

LEGAL HOLIDAYS IN IOWA

JANUARY — JUNE

The word, holiday, is a corruption of holy day, meaning a day set apart by the church in honor of some important event or saintly personage.¹ In Catholic countries the large number of holidays was frequently so embarrassing to the civil authorities that the government interfered to curb this churchly zeal for holy days. The same situation once prevailed in India where the British found the Hindus unable to give more than two hundred days of work during the year because of their holidays.

In contrast with continental countries, the English have indulged in relatively few periodical celebrations. Even the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo was observed merely by private gatherings during the life of the Duke of Wellington. "Political feasts and fasts", one author writes, "have had no vitality except when associated with party struggles, and even in this sense they are becoming obsolete. A few obstinate Orangemen glorify themselves

¹ A number of excellent references may be consulted by those interested in pursuing the general subject of holidays: Florence Adams and Elizabeth McCarrick's *Highdays & Holidays*; R. Chamber's *The Book of Days*; Edward M. Deems's *Holy-Days and Holidays*; George W. Douglas's *The American Book of Days*; James L. and Mary K. Ford's *Every Day in the Year*; Mary E. Hazeltine's *Anniversaries and Holidays*; and William S. Walsh's *Curiosities of Popular Customs*.

The attention of the reader is particularly called to a series of anthologies entitled *Our American Holidays*, edited by Robert Haven Schauffler, which contain verses, plays, stories, addresses, special articles, orations, etc. The titles of these volumes include Arbor Day, Armistice Day, Christmas, Flag Day, Independence Day, Washington's Birthday, and Columbus Day. Another series compiled and edited by Mr. Schauffler is entitled *The Days We Celebrate* and includes such volumes as *Celebrations for Festivals*, *Celebrations for Patriotic Days*, and *Celebrations for Special Occasions*.

very absurdly on the anniversary of the battle of the Boyne, Guy Fawkes still amuses children on the 5th of November, but the questionable memories of Stuart triumphs and the annual remembrance of the great revolution had died out of the minds of men long before it was determined to obliterate them from the pages of the Prayer Book."²

The Puritans caused all holy days to be given up and the Stuarts were able to revive only Christmas and Good Friday. It was not until 1865 that a Liberal candidate ran on a pledge for more holidays. The English Bank Holiday Law of 1871 made all negotiable paper falling due on certain holidays payable on the next following secular day, whereas an obligation falling due on Sunday is payable the preceding Saturday.³

Since the United States inherited so much in the way of history and tradition from the British it is not surprising that relatively few holidays have been observed in this country. Each of the forty-eight States has its own legal holidays which are prescribed by statute. Others are observed by popular agreement. New Year's Day, the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas are the best known and most frequently observed of our American holidays.

The first generation of Iowa pioneers were hard-working men and women who found little time for relaxation. The Fourth of July was well-nigh universally observed by Iowa communities; Christmas festivals generally centered in the home, although churches and sometimes towns sponsored Yuletide celebrations. A few other holidays were observed from time to time in widely scattered parts of the State. As late as the 1860's, however, a Jones County pioneer re-

² Walsh's *Curiosities of Popular Customs*, p. 537. Orangemen in Canada and the United States still celebrate the Battle of the Boyne.

³ Walsh's *Curiosities of Popular Customs*, pp. 90, 538.

called that the Fourth of July was the only free day granted a farm hand between March and November.⁴

The need for more holidays was expressed early in Iowa history. Referring to the Christmas-New Year season which had just passed, the *Bloomington* [Muscatine] *Herald* of January 3, 1845, declared that holidays afforded the "sons and daughters of men" an excellent opportunity to "turn aside from the weightier matters of life" and refresh their "drooping spirits" by a kindly social exchange "at least once in a twelvemonth."

With commendable foresight the editor continued: "There *should* be some regular periods in the lapse of time — some points in our life's weary pilgrimage — when we can pause upon our journey, and, forgetting alike our joys and sorrows, compare notes with such as are prosecuting the same journey as ourselves — join in the song of joy with such as a kind Providence has preserved from most afflictive ills — mingle the holy tear of sympathy with the grief-stricken ones around us — bid the rose bloom again upon the pale cheek of the starving children of want — dry up the tear drops in the eyes of those who mourn — bid the pulse of the sick and weary return to its 'healthful music' — and the hearts of the widow and the fatherless leap again for joy."

During a conversation with an "intelligent German" in 1848 a Davenport editor learned that he preferred his native land to the United States. "Here," the German pointed out, "every man's time is devoted to making money, it is the engrossing subject of conversation; there, sports and pastimes and gala days serve to pass the time more pleasantly and happily."

⁴ William J. Petersen's "The Birthday of the Territory", "Christmas in Iowa", and "Homespun Amusements" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. XVI, pp. 373-378, Vol. XIX, pp. 241-250, 485-494; O. J. Felton's "Pioneer Life in Jones County" in *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. XXIX, p. 251.

The Davenport editor was inclined to admit the truth of this criticism. Americans, he wrote, were a money-making and a money-loving people, who stood in danger of becoming enslaved by their passion for gold. "It would be better for our community — as it would exert an ameliorating influence upon character", he cautioned, "did we frequently relax the mind by engaging in harmless pastimes. The mind, ever expanded to its utmost tension by business and its attendant cares, becomes so thoroughly impregnated with the one desire of acquiring wealth, that all others become subservient to the passion thus engendered. We want more holidays, more gatherings of an intellectual and convivial nature, calculated to weld the divided state of society into one harmonious whole. Gatherings where all can meet on common ground, interchange sentiment and for the time being, banish from the mind the harassing and perplexing cares attendant, as shadows, upon our daily avocations. As society becomes more enlightened, we believe that more attention will be devoted to intellectual and physical pastimes that by thus directing and freeing the mind, it may forsake the well-worn channel through which its ideas so continually flow."⁵

Holidays, of course, are of different kinds. Some are entirely religious in their significance and are of interest only to the religious group which establishes them. Some relate to national events in foreign countries and in the United States, where people from many nations are represented. Such national celebrations are common among Irish, Germans, French, Czechs, and other national and racial groups. Some are related to events in the history of the United States. Others, such as Valentine's Day, are reminders of old legends or customs. Often the meaning of these has been forgotten but the custom lingers as a feature

⁵ *Davenport Gazette*, June 22, 1848.

of dinners, parties, dances, and public meetings. Some are recognized by law; others are observed only on private initiative. Even those recognized by law are not all on the same basis. New Year's Day, for example, is a legal holiday in Iowa and is not counted in business dealings. A note which becomes due on that date, or on Sunday, is not payable until the following day. Such days are real legal holidays. On the other hand Mother's Day is recognized by law but not made a special legal holiday since it always falls on Sunday. It is, however, generally well observed. On the other hand, the day of a general election is a business holiday although, aside from the campaigning and voting, there is little observance.

In this article the holidays which have been described are the legal holidays, the ones set apart as such by law. The observance of these holidays is, however, largely dictated by popular sentiment and not by law. It is not from books of law or codes alone that the story of these holidays may be gleaned. While the nature and extent of these holiday festivals varied somewhat in different Iowa communities — depending on such factors as nationality, religion, the custom of the region whence the pioneers came, the population of a community, and its accessibility to the more settled areas back east — the overall picture has been somewhat the same. Details may be gleaned from the diaries of pioneers and the reminiscences of old settlers, from the proclamations of the Governors of Iowa, and more especially from the yellowed files of our early Territorial and State newspapers.

For almost thirty years following the opening of the Black Hawk Purchase in 1833 the laws of both the Territory and State remained silent on legal holidays, but on April 7, 1862, the General Assembly of the State of Iowa enacted a measure which declared:

The first day of the week, called Sunday; the first day of January; the fourth day of July; the twenty-fifth day of December, and any day appointed or recommended by the Governor of this State, or by the President of the United States, as a day of fasting or of thanksgiving, shall be regarded as holidays for all purposes relating to the presenting for payment or acceptance, and the protesting and giving notice of the dishonor of bills of exchange, bank checks and promissory notes; and any of such obligations (or such as are denominated bank or mercantile paper) falling due on any of the days above named, shall be considered and treated as and falling due on the succeeding day.⁶

The legislature was slow to recognize other holidays and it was not until 1880 that the addition of the words "thirtieth day of May" to the Code section established Memorial Day. Ten years later, in 1890, the Code was further revised by adding "the first Monday in September" or Labor Day to the list of legal holidays. At the time the *Code of 1897* was adopted, the General Assembly added Washington's birthday and "the day of the general election" as falling in the same category of holidays. Despite the influence of the G. A. R. it was not until 1909 that the Thirty-third General Assembly included Lincoln's birthday among Iowa's holidays. On March 23, 1921, the Thirty-ninth General Assembly designated November 11th as a legal holiday in honor of the signing of the Armistice.⁷

The *Code of 1939* summarized Iowa holidays as follows:

The first day of the week, called Sunday, the first day of January, the twelfth day of February, the twenty-second day of February, the thirtieth day of May, the fourth day of July, the first Monday in September, the eleventh day of November, the twenty-fifth day of December, and the following Monday, whenever any of the foregoing named legal holidays may fall on a Sunday, the day of general election, and any day appointed or recommended by

⁶ *Laws of Iowa*, 1862, Ch. 116.

⁷ *Laws of Iowa*, 1880, Ch. 31, 1890, Ch. 45, 1909, Ch. 193, 1921, Ch. 62; *Code of 1897*, Sec. 3053.

the governor of this state or by the president of the United States as a day of fasting or thanksgiving, shall be regarded as holidays for all purposes relating to the presentation for payment or acceptance, and for the protesting and giving notice of the dishonor of bills of exchange, drafts, bank checks, orders, and promissory notes, and any bank or mercantile paper falling due on any of the days above named shall be considered as falling due on the succeeding business day.⁸

This law for the first time included the words "and the following Monday, whenever any of the foregoing named legal holidays may fall on a Sunday". It may be noted that Thanksgiving Day was never included specifically. Instead, the *Code of 1939* (adopted the year President Roosevelt moved Thanksgiving from the last Thursday to the third Thursday in November) includes among the holidays "any day appointed or recommended by the governor of this state or by the president of the United States as a day of fasting or thanksgiving".

The Fiftieth General Assembly did not change this phrasing when it passed the following "Rules of a General Nature" for "Computing Time" with reference to holidays:

In computing time under these Rules the first day shall be excluded and the last day included, and if the last day is a Sunday or holiday, the time shall extend to the next day not a Sunday or holiday. Holidays shall be only: January first, February twelfth and twenty-second, May thirtieth, July fourth, November eleventh, December twenty-fifth, the first Monday in September, the day of general election, and any day proclaimed or designated by the President or the Governor as a day of Thanksgiving.⁹

Precedent and presidential proclamations have usually determined the few holidays observed by the Federal government. The change in the date of Thanksgiving Day

⁸ *Code of 1939*, Ch. 424, Sec. 9545.

⁹ *Laws of Iowa*, 1943, Ch. 278, Rule 366.

which was made by the President's proclamations in 1939, 1940, and 1941, resulted in a specific provision by Congress. A joint resolution, approved by both houses of Congress on December 26, 1941, reads as follows:

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the fourth Thursday of November in each year after the year 1941 be known as Thanksgiving Day, and is hereby made a legal public holiday to all intents and purposes and in the same manner as the 1st day of January, the 22nd day of February, the 30th day of May, the 4th day of July, the first Monday of September, the 11th day of November, and Christmas Day are now made by law public holidays.¹⁰

It will be seen that the Iowa code mentions the same legal holidays as do the Federal statutes, with one exception — since 1909 our State lawmakers have included Lincoln's birthday among the ten specifically enumerated Iowa holidays.

It should also be pointed out that the State of Iowa, by a special law, authorizes and requests the Governor "to issue annually a proclamation calling upon our state officials to display the American flag on all state and school buildings, and the people of the state to display the flag at their homes, lodges, churches, and places of business" on the second Sunday in May (Mother's Day), the Fourth of July, and the twelfth of October (Columbus Day). Suitable services and exercises are to be conducted for each occasion. Columbus Day, however, is not a legal business holiday and Mother's Day, always on Sunday, does not involve business, and therefore is not a legal holiday.¹¹

¹⁰ *United States Statutes at Large*, Vol. LV, Pt. I, Ch. 631.

¹¹ *Code of 1939*, Ch. 29, Secs. 471, 471.1, 471.2. Mother's Day is not a legal holiday in Iowa, but it has been recognized by both the national Congress and the Iowa General Assembly and a brief account is presented here.

The Iowa Liquor Control Act prohibits "the sale or delivery of any liquor in, on, or from the premises of any state liquor store, special distributor or warehouse" on any legal holiday, on Sunday, or on a national or State election day. The same law applies to "any municipal elec-

The custom of honoring motherhood dates back to the ancient Greeks and Romans. In both countries goddesses and not human mothers were honored. The observance of Mother's Day in the United States dates from May, 1907. It was begun under the inspiration of Miss Anna M. Jarvis of Philadelphia, who believed at least one day a year should be set aside in order that sons and daughters might honor their mothers. The first observance was held in a Philadelphia church, white carnations being worn by those who attended the service.

