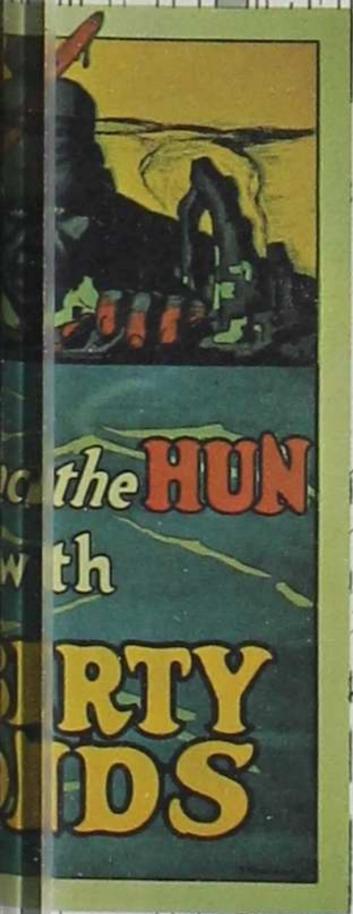


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VOLUME 59 NUMBER 6

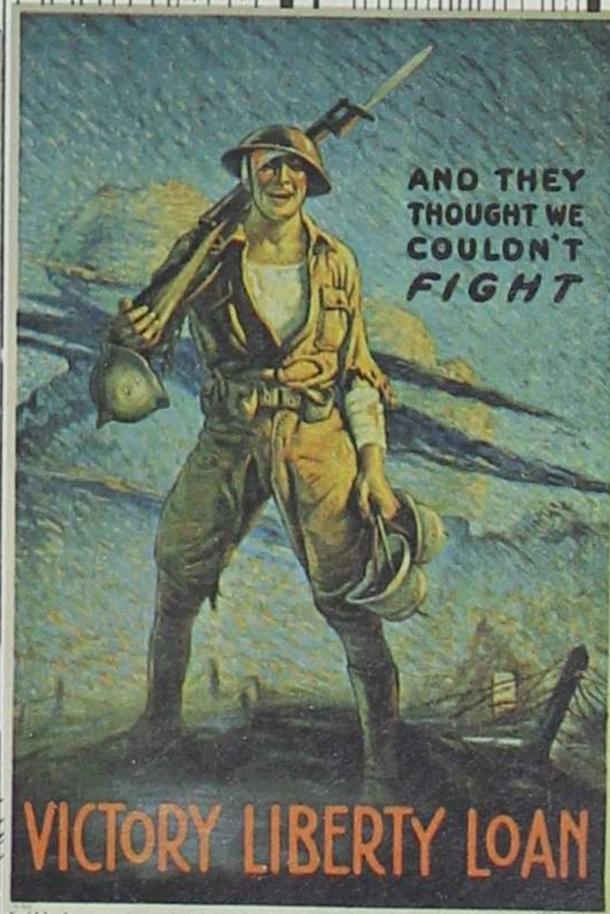
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The  
**PALIMPSEST**

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Peter T. Harstad, Director

VOLUME 59 NUMBER 6

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1978

Charles Phillips, Editor

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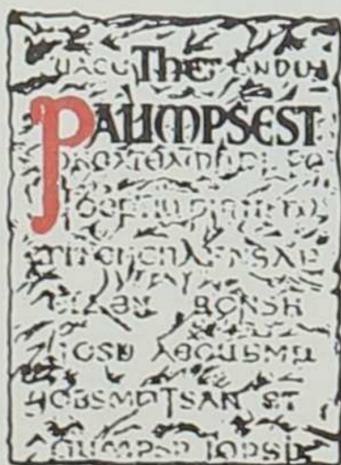
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Cover: Four World War I propaganda posters by (from right to left) C. Forsythe, Macinel Wright, F. Strothmann, and J. Daugherty. For a closer look at images born of the Great War, see page 176. (Background art by Backroom Graphics)



*The Meaning of the Palimpsest*

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete, and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

# THE FRAULEIN CHOOSES BACKWOODS IOWA



*Auguste von Schwartz (courtesy Wartburg College)*

by  
Elaine Main

It was more than the promise of adventure that lured a titled Russian lady to backwoods Iowa in 1862. Although Fraulein Auguste von Schwartz came from an aristocratic German family living in Russia, her early life was hard. This, perhaps, strengthened the religious commitment that would one day draw her to Iowa.

As a child, she was often ill and her family grew to think of her as "delicate." Her health caused her mother more care and trouble than her six sisters together. A year after Auguste's confirmation at age 20, her mother died, and the delicate young woman took over management of the house, including the care of her nine-year-old sister.

Then her father died. And the family broke up. The strain of both parents' deaths and the household responsibilities prompted Auguste's doctors and friends to urge a change of scenery. She decided to visit the woman who had been her closest childhood friend and who was now wife of the Governor of a Russian province called Tambov.

