AN IOWA COUNTY SEAT

Of the three thousand inhabitants that constituted the population of Hampton during my boyhood, my own family was the only one to have come from Gibson, Pennsylvania. On a recent springtime afternoon when I first visited Gibson, sunshine and quiet lay upon the valley with its stone fences and its thin-soiled acres and cut-over timber growths. An occasional automobile sped along the road from Susquehanna, a town where my grandfather had disposed of farm produce at the end of a struggling journey.

The Sweet homestead at the top of the hill was so old that its sides were blackened by the weather, and it had so fallen into decay that the strange family which it now poorly sheltered was loathe to permit my exploration of the interior. The woman of the house, troubled in a trying era, noted my unprepossessing appearance and was unsympathetic toward my belated interest in ancestry.

My father and mother had known youth in Gibson, as I knew it in Hampton, but how different the localities! There had been about the Iowa town something that had taken its tempo from the cornfields that required quick, lush growth. There had been a throb to its newness. We had been young together.

BOYHOOD IMPRESSIONS

Hampton was a town laid out in the middle of America. It had taken shape just enough years before I was born so that, to me, it was as much a part of the landscape as the sun that rose over by the cemetery and sank behind the willow windbreak of Chris Shafer's farm.

Squaw Creek crept out from the prairie and wound it-

self beneath a wooden bridge and around the edge of town. Maples had been planted along the dirt streets, and only the church steeples, the schoolhouse tower, and the courthouse dome jutted above their luxurious summer leafage. From our home, which stood close to the cornfields, it had been but a walk of a few blocks along board sidewalks to the business section.

There were the distinct changes of season—blizzards, lilac-scented springs, hot days for growing corn, and the frost-painted foliage of autumn.

The people had come from far places, but they were living tensely in the spot, handicapped in many things but not lacking in glowing hopes. My own pride in Hampton was stimulated by the feverish energy that my father was putting into his grocery business in town and his part purchase of a farm ten miles to the west that was still unfenced and where the sloughs teemed with prairie chickens.

Pride was stimulated by the attitude of other men in their prime who had staked their judgment on Hampton's possibilities. They visioned, if not a metropolis, at least a county seat that would surpass any other of its size in the State. I am appreciative that my boyhood, hard though it may have been if measured in the advantages of today, was passed in an atmosphere far removed from defeatism of any sort.

It was a period in which philosophies seemed fixed. The struggle was softened by unbounded faith in democracy and confidence in the surrounding soil. These men, shaping the destiny of a community, thrilled to the importance of their task. It was a spirit that was reflected in booming voices, swaggering steps, a development of individualism to the extreme.

An added decoration to the top cornice of a newly constructed two-story brick building contained an inscription

giving the year of its erection. One of these was the "Empire Block". One-story, frame structures in the business section were given false fronts to add to their height. When George Beed in the early eighties erected the "Beed House", a brick hotel with three stories, its opening was made the occasion of a social event, souvenirs of which are still treasured. Pride rather than practicability had inspired the extra story. It was enough to lend a superiority complex in which the whole community shared.

George Beed and his brothers were among the limited few to arrive in the prairie setting with capital, either of their own or belonging to investors in the East. Each county seat seems to have had at least one outstanding man of this sort. There was Eugene S. Ellsworth at nearby Iowa Falls whose name was given to a college. In Eldora, it had been L. F. Wisner who had built an opera house far more pretentious than patronage warranted. The basis of all these ventures had been the rising value of land.

Our attitude toward such men at the time was one of deep appreciation. They catered to our combined ego. We wanted strangers to see the brick mansion George Beed had built at the edge of town—a house with a turret surrounded by wrought iron work, set well back among tall evergreens. For most of us the medium of exchange flowed meagerly. Families averaged seven children. Immigrant farmers were depending on future crops to pay for their acres. But there was homage rather than envy toward those capable of lifting the community out of the commonplace and permitting us to gloat together.

I saw the new courthouse in the square replace the small stone structure where my mother had taught school. I saw the bronze statue of justice take her position atop the dome where she could see the farming country for miles around. I watched while the laying of cement supplanted the board

sidewalks in the downtown section. And when I returned to the town much later, I found that bricks covered what had once been dusty or muddy streets.

Our culture was influenced more by England than by any other European country. So many of the old names reveal that—Proctor, Raymond, Guilford, Buckingham, Hollingsworth, Webb, Raper, Spencer, Robinson, Rule. Much of the immediate migration had been from around Galena, Illinois. At one time the local post office was each week receiving seventy *Galena Gazettes,* just as today there are many hundreds in Long Beach, California, who eagerly await the arrival of Tom [T. W.] Purcell's *Hampton Chronicle.*

In that earlier period, Raymond and Stuart's *Franklin County Recorder* might tell of a visit being made to Shullsburg or Galena or Platteville, but with the paragraph there was always a tag to the effect that the visitors were glad to get back to Hampton. No one was ever prosperous or content if he permitted himself to be lured beyond the Hampton horizon. So it seemed to a *Recorder* reader. There were those who returned from ventures in Kansas or Montana who were quoted as being penitent. A phrase that took away some of the music from the sound of mountain States was, "You can't eat scenery."

I. L. Stuart was particularly capable at writing paragraphs persuading Hamptonites that they need look no farther to find paradise. He had come as a young man from Boscobel, Wisconsin, with a mastery of the printer's trade, and soon became junior editor of the *Recorder.* As a testimonial to his belief in his own writings, now, along in his eighties, he still resides in Hampton, giving every indication of being thoroughly content.

As for the rising generation, its wings were pretty well clipped. You couldn't go far with a horse and buggy over

poor roads, and railway travel was beyond the average purse. So we were a tribe unto ourselves. But there were a few venturesome souls among the first native born on attaining manhood. Sometimes they went as far as Marshalltown where there were street cars and where the soldiers' home was located. Or they went into Chicago on "hog passes". On their return, they would stand on the bank corner and relate their impressions of the outside world. They were our movies, our picture papers, and our radio.

The Hampton of that period gained its glamour from isolation. We felt that we possessed greater prowess on the baseball diamond than the distant tribe at Iowa Falls, twenty miles to the south. Had we not the best band in the State, the winner of the district declamatory contest, and the fastest trotting horse to be found at any of the nearby county fairs?

I remember one trip away when I was fourteen. It was a Sunday excursion on the Iowa Central to Clear Lake, where the Methodists had camp meeting grounds. The wide expanse of water irritated me as one accustomed only to the prairie. Maybe it was because we instinctively dislike anything alien, something that takes us by surprise that we can't understand. Perhaps I went too long without lunch, or the reflection of sunlight on the water at noon was too bright for my eyes. Anyhow it was soothing on the return trip home to glimpse the first familiar windmill and windbreak and big red barn and, when the track swerved just north of Hampton, to view again the courthouse dome above the leafy maples.

While few left Hampton during that early era, those who did desert us chose a westerly direction. Ralph Bender was one exception who invaded the deep South. He was a dashing young fellow who had learned the jewelry

trade, and he went to work for a firm in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. I recall the wintry day when he made his one trip back to Hampton. He talked to me as he shivered his way in a thin overcoat through the slush of a February thaw, in crossing from Welty's drug store over to Lombardo's pool hall. He had acquired a Southern accent. He spoke of hospitable colonels and servile darkies. I missed none of this chance to learn of an atmosphere so dramatic.

But years later when I was on a chautauqua tour through Alabama and Ralph came to see me at the hotel, he did not talk about the South. He asked about Hampton to which he referred as "the center of the universe". He had not forgotten a corner of the town nor its people. They never do. He asked about Frank Kratochvil and Cy Jernegan.

Frank Kratochvil was one of those sure-of-himself pioneers who had picked Hampton in preference to his native Milwaukee. A cigar maker by trade, he had set up a shop where he employed several helpers and wholesaled his brand, "The Pride of Hampton". At the entrance of his shop was a wooden Indian maid, and inside there was a settee about which was discussed the affairs of the nation. His contribution to the town was an "old world" hospitality, good cheer, and a tolerant attitude that acted as a leaven to the predominant Puritan and Victorian atmosphere of the town. For several terms he served as mayor, but he was always the village burgomaster.

Well up in age, Frank Kratochvil passed away a few years ago. He never left Hampton. Until the cigar making business went the way of the livery barn, he kept his shop open as a place to which prodigals might return from California. He listened to their glowing tales of the far country with twinkling eyes of suspicion. He knew how homesick they had been.

"Looking after the farm" provided the most legitimate

excuse on the part of deserters to California for suddenly showing up again on Hampton streets. "Visiting relatives" or "just passing through" were among the lesser alibis. Under no circumstances must there be admission of heart hunger for the locality itself. Inquisition included two standard thrusts—"When did you come?" and "How long are you going to stay?" Hesitancy in responding to the latter inquiry caused immediate loss of prestige.

Cyrus L. Jernegan, tall and lean, was Hampton's marshal during two decades. He also served as sheriff of the county. He and his brothers had come with their parents from Martha's Vineyard Island, and he had retained a portion of the New England mode of speech. Cy wore a blue coat and a star, carried a cane, and was accompanied by a large dog, but, so far as I know, never carried a gun. Hampton was not a gun-toting community except at wild duck and prairie chicken hunting time.

Cy was a familiar figure not only to Hampton but to the people of the farms and the smaller towns for miles around. He was conscious of his authority and so was every small boy, every stranger within the gates, and every potential law-breaker. He made a career of a job that fitted him completely. Nobody ever got the better of him.

Characteristics of the type possessed by Mr. Kratochvil and Mr. Jernegan were strengthened by the atmosphere of pioneer Hampton. Their personalities, flowering to the fullest, registered with all whom they met. It was that way all up and down the street before it was taken over by chain stores and filling stations.

Our downtown "Main Street" was called Reeve Street out of respect to the Reeve family that had driven into the locality to the southeast of what became the site of Hampton and established a homestead in the log house days. The Reeves were so early on the scene that one of the

townships of the county was given their name. The Reeve and Clock families, which intermarried, were so synonymous with substantiality that when any of their members sought office their opponents usually made a sorry showing. There were six brothers in the pioneer Clock family. Emily Reeve was county superintendent of schools when I took the teacher's examination. Henry A. Clock was county treasurer for several terms, and his son, Ralph, became a judge and State Senator in California.

THE OPERA HOUSE

I don't know what had motivated Dr. O. B. Harriman in building the Hampton Opera House, whether it had been a leaning toward the theater or pure commercialism. The two-story structure, made of brick that had been manufactured locally, similar to that used in other early construction in the town, was standing when I first viewed the business district. The lower floor was divided into stores including the doctor's pharmacy; the playhouse occupied the entire space above. There was a stairway leading to the theater, the walls of which had been carved with the initials of persons who, at a certain stage of their existence had gone in for that sort of thing, possibly with the idea of perpetuating their memories. Against the cornice of the building, the words "Opera House" were displayed in gilded letters.

I do not recall ever having seen Dr. Harriman at any of the performances in the hall and this was amazing to me inasmuch as what the occasional traveling show troupes had to offer provided the ultimate in feverish anticipation, intense realization, and pleasant remembrance.

I was not able to attend all the shows. For the most part my admission to the hall was gained through peddling bills, carrying the bass drum for the parading band, or

sneaking through the skylight on the tin roof. But Dr. Harriman, enabled by his ownership to cross the portals that marked the difference between being outside or in, would remain below among his pills and tonics while the most exciting performances were being presented above.

Kitchen chairs were used for seats and these could be removed for the holding of dances. If one sat at the rear of the hall—which I never did, as my choice was a location as near to the kerosene footlights as possible, a point of vantage which could be gained by a quick rush as soon as the doors were thrown open—it required a considerable craning of necks to follow everything transpiring on the stage. But this handicap was offset by a series of platforms filled with chairs which rose tier by tier until they reached the rear ceiling. These seats were "reserved" and only the affluent could hope to occupy them. The skylight was so located that it was not difficult to drop to the final tier of raised seats at such infrequent intervals as the trap was left open for ventilation and one could elude the watchful eye of "Stoney", the janitor.

Waiting for an opportunity to make a descent into the palace of pleasure, and hoping an opportunity would prevail before the end of the last act or before the Lincoln J. Carter drama called for the train wreck so glowingly pictured on the window lithographs, one could catch the combined odor of chewing gum, dried tobacco juice, heated foul air, and grease paint perfume—the seductive opera house smell.