The idea spread so rapidly that by 1911 special exercises were held in every State as well as in Canada, Mexico, South America, Africa, China, Japan, and other places. In December, 1912, a Mother's Day International Association was incorporated. The following year the United States House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution calling upon the President, his Cabinet, the Senators and Representatives, and all officials of the Federal government to wear a white carnation on the second Sunday in May. In 1914 Congress designated the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day and requested President Wilson to issue a proclamation calling upon all government officials to display the national flag on public buildings. It has now become customary for those whose mothers are dead to wear white flowers while those whose mothers are alive wear colored flowers.—Douglas's *The American Book of Days*, pp. 263-265; *Congressional Record*, 63rd Congress, 1st Session, p. 1478; *United States Statutes at Large*, Vol. XXXVII, Pt. 1, pp. 770, 771.

Iowa was not slow to follow the national pattern. On April 18, 1923, a joint resolution was passed by the General Assembly providing for the annual display of the American flag on the second Sunday in May. This resolution read:

"WHEREAS, the service rendered to the United States by our American homes is the supreme source of our country's strength and inspiration; and

WHEREAS, the American mother has done, and is doing, so much for the home, the moral, industrial and spiritual uplift, therefore,

Be it resolved by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa: . . .

"That the governor of this state is hereby authorized and requested to issue annually a proclamation calling upon our state officials to display the American flag on all state and school buildings, and the people of the state to display the flag at their homes, lodges, churches and places of business, on the second Sunday in May, known as mothers' day, as a public expression of reverence for the homes of our state, and that the governor urge the celebration of mothers' day in said proclamation in such a way as will deepen the home ties, and inspire better homes and closer union between the commonwealth, its homes, and their sons and daughters."

tion day held in the municipality in which such store, warehouse or special distributor may be situated."¹²

NEW YEAR'S DAY

The first month of the year has but one holiday of note and that one owes its existence to the calendar-makers. New Year's Day is the birthday of chronicled time.

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light,
The year is dying in the night,
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow,
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Alfred Tennyson

New Year's Day is the oldest of all the holidays observed in Iowa, surpassing Christmas itself in antiquity. A year can be considered to begin on any date. The custom of celebrating the first day of the year by some religious observance appears to have prevailed among most ancient nations. Long before the Christian era the Jews, the Egyptians, the Chinese, and the Romans, although differing as to the time from which they reckoned the beginning of the year, all regarded New Year's Day as one of special interest.

The Roman year originally began with March, but when Julius Caesar reformed the calendar he made the year begin on January 1st, a day held sacred to the two-faced Janus, who was supposed to look backward upon the old and forward into the new year, with a careful regard for both. The Romans exchanged gifts and greetings, offered sacrifices to Janus, and tried to regulate their conduct so

¹² *Code of 1939*, Ch. 93.1, Sec. 1921.025.

as to be assured of happy days during the ensuing year.

Errors of the Julian calendar were corrected by Pope Gregory in 1582 and his calendar was adopted by nearly all Christian countries throughout the world. The Gregorian calendar moved the first New Year's Day under the new system ten days forward, to correct the error in time that had accumulated over sixteen centuries. England did not adopt the Gregorian calendar until 1752, 170 years after it was established.¹³ By that time there was a difference of eleven days. The Russians and Greeks, however, continued to use the old style, or Julian calendar, a much longer time. Soviet Russia adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1918. The Jews observe their New Year between September 5th and October 5th, the fifth of September being the first of ten penitential days ending with the Day of Atonement.

It was long the custom of the President of the United States to hold a reception for the general public on New Year's Day. George Washington held open house the first New Year following his inauguration and continued to do so during his eight years in office. A Pennsylvania Senator penned the following in his diary on January 1, 1791: "Made the President the compliments of the season; had a hearty shake of the hand. I was asked to partake of the punch and cakes, but declined. I sat down and we had some chat. But the diplomatic gentry and foreigners coming in, I embraced the first vacancy to make my bow and wish him a good morning." William Howard Taft is said to have shaken hands with about six thousand White House guests on New Year's Day in 1910. The White House reception was suspended by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on January 1, 1934, because it was difficult for him to remain standing in the receiving line.¹⁴

¹³ Walsh's *Curiosities of Popular Customs*, pp. 732-750.

¹⁴ Douglas's *The American Book of Days*, pp. 3-5.

The celebration of New Year's Day was quite generally observed by the first settlers in the Black Hawk Purchase. The yellowed pages of our earliest Territorial newspapers reveal the first day of the year as one of rest, entertainment, religious observance, and festival recreation. New Year's calls and New Year's balls, church services, oyster suppers, and boisterous celebrations, the holiday songs of carollers and joyous sleigh-riding parties, feasting and general carousing, all formed a part of the holiday scene. Editors were disposed to look back in retrospect on the Old Year with mingled feelings while peering hopefully into the future. While extending the season's greetings to their patrons they usually did not forget to call attention to the fact that many were in arrears on their subscriptions or advertising.

NEW YEAR'S CALLS

One time-honored New Year's custom was the New Year's call. It was quite common for the ladies of a pioneer community to remain at home on the first day of the year and keep open house for the men of the community. The gentlemen made short calls and took slight refreshments at each stop. Usually the hours between 10:00 A. M. and 4 P. M. were considered proper for such calls.¹⁵

A Sioux City editor was delighted with the "pleasant and agreeable" manner in which the ladies received their gentlemen callers on New Year's Day in 1859. "The tables spread before us", he declared, "were dressed out with as much profusion and taste as can be found in New York or Boston, and the ladies that presided over them have won hosts of friends. A happy New Year to all of them!" The editor was pleased to note that despite the unalloyed en-

¹⁵ Bertha L. Heilbron's "Christmas and New Year's on the Frontier" in *Minnesota History*, Vol. X, pp. 373-390, stresses the Carrier's Greeting and the New Year's Call, and contains additional illustrations of New Year's observance in the Upper Mississippi Valley.

joyment New Year's Day in 1859 passed with little drunkenness.¹⁶

The ladies who served as New Year's Day hostesses were sometimes rewarded with more than a mere "Thank You" in the local newspaper. The "rougner sex" of Sioux City clubbed together and kept "open house" for the ladies on the Monday following New Year's Day, 1859. To learn first hand how the ladies were entertained a local editor visited the "sumptuous apartment" decorated for the occasion "without regard to expense". He was met at the door by a porter in "spotless linen and shirt collar of huge dimensions" and ushered into a room where the bachelors were seated "demurely smoking their pipes." The table center was graced by a large cabbage labelled "fruit cake" from which slices were cut with a cross-cut saw. Suspended over the table from the ceiling was a large bologna sausage which swung lazily back and forth like a huge pendulum. A jelly cake proved to be a cold buckwheat cake. Turnips were served from a silver fruit dish as "Bungo apples" and raw onions were freely distributed with butter. Amid a numerous array of wine bottles, the editor discovered one containing ink which was highly recommended as "Ethiopian wine from the Black Sea". Pipes and tobacco also entered into the entertainment and for dessert a bottle labelled "Castor Oil" was produced.

The homes of Dr. William R. Smith and Charles K. Smith were among those open to the young men of Sioux City. Doubtless such hospitality afforded many newcomers a means of widening their circle of friends and business associates. Public officials and office seekers, as well as business and professional men, might gain many friends on such occasions.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Sioux City Register*, January 6, 1859.

¹⁷ *Sioux City Register*, January 5, 1861. The story of Dr. and Mrs. William Remsen Smith is illustrative of the background of these New Year's enter-

It was fashionable to serve a favorite punch to New Year's callers — a custom introduced by the Dutch into New York. This custom gradually spread to other parts of the country — and many excesses developed as gay young blades hired carriages and dashed from one home to another for the sole purpose of hovering over the free punch. Because of such abuses the New Year's call was finally abandoned or at least limited to an exchange of visits by intimate friends.¹⁸

The reaction against serving drinks at these open houses was already gaining headway in Iowa before the Civil War. The influence of the temperance crusade was manifested in Davenport as early as 1857. "A petition is in circulation for signatures", the *Davenport Gazette* declared on December 24th, "the signers pledging themselves not to keep intoxicating beverages of any kind on their tables next New Year's Day. We heartily endorse this movement, and hope the rule will be so general that the exceptions may be

tainers. Dr. Smith was born in Barnegat, New Jersey, in 1828, received his medical education in New York City, and came to Sioux City in 1856. In 1859 he returned to Tecumseh, Michigan, to marry Rebecca Osborne, who was thus a youthful hostess when she entertained in 1861 on New Year's Day. Dr. Smith served as mayor of Sioux City in 1863 and again in 1881. He was receiver of the United States Land Office at Sioux City from 1865 to 1878 and a member of the Board of Education for fifteen years. In 1885 he converted his eighty acre farm into what developed into one of Sioux City's important additions — Smith's Villa. The doctor and his wife were instrumental in establishing beautiful Smith's Villa Children's Park. A beautiful memorial fountain in this park honoring Dr. Smith bears the inscription, "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly."

Charles K. Smith was born in New York State in 1835 and came to Sioux City in 1856. He was appointed postmaster in 1857 and occupied the first post office at Sioux City. In addition to many occupations he held the office of mayor and county treasurer. He married Ann M. Gill of New York in July of 1860, hence Mrs. Smith was a bride of only six months when she entertained on New Year's Day in 1861.— Constant R. Marks's *Past and Present of Sioux City and Woodbury County*, pp. 390-392.

¹⁸ Douglas's *The American Book of Days*, p. 5; Thomas Low Nichols's *Forty Years of American Life: 1821-1861*, p. 173.

considered as anything but complimentary to the guests of the day.”

The first of January, 1858, dawned “clear and pleasant” with the Christmas mud sufficiently compact to admit of easy pedestrianism. As a consequence there were an increased number of New Year’s calls and few people were without visitors whether or not they kept open house. To avoid the embarrassment of unexpected visitors the Davenport editor called attention to a “new idea” in Moline whereby those intending to keep open house published a card to that effect in the morning paper. Most Davenport stores were closed, presents “flew thick and fast, and, with the exception of the fire in the morning, no accident occurred to mar the harmony of the day.”

The temperance pledge mentioned by the Davenport editorial was apparently not without effect. The editor commented on the presence of a drunken man, well-dressed, apparently respectable and intelligent, on Farnam Street and added: “He had made too many ‘calls’ — at the saloons — the only place, we believe, where liquor was ‘set out’ on that day.”¹⁹

Similar reactions against the too free quaffing of New Year’s drinks could be noted in other towns. In 1867 an Iowa City editor expressed little regret at the passing of the New Year’s call. “The custom of New Year’s Calls seems to have gone very much into disuse with our people. It is well it is so if the former attending custom of treating to wine or stronger drinks were to remain with it. Many a young man has been lured from the path of sobriety by the New Year’s glass, tendered by the hand of beauty. Such a tender compels many a young man to yield. We hope that custom at least will cease to be observed.”²⁰

¹⁹ *Davenport Gazette*, January 7, 1858.

²⁰ *Iowa City Republican*, January 9, 1867.

DANCES AND BALLS

Dances and grand balls were common New Year's Eve entertainments. In 1853 a "grand ball" was held at Iowa City on New Year's Eve which was attended by a "goodly proportion" of the legislators of the State of Iowa. A correspondent of the *Davenport Gazette* declared the lawmakers were "carried away with the loveliness of the Iowa City belles, and their wonderful power over the muscles of their toes and heels, and lower extremities (vulgarly called legs) which they so happily exhibited in the mazy dance," that they forgot to make their appearance in their respective places in the House on New Year's morning. It happened that the Senate had succeeded in adjourning from Friday preceding New Year's Day until the following Monday but the House had obstinately defeated the same motion — determining to work on the first of January.

Many of the members failed to put in their appearance on New Year's Day and the Sergeant-at-arms was sent out to round them up. When the Speaker of the House sought to find the reason for their absence none of them mentioned the New Year's Ball. Their excuses in the main included — a bad night's rest; the servant girls were out of tune and they had failed to secure their breakfast in time; the porter had taken away their boots and failed to return with them; or they had simply overslept. Since many of the men were in such a condition that legislative work was impossible the House agreed by common consent to adjourn until the following day.²¹

In 1857 citizens of McGregor were informed as early as November 25th of a Grand Masque Ball to be held on New Year's Eve under the sponsorship of the German residents. "The arrangements are all made, a splendid Band of Eight Musicians are engaged, and in despite of the Hard Times,

²¹ *Davenport Gazette*, January 13, 1853.

we expect an exhibition of Fancy, Good nature, and Good feeling that will put the city in a good humor till next spring. Come now, Choose the characters you wish to personate, get your 'rig', give the wink to your lady love and as the teacher said in the whistling school 'prepare to pucker'." And "pucker" they did! A large portion of the citizens of McGregor turned out on the eventful night attired in the costumes of an Hungarian general, a Swiss countryman and a Swiss lieutenant, a Prussian Hussar and a Prussian peasant, a Spanish knight, a Polish Jew, an Austrian lieutenant, a Turkish officer, a count of the sixteenth century. J. Walter was attired as Ring Master *Hans Snigglefritz* and P. Walter represented the Clown *Jacob Schneider*. The ladies were costumed in the styles of central and southern Europe — belles from Austria, Bohemia, France, Germany, Turkey, the Tyrol, Spain, and Switzerland caused many an onlooker to think he had been transported back into one of those "old Baronial castles" he had read about in his youth.

