adults. In April, after modifications, the bill passed both houses unanimously, perhaps because there were no appropriations for probation officers or detention homes. These funds would have to come later. It was a predestined victory, but Cora had worked hard to point out the obvious need and to prick the conscience of Iowa. Later she would analyze what she had undertaken—“to try to overturn a century old system of Jurisprudence; introduce juvenile courts, and compel reluctant judges to turn from the business of safeguarding the almighty dollar long enough to save some little immortal child. I must do all this and yet be, in my own home, the kind of mother whose children would reflect honor on herself and her home.”

But tragedy seemed to hover over Cora’s home. She had searched her heart for some divine reason when her sister Lollie died while visiting relatives in Alabama. Cora had written her cousin Florence: “I think I know how a wild bird must feel when it beats its wings against the fatal bars which shut it in. I have beaten against the bars until my heart is sore and my spirit is broke. They say ‘He doeth all things well,’ but I do not understand. I never yet saw the *well* in Mama’s case, nor do I see it in Lollie’s. I suppose I am wicked but I can’t be reconciled and I won’t be a hypocrite and say I am when every atom in me rebels at being robbed of Mother, my lovely boy and the only sister I have. You see I am in a bad way.”

It was not over. In early August, 1903, eight months before her legislative victory for the children of Iowa, Cora’s nine-year-old son Isaac died of a ruptured appendix.

In 1904 Cora began speaking at county Farmers’ Institutes. Her speeches, titled “A Field Worth Cultivating,” “Seed Worth Sowing,” or “Child Culture Vs. Corn Culture,” were slated between talks on fencing, manuring fields, and breeding hogs. She urged Iowa farmers to give as much care and attention to their children as to their crops and livestock, a theme Iowa would hear again. Children must not be neglected “in father’s passion for adding farm to farm or the mother’s house-keeping fury.” Wrote a rural newspaper, “She succeeded in taking the attention of the farmer for the time from corn, cattle, hogs, and rotation of crops and centered it

upon the home, the boy, and the tired mother." Eventually she helped organize a woman's department within the institutes for greater integration of home and farm.

In October, 1906 she resigned as president of the Iowa Congress of Mothers, but she continued to give her energies and talents to the organization, later holding national office, as it evolved into the Congress of Parent-Teachers Associations.

There is a pause here in Cora's public life. One hopes she finally took time to rest, to cook her superb Creole dishes, to develop prints in her darkroom, or to feel the solid satisfaction of working with wood and simple tools. Surely she deserved such pleasures. The house sparkled as the Christmas of 1906 approached. But then eight-year-old Doris came home ill from school, where she had been exposed to scarlet fever and diphtheria. Ellen, the eldest child, also caught the fever. On Christmas Eve Cyrus carried his little sister downstairs to see the tree and the presents. On the night of New Year's Day, Doris died.

Cora nursed Ellen back to health, but the emotional and physical drain were tremendous. She could not recover from this fourth tragedy. For months, decimated with grief, she sought seclusion.

Cora gradually picked up her causes again, carrying them to more Farmers' Institutes, to mothers' congresses, to President Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission on which she served, to Des Moines citizens for city beautification plans. The winter of 1909-10 she headed south for New Orleans, where friends and family and nights out at the opera house made her feel 25 again, instead of twice that age. And packed along with the fancy gowns and jewels she loved, she brought her favorite causes, speaking on child welfare and helping to establish a night school for the poor children of New Orleans.

But there were always more setbacks. A year later surgeons at the Mayo Clinic discovered and removed a blood clot in her throat and her recovery lasted several months. Illness was not new to Cora. In her letters she often mentioned she was unwell, but seldom gave details. Migraine headaches often forced her to bed, but unexpected company or a suggested outing would get her back up again. Surely her health suffered from the public demands and family tragedies of these years, but in some sense she thrived on work and on challenge.



Tragedy continued to haunt the Hillis home. Above: Isaac Jr. and Doris Hillis.

She traveled across Iowa inspiring and instructing, still managing to spend more time with family than did her socialite friends out playing progressive euchre.

Her stamina and will must have been remarkable. Certainly her intuitive powers were. Cora's family grew used to watching her hunches come true. One morning she awoke from her dreams to tell her family of a terrible disaster at sea, and detailed vividly the chaos on deck as passengers and lifeboats went overboard. Later the news reports came in of the sinking of the "unsinkable" *Titanic*.

She worked to pass a Vital Statistics Bill in the Iowa Legislature in late 1912. Accurate registration of birth and death information was one of the first steps needed to reduce the incredibly high infant mortality rates in the United States. But the bill never got beyond the Appropriations Committee. Senator Thomas H. Smith wrote to Cora, "They wanted to save the little appropriation required that they might invest it in hog serum or in some other way add to the health and comfort of cattle and hogs." It was becoming an old and grating song to Cora, this choice of livestock welfare over child welfare.

But Iowa needed statistics, and if the lawmakers wouldn't provide the means, someone else had to. The Des Moines Child Welfare Association was formed as a branch of the Department of Public Safety. As the Baby Saving Campaign took shape, committees were appointed to handle birth registration (thus registering over 90% of Des Moines's births in one year), free ice and pure milk distribution, visiting nurses, and Cora's project, the fresh air camp.

Cora secured the finances to set up the camp—

including a large screened nursery—at Good Park and supervised the camp the second month. Besides lecturing on packing nutritious lunches, discarding patent medicines and whiskey as colic cures, avoiding loan sharks, and bathing and feeding children, Cora and the nurse rocked babies while the mothers slept undisturbed for the first time in years. Temperatures hovered around 100 the summer of 1913, but 117 mothers and children left the camp revived and educated. Cora left the camp bitter and angry. “Whatever good was done to a family by a rest at the camp would be quickly undone if they returned to the house from which they came . . . crowded two and three to a lot, treeless, sun baked, near undrained ponds, filthy outhouses. . . .” She surveyed over half the realtors in Des Moines and found only two decent homes available for fair rents. Some of the landlords of the most deplorable homes were Des Moines’s wealthiest men. This time all of Des Moines was not so proud of itself.

By the next year, an idea that Cora had carried with her for years, keeping it glowing like a coal on a cold hearth, finally burst into flame and consumed all of her energies and the imagination of countless Iowans.

The story had started when Cora was 12. Lollie, then two, had contracted a serious spinal disease. For years her parents had searched for doctors who could cure her. They had prescribed several different treatments, but their diagnoses had all been equally grim. When

Cora’s mother died, the bride of only a few weeks had carried on the search. No two doctors agreed and yet they all warned Cora that her sister, at best, would be bedridden for life. Cora rejected this, and in the house on Sixth Avenue, she had set out to educate Lollie in moments when the invalid was strong enough to study. Lollie and Cora had proven the doctors wrong when Lollie completed high school and entered a local college at age 17. Along with Cora’s growing distrust of the medical profession’s ability to adequately deal with Lollie, she developed related doubts as she raised her own children. “I waded through oceans of stale textbook theory, written largely, I fancy, by bachelor professors or elderly teachers, with no actual personal contact with youth,” she wrote later. “I discovered there was no well defined science of child rearing, no accepted standards on which all might agree. I found that all knowledge of the child was theoretical and most advice experimental.”

More was known about the development of a dog or a cow than about a child’s growth. And, particularly in Iowa, applied science had helped farmers produce superior crops and livestock and meet every problem with well-researched solutions. In fact, at the Pan-American Exposition in 1901 Iowa claimed 285 of the 289 agricultural prizes awarded.

But as Iowa’s farm products picked up more blue ribbons and Cora immersed herself into child welfare work, the number of citizens in institutions cried bitterly to her. She answered back, sometimes with moving eloquence, other times with hard statistics and cost analyses. Could not applied science based on the study of the normal child result in a dependable science of child-rearing, so that some of these cases in the asylums and jails might have been prevented? Cora was sure of it, but it would be years before she would find others who were as convinced as she.

Late in 1901 Cora approached the president of Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts at Ames with her idea. She described the problem and outlined the solution: scientific investigation of everything related to child life. President Beardsheer thought it over, but told Cora that while the idea was sound, it was too new. There were neither the trained workers nor the money. A visit to the next president at Ames a few years later was again fruitless. Meanwhile Cora took every opportunity to educate the public. In every speech she stressed that children as well as hogs and cattle should benefit from applied science.

In 1908 she turned towards Iowa City. State University of Iowa President George E. MacLean listened so attentively that, as she spoke the familiar words, the

Hillis holds babies at the fresh air camp she helped organize.



idea took on the form of a research station, a laboratory where normal children would be studied extensively. MacLean's interest was sincere, but so was the University's need for a \$150,000 state appropriation for a women's dormitory. But now MacLean, too, started speaking publicly of the idea.

While the next University president told her she could help most by procuring a set of chimes for a campanile, Cora persisted, watching as public opinion crystallized. Later she wrote, "A great poet has said: Men get opinions as boys learn to spell, by re-iteration chiefly. And I re-iterated endlessly. I developed an amusing facility in directing discussion to child-welfare channels."

In 1914 she approached her fifth University president, Thomas Macbride. He listened and replied: "I believe we can do something along this line." He directed her to Dr. Carl Seashore, Dean of the Graduate College,

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Carl Seashore adopted and set Hillis's idea into motion.

who adopted the idea and appointed a faculty child-welfare committee to develop working plans. As state chairman, Cora organized support.

Over the Christmas holidays, the small group (Cora was now president of the Iowa Child-Welfare Association) churned out plans and letters from her house. As drafted, the bill asked for a \$50,000 annual ap-

propriation to establish a research station as part of the University. Through study, it would establish norms for every phase of early childhood, develop methods of care and treatment to bring about balanced growth and correction of defects, and disseminate this information to Iowa parents.

Years of contacts with individuals and groups across the state were paying off. Cora had no computerized mailing lists or major expenditures, but she organized her support. Within eight days every major group in the state—political groups, labor unions, Parent-Teachers Associations, professional and fraternal bodies, the clergy, to name but a few—had been instructed to flood the legislators with mail. And flood they did.

The bill was out of committee and passage looked promising, even though the appropriation requested

had been slashed to \$25,000. Suddenly Cora had to leave for Washington. Her father was dying of pneumonia. She came home two weeks later to more bad news.

During her absence another bill had come up. It appeared that the sheep of Iowa needed a barn for their ten-day stay at the state fair each year, and this barn would cost \$25,000. Well, Iowa was proud of her sheep and her state fair, all right, and what a chance to show them off. There was only so much money, after all, and Iowans didn't need an extravagant bunch of scientists telling them how to raise their children. The sheep won.

Representative Moore of Guthrie was not alone in railing against the so-called "economy advocates" of the House: "You cut out publication clauses to save a few cents, you kick against every little appropriation that comes along, you forget the interests of the children, you forget the interest of advancement in order to save a little money, then turn and put the whole business into a sheep barn."

As 1917 approached, Cora restocked her arsenal for the next general assembly. This year she found even more support. A bad fall had confined her to bed for five weeks, so she set up headquarters in her bedroom. Within two weeks she had the support of 30 state organizations representing half-a-million Iowans. Other states were considering the idea of studying child life, and Cora feared that her talented professors at Iowa would be pulled away. There could be no more waiting.

She told the state the money was an investment, not an expenditure. In nine years Iowa had spent 18 million dollars on the thousands of citizens in state institutions. If only four children per year per county were helped by the work of the station so as to not become delinquent or defective wards of the state, the money saved would pay for the station. If only ten children per county were helped to make their grades, the money saved in repeated education would again cover the cost.

To Governor Harding she claimed the requested appropriation was impossible to reject: "The amount asked is so small—in a state like Iowa—the price of a postage stamp per capita, three puffs of a good cigar, half a glass of milk, half of a good apple, one third of an orange—two sticks of chewing gum—such a trifle per capita that is good politics as well as good business sense."

She appealed to state pride: "The eyes of the educational world are on Iowa." She reiterated points she had made in a letter to legislators two years earlier where she had not minced words: "Defeat of the Child's Welfare Bill will mean the death warrant to hundreds of

Iowa's babies and a life-long handicap through neglect of curable preventable defects to many of Iowa boys and girls . . . are you willing to assume such a terrible responsibility?"