E. J. Stonebraker acted as janitor of the opera house during its entire heyday. He was a G. A. R. veteran, one of the youngest of the McKenzie Post, and later (1926) became State Commander of that organization when its ranks were pathetically thinned. He may have been of kind heart underneath, but he was obliged in fulfilling his

duties to prevent boyhood from tasting of joys without payment in return. We never figured the financial problems of the traveling troupes nor were we concerned with Dr. Harriman's vexations in collecting rent, but we were conscious of the cruel fact that dimes were scarce.

"Stoney" was a busy man on show nights, and he moved about importantly as he trimmed and lit the row of kerosene footlights and kept the two pot-bellied stoves red hot. We were sycophants before him when he was about to dispense the bill-peddling jobs. Sometimes the rumors that he was ready to distribute this patronage were false, but if one hung about persistently enough and was extremely fortunate he might capture one of these jobs. It meant being entrusted with a bundle of pink or green hand-bills announcing the attraction "TO NIGHT!", the title of the performance, the names of characters and cast, the prices of "ten, twenty, thirty", and a reminder that doors would be open at 7:30 sharp.

We would be accompanied by a member of the troupe to make sure that none of the bills were thrust through the cracks of board sidewalks or disposed of otherwise than at the doors of householders. Troupers in those days were actors off stage as well as on. They went in for glamorous overcoats and carried canes. We could only conjecture as to the sort of rôle in which they would appear at night, but if they were of dark complexion and had grey at the temples, we deduced their part was that of the villain.

It was their wont to speak with disparagement of the size of the town, suggesting that the number of houses did not correspond with the population claimed. They dropped hints that they were accustomed to playing in larger places, and that the Hampton engagement was a condescension caused by faulty railroad connections. But we were so awed by these strangers and so filled with homage that we

did not resent their insinuations. They had been everywhere and ours was just one small town that counted so little in a great world. Later I learned that many of these companies before which we bowed so abjectly toured but a limited territory, and some of them had originated in communities no larger than our own.

We could not hope for many shows during the season. At county fair time came the Cora Warner Comedy Company that stayed for a week with a change of bill each night. After a lull, downtown store windows would contain posters announcing the coming of Beach and Bowers Minstrels.

Although she had rivals in Flora De Voss and Ollie Eaton, both of whom headed "comedy companies" bearing their names, Cora Warner was my first love and my impressions of her were imprinted most indelibly on my consciousness. She had a bird-like voice that carried to the far corners of the hall and she played ingénue rôles that gave her a sympathetic appeal. But discounting the sweetness of some playwright's characterization and the fact that she was the first actress to come into my life, I am convinced that she possessed real dramatic talent. She wore a wig of blonde curls on the stage and dressed girlishly, but I had seen her walk to and from the Beed Hotel and the opera house for afternoon rehearsals. Her real hair was dark and she was no longer a young woman. Yet at night, even though my seat was within a few feet from where she interpreted human emotions, the illusion was perfect.

Billed as Miss Cora Warner, we knew from inside information provided by those in a position to gather such details, that she was the wife of Ben Warner, who managed the company and played a violin in lieu of an orchestra. There was a good deal of doubling of rôles, for,

though it did not concern us then, Ben must have been obliged to keep down expenses.

It was a small stage, surrounded on three sides by the paneled advertisements of local merchants. Even at that day some of the advertisers had died or failed in business, but there was never any change in the lettering. The front drop curtain had a painting of "The Rock of Gibraltar". To us of the inland, it was an artistic marine that had to do with a setting far removed from the cornfields. Up close, one was made aware that the faces of the men in the boat on the Mediterranean were nothing more than pink dabs of a brush, but the sea was very green, the sky a beautiful blue, and the yellow Rock of Gibraltar, with the town nestling at the water line, constituted our art gallery.

The manipulation of this front drop was something we often tried to imitate, with indifferent success, in our haymow and backyard shows. Provided with ropes and pulleys properly adjusted, it rolled upward on itself and required scarcely any space at all among the rafters. To one seated in one of the kitchen chairs out in front, waits for the curtain to rise and reveal action on the stage seemed endless. The rising was preceded by the tinkle of a tiny bell, and this sound with its significance, brought on breathlessness and jumpy heart beats.

The stage had three sets—a street scene, a woodland, and a "fancy door center". Also there was a prison scene painted on the back wall. On either side of the stage were wings that could be shifted to suit the change of scenes. When companies brought their own scenery they made much of it in their billing, sometimes claiming to have more than a carload of effects that would provide trains traveling at sixty miles an hour, tornadoes, ship-wrecks, floating ice, and saw mills. When an attraction failed to live up to its scenic promises, explanation would be given that the

local stage was too small for use of the equipment that had been manufactured for big city engagements.

The street scene was that of a city and gave me my first impression of brick pavements and water hydrants. This canvas, revealing a boulevard in which the structures all had many stories, was devoid of pedestrians or traffic. It was the custom of comedians doing a monologue, to turn from viewing the painting and comment, "Hampton on a busy day". It always got a laugh regardless of its repetition. We demanded, however, that our comedians use the names of nearby towns, toward which we felt a superiority, in certain of their jokes. Invariably, they made Ackley the butt for this type of humor.

There was only one interlude to mar the complete enjoyment of a Cora Warner play. During the intermission before the last act, there would be a rustling of the Rock of Gibraltar and a member of the cast, usually the man who played the villain, would step before the footlights and offer an apology for appearing before us "in the costume of the evening", while announcing the bill for the following night. Tomorrow night the company was to present the most exciting play in its entire repertoire and it was propagandized so effectively that one was brought from out of the realms of fantasy, created by what had just been witnessed, with the stern realization that the present program not only was reaching its climax, but that attendance next night was problematical.

It was through the medium of these plays that we were given impressions of the romantic South, the golden West, and the sunshine and shadow of life in a big city. There was nothing in the dialogue to disturb anyone's political leanings, religious faiths, or inherited prejudices. We made no effort to analyze theatrical tricks but naively succumbed to their effectiveness.

When the show reached its climax there was a rasping of kitchen chairs, a final applause in which shrill whistling mingled with the handclaps, the bundling up preparatory to meeting the cold outside, and a shoving and jostling toward the hall's one entrance and exit. Then the members of the audience took their separate ways and straggled home in the darkness and the reality of a world from which for the nonce they had been transported.

We did not consider it sinful to attend shows at the opera house, but we were sufficiently under the Puritan influence to feel that local talent, feminine at least, should not venture in the field any farther than appearing in homemade programs or, if they must travel, in lyceum offerings sponsored by the church or school. It was this taboo that made the genuine troupers the more glamorous.

I am sure Cora Warner and the members of her company possessed ability or they would not have been so successful in weaving a spell. Yet I am aware that stage handicaps were partially overcome by the imagination that we took with us to the performances. The clapping of cocoanut shells off stage served as a substitute for the actual appearance of a horse, and the lines of an actor could convert a bit of painted prop into the edge of a yawning canyon.

Minstrels, with their parading street bands, shared popularity with the drama at the opera house. Beach and Bowers came every winter. They traveled in their own special railroad car and remained for "one night only". The blare of their street parade at noon, with sliding trombones prominent, would reach us as we emerged from the schoolhouse. By running ourselves out of breath we could arrive about the time the musicians were forming a circle on the bank corner as a climax to their swift march through the brief trading district.

The blast of brass mingled with the plaintive reed instruments and the rattle and bang of drums had an effect that lifted the town out of the commonplace. Rhythm and harmony, perfected by daily practice, put poetry into the familiar setting. Under the spell of the crashing music, our stores seemed more majestic than on other days, and the dome of the courthouse tower assumed added grandeur.

There was finish about the Beach and Bowers band, the players uniformed as jockeys, and the owners of the show wearing silk hats and frock coats. Shifting from swift tempo, the band would give a slow rendition of "My Old Kentucky Home" with variations, while Robert Beach and Otis Bowers would allow their gaze to wander beyond the gathered throng to the roofs of the Franklin County Bank building, the Empire Block, and Patterson's Temple of Economy. Every gesture was dramatic, from the tuba player's pause to rattle saliva from his horn to the blasé attitude of the snare drummer as he manipulated his sticks.

I wonder if most of the tricks for awing the populace and playing on emotions had not already been mastered by showmen of that day. Such care was taken with details that we were caught up, breathless. Perhaps it was the viewpoint of adolescence in an era when diversion came too infrequently to cloy. There must have been worn and weary faces among some of those performers. Close inspection would probably have revealed soiled linen beneath the gold braided coats, but at that time there was only glitter.

Lew Hall came with his negro minstrels and a band that walked faster and manipulated the slip horn more effectively than any of its rivals. The minstrel performances varied but little. There was the grand opening, the half circle with interlocutor and end men, the contrast of joke and sentimental ballad, the olio, and the concluding farce.

I enjoy tuning in minstrels on the radio, but the satisfaction of listening has less to do with what the modern program has to offer than with the mellowed memories it evokes.

Ballads sung by the traveling minstrels, dripping with sentiment, appeared to meet the approval of even the most cynical in the audience. Favorite themes of the silver-throated tenor concerned the girl who had left the village for the big city and become wayward, disappointed suitors sitting in reverie before the firelight, women who regretted having married for money instead of love. Bassos sang of the rolling sea with a final deep note that never failed to bring applause. And it was the golden age of the clog dance.

Since we were under the Victorian influence, the mildest of jokes were considered risqué. Burlesque shows came no nearer than Minneapolis and St. Paul, and it was only through the cigarette package souvenirs and *The Police Gazette* in the barber shops that we were aware of what women looked like in tights.

Another show I missed was "The Merchant of Venice". The company was stranded in Hampton although it was said to carry a goodly cast, be well costumed, and equipped with its own scenery. There had been doubt, I remember, as to the merit of the production. Either it had been a last minute engagement and the press agent had fallen down on the job, or it was too high priced — or perhaps we shied from the classics. Anyhow, the company was disbanded as the result of meager gate receipts.

I glimpsed two of the actors on a Saturday afternoon when a warm March wind was eating its way into the snow-drifts shoveled from the board walks into the unpaved gutters along Third Street. The strangers on their way from the opera house to the hotel had reached a point in front of Rule's butcher shop. There was glamour about them even in the moment of distress. In those days we had no

trouble sighting strangers and becoming absorbed in their mannerisms. No automobiles then with out-of-State license plates whizzed along cement highways connecting us with the outside world in all directions.

The Rock of Gibraltar front curtain has gone the way of the fancy hitching post in front of the Harriman drug store. They built the movie theater on the site where once stood the Phoenix Hotel. Modern youth need not pine for the next show to come along, for there is a new one every night, including Sundays. The films follow each other in such kaleidoscopic fashion that the plot of one is mixed with that of its predecessor. For scenery, the camera has caught everything that lies out of doors, and leading ladies smile photographically for Hampton audiences just as they do for those in the cities from coast to coast. Our romantic heroes and heroines walked our streets, breathed our air, ate our food. They were not strips of celluloid packed tightly in tin boxes shipped to us from across the continent. They stopped at the Beed House.

HOTELS

It may seem unbelievable now that one of those county seat hotels, such as our Beed House, could have been surrounded with such glamour, but in our isolation we were starved for contact with strangers, and guests accommodated by parading their fascinations. Traveling men, then obliged to stay until the next train, stood on the steps and were glittering personalities.

To the spacious lobby and high-ceilinged rooms came theatrical troupes, visiting baseball teams, milliners from Chicago. The hotel had a negro porter, the only member of his race in town, and it had a horse-driven bus with scenery painted on its sides. That was all before the days of the tourist camp and the tourist home.

In later years John E. Coonley was the prime factor in the erection of a much more modern hotel where the Rotary Club holds its meetings and social affairs have that sophistication that comes only when young people are widely-traveled and in close touch with the outside world. "Tec" [W. D.] Sherer drives the motor bus as he once drew rein over the horse-drawn bus, furnishing an example of adjustment rather than surrender to a changing world.

The Phoenix Hotel, built at the beginning of the town as a stopping place for stagecoaches, was declining in prestige when I first picked my barefoot way along the board planks of its front sidewalk. These planks were in constant need of repair and "Old Man" [E. S.] Stiles was forever patching them with pieces of tin. A huge willow tree cast its shade over the inn's entrance and on sizzling summer days afforded a splotch of relief for the soles of unshod feet.