Auguste fit so easily into the von Gamaleya household that, as her visit extended into years, she began to act as her friend's lady-in-waiting. When the Governor was promoted to Imperial Minister, the von Gamaleyas moved to Petersburg, Auguste accompanying them. Here Auguste heard about Iowa through Dr. Sigmund Fritschel, who was on the faculty of a fledgling school called "Die Wartburg" in northeast Iowa. He was touring Europe to raise funds for the school, and in 1861 he visited German Lutherans living in Russia. By the time Professor Fritschel called at the von Gamaleya household, the Minister had died. Dr. Fritschel told his widow and

her friend Auguste that the school urgently needed a housemother: "someone to take over the direction of the housekeeping. The students need someone who expresses a motherly concern for them."

After Dr. Fritschel explained further, Frau von Gamaleya exclaimed: "Auguste, that would be just the position for you!" Dr. Fritschel took the comment as a joke.

"Oh, yes, Fraulein von Schwartz, if you were ten years younger, I'd immediately ask you to come along!" Auguste was now 53.

In fact, everyone laughed — and heartily, because Fritschel had described backwoods Wartburg in honest detail. Conditions were primitive, the surroundings deficient in civilized comforts and, compared with what a Russian noble woman was accustomed to, almost shabby. Auguste laughed too, but with a seriousness behind her laughter.

A few days later, she went to see Dr. Fritschel and announced that she would return with him to America and become the housemother of "Die Wartburg." Dr. Fritschel thought her unrealistic, reiterating the particulars of life at the backwoods mission college. Politely, at first, he attempted to talk her out of her idea.

"You're being fanatical," he said finally. "The housemother's job is difficult and earthy. It won't work, Fraulein von Schwartz; it won't work. I cannot accept your offer."

She answered seriously, "I have not offered myself to you, but to the Lord Jesus. You have no right to refuse me. The call you told me about I understand as the call of the Lord Jesus."

With a half year of his European tour remaining, Dr. Fritschel urged Auguste to reconsider her decision prayerfully.



Wartburg College at St. Sebald, near Strawberry Point, Iowa, ca. 1870 (courtesy Wartburg College)

**D**ie Wartburg” was located at St. Sebald near Strawberry Point. The college hadn’t been there long. Founded in Saginaw, Michigan in 1852 by Rev. Wilhelm Loehe, a German minister, it was to supply teachers and ministers for the influx of German Lutheran immigrants to America. After only one year, the college left Michigan because of doctrinal differences. It spent four years in Dubuque supported by the Lutheran Church’s Iowa Synod, but because the school was too expensive for Iowa pioneers and settlers to maintain, they suggested it move to a rural location, where students and teachers could contribute to their own support by growing food. So “Die Wartburg” became part of the small settlement a few miles northwest of Strawberry Point. On the “college farm” students and faculty shared chores such as drawing water, planting, and caring for cattle.

Dr. Fritschel had been realistic about

the unglamorous life in the New World. Upon his return to Neuendettelsau in Bavaria, he was astonished to learn that “a Russian lady” had preceded his arrival. It was Auguste — still determined to accompany him to America. He resigned himself to the belief that God was leading her to “Die Wartburg.”

But she also had to convince her friends that her emigration to America was wise. Even her Christian friends considered her decision mad. Her family, unable to understand her decision, despaired and tried at any cost to prevent her departure. Her sister traveled with her as far as Berlin, still hoping to dissuade her. Nevertheless, Auguste remained faithful to her plan and the long trip to Iowa began. The traveling party included Dr. Fritschel, Fraulein von Schwartz, and three young women intended as brides for clergymen already in America. Auguste began her mothering by chaperoning the three.

There was adventure even before the ship reached America. The five were sitting out on deck one evening when the cold night air forced them inside. They made their way through the engine room along a dark, narrow gangway. Suddenly, one of the young women shrieked: "Fraulein von Schwartz fell through!"

In the darkness, the rest of the group hadn't missed Auguste. Dr. Fritschel looked for her at the nearby stairs, but she was not there. He rushed to the upper deck to tell the first officer what they feared had happened. The man laughed, but hurried toward the stairs leading to the engine room.

The sight they found at the top of the stairs was a shock. The ship's doctor leaned over a figure lying on the floor. It was Auguste, unconscious.

With the doctor's help, she revived and explained what happened. As the party walked the gangway in the engine room, the ship suddenly lurched. Fraulein von Schwartz lost her grip and slid over the iron railing that separated the engine room from the boiler room's air vent. She fell into the vent, a distance of 45 feet, through three narrow overlapping hatches. She had not lost consciousness during her fall and remembered crying to Jesus for help.

Her cry was answered. Jesus, she said, commanded that she not strike the floor and, miraculously, she landed between two mattresses. Men working nearby hurried to help her. They picked her up, but she climbed up the iron ladder herself. It was only then, safe at the top, that she lapsed into unconsciousness.