The bill stalled in a House committee, so Cora hobbled to the State House on crutches to get it reported out that day and passed a few days later. But in the Senate the bill faced the opposition of eleven members of the Appropriations Committee. W. A. Jessup, now president at the University and a strong supporter of the bill, was giving up hope. Cora went back to Sixth Avenue to do her homework, "to study those eleven men. Two were democrats and Catholics, somewhat aloof from the majority. One was a pessimist, two were old fogies of limited education and narrow outlook. One firmly believed that instinct could teach any mother how to care for her children. 'It was nature's plan,' he argued, 'A cat could care for her kitten, a mother should be able to care for her child.' Each of the others had some particular bias which it took time to unravel. I never personally spoke to any of these gentlemen, but I know that for ten days thereafter, they had many calls and letters from unexpected sources, from the Bishop of the Diocese to the mother of ten, doctors, members of the Board of Control and state officials. Still no action was taken."

Then World War I was declared. The research station bill was apparently "put to sleep" in committee. State expenditures were directed toward preparing for

the war. All across the nation, America's best lined up outside recruitment offices, and appalling numbers were turned away after the physical exams. Many of the physical handicaps reported stemmed from childhood and poor upbringing.

One morning Cora seized on the *Des Moines Register* headlines announcing that 209 of 250 boys had failed their physicals the previous day. By noon every legislator in both houses found on his desk a letter suggesting that the mothers of these 209 "rejected young patriots" no doubt had raised them by tradition and instinct, and that a little well-distributed scientific guidance on child-raising 30 years ago might have put America in a better position now to defend democracy.

The bill passed. Cora's greatest dream and most difficult challenge was a reality. She wrote to Seashore, "For a time I shall feel lost. In putting away some of my material the thought came, this is like putting away the clothes of the child I had lost, so much a part of me has been this work."

Cora trusted deeply in science and so she left the research up to the staff at the station. But she remained in constant touch with Seashore and Dr. Bird Baldwin, the director. Like the proud mother of a child genius, she was determined that the research station should gain national prominence and leadership, and yet remain at the service of the Iowans who had produced and paid for it. Since then, the Iowa Child-Welfare Research Station has been renamed the Institute of Child Behavior

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Day Message	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	Nite
Night Letter	N L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a day message. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM



NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT

GEORGE W. E. ATKINS, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Day Message	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	Nite
Night Letter	N L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a day message. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

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1917 APR 26 PM 6 24

MRS I. L. HILLIS

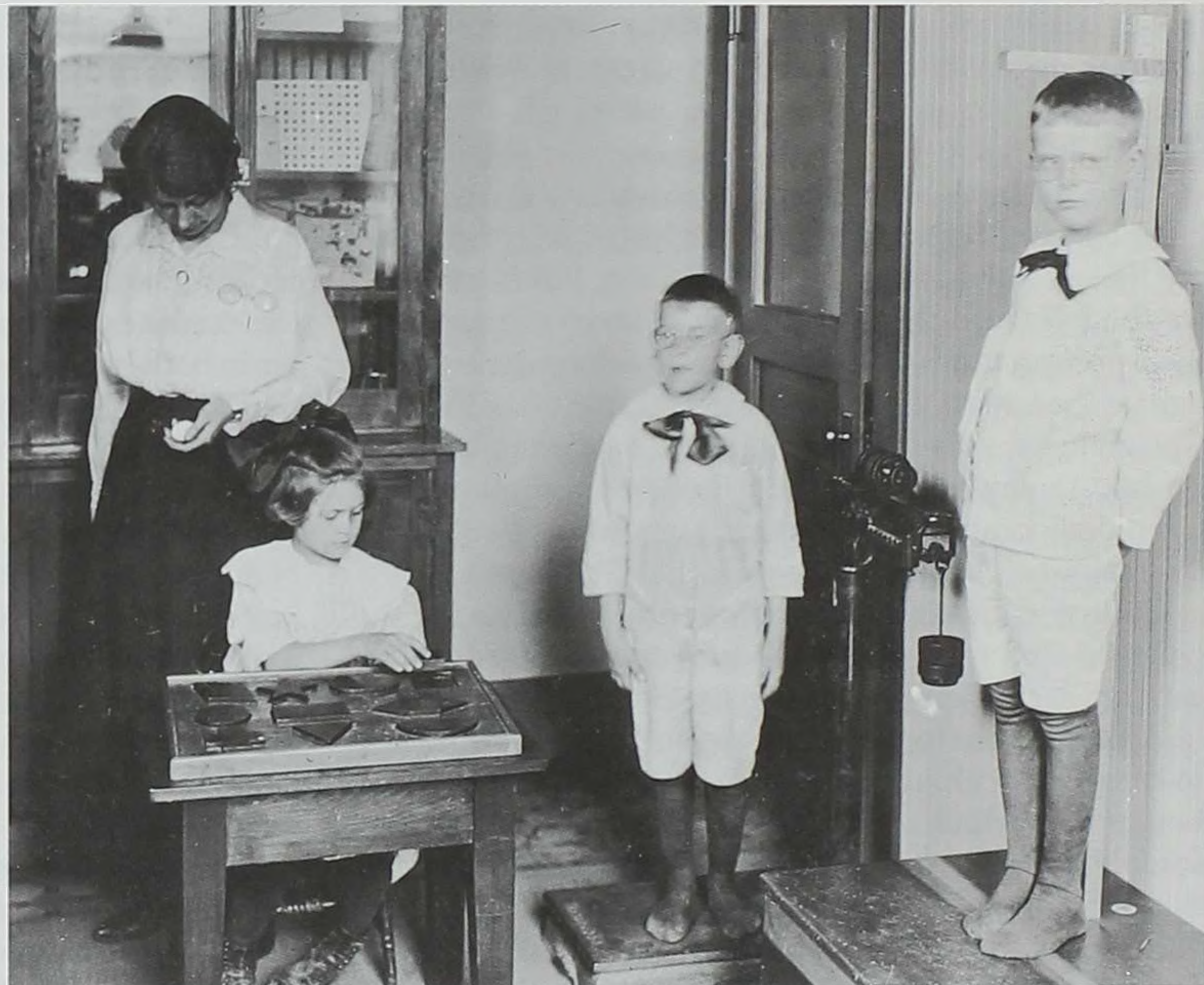
0686 CR RALEIGH HOTEL WASHINGTON DC

CHILD WELFARE BILL SIGNED APRIL TWENTY FIRST AM SAVING PEN FOR YOU

W L HARDING GOVERNOR.

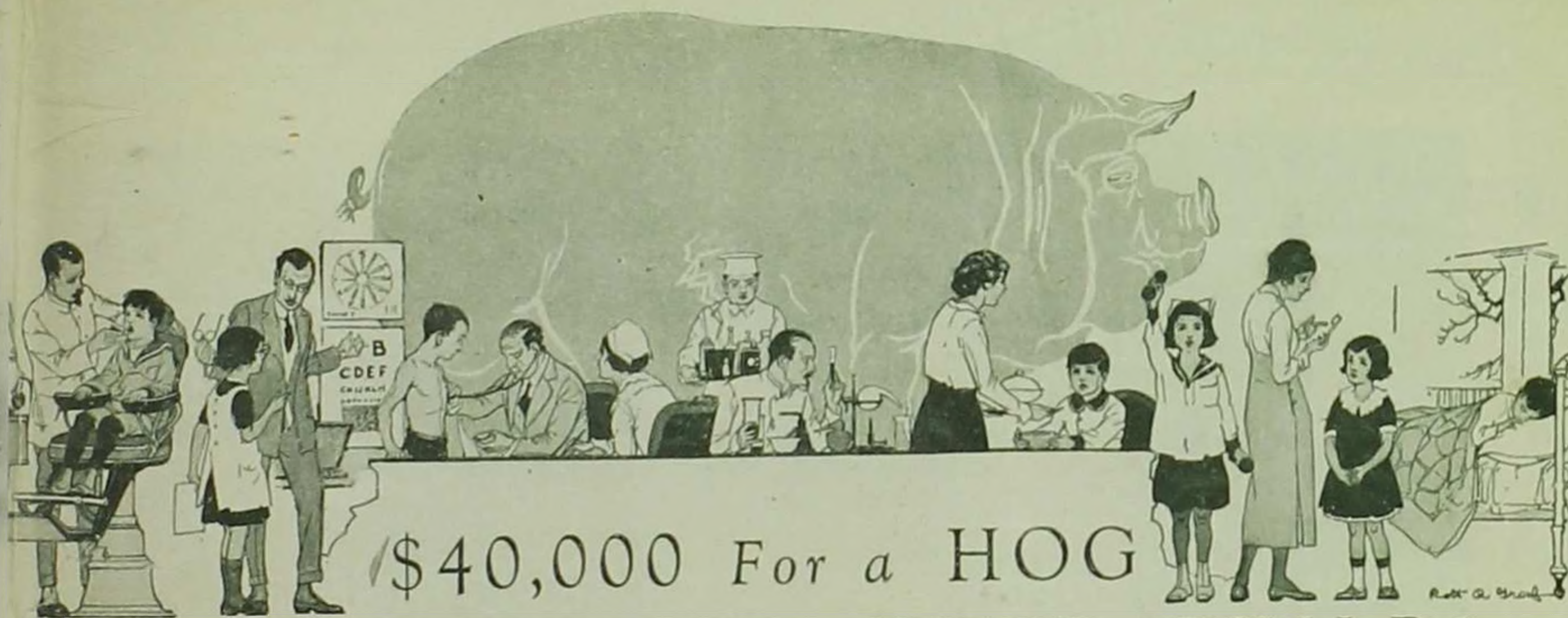


Early scenes from the Child-Welfare Research Station directed by Bird Baldwin (above).



ABOVE AND BELOW: UNIVERSITY OF IOWA LIBRARIES (SPECIAL COLLECTIONS)





\$40,000 For a HOG HOW MUCH FOR YOUR CHILD?

The State of Iowa spends money to raise normal children. How about your State? This is the story of the Iowa Child Welfare Research Station

By DR. BIRD T. BALDWIN, DIRECTOR, and ANNE O'HAGAN for THE DELINEATOR

The September 1921 *Delineator* magazine helped spread the idea nationally of Iowa's Child-Welfare Research Station's role in helping "fathers and mothers in the business of raising a magnificent crop of boys and girls." The article detailed the evolution of Hillis's vision and how "Iowa has begun to give parents as much assistance in their problem as it gives poultrymen, dairymen and corn-growers in theirs."

and Development, but it has remained true to its original purposes, listing over 2,000 publications and major research breakthroughs concerning physical growth rates, factors affecting children's I.Q.'s, speech retraining for cerebral palsied children, and teacher discipline.

The research station got off to a fitful start as the war pulled away some of the staff. But to Cora this only underlined the necessity of child study. All over the world nations were taking inventory of their natural resources, gearing up factories, and conserving materials. But Cora believed children were a nation's greatest natural resource and she demanded that they be raised to reach their potential: quality American citizens ready to lead the world in pursuit of a lasting peace. Towards this goal, she proposed to Herbert Hoover and President Woodrow Wilson a nation-wide survey for outstanding youth, physical and mental measurements of all American children, and compulsory feeding and housing standards. The scope of her proposition was so broad and the product so nebulous that it seemed only a vision, her usual persuasive eloquence lost in her eagerness to reconstruct her country and her world after the chaos of the Great War.

Cora turned 60 in 1918, the year of her husband's death. She wrote President Wilson offering to serve at home or abroad to carry out her proposals. This plan never took shape, but in the next six years as she traveled widely serving on national commissions and boards, she was her own ambassador. The juvenile bill and the research station were her credentials, and her eloquence still moved people to action. A sidetrip after a 1920 Dallas convention took her to the inaugural ceremonies of President Alvaro Obregon in Mexico. Seated next to Mrs. Obregon during a dinner, Cora talked of

her life work. Within two months Mexico held its first conference on child welfare.

In the summer of 1924, while vacationing in Minnesota with her son Cyrus, the steering gear on the car broke and they crashed into another car. Cora was killed.