The Phoenix attracted the lesser drummers who visited the town — house to house canvassers who enlarged photographs of loved ones into crayon portraits, agents who sold cooking utensil gadgets and stereopticon views. A regular guest each summer was a Mr. Gallagher from Dubuque. Season after season, Mr. Gallagher wore the same straw hat and alpaca coat. His movements were more or less mysterious, but he was said to be a money lender in a day when a mortgage really meant an obligation. Mr. Stiles had an adopted son, Emery, who had run away with a circus and become a success as an animal trainer. Emery was a bit ahead of my time, but the older folk remembered him and he had become a legend.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

There come to mind the names of so many men of more than ordinary caliber who gave their best to Hampton and who rounded out their years in the town. E. S. Patterson

called his drygoods store "The Temple of Economy" and the words appeared in gilt letters above the front of the roof. His son, George, carried on as did Charles Lockwood Beed the hardware business founded by his father, Charles Beed.

Another exception to the tendency to seek careers elsewhere was Ed [Edwin A.] Beebe, whose only Hampton desertion was during his enlistment for the Spanish-American War. His father, N. W. Beebe, a lumber dealer whose qualities as a gentleman gave tone to the town, was still living when these lines were written. It was when the Beebe house was built that I saw my first porcelain bathtub.

Sons of Isaac Robinson continued in the banking business, the Schlesinger boys in the clothing trade. Here was tradition taken seriously, and an inheritance of faith in the town and its surrounding soil. Those who knew well those other ninety-eight county seats may supply their own names for a set-up that must have been much the same.

There were several groups of brothers that came to Hampton in an early day. Henry, Walter F., and O. B. Harriman belonged to both the business and professional as well as the land owning class. Walter became State Senator and was a candidate for Governor at one time. Each had a fine home at different sides of town. It would appear that dreams of what they expected from the section of Iowa had been well fulfilled.

The Motts — Albert M., C. J., and Delos W. — went in for land owning, strictly, and they supervised farms of many hundred acres. They had homes in the country as well as in town, and the farm homes were more impressive than most. They brought to the area something that was a combination of the planter or rancher type. Their dress and manners were those of the country gentleman.

With the exception of Walter Harriman, all of these men stayed on in Hampton throughout their lives. In recalling them, I recall their horses and fringe-topped phaetons. Their dignity demanded a certain homage.

Will [W. T. O.], Lou, and John H. Rule were meat market and hotel men, with heavy, black mustaches. There was a stuffed bear in front of the Rule meat market, I remember.

Ex-Hamptonites think of the homes and business houses as still being in possession of owners and proprietors of the period when they had known the town best. Changes occurring in the intervening years are ignored. The G. G. Clemmer house with its green blinds and elderberry hedge has not lost its name even though it may have had a dozen different families as occupants since its original possessors scattered afar. It is the same up and down the business section — Lane's Book Store, Refsneider's Restaurant, Buckingham's Barber Shop, Mrs. Whitcomb's Millinery — all places that have changed hands years back.

It was in Refsneider's Restaurant that I tasted my first ice cream soda, then just discovered. I recall the dark coolness of the place that offered a refuge from a sultry afternoon. The room was partitioned to separate the tobacco and candy cases from the dining tables, and the ceiling was decorated with colored tissue paper that had been cut into festoons by a stranger who had exchanged his artistry for one of Mr. Refsneider's twenty-five cent meals. The fact that the decorations were fly-specked did not detract from an atmosphere which set the room apart from duller business houses along the street.

The word "restaurant" on a striped awning — it was not until later that it became a cafe — was synonymous with the scent of luxuries borne to us from the tropics. Bananas picked by jungle natives, lengths of licorice, gum given a peppermint flavor in far-off factories. There were

no candy bars nor ice cream cones as yet, but space was given to a complete line of plug tobaccos.

The restaurants tolerated the presence of boyhood for only such length of time as was required for making a penny purchase. Each of them had its accepted group of loungers among those who had reached man's estate, and the privileges the initiated enjoyed provided an added incentive for surmounting the stings of adolescence. The Hampton restaurants fulfilled the mission of clubs, with Refsneider's considered the most exclusive. It was not until after the World War that the Greek restaurateurs penetrated as far inland as Hampton.

In addition to Mrs. Whitcomb's, the feminine shopper for an Easter hat had three other stocks from which to make a selection in "the nineties", and the rival milliners strove with plumes and feathers and artificial birds and fruit and flowers to make each bit of finery vary from its companions displayed in their store windows. To acquire headgear similar to that of someone else in town had its alarming possibilities, and the prospective wearers exercised caution. Each shop owner imported a "trimmer" from Chicago for the spring season, and these beautiful strangers were assured of popularity among Hampton males as soon as they set foot on our board walks. They were our mannequins demonstrating the latest styles as they passed along the street.

Every spring Mrs. Whitcomb visited Chicago where she selected her hats and her "trimmer". Although she was never gone long, she returned with a fund of anecdotes concerning the big city. Pausing from biting off a thread or plying her needle to a bit of straw, she told of her personal contacts with the famous ones of the metropolis. Making the most of her meager material, she had all the knack of a present-day columnist.

It was to the Buckingham barber shop that I went for my first shave, although I never reached enough importance as a customer to possess one of the monogrammed mugs on the row of shelves against the wall beside the tall mirror. Along with the monogram was a design indicating the vocation of the mug owner. John Buckingham wore long, black side whiskers, and numerous Hampton boys learned the trade in his shop. The most capable of them was Frank Bailey, who followed the work over a long period of years. Tribute was paid to those who did things especially well by showing a preference for their services.

As for livery barns, there had once been half a dozen of these institutions and, in their heyday, there had seemed not the slightest hint that they would ever lose their prestige. The street that led up from the depot to the courthouse square was lined on either side with blacksmith shops and livery barns and farm implement establishments. The latter business displayed its binders and hay rakes on the sidewalk's edge.

Livery barns had advertisements in panels above the decorative writing desk in the Beed Hotel. The Phelps livery barn sought the patronage of drummers desiring to take side trips to nearby towns. Its purchased panel included a woodcut of a fancy vehicle drawn by a span of horses, their lifted hoofs remaining smartly in mid-air year in and year out. On the seat of the equipage was pictured a silk-hatted driver, languishing among the cushions was a lady holding a lace-edged parasol, and in front of the prancing steeds ran a lad, rolling a hoop. Tom Phelps had no such carriage nor driver, but all of his horses were known on the highway by name. He rented his rigs by the hour, and scores of courtships commenced and culminated in his hired buggies. In winter, he let out cutters that slid through the snow to the accompaniment of jingling bells.

Each livery barn had its coterie of loafers — retired farmers, men who had never quite found their niche in life, horse buyers, and horse traders. The office was at the great barn's entrance — a shut-off place with a small stove that, in winter, roared red hot to meet the room's lack of lath or plaster. The walls were covered with bright colored tin signs expounding the merits of liniments and spavin cures, farm sale bills, and bits of harness suspended from nails.

Livery barns counted mightily in the scheme of things before all the talk of carburetors and spark plugs and spare tires. Their surrender to garages was a gradual, heart-breaking procedure. Indeed, even after the horseless carriage gave evidence of its practicability there was stubborn refusal to face reality. The aging livery barn owners stayed at their posts until it was time for them to take their own last rides. No one followed them in their occupation; the livery barn just dwindled away.

LAW AND POLITICS

Of course politics played a part in the pioneer excitement. We were as predominately Republican in politics as we were overwhelmingly Protestant in religion. There was a scramble for county offices, the campaign frequently developing into a fight between a candidate from the country and one from the town. The retired farmer could play both factions. It was figured that it cost about $400 to run for a county office. I remember once when there were fourteen candidates for recorder, with all fourteen covering the townships with horse and buggy and handing out cigars.

L. B. Raymond in an earlier day and later Tom Purcell, both editors, had statewide influence. National issues were handled at the Cy [Cyrus] Roberts' shoe repairing shop that was nicknamed "Tammany". Occasionally even

a school election caused bitterness. In later years, T. J. B. Robinson of Hampton represented the district in Congress. When Franklin County went Democratic during the depression — that was really revolution.

W. D. Evans, coming to Hampton from Williamsburg, Iowa, as a young man, first taught school, then practiced law, and for many years was a State Supreme Court Judge. He was endowed with a fine mind and a commanding presence. In an early day he and L. B. Raymond were among those of a small group active in a Chautauqua Reading Circle. Judge Evans, perhaps the town's most distinguished citizen, retained his Hampton residence until his death.

Another Hampton attorney of the "nineties", John W. Luke, became a State Railroad Commissioner. I recall that the Governor attended his funeral in Hampton. My father always referred to him as "Cap" Luke, a title gained from his Civil War experience, and the rank was not carelessly bestowed. Mrs. Luke was active at the G.A.R. "camp fires" where the Women's Relief Corps served hot coffee and baked beans, and where there were patriotic tableaus and battle reminiscences. She was a jolly woman. After fifty years, the sight of her in a white apron bustling about amid the smell of layer cakes and steaming coffee comes back.

SCHOOL DAYS

The county was fortunate as, I suppose, were most counties of the State, in the type of earliest settlers who built a background of sturdiness. There was not the necessity of bridging the gap between lawless adventure and normal living characteristic of the cattle and mining country farther west. School and church had sobered the instincts of the lawless among settlers in new Middle West towns, toning down a good deal of local color, perhaps, but providing a substantial axis about which family life could revolve.

The Hampton school building was located just across the street from our home. Back of it, there was the slope to the creek, then the cemetery hill, and beyond a stretch of cornfields to the eastern horizon. It had not been many years before I was born that the site of Hampton presented but unbroken prairie sod, yet in my first glimpses of the world about me, board fences and walks and buildings had a settled appearance. As for the brick schoolhouse, its imposing architecture, to my eyes, had belonged to all past ages. Contrary to modern structures devoted to similar purposes, the Hampton schoolhouse went in for height. It had three stories, although the first floor was utilized for hot air furnaces as well as classrooms. And it had a belfried tower, then considered of utmost importance.

Dwelling within sound of the bell, which had a first, second, and third ring, and in sight of the pupils at play, the institution meant more to my infancy than if we had resided in a more remote neighborhood. As it was, the shouts at recess and the goings and comings of teachers and older boys and girls aroused an interest that was part of my consciousness long before I reached an age that was acceptable for entrance into the halls from whose open windows drifted chorus singing and the drone of classes reciting in unison.

Four of my older brothers and sisters had preceded me into the mysterious realm, and it was from them that I was given hints of what to expect when my hour should arrive. There were recesses when I left our front yard to watch games of breath-taking "pullaway" and "marbles for keeps". There have been whole years in my life which apparently left nothing worth remembering, but to this day I have a clear-cut vision of Jack [John C.] Ferris on an April day as he knelt on one knee and adjusted a red carnelian between thumb and forefinger, preparatory to an expert shot at the "commies" and "agates" and "glassies"

within the lines that had been marked off in the moist earth. The precision of Jack's marksmanship with his favorite "shooter" came back to me the other day when I read his obituary. He had lived to be 65, and death came a year after his retirement as station agent at the Great Western depot in Hampton. He must have been about fourteen when I saw him at his best as a marble player, but even then he was long-legged and aggressive, and, according to the viewpoint of age four, very much grown up.

"Pert" [John P.] Myers also was an important personage of that period, due to his ability to kick a football great distances. I remember him best, perhaps, as the follower of this playground activity, because on one occasion he sent the round leather sphere crashing through one of the schoolhouse windowpanes. Jack Ferris and Pert Myers were non-commissioned officers with Hampton's Company D at Chickamauga during the Spanish-American War. Pert, too, has passed on. Jack and Pert belonged to one of the first generations of high school youths that the town produced, and I somehow feel that their shouts are still a part of the echo to be heard on the old playground.

I heard much about "the twelfth grade". We didn't call them seniors then. My curiosity concerning this group sent me forth on a quest as relatively hazardous as that of an alien in Tibet seeking an audience with the Dalai Lama. Saying nothing about it to members of my family, I decided to overcome all obstacles and invade "the twelfth grade" precincts. Crossing the street, I journeyed to the entrance of the great, brick building. There was the smell of chalk and dust sweepings and stale air. I began the long climb of the three flights of scuffed stairs with their marred wainscoting and finally came to the top floor. Having eluded the outer guards, I found myself in a large room with folding blinds at the tall windows, and there was a globe show-

ing the manner in which the world of that day was portioned among the nations. I suppose that at the end of all rainbows there is some disillusionment. My Dalai Lama, the high school principal, startled me with a burst of mirth.