The doctor pronounced her not seriously hurt, although rather badly scraped.

"If I had fallen to the right," she said, "I would be dead. Only the Savior preserved me. My life is not mine, but I'm placing it in

the service of Him who spared me."

When the ship at last arrived in New York, the five boarded a train for the first leg of their overland journey. Sleep was out of the question in the 50-seat coach occupied by Bohemian immigrants fresh from steerage. The injuries caused by her fall also began to give Auguste considerable pain. "I cannot tolerate standing or sitting stooped very long without severe pain in the back and chest," she wrote to a Russian friend. "I'm convinced, however, that the pain is superficial, possibly in the bones."

**T**he party ate their first American dinner during a stopover, waiting for an express train. Auguste was surprised to find that soup did not precede the main course, since soup was the mainstay of European meals. She thought that Americans wasted meat broth.

The next meal was also a surprise. The ladies stayed with a family while Dr. Fritschel attended to errands, and the hostess and her younger sister prepared supper for the unexpected guests in less than an hour. "And they have no real kitchen," Auguste reported. "There is only an iron cookstove, smaller than a lady's desk, with a couple of burners and a lower oven for baking bread." The little band had not eaten all day and eagerly consumed coffee, cooked cereal, bread, butter, and apple and peach compote.

Their hostess was a picture of friendliness and industry. She prepared beds for the guests in the bedroom, cheerfully sleeping with her little one in the main room of the house. The next morning she baked bread, matter-of-factly scrubbed the floor, and periodically — even with the baby at her breast — checked the bread in the oven and the coffee on the stove. Dr.

Fritschel's errands delayed the party for two days. By the time they left, the family had become their close friends.

The three young women in the party grew more excited as the company approached the Midwest and their future husbands. The group traveled all night to reach Galena, an Illinois town near the Iowa border. Here two of the brides were met by the grooms-to-be. The rest of the party stopped overnight but could not stay long enough to attend the double wedding the following day.

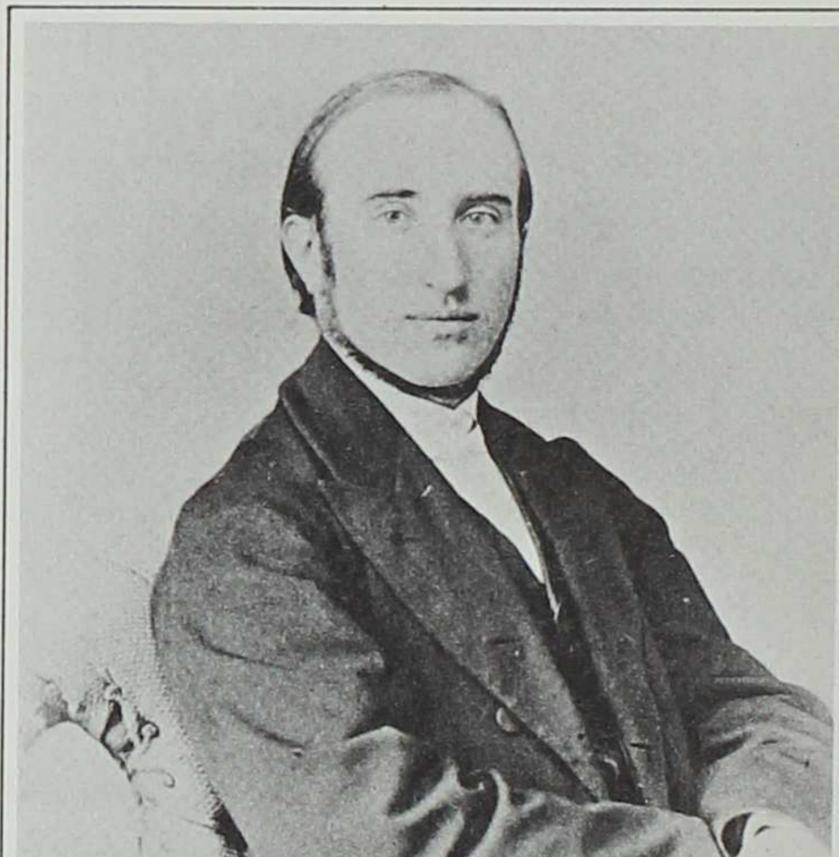
When the group was within a few hours of "Die Wartburg," two familiar faces greeted Dr. Fritschel: first, his brother Gottfried Fritschel, and then Rev. Georg Grossmann, director of "Die Wartburg." Then Fritschel disappeared into a building by the station.

He emerged with his wife and three children—whom he had wanted to greet privately, away from the station crowd.

"Come, dear Auguste," he called, "so that I can introduce you to my family." Mrs. Fritschel welcomed the Russian lady with great warmth. Soon both she and her husband were calling her "Tante Auguste."