Friends and colleagues were stunned with the grief and sorrow that had devastated Cora again and again when her three children and sister Lollie died. "Our hearts are burdened with the needless suffering in the world, with the cry for help from the countless thousands of victims of *preventable* maladies and sorrows," she had written. "In the watches of the night we have thought of it all . . ."

Cora's sensitivities were acute and her visions reached beyond her own life and beyond Des Moines, Iowa to a "regeneration of the race through enlightened parenthood." And yet the list of her concrete achievements in child welfare is the result of tempering these visions with a political shrewdness, a respect for facts, and exhausting years of hard work. ❖

This article first appeared in the November-December 1979 Palimpsest. Its author, Ginalie Swaim, became the editor of the Palimpsest in 1986 and continues today as editor of Iowa Heritage Illustrated.

NOTE ON SOURCES

The major source for this article was the Cora Bussey Hillis Papers in the Manuscript Collection of the State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City). The papers had been gathered, arranged, and donated to the Society by Hazel Hillis Modine, who married Cora's son Cyrus in 1928, three years after Cora's death. Also helpful were articles written by Mrs. Modine about Cora's work: "Securing the Juvenile Court Law in Iowa," *Annals of Iowa*, January, 1942; "The Formative Years, 1900-1950," *The First Fifty Years* (Iowa Congress of Parents and Teachers, 1950); and an unpublished paper written in 1975.

For Release Saturday Noon, May 25th.

COMMONWEALTH OF IOWA
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
DES MOINES

A Proclamation

To the People of Iowa:

WHEREAS, our country is engaged in war with foreign powers; and

WHEREAS, controversy has arisen in parts of this state concerning the use of foreign languages;

Therefore, for the purpose of ending such controversy and to bring about peace, quiet and harmony among our people, attention is directed to the following, and all are requested to govern themselves accordingly.

The official language of the United States and the state of Iowa is the English language. Freedom of speech is guaranteed by federal and state Constitutions, but this is not a guaranty of the right to use a language other than the language of this country—the English language. Both federal and state Constitutions also provide that “no laws shall be made respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Each person is guaranteed freedom to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, but this guaranty does not protect him in the use of a foreign language when he can as well express his thought in English, nor entitle the person who cannot speak or understand the English language to employ a foreign language, when to do so tends, in time of national peril, to create discord among neighbors and citizens, or to disturb the peace and quiet of the community.

Every person should appreciate and observe his duty to refrain from all acts or conversation which may excite suspicion or produce strife among the people, but in his relation to the public should so demean himself that every word and act will manifest his loyalty to his country and his solemn purpose to aid in achieving victory for our army and navy and the permanent peace of the world.

If there must be disagreement, let adjustment be made by those in official authority rather than by the participants in the disagreement. Voluntary or self-constituted committees or associations undertaking the settlement of such disputes, instead of promoting peace and harmony, are a menace to society and a fruitful cause of violence. The great aim and object of all should be unity of purpose and a solidarity of all the people under the flag for victory. This much we owe to ourselves, to posterity, to our country and to the world.



The Babel Proclamation

by Nancy Derr

In July of 1918, Iowa Governor William L. Harding confided to the State Bar Association: "I have information that a dozen foreign language preachers on the last Sunday of the Red Cross drive told their congregations that the Red Cross nurses go abroad to act as companions for our soldiers." Harding [*opposite*] offered no further proof for his claim despite calls by newspapers to either produce the guilty and prosecute them or "admit he was talking for effect." Harding needed no proof, and he often talked for effect. He saw the invisible hand of conspiracy working through the foreign-language ministers who he claimed undermined trust in the nation with their indecent tales, communicated in code, led fanatically loyal followings, and ultimately posed a strong threat to the Nation.

Since the beginning of America's entry into the World War, Harding had lambasted the lazy and the indifferent for their unpatriotic lassitude, but he saw the foreign-language ministers as a far more powerful group than he could control with mere words no matter how strong his rhetoric. Majority opinion in Iowa shared Harding's fears and would support whatever action he deemed necessary, but the traditional separatism of foreign-stock ministers and congregations made them unresponsive to the pressures of community disapproval. So Governor Harding resorted to his power of proclamation: he distinguished himself by becoming the only American governor ever to make it a crime to speak any language but English in his state.

In the newspaper controversy that followed his edict, the only "legal" language allowed in Iowa was often referred to as "American." Despite a few pleas for tolerance and a few demands for proof of the need for the proclamation, the native-stock majority in Iowa thought a ban on foreign tongues was a patriotic necessity. The edict and the terminology surrounding it were the culmination of a concentrated effort by civil authority to homogenize citizens of all ethnic backgrounds into flag-waving patriots who identified solely with the nation and its might and power. The leaders of the "100% Americans" assumed that the United States was the

apex of the hierarchy of nations. They thought gratitude and eagerness to sacrifice should be the proper attitude of recent immigrants toward their benefactor, their new homeland, America.

Pre-war nativism became out-and-out chauvinism when it was officially sanctioned by the war. "Hun"-baiting, forced Liberty Bond purchases, dousing with yellow paint the homes and businesses of suspected slackers, all of which the legal authorities tolerated if not encouraged, failed to satisfy the emotional demands of war fanaticism. Harding's language ban came a step closer to satisfying these demands by legitimizing and expressing the desire to suppress all foreign traits, a desire that had been evident before the war in the movement to restrict immigration. The method adopted to suppress these traits was to force on the pluralistic pockets of foreign-speaking groups a public affirmation of nationalistic fervor, partly as punishment for their independence, partly from fear that they had the power to subvert the war effort.

The unfortunate result of the war—obvious later throughout the 1920s—became tragically apparent during the last months of conflict. The pressures it put on Iowa's society led to the virtual obliteration of the self-confident, aggressive German-American community.

The movement toward the language proclamation proceeded in stages. German language instruction was forbidden in public schools, followed by a spate of book burnings. Communities forced parochial schools to close and then outlawed church services in German. People speaking German on the street were attacked and rebuked. German-Americans began to Anglicize or change their names. Most German-language newspapers had to close their offices. Finally, in May, 1918 Governor Harding gave prejudice the force of law and forbade the public use not only of German, but of any "foreign" language.

Before Harding's attack on foreign language, Iowa's diverse ethnic groups from nations neutral or friendly

to the Allies had themselves joined in the growing hatred of all things German. But now, non-English-speaking groups became identified with the scapegoated German-Americans. Their protest that their loyalty had been unfairly impugned came to nothing, and their institutions, bereft of the vital bond of language, started to crumble. Harding was riding the crest of a wave of intolerance, and all objectors were silenced.

Iowa went further than any of the 48 states. It enforced its anti-foreign bias by arresting foreign-language speakers. After the so-called Babel proclamation of May 14, 1918, only English was legal in public or private schools, in public conversations, on trains, over the telephone, at all meetings, and in all religious services. (Most of the arrests were made for violations over the telephone lines, detected by the operator or by party-line users.) Harding argued that the language ban was legal under the First Amendment, which, the proclamation noted, does *not* "entitle the person who cannot speak or understand the English language to employ a foreign language, when to do so tends, in time of national peril, to create discord among neighbors and citizens, or to disturb the peace and quiet of the community." Reflecting the extremism that would nearly cost him the November, 1918 election, Harding justified his ban as an effort to harmonize the discord which foreign-language use aroused in communities.

The issue of teaching German in public schools was the first to surface after the United States declared war in 1917. At its November 23, 1917 meeting, the state council of defense resolved "that the public schools of Iowa, supported by public taxation, should discontinue the teaching of the German language . . . in the interest of harmonizing and bringing our people together with a common language, believing thus they would act more patriotically and more essentially with a common purpose." Chairman Lafayette Young, Sr., editor of the *Des Moines Capital*, considered this his special cause. When uniform compliance was not immediate, Young's state defense council repeated its order in late January, 1918, and Governor Harding emphasized his support. In April, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, A. M. Deyoe, once again insisted on the immediate cessation of German instruction. In May, he "conducted a campaign" to get German out of all Iowa schools. By the end of May the opposition was decimated. The success of the spring campaign caused sudden unemployment among German teachers. In Davenport, 27 teachers were precipitously fired in May.

Next, a rash of book burnings filled the news. Book burners needed no more encouragement than that given them by the State Superintendent by making German

Therefore, the following rules should obtain in Iowa during the war:

First. English should and must be the only medium of instruction in public, private, denominational or other similar schools.

Second. Conversation in public places, on trains and over the telephone should be in the English language.

Third. All public addresses should be in the English language.

Fourth. Let those who cannot speak or understand the English language conduct their religious worship in their homes.

This course carried out in the spirit of patriotism, though inconvenient to some, will not interfere with their guaranteed constitutional rights and will result in peace and tranquility at home and greatly strengthen the country in battle. The blessings of the United States are so great that any inconvenience or sacrifice should willingly be made for their perpetuity.

Therefore, by virtue of authority in me vested, I, W. L. Harding, Governor of the State of Iowa, commend the spirit of tolerance and urge that henceforward the with-outlined rules be adhered to by all, that petty differences be avoided and forgotten, and that, united as one people with one purpose and one language, we fight shoulder to shoulder for the good of mankind.

WHEREOF, I have hereunto



Titled "Where he can be kept out of mischief?" this November 1917 cartoon by *Des Moines Register* cartoonist J. N. "Ding" Darling speaks to the fears that German-Americans would support or aid the Germans in World War I. Below: A press release from the files of an Iowa official in the Council of National Defense.

from the German language, and to keep citizens from suspect books, it followed that parochial schools, in which the entire course of instruction might be in German, should be an object for attack. But to attack the parochial schools was to challenge the separatism of ethnic communities directly. Controversy over the receipt by parochial schools of tax monies had raged sporadically over midwestern states, especially in the 1880s and '90s. The animus toward parochial schools had an anti-Catholic as well as an anti-foreign bias, but the attacked groups had weathered these outbursts by effective organization and emphasis upon the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion. Parochial schools had helped maintain the aloof identify of ethnic groups by a combination of religious and cultural instruction and by the relative isolation of their youth. Mennonite communities and the Amana colonies were especially wary of outside influences upon their communities. Most German Evangelical and German Lutheran churches had parochial schools; Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish groups were, at some places, concentrated enough to support parochial schools; Catholic parochial schools were familiar. Pressure to ban German-language instruction in public schools increased to include schools in which all instruction was in German, then spilled over to include all foreign-language parochial schooling, but did not focus upon English-language Catholic parochial schools.

The well-publicized arrest of a German Lutheran minister, Rev. William Schumann of Pomeroy, on seditious

SHSI (IOWA CITY); H. J. METCALF PAPERS

textbooks superfluous. In State Center, Gladbrook, Vinton, and a dozen other towns, students broke into schools at night and made bonfires of the books.

Lafe Young did not feel uncomfortable with the destruction of certain books. As state council chairman he wrote to librarians all over the state requesting the "elimination" of books "written to defend Germany's course in the war." Young apparently was aware that book disposal was an extreme measure, for he reasserted the apocalyptic nature of the struggle: "The present war is between the divine right of kings and the rule of the people."

If one had to guard children

Sauer Kraut is a drug on the Iowa market.

Wholesalers report a very much diminished sale. Folks won't buy the food. They think it is of German origin.