At that time, the local high school had had but one or two graduating classes. The first had had but one member — a mustached young man who had received his diploma in raiment that included a swallow-tailed coat. His name was Charlie Wilcox and recently he retired as a Y. M. C. A. official out in Seattle. My two older sisters were looking forward to their commencement and, when it neared, talk of the event became the main topic of household conversation. Theirs was the class of '91. Graduates had increased until two nights were required to give each an opportunity to present a fifteen minute oration. Edna had chosen " 'Tis Not in the Bond" and Mamie had selected "The Women of the Twentieth Century". It was customary to choose heavy themes in order to impress the taxpayers. In planning their gowns, the girls sent to Chicago for samples of dress goods. There was much debate over these bits of cloth, but Mamie finally settled upon a plain cream color, and Edna decided on material in which there was a silk stripe.

The commencement program was held at Harriman's Hall, there being no quarters for an assembly of townspeople in the school building. Miniature baskets of garden flowers were considered appropriate for gifts, and these were placed along the row of kerosene footlights at the feet of the graduates. The attitude at the time was that the receipt of a rolled diploma with a ribbon about it constituted entree to worldly success. The town had turned out so few who had completed the high school course that it was years before this myth was dispelled.

By the time my sisters graduated, I had passed beyond

the lower floor of the building with its furnaces and huge pipes for heating the upper strata, and was in Maud Burson's room. Until one had reached Miss Burson, he had not really been to school in Hampton. Every instant spent in her presence was dramatic.

Whether or not Miss Burson had gone through any special training course for teaching I never knew. All I know is that when our class poured into the fifth grade, there she was — a personality whose emotions were so close to the surface that the color came and went beneath the soft texture of her olive skin. She met us with thrown-back shoulders that were never permitted to droop, and with a smile of approval from lips that could be suddenly framed for stinging sarcasm. She kept us in tow from the start. Perhaps any school has served its purpose if it has just one good teacher. Miss Burson was native born and she knew the background of every boy and girl who sat at the desks.

Our geography lessons included, of course, a study of Iowa and drawing a map of our native State, longer than it was wide, with a jagged line representing the "Muddy Missouri" on the west and a bulge that followed the course of the "Father of Waters" on the east. We were obliged to learn the names of the ninety-nine counties by heart, starting with Allamakee in the northeast corner of the State. Cities and towns beyond a certain population were marked with a red dot. We grieved that Hampton could not be so indicated, but disappointment was offset somewhat by the circle designating our home town as a county seat. That was something Latimer, Hansell, and Chapin could not boast.

There was a bit of envy toward Mason City on the north that was becoming larger due to a cement plant, and toward Waterloo to the east that was developing as a manufacturing town. Beyond that we made no comparisons.

Most of our teachers came from the State Normal School at Cedar Falls, and a quota of them married Hampton men. We had one teacher from Maquoketa, who spoke of the river of the same name with first hand information. Miss Funk came from Independence, through which flowed the Wapsipinicon. Our own Squaw Creek had been neglected by the map maker. It was in Miss Burson's room that we first began the study of American history, and her dramatic ability in interpreting the Revolutionary War made super-patriots of us all. No subversive influence pervaded that classroom.

It would be too much to expect of all teachers that they have the physique, the energy, and the enthusiasm of Miss Burson. I was starting my reportorial career on the *Hampton Chronicle* when word came of her death. In the brief obituary I tried to say something of what she had meant to the community but was far from satisfied with what went into print. Regardless of the justice or injustice of our system of reward, she had gotten much out of her work because she had put her all into it. I remember walking to school with her on an April morning when the dark branches of the maples were beginning to bud and the robins were starting their nests in the apple trees. She threw back her head to revel in the scene and to impart to me a realization of its beauty.

It was while I was in fifth grade that the schoolhouse burned, and Miss Burson was among those who stood in our front yard that spring night to watch the volunteer fire department unsuccessfully fight the flames. There was a wild night wind blowing and from a spectator's standpoint the conflagration was the most satisfactory of any in the town's history. I fear there was a secret sadistic streak in the populace, in evidence when the blaze gained new headway in hitherto unscathed portions of the structure.

The excitement of fires was so infrequent that those who relished an opportunity to display their leadership, submerged in the daily routine, made the most of such frenzied moments.

In those days the clang of the fire bell within hearing of every household in the town would startle us from our beds. Lacking telephone communications, we would rush to the west window upstairs and scan the rooftops for a sign of red. First of all, my father would anxiously survey the darkness in the vicinity of his downtown store. Then would follow speculation as to whether the splotch of unusual light was in the residential or business district or perhaps was as far out as the grain elevator. Prolonged clang of the bell would convince us of the seriousness of the holocaust, even though experience taught us otherwise, for there were those who found release in legitimately pulling the rope.

Fire in the three-story brick schoolhouse was so important a catastrophe that tactics for combating it were disputed by self-appointed chieftains, some of them seemingly being more bent on winning homage for their generalship than the saving of property. Yet for a time it did appear that the water pumped by hand into a hose from the street cistern would be effective. Along toward midnight, however, red sheets of flame pushed clouds of smoke before them and enveloped the belfry. There was the crash of walls, and the most pessimistic of pupils were made aware that there would be no school on the morrow.

For weeks the ruins provided a field for exploration. There was a smoky, water-soaked smell to the debris. The school board functioned with such efficiency, however, that our holiday was short-lived. Vacant storerooms and offices downtown were utilized. Miss Burson's fifth grade was given quarters in what had formerly been housekeeping rooms on the second floor of the Beed Hotel. For a day or

two, there was novelty in going downtown to school and climbing the narrow stairway to where new desks had been arranged, but we missed the playground, and the studious atmosphere was permeated with the odor of the less pleasant cooking smells from the hotel kitchen.

Somehow the new schoolhouse erected on the site of the old meant less to me than its predecessor. During the long summer months while it was being constructed, we climbed about on the scaffolding. Frank Howe, we were told, was drawing the unbelievable salary of five dollars a day for supervising the project.

There were incidents connected with my career leading to graduation, quite apart from the struggles for a smattering of physics and higher mathematics, that reveal how primitive was the institution. It was not until along toward the end of my scholastic life that I heard a "class yell", the innovation being imported by a group from Marshalltown who accompanied their entrant to Hampton for a district oratorical contest. Also, these over-bearing strangers impressed us by wearing school colors which we speedily imitated.

As my school days were drawing to a finish that last year of the century, modern football was also introduced into the community's athletic activities. Hitherto, the ball on the playground had been round in shape and, instead of being used in a game, had merely been kicked about. Earl Ferris (later head of the Earl Ferris Nursery) had attended Upper Iowa College, two or three counties away, and had returned with bushy hair and a sweater of alternating black and yellow stripes. We had thought of football as something that belonged exclusively to Princeton and Yale and the far East, but Earl had a rule book and was conversant with the terms of the gridiron.

Hampton played its first game with Ellsworth College

from Iowa Falls, and the experience for us was most distressing. That Thanksgiving Day was snowy and cold, our elders ridiculed a sport in which participants merely bumped into one another, and the Ellsworth team was composed of giants familiar with "interference", a word that for us took on a new significance. Remembering the crushing effect of that defeat gives me something of an understanding of the attitude of a people defeated in war.

Then we resorted to a one-year plan that I am afraid was lacking in ethics. Jap Smith had been out in the world for years and had long since abandoned textbooks, but he was so constructed that he seemed devoid of any of the frailties that hamper ordinary flesh and blood. He resembled a cast-iron robot which, once started in motion, felt neither pain nor fatigue. The next year when we played Ellsworth College, Jap was given the ball in every offensive play and he moved with the precision of an armored military tank. Jap could have starred in highly commercialized college football that developed to its peak a generation or two later. At best, the game was an importation to the Hampton scene, golf even more so. Baseball, on the other hand, was as natural to the prairie sod as the native vegetation.

On my final chautauqua tour in 1925, the circuit included all far western States, and Jap Smith knocked on the door of my hotel room in Lewistown, Montana. He still had an armored tank appearance. He said that he was driving a truck in the western town. Loyally, he inquired if there was anyone I wanted him to fight.

L. D. Lane, from whom we bought our schoolbooks, slates, and writing pads, each season put in a stock of toys, and boyhood visited his place of business nightly during the weeks leading up to Christmas Eve. He must have had a limited display on his counters but it seemed extensive at the time, and we slyly shunted about and experimented with

the novelties intended for Yuletide purchasers. Mechanical gewgaws suffered from handling, and bearded Mr. Lane, realizing that we were not legitimate shoppers, was harassed no end. Yet fingering the collection constituted for most of us our greatest Christmas excitement.

Few of us were sated by presents from Santa Claus in the gay nineties, and the buying of schoolbooks from Mr. Lane for a large family provided a real budget balancing problem, although readers and arithmetics, like coats and mittens, were handed down as long as they held together. Slates and sponges were more economical than writing pads, and the question about their being unsanitary had not been raised. To be given a chance in school to "wet the sponges" was somewhat equivalent to receiving a merit badge in Boy Scoutdom of today.

As I look back, there was little encouragement for the fine arts among a people absorbed in practicability. Parents desired of their offspring that they be able to take care of themselves in a world where one must plant and plow in order to reap. Even with the aid of kindly nature, hard work and long hours were required to wrest reward from the earth.

Mrs. Galer was among those from the East who taught oil painting, but she was the wife of a successful doctor [Dr. J. B. Galer] with large land holdings, and her instruction in the copying of reprints of "still life" was considered a harmless hobby. She explained to her pupils how to mix colors to get an imitative effect, but no pretense was made along creative lines. Results of the lessons hung on the walls of homes about town, and aside from these we had the Rock of Gibraltar front curtain at the Opera House.

The teaching of music ranked among the secondary professions, and we paid homage to our church choir singers, such as Mrs. T. H. Haecker, who mastered the high notes.

But there was certainly plenty of opportunity for freedom of worship in Hampton. In churches of a half dozen denominations there were Thursday night prayer meetings, Sunday night as well as Sunday morning services, Epworth League, Christian Endeavor, and Baptist Young Peoples' Union. It was at the Methodist Church that I saw my first chandelier of electric lights. This building was said to be the largest in the entire district and its seating capacity, enhanced by a balcony, was utilized for lyceum courses.

As youngsters, we went to church without urging, especially at revival time. We may have shifted our allegiance, seeking a service or a minister of most appeal rather than because we had caught any new significance in the shading of creed, but we did go to church. And rubbing elbows with other human beings, all swayed by similar emotion, we got something that is lacking when one sits at home and merely turns the dial of a radio.

AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD

John Atkinson, the drayman, lived across the alley from us. John was a bearded man who had been to California in the gold rush days. He kept three teams of horses and as many wagons for carrying on his business. And he had a hired man, John Roberts, from out in the country who sang and played the guitar when he had finished the evening chores. His favorite was "Lost on the Lady Elgin".

The Atkinson family was not musical although, like others in the neighborhood, they had in their parlor a Story & Clark organ, and the one daughter, Phyllis, dutifully learned to play the instrument according to the requirements of the period. On summer Sunday afternoons, when windows were open, one could hear all the organs in the neighborhood as they mingled hymnal chords with the lazy nature sounds of buzzing flies and droning bees.

The E. A. Nortons lived at the foot of the hill in the old neighborhood. We called it a hill, but there was no more than a slope to the vacant lots in the block, and the open space, unsupervised, was utilized for playground purposes —"one old cat", "duck on the rock", "roly-poly", marbles, and a night hide-and-seek game called "tally ho".

Jack Norton had belonged to an older gang, the members of which I had watched emerge from prolonged adolescence into a manhood that meant growing a mustache, being particular about one's clothes, thinking of the girls, seeking downtown interests, and deserting to an onrushing generation the vacant lots with their evening echoes. Jack left Hampton to live in Traer, Iowa.

The prairie that sloped down toward the Norton home to the west took a sharper cut on the north where the Henry White, James Campbell, and G. W. Soper homes stood on what could really be called a hill, ideal in winter for sleds. With the proper iciness and a good start, one could go as far as the creamery bridge, a distance of two blocks. The Soper place had been built by John Zimmerman, who, being the owner of a stone quarry, had erected a retaining wall from the yellow rocky formation beneath the black loam. Mr. White was justice of the peace. The Campbells and Sopers had retired from farms. "Old Man" Campbell had a decided Irish brogue and when it was a real sultry day he would inquire if one had heard about the man who had frozen to death.