The easy integration of native Americans and foreigners on the Iowa frontier was demonstrated at this ball. According to A. P. Richardson, the McGregor editor:

The Germans are not partial to Cotillions and "our folks" are partial to scarcely anything else. Whether the dancing was well or ill done we cannot judge; those who decide such points assure us that the Music was enrapturing and that the Polkas, Waltzes, Schottische, Gallopades, &c., &c., were faultless in execution. We managed to get a most liberal share of human comfort out of the proceedings, and if loud expressions of applause in the Hall or equally significant expressions of gratification throughout the town may be regarded, it will be safe to say that McGregor, on New Year's Eve, was as happy as it possibly could be had the Millennium itself arrived. The party was large, the dresses were got up in excellent taste and many of them quite expensive. The whole appearance wore a European character that rendered it extremely

interesting to such of the company as had not before witnessed any representation of the kind. . . . We must not omit to state that a German retired actor named Beck was present, and that at the request of the audience he repeated in excellent style some most eloquent passages from Kotzebue's Play of "The Stranger".

There were, of course, many "side shows" in McGregor that night. "Nectar in quantities sufficient to be-fuddle all the gods that Olympus ever saw; in bowls too, of such modern, unique, and at the same time necessary construction as to put to blush all the goblets of antiquity. Songs, anacreontic and homeric, comic and africanic, funereal and triumphant; Wit — with wings brightened by the spray of sparkling Catawba, bedizzened with the effervescing jets of the best of all *shams*, PAGNE, or burnished with the more solid extract of antique bourbon — flowed in mellow unrestraint from the labial orifices of the happy company. It seemed as though the worshippers of the wise Minerva, the tuneful Apollo, the quick-winged Mercury and the 'jolly god of grapes' had all agreed upon a mass meeting to celebrate the death of the old, and the birth of the New Year." Toasts were drunk with remarkable unanimity, songs were sung with enthusiasm if not in harmony, as McGregor sought to forget the panic year and welcome in 1858.²²

While McGregor was reveling in general merriment, a more somber note was struck at Dubuque where the *Express and Herald* of January 3, 1858, expressed concern over a riot between Germans and Irish on New Year's Eve. It seems that the Germans were holding a ball at the Western Brewery Hall when several Irishmen put in an appearance and proceeded to make themselves "pretty free" with the dance. In the quarrels that followed Thomas Gainor was killed and his brother Philip mortally wounded by gun shot. Two other Irishmen were severely injured by "glass bot-

²² *North Iowa Times* (McGregor), January 6, 1858.

bles" or other sharp missiles. Several Germans were arrested for murder.

The Irish invaders were described by one editor as "peaceable" but when an Irish prosecuting attorney exhibited "undue partiality" for his countrymen he was quickly censured. "The Germans are a peaceful people and the Irish are notoriously fond of a little excitement even though it may promise a broken head or two, or some other equally pleasant result. The Gainors and their noisy companions had no business at the ball, and if we were a jurymen we would be slow to convict any man who was repelling an attack upon his castle. This assumption on the part of a mob 'to break up' what they cannot participate in, to come prowling round your house with tin horns and bells, &c., &c., is practiced too much in our country, and the sooner it is stopped — no matter if there is a rioter killed occasionally — the better will it be for decent people and for blackguards also."²³

Dubuque could, however, celebrate New Year's without a riot — as was evidenced by the grand masquerade at Turners' Hall on the evening of December 31, 1859. "Early in the evening", declared the *Dubuque Herald* of January 11, 1860, "there was a gathering together of the odds and ends of all creation. In crowds flocked in devils, angels, queens, slaves, Zouaves, Mexicans, Niggers, ladies, gentlemen, soldiers, priests, monks, et cetera, together with a 'working majority' of nondescript characters, who bore not the remotest resemblance to anything in the heavens above or the earth beneath. There was a glorious jam — a mash of hoops, a treading of corns, a charge of elbows, a Babel of tongues and an odor of lager, positively unique and overpowering. There was 'fun alive' till daylight — a rich blossoming of wall-flowers, rare *tetes-a-tetes* in sly corners,

²³ Quoted in the *North Iowa Times* (McGregor), January 6, 13, 1858.

dizzy whirlings, and twistings, and intertwinings, by the motley crowd, glorious oysters and toothful quails by Walter, sour Rhein Wein at '10 cents a schoppen' at the bar, interminable gallops and clumsy quadrilles — a rush, crowd, jam, confusion, uproar, babbling, to which the confusion of Babel was a Quaker Meeting in full blast."

The smallest communities enjoyed their New Year's celebrations and were frequently assisted by residents from the larger towns. In 1858 citizens for miles about helped celebrate the opening of Barr's Hotel at Monona. Large numbers from McGregor assisted the new landlord in the "splendid affair". "The Ball at Monona must have been a protracted one", a McGregor editor noted, "as three of our nice young men N. F. and W. started there on Thursday evening and they did not get back till Sunday!"²⁴

CHURCH SERVICES

A more solemn aspect to the observance of the New Year is recorded in the numerous church services. Few days offer a better opportunity for preaching and moralizing. Clergymen generally looked backward dubiously into the past and forward optimistically into the future. Perhaps no preacher has jolted his congregation quite as much as did that McGregor minister who, as 1935 drew to a close, placed the following notice on his church bulletin board: "HAPPY NEW YEAR: *Where will you be 100 years from now?*" Iowa newspapers and radios were quick to flash the greeting throughout the State — to family gatherings

²⁴ The *North Iowa Times* of December 9, 1857, contained the following advance notice of the Monona party: "On New Year's Eve Barr's New Hotel at Monona will be dedicated to Terpsichore. Mr. McNamara the lessee of the House is an old Landlord, Monona boys and girls are the best dancers in Iowa, and the ballroom is probably the best hall in the state! — Why won't they have an awful good time? Ervins Band will play." See also the *North Iowa Times* (McGregor), January 6, 1858.

at home and to those thousands who disported raucously at the theaters, dance halls, road houses, and night clubs.²⁵

Pioneer Sunday schools frequently had special New Year's programs. A Dubuque sojourner at Iowa Falls was impressed with the model manner in which the Methodist and Congregational sabbath schools held a joint festival at Colburn's Hall on New Year's Day in 1859. Appropriate decorations and banners caught the eye of "T. J." as he entered the hall. A table that fairly groaned under the burden of "substantials and delicacies" was not overlooked. Appropriate choir music, happy festival songs, and the distribution of gifts to the children, and two "short but pertinent" addresses closed a program that gave "new impetus" to the "noble and self-denying labors of the Sabbath School" and was "worthy of the imitation of all, upon similar occasions."²⁶

The colored folks of Anamosa held a New Year's Jubilee on January 1, 1873. It began with a parade, headed by the Clinton Martial Band, from the depot through the principal streets to the old city hall where the celebration was held. The afternoon program consisted of two sermons and singing by the colored Sabbath school. Supper was served from five to seven o'clock. In the evening Alexander Clark (colored) of Muscatine gave an address while the Heuston family entertained with several songs.²⁷

Preachers were frequently greeted with a surprise party on New Year's Eve. Abundant food was spread out for all who attended; sometimes a fine suit of clothes or a substantial purse added to the joy of some hard-pressed clergyman. At Dubuque in 1860 a surprise party for the Rev. C. Billings Smith proved to be one of the most prominent

²⁵ *The Des Moines Register*, December 31, 1935.

²⁶ *Dubuque Weekly Times*, January 10, 1859.

²⁷ *Anamosa Eureka*, December 26, 1872, January 2, 1873.

social events of the season. "Early in the evening his house was forcibly taken possession of by a crowd numbering from 30 to 300, which completely jammed every apartment of the parsonage. Crinoline was omnipotent—it blockaded the stairway, expanded in the halls, clouded the kitchen, overspread the parlors, wedged the passages, was everywhere grand, rotundant, expansive. One or two pleasant episodes varied the general pleasantry of the gathering and at a reasonable hour crinoline and its opposite departed, pleased with the gracious reception and the success of the undertaking."²⁸

ALMS GIVING

Among the favorite New Year's events were the numerous oyster suppers held by churches, lodges, and various other groups. On December 31, 1864, an oyster dinner was held at the Oskaloosa City Hall, the proceeds of which were to be used in behalf of the families whose main support had been lost in the Civil War. The dinner was "largely patronized" and "heartily enjoyed" by all. A "Card of Thanks" was inserted in the *Oskaloosa Herald* by the wives and widows of soldiers for all who had exerted themselves by work or contribution in making the oyster dinner a success.²⁹

Des Moines had a unique "association of ghosts" who chose New Year's Day as a fitting time to render aid to the poor and needy. "They come out at midnight on the first of the new year, in ghostly dress, and this they have done for several years. Their business is to supply the poor and needy with food and clothing and all is done in so mysterious a manner that no one knows who the nocturnal visitors are. On last New Year's morning at least a thousand dollars worth were found on the door steps of the poor in

²⁸ *The Dubuque Herald*, January 11, 1860.

²⁹ *Oskaloosa Weekly Herald*, December 22, 29, 1864, January 5, 1865.

various quarters of the city and a hundred dollars was deposited with Mrs. West, the President of the aid society, the unknown ghosts fling into her parlors and their leader placing the parcel in her hand, but not uttering a word."³⁰

SLEIGHING PARTIES

Sleigh-riding parties were in order on New Year's Day whenever the weather permitted. In 1848 a Davenport editor expressed delight with the snowfall of December which averaged about twenty inches in depth. The sleighing, he thought, was never better than that enjoyed by Davenporters during the Christmas-New Year season of 1848-1849 and did much "to make amends for the deficiency" of the previous four or five years. That same season, a Burlington citizen declared that sleigh bells were jingling merrily to the "utter destruction of all the horse flesh that can be pressed into the service."³¹

A Sioux City editor reported delightful weather and excellent sleighing in 1861, turning that town's streets into the "liveliest" thoroughfares the editor had seen for a long time. That same year the Dubuque "Governors Greys" appeared on Main Street at ten o'clock, New Year's morning, in two large sleighs each drawn by four horses. "The first vehicle contained the Germania Band, while the second and larger one held some thirty members of the company. They made quite an imposing appearance as they went down the street, with colors flying and with strains of inspiring music."³²

EDITORIALS

A study of the New Year's editorials published during the past century would provide a comprehensive picture of

³⁰ *Anamosa Eureka*, January 8, 1874.

³¹ *Davenport Gazette*, December 21, 28, 1848, January 4, 1849.

³² *Sioux City Register*, January 5, 1861; *Dubuque Weekly Times*, January 10, 1861.

the history of Iowa and the nation. Measured in terms of population growth, and of agricultural, financial, and industrial expansion, editors had much to be thankful for, although the general tone of their comment was not infrequently spiced with boastful claims and frontier optimism. Particular pride was taken in the many educational institutions springing up throughout the State. Partisan politics flared up in many a New Year's editorial, particularly during the abolitionist crusade, the Civil War, and the Reconstruction period. In addition, wars and rumors of war, panics, plagues, pestilence, floods and droughts, as well as keen interest in the international scene were usually recorded in the New Year's editorial.

The season's greetings also afforded editors an opportunity to remind readers and advertisers that an auspicious time had arrived for the settling of unpaid debts. "We offer the compliments of the season to our kind patrons", declared a Burlington editor as the year 1837 drew to a close. "A happy, thrice happy new year to them all, and may they live to enjoy many more such, and the last always the happiest. . . . The New Year is the time to take a retrospective view of the past, and if errors have been committed, the time to adopt a new course, guarding against the evils which have fallen upon you during the past. It is a period of no small interest to us, and one at which we shall adopt new rules that may interest others." The editor thereupon called on all subscribers and advertisers to pay their subscriptions and square their accounts.³³

In 1852 the *Davenport Gazette*, while wishing all its readers a Happy New Year, editorialized on the significance of the New Year greeting to all ages of men. The "prattling child" lived in the "passing hour" and had no

³³ *Wisconsin Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser*, December 30, 1837.

idea of the significance of the term. The "romping boy" upset the chair as he burst into the room with his greeting — thoughtless, bent on fun, hopeful of receiving a present, and entirely oblivious to such cankerous human afflictions as famines, plagues, pestilence, and oppression. The youth entering with the dignity of manhood, was adjured to be moderate, and ever on the guard against the evils that surrounded him. The middle-aged man came into the room with his firm and self-confident step, his smiling face "banishing the wrinkles that the stern realities of the world" had placed there. His family has been made comfortable through his labors and his children awaken hopes for future greatness. "Finally, comes the aged man with his HAPPY NEW YEAR, to receive the kisses of his grandchildren. Kind old man, he exists the monument of a well-spent life — the grave has no terrors to him — it is the door of entrance into the mansion of his Father — into that blessed above upon which his hopes have long been stayed."³⁴

In 1860 the *Dubuque Herald* offered the customary New Year's salutations to its readers. "This day", the editor pointed out, "is generally observed as a kind of holiday or festival-day, and as it happens on Sunday, to-morrow (Monday) will be observed for making the usual calls and enjoying the usual festivities." After pointing out that no paper would be issued over the holidays the editor wrote a special farewell to the parting year:

GOODBYE.— To-day closes up the year 1859 — it is his dying day. Well, goodbye old fellow! We all had considerable fun with you, and a few tears. You've dug the earth from beneath the feet of many loved ones, and they have disappeared forever. You've opened the portals of love for the ingress of many a child-life, have cemented some new bonds, sundered others, expanded crinoline, spun earth one year nearer the end, hung John Brown, defeated

³⁴ *Davenport Gazette*, January 1, 1852.