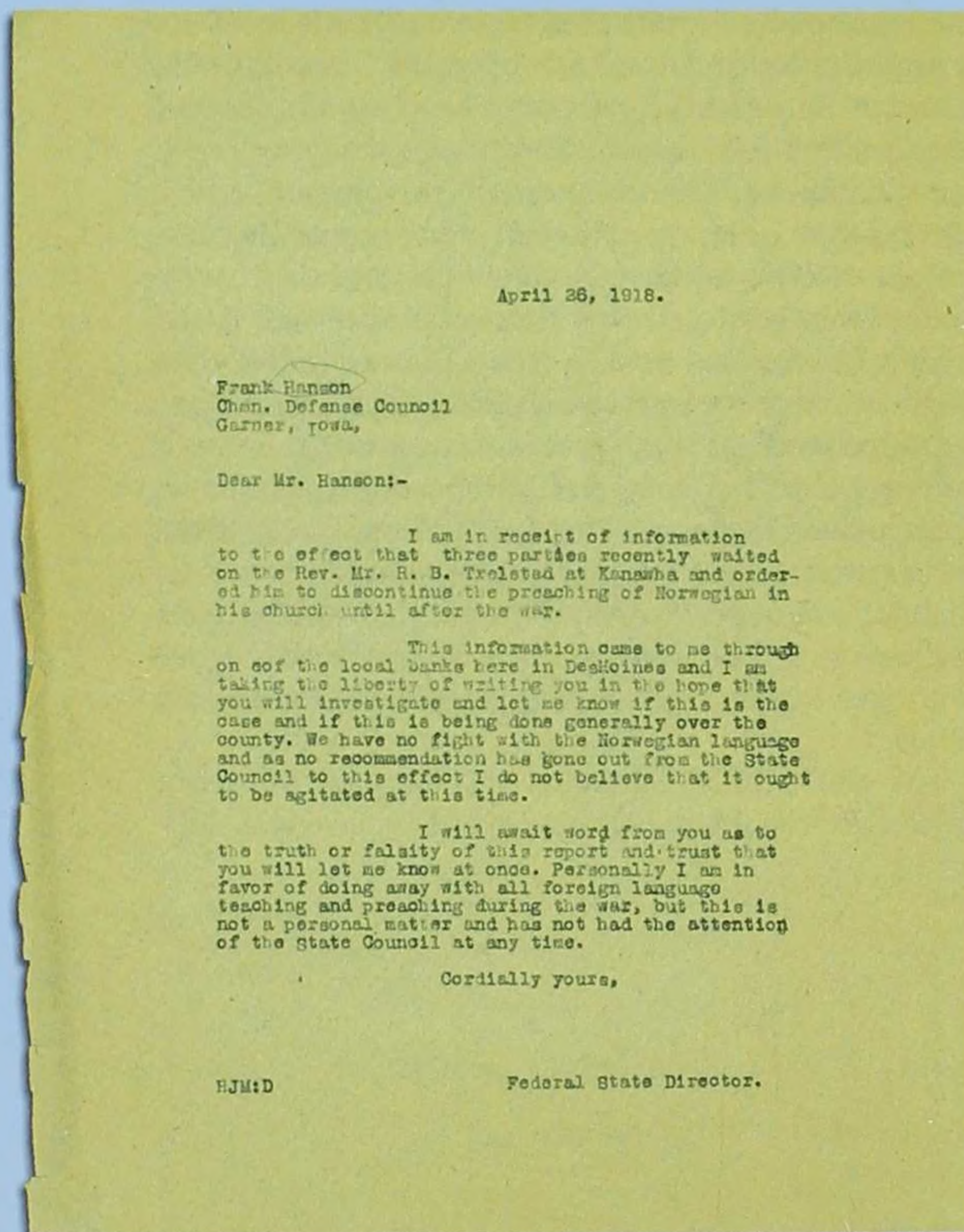
Not so, say the grocers. There are two opinions on it. One is that the invention of both food and name belongs to Norway and the other is that the Dutch of Holland are entitled to the credit.

But, be that as it may, the consumers of Sauer Kraut have broken the habit and there is only an incidental demand for it. It is understood that jobbers at Mason City, Estherville, Des Moines, Marshalltown and other cities in Iowa have big stocks that are stationary. The food used to be a big seller. It still would be if it wasn't for the suspicious name.

It's a good food say the food officials and mighty economical. But folks won't eat it under its old name and they won't buy it under any other. So the grocery jobber who has vats of it is in hard luck, he tells the Food Administration.

INTIMATE GLIMPSES of Iowans addressing the wartime use of foreign languages are provided in the following letters, written to or from Herbert J. Metcalf, or retained in his files as secretary of Iowa's Council of National Defense. Newspaper editor Lafayette ("Lafe") Young chaired the state council.

Metcalf also worked with the wartime United States Public Service Reserve; his USPSR papers, as well as those for the defense council, are in Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City).



April 26, 1918.

Frank Hanson
Chm. Defense Council
Garner, Iowa,

Dear Mr. Hanson:-

I am in receipt of information to the effect that three parties recently waited on the Rev. Mr. R. B. Trelstad at Kanawha and ordered him to discontinue the preaching of Norwegian in his church until after the war.

This information came to me through one of the local banks here in Des Moines and I am taking the liberty of writing you in the hope that you will investigate and let me know if this is the case and if this is being done generally over the county. We have no fight with the Norwegian language and as no recommendation has gone out from the State Council to this effect I do not believe that it ought to be agitated at this time.

I will await word from you as to the truth or falsity of this report and trust that you will let me know at once. Personally I am in favor of doing away with all foreign language teaching and preaching during the war, but this is not a personal matter and has not had the attention of the state Council at any time.

Cordially yours,

HJM:D

Federal State Director.

"I am in receipt of information to the effect that three parties recently waited on the Rev. Mr. R. B. Trelstad at Kanawha and ordered him to discontinue the preaching of Norwegian in his church until after the war.

... We have no fight with the Norwegian language and as no recommendation has gone out from the State Council to this effect I do not believe that it ought to be agitated at this time.

... Personally I am in favor of doing away with all foreign language teaching and preaching during the war."

tion charges in December, 1917, provoked a virtual campaign which Lafe Young began the next month against these groups. Not only were most German Lutheran ministers disloyal, he claimed, but further, any person who appreciated German literature and music had to be loyal to the Kaiser. "Lafayette Young of Des Moines," wrote David Brant, editor of the *Iowa City Republican*, "would crucify every person of German descent."

Young only waxed more intemperate. In a blistering speech to the Dubuque Commercial Club in March, after warming to his subject with atrocity stories and an emphasis upon the "one hundred and twenty-five babies" drowned when the *Lusitania* was sunk, he struck out again at German Lutheran ministers, claiming the "Kultur" they were so proud of was "hogwash," and their music and literature worthless. Young claimed that he had a German background himself, but in judging patriotism, he looked for action. "If he's for America—I am his friend. If he is against America, I am the sheriff!"

Angry responses came from ministers so maligned, who noted that most Germans were in America because they had opposed German militarism, or who pointed out that the Kaiser was a Calvinist, not a Lutheran, but most churches moved to conform to community pressures.

Not only was the use of German outlawed in public and parochial schools, but in church services as well. The cruelest restriction forbade funeral services in the language of the mourners—even funerals for Iowa soldiers. In early January, 1918, prior to the ban, Private Eilert Johnson died of pleurisy at Camp Pike, Arkansas. He was born near Hampton in 1892 but had grown up in the Alexander area west of the county seat. One of the pastors at the ecumenical funeral service felt compelled to publish in the county newspaper this "Statement to the Public: . . . I sincerely regret the unfortunate use of the language of the country with which we are at war" at the funeral for Eilert Johnson. "It grates most harshly upon the ears of most of our people, and tends to engender discord. . . ." The editor, though noting that the service contained "much to comfort the sorrowing relatives," also considered the German language "odious to all liberty loving citizens . . . it is the tongue in which the autocratic rulers of Germany are issuing orders . . . which have shed the blood of innocent women and children . . . it is difficult to disassociate a person who uses it with one who sympathizes with the commands and enforcements which are conveyed in its wording." Private Johnson was among

the last Iowa soldiers whose relatives would be comforted in their native tongue.

Many German-stock people responded to the intense community disapproval of being German by changing their names. Communities forced changes in institutional names. In present-day Iowa, a township named Liberty or Lincoln usually was named "German" before 1918. A "German Savings Bank" had been a fixture of small town main streets: the "American Savings Bank" was its replacement in Lowden, Carroll, and Muscatine; it became "Liberty" in New Liberty, "Union" in Dubuque, "United States" in Dyersville, and "Lincoln" in Tama County in a town that changed its own name to Lincoln from Berlin. The Carroll bank capitulated to a name change in September, 1918 after threats that worse than yellow paint would occur. In August the German Savings Bank there was covered "with three batches of yellow paint" for the third time; "its stubborn refusal to change its name is arousing countrywide feeling."

The state council of defense, whose feelings were easily aroused, expressed "unqualified disapproval of the word 'German' in connection with the names of financial, industrial and commercial enterprises. . . ." In most towns, signs bearing the name "German" or "Berlin" had already been vandalized, even when they were part of the names of churches. The German Telephone Company of Dillon and the German Mutual Insurance Company of Tama County changed their own names; in Bellevue city firemen tore down the sign of "The Bismarck," and in the night a landmark of Dubuque, the old sign over Germania Hall, was removed. German measles during the war months were called "liberty measles." German fries were called "American Fries" until after the war when they denationalized into "home fries." Many towns had had Germania Halls for dancing and large meetings (for example, Lowden and Manilla). Local newspapers in passive resistance often refused to use the new "American" or "Liberty" labels on a town institution, and dances were announced for the "hall" or speakers for the "opera house," bereft of a name. Changes in street names and township names usually caught hold, though the loss of Bismarck Street and Hanover Avenue in Muscatine was not compensated for by Bond Street or Liberty Avenue, and Berlin Township had stronger associations than Hughes, its new name in Clinton County. But it was difficult to change a town's name, despite the disappearance of a few tiny Berlins. The town council of Guttenberg changed the name of the city to Prairie-la-Porte, the original French name of the old Mississippi River town before German settlers arrived. Having made the patri-

Sheffield Iowa April 22nd 1918.

Secretary of the State Council of Defense

Des Moines Iowa

Dear Sir:-

According a resolution of the Franklin County Council of Defense we are requested to discontinue the use of the German language in our church.

The German Baptist Church of Sheffield Iowa has many members who can not understand sufficient American language to have the spiritual benefit of the service as they should have. Some parts of the service and prayer meetings are rendered impossible.

The members of the church are loyal and supported the Government in every way and all subscribed the large sums for the Third Liberty Loan. They will be thankful and do even more if the use of the German language is allowed to them in public worship.

It is not the question of preserving the German language in our church for we have long ago discontinued to teach German to our children as it was done previous our entry into war with Germany. The children and young people are getting fast away from the use of the German language but the aged people should not be deprived of the benefit of worship.

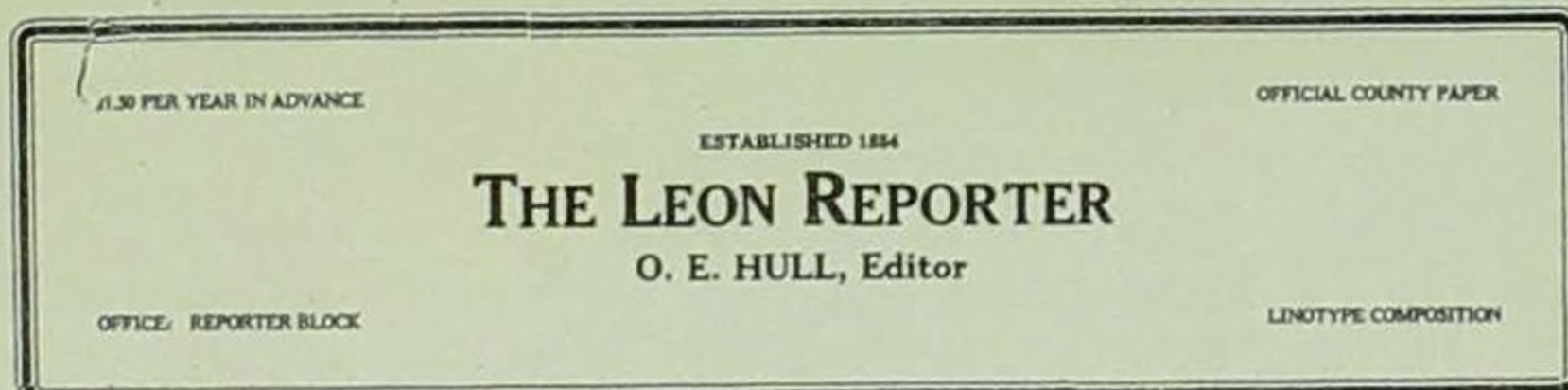
The undersigned are requested by the order of the church to appeal the State Council of Defense and secure if possible permission to have at least one service in the German language on Sunday or partly English and German.