The second and third generations of all our founders had none but the Hampton earmarks. Wes [G. W.] Soper became a stock buyer after he moved to town. The Sopers were a large family and their household and ours had something in common because the heads of each were Civil War veterans. While the Sopers had still resided seven miles out in the country we had visited them on several occasions.

I remember gathering hickory nuts out there on frosty mornings, and how two of the younger boys had stayed at our house all night when they had journeyed by wagon to attend a tent show of "Ten Nights in a Barroom".

The creamery was a thriving place in those boyhood days. It was a rambling structure by the creek, and its wagons, with a step behind on which we caught rides, scoured the county to gather milk, the cream from which was churned and the butter colored and shipped to Baltimore and other eastern points. I recall Baltimore best because John Mizel, a butter maker, had come from there.

There were three Ferris families, all of them engaged in horticulture on three different sides of town. The Ferris family heads — B. F., Sol W., and John C. — were bearded members of the G.A.R. Their trees were sold by agents who sometimes traveled as far as the Dakotas where farmers were in need of windbreaks against the wintry blasts. Later, Earl, the son of Sol Ferris, put the nursery on a wide map through mail order and eventually radio advertising, and the business became most prosperous.

We drove our cows to a partly wooded pasture out beyond the Ben Ferris nursery which was a full mile from the home barns. We not only had our own cows to herd back and forth along the dusty street but took on those whose owners were boyless. The two John Marken cows brought me fifty cents a month and at the end of the season the reward in crisp, green dollar bills was not to be sniffed at.

During the long vacation days we usually started for the cows in the partially wooded pasture shortly after dinner, a Duchess apple tree in Kline's backyard providing us a rendezvous as well as our dessert. Mott's woods, where the cows often sought distant grazing spots difficult to locate, had Spring Creek running through it. There was a place where the stream deepened and widened, just before

rippling over shallows, that had been chosen instinctively as a swimming hole by a preceding generation.

Horse traders had selected, with the instinct of a robin picking its nest, the bend in the road near Mott's Spring as a camping place. Horse traders have become a vanished tribe, but in my barefoot days they frequently appeared in the picture. There was a difference between the "movers", who traveled in prairie schooners on their way to and from lands to the west, and "horse traders", who used the same sort of conveyance.

The horse traders were a swaggering, wide-hatted, tobacco-chewing lot. Their train consisted of as many as a dozen horses, some of them tied to the back of the wagon and others allowed to follow along free. The human members of the gypsying caravan were uncommunicative except to our elders, and boyhood, on visiting the camp, was ordered to remain aloof.

It was different with the tramps down at the water tank. They talked a good deal for our benefit, and their lingo was peppered with abbreviations of the names of all the railroads in the country. Also they enlightened us on the various methods of beating one's way on trains. They were usually men on their way to the Dakota harvest fields, and some of them remained for a month or two to work on nearby farms.

Squaw Creek lay close, at the foot of the creamery hill. It was too shallow for swimming but, frozen over, it was the winter resort supreme. By walking on skates over a large portion of the route, one could explore the creek's entire course between the railroad trestle and the cemetery bridge. We wore skates that fitted into heel plates and strapped around the toes. Recreation in such a setting and in those days required a minimum of equipment and supervision.

THE COUNTY FAIR

Our appreciation of fête days depends, I suppose, on our ability to make comparisons. Hampton boyhood in "the nineties" was in no position to pass judgment on the merits of fairs and Fourth of July celebrations except as those home attractions varied from one year to another. There was no background for knowing what other localities had to offer in the way of gala occasions. This naive attitude was ideal for the enjoyment of such big days as our elders set apart. Bunting and a band, and the herding together of the local populace along with an influx of strangers were sufficient to stir the pulses. The Franklin County Fair, scheduled each September when the grapes were beginning to purple and the nights starting to cool, was less disappointing than any exposition I have since attended.

At fair time the wheels of buggies and wagons and the hoofs of horses filled the street toward the fairgrounds with a cloud of dust. It was impossible to police the entire fairgrounds fence and prevent the scaling of its walls or the removal of a loose board at one of its far corners. Once inside the enclosure, the panorama of Floral Hall, grandstand, merry-go-round, hastily constructed booths, side show tents, cane rack, and pounding machine was spread out for minute exploration. The purpose of the institution may have been the exhibit of the better breeds of livestock and agricultural specimens, but so far as boyhood was concerned these products belonged to the everyday, and it was the Coney Island features that had the appeal. Floral Hall, with its display of jellies and patch quilts and copied paintings, called for no more than a hurried inspection, but the ballyhoo in front of the worn tent concealing "The Demon Child" freak halted the footsteps and demanded concentrated attention.

Despite the concoctions sold from pine board counters

and high-pressured to quench the thirst, it was at the pump near Floral Hall about which there was the most crowding. To get hold of the shallow tin cup attached to a chain was actually an achievement in the middle of a sultry afternoon. Even the propaganda, resorted to by those far back in the milling mob, to the effect that there was a dead cat in the well, failed to discourage the quest among the parched-throated.

The competition which the pump provided for commercialized drinks would not have affected me had I possessed surplus funds to purchase the contents of glasses temptingly set forth by their venders who shouted their merits in our ears. I have said before that the medium of exchange circulated sluggishly in one of those inland towns during the second Cleveland administration and for some time thereafter. The scarcity of coin caused our elders to circulate propaganda tending to relieve the pangs of covetousness and bolster the blessings of self denial. The statements were not overly convincing, but a thin dime pressing against a lone nickle, the sum of which must suffice for four full days of sight-seeing and appetite-sating, spoke with such a poor jingle that their squandering called for financial wizardry.

We were given inside information, for instance, that the fairground lemonade was manufactured with citric acid rather than with the real juice of imported fruit, that the side shows were fakes, that the spindle wheels were fixed, and that the dollar bill was attached to a cane with such a broad handle that capturing it with a tossed ring was a geometrical impossibility. I must confess that the raucous voice of the barker was more persuasive than the lore of the sage, and it was personal penury, not the virtue of heeding the warnings of our wise men, that controlled our lusts for the flesh pots of fair time.

I never saw "The Demon Child" except as it was painted on the windblown canvas in front of the tent, but I knew its description by heart. Imagination probably left an imprint more morbid than I would have taken away had I actually viewed the allegedly petrified object. Perhaps it was because the prairie scene was so normal that showmen capitalized on a craving for contrasts. Anyhow, to inveigle dimes into their coffers they played upon a curiosity concerning the gruesome and the grotesque. It may have been that their enterprises were not as profitable as they appeared. Canes and gay cravats and tilted derbies and the flash of jewelry gave them a surface indication of success, and these emblems were demanded by a populace which refused to bow in awe without hints that folks of other communities had done likewise.

Catering to gastronomic urges, Ed Sun came each fall from the nearby hamlet of Dumont to vend cream candy on the Hampton fairgrounds. About Ed there was no mystery of background, but he made up for this lack of illusion through his familiarity with a confection recipe and an instinct for showmanship. Perspiring, red of face, white capped, chewing the butt of a cigar, without inhibitions, he could bark as professionally as any of his competitors. Along with the cleverness of his constantly repeated phrases flung at passersby, and having to do with the flavor, the freshness, and the low price of his wares, Ed proved himself a psychologist by making the candy before the gaze of prospective consumers.

He had a machine that manipulated the taffy until its ingredients reached the proper stage of consistency. Then he took great lengths of the sugary substance, laid them on the counter and with a pair of scissors snipped off chunks which he wrapped in tissue paper. The liberality of these hunks, finally ready for retailing, lured many a reluctant nickle.

The fact that before Ed finished his process of manufacture the sticky mass would be sprinkled with racetrack dust interfered not the least with his sales. Whatever might have gone into the recipe, the completed product resisted mastication to such an extent as to give it a long lasting quality.

Joby Freeman was another who, except on gala days, followed a routine similar to that of his neighbors. Instead of having culinary accomplishments, Joby was owner of a pounding machine which, on other than red letter days, he kept in his barn. A wagoner by occupation, Joby blossomed forth at fair time with a tall, thermometer-like contrivance, a sledge hammer, and a box of cigars. Joby had few of the tricks of ballyhoo, his lingo being confined to a promise that any Hercules who rang the bell would receive a cigar in compensation. For the privilege of testing one's strength, he required a payment of five cents.

Farm boys with bulging muscles that had not been acquired in any gymnasium pushed their hats to the back of their brows, removed their hot coats, rolled up their sleeves, adjusted their suspenders, spat on their hands, and helped deplete the contents of Joby's cigar box. It was said of Joby's brand of Colorado Maduros that they were overly dry from having been carried over year after year and that they had a cabbage-like quality. Yet, either through a desire to enhance his income or a craving to satisfy some trait in his nature that rebelled against the rôle for which he had been cast in the community, Joby's fair time activity, if for no more than its familiarity, added to the gayety of the annual bazaar. It was not until I read Joby's obituary that I learned he was a native of Canada.

Never-ending music for this carnival outlay was provided by the merry-go-round, one invention which was not denied to the boyhood of that pre-mechanical age. There may have since been some improvement in the glitter of the con-

trivance, but then it had all the fundamentals on which its glamour is based. The engine emitted black coal smoke and was equipped with a shrill whistle that sordidly accompanied the slowing down of the whirling device, marking the end of a ride and the passing of a five cent piece into the hands of the gods in control of amusement. The handle of the organ was turned by a black-faced Charlie McCarthy, whose expression remained unchanged whether a ride might be at its joyous beginning or too speedily reaching finality. It was a wheezy organ that knew but one tune, "Just One Girl". Music of the merry-go-round organ could be heard far beyond the fairgrounds fence, and it penetrated every phase of the fair's activities.

An advertised fair attraction which sometimes fizzled but on one occasion was so thrilling that no stunt of later years coming within my observation has ever equaled it, was the balloon ascension on the afternoon of the third and big day in the week. There were years when the canvas failed to fill properly and a bungling novice mastered the air only long enough to skim listlessly over our heads and sink miserably in a cornfield just beyond the fairgrounds fence, but this one year the "professor", clad in spangled black tights, gave a perfect performance. After no more than the sufficient suspense required as part of the technique of any theatrical act, the big balloon lifted itself gracefully toward the heavens and the scientist demonstrated that he not only had a knowledge of how to prepare for the flight but was an acrobat as well. As the lighter-than-air craft soared upward and took a course out toward the millpond, the aeronaut, suspended from the balloon on a flying trapeze, hung by his heels and executed other tricks on the swinging bar. The spectacle was something never to be forgotten and constituted one of those things of beauty that are a joy as long as one has the faculties for remembrance. The disappear-

ance of the breeze-borne balloon into the far horizon added to the artistry of the achievement.

Had there been no special attractions at fair time, the concentration of human vitality would have provided excitement in itself. These people were in the midst of living and grasping each thrill that a throbbing world had to offer. Pioneer gala days were hotbeds for the nurturing of courtships. They encouraged exhibitionism and afforded emotional release. They were not to be approached in bored fashion but as something to be entered into with such enthusiasm that the end of a day was filled with the soothing fatigue that follows a let-down of cells over stimulated.

The most abject of plowboys acquired ego at fair time. He twirled the cane he had rung, tilted back the brim of his felt hat, wore souvenir buttons on his coat lapel, protected his wilting white collar with a handkerchief, shifted the cigar he had won at the pounding machine to a rakish angle, and strode with a girl on his arm. The companion might be a shy neighbor girl who had driven in with him that morning, or she might be a bold stranger whom he had casually met on the grounds.

In those days there was no thought of a lighted fairground at night and the nocturnal amusement was limited to a "bowery dance" at Harriman's Hall, where Cy Jernegan, the marshal, kept close scrutiny on those whose extra clogs and fancy side steps hinted of inspiration derived from something stronger than fairground lemonade or water from the Floral Hall pump. Those dances, with their four-piece orchestra and caller, were of the "hill-billy" variety, and possibly were brought to us from Tennessee.

The Woodley boys, who farmed out in West Fork Township and who brought running horses to the fair each fall, cared more for a horse that could run than for one that merely served for pulling the plow, and the only opportun-

ity for placing a bet on their roans and sorrels was at the county fair. Their joys and disappointments were those of the usual race track followers.