Mahony, and performed other operations mean, beneficial, and otherwise. Farewell! we'll attend your wake, and stand not sadly by your Bier. (if its lager) Peace to the eternal rest to which you betake yourself — may your successor leave us all fatter, richer, happier, kinder and better. So mote it be!³⁵

New Year's Day provided an excellent opportunity for editors to cast vitriolic barbs at men of opposite political views. The *Dubuque Herald*, the most powerful Democratic organ in Iowa, bitterly opposed the Civil War. The editor had not shed a tear at the passing of John Brown. After four long and bloody years his attitude had not changed. The year 1865, he wrote, has been "crowded with glory and shame, the glory of hard-won victory, the shame of conquest. In it magnanimity has struggled with vengeance, and each has had its trophies, the former in the generous forgiveness of enemies, the latter in the brutal putting to death of conquered foemen and prisoners. It has been signalized by the defeat and dispersal of rebel armies seeking a disruption of the Union, and by the attempt of the conquering party to accomplish what they have affected to fight against. With it depart the grand opportunities of men to become statesmen and patriots, and as it gives place to a better year, so they must give place to better men."³⁶

In sharp contrast to this Copperhead editorial, the editor of the *Oskaloosa Herald* was inclined to make his New Year's greeting the vehicle of a prayer of thanksgiving that the American Union had been preserved. The buoyant youthfulness of the Iowa frontier and its ability to recover from the physical as well as the spiritual ravages of Civil War may be seen in his final wish — the speedy arrival of the Iron Horse at Oskaloosa. His editorial read in part as follows:

³⁵ *The Dubuque Herald*, January 4, 1860.

³⁶ *Dubuque Weekly Herald*, January 3, 1866.

With this number we bid our kind friends and patrons adieu for 1865. Ere the *Herald* reaches you again, the wheel of Time will have completed another revolution, and 1866 will be with us. The year now slowly dying, has been fraught with events of great interest and moment to all. Since its advent, we have learned that Republican government was not a failure; that the American people were able to govern themselves, and we have demonstrated to the world the fact that

“The land of the free, and the home of the brave”, was not a mist which the first adverse wind of fortune should disperse, but a structure built upon a solid foundation, to which the downtrodden and oppressed of all lands might look for sympathy and support.—The glad tidings of Peace have been proclaimed throughout the land, and millions of hearts made to rejoice. It witnessed the death of our beloved Chief Magistrate slain by an assassin’s hand. For four long years had he stood at the helm of the Ship of State, and guided it safely through every storm and peril, only to yield up his life for the cause, when the breakers were passed and still water reached. Ties have been severed; and new responsibilities assumed. Many who were present one year ago have passed to “that bourne from whence no traveler returns”; many who were then absent upon the tented field have returned victorious to their homes.—In the “dim and silent future”, when the snows of many winters shall have changed the young and blithesome to mature and sedate, all will look back with reverence and pleasure to the year when FREEDOM and RIGHT were proclaimed more powerful than Anarchy and Oppression. Kind friends we wish you a HAPPY NEW YEAR. May ’66, looming up in the future, bring in its train as many pleasant memories as ’65, receding in the past, has left us, and we sincerely hope and believe that ere another year shall pass over our heads, the whistle of the locomotive on the Iowa Central Railroad will be heard, as, with a long train attached, it comes thundering into our town.³⁷

Sometimes Iowa editors gave special prominence to letters written by readers who caught something of the New Year’s spirit. The year 1873 was a memorable one in both Iowa and American history as the following paragraph

³⁷ *The Weekly Oskaloosa Herald*, December 28, 1865.

from a resident of New Hartford to the *Cedar Falls Gazette* reveals: "The Old Year is about to take his place among the ex-years. Congress, if they ever get back from the holidays, will probably retire him with a pension, and a land grant of every alternate section from here to the moon. As Josh Billings says: 'This is terrible if true.' But we wonder if the coming year will be as prolific of 'Credit Mobiliers', 'Salary Grabs', 'Panics', and 'Misappropriations', as was '73.'"³⁸

A resident of Jackson Township in Jones County was inclined to view 1874 through rosier glasses. The first day was warmed by a genial sun, he pointed out, farm prices were the best in some years, dances, oyster suppers, and social enjoyment had prevailed throughout the holidays. The mistakes of 1873 could be "turned to good account" by those willing to learn. The holidays had not passed without their "reviving influences" on Jones County residents. "Roast turkey, pork, mince, and other favorite pies, Yorkshire puddings and such other condiments — digestible or otherwise — each have graced the tables in accordance with the ability and skill of the getter up. Old associations and friendships have been renewed, new acquaintances formed, and it is to be hoped that many of the jarring differences which may have existed between neighbors have been buried with the dead year".³⁹

Probably no New Year caused more comment than that of 1900 and 1901. The great theme of editorial speculation at that time was which year should be considered as the start of the 20th century. Did it begin on January 1 of 1900 or 1901? There were many arguments, but few decisions. In a special cartoon the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* also indicated that in 2001 men would still argue over whether

³⁸ *Cedar Falls Gazette*, January 2, 1874.

³⁹ *The Anamosa Eureka*, January 15, 1874.

the twenty-first century had just begun or was already a year old. As a matter of fact the argument could have been settled by consulting English and American reference works which agree that the first century began on January 1 of the year one, so the twentieth century began with January 1, 1901, and the twenty-first century will begin on January 1, 2001. But there will, no doubt, be arguments.

Many editorials tended to look back over the century to show what mighty strides had been taken since the days of Jefferson and Hamilton. In the field of invention alone the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* showed that such commonplace things as steamships and steam railroads, electric vehicles and street cars, telegraphs, and telephones, photographs and phonographs, electric lights and kerosene lamps, illuminating gas and cooking ranges, steam presses and steam threshers, typewriters, sewing machines, public water supply in cities, sidewalks and sewers, were all unknown when John Adams was President in 1800. Local prospects were not forgotten. A special editorial recounted the good things of 1900 and looked forward to what the expenditures by the railways and the cereal company would do for Cedar Rapids in 1901.⁴⁰

CARRIERS' ADDRESSES

The annual "Carrier's Address" is another interesting sidelight on New Year's Day celebrations in Iowa. On January 6, 1838, the *Iowa News* printed a 24-stanza "Carrier's Address" which touched on everything from the scientific marvels of the time to international affairs, unpaid subscriptions, and the shortage of women on the frontier.

⁴⁰ *The Cedar Rapids Weekly Gazette*, January 2, 9, 1901. A good account of the arguments over which year marked the turn of the century may be read in Pauline Grahame's "The First Day of the Century" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. X, pp. 1-15.

The following verses, selected at random, are typical:

Kind Patrons all I bring to you
 Again my annual rhyme,
 And promise to be very *short*,
 In such a "*pressing*" time.

Science is irradiating
 The human intellect,
 And BRANDRETH'S Pills are curing all
 Of every age and sect.

And steam is pushing all "ahead,"
 But Oh! "Magnetic power!"
 Will drive us on a thousand miles
 In less than half an hour.

Whilst *Chemistry* is blowing up
 The blunders of the past,
Phrenology peeps through the brain —
 The rogues are caught at last!!

With every kingdom of the earth,
 In peace we still remain.
 But wars are raging in the realms
 Of Canada and Spain.

And may the Patriots of the north
 Succeed — like *us* be free.
 May they, as did Columbia's sons,
 Cry, "Death or Liberty."

Subscribers all, A B C D,
 Pay up now for the "News,"
 For January has set in,
 And I lack wood and shoes.

DuBuque can boast of many *beaux*
 But girls are rather "*few*"—
 Come, Yankee damsels, "right ahead,"
 To get — to get ———. Adieu.

The first "Carriers' Addresses" were printed in the paper, usually in the first issue in January. Later a sepa-

rate sheet or stiff cardboard placard contained the "Address". Finally the address was discarded for a calendar, which the carrier brought around each New Year. The boy usually paid the newspaper a nickel for the calendar, carried a supply around on New Year's Day, and looked for anything from a dime to a dollar in return. The writer delivered these New Year's calendars to the hundred-odd subscribers on his *Dubuque Telegraph-Herald* route for five consecutive years beginning in 1911. After paying for his calendars he netted about \$12 on an average — a good return for a route which had no wealthy people and which counted only one fifty-cent tip.

The "printer's devil" of pioneer days no doubt served as the carrier for an entire town. Editors frequently wrote a warm word of support for their "devil" as the New Year came around. "Remember", said a Davenport editor, "he tramps through the mud and rain of the summer, and the snow, and piercing winds of winter, to deposit at your doors at the earliest moment the news fresh from the press. Remember him substantially." Readers were urged to get "halves and quarters" ready as his only fee was the pittance he received on New Year's morning.⁴¹

In 1865 the *Oskaloosa Herald* called attention to the annual New Year's morning visit of the "Carrier Boy" with his address. "John has been faithful in the discharge of his duty during the past year, and through sunshine, mud and rain he has been at his post. As the proceeds of the Address are *entirely* his own, we speak for him an unusually large supply of QUARTERS."

On December 27, 1866, the *Herald* noted that "John" would make his usual friendly call on New Year's Day and

⁴¹ *Davenport Gazette*, January 1, 1852. On December 31, 1859, the *Sioux City Register* announced that its "devils" would be seen "bobbin 'round" after "dollars, half dollars, quarters, &c.". It added a "P. S." that "country produce, dry hides, furs, tanglefoot whiskey" would not be taken.

hoped that those who felt themselves "under obligations to the Commodore" would discharge that debt in "postal currency or — specie." John was still carrying the *Oskaloosa Herald* as 1868 loomed in view. After pointing out that John had been guilty of very few omissions, the editor declared: "Fifty-two times within the year he has made his Thursday morning call on our city subscribers, through sunshine and shadow, hail, rain, snow and wind, for which he will receive — just what you may think it worth to bring the HERALD to your doors for so long a time. That you are generous and appreciative of honest labor we have good reason to know. John believes he will receive his reward. He will not be mistaken."⁴²

Early editors recognized that the printer's devil was poorly paid. "Our carrier, poor devil!" declared the editor of the *Iowa Standard* on January 8, 1841, "has been compelled to forego the pleasures, as well as the profits arising from the distribution of what is called the 'CARRIER'S ADDRESS'. In the early part of last week, our carrier started in pursuit of a 'poet', one who could reduce his ideas of the doings of the past, of the present and his anticipations of the future, into jingles. One would be inclined to think that 'poets' were numerous in this land, and that there would be no difficulty in ferreting out one; but to our great surprise! on New Year's morning our devil came into the office with woe depicted upon his countenance, and informed us, that in all his rambles he had not been able to find but one 'poet', and that he had been 'retained' by the Locofoco devil. It was now the time that the address should be is-

⁴² *The Weekly Oskaloosa Herald*, December 29, 1864, December 28, 1865, December 27, 1866, December 26, 1867. As late as 1891 a Clinton editor reminded his readers that New Year's morning was the proper time to give a silver piece to the letter carriers for faithfully delivering mail all year. The suggestion apparently met with success for mail carriers "fared handsomely" through Clintonian hospitality.— *Clinton Weekly Age*, January 2, 9, 1891.

sued: and what was to be done? — we knew not! At length we concluded that we would write his address ourselves, and went hastily to work at it." The editor was just half-way through writing the address when the devil of the *Bloomington Herald* arrived with his address. One glance at the labors of a real poet caused the mortified editor of the *Iowa Standard* to consign his own efforts to the flames.

It was not until 1844 that the *Iowa Standard* printed a "CARRIER'S ADDRESS". The poetic outburst of "The Devil" that year filled the first column and a half on page one. It began as follows:

Good morning friends and patrons all,
 I've come to give a friendly call,
 And let you know you're all alive,
 And like to live, and still to thrive:
 That forty-four has come indeed,
 In spite of Miller and his creed.
 So wipe your eyes, and dry your tears,
 And throw away your silly fears;
 And cast about you thro' the winter,
 What means you have to pay the PRINTER.⁴³

It normally fell upon the newspaper editor to compose the "Carrier's Address" and needless to say the task sometimes went unexecuted. Perhaps as an excuse for his non-performance of this sacred duty a McGregor editor declared in 1857: "We have not seen a New Year's Address for many years that was not a rythmitical [sic] humbug, and as our *devil* has been having a whole week to play, he dont want to collect dimes from a good-natured public to continue the frolic." Two weeks later, however, the "Carrier Boy" of the McGregor paper thanked his brothers of the *Prairie du Chien Leader* and the *Galena Courier* for "neatly printed copies" of their New Year Addresses.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Iowa Standard* (Iowa City), January 4, 1844.

⁴⁴ *North Iowa Times* (McGregor), December 30, 1857, January 13, 1858.

On December 28, 1846, Iowa was admitted into the Union. It is natural that the Carrier's Address should consider such names as Henry Clay and James K. Polk, and such issues as the slavery question, the Mexican War, and the Oregon boundary dispute. On January 6, 1847, the *Iowa Standard* stressed the admission of Iowa into the Union and its relation to slavery.