The final leg of the trip was made by wagon. Tante Auguste said the wagon was like a little chair vehicle, quite different from European carriages. On the rear seat Dr. Fritschel's wife sat holding little Sigmund. Tante Auguste was beside her with Marie between her feet. The roads were so bad the passengers were in danger of bouncing out of the wagon, and Tante Auguste had to hold on to Mrs. Fritschel tightly. Gottfried Fritschel drove, and Dr. Fritschel sat in front with his brother's young namesake between his knees. Again and again he turned back to look at his dear wife.

That wagon, poor as it seemed to a Euro-



*Dr. Sigmund Fritschel, aged 28, about the time he solicited support for "Die Wartburg" from German Lutherans living in Russia (courtesy Wartburg College)*

pean lady, was luxurious compared to the other college vehicle, which Auguste likened to the long spring wagons used to transport beer bottles in Europe. For seats, boards were placed across the top of the wagon — three, four, or five, as many as were needed. "If you want luxury," Tante Auguste reported, "you cover them with an old robe."

Later, that is how she went to church or to a wedding.

As the group traveled through northeast Iowa, they were met by delegations from the college. The third groom came on horseback, and a student brought horses for Rev. Grossmann and Gottfried Fritschel.

The weather was warm, a gorgeous moon lighting the prairie. They saw moving lights in the distance and soon found themselves surrounded by 20 riders bearing torches. The young people, students from "Die Wartburg," sang with gusto. It was a greeting to their returning professor especially written for the occasion.

At Strawberry Point, people gathered



outside their homes and shouted welcomes to Dr. Fritschel. The group drove on, and soon the lights of Wartburg could be seen, more numerous and brighter than usual.

"Why are there so many lights?" Fritschel asked. "Are they going to burn down Die Wartburg for me?"

"Oh, we're just illuminating!" the students replied.

The torch parade halted in front of the college. It was adorned with hundreds of colored lanterns. The bell clanged, and the group was greeted with the hymn, "Now thank we all our God."

After the singing, Gottfried Fritschel ascended the college building's upper balcony to greet his brother with a poem — 41 verses long! He further surprised Tante Auguste by thanking the Lord that she had come to help them.

**D**ie Wartburg" and its agricultural enterprise were isolated. Indeed, the distance between it and "the world" was so great that life there was nearly monastic. The college was at the edge of a woods, overlooking endless and uncultivated prairie. If anyone strayed to "Die Wartburg" it was indeed an unusual event. The college building was a simple two-and-a-half-story structure. The students and faculty sat on homemade benches at homemade tables. Meals were basic. Coffee, tea, and other such "luxuries" were unknown. Students and faculty alike drank wheat "coffee" and ate fresh meat only once a year when hogs were butchered and salted.

Because it was the closest place to shop, Tante Auguste returned to Strawberry Point within the week. She reported a limited supply of merchandise, especially soup bowls. The lack of utensils hindered Tante Auguste's kitchen work. It was autumn—harvest time—and very busy. "The kitchen is almost without equipment," she said, "not *one* kitchen knife."

The Petersburg lady adapted to this primitive life. She and a maid took care of housekeeping, meals, washing, and gardening. During the day she often worked to the point of exhaustion. Yet at night she washed and mended clothes, and also engaged in correspondence. Letters she wrote to her Russian friends were as helpful to the college as her manual labors. She wrote convincingly, and her reports brought more financial support for the college.

Tante Auguste returned to Russia twice. Both times, relatives and friends tried to persuade her not to return to Iowa. Both times the housemother came back.

When Auguste was 60, after six years at "Die Wartburg," the college outgrew St. Sebald and moved to Galena, Illinois. Tante Auguste continued her work there. After seven more years, the college moved to Mendota, another Illinois city, where it was combined for a time with Wartburg Seminary. Because of her advancing age, Tante Auguste decided she could no longer serve as housemother, and—reluctantly—she turned in the keys to the house. But she continued to serve the college as best she could until her death two years later at 69.

□

#### Note on Sources

Fraulein von Schwartz's tale is compiled from correspondence recorded in early Lutheran publications. A letter by Dr. Sigmund Fritschel is in "The History of the Iowa Synod," *Wartburg Kalendar 1893* (Waverly, Iowa: Wartburg Publishing Company, 1893) 35-43. A letter by Gottfried Fritschel is published in *Kirchen-Blatt*, Sept. 15, 1877, and is entitled "Fraulein Auguste Sophia von Schwartz." Dr. William Rodemann, a member of the history faculty at Wartburg College, translated both articles from German.

A lengthy letter written by Fraulein von Schwartz is preserved in the archives of the American Lutheran Church in Dubuque and was located by the archivist, Rev. Robert Wiederaenders. It was translated by Rev. J. T. Meyer of Waverly.