A. Oelker Pastor

O. Hickman Secretary

"The German Baptist Church of Sheffield Iowa has many members who can not understand sufficient American language to have the spiritual benefit of the service as they should have. Some parts of the service and prayer meetings are rendered impossible.

The members of the church are loyal and supported the Government in every way and all subscribed large sums for the Third Liberty Loan. They will be thankful and do even more if the use of the German language is allowed to them in public worship. It is not the question of preserving the German language in our church for we have long ago discontinued to teach German to our children. . . . The children and young people are getting fast away from the use of the German language but the aged people should not be deprived of the benefit of worship."



Leon, Iowa, 1/7/18.

H. J. Metcalf, Secretary,

Des Moines, Iowa.

Dear Sir:

Replying to your inquiry of Dec. 31st: I have made an investigation in regard to Supt. Lohr, of the Davis City public schools, and so far as I can ascertain the rumored charges against him are without any foundation, and evidently emanated from opponents in a factional school fight at Davis City. I find that Prof. Lohr was one of the very first purchasers of Liberty Loan bonds, without solicitation, is a member of the Red Cross, has contributed and worked for it as well as the Belgian relief fund. He has his pupils salute the flag everyday and he salutes it with them. His grandparents came to this country from Germany in 1840, because they were dissatisfied with German government. His father and himself were both born in the United States, and as he assures me himself there is not one thing about him German except his name. I have received the enclosed report from Mr. C. W. Robinson, member of the county council of Defense at Davis City, and I have myself talked with leading citizens of Davis City, and have found no one who even questioned his loyalty. He is considerably wrought up over what he justly terms the indignity he has been subjected to by some one who does not dare come out in the open and make the charge. I believe you should write him a letter in regard to the findings in his case. Yours truly,

O. E. Hull.

"I have made an investigation in regard to Supt. Lohr, of the Davis City public schools, and so far as I can ascertain the rumored charges against him are without any foundation, and evidently emanated from opponents in a factional school fight at Davis City. I find that Prof. Lohr was one of the very first purchasers of Liberty Loan bonds, without solicitation, is a member of the Red Cross, has contributed and worked for it as well as the Belgian relief fund. He has his pupils salute the flag everyday and he salutes it with them. His grandparents came to this country from Germany in 1840, because they were dissatisfied with German government. . . . His father and himself were both born in the United States, and as he assures me himself there is not one thing about him German except his name."

otic effort, the council gave up when no one used the name, and Guttenberg endured.

Family names were changed and given names, particularly Fritz and Franz, dropped from favor. Names spelled in one way in the 1915 census appeared Anglicized in the 1917-18 newspapers, with the considerable variation in spelling expected in a transition. In towns and cities where the German-named population was so large and established that all shades of war opinion might be encountered, a German name tended to lose the stigma of the "disloyal" label. Nevertheless, in the inflamed atmosphere of the war, a German name often seemed a business disadvantage and a burden. In Charles City, attorney Frank Ligenfelder, his son, and his brother "cast off all connections with their Teutonic origin and . . . had their names changed to Linnell." Vowels were dropped, "sch" changed to "sh," and assimilation in external appearances was accomplished almost overnight.

German was not spoken in stores; sermons were no longer heard in German; the word "German" disappeared from letterheads and storefronts; German was not taught in schools. Thus it is no surprise that the number of German newspapers in the state declined from 46 in 1900 (behind only five other states in number of papers) to 16 in 1920, even though reading German was not illegal. Foreign-language newspapers were required by Postmaster General Burleson to translate their news and to file a copy prior to street sale with postal authorities. This added burden was enough to put tiny papers out of existence. Once a single issue was confiscated, second class mailing privileges were denied for future issues.

There were efforts prior to Governor Harding's proclamation of May 14, 1918 to ban the speaking of German altogether. The Pocahontas War Service association organized itself and proclaimed that "all persons suspected of disloyalty will be summoned before it." Further: "We condemn the use of the German tongue, a language which has come to be that used by the traitor and the spy, and shall see to it that it is neither taught in the schools, spoken from the pulpit, over the telephone, or used in trade." The *Manson Journal*, immediately south of the Pocahontas county line, noted that Pocahontas was the first county in the state to forbid the use of German in public and that the protest against this move led to a boycott of county business. The *Journal* reprinted a Pocahontas County newspaper's accusation that "towns in adjoining counties were bidding for our trade and thus fanned the

flame of division until it became a serious problem." Plymouth County, like Pocahontas County, had a sizable foreign-speaking population in 1918. These signs were posted all over the town of Le Mars in April and May:

If you Are An American At Heart
 Speak OUR Language
 If you Don't Know It
 LEARN IT.
 If you Don't Like It
 MOVE.

The majority insisted on conformity. It was especially provoked when the use of a foreign language seemed designed to exclude the majority, to evade, even to mock, its power. F. S. Wright and T. A. Wilson, secretary and president of the Buffalo Center Commercial Club, wrote to H. J. Metcalf of the state defense council about their problems with "a very strong German and Pro-German community in and around Buffalo Center. . . . There is a click [clique—ed.] of the German retired farmers that gather each day in the Post Office lobby and talk over their troubles in German. We put up one sign to the effect that the Post Office was an American Institution and that all those who could not talk English better keep still, but it was taken down for fear the United States Government would not sanction it. Now, we would like to . . . go a step farther and forbid the speaking of German on the streets and in public places. We would like to have your advice as to the best methods to pursue. . . ." Metcalf replied that enacting an ordinance prohibiting German was "not going too far" but was still "rather a drastic step." He encouraged calling "the ministers of the German churches and prominent Germans in your community . . . together in a meeting of your council of defense, and ask them as a favor and as a matter of protection to themselves to discontinue preaching and talking of German during the period of the war."


It was not only in counties with a high proportion of foreign-born that language bans were proposed. The editor of the Winterset newspaper wrote that he heard two "immigrants from Prussia . . . conversing with each other in the German language. . . ." It made my "American blood boil with indignation." They should be sent back to Germany "where they can bow before the kaiser to their heart's content." We won't permit the "use of the tongue of the enemy . . . on our streets."

A ban was, in such an instance, a ceremonial way of combatting the enemy on the homefront. To speak German at all was to "bow before the kaiser." The phrase

THE GERMAN-AMERICAN PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION
 (ORGANIZED FEBRUARY 1, 1918, AT DES MOINES, IOWA)
 AFFILIATED WITH IOWA COUNCIL NATIONAL DEFENSE
 (COMPOSED OF AMERICAN CITIZENS OF GERMAN DESCENT)

OFFICERS
 JOHN C. ORTH, PRESIDENT
 STATE HOUSE, DES MOINES, IA.
 EMIL SCHMIDT, VICE PRES.
 DES MOINES, IA.
 H. P. LEIBSLE, VICE PRES.
 DES MOINES, IA.
 F. J. ALBER, SECTY. AND TREAS.
 COURT HOUSE, DES MOINES, IA.

HONORARY PRESIDENTS
 FRED WHITE, SIOUXNEY, IA.
 LOUIS BLOCK, DAVENPORT, IA.
 WM. KOCH, DES MOINES, IA.

 April 14 - 1918

My dear Mr. Metcalf: While resting this morning from a strenuous week's campaign during which time I delivered eleven addresses I thought it best to make some suggestions in regard to practical missionary work for 100% Americanism in Iowa. Buffalo Center and Germania should be supplied with "Why America is in the War" and "German Kultur and War Practices." A number of copies of each in German should be placed into the hands of loyal workers - A goodly supply should be distributed in Wellsburg, Reinbeck, Gladbrook, Hubbard Denver, Readlyn and Waverly - I must send it that in my future campaigns considerable copies are sent ahead for distribution at the close of my meetings - Address a big mass meeting today at 3 PM at Waterloo and tonight at 8 PM at La Porte City - and then for a two days rest - Will see you Monday in regard to pamphlets sent me from your office -

Sincerely yours
 John C. Orth

"I thought it best to make some suggestions in regard to practical missionary work for 100% Americanism in Iowa. Buffalo Center and Germania should be supplied with 'Why America is in the War' and 'German Kultur and War Practices.' A number of copies of each in German should be placed into the hands of loyal workers. A goodly supply should be distributed in Wellsburg, Reinbeck, Gladbrook, Hubbard Denver, Readlyn and Waverly."

C O P Y

Iowa State College Library,
Ames, Iowa.

Ames, Iowa.
April 5th.
1918.

Mr. John H. Winterbotham,
120 W. Adams St.,
Chicago, Illinois.

My dear Mr. Winterbotham:-

At the request of Mr. H. J. Metcalf,
Secretary of the State Council for National
Defense, I am sending you the following list of
books which we have withdrawn from our shelves
because in our opinion they are pro-German.

Harris, Frank - England or Germany?
Münsterberg - The War and America.
Andrassy, Julius - Whose Sin is the World War?
Reventlow - Vampire of the Continent.
Berhardi - Germany and the Next War.

Yours very truly,

Signed: V. M. Dixon.

Assistant Librarian.

D/c

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[Iowa State College Library]

also suggests the fear that by speaking German some Iowans could express anti-American sentiment without worry about eavesdroppers. And frustrated eavesdroppers took for granted that one who spoke German was pro-German. A ban was also a way to punish and chasten old fellows who idly hung around the post office and failed to be properly enthusiastic about defeating the old country, or who seemed to sneer at signs warning them their very language might be considered seditious. At the very least, German speakers clung to an ethnic "otherness," in itself unnerving. Why were these people so self-contained? Why didn't they blend into the larger community? Why did they insist upon trading exclusively with each other and inter-marrying and staying so close to home? And especially: Why did they keep talking in an alien tongue, generation after generation?

Today a community using a foreign language is no longer perceived as a threat to American unity. For example, the Mennonites' right to violate state school attendance laws has been upheld in Iowa. This greater degree of tolerance exists because of the relative political ineffectiveness of unassimilated communities, as well as a more secure national identity. We no longer feel comfortable forcing the habits of the majority upon minority groups, an attitude that developed concurrently with a shift in the national viewpoint on civil rights for the Black minority.

The World War I era, in contrast, had numerous unassimilated—and potentially powerful—ethnic groups. Such groups were often predominant in rural areas. German communities had demonstrated their great unity and political aggressiveness in several successful campaigns they mounted against prohibition. While great waves of national confidence in world affairs would follow the Second World War, at the outset of the First World War many questioned the nation's ability to fight at all because of the debilitating effects of diversity. Further, the rights of minorities found few defenders in a time of extensive racism. Minority groups had to champion themselves, and to do so in wartime was to be vulnerable to a charge of disloyalty. The resounding victory of the anti-pluralist opinion so weakened the foreign-speaking communities in World War I that when, two generations later, opinion began to reverse, the communities to benefit were of different national origins than German.