From eastern hills, and western plains,
 Where'er true Freedom's genius reigns,
 The rising voice of Truth is heard,
 And millions by its might are stirr'd.
 It speaks a people's sense of wrong,
 To all the reckless Hireling throng,
 Who vilely have betrayed their trust,
 And sank our fair fame in the dust.
 Young Iowa hath caught the tone
 With added vigor of her own;
 And the first acts of our fair State,
 Will but abridge their narrow date,
 Who thought to bind her to the car
 Of "*Free-Trade*", *Slavery*, and *War*;
 Who thought their arrogant behest
 Would cause the mighty, free *North-West*,
 To cast its influence away,
 And sink in powerless decay,
 That *southern* wealth and pride might rise,
 And *Slavery* darken distant skies!

The Panic of 1857, the arrival of the telegraph, the triumph of the Republican Party through the election of Abraham Lincoln, the compilation of the *Revised Code of 1860*, these were but a few of the events alluded to in the "Carrier's Greeting" from the *Council Bluffs Nonpareil* as the year 1860 came to a close and the nation faced the grim realities of Civil War. The concluding stanzas read:

In Railroads we've slowly progressed;
 Our weather and crops have been fine;
 In health we've been happily blest;
 And in *politics* how we still shine!

As a Nation we've treated and feted
 The yellow-hued sons of Japan —
 How much we have gained or been cheated,
 The wise ones may tell — if they can.

To a young English Prince we've devoted
 Full many a smile and an hour;
 And, last but not least, we have voted,
 And called a true Statesman to power!

Now a small Southern State of "Fire-eaters,"
 Because they can't have their own way,
 Are classing themselves as "Seceders,"
 And will break up the Union, they say.

After pointing out that the *Nonpareil* would be delivered to readers each Saturday with the latest news, the "Address" concluded with the following pertinent and obvious suggestion:

'Tis the Carrier will bring it,
 He who offers you these rhymes;
 Wishing you here, a Happy New Year!
 And craving your "QUARTERS" and "DIMES"!⁴⁵

LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY

Abraham Lincoln's name is internationally known and respected. Kentucky prides herself as the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln. Indiana is equally proud that Lincoln spent fourteen years in the Hoosier State before reaching his majority. Illinois proudly claims Lincoln as a citizen

⁴⁵ *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, January 5, 1861. On January 5, 1865, a rival paper, the *Council Bluffs Bugle*, announced that its carrier had "realized about forty dollars" from his New Year's Address.

whose thirty years at New Salem and Springfield groomed him for the presidency. Between 1861 and 1865 the spotlight was focussed on Lincoln in the White House: directing the war as Commander-in-Chief, ably guiding his party through the maze of partisan politics and corruption bogging down the war effort, and carrying on American diplomacy in a highly successful manner.⁴⁶

In this kaleidoscopic picture of the Great Emancipator no mention is made of Iowa. It should be pointed out, however, that the early history of Iowa closely parallels the life of Lincoln; that Iowa strongly supported him in both presidential elections; and that our military contributions to the Civil War were generous and whole-hearted. Finally, Lincoln was intimately acquainted with many Iowans, visited the State on several occasions, owned Iowa land, and made decisions of far-reaching effect in the history of Iowa.

⁴⁶ Harry J. Lytle of Davenport, Iowa, a keen student and collector of Lincolniana, has compiled a list of the one hundred best books on Lincoln. The following volumes are suggested by Mr. Lytle as ranking in the top thirty in biography or as specialized studies: Paul M. Angle's *Here I Have Lived and New Letters and Papers of Lincoln*; Colin R. Ballard's *The Military Genius of Abraham Lincoln*; William E. Barton's *The Life of Abraham Lincoln, The Lineage of Lincoln, and The Soul of Abraham Lincoln*; Albert J. Beveridge's *Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858*; Lord Charnwood's *Abraham Lincoln*; William H. Herndon's *Herndon's Life of Lincoln*; Daniel Kilham Dodge's *Abraham Lincoln: The Evolution of His Literary Style*; M. L. Houser's *Abraham Lincoln, Student: His Books*; Elizabeth Keckley's *Behind the Scenes*; Joseph Fort Newton's *Lincoln and Herndon*; Nicolay and Hay's *Abraham Lincoln: A History, and Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*; Luther E. Robinson's *Abraham Lincoln as a Man of Letters*; Alonzo Rothschild's *Lincoln, Master of Men*; Carl Sandburg's *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*; Edwin Erle Sparks's *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858*; Ida M. Tarbell's *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*; Benjamin P. Thomas's *Lincoln's New Salem*; Gilbert A. Tracy's *Uncollected Letters of Abraham Lincoln*; Louis A. Warren's *Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood*; Henry C. Whitney's *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*; Albert A. Woldman's *Lawyer Lincoln*; John M. Zane's *The Legal Lincoln*. Students, librarians, and program chairmen for study clubs may find these useful in preparing papers on Lincoln.

The life of Abraham Lincoln⁴⁷ is intricately woven into the chronology of Iowa history. He was born in Kentucky in 1809, one year after the first American fort in Iowa was erected at present-day Fort Madison. The Lincoln family moved to Indiana in 1816, the very year that Fort Armstrong and Fort Crawford were erected on the eastern bank of the Mississippi opposite present-day Davenport and McGregor. Lincoln reached his majority and removed to Illinois in 1830, the year a group of sturdy miners drew up the Miners' Compact at Dubuque. During the Black Hawk War Lincoln served as captain of a company of Illinois volunteers.

Lincoln was admitted to the bar in 1836, the year Iowa became a part of the Territory of Wisconsin. When the capital of Illinois was moved to Springfield in 1837 Lincoln made that city his home, serving as a legislator in the new building designed by John Francis Rague, who likewise designed the Old Stone Capitol at Iowa City. Rague, incidentally, knew Stephen A. Douglas and Mary Todd and is said to have groomed Lincoln for a dance.⁴⁸

Lincoln served his only term in the National House of Representatives between 1847-1849, immediately following Iowa's admission into the Union in 1846. During the 1850's Lincoln was in close touch with James W. Grimes, the father of the Republican Party in Iowa, who was elected Senator from Iowa in 1858, while Lincoln lost the race for the same office to Stephen A. Douglas.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ See James G. Randall's excellent account of Abraham Lincoln in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. XI, pp. 242-259. The longest biographies of Americans in this monumental 20-volume set are those of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, each of which embraces approximately eighteen double column pages of text and references.

⁴⁸ Benj. F. Shambaugh's *The Old Stone Capitol Remembers*, pp. 108, 109.

⁴⁹ F. I. Herriott's *Iowa and Abraham Lincoln: Being Some Account of the Presidential Discussion and Party Preliminaries in Iowa: 1856-1860*; William Salter's *The Life of James W. Grimes*.

Leaving these historical parallels one might next examine the nature and extent of Iowa's support for Lincoln during those harrowing Civil War days. By 1860 Iowa was strongly Republican in politics, having elected Samuel J. Kirkwood to the governorship and sent James Harlan to the United States Senate. The State was equally strong in supporting Lincoln in the presidential election of 1860. When the smoke of battle cleared away it was found that 128,331 voters out of a population of 674,913 had cast the following votes for the four presidential aspirants:⁵⁰

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Popular Vote</i>	<i>Per Cent of Total</i>	<i>Electoral Vote</i>
Lincoln	Republican	70,409	54.8	4
Douglas	Democratic	55,111	42.9	0
Breckenridge	Democratic	1,048	0.8	0
Bell	Constitutional Union	1,763	1.4	0

In the election of 1864 the support of Iowa for Abraham Lincoln was even more strongly attested. Despite the war-weariness of a home front numbed by heavy losses, a total of 138,671 votes were cast. The final count in Iowa stood:⁵¹

<i>Candidate</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Popular Vote</i>	<i>Per Cent of Total</i>	<i>Electoral Vote</i>
Lincoln	Republican	89,075	64.2	8
McClellan	Democrat	49,596	35.8	0

Perhaps the most striking endorsement of Lincoln is attested in the vote of Iowa soldiers, 15,178 for Lincoln compared with 1,364 for McClellan. Surely no Commander-in-

⁵⁰ *Cyclopedia of American Government*, p. 29; O. A. Garretson's "A Lincoln Pole Raising" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. VI, pp. 109-116; Louis Pelzer's "The History of Political Parties in Iowa from 1857 to 1860" in the *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. VII, pp. 179-229, April, 1909. See also the bibliography on Lincoln and Iowa in Petersen's *A Reference Guide to Iowa History*, pp. 60, 76, 77.

⁵¹ *Cyclopedia of American Government*, p. 30.

Chief has ever received a warmer support from his fighting forces than did Abraham Lincoln in this eleven to one vote of confidence by Iowa soldiers during the campaign of 1864.

And it was not merely at the ballot box that Iowa supported Lincoln. Fully 78,059 men out of a population of 674,913 donned the Federal blue to "Preserve the Union". This represented half of the able-bodied men in Iowa. It was more soldiers than Washington commanded in his armies during the American Revolution. It represented a higher percentage of the total population than in World War I or World War II to date. The contribution is even more significant when one considers the handicaps of Iowa on the home front since the mechanization of agriculture was just in its infancy in 1861.⁵²

Nearly a score of Iowa regiments marched in the Grand Parade in Washington in April of 1865. They marched with their war-torn banners flying proudly before them but with sorrow in their hearts, for their beloved Commander-in-Chief was dead. The G. A. R. became a powerful political influence in the Hawkeye State and prior to 1900 most office holders were Civil War veterans.⁵³ Schools occasionally observed the birthday of the immortal Lincoln, but the Department of Public Instruction declared as late as 1908 that Patriot's Day was "usually observed on the anniversary of the birth of Washington or Lincoln."⁵⁴

⁵² John E. Briggs's "The Enlistment of Iowa Troops During the Civil War" in *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. XV, pp. 323-392; Charles Aldrich's "Voting with the Soldiers in 1864" in *The Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. VI, pp. 618-623; Edward M. Benton's "Soldier Voting in Iowa" in *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. XXIX, pp. 27-41.

⁵³ Jacob A. Swisher's *The Iowa Department of the Grand Army of the Republic*, pp. 27-39; Cyrenus Cole's *Iowa Through the Years*, pp. 307-309.

⁵⁴ *Special Day Annual: 1908-1909*. These useful booklets were issued by the Department of Public Instruction of the State of Iowa. See the foreword by the Superintendent of Public Instruction—John F. Riggs.

The approaching centennial anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln awakened the nation to the need of commemorating that day. When the Thirty-third General Assembly convened in Des Moines early in January, 1909, two Linn County men — Representative Ernest R. Moore of Cedar Rapids and Senator Willard C. Stuckslager of Lisbon — introduced bills almost simultaneously in the General Assembly to make Lincoln's birthday a legal holiday in Iowa. The bill passed both houses on January 22, 1909, and was signed by Governor Beryl F. Carroll on January 25th. It was the first bill adopted by the Thirty-third General Assembly, the first measure to reach the Governor's desk, and the first to receive his signature.

The Des Moines *Register and Leader* was pleased with the work of the lawmakers, pointing out that the Lincoln Centenary would be celebrated in the "letter as well as in the spirit" of the occasion. The editorial continued:

A new holiday is in harmony with the times. There will be more and more holidays as the wealth of the people increases and there is leisure for doing something besides the routine work of life. A legal holiday is a breathing place in the year for those who toil.

It is fortunate that this new holiday is associated inseparably with the memory of a typical self-made American. There is something in Lincoln's career that brings courage to the boys and girls who have a desperate chance in life. A day that recalls Lincoln is a day dedicated to renewed confidence in the possibilities of the "plain people."⁵⁵

Iowa newspapers editorialized on the importance of observing Lincoln's birthday in 1909. The Des Moines *Register and Leader* carried a Lincoln editorial almost every day and featured a daily column on "Lincoln Sayings". Communities told of special exercises. Elaborate plans were made at Iowa Falls culminating with a public gather-

⁵⁵ *The Register and Leader* (Des Moines), January 15, 21, 23, 1909; *Laws of Iowa*, 1909, Ch. 193.

ing in the evening at the Metropolitan Opera House.⁵⁶ The ceremonies at Des Moines were in many ways typical of all Iowa. State, county, and city affairs were suspended while banks and schools were closed. Eighty-two Civil War veterans (including Samuel H. M. Byers) appeared on the programs of twenty-seven Des Moines schools; nineteen East Des Moines schools were visited by other G. A. R. members. In all some fifteen thousand Des Moines children participated in the services commemorating the centennial anniversary of Lincoln's birth.

Perhaps the "most impressive" exercises were held by the Grand Army of the Republic in the Plymouth Congregational Church at Des Moines. A special service was held in the House Chamber of the State House where Rabbi E. E. Mannheimer offered prayer, Samuel H. M. Byers read an original poem, and Lafayette Young delivered an address on Abraham Lincoln. Des Moines negroes observed Lincoln's Birthday with special programs. The day was one of total abstinence. "Liquor, the consumption of which Lincoln fought, cannot be sold today without violation of the law", the Des Moines *Register and Leader* declared. "The saloons of Iowa are not only closed, but many resolutions have been passed by societies requesting the people to abstain from drinking. Patriotic banqueters have tabooed liquor on their tables because the sixteenth president was a total abstainer."⁵⁷

While Iowans were observing the centennial anniversary of Lincoln's birth, their attention was not diverted from

⁵⁶ *The Register and Leader* (Des Moines), January 21, 26-29, 1909. The graduates at Cedar Falls presented the school with a bronze plaque containing Lincoln's Gettysburg address. Classes were suspended at the University of Iowa where Colonel Charles A. Clarke of Cedar Rapids gave the principal address of the day. The literary societies of Fort Dodge held special programs in honor of Lincoln.