*Chautauqua baptism (Culver Pictures)*

The Chautauqua Literary  
and  
Scientific Circle  
in  
Iowa,  
1880-1900

by  
Barry D. Cytron

Iowa's educational accomplishments are impressive. In 1900 it boasted the second highest literacy rate in the country and, in each succeeding year, the highest. The state's position in higher education is noteworthy: although it ranks 25th in population, it ranks 13th in number of institutions of higher learning. Today Iowa has 80 such institutions, many of which have long and noble traditions. There is another institution that has occupied a distinguished place in American education, an institution that has never had permanent walls, a salaried faculty, or a football team. Yet, in its prime, between 1878 and 1900, the Iowa affiliate of this institution conducted well over 200 different "classes." The institution is the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, (C.L.S.C.).

The C.L.S.C. was the product of the creative genius of John Vincent, one of the founders of the Chautauqua Assembly in New York State. In the summer of 1874, Vincent, a young Methodist minister from Chicago, and Lewis Miller, a wealthy industrialist, joined their talents to found a teacher's institute on the shores of Lake Chautauqua in southwestern New York. The three-week summer institute was designed to improve the Sunday School in America's denominational churches. Though the Sunday School work was never completely abandoned, studies in history, science, and literature soon overshadowed religious teachings. Vincent, who had never been able to attend college himself, explained the rationale for including secular studies in the curriculum: "Things secular," he wrote, "are under God's governance and are full of divine meanings."

The Assembly was a cultural as well as an educational success. An amphitheater was

erected and hundreds of speakers—politicians, authors, and famous educators—visited the lake-side camp. In a short time other institutes, patterned after the Assembly and adopting the name Chautauqua, sprang up across the country. Each had its own program and its own series of lectures and speakers. By the turn of the century, the name Chautauqua had become synonymous with traveling cultural and lecture forums—commercial ventures not officially tied to the first Chautauqua but whose goals were similar.

In 1878, four years after the first assembly, Vincent proposed a course of study that would make adult education even more accessible. Vincent was bothered by the educational gaps that existed from summer to summer and wished to create a program enabling summer students to continue their studies through the winter months. The C.L.S.C. was his answer. He introduced a set of prescribed readings that would extend over four years. The reader would study sophisticated, college-level material in history, literature, religion, and science, and on showing evidence of having completed the program (similar to that of an established college), was entitled to participate in graduation ceremonies, called "recognition day ceremonies," held on the grounds at Chautauqua.

The C.L.S.C. program soon outgrew its role as the winter supplement to the summer assemblies. Because most of the C.L.S.C. participants never visited the New York site, "Chautauqua" to them was the C.L.S.C. reading program. Approximately half the required reading for the four-year program was included in the books selected by the national directors of the C.L.S.C. In time, the C.L.S.C. officers commissioned various texts in several fields and assisted in their publication and dis-



The "Pavilion" where C.L.S.C. was organized, Chautauqua, New York, 1878 (courtesy Chautauqua Collection)

tribution. A monthly periodical, *The Chautauquan*, was initiated, which carried the remaining half of the year's assignments.

*The Chautauquan* was more than a journal of readings. In its early years, it included questions and answers on the articles and essays, hortatory sermons for Sunday morning inspirational reading, and news about the Chautauqua organization. Most members of the C.L.S.C. program formed home study groups. As these groups increased in popularity, more space in *The Chautauquan* was devoted to reporting on local circles. The magazine later underwent dramatic changes in format as it sought to keep its old subscribers and attract new ones. This effort at popularization failed and, in 1914, the magazine ceased publication.

An examination of the magazine reveals a phenomenon unique in the history of adult education in Iowa.

Greek and Roman history were favorite subjects for essays. There were multipart

series on British history and the English language, and scholars were invited to contribute articles on world literature. Diagrams accompanied academic discussions of physical and life sciences. Poetry was often included and analyses of poems constituted a standard feature of the magazine. The conscientious student could emerge from the four-year course of study with a comprehension equal to today's liberal arts graduate. This was the point. One of the early supporters of the C.L.S.C., Rev. Dr. A. A. Livermore, then president of the Unitarian Theological School, wrote to *The Chautauquan* commending the C.L.S.C. as "the university of the common people."

Evidently Dr. Livermore was not alone in believing that Chautauqua was "destined to do more for the perpetuation of our free institutions than many another time-honored school or college that limits its benefits to some privileged class, sex, color or section." Such enthusiasm seems to have pervaded every corner of the State of Iowa. Circles were formed from Council

Bluffs to Dubuque, and from Spirit Lake to Keokuk. A circle could number as few as two or three. In Hamburg two teachers comprised the town's circle. Jessup, Montezuma, Farley, and St. Ansgar also reported that they had but two members who nonetheless were committed to mastering the readings.