Nor did Sarsanet, the trotter owned by Attorney J. M. Hemingway, always come up to expectations, notwithstanding his record of 2.16¼. So great was our home town pride in the black stallion that its winning of a race gave us the same thrill as when a Hampton team won a ball game or a Hampton girl came forth victorious in a district declamatory contest. Sarsanet was an excitable animal and would foam with lather in getting off to a start considered "fair" in the judges' stand. Also, he had a habit of "breaking" on the final stretch, but we overlooked these temperamental quirks that cost Mr. Hemingway a race, content in our gloating that when the steed was at his best no horse in any of the surrounding towns could equal his registered record.

I have been told that there were but twelve rows of planks in the grandstand across the track from the judges' stand, but it is difficult to accept such statistics. Here sat the same privileged group that took reserved seats at the opera house, supplemented with strangers whom the fair attracted from a distance of as far as thirty miles around. Most of the spectators stood in their buggies drawn close to the inside rail of the track or seated themselves on the rail itself. An incident of the afternoon would be caused by the desire of fair patrons to cross the track in the midst of a race, it being about the only occasion afforded pedestrians of that day to become victims of traffic accidents. The shout that someone had been killed would spread quickly through the throng, but while there were injuries, there were no fatalities resulting from these episodes that, to be frank, added thrill to the Hampton holiday.

The races brought to the town picturesque characters who arrived before the opening of the fair and spent their

days grooming horses in preparation for the track. They were distinguished from ordinary mortals by their sweaters and caps and superior attitude toward a locality into which they were to cast their lot but briefly. Some of the "swipes" were negroes and therefore, to us, a novelty. Conscious of our gaping, they emphasized their natural talent for droll comment and the humming of current tunes as they exercised the blanketed pacers and trotters or sponged their sleek sides. The purr of the first automobile motor was yet to be heard in the county, and interest in speed was associated with sulkies and saddles.

By the time the four days were over, the grounds would be littered with remnants of paper sacks and bursted toy balloons. Not infrequently the final afternoon would turn bleak with a hint in the air of an approach of the first killing frost — time of the equinox — and we would shiver toward the gate, ignoring appeals of the venders with their cut prices for cold drinks, and the merry-go-round music would contain a wailing note. Then, except for baseball games, the fairgrounds would be abandoned for another year and become overgrown with foxtail and mullen, while the weather beat relentlessly against the unpainted high board fence.

DOCTORS

Pioneer horse and buggy doctors in Hampton were given to philosophizing on subjects other than those of a medical nature. Perhaps the necessity of being studious along one line stimulated their mental processes in other directions. Their original comment when they made calls was quoted and became a part of the community lore. In a day long before human behavior was analyzed for popular consumption, they were inclined to be more tolerant than persons who emphasized symptoms and gave no thought to cause.

Dr. James H. Hutchins, who brought me into the world, was typical with his long beard, black bag, and twinkling eyes. Doctors and dentists came and went just as did the preachers of various denominations, each of them contributing something, no doubt, to the weave of Hampton's pattern.

A physician and surgeon who came from the University of Iowa as a young man and bridged the gap from horse and buggy days on into the modern era was Dr. J. C. Powers. His ability and local loyalty were important factors in establishing, twenty-five years ago, the Hampton Clinic, which today provides excellent hospital facilities available to patients from a wide area.

BEED'S POND

To prairie youth, the artificial Beed's pond three miles to the northwest was a real body of water. William G. Beed, in an early day, had dammed Spring Creek and built a stone mill for the grinding of wheat. By the time our gang came along, the pond, like the town, was as if it had always been. The oasis amid so many counties of corn land brought every type of native wild fowl in season and along its grassy banks were the cattails and other rank vegetation characteristic of marshes.

It was a long walk to the pond and back, and when Sunday schools promised conveyances for their picnics, their attendance increased. Those of a courting age rented a horse-drawn "wagonette" from the Hyer livery barn for their select outings. Jeff Webb was the one who promoted the wagonette excursions, going about among the young swains and collecting from each his quota of the expense. Later Jeff managed the Symphony Orchestra in Detroit and became a leader in the Rotary Club and Chamber of Commerce in that growing city. "As the twig is bent . . ."

I associate Beed's pond with the first quartet music that ever inspired me. Members of the organization who sang one night from a boat were Derwin Parks, who has never left the old town, Dick Webb, an older brother of Jeff, and now a retired railroad conductor, Roscoe Palmer, who had come from Kokomo, Indiana, to run the laundry, and Charlie Osborne, insurance man and prairie chicken hunter. They harmonized on "Way Out Yonder in the Cornfield". Never since have I heard a quartet serenade without thinking of that particular group and that night when a moon hung low on Beed's pond.

Beed's pond was too unimportant to appear on our geography maps, but there was Clear Lake, thirty miles to the north, and Lake Okoboji on the State's northwest border. We were a part of that great stretch of country that has nothing to check the heat of a southwest breeze. During the land boom the mill dam was demolished and the lake bed reverted to farm land. Within recent years, restoration of the body of water has constituted a pretentious CCC project. A summer or two ago, when I was out home, I drove to the spot but had difficulty locating the original landmarks. The stone mill was gone, as were many of the oaks that had once lent their thick shade.

MEDICINE SHOWS AND THE FIRST MOVIE

One Saturday night I learned there was a new sort of medicine show at the opera house. According to the handbills, the entertainment consisted not only of illustrated songs, with which we were familiar, but with pictures that moved. The claim seemed incredible.

Indeed, as I discovered, the showman did have something new. We were obliged to wait through a long selling talk, this time of a bottled remedy that had been concocted from herbs by an Indian squaw on the Arizona desert. But

finally a screen was let down at the front of the stage, the hall darkened, and the magic lantern threw a square of light in which there appeared a man with a fish pole actually walking beside a stream. The effect was startling. Instead of "stills", here was action, full of flickers of light, perhaps, but action nevertheless.

The man with the fish pole seated himself on the end of a plank and started to fish in flowing water. He moved jerkily, but none the less amazingly. Then a second person emerged from the edge of the screen and lifted a rock that held the plank in place. There was a splash of water and the drenched fisherman floundered in the stream. Then the picture clicked off. But it was enough. The show remained a week, and the townspeople flocked to it night after night for a repetition of the same performance.

Deeply impressed though we were by our first movie, we were not yet ready to give up an earlier love, the illustrated song. The medicine-show doctor had two of them, and their tunes are clearer in my mind than any of the latest hits. Their titles were "The Baggage Coach Ahead" and "There'll Come A Time Some Day". Both were sad, and lurid in their coloring. Prison sentences, burning hotels, sinking ships, wayward daughters, and broken homes furnished the themes for the popular songs of that era.

In summer, medicine show men staged their performances in the street opposite the Franklin County Bank building. I now realize they came at harvest time, although in those days we were naive concerning the commercial motives of those who brought us contrast from everyday routine. Word of their arrival would reach our gang and cause us to abandon our usual neighborhood twilight games.

The doctor, who had supped at the hotel, could be seen manipulating the flickering gas jet attached to a pole on his portable platform. Adjustment of the flame seemed to re-

quire a good deal of attention, but perhaps the effort in producing just the proper glow against the creeping darkness was all a part of his showmanship along with the fingering of a watchfob and constant tilting of the brim of a wide hat to attain the correct angle.

This pompous stranger knew much of psychology. His method was a minimum of entertainment and an overdose of talk about digestive ills. He had along with him a blackface comedian who played the banjo, and when the crowd in front grew too restless, the doctor permitted a respite in the way of songs and jokes. He was the forerunner of radio selling of balms and nostrums.

There was subtle tribute, during that early era, to those who contrived to live by their wits. The soil demanded of people that they toil, and the exceptions who subsisted without seeming effort were somewhat of a novelty.

PRAIRIE BASEBALL

There was nothing lukewarm in Hampton's attitude toward baseball. It was a game that seemed suited to the prairie setting. It was a sport that everyone could understand. It was sufficiently vigorous to appeal to males of all ages, and it had the respect — as long as it was not played on Sunday — of the clergy. It interested the fair sex. It inspired patriotism toward the locale to the highest pitch. It was to Hampton what bull fights and chariot races were to other peoples in other climes. It meant an afternoon when bedlam echoed out over the quiet fields of corn. It was an occasion for coining witticisms, sweating in the sunshine, losing oneself in mass hysteria.

Ed Leckey, a jeweler by profession, was catcher for that first of the Hampton teams of my remembrance. He used to come up close to the batter for the catching of third strikes. We had depended upon him and his teammates in

uniform to defend our reputation as a town. It was through victory or defeat on the baseball diamond in the center of the fairground race track that our morale lifted and fell. It was with this pick of our athletic prowess that we staked our all. Rival baseball teams were the enemies at our gates. Fortunately, there was no such thing as a ball game every day. We were attacked probably a dozen times during a summer.

Such thrills as I have since derived at world series contests have been tepid as compared to those I experienced in every fiber of my being when the home team met invaders from beyond our borders. There was no shifting each season of players from one team to another as in the big leagues of today. Our stars we encountered daily in their various walks of life — heroes who took the afternoon off to justify our faith in all things Hampton. None were more rabid among the spectators than the aging pioneers who closed their shops and stores to follow the innings. For boyhood, the trend of battle called for concentrated tenseness. We were as one in our emotions when the home team played.

The fairground grandstand, suitable enough for watching horse races, was at too great distance to do double duty at the ball games. Buggies were driven to a point of vantage parallel to the base lines. Then the horses were unhitched and those of the fair sex whose carriages were without fringe-decorated canopies raised their parasols as protection from the blazing sun. Along about 3:15 o'clock in the afternoon, providing she was on time, the Iowa Central passenger, headed south, chugged in the middle distance, and in the field beyond the fence a farmer, fearing a rainstorm, rode his hayrake — reminder of how the world goes on, regardless.

Men in shirt sleeves anxiously chewed "Krat's" cigars

as they milled about. Bare-legged boyhood edged close to the action. Tec Sherer turned his hotel bus into a ten-cent taxi on ball game days and, occasionally, traveling men, with no more interest in one town than another, responded to his call of "All aboard to the ball game — going right out!" If they were diplomats and wished to make any sale when local merchants should again have time to scan their samples, they joined in the howl for the Hampton team. There was no occasion to tend the only bat in use, but if one were especially favored by the gods there was an opportunity to watch the water pail, filled from the pump at the Floral Hall, exclusively for those engaged in actual combat.

For a people under the Puritan influence, the ball game of those days must have afforded an outlet of the sort similar to that enjoyed by jungle natives with their open-air dancing and tom-tom beating. In the excitement, lack of originality in the voicing of homage and hatred went uncriticized. Anatomy of opposing players, vociferously hinted, consisted of "glass arms" and "butter fingers". These shrill accusations were intended to confuse the alien athletes.

Yet with all this regimentation of passion our victories were sufficiently balanced with defeats so that we were kept in a jittery state. Even though Harry Proctor wore a tight leather band about the muscles of his arm we could not be sure of his pitching, and all of our idols in the field were capable of muffing flies in a crisis. So it was that we tensed with uncertainty each time a ball was in motion. In our despair we centered on someone to crucify. According to our code, in those earlier years, each of our players must be as bonafide a home product as a voter registered for election day, but gradually the town eased its conscience by advertising for printers or bakers or house painters who

also had a knack for knocking a baseball over the fence. I might also add that, in the same manner, we recruited musicians for the more complicated instruments required for a well-rounded band. As long as such outsiders acquired our customs and shared our pride we saw no harm in the subterfuge.

Along in 1897 we had a set-up so assuring that at last we were allowed to relax. Ben Davis and Johnnie Dorman, two youths from the college at Fayette, played short-stop and second base with a snappiness that startled. We paid the lanky Packard, from Root Siding, to pitch. E. W. Shaffer, the uncommunicative catcher, had, according to a legend, come to us from the Western Big League. This nucleus was supplemented by natives. In the archives of Hampton homes there are faded photographs of that banner outfit. My interest in the game has since been desultory. When once a climax has been reached, all that comes after is but a memory reviver.