⁵⁷ *The Register and Leader* (Des Moines), February 11, 12, 13, 1909.

the national and international significance of the day as revealed through the columns of local newspapers.⁵⁸ The eyes of Iowa and the nation were naturally focussed on the services at Hodgenville, Kentucky, where President Theodore Roosevelt laid the cornerstone of the beautiful marble structure that houses the log cabin in which Lincoln was born and where he lived the first seven years of his life. The exercises at Springfield, Illinois, shared honors with the Hodgenville ceremonies for three nations paid tribute to Lincoln at Springfield — England was represented by Ambassador James Bryce, France by her Ambassador, Jules Jusserand, and the United States by William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska and Senator Jonathan P. Dolliver of Iowa. Dolliver was chosen to lay the American wreath at Lincoln's feet! Before 850 members of the Lincoln Centennial Association the silver-tongued orator from Iowa spoke on "Our Heroic Age", referring to that time when Lincoln and the statesmen who stood by his side walked without despair into the "chaos of civil strife", fought "the way of the nation through it, to lift up a spotless flag above it and, in the midst of the flame and the smoke of battle", created a true United States of America. In conclusion Dolliver declared:

You have built here a monument, strong and beautiful, which is to bear the name and perpetuate the service of Abraham Lincoln. We are about to build, at our capital yonder at Washington, a national monument that will in some dim kind of way illustrate our opinion of the service of this man; and when we get it built we will not put upon it any image of his person. It will not need any such memorial . . . for it will be the statue of a people, the memorial of a great nation.

And so his centennial has put into the hearts and into the minds

⁵⁸ *The Register and Leader* (Des Moines), February 12, 13, 1909. Data on the centennial celebration may be found in Douglas's *The American Book of Days*, pp. 85-91.

of unnumbered millions this fame which has grown in this half century until it has become the chiefest possession of the American people, and the most precious heritage that will be passed on to the generations that are to come.⁵⁹

Since 1909 the State of Iowa has faithfully cherished the birthday of Abraham Lincoln. It is well that we do so, for in the life of the "Great Emancipator" we have mirrored those qualities which have made America great. Lincoln the rail-splitter; Lincoln the flatboatman; Lincoln the surveyor; Lincoln the Indian fighter; Lincoln the storekeeper and postmaster; Lincoln the circuit-riding country lawyer and stump-speaking prairie politician — truly here was a man with experiences that could be understood by thousands of those sturdy Iowa pioneers engaged in transforming a vast wilderness into the richest agricultural State in the Union.

By the time of the Lincoln-Douglas debates few men were better known to Iowans than Abraham Lincoln — opponent of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill and "squatter sovereignty", critic of the Dred Scott decision, stalwart leader of the Republican Party in Illinois. During these formative years of the Republican Party he corresponded with James W. Grimes and other Iowans on political matters. During the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858 he crossed over to Burlington to make a brief speech in that town.⁶⁰

Although he lived in Illinois, Abraham Lincoln early manifested interest in the new State west of the Mississippi. In 1854 he entered a 40-acre tract in Tama County in accordance with a law granting land to veterans of the

⁵⁹ *Lincoln Centennial: Addresses Delivered at the Memorial Exercises Held at Springfield, Illinois, February 12, 1909*, pp. 52-59; *The Register and Leader* (Des Moines), February 12, 13, 1909.

⁶⁰ Salter's *The Life of James W. Grimes*, pp. 83, 84, 94, 95, 127, 128; Ben Hur Wilson's "Lincoln at Burlington" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. XXIV, pp. 313-322.

Black Hawk War. Two years later, when the allotment to veterans was increased, Lincoln entered 120 acres of land in Crawford County.⁶¹

During the Rock Island Bridge Case, when steamboat and railroad interests fought over the right to erect bridges across the Mississippi, it was Lincoln's brilliant mind which pointed out the inevitability of the westward movement and argued that it must not be thwarted by even so important a highway as the Mississippi. At this same time he loaned \$2500 to Norman B. Judd, attorney for the Rock Island railroad and his associate in the trial, later getting a quitclaim deed to seventeen lots in Council Bluffs and ten acres along the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad.⁶²

In 1859 Lincoln visited Council Bluffs and studied the prospects of this town, perhaps with a view to speculation, although he apparently decided not to invest. In 1862 he determined that Council Bluffs should be the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad—a far-reaching decision in Iowa transportation history. It was Lincoln, too, who warmly supported Annie Turner Wittenmyer when that gallant Iowa woman sought to establish diet kitchens in the Union Army hospitals during the Civil War. Later Lincoln entertained Mrs. Wittenmyer in the White House.⁶³

On February 12, 1909, J. N. Darling drew a Lincoln cartoon entitled "The Guiding Star of the Republic". Uncle

⁶¹ Harry E. Pratt's *The Personal Finances of Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 68, 69, 123, 137, 139. On February 19, 1909, the *Des Moines Register and Leader* contained a feature article telling how Peter F. Jepsen bought Lincoln's 120 acre farm from Robert Todd Lincoln for \$1,925 in 1892. The land was still unimproved in 1909 but Jepsen boasted he would not sell it for \$10,000.

⁶² "Lincoln and the Bridge Case" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. III, pp. 142-154.

⁶³ Pratt's *The Personal Finances of Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 77-79; E. Douglas Branch's "Council Bluffs in 1865" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. X, pp. 201, 202; Ruth A. Gallaher's "The Wittenmyer Diet Kitchens" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. XII, pp. 337-346.

Sam, backed by Columbia, stands at the pilot wheel guiding the "Ship of State" toward the ever-beckoning profile of Lincoln which shines resplendent in the starry firmament. Today that "Guiding Star" still shines brightly in the minds of Iowans.

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY

"This is the General's birthday", declared a Cambridge, Massachusetts, editor on February 22, 1776. "Only a few of his closest companions know anything about it. There has been no observation of the occasion, no salutes, no parading of the soldiers, no party at headquarters. The day has been like all others, with the General as attentive as ever to his many duties. If he has received gifts or congratulations we know nothing about them." Although he was only forty-four years old at that time, Washington had won the "high regard of his officers and men" in the short time he had been Commander-in-Chief. "He is a vigorous, stalwart person, with a rugged, pleasing, though careworn, countenance", the Cambridge dispatch continues. "Combine such a physique with his dignity of bearing, his seriousness of manner, his firmness of resolution and the many rare traits of mind and character which are his in such abundant measure, and we have the explanation of his hold upon the loyalty and affection of his soldiers."⁶⁴

In spite of the esteem and affection felt for the "father of his country", the idea of celebrating Washington's birthday took root slowly. The first known public observance occurred on February 22, 1778, when the band of the Fourth Continental Artillery serenaded Washington at his headquarters. Three years later the brilliant French commander, Rochambeau, invited the American officers to join the French officers at a dinner honoring their Commander-

⁶⁴ Jonathan Rawson's 1776: *A Day-by-Day Story*, pp. 60, 61.

in-Chief. The "old style" calendar was used in fixing the date of celebration and, since February 11 occurred on Sunday, General Rochambeau had postponed the celebration until the twelfth. It was many years before there was general agreement that February 22nd and not February 11th should be used as the anniversary date. Richmond claims to have celebrated the anniversary on February 11, 1782, while New York and Cambridge, Massachusetts, point to public celebrations on February 22, 1783.⁶⁵

Washington's birthday continued to be celebrated on both February 11th and February 22nd during the 1790's. Washington himself used the "old style" calendar for his last two birthdays. In his diary for February 12, 1798, he records: "Went with the family to a Ball in Alexa. [Alexandria, Va.] given by the Citizens of it and its vicinity in commemoration of the anniversary of my birthday." The last birthday entry was chronicled in his diary on February 11, 1799: "Went up to Alexandria to the celebration of my birthday. Many Manoeuvres were performed by the Uniform Corps, and an elegant Ball and Supper at Night." The observance of February 22 did not become generally accepted until after Washington's death on December 14, 1799.⁶⁶

Washington's birthday, in the early years, tended to be a Federalist celebration. When Thomas Jefferson came into office he ignored Washington's birthday and for a long time thereafter Jeffersonian Republicans and Jacksonian Democrats paid scant attention to it. The feeling that Washington's natal day provided an opportunity for partisan politics was recognized by many. "Washington's

⁶⁵ Douglas's *The American Book of Days*, pp. 129, 130.

⁶⁶ J. C. Fitzpatrick's *The Diaries of George Washington*, Vol. IV, pp. 252, 271, 298. February 11, 1798, fell on a Sunday, hence the celebration was postponed a day.

birthday", two Philadelphia historians record, "was an occasion for processions, orations and banquets, and it should have been a national holiday, in which all the people would have participated, were it not that the societies most prominently engaged in the celebration being entirely composed of Federalists, the Democrats came to consider the twenty-second of February as a political anniversary, and they abstained from participating in the ceremonies directed by their political opponents. This abstention extended even to the volunteer companies not in sympathy with the Federalists."⁶⁷

Since Iowa was being settled during the period when partisan politics reached its height and the bitterness was further accentuated by the abolitionist crusade, it is not surprising that our early Territorial and State legislators did not see fit to make Washington's birthday a legal holiday. A New England Democrat who fled to England in 1861 because he opposed abolition by force of arms gave this explanation for the increased attention to Washington:

The Birth Day of Washington, the commander-in-chief of the rebel colonies — the first President of the Federated States — was not kept with much enthusiasm until since the war of secession. The failure of the second rebellion made the first more glorious, and the memory of Washington became the more honoured, after Jefferson Davis and General Lee had been defeated. Before this, party politics had obscured the fame of the revolutionary leader, the arch rebel of the first secession. The democratic majority looked coldly upon the virtues and services of the Federalist leader. But when the second secession had been defeated, the victors revived the memory of the successful hero of the first, and Washington's birth day has since been celebrated with an enthusiasm scarcely less than that which greets the noisy anniversary of the rebellion of 1776.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Douglas's *The American Book of Days*, p. 130.

⁶⁸ Nichols's *Forty Years of American Life: 1821-1861*, p. 175.

In Iowa it was not until 1897 that Washington's birthday became our sixth legal holiday. The initiative in making Washington's birthday a legal holiday seems to have been taken by the Iowa Code Commission of 1897 which added February 22nd to our growing list of holidays. It became law when the General Assembly approved the *Code of 1897*. Washington's birthday is the only instance in Iowa of the establishment of a legal holiday during a revision of the code.⁶⁹

Although the parallels between the life of Washington and the history of Iowa are not as intimate as similar parallels drawn with the career of Lincoln they are in many respects just as interesting. Our first President was born in 1732, exactly a century before the Black Hawk War broke out. He was only three years old when Joseph Des Noyelles fought the first pitched battle between the red man and the white man on Iowa soil. The date of that battle — April 19, 1735 — was exactly forty years before the battle of Lexington and Concord!⁷⁰ No one then dreamed of a State named Iowa.

When Jonathan Carver reached Prairie du Chien in 1766, Washington was serving in the Virginia House of Burgesses. While Jean Marie Cardinal was giving his life at St. Louis in the cause of American independence in 1780, Washington was confronted with the treason of Benedict Arnold, the ignominious defeat at Camden, and the impotence of a bickering Continental Congress. At the time Julien Dubuque, the first permanent settler of Iowa, won permission from the Fox Indians to work the lead mines around Dubuque in 1788, George Washington was being chosen President of the United States. In 1796 Du-

⁶⁹ *Code of 1897*, Sec. 3053.

⁷⁰ John E. Briggs's "When Iowa Was Young" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. VI, pp. 117-127.

buque received the first Spanish land grant in Iowa and Washington delivered his Farewell Address. In 1799 Louis Honore Tesson received his Spanish land grant, the very year that marked the death of Washington. Thus, Iowa history was well under way during the life of George Washington.⁷¹

Although Washington's birthday did not become a legal holiday in Iowa until 1897 the citizens of this State paid frequent tribute to his memory. Washington County and its county seat were named in honor of our first President.⁷² Beautiful Mount Vernon on the Potomac is remembered by Mount Vernon in the Cedar Valley. Some forty-five townships in Iowa were named in honor of George Washington. His gallant generals are perpetuated in Greene, Fayette, Marion, Montgomery, Shelby, Warren, and Wayne counties.

But February 22nd was not the only date on which George Washington was honored in Iowa. His name was acclaimed at every Fourth of July celebration and was always included in the thirteen regular toasts proposed. It was invariably repeated in the volunteer toasts offered

⁷¹ John E. Briggs's "Two Connecticut Yankees" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. VII, pp. 15-29; William J. Petersen's "Jean Marie Cardinal" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. XII, pp. 414-420; William J. Petersen's "Julien Dubuque" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. XII, pp. 421-430; Ben Hur Wilson's "Tesson's Apple Orchard" in *The Palimpsest*, Vol. IV, pp. 121-131.