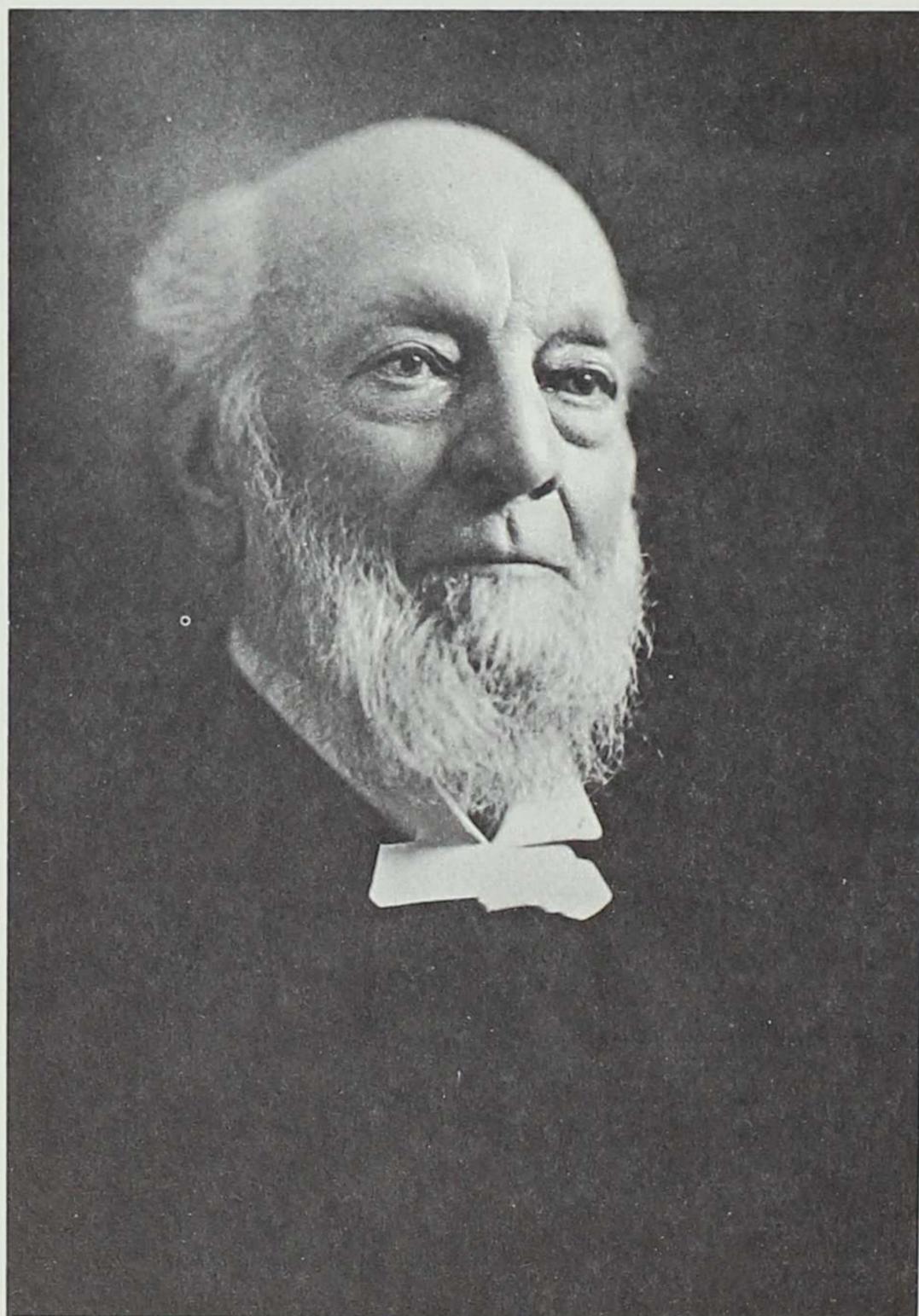
Some circles in larger communities placed limits on the number of members who could join. Stewart had two circles, one of 40, the other restricted to ten. The purpose of this differentiation was to determine whether the work could be accomplished more efficiently within a large or a small setting. Apparently there was some debate within the national Chautauqua movement about circle sizes, for the magazine commented that it was watching the Stewart, Iowa experiment with some interest. Circles of 20 and 30 were common. Some circles found themselves naturally divided on the basis of meeting times. Many communities had a circle that met in the afternoon, and another that convened in the evening.

Cedar Rapids had six circles, Oskaloosa ten and, in its heyday, Des Moines had 30 circles formed into two associations: the Chautauqua League and the Chautauqua Union. In some cases, circles in the same city conducted parallel reading programs. In others, a new circle was formed each year when a new "class" enrolled in the reading program. Some circles specialized in the material they chose for exploration. For example, in addition to seven regular circles in Oskaloosa pursuing the standard readings, there was also a Ladies Literature Circle, organized in 1882, which concentrated on American history; a Chautauqua Shakespeare Club devoted exclusively to

studying the works of the Bard; and an Oskaloosa Art League, which pursued the special Chautauqua art course.