Hampton still has baseball teams. Enthusiasm for the sport ran in families. Those skilled in the game had an equal fondness for hunting. No week has passed since I left Hampton that I have not given a thorough reading to the copy that has reached me of the *Hampton Chronicle.* In the paragraphs, I find a repetition of some of the old names, but they are of a newer generation. The Lukes and the Webbs still catch and pitch. Several summers ago, when I was out home I saw a night game that was played under artificial lights. A few of the old timers were there to look on, and Frank Smith, an aged man now, was still keeping score. But the old frenzy was lacking. There was now a golf club north of town. Play by play accounts of the Chicago baseball games were being received daily over the radio. The provincialism that had produced such poignant partisanship had evaporated.

CLERK AND COMMUNITY

Just preceding the year of the championship ball team, my father had again gone into business in a small way. He had opened a confectionery store between the millinery establishment and the barber shop across from the courthouse square, and our place became a hang-out for commentators on fine points of the day's game. Baseball, second to the Civil War, was my father's favorite topic, and he joined vigorously in discussions with younger men on aftermath details.

At the store, my father tried to instill in me business acumen, but our stock of goods was limited, and so many of our patrons came for social privileges rather than to purchase. During the 1896 political campaign, my father was greatly concerned and he asked traveling men for inside dope on how "the country was going". Those acquainted with his political faith assured him of McKinley's success. There were two white puppies around the store that he named McKinley and Hobart.

McKinley, as a candidate, came to Hampton and spoke from the rear of an Iowa Central coach during the briefest of stops on his itinerary. A day or two later when we received the Chicago paper we read that Ed Brandon had lifted his offspring, named after the advocate of the gold standard, for the presentation of a bouquet of prairie wild flowers. The reporter, accompanying the party, in mentioning the episode, created plenty of reader interest in Hampton. The last time I heard of William McKinley Brandon he was a banker at Davenport, Iowa.

One of my first transactions in the store was to hand over a full length of "Horseshoe" plug tobacco to a townsman who asked me to "put it down on the slip". Noticing the record on his return from supper, my father sighed his disdain. With the optimism of fourteen, I insisted the deal

had been bonafide, but the man never entered the store again. Thinking back, I now realize that most of my father's admonitions and axioms were practical. It was his theory that amateurs who went into store business, as so many of them did, failed because they thought of the money in their tills as net receipts.

We catered to a colorful coterie, there in the last half of the nineties. With an older group, my father argued the Boer War and kept maps for following its maneuvers. Among our paying clients were Fred Harriman and Les [L. W.] Hobbie, both of whom became early owners of automobiles. Les shifted naturally from blacksmithing and bicycle repairing to dealing in cars, the first of which provided a novelty in one of our Fourth of July parades. He is now active in aviation in Hampton. Les and my older brother, Will, raced with pneumatic-tired bicycles, just come into being, and practiced endlessly at the fairgrounds track, bent low over the handlebars. My brother's bicycle was stolen but was recovered by a sheriff out in Nebraska. Fred Harriman was killed in Hampton's first automobile accident, the machine plunging off the road while traveling at the speed of thirty-five miles an hour.

It was while I was working in the candy store that I was given my first opportunity to talk over a telephone, the invention having reached a stage where a line had been strung between Marshalltown and Hampton. Usually, my father ordered freezers of ice cream by mail, but in this instance some unforeseen demand had arisen and he told me that if I would straighten up and attend to business he would allow me to go up to the Beed Hotel and carry on the necessary negotiations over the strange instrument. It was an experience not to be approached without misgivings, but steeling my nerves, I performed the assignment and had something to boast about for months to follow.

Also, about that time, Bob Seney came along with what we were told was a phonograph. Bob was an old man from the neighboring town of Sheffield. He stopped at the Phoenix Hotel with the contrivance. We listened by placing the split end of a rubber tubing in our ears. The spoken words were rasping and indistinct, but the musical accompaniment had a pleasing tinkle. Mr. Seney charged five cents a listen, and we marveled at the age of progress.

Mr. Seney made no pretense of having invented the machine. His rôle was merely that of a transitory showman. The fact that he stopped at the Phoenix Hotel was an indication to us that he was feeling his way cautiously. To put up a front, he would have been obliged to have registered at the Beed Hotel.

The Ringling Brothers circus came to Hampton when it was a one-ring affair, but after it became a railroad show it passed us by for towns that boasted trunk lines. Bill posters made us acquainted with engagements at Mason City to the north or Iowa Falls to the south, and the explanation that our transportation facilities were faulty was a bitter pill. Van Amburg and Adam Forepaugh did not neglect us. Loungers at the livery barns passed on the merits of an uncertain circus offering by noting the condition of the horses in the street parade.

That there were long stretches of stillness in midsummer, when the corn was being made, was known only too well by the proprietors of businesses about the courthouse square. We waited for Saturday afternoons and gala days to make up for the lean and languid hours. Yet, standing in the doorway, one was given a glimpse, sooner or later, of all who stirred themselves for downtown expeditions. Except for the few who shopped from their phaetons, it was a pedestrian population. To saunter forth was to be seen. As yet it was necessary to go to the post office for mail. When

school was in session, the entire enrollment, regardless of the location of their habitat, first paraded to the business section for a glance in the family mail box. Strangers watching the procession commented on the prettiest of the high school girls. In those leisurely days, passing through the marts of trade was like running a gauntlet.

Lovers walked while they exchanged their vows. At evening, they strolled along the board planks that led to sequestered rendezvous. The creek bridge was a trysting place, and on Sunday afternoons, the quiet of the cemetery had a lure akin to that of a landscaped park.

Most of us were semi-farmers, although dwelling in town, with our vegetable gardens and our pigs and chickens and cows. Without our partial dependence on agriculture to the extent of sustaining our own tables, the large families could not have survived.

Ambitious pioneers in Hampton harkened to the persuasions of promoters of plow works and aluminum factories. They bought stock and visioned smokestacks and payrolls. There had even been built a warehouse down near the Iowa Central depot and the grain elevator, but for years the structure stood empty. The brick yard had done fairly well while the Beed Hotel, the courthouse, and the school, as well as some of the homes, were lifting themselves above the prairie sod. We had misunderstood inventors and potential business executives who complained that their lights were hid under bushels, but what kept the town going was the certainty of farm crops. In more recent years, a corn-packing plant and poultry firms have successfully fitted into the picture.

Al Sholes, who had left us for Waterloo, returned one summer to fish Squaw Creek for pearls. Stripped to his red flannel undershirt, he would pass the house each morning on his way to the clam fields and he radiated an opti-

mistic attitude, but I don't know how well he fared in the venture. Harry Cornish had a patent on a lamp that gave a brighter glow than the flat-wick vessel in use, and in due time took his idea to Chicago. For a time, it appeared that Mr. Zimmerman's improvement on the threshing machine might lead to its local production. These were spasmodic deviations from the tried method of extracting a livelihood from the soil.

Before the telephone and the rural mail delivery, to say nothing of the automobile and the radio, remoteness from the county seat was trying on many wives and daughters of farmers of American stock. There was an urge to "move to town".

Saturday afternoon shopping expeditions to the county seat were made in buggies and lumber wagons and bobsleds over miserable roads. Nowadays, the crowd on Saturday night is as large as the old Fourth of July throngs. The trip can be made after the chores are done.

It was the families fresh from Europe who did not mind the isolation. They were engrossed with overcoming mortgages on quarter sections that they sensed as the richest farm land in the world. They were in a mood to "take it", and it was largely due to their stick-to-itiveness and thrift that town and county owed their ultimate prosperity. They had their churches in the country and retained many native customs. They spoke broken English, remained clannish, and came to town only on Saturday afternoons to do their trading. Their turn came with the land boom.

There must have been frustrated persons in our midst. Not everyone was so constituted that the pioneer scene could suit his make-up, certainly. But we dismissed their fault-findings with the term "crank".

Fortunately, we were not without a coterie that kept us from taking things too seriously. Joe Barry could dismiss

a situation that offered maudlin or morbid possibilities with a direct epigram of original wit. His was the Will Rogers method of clearing the atmosphere, and his extemporaneous comments evoked a chuckle that stifled tragic interpretation of current events.

DRUMS AND BUGLES

During the exciting summer of the Spanish-American War, I do not recall a single pacifist voice that was lifted, locally. Hampton had a company in the Iowa National Guard and when there came the possibility that it might go forth to battle, glamour descended upon the most self-effacing in the ranks. For the first time, we inlanders became greatly interested in battleships pictured in the newspapers through pen-and-ink sketches.

There penetrated to us Sousa's stirring "Stars and Stripes Forever" march and the ballad, "Just Break the News to Mother". No one could have fitted more gallantly into the situation than Ted [Gorham T.] McCrillis, a lieutenant erect of carriage and of commanding voice. Nor tall, lean Colonel Sanford J. Parker, our Wells, Fargo Express agent, who was thoroughly familiar with military details acquired at annual State encampments. Departure at dawn of the company from the Iowa Central depot was the only occasion afforded Hampton to contribute in one single dramatic gesture the total of its military strength.

Wives and sweethearts left behind wore photographs of the men folk pinned to their Gibson-girl shirtwaists, exchanged letters written on flag-decorated stationery, and collected boxes of sweets first to be sent to Des Moines and then Chickamauga, where drilling in heavy blue uniforms went on in the hot Georgia sun.

During the dog days of August, victims of typhoid fever drifted back to us to be removed in cots from the Iowa Cen-

tral baggage coach. That fall there were several impressive military funerals at home. After a time the skeleton-like convalescents, bundled against the autumn winds, emerged again in an effort to take interest in the ways of the old town.

Our entire thoughts were on Company D that summer. My brother, Will, had left the college at Ames and enlisted much against my father's wishes, for he was the favorite son. Will loathed letter-writing, but I was thrilled when he did take his pen in hand. He told of Company D as the train crossed "The Banks of the Wabash" and of eating "peach cobbler" at a Georgia farmhouse.

DECORATION DAY

Aided by the church, the weekly newspaper, and the charm of our cemetery, death was robbed of much of its sting in Hampton. There were no perfunctory chapel funerals nor hurrying of automobiles to the grave. Obituaries were ofttimes masterpieces in their summing up of a life that had been unfolded day by day within the observation of an editor-neighbor. The cemetery on the hill was made a beauty spot in the prairie setting. The town remembered its dead.

Decoration Day came at a time when May was at its best and somehow the idea of an eternal resting place was associated with the perfume of flowers, the chirp of birds, and sunshine in a cloudless blue sky. The day was usually so flawless that nature seemed to have spent the entire year arranging for its perfection. That the foliage might reach the peak of its unfolding and the flowers lend their bloom, it was as if all the winds and snows and bleakness had been bent on the sole purpose of producing one lovely Iowa day.

Pioneer Hampton made much of Decoration Day. Primarily, it was an occasion for paying tribute to the soldier

dead, but families without representatives who had participated in the Civil War also saw that the graves of their departed were not neglected. It was a day for the homecoming of members of clans scattered far and wide. So solemn was the observance that for many years no dancing or ball games were permitted as afternoon and evening activities. No matter to what distance Hamptonites migrated, when they died they were brought back to the old town for burial.

Decoration Day came just before school let out for the long summer vacation. On the afternoon preceding the holiday, classes hunted through the woods north of town for wild flowers to be used for bouquets. Beneath the oak and walnut trees, the bloodroots and violets and shooting stars seemed to be waiting. There were honeysuckles in the thickets and cowslips among the moss on the creek bank. The rare lady's slipper constituted a real find. Stems of the tender petals, with a background of ferns, were tied together in an offering as delicate as that which could have been supplied by any florist, but frequently they became wilted in the hot sun as we waited next morning on the school ground to take our place in the procession. Held in check by our teachers, we could hear the band as it left Memorial Hall, opposite the courthouse square. Tramping in the dust behind the musical organization were scores of veterans, with Old Glory and the Post banner unfurled.

By the time we had fallen in line, the marching extended for blocks. We moved down Soper's hill, crossed the wooden bridge over Squaw Creek, and on entering the cemetery gate we waited in groups to be assigned to soldier graves. In the meantime a program was being conducted at the "Monument to the Unknown Soldier". We were too far away to hear the speech-making, but caught snatches of the quartet music directed by I. W. Myers, as it was wafted by faint breezes out over the cornfields. Mr. Myers,

a buttermaker and a member of the G. A. R., had drilled the quartet for weeks. Awaiting orders to move, we studied the familiar epitaphs on the tombstones about us.

There was a feeling, as we looked back beyond the creek to where the courthouse dome jutted above the maples, that all these who slept in the hallowed spot were conscious of the changes of season, and, dispassionately, continued to be concerned with the town.