⁷² States and cities, counties, towns, and townships, streets, parks, and public squares, rivers and mountains, all have been named to perpetuate the memory of Washington. In his honor the National Capital was named; the city was laid out in 1791 and Washington himself laid the cornerstone in 1793. The State of Washington was admitted into the Union exactly a century after Washington was inaugurated President. Twenty-six cities and towns are named Washington while a dozen others bear the prefix Washington. There are towns named Wakefield to commemorate his birthplace. Sixteen cities and towns bear the name Mount Vernon.— See Leon C. Hill's *History and Legends of Place Names in Iowa*, pp. 21-23; list of towns and townships in the *Iowa Official Register*; and the post offices recorded in the *United States Postal Guide*.

on such patriotic occasions.⁷³ Editorial comment also dealt with the significance of Washington to National Independence. Thus, in 1857 a Dubuque editor urged citizens and foreigners alike to remember the part played by Washington and his "heroic subalterns" in breaking down forever the gates of "Colonial dependence" and unfurling the "flag of Liberty" along the Atlantic Coast. "Let us keep the day as Washington and his brave compeers would do, were they still among us — with minds unclouded and hearts patriotically warm. Then may the departed fathers of the Republic, beholding us from their high resting place, rejoice in the dignity of their descendants and their rational appreciation of the blessings bought by the blood of the heroic sleepers."⁷⁴

It was not merely the Fourth of July which might cause an Iowa editor to recall the birthday of Washington. When the South chose February 22nd for the inauguration of Jefferson Davis as President of the Confederacy newspapers throughout the North were indignant. An editorial in a Webster City paper branded as "Shameful" this affront to the hallowed name of Washington. "The ever to be remembered day, 22nd of February — the day which gave birth to that great and good man, George Washington, seems to have been chosen above all others in the Secession calendar for the inauguration of Jefferson Davis (that black hearted traitor) as President of the Southern Confederacy. It must have been a mournful ceremony, in view of the long line of disasters which have befallen the rebellion, and the sure signs of destruction which are impending over it."⁷⁵

⁷³ *The Dubuque Visitor*, July 13, 1836. This issue contains the first newspaper account of a Fourth of July celebration in Iowa and records both regular and volunteer toasts in memory of Washington.

⁷⁴ *Dubuque Daily Times*, July 3, 1857.

⁷⁵ *Hamilton Freeman*, March 8, 1862.

Iowa was unable to observe the centennial of Washington's birth in 1832 because permanent white settlement did not begin here until June 1, 1833. The Hawkeye State need feel no particular chagrin, however, for in 1832 many communities along the Atlantic seaboard (staid Boston included) which had hitherto taken no particular notice of the day held their first celebrations. The anniversary of Washington's birth in 1832 reached jubilee proportions in New York City.⁷⁶

A century later, however, Iowa joined the nation in the bicentennial of Washington's birth. This event was notable not only because of the magnitude of the celebration but also because it demonstrated the amazing growth of Iowa and the nation. In 1832, for example, the Black Hawk Purchase had not been opened to settlement. A century later Iowa had a population equal to that of the thirteen original colonies in 1776. In 1832 the first President west of the Alleghenies was elected; in 1932 the first President born west of the Mississippi was in the White House. It was Iowa-born Herbert Hoover, thirty-first President of the United States, who proclaimed the bicentennial for the first chief executive. President Hoover's proclamation read:

The happy opportunity has come to our generation to demonstrate our gratitude and our obligation to George Washington by fitting celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of his birth.

To contemplate his unselfish devotion to duty, his courage, his patience, his genius, his statesmanship and his accomplishments for his country and the world refreshes the spirit, the wisdom and the patriotism of our people.

Therefore, I, Herbert Hoover, President of the United States of America, acting in accord with the purposes of the Congress, do invite all our people to organize themselves throughout every community and every association to do honor to the memory of Wash-

⁷⁶ Douglas's *The American Book of Days*, pp. 131, 132.

ington, during the period from February 22 to Thanksgiving Day.⁷⁷

The bicentennial celebration began on Sunday, February 21st, when 212,159 church congregations in the United States heard special sermons on Washington. The official opening took place in Washington, D. C., on February 22nd with President Hoover addressing a joint session of the two houses of Congress. Then, from the east steps of the Capitol, President Hoover signalled for the nation to join in the celebration by commanding a chorus of 10,000 voices to sing "America". The chorus was conducted by Walter Damrosch and John Philip Sousa directed the combined Army, Navy, and Marine bands.⁷⁸

The bicentennial celebration in Iowa in 1932 was patterned after the national ceremonies. If the University of Pennsylvania could point back with commendable pride to regular Washington exercises dating back to 1794, Drake University could note with equal satisfaction her colorful Washington birthday program which had been observed since 1897. In church and in school, in newspaper and in public forums, the name of Washington stood out during the celebration of the bicentennial. Harvey Ingham, veteran Iowa editor, began a series of editorials on Washington beginning with the February 8th issue of the *Des Moines Register*. A cartoon history of the life of Washington by J. Carroll Mansfield was printed daily in numerous Iowa newspapers. Albert Bushnell Hart's article on Washington's foreign policy was read by thousands of Iowans; Rupert Hughes's interpretation of the character

⁷⁷ *Report of the United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission* (Complete and Final Report), Vol. V, p. 28.

⁷⁸ For accounts of celebrations in the United States see *The Des Moines Register*, February 9, 21, 1932; *The New International Yearbook*, 1932, pp. 142, 143, 838, 839; Lucretia Perry Osborn's *Washington Speaks for Himself*, p. XI.

of Washington was equally popular. Harriet C. Towner, Vice-Regent for Iowa of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, told how the women of the United States had banded together to restore beautiful Mount Vernon.

A committee of 125 persons had charge of the local celebration in Des Moines. More than four thousand attended the services at the Shrine Auditorium on Sunday, February 21st, and numerous other church services were held throughout the city. One committee arranged to have a tree planted on each of the 63 school grounds in Des Moines; it also planned to plant ten or twelve blocks of trees in the parkway on University Avenue. Of the more than 30,000,000 George Washington memorial trees planted throughout the nation, Iowa contributed her share. Movies, plays, and orations on the life of Washington formed a part of the general celebration; Iowa grade school, high school, and college students formed a generous cross-section of the more than 2,000,000 boys and girls who competed in essay and declamatory contests throughout the country.

As a governmental feature of the celebration a silver quarter featuring the Washington bicentennial was minted, the first time that a special coin was issued by our government. The Post Office Department issued a series of twelve commemorative stamps, each stamp bearing a likeness of George Washington at different periods of his life. The United States government also authorized the publication of *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources: 1745-1799*, under the editorship of Dr. John C. Fitzpatrick. Eight volumes were complete by the end of the year. The thirty-seventh and last volume appeared in 1940.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ *The Des Moines Register*, February 9, 21, 22, 1932; *The New International Yearbook*, 1932. See also the five volumes containing the history and reports compiled by the Bicentennial Commission.

Such were the celebrations, such the monuments and honors, such the heartfelt homage that a grateful people rendered the memory of Washington during the bicentennial year. The Bicentennial Commission spent \$1,190,364.11 on the celebration, a sum that was almost realized by the United States Post Office in profits from the sale of commemorative stamps. Harvey Ingham wisely observed, a birthday must be "outstanding" to win such national acclaim. Of what American, other than Washington, could it be said: "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen. . . . Pious, just, humane, temperate, and sincere; uniform, dignified, and commanding; his example was as edifying to all around him as were the effects of that example lasting."⁸⁰

In 1832 the renowned Daniel Webster declared at the commemorative exercises in Washington: "A hundred years hence, other disciples of Washington will celebrate his birth with no less of sincere admiration than we now commemorate it. When they shall meet, as we now meet, to do themselves and him that honor, so surely as they shall see the blue summits of his native mountains rise in the horizon, so surely as they shall behold the river on whose banks he lived, and on whose banks he rests, still flowing on toward the sea, so surely may they see, as we now see, the flag of the Union floating on top of the Capitol; and then, as now, may the sun in his course visit no land more free, more happy, more lovely, than this, our own country."

On February 22, 1932, Iowa-born Herbert Hoover, standing before a joint session of Congress, declared: "The true eulogy of Washington is this mighty Nation. He contributed more to its origins than any other man. The influence of his character and of his accomplishments has contributed

⁸⁰ *Report of the United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission, Vol. I, p. 34.*

to the building of human freedom and ordered liberty, not alone upon this continent but upon all continents. The part which he played in the creation of our institutions has brought daily harvest of happiness to hundreds of millions of humanity. The inspiration from his genius has lifted the vision of succeeding generations. The definitions of those policies in government which he fathered have stood the test of 150 years of strain and stress."⁸¹

MEMORIAL DAY

Sweetly with loving touch, mem'ry embalms them all,
Loyal, obedient, they answered duty's call.
All that man hath to give they at her mandate gave;
What tribute worthy to deck a soldier's grave?

Memorial Day was the fourth legal holiday to be established in Iowa. Although Christmas, New Year's and the Fourth of July had been recognized as early as 1862 the General Assembly took no further action with regard to legal holidays until 1880. As a consequence Memorial Day may be considered the first in a series of five holidays which have been set aside by Iowa legislatures between 1880 and 1920. Like many other holidays it had been observed in Iowa for many years before it was recognized by law.

The first formal observance of Memorial Day, or Decoration Day, as it was popularly called for many years, dates back to 1868. The idea however is old, for the Greeks and Romans decorated the graves of their dead. Actually the women of the South are known to have placed flowers on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers as early as 1863. On April 26, 1865, Southern women decorated the

⁸¹ In his address before the joint session President Hoover began by quoting the immortal Daniel Webster's tribute to Washington in 1832.— See *Report of the United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission*, Vol. V, p. 47.

graves of soldiers at Vicksburg where many of Iowa's heroic warriors laid down their lives.⁸² Not long after the Grand Army of the Republic was formed, in the spring of 1866, at Springfield, Illinois, that organization began considering the idea of a uniform date for the decoration of the graves of Union soldiers throughout the country. Credit for Memorial Day seems to belong to some unknown Union soldier who suggested the idea to Adjutant General Norton P. Chipman because the custom had prevailed in his native Germany. The latter passed the idea along to General John A. Logan, Commander-in-Chief of the G. A. R., who heartily approved the plan.⁸³

On May 5, 1868, General John A. Logan issued General Orders No. 11 from his Headquarters of the Grand Army of the Republic in Washington, D. C. No better explanation of the purpose and significance of Memorial Day can be found. It read as follows:

I. The 30th day of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defence of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet church-yard in the land. In this observance no form of ceremony is prescribed, but Posts and Comrades will in their own way arrange such fitting services and testimonials of respect as circumstances may permit.

We are organized, Comrades, as our Regulations tell us, for the purpose, among other things, "of preserving and strengthening those kind and fraternal feelings which have bound together the soldiers, sailors, and marines who united to suppress the late rebellion." What can aid more to assure this result than by cherishing tenderly the memory of our heroic dead, who made their breasts a barricade between our country and its foes. Their soldier lives

⁸² Douglas's *The American Book of Days*, pp. 293, 294.

⁸³ Swisher's *The Iowa Department of the Grand Army of the Republic*, pp. 23, 24. The G. A. R. has used the name Memorial Day rather than Decoration Day.

were the reveille of freedom to a race in chains, and their deaths the tattoo of rebellious tyranny in arms. We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance. All that the consecrated wealth and taste of the nation can add to their adornment and security, is but a fitting tribute to the memory of her slain defenders. Let no wanton foot tread rudely on such hallowed grounds. Let pleasant paths invite the coming and going of reverent visitors and fond mourners. Let no vandalism of avarice or neglect, no ravages of time testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten as a people the cost of a free and undivided Republic.

If other eyes grow dull, and other hands slack, and other hearts cold in the solemn trust, ours shall keep it well as long as the light and warmth of life remain to us.

Let us, then, at the time appointed gather around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with the choicest flowers of spring; let us raise above them the dear old flag they saved from dishonor; let us in this solemn presence renew our pledges to aid and assist those whom they have left among us a sacred charge upon a nation's gratitude, the soldier's and sailor's widow and orphan.

II. It is the purpose of the Commander-in-Chief to inaugurate this observance with the hope that it will be kept up from year to year while a survivor of the war remains to honor the memory of his departed Comrades. He earnestly desires the public press to call attention to this Order, and lend its friendly aid in bringing it to the notice of Comrades in all parts of the country in time for simultaneous compliance therewith.

III. Department Commanders will use every effort to make this Order effective.⁸⁴

Iowa cities and towns were quick to obey General Logan's order for a Memorial Day in 1868. On May 27th Post Commander Sam S. Sample announced in the *Weekly Gate City* that the Keokuk G. A. R. would join in the national exercises on May 30th. No other city in Iowa could observe Memorial Day more fittingly than the Gate City of Iowa. At Keokuk was located Camp Ellsworth, the

⁸⁴ *Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), May 20, 1868.

first military camp in the State. Here the First Iowa Infantry was mustered in and from here most of Iowa's troops embarked by steamboat for the South. Three other military camps were located at Keokuk during the Civil War. The thriving city at the foot of the Lower Rapids contributed two hundred commissioned officers to the bloody struggle. Samuel Ryan Curtis of Keokuk was one of four Iowa men to attain the high rank of Major General; Brigadier General William W. Belknap of Keokuk was destined to become Secretary of War in General U. S. Grant's cabinet in 1869.⁸⁵

It is not for camps and officers alone that Keokuk is singled out, for other Iowa cities contributed freely of their young manhood. It is because Keokuk became a great hospital center for wounded soldiers during the Civil War where thousands of sick and wounded were brought aboard such hospital boats as the *Express*, the *D. A. January*, the *Diligent*, the *Gladiator*, the *Sunnyside*, and many others.