Considering the Chautauqua's origins it is not surprising to find that pastors were often organizers and leaders of the circles. As Chautauqua grew in popularity, however, and as "secular" subjects became more common in the course of study, ecclesiastical direction yielded to lay leadership. The Storm Lake circle was presided over by a former teacher who had been on the faculty of the Kansas State Normal School. The Fairfield circle noted with pride that its leader was the wife of the president of Parsons College. The Muscatine circle president was described as "a very busy and able lawyer." Moreover, that same chapter noted that the circle was "composed of many of the most intelligent and active literary workers in the place, and embraces all professions and represents the best culture of the city." Such self-congratulatory statements were common in the earlier years, and were expected from any organization trying to secure and legitimize itself. Most groups enjoyed the support of their local newspaper. When the Chautauqua's reliance on study groups to discipline its participants was challenged, the Muscatine newspaper responded that "if a tree is to be known by its fruits, there can be [but] one opinion of an organization that is rearing so many youth of our land of both sexes in the cultivation of their mental powers and graces . . ."

There were circles that included both men and women. For the most part, women were more active. Many of the chapters identified themselves as exclusively feminine by including "Ladies" in their circle designation. Others were perforce exclusively feminine by virtue of having chosen to meet during the working day.



*Under John Vincent's direction Chautauqua's Literary and Scientific Circles flourished (courtesy Chautauqua Collection)*

In this respect, Iowa was following the pattern of the C.L.S.C. throughout the country, for approximately 60% of all participants were women.

The study format of an individual circle was decided by its members. Some groups were highly imaginative; some conducted sessions almost indistinguishable from a high school or college recitation class. A common format was for the leader

to quiz the others on the reading assignment. The questions and answers included in *The Chautauquan* were often the basis for the interrogation, though some circles chose to write their own questions.

The format inevitably depended on the leader's training, and the group's inclinations. The Storm Lake leader, who had taught at a Normal school, directed the sessions as if she were still teaching there: "Our class had been conducted like a well-

organized school, and every part of each lesson assigned has been clearly brought out by the individual recitation and general discussion."

That same circle purchased chemistry apparatus to conduct experiments, collected geological specimens in a course on the Iowa prairie, and went star-gazing during a series of astronomy sessions. The report of the Lyons, Iowa circle is reminiscent of a radio book club. During 1887-88 the Circle assembled 40 times and read aloud to each other "Hale's United States History, Beer's Literature, Hatfield's Physiology, and Wilkerson's German Literature."

Other circles were more informal, hoping to introduce their members to great literature through drama and impersonation. The Washington, Iowa circle spent a year studying Longfellow. To generate enthusiasm, various members would dress in the costumes of Miles Standish and Priscilla and, at one session, the leader appeared outfitted as "Snowwhite Buck." When the Shenandoah circle devoted itself to the writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe, members dressed as "Uncle Tom," the "Old-Town Folks," and "Mr. and Mrs. Stowe." The *Des Moines Register* of February 24, 1883 reported a meeting of the Prospect Park circle that included such famous "guests" as "the illustrious Benjamin Franklin, the handsome Mrs. Polk and the venerable mother of Washington."

Field trips figured in the agenda of several of the circles. The Clinton group traveled to Chicago to complete its astronomy studies with a visit to an observatory. The Dunlap circle traveled to New Orleans, hoping to expand its understanding of European culture by attending the exposition there. Other groups created their own exotic atmosphere. Evenings de-

voted to exploring the sights of London and Paris were common. Perhaps in response to the emphasis of *The Chautauquan* on Greek civilization, Iowa circles spent more time studying Greek culture than any other. Architecture, poetry, tragedy, philosophy, politics—all were explored repeatedly by circles throughout the state. The Attica group devoted a year to studying Greek politics. Storm Lake assigned Homer's *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* for summer reading. The Rockford group concluded its



The "Chautauqua idea" is an idea embracing many nations developed through years in many forms, initiated and developed through personal thought, experience and conversation by Lewis Miller & J. Vincent. The question of personal prominence or priority as to the original elements + plan is forever postponed. The two claim joint ownership + fellowship, and no real partition of the one shall by our permission be introduced without

recognition of the other - that we may stand and abide as brothers, with a perfect mutual understanding + a spirit of love which shall not allow alienation or even difference between us.

Lewis Miller  
J. Vincent  
Jan. 1899.

A post-card letter from Lewis Miller (left) and John Vincent (right), founders of Chautauqua (courtesy Chautauqua Collection)



C.L.S.C. class of 1882 photographed in 1895 (courtesy Chautauqua Collection)

study of Greek culture with a social event that included a Greek symposium, which the local newspaper said “was given at the elegant home of one of the members, costumes, decorations, and menu all being typically and classically Grecian in Character.”