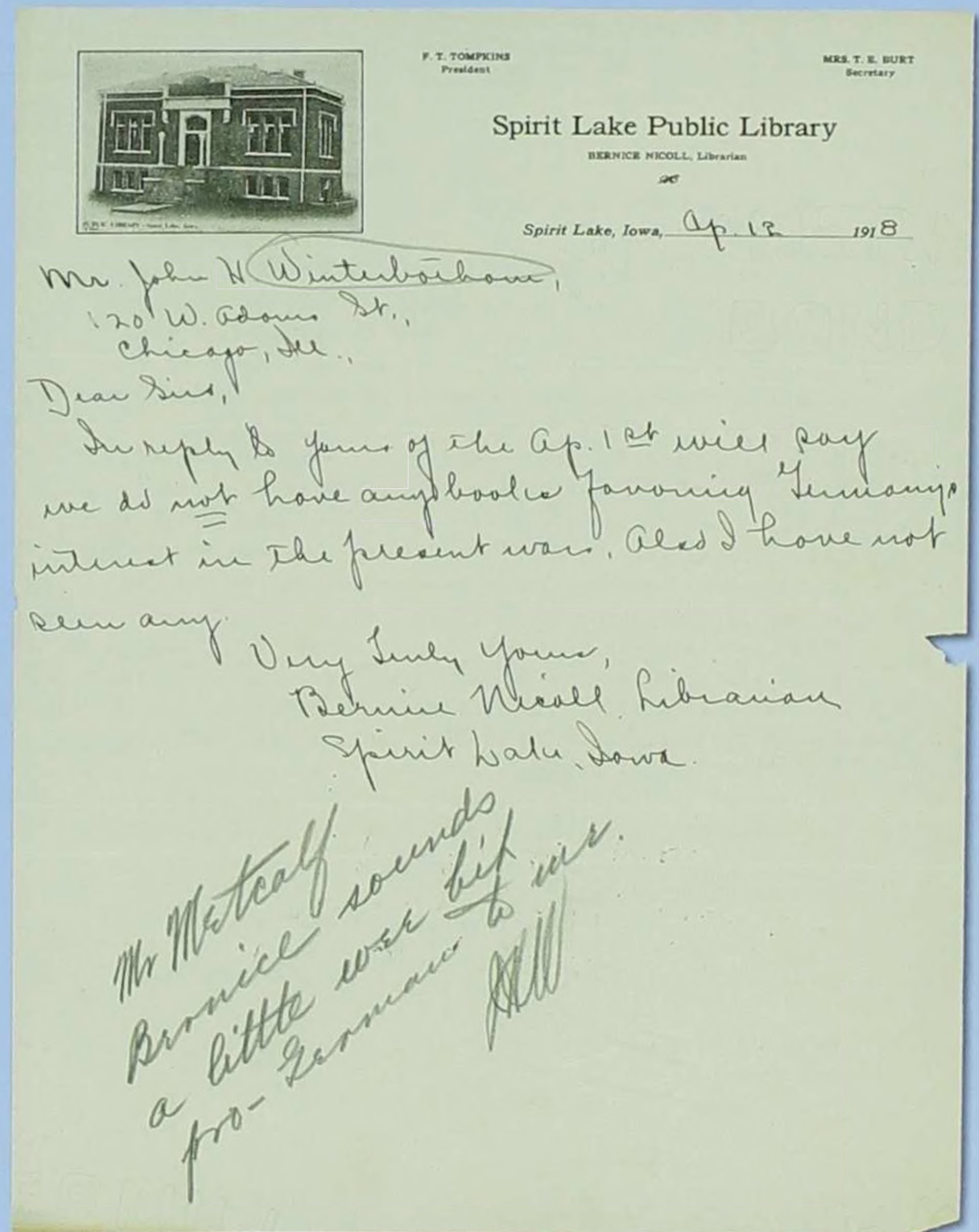
The final encroachment on the rights and the traditions of foreign speakers came when Governor Harding proclaimed four rules governing language use in the

state of Iowa for the duration of the war. "First," he declared, "English should and must be the only medium of instruction in public, private, denominational or other similar schools. Second, conversation in public places, on trains and over the telephone should be in the English language. Third, all public addresses should be in the English language. Fourth, let those who cannot speak or understand the English language conduct their religious worship in their homes."

The justification for this proclamation was nothing more than the imperative to conform to majority community sentiment. "Every person should appreciate and observe his duty to refrain from all acts of conversation which may excite suspicion or produce strife among the people, but in his relation to the public should so demean himself that every word and act will manifest his loyalty to his country and his solemn purpose to aid in achieving victory for our army and navy and permanent peace of the world." Paradoxically, the proclamation warned against the mob violence its message tended to incite. Harding urged that all disputes be settled "by those in official authority. . . . Voluntary or self-constituted committees or associations undertaking the settlement of such disputes . . . are a menace to society and a fruitful cause of violence." By "authorities," Harding meant the quasi-legal ad hoc county councils of defense and the Liberty Loan kangaroo courts. The councils of defense were composed of volunteers and appointments down the hierarchy from the state's war leaders to the township's. Successful, established citizens, they supported the war. Well-intentioned, law-abiding and respectable, they consciously desired to adjudicate and pacify. But, like Harding with his edict, they were all-too-eager to demand order at the expense of liberty. Rather than counseling patience and forbearance to those whose "blood boiled" upon hearing German, they decided to eliminate the language that "caused" the boiling. By moving against the victims of community aggression rather than the aggressive mob itself, they were defeating their own attempts to maintain order. In fact, they often aided mobs by identifying recalcitrants.

William Harding's style was like the wartime Teddy Roosevelt's without the redeeming reputation for verve and intelligence. Harding was bombastic. He spoke in slogans and shibboleths and avoided complexity. Among those who agreed with him, he was immensely popular.

Harding's proclamation may well have been his own idea. He betrayed the quality of his logic about the language ban in a screaming-eagle speech reprinted in the pages of the *Sac Sun*. The *Sun* editor later remarked,



"In reply to yours of the Ap. 1st will say we do not have any books favoring Germany's interest in the present war. Also I have not seen any.

Very Truly Yours,
Bernice Nicoll, Librarian
Spirit Lake, Iowa."

[Pencilled note at bottom]:

"Mr Metcalf

Bernice sounds a little wee bit pro-German to us.

JHW"

[John H. Winterbotham]

HARRY EARL MORROW
PASTOR METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
STATE CENTER, IOWA

1 31 18

Dear Mr Metcalf:

I wish a little advice or light as you may see fit to give. I am pastor of a Methodist Church here in State Center. About five miles north of town there is a German Lutheran Church, and the pastor of that Church has for some years come to town every second Sunday afternoon and held services in the German tongue in our Church building for the people of his congregation who live in town. There is now a little kick by a few about this, and insist that if we are good Americans and patriotic Americans we will stop them holding services in the German language. The complainers, however, are not in our Church nor any other Church, and never go to Church, and I do not care about ~~them~~ their notions very much, but it caused me to wonder if it is the right and patriotic thing for a good American Church to allow its building used by people who hold service in the German language. I would like to know what is the principle that should govern a Church in such a case. I have noticed in the dailies where several Churches under similar circumstances have forbidden the use of the German language in their building. Hoping this is not imposing too much on your other duties,

I remain yours cordially,

H. E. Morrow

Mr H. J. Metcalf,
Des Moines Ia.
State House.

"I am pastor of a Methodist Church here in State Center. About five miles north of town there is a German Lutheran Church, and the pastor of that Church has for some years come to town every second Sunday and held services in the German tongue in our Church building for the people of his congregation who live in town. There is now a little kick by a few about this. . . . The complainers, however, are not in our Church nor any other Church, and never go to Church, and I do not care about their notions very much, but it caused me to wonder if it is the right and patriotic thing for a good American Church to allow its building used by people who hold service in the German language."

"[the speech] hardly becomes the dignity of the chief executive of Iowa."

Harding spoke in the rain to a huge Fourth of July crowd on the Sac County fairground. Most of his speech was devoted to a defense of his proclamation which was stirring up much opposition. He quoted two legal precedents to prove that English was the "official" language of the United States. As his proclamation had stated, "we're going to have one language in Iowa and one only and that is the English language. . . . I don't want any schools in Iowa where the everyday language is anything but English. As long as I am governor . . . I won't stand for it. I would rather work in a packing house than to be governor of Iowa with a tow-string backbone." This was one ill-chosen example, and Harding embarked upon another one. People have said to him, in opposing the proclamation, look how much, for example, the loyal Danes have done for Audubon and Shelby counties. He replies to them, he told the crowd, that he knows a man whose ancestors on both sides are solid American from way back, who fought in every war. "That man owns a section of Iowa land and he owes the United States every dollar he has and every drop of blood that is in his veins. The state of Iowa and the United States of America don't owe that man anything except protection under the law. Now, think of a man who was brought from the filth of Denmark and placed on a farm, for which he paid perhaps three dollars an acre. Ye gods and fishes, what Iowa has done for him he can never repay!" The governor repeatedly denied that he had used these words. "Filth," he said, was not in his vocabulary. Danes from all over the state wrote to the *Des Moines Register*, a paper very sympathetic to their position and adamantly in opposition to the governor, and to the *Dannevirke*, a Danish newspaper published in Cedar Falls, to express their dissatisfaction. The Jacob A. Liis League of Cedar Falls demanded a retraction from the governor.

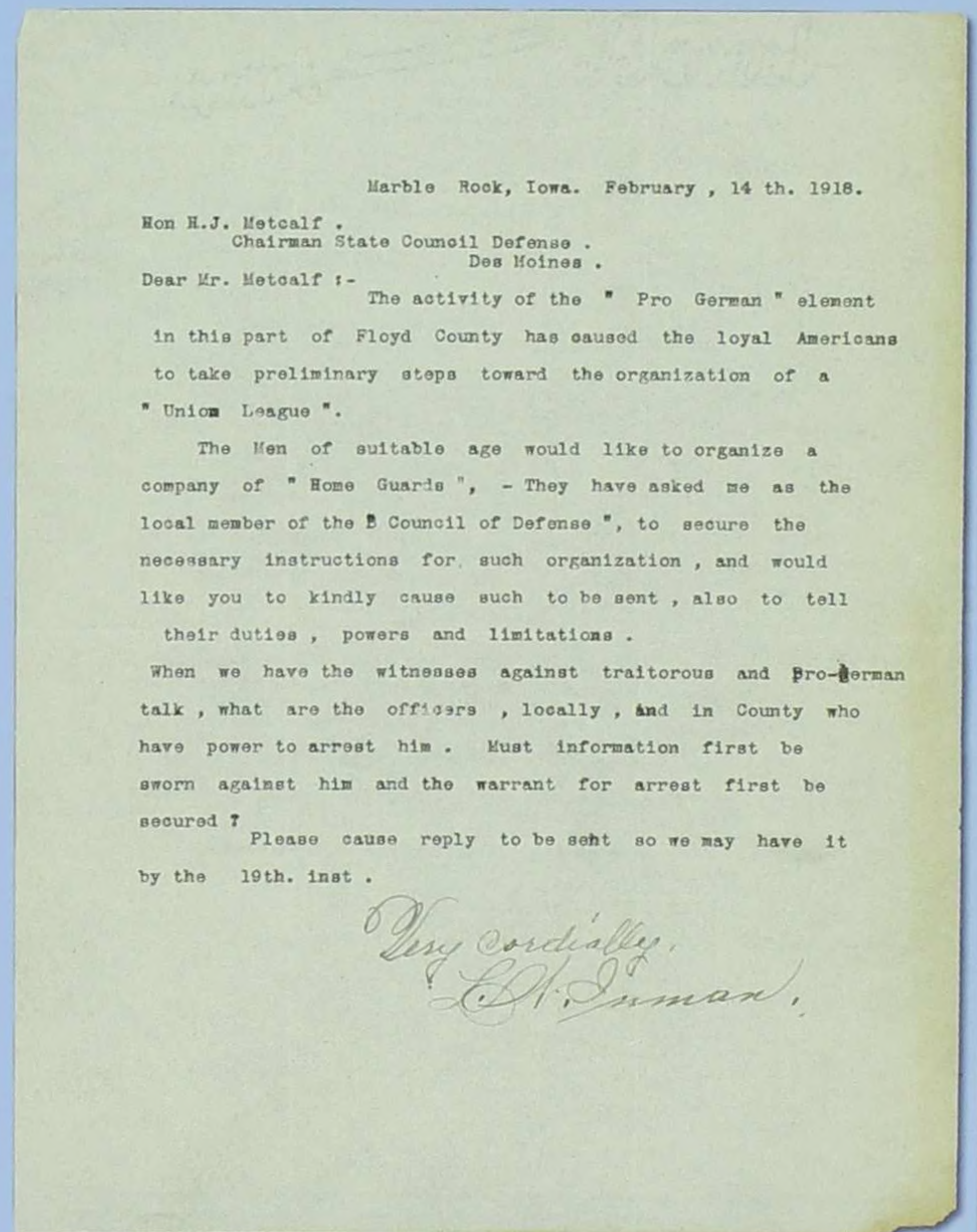
The language ban particularly aroused the pro-war communities of Norwegians, Swedes, Bohemians, and Danes. Danes were insulted further as they read the account of this Fourth of July speech, which was soon broadcast around the state. Swedish and Norwegian communities had tended toward neutrality on war issues, some German communities had been obviously reluctant to support the war, but Denmark and Bohemia had historical reasons to support the Allies, and those ethnic groups in Iowa had been outspokenly in support of the war. Bohemians wanted independence from Prussia and Austria. Their

concentration in Cedar Rapids helped explain that city's emphatic pro-war coloration. In Iowa City, the Sokol lodge of 35 "Bohemian-speaking" men had sent a third of its members into the army. There was no division in Danish communities regarding the issues of the war in Europe since the overwhelming motive for Danish immigration after 1878 had been to escape German rule of Schleswig, but success in coercing German-speakers so fired the zeal of the enforcers that the small gap from anti-German bias to antagonism toward all foreign groups was easily jumped, even though the United States was not at war with the world.