FOURTH OF JULY

In contrast to the solemnity of Decoration Day observances, our celebration of another patriotic holiday, the Fourth of July, bore resemblance to a Mardi Gras with its pageantry, a mining camp with its hilarity, Olympia with its athletic games, and an African jungle with its sizzling heat. Every other year was considered sufficient for such breaking loose. The diplomacy was not without ulterior motive. It was explained that this biennial arrangement would give other neighboring towns a chance. We could go to Iowa Falls or Sheffield one year, and their people could visit us the next. There was enough competition every year so that familiar greeting among farmer folk along the middle of June was, "Where ya goin' to spend the Fourth?"

"The Fourth" was one day in summer, excepting Sunday, when no farmer, regardless of faithfulness to his acres, remained in the fields. The rural population throughout Iowa was concentrated where the bunting hung and there was promise of a parade and pyrotechnic display. The day really began on the farm where the sun rose early to blaze against the side of the big red barn. It would be the sort of a morning in which the fan on the tall windmill remained listless. Knee-high corn appeared to sense the approaching silence. Buggy horses were given a special grooming, and a bow of ribbon, from some bygone gala day, was attached

to the whip in its socket. Horse-drawn vehicles passed each other on roads all leading to the county seat. The Iowa landscape seemed to quiver with hushed expectancy.

It was a transformed Hampton that greeted the country folk. Business houses about the courthouse square, realizing their clientele would be in no mood for prosaic purchasing, erected pine-board booths at their entrances where refreshments and confections were on sale. Back of these counters, stood the more flippant among the community's unemployed. The one-day hawkers were chosen for their lack of inferiority complex and their knack at repartee. They wore white caps on which there was lettering that promoted a certain brand of flour. Each store front had its decorations of bunting and flags. The coming together of the entire countryside created congestion on the board sidewalks. With the band playing and the firecrackers popping and the babies crying, nerves, accustomed to pastoral peace, became jangled and frayed.

The old *Recorder* was depended upon for propaganda preceding the celebration. Its news columns announced that "the eagle would be made to scream" as never before, and its job office turned out window posters with an emblem of two crossed muskets across the top and beneath a listing of the day's events. The speaker of the day would be some politician of more than local importance. I have no recollection of listening to him, nor do I believe many of my elders paid much attention to this phase of the program.

Temporary seats and a platform were erected in the shady park a day or two before the celebration, and we played tag on the planks rented from the lumber yard, but on the Fourth itself, there were too many other attractions for us to bother about oratory. I doubt very much if the incumbent in office or the candidate for it could successfully lift his voice above the general din. Indeed, as I think back,

I am of the opinion that the significance of the occasion was far from uppermost in our minds. The signers of the Declaration, as portrayed in our history books, surely would have been puzzled. The manner of celebrating the Fourth in those pioneer days was crude, but behind it all was an unadulterated enthusiasm for our form of government and for our chosen leaders.

The morning parade had several features that were repeated year after year. Among these was a Goddess of Liberty float, and the girl selected to wear a Grecian robe of white cheesecloth and a crown of gilt pasteboard must be of classic mold. She must stand erect on the flag-draped platform that covered the chassis of a dray. Behind her marched girls representing the different States of the Union, each carrying white parasols, star spangled. Although we might not listen to the orator later on, we were given a glimpse of him as he rode in state in one of the livery-barn phaetons. Preceded by the band, the historical unit would be followed by parade entries in which commercialism was but thinly disguised and beneath patriotic festoons could be noted the signs of business firms. Circus-like, the tag of the moving spectacle was a bit of buffoonery with a hay-rack loaded with men wearing grotesque masks. This contribution was known as the "calathumpians", and associated with it is one of the most vivid memories of my childhood.

One Fourth the producers of the pageant surpassed themselves by utilizing drygoods boxes, draping them, and causing them to rise, in pyramid fashion, to a great height. "Tiny" [Theodore] Autry was selected to sit enthroned on the topmost box. Tiny was the tallest man in town and once the innovation had been conceived, no one but he could possibly have been considered for the leading rôle. All went well until the procession turned at the main business

intersection, where a wire had been strung from the roof of the Franklin County Bank building to the second story of the Beed Hotel. This slender but firm obstacle passed unnoticed until it came in contact with Tiny's chin, and he came tumbling to the flat yellow stones that were used for the pedestrian crossing.

At the moment of tragedy, there was something absurd in the grins and grimaces of the clown masks worn by Tiny's companions. The parade was halted, the crowd gathered about, and Tiny was rushed to the drug store for first aid. He recovered to become a hero, and the incident was woven into the folklore of the community. But Tiny was apparently predestined to meet an unusual end. Even in his advanced years, he liked to go fishing at the creek which swarmed with minnows but seldom surrendered a piscatorial offering larger than a bullhead. A few years ago I read a paragraph in the *Chronicle* telling how Tiny had been gored by a bull while seated on the bank of Squaw Creek absorbed in his favorite pastime.

Clear as were the skies on Fourth of July mornings, and hot though the sun blazed, there was usually a heavy thunderstorm along in the middle of the afternoon when the revelry was at its height. It was as if the elements, like human emotions, had reached a bursting point, although the thunder and lightning and rain furnished but brief relief from the humidity. There would be a scamper for shelter, colors in the gay bunting would streak together, rivulets would form in the muddy gutters along the street, and the three-legged race would be postponed. It would be a sudden outburst, almost like an impulsive contribution of nature to the sputter and bang of the program, and we would soon be permitted, bedraggled and a bit subdued, to continue with "The Fourth", described in the press-agenting by the adjective "glorious".

HOG PASSES

It was while I went about Chicago that I noticed the gradual increase of trucks on the four-lane highways leading into the city. Some of them were used for bringing hogs to the stockyards. The vans were painted in bright colors and bore the names of the towns from which they came. One day I saw "Hampton, Iowa" emblazoned against the side of one of these trucks as it stood taking on gas at a filling station along Ogden Avenue.

The driver and I were strangers, but he told me his name was Crandall and, when I had revealed my knowledge of what had been his father's occupation back home, I was able to establish friendly relationship. The elder Crandall had been a house-mover in a day when home owners had been given to shifting their location by having their dwelling rolled to another part of town. There had never been much tendency in the old days toward changing one's address in the May first fashion of cities, but there had been a vogue for home transplanting. Most of the houses were frame and were without basements or fireplaces, the terrain friendly, and by putting rollers under a domicile and giving an extra goading to a good team of horses, buildings and their effects could be made to travel a block or two down the street during a single day.

Houses had become more static with the passing of pioneer days, and the house-mover had, more or less, gone the way of the well-driller. But this change in custom was trivial as compared to the altered method of hauling livestock from the farms for butchering at the Chicago packing plants. The stock train had played an important part in the romance of railroading. I had never enjoyed the privilege of "riding in on a pass" but I heard much about these interesting journeys, resorted to for economy's sake. You yearned to go to Chicago and so you hunted up Wes Soper

or John McNeill and put in your request for a "hog pass". Wes and John drove about the county making bids for fattened animals, and when enough of the "critters" had been herded together in the pen set apart for such purposes down near the depot, they were crowded into carload lots.

Through the functioning of a transportation system with remote headquarters that exchanged telegrams and bewildered us with its efficiency, these local shipments were added to others at a junction point. As I recall, each carload entitled its shipper to one human passenger, technically someone who would help care for the imprisoned beasts while en route, although penance merely consisted of absorbing the shocks that accompanied a ride in the caboose. If all those, now residents of Chicago, who made their entry into the city's gates on a stock train were gathered in one group, their voting strength would be sufficient to interest any precinct captain.

TRAIN WHISTLE

Railroading awed the boyhood of my generation. So great was our homage for all things pertaining to it that we graciously accepted the officiousness of its employees. We expected the conductor to complain about the wording or the color or the date of our ticket as we sat in one of the red plush seats, waiting for him to come swaying down the aisle. The railroad with its cindered track, its trestle across the creek, its side-tracked box cars, its crossing warnings — its every appurtenance offered distinct contrast to the cornfield setting.

Uniformed trainmen were colorful creatures to whom we catered because of their implied contention that they had little in common with the countryside. Train noises were a stimulant to ears overly accustomed to nature's calm cadences. The symphony of click and clank and of hiss and

whistle vibrations seemed to have been conjured for the mystification of rustics.

Crandall's acquaintance with the filling station employee was akin to that of a railroad man with a station agent along the line. In talking with him, I discovered that his Hampton and mine were two different towns. A mist intervened.

In the early days of railroading it had been necessary to link and unlink cars with a coupling pin, and danger attached to the job had somehow added to its lure. We knew nothing about men who put out to sea or went down into mines, and most of our violent deaths were due to railroad accidents or runaways. Tragedies of this sort were so infrequent that the memory of them was vivid over a decade.

ALIEN NATIVE

The last time I visited Hampton I chose the route from Chicago that goes by way of Galena as being the most satisfactory approach, for it is the same trail that, years ago, was taken by so many of those who had a part in building the town I call my own. The Galena of today gives the impression of having helped build many another town and of having suffered from the sacrifice. Crossing the high bridge over the Mississippi River, I am torn between a desire to glance at the swirling yellowish water below and the necessity, being a mediocre motorist, of keeping an eye on the steering wheel. Then comes a descent of the narrow passage-way toward the Iowa side, and soon I am on native soil, but it is not until we leave the hills and the prairie cornfields roll away to the horizon that the landscape looms familiar.

Towns once glimpsed from the window of a train are not the same when viewed from an automobile that cuts their corners and, in instances, shuns them altogether. Roadside

signs along the cement highway point in the direction of a meager medley of roofs and a steeple or two, half lost in the thick June foliage. Even without picking up speed the string of towns along what was the Dubuque and Dakota Railroad before it became the Great Western now seem such a short distance apart. You observe a winding stream that has been aided by the trickling waters of Squaw Creek in making its long struggle from far inland to the sea, and a mile farther on the dome of the courthouse tower in Hampton juts above a grove of man-planted maples.

I have gone back many times and so, because there have been no long intervals between journeys, it has been possible for me to absorb adjustments without any shocks. By keeping in touch, the old town has not been lost to me, and I have so timed my stays that no particular phase of the community's career crowds out another. Care must be taken in blending the old with the new if memory's cells retain intact each picture in the gallery entrusted to their guardianship. I realize there is much to be said for the theory that it is best never to return to a cherished spot, except in fancy, lest the mists of a dream be dispelled. If one is not to be robbed of an illusion, it must not be subjected to too great a test.

So I slow down the car and turn from the cement to the sod of the roadside. Just opposite is a farm that may have changed hands half a dozen times since the name of one I knew was shown as its owner in the courthouse records. There is a row of evergreens that he had planted in the sloping front yard. A silo has replaced the once towering windmill by the big red barn. A prairie wild rose nods from the edge of an embankment where a sweep in the landscape has been cut away by highway engineers.

I linger, for from this point of vantage I am close enough to commune with the statue of Justice on the dome of the

courthouse tower. It is getting toward evening. The dome rises above the highest maple and the tallest church spire, and the bronze goddess views the scene below from the town's topmost pinnacle. Immovable, she has stood there throughout the years — dignified, calm, brooding, conscious of every detail in the happenings of a typical small town in the heart of America.

The sculptor provided the bronze figure with a scales and a blindfold, but the winds of so many winters and the suns of so many summers have obliterated the sharp outline of these emblems and, long ago, she assumed a more sympathetic rôle than that of harsh, superficial Justice. Watching over the town during the long nights and throughout the days, creeping one after another upon the town, she has known all the motivations in the hearts of her people. From her elevation, she has observed the town and countryside with a detached attitude. Her wisdom of the world since its beginning and her comprehension of the wider scene are but the background for her interest in days' events spread out before her. Since being placed on her pedestal, she has not budged the fraction of an inch. No other locality on all the earth has claimed her allegiance.

This town, among the countless others, was the one ordained to share her perpetual presence. She would not have had it otherwise. From the first, she has had faith in her domain. She has weathered the Iowa climate and has welcomed its every whim and challenge. She holds in remembrance the thrift and pride and the sacrifice and struggle that has gone into the building of the inland empire.

And the red sun sinks into the waves of lush green, and the contralto of a mourning dove floats across the meadow just as in the old days.

ONEY FRED SWEET

HOLLYWOOD ILLINOIS