When the steamboat *Decatur* docked at Keokuk in July of 1862 that city had opened its fourth hospital in a public school building. By the close of the year 1862 it was estimated that more than seven thousand men were being treated in Keokuk. The same scenes were reenacted in 1863; on December 24th the record showed that 7396 sick and wounded soldiers had been brought by steamboats from the South to Keokuk. Of these, 617 had already died. In all, six hospitals were ultimately opened in Keokuk.⁸⁶

Because of the large number of deaths the Federal government established a National Cemetery in Keokuk, the only place of its kind in Iowa. Here sleep over seven hun-

⁸⁵ Swisher's *Iowa in Times of War*, pp. 132-136; *Iowa: A Guide to the Hawkeye State*, pp. 277-280; *The History of Lee County, Iowa* (1880), pp. 552-589.

⁸⁶ William J. Petersen's *Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi*, pp. 185, 186.

dred of the "Boys in Blue" who gave their all to preserve the Union. A sprinkling of the "Boys in Grey" also sleep peacefully at Keokuk. The National Cemetery at Keokuk should always serve as a symbol for those thousands of Iowa's heroic dead who slumber far from home — at Pittsburg Landing and Vicksburg, at Corinth and Shiloh, and along the road that marked Sherman's March to the Sea.⁸⁷

The editor of the Keokuk *Gate City* strongly supported the observance of Memorial Day in 1868. "The military will attend in force", he declared. "Little girls from the various sabbath schools in the city will scatter the flowers. Our citizens are asked to join in the procession and the commemorative ceremony. It is purposed that everything shall be done decorously and in order. Further announcement will be made of the order of exercises. The event will appeal direct to the heart and willing minds of our people. Only a few short years separate the grievous, perilous past — which was the present when those graves were made — from us. . . . So remembering the glory, and merit, and brave endeavor of the soldier's life, of these men who sleep in our cemetery, and with devotion and love for the cause for which they fell, the citizens of Keokuk will at once gladly and sadly join in the ceremony to which the veteran soldiers of our city invite them."⁸⁸

The ceremony in Iowa's only National Cemetery in 1868 was impressive. Only a brief notice had been given and it was hardly to be expected that a large number of people would attend. The *Weekly Gate City* accordingly felt that Keokuk had "honored itself" as well as the Union soldiers buried in the cemetery by turning out in such large numbers on Memorial Day. The editor felt the "outpouring of

⁸⁷ *Harper's Encyclopedia of United States History* (1905), Vol. II, p. 74; *Iowa: A Guide to the Hawkeye State*, pp. 227-280.

⁸⁸ *Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), May 27, 1868.

people of all ages and conditions, the lengthy and imposing procession, the hearty spirit and success of the whole affair, was a glad surprise to everybody. Its spontaneity was the charm of it. 'Republics are ungrateful' has long been the aphorism of their enemies, and quoted with the tacit sanction of their friends. A self-governed people have been accused of ingratitude to their benefactors. The people of Keokuk cannot be accused of forgetfulness or of indifference towards her fallen soldiery — of the men who died for the life of the nation."

The Sabbath schools were nearly all represented, and the little folk were there, attended by their teachers. The members of the various societies were there, with the citizens coming afoot and in carriages. The excellent military band, the profusion of flags and banners, and the lavish display of flowers and evergreens combined to make a very colorful procession. "We heard no estimate of the number of people in it", the editor declared, "but it was one of the largest and best we have ever seen in Keokuk. A noticeable and worthy feature of it was the large attendance of soldiers, principally members of the Grand Army of the Republic."

Upon arriving at the cemetery, Post Commander Sam S. Sample gave the order to strew flowers upon the graves. The Reverend John Haines of the Chatham Square M. E. Church opened the services with prayer. The band played martial music, and the choir of the Congregational Church sang "America" and "The Star Spangled Banner". The inter-denominational character of the services is attested by the three ministers who participated in concluding the services. "Then it was evening", the *Gate City* records, "and the crowd left the dead sleeping under their flowers."⁸⁹

⁸⁹ *Weekly Gate City* (Keokuk), June 3, 1868.

Memorial Day continued to be observed in Iowa although with varying degrees of emphasis and for some years without the sanction of State law. When the Eighteenth General Assembly met at Des Moines in 1880 Representative Bruce T. Seaman of Scott County introduced a bill on January 22nd amending the Code of Iowa to make May 30th a legal holiday. The bill was passed by the House by a vote of 90 to 9. The Senate approved the same measure by a 40 to 1 vote and the bill was signed by Governor John H. Gear on March 12, 1880.⁹⁰

The State of Iowa was thirty-four years old in 1880, but its youth forms no measure of the magnitude of its sacrifice in the Civil War. In four years Iowa lost almost twice as many men killed in action or died of wounds as did the thirteen original colonies in the seven long years of the American Revolution! The sacrifices of the Hawkeye State were recognized by the *Iowa State Register* in the following editorial on May 29, 1880:

“This is Decoration Day — sacred to the heart of every lover of his country. It is an old theme, but one very dear to those who shouldered their muskets and tramped out the weary years that marked the bloody era of the great rebellion. It awakens memories of that great struggle that flood the soul with joy and with grief — joy that the struggle, dark, gloomy and nearly without hope at times, ended with a country saved from dismemberment; grief, at the death of the thousands of the men who died that we might enjoy the blessings of free government, under a great and prosperous nation. The memory of these brave souls, who made the supremest sacrifice known to man — of life itself — ought, and always will be treasured with holy patriotism by those who believe that this people should be a nation,

⁹⁰ *Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), January 22, 23, March 13, 16, 1880; *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1880, pp. 44, 45, 431, 463, 484; *Journal of the Senate*, 1880, pp. 35, 38, 201, 294, 322; *Laws of Iowa*, 1880, Ch. 31.

strong in all its attributes of power, freedom, and happiness of its people.”

After pointing out how Iowa had marshalled nearly eighty thousand men, who won the “plaudits of the world” by their “unflinching valor” at such battles as Wilson’s Creek, Donelson, Vicksburg, Shiloh, Corinth, Nashville, Lookout Mountain, and on Sherman’s March to the Sea, the editor continued: “The future Iowa people — those who shall come with centuries yet to follow — need never be downcast at the record of Iowa men who went forth in the brunt of the battle that wiped out forever the foul blot of human slavery and its attendant horrors. ‘Storied monuments and animated busts’ will arise to proclaim the valor and heroism of our Iowa Soldiers.”

Originally scheduled for Saturday, May 29th, the 1880 Decoration Day services at Des Moines had to be postponed until Sunday because of rain, but the program was carried out to the letter. The parade started promptly at two o’clock in the afternoon, the booming of the signal cannon being followed by the ringing of all the church bells in the city for twenty minutes. The order of procession was:

Kinsman Post
 East Side public schools
 Catholic schools
 West Side public schools
 Veteran Soldiers and Sailors’ Association
 Crocker Post
 Joe Hooker Post
 Military companies escorting the vehicles containing the thirty-eight little girls, representing the different States
 Fire companies and civic societies
 Citizens on foot
 Carriages containing the president and orators of the day, city council, decoration committee, etc., etc.
 Citizens in carriages

Bands were assigned their positions in the parade by the marshal. Upon arriving at the ground the following order of services was observed: decoration of graves by committee and friends; calling to order at the stand by the President of the Day, Colonel Conrad; prayer by Chaplain W. W. Thorpe; music by the band; music by the quartet; address by Chaplain D. R. Lucas; music by male quartet; address by Comrade Robert Afton; music by quartet; volunteer addresses; benediction.

Each family had been asked to contribute at least one bouquet but flowers were sent in such profusion that, in addition to supplying each grave with two wreaths and three bouquets, there were enough to allow flowers to be strewn over all.⁹¹

The pattern followed by Des Moines in 1880 is typical of the average memorial service in Iowa. The fact that Memorial Day became so strongly entrenched in the hearts of the people was in large measure due to the heavy sacrifices that Iowa had sustained in the "War Between the States", to the large number of widows and orphans who were left to mourn the dead, and to the strength of the G. A. R. in Iowa. In 1886, for example, there were about four hundred Civil War veterans living in the city of Keokuk alone.⁹²

In 1890 the Iowa Department of the Grand Army of the Republic reached its peak strength — 20,324 members in 435 Posts. In 1918 a total of 4700 comrades from 289 Posts visited 543 cemeteries to decorate 27,400 graves on Memorial Day. In 1935 only sixty-two members attended the

⁹¹ *Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), May 29, 30, 31, 1880.

⁹² *Keokuk Daily Constitution*, May 28, 29, 30, 31, 1886. The *Constitution* contained numerous items and many columns on Decoration Day. The list of veterans living in Keokuk and Jackson Township was printed in full. It shows the out-of-State ex-Federal soldiers with the company and regiment in which they served. Fully half the northern States are represented.

Sixty-first Annual Encampment in Waterloo.⁹³ When Memorial Day was observed in 1944 less than a score of veterans remained of the 79,000 Iowans who responded to the call of "Father Abraham" in those stirring Civil War years.⁹⁴

Memorial Day was inaugurated in 1868 as a distinctly northern holiday, the South observing its own Confederate Memorial Day on April 26th. In 1873 New York adopted "Decoration Day" as a public holiday, the first Northern State to do so. Rhode Island made the day a legal holiday in 1874, Vermont in 1876, New Hampshire in 1877, Wisconsin in 1879, and Iowa in 1880. Ohio and Massachusetts legalized Memorial Day in 1881. Since then it has gradually become a legal holiday in all the Northern States and in the Territories.⁹⁵

For many years after 1868 Memorial Day orators used the occasion to glorify the success of the Union over the Confederacy. Time has done much to mellow this bitter spirit — historians, writers, and poets have endeavored to deal with both sides of the question with sympathy and understanding. When sons of the men who had worn the Blue and Grey charged up San Juan Hill a new nation

⁹³ Swisher's *The Iowa Department of the Grand Army of the Republic*, pp. 38-46. In 1922 the Fifty-sixth National Encampment was held at Des Moines. Veterans from every State were among the twenty thousand who gathered in our Capital City that year. Major Samuel H. M. Byers, distinguished poet and author of *Iowa in War Times*, came all the way from Long Beach to attend the National Encampment in Des Moines. Although many thought this would be the "Last Great Encampment" Des Moines was destined to play host to the Seventy-eighth National Encampment in September of 1944. By that time only a handful of veterans were able to attend.—*The Des Moines Register*, September 9, 10, 11, 1944.

⁹⁴ *The Des Moines Register*, May 30, 31, 1944. The same was true throughout the Nation. Although 750,000 lined Riverside Drive in New York City to watch 25,000 Memorial Day marchers only two G. A. R. veterans were able to participate.—*New York Times*, May 31, 1944.

⁹⁵ Douglas's *The American Book of Days*, p. 296.

was forged out of the courage exhibited in that epic event. Early in the 20th century General John B. Gordon, a famous Confederate general, told Union veterans at St. Paul that "The reason it took you so long to defeat us was that we were Americans like yourselves."

In 1913, the whole nation thrilled when more than fifty thousand veterans of the Civil War met in a grand reunion at Gettysburg. "It was an army united in sentiment and united in fact, for the blue linked arms with the grey. They marched the dusty road together from the village; they sat down at the same mess tables, and they talked over the war before the campfires." The crowning event came when the survivors of Pickett's Charge marched through the wheat fields and up the hill to clasp the hands of the surviving members of the Union force who had held that position against them. General Sickles, the only corps commander of the Union Army at Gettysburg who was living in 1913, was the recipient of hundreds of salutes from the "Boys in Grey".⁹⁶

Since that memorable reunion at Gettysburg the United States has passed through the fiery cauldron of World War I and is now engaged in a life and death struggle in World War II. Memorial Day has taken on a wider, a deeper, and a more intimate meaning in Iowa and the Nation. Veterans of the Spanish-American War and the American Legion now bolster the thinning ranks of the G. A. R., holding aloft the Stars and Stripes as grateful tribute is paid to the memory of our soldier dead.

And now a host of new names must be entered on the obelisk of fame that will mark the military exploits of our Iowa warriors. At Pearl Harbor and Bataan, Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan, the Midway Islands and the Coral Sea, Kiska and Attu, in Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, and

⁹⁶ *Sioux City Journal*, July 1, 2, 3, 4, 1913.

Germany Iowans match their exploits with the heroes of old and many will pay the supreme price of freedom. By some divine alchemy the heroism of men becomes the heritage of the world. At no time is this more keenly felt than on Memorial Day.

Witness, for example, the memorial services held at Des Moines on September 10, 1944, when the Seventy-eighth National Encampment of the G. A. R. was held in the capital city of Iowa. Seated in the Coliseum with bowed heads, fourteen Union veterans paid reverent tribute not only to their departed comrades but to the heroic dead of World War II. Addressing his words directly to the sorrowing relatives and friends of those who had given their lives in Africa, in Europe, in Asia, and in the South Pacific, 95-year-old George A. Gay of Nashua, New Hampshire, declared: "This memorial is not only to our G. A. R. but it is for every citizen in this hall. You have lost your loved ones and we have lost ours. But they are not dead — they live and they walk beside us."⁹⁷

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
IOWA CITY IOWA

⁹⁷ *The Des Moines Register*, September 11, 1944. Iowans may take genuine pride in MacKinlay Kantor's *Happy Land* which deftly describes the Memorial Day spirit of a typical small Iowa town at the same time that it offers comfort to the bereaved.