In June, Harding tried to soothe feelings. No other ethnic group was being classed with our enemy, he claimed, but he cautioned that German propaganda could be spread in any foreign language. He announced that Des Moines Italians, Sioux City Scandinavians, and Cedar Rapids Bohemians had withdrawn their protests and curbed their defiance. He called the loss of their native language a small sacrifice compared to the good it could do saving the lives of American boys overseas by curbing sedition at home. Harding warned foreign speakers, yet to be convinced of the patriotic necessity of speaking English, that his proclamation would stand, and be strictly enforced.

The Babel proclamation became the major political issue of Iowa politics of 1918. Since the ban included all foreign speakers, not only Germans, defenders of the ban could not legitimately accuse its opponents of being the Kaiser's agents. With less fear that the onus of disloyalty would spread to them, enemies of the governor closed in around him, led by the *Des Moines Register*. The press debate continued throughout the summer at fever pitch. The *Register* was charged with undermining authority and promoting anarchy by ridiculing and disputing the governor's proclamation.

But in the summer-long attack on the proclamation, the *Register* and other opponents of the language ban made these points: First, men of many languages and nationalities were fighting for our country. "Americanism is not a matter of race or . . . of language." Second, it is "undemocratic, un-American, and oppressive to try to force" segregated foreign communities into American habits. Third, it is a hardship to impose a new language on old people. Fourth, the United States should be proud of its diversity, since we are all immigrants. Fifth, Governor Harding acted from political motives, attacking the loyalty of defenseless minorities merely to maintain his leadership of a small cadre of violent patriots. Sixth, many states had larger foreign-speaking



"The activity of the 'Pro German' element in this part of Floyd County has caused the loyal Americans to take preliminary steps toward the organization of a 'Union League'.

... When we have the witnesses against traitorous and Pro-German talk, what are the officers, locally, and in County who have power to arrest him. Must information first be sworn against him and the warrant for arrest first be secured?"

CLOCK & SALEY
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
HAMPTON, IOWA

April 16th, 1918.

H. J. Metcalf,
Des Moines,
Iowa.

Freind Metcalf:-

Our Council of Defense, of which by the way I ^{have} been made Chairman subject to approval by those higher up, has been after the German churches and parochial schools. We have about cleaned up the county except one church. In this church I beleive that the preacher cannot speak American so they are holding back. It is a sort of a "rat nest" and has caused us trouble in all of our work. They write me to-day as follows

Dear Sir:-

We let you know that our congregation postponed their religious services till we get order from our president and the government at Washington to which we appeal.

Respectfully,
Th. Storck.
Geneva, Iowa.

I wonder how the authorities down at Washington will handle this matter. We are telling them it is for their own good to stop as we cannot hold mobs in check if they do not help us and I know their church will come in for a terrible raid if they refuse to quit using the German language. I thought you might be interested.

I am going to try and get down and gather up the rest of the seed corn soon.

Give my regards to everyone and especially your family.

Yours Truly,

Sherwood & Saley

"Our Council of Defense . . . has been after the German churches and parochial schools. We have about cleaned up the county except one church. In this church I beleive that the preacher cannot speak American so they are holding back. It is a sort of a 'rat nest' and has caused us trouble in all of our work. . . .

. . . We are telling them it is for their own good to stop as we cannot hold mobs in check if they do not help us and I know their church will come in for a terrible raid if they refuse to quit using the German language."

populations than Iowa but none had such a language ban. Last, it was an embarrassment to have such a governor. His language proclamation, the *Register* claimed in an overused 1918 insult, was worthy of the Kaiser himself.

Discussion of these arguments appeared in the newspaper debate all over the state. Rebuttals took these forms: The foreign names of many Iowa servicemen was no proof of patriotism since military service was compulsory. Although "race" (used on both sides of the debate to denote "nationality") might not determine loyalty, language did. Certain "treacherous interests"—most foreign-language preachers, some business firms, and some politicians—want "to prevent the adoption of American customs . . . language and . . . sympathies. . . ." Lafe Young believed that "the basis of disloyalty . . . in such Iowa towns as Lowden, Hubbard, Sully, Denison, Carroll, and others, is the power of the foreign language."

The pro-Harding faction argued that it was necessary for patriots to coerce segregated ethnic communities, particularly German ones. By forcing people into a predetermined mold, the coercers felt they were creating "Americans." Actually the coercers were less interested in making good citizens than in increasing their own power. Forced flag-kissing, for example, did not promote actual patriotism, but it clearly demonstrated what behavior they required for community acceptance. The question of what defined "America" was left at the level of respect for the flag and enthusiasm for the war. Even the *Register*, which had once called the denial of free speech "un-American," was reluctant to pursue the debate. "Un-American" remained merely an epithet, amorphous but lethal, for all to hurl at any opponent.

The plight of older people, who the language ban opponents had protested should be allowed to keep their ethnic identity *and* their social standing, deserved no such consideration, according to the Harding faction. (It was an attack that prefigured the ridicule of the "bleeding heart" liberal.) Anyone who had been in the United States for decades and still could not speak the language deserved to be made uncomfortable. And those who pity such people, the Harding forces argued, sanctioned personal irresponsibility.

The American "melting pot," if interpreted to mean that the dominant culture could absorb white minority groups without damage to itself, was questioned by ever-growing numbers of people. The waves of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe in the four decades before the war introduced habits and values often at odds with those of the more established "native" citizenry. Demands for restricting immigration mirrored a fear that the old-stock Protestant values, con-

sidered identical with national values, would be swamped. Drunkenness and criminality would undermine the family and the efficiency of the work force. Ethnic loyalty to the family would halt the mobility so characteristically American. Influence—the result of ethnic voting “blocs”—would replace merit. On the other hand, the new immigrant’s passivity toward authority, so valuable in a work force, might smother the local initiative crucial to a democratic society.

German-Americans, far from being the most threatening ethnic group, were rural as well as urban, industrious, thrifty, and generally upstanding. They challenged dominant values only in their opposition to prohibition and their clannishness. But the glare of the enemy-at-arms label during World War I brought down on them all the anxieties and hatred aroused by newer, stranger immigrants.

Language-ban supporters lost faith in assimilation. It seemed to them there were elements which simply would not dissolve in the melting pot. Some went so far as to claim that Germany had been covertly establishing supply bases for treason, all over the country. To use the metaphor they used, those in charge of the melting pot must either remove the lumps from the pot—jail or deport the uncooperative—or make them melt—assimilate them by putting them next to the fire.

In this argument, national chauvinism hit ludicrous lows. Lafe Young’s July editorials on the proclamation exhorted all foreign speakers to “support the American language.” Like Young, Governor Harding pointedly avoided calling the legal language “English” in his early defenses. The *Des Moines Register*, they said, deliberately used the term “English” instead of “American,” implying that our language was borrowed, and therefore any European tongue would be as legitimate as English. These “Patriotic Citizens,” as they called themselves, had a ready rebuttal to anyone so lost in the remote past as to cherish American connections to an older English-speaking culture: “We are today the leaders of the peoples speaking technically so-called English and we shall dominate in this leadership more and more in the future. It is *our* language—remember that.” One-hundred-per-cent Americans would not let themselves be caught speaking British English.

Two more arguments remained to be answered. The governor could not have acted for political motives since his proclamation would “cost him a vastly larger number of votes than it would gain for him.” This turned out to be a sound prediction. The *Register* might call the proclamation “precipitous,” they said, but how can one act too hastily to stop evil? The defenders of the proclamation, in all their war activities, saw themselves as

THOMPSON & LOTH
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
SUITE 14-18-6 STATE BANK BUILDING
FOREST CITY, IOWA

Feb. 2, 1916.

Mr. T. A. Potter,
Mason City, Ia.

Dear Sir:

I am in receipt of your letter of yesterday, enclosing resolution regarding the use of the English language during the period of the war. I am in sympathy with the same but I anticipate that we will have a fine time getting anywhere with it in Winnebago County. We are about 75% Foreign born, first or second generation. There are several more churches in this county that are using Foreign language than churches using the English. In fact it is my opinion that Winnebago County, is about as hard a proposition to get anywhere with anything pertaining to patriotism as can be found in the state. I wrote you a letter on the 18th of January, which has not yet been mailed. Activities pertaining to the War have become very dormant in this county, and I have been feeling a little nervous about the situation. Some of the activities which are being taken up in the larger cities are not practical or possible owing to our rural population and small towns. However, there are a number of movements which we ought to get away with better than we are.

The Thrift Stamp campaign was turned over to Luther Aasgard, editor of the Republican. After securing the appointment, Mr. Aasgard immediately left for California. He remained long enough to appoint a few committees, and that was the end of it. A few stamps are being sold, but nothing like a systematic campaign is going to be carried on under the present arrangement. Likewise there are several other activities that need serious consideration, if conditions are as serious at the front as we are being told. We have arranged for a big meeting on February 18th, which is to be addressed by Evertt Colby. This is in behalf of the Food Administration. I am trying now to arrange a meeting of a number of the best men in the county the same day for the purpose of going over these propositions and looking the whole matter square in the face. I have also called the County Council of Defense together. There are three or four men in this county who would throw up their personal business entirely if they could be convinced that there was any thing to be accomplished, that would be anything like in proportion to the sacrifice. Before we have this meeting, I am going to try and get to Des Moines and have an opportunity to talk the matter over with some of the members of the State Council. Personally I feel this is the only way that we are going to get anywhere in this state.

James
Anderson

“I am in receipt of your letter of yesterday, enclosing resolution regarding the use of the English language during the period of the war. I am in sympathy with the same but I anticipate that we will have a fine time getting anywhere with it in Winnebago County. We are about 75% Foreign born, first or second generation. There are several more churches in this county that are using a Foreign language than churches using the English. In fact it is my opinion that Winnebago County, is about as hard a proposition to get anywhere with anything pertaining to patriotism as can be found in the state.”



*Parade at our
"Schulfest" July 1, 1917.*

Celebrating with American flags and band music, the citizens of Lowden parade at their "Schulfest"—a traditional German American festival. In 1915, 74 percent of Lowden's population was first- or second-generation Protestant German.

warriors on the homefront, no less vital to the outcome of the war than the front in Europe. They fought their war to make Good triumph over Evil. They saw it as a struggle between opposing absolutes, between Democracy and Autocracy. To make the world "safe for democracy" was to make the world more American. And to curb the treachery of foreign tongues, by any means—however undemocratic—was to be closer to the boys in the trenches. As the group calling themselves "Patriotic Citizens" declared: "We, who remain at home, should have the republic well cleaned up of treason and all other un-American influences and properly prepared for a homecoming welcome to democracy's victorious heroes."

Pro-Harding forces dismissed their opponents' comparison of Iowa to other states as petty. Iowa was not content to be average during the third Liberty Loan campaign, they pointed out, and therefore emerged first in the nation. But no matter what they said, the urge to conform to the national pattern made the defenders of the Babel proclamation vulnerable to the charge of over-reaction when other states did not go as far. South Dakota, for example, prohibited German over the telephone and in conversations of more than three persons. German was banned in schools or in churches except during funeral services. But only German speakers were affected. In the several states which banned some uses

of German, motives ranged from vicarious retaliation against the enemy, to punishment of anti-war communities, to sincere belief that espionage by German agents was thereby diminished. Only in Iowa did the scapegoating intent of the language ban forbid all non-English dialogue.

The governor did not make his proclamation lightly. It was strictly enforced. However, in most reported cases, county patriotic organizations—and *not* the state—levied fines against foreign-language speakers. These local groups took the ban as legal license for their actions. For example, the so-called Bureau of Military Affairs in Lake View fined farmer John B. Roesign \$25, payable to the Red Cross, for speaking German on the streets of Wall Lake after he had been warned not to. In a case that received wide publicity, four women from LeClaire Township in Scott County were fined for speaking German together over their party line. The operator reported them to Sam T. White, chairman of the county defense council. A block-lettered pencilled tip to the Davenport American Protective League in October read "THE DUTCH STILL FLYS" along a rural party line. But defense council chairman A. J. Faerber's assiduous efforts to catch it failed. Mrs. Lura Parker reported that she picked up her phone regularly

to listen as Faerber instructed but heard no German. APL operatives warned a Mrs. Wolfe and August Neidorf of Allens Grove, and Mrs. Herman Thee and Miss Margaret Grell of Davenport, that they must speak only English. In Clarion citizens painted the local telephone company yellow for letting the German language go over its wires without breaking in and stopping it.

Editor Jim Pierce of the *Iowa Homestead*, the state's major defender of civil rights, became indignant when "party-line patriots" interfered with German conversations: "A few years ago these good American citizens were honored and respected . . . [now] these people are humiliated, insulted and abused—for what? Why, because some of them cannot understand English! Their only sin is that the older ones came, at America's welcoming invitation . . . to escape the very evils against which America is fighting today. Born under the black eagles of Prussian darkness, they turned to the Statue of Liberty's beckoning light . . . they have prospered here and received much from America, but they have also given much, and what ever obligation exists is mutual. . . . Perhaps they have appreciated what a free America means more than those of us . . . who have not had to struggle to attain it. . . ." Two kinds of people caused "such cruel pain and unnecessary suffering." There were the "smart-alecks," cases of "arrested development," the kind who would set fire to cats, who enjoyed "harassing" the "unfortunately situated." The other kind were "the hard of heart, the calloused and brutal . . . who are acting through motives of personal spite and envy." Pierce discounted love of country as a motive—tormentors of German-Americans have no love in their hearts for anything. Pierce allowed: "It may possibly be that there is a third and very limited class who have a mistaken idea that they are acting patriotically in mistreating their good neighbors, and are serving their country in this way." Pierce reminded these latter of Wilson's condemnation of vigilantes and the U.S. Attorney General's call for domestic tolerance. He had to use examples from federal authorities, because all the state officials, whether governor, state council, or judges, gave explicit encouragement to the harassment of minorities. When Pierce decided to criticize these authorities, he did not say they were misguided. He said they "duped" others. Yet they were in a slightly different category from the gratuitously cruel or the cat-torturers. He saw them as people who fostered and exploited hatred for ethnic minorities in order to consolidate their power and weaken their political enemies.

The hardships of people who could no longer speak freely to their friends on the street, or who could talk on the telephone only haltingly if at all, or whose

children's schools were closed, paled before the pain of people who wanted to find religious solace in these difficult days. Humanitarian considerations aside, Harding's proclamation was manifestly unconstitutional. It infringed upon freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and the separation of church and state. But Governor Harding read the Constitution differently. Though the extremity of his public statements may seem comical to us nowadays, they were anything but funny in his own day. He was the governor of Iowa. His opinions could easily become law. The right to pray in a language other than English would not be protected in Iowa, he decided. It was unpatriotic as well as futile, Harding thought. He addressed the Des Moines Chamber of Commerce meeting of June 1, 1918: "Everyone is now beginning to see that English is the official language of the country and that the constitution doesn't allow a man to talk or pray in any other language. . . . There is no use in anyone wasting his time praying in other languages than English. God is listening only to the English tongue."

And he meant it. Foreign-language ministers came under particular indictment from Governor Harding and from *Des Moines Capital* editor Lafe Young. Their muzzling was one of the chief intentions of the edict. Hardingites watched ministers carefully for compliance, and refused to dignify rare protests about freedom of religion with any response other than a perversion of the "higher law" defense—since God Himself speaks only English, He cannot hear a German prayer anyway. Occasionally, enforcement of the proclamation was modified to conform to reality. Even in pro-proclamation Page County, virulently antagonistic to its Swedish speakers, a compromise was effected by late summer for Swedes in Essex who could not understand English and who took great comfort in church attendance. The county council of defense allowed "special church services in mid-week which English-speaking Swedes" could not attend. In Sac County, the quasi-legal Bureau of Military Affairs allowed a foreign-language service to be held after an English one, provided that the earlier one was well attended. The town of Little Rock in the far northwest corner of Iowa posed a unique problem for churchgoers since none of the town's ministers spoke English.

In many churches, the minister could speak English, but most of his parishioners could not. Some churches actually shut their doors for the duration of the war. Others seized upon the solution the Amana colonies found—the congregation sat in silence during the entire "service," since even German prayers were specifically forbidden, rising, at the appropriate intervals, to

sing their German hymns. Detailed as Harding had been, he had not thought to outlaw singing in a foreign language.

The Norwegian Lutheran church sponsored a college at Jewell. In early July, it closed its doors. There was little point to its teaching in English. Vacation church schools were halted throughout Emmet County on advice of the County Attorney. They were also, in a sense, untranslatable. The cultural institutions of church, school, and family maintained the security of the ethnic bond only through the tie of language. Without their native tongue, assimilation was assured, and assimilation meant grievous loss. The gulf widened between the young, who could yet profit by integration into the community, and the old, whose lives were set in the ways of a now forbidden culture. Generations were divided and ethnic communities were badly demoralized.

The language ban supplied ammunition to the already overstocked arsenal of the majority culture. When Mr. Gavert of Pomeroy complained that he was handicapped in selling his farm because he was prevented from negotiating in his native tongue, Rev. T. J. Pettit of neighboring Palmer angrily replied that such transactions are easily accomplished without using any language. Furthermore, if Gavert's eagerness to sell his farm was proof of his antagonism to the language ban, then good riddance. W. C. Hoelscher, the mayor of Hubbard, took out a full-page ad in the *Hubbard Review*, ordering everyone in town to speak English or keep silent. In Lowden, Henry Mowry checked the stores on Main Street to make sure that everyone was speaking English.

Many justified their support for the language ban on the basis of its being a legal proclamation. The *Monticello Express* approved of the proclamation on the peculiar grounds that it would be easier for Iowans to fight off "Russian Socialism" when it came to the United States if we all spoke the same language. The native-stock community, with the exception of a few opinion-leading newspapers, endorsed or at least acquiesced in the destruction of pluralism in Iowa for the next generation. Most of the responsibility for this destruction rests with Governor Harding, since he used the weight of his position to command respect for the proclamation. Iowans were not civilly disobedient, particularly in wartime. Therefore, Harding had an obligation to be prudent and responsible, restraining rather than encouraging the war fever. But, Harding held Europe in low regard, and this contempt reinforced, as it was reinforced by, the provincial attitude of much of

the Midwest. Harding amply demonstrated, as have many politicians before and since, that elevation to public office does not necessarily confer wisdom or discretion. It *was* unusual, however, for a governor to express his biases in legal form without the normal political regard for constituency.

The opposition the proclamation aroused against Governor William L. Harding in communities of the foreign-born with pro-Allied sympathies aggravated the antagonism he had already aroused in loyal German communities by his constant and extravagant aspersions on their loyalty. He was gratuitously offensive. If voters had come to the polls in November, 1918 in the numbers that had come in 1916, Harding would have been defeated by a combination of ethnic groups. The fact that the number of voters dropped precipitously saved Harding. The decline came among ethnic voters, and it was probably caused by the demoralization Harding had effected by his strident undermining of the validity and significance of an ethnic heritage. Thus, ironically, Harding maintained his office, despite the disappearance of a large part of his previous constituency. Attempting to erase the ethnic heritage of which they had once been so proud, these minorities retreated even from the basic American right of voting, and became casualties of the war on the homefront. ❖

This article appeared in the July/August 1979 Palimpsest. Its author, Nancy Derr, wrote her Ph.D. dissertation (George Washington University, 1979) on "Iowans During World War I: A Study of Change Under Stress."

NOTE ON SOURCES

Among the principal sources for this article are the contemporary accounts of war activity in Iowa found in various issues of the *Ames Evening Times*, *Cedar Falls Record*, *Cedar Rapids Republican*, *Clarence Sun*, *Dannevirke*, *Davenport Democrat*, *Des Moines Capital*, *Des Moines Register*, *Estherville Vindicator and Republican*, *Franklin County Reporter*, *Iowa City Republican*, *Manson Journal*, *Monticello Express*, *Pomeroy Herald*, *Rock Rapids Reporter*, *Sac County Bulletin*, *Sac Sun*, *Shelby County Reporter*, *Sioux City Journal*, *Vinton Review*, *Wayland Times*, and the *Webster City Freeman-Journal*. William Harding's war proclamations are collected in *War Proclamations by Governor Harding* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1918). Two manuscript collections were of great value in preparing this article, the papers of the American Protective League on deposit at the Putnam Museum, Davenport, and the H. J. Metcalf papers in the Iowa Council of National Defense Collection at the State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City). Two unpublished University of Iowa theses were helpful, Hildegard Emile Frese's "German-American Journalism in the State of Iowa" (M.A., 1935) and Thomas Peter Christensen's "History of the Danes in Iowa" (Ph.D., 1924).

For annotations to material appearing in this article, see chapter 11 of the author's dissertation, "Iowans During World War I: A Study of Change Under Stress" (George Washington University, 1979); a copy is in the library collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City).

One in a Million

As field historian for the State Historical Society in 2003, Kathy Gourley made an important discovery at the Society's State Archives in Des Moines. While she was looking through documents relating to early Des Moines, a folder label caught her eye, and she stumbled onto a forgotten piece of Iowa history—this partial census of Sauk and Meskwaki tribes taken about 1840.

As white settlers pushed westward across the Mississippi into Iowa, treaties and land cessions were forced on the Sauk and Meskwaki tribes (called the Sac and Fox by the federal government). Iowa's newly appointed territorial governor, Robert Lucas, and the U.S. government wanted to identify members of tribes living in eastern Iowa. The census records determined who would be eligible for annuity payments from the federal government.

The census comprises three sections and identifies 1,924 individuals and their family relationships. Page 24 of the third book states the four primary villages under tribal leaders Poweshiek, Keokuk, Appanoose, and Wapello: "Paweshiek's Village with about four lodges, Keokuck about three lodges, Apenose with about three lodges, and Wawpallaw with about eight lodges."

Until further investigation is conducted, this early census remains a bit of a mystery. It may have been created by a government official—probably Indian Agent Joseph Street shortly before his death in May 1840. Wapello also died that spring. The Robert Lucas Papers at the State Historical Society (Iowa City) provide some clues, as do articles in early Society publications. This may be the only historical record of some members of the tribe in the 1840s.

We do know that representatives of the two tribes met with

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Enumeration of Families and Names
in Each Family of the Sac and Fox Tribes

No. 1	5	Wan, E, Shee, Daughter of Loaw-sau-sha Pe, Koe, qua, Grand daughter Maek, Kook-whay, daughter Way tam Mah. (S. D.) Sis Se. Sak, Mah. (S. S.)
" 2	3	Papo, qua (D) of Hah-guash, Koko Ma. Man Mah-whay. (S) Haw, wah ten & Kae, qua (W)
" 3	2	Kae, Kae gue. moe (S) of Mat-chalank wit-taw-whay. (wife)
" 4	2	Se, naw-gua (D) of Shah nee Sis sack ew. (S. S.)
" 5	1	Kal, O, Maho. (D) of Mashe, Mah, to
" 6	3	Kah, Kook, Tshe, Kow (S) of Mo, Koe, Koe Mash-gah, ew. (S) Koe, Tshe Cam meo (S)
" 7	3	Hah, lah-guak to (S) of Hah lah-gua Kah-wit, to qua (W) Ma, Koe, Koe, ay (S)

Lucas at the end of January 1840 to air their grievances about the distribution of payments and unfair accounting by local traders. Lucas promised better accounting. He also

asked if the tribes wanted to sell more land. His offer was adamantly turned down.

—Mary Bennett
Special Collections Coordinator