Many of the groups observed the special memorial days designated by the national C.L.S.C. movement. The anniversaries of Milton, Shakespeare, and Longfellow appear to have been most often celebrated by local chapters, though the Anamosa chapter took the liberty of expanding the number of memorial days to include special learning observances of Hawthorne, Holmes, Scott, Byron, Bronte, and Martineau. Observances of these special days were elaborate and often involved a dozen or more participants. The *Des Moines Register* of Thursday, April 24, 1884 reported on the meeting of the Des Moines Chautauqua class detailing the program, which included an essay on the life of Shakespeare, several readings from his works

interspersed with musical selections, and concluded with a performance of the fourth act of *The Merchant of Venice*.

Circles served social as well as educational needs. Accounts suggest that social benefits increasingly outweighed the educational in many local circles. It should be noted that local circles attempted many noteworthy civic endeavors: beautification programs, improvement of jail facilities, and expansion of school programs were urged by C.L.S.C. members, who used the

#### Note on Sources

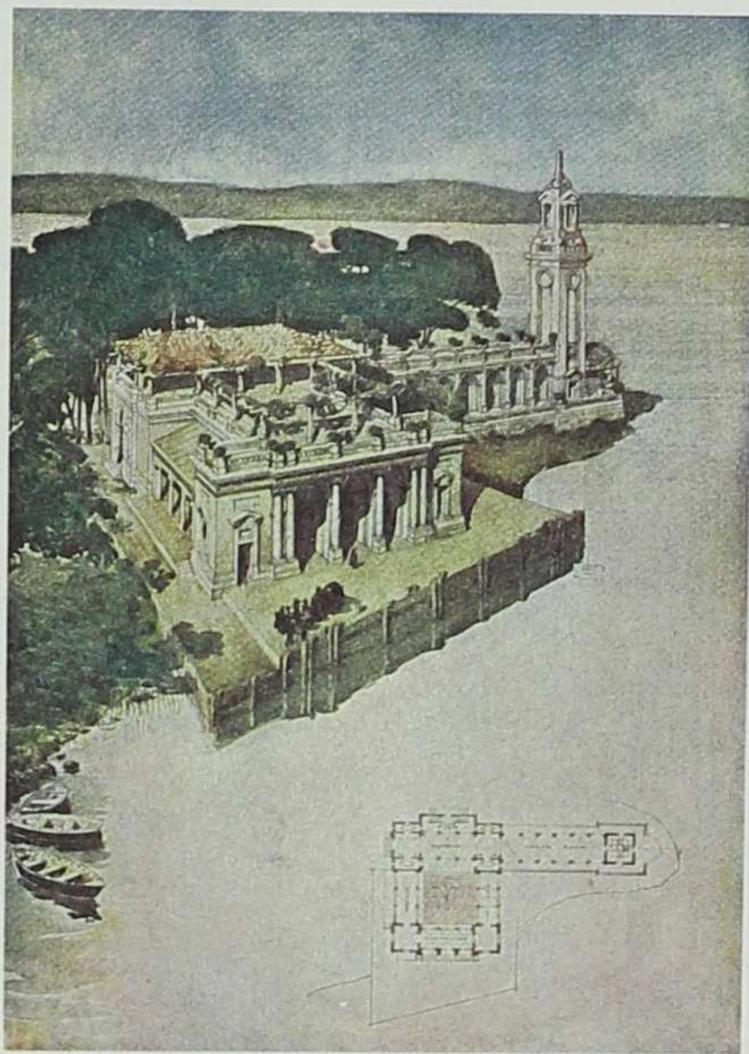
Most of the information on the membership and educational activities of the Iowa Chautauqua Circles was found in early issues of *The Chautauquan* (1882-90). Charles Kniker's *The Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle-1878-1914* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1969) was consulted for background information on the history of the C.L.S.C. Portions of Professor Kniker's work will be published in a commemorative volume, to be issued by the C.L.S.C. in 1978. Also helpful was "Chautauqua in Iowa" by Harrison John Thornton in the *Iowa Journal of History*, 50 (April, 1952) 99. The statistics on Iowa's literacy rate were provided by *Statistical Abstract of the United States-1976*.



editorial page and the city council agenda.

The C.L.S.C. of Humboldt, Iowa, one of the 15 circles still in existence nationally (and one of the oldest, having been founded in 1882), represents another civic dimension of the circles. Through the years, it has supported the local library by donating memorial books. Throughout the expanding frontier, it was often the local circle that held money-raising projects to buy a site for a library, or stocked fledgling libraries with their first volumes. The national organization recognized with pride the enthusiasm and vigor of the many circles in Iowa. The

November 1890 issue of *The Chautauquan* praised the Iowa circles: "The numerous reports of small but active circles in this State strongly suggest the saying, 'A little one shall become a thousand and a small one a strong nation.'" There may be a relationship between the ambitious accomplishments of the Iowa C.L.S.C. groups and of the distinguished place Iowa has occupied in national educational ratings. Whether or not there is a direct relationship, the activity and success of the C.L.S.C. in Iowa is a manifestation of the finest educational traditions of the State. □



Water-gate of Chautauqua in 1903 (Culver Pictures)

# Images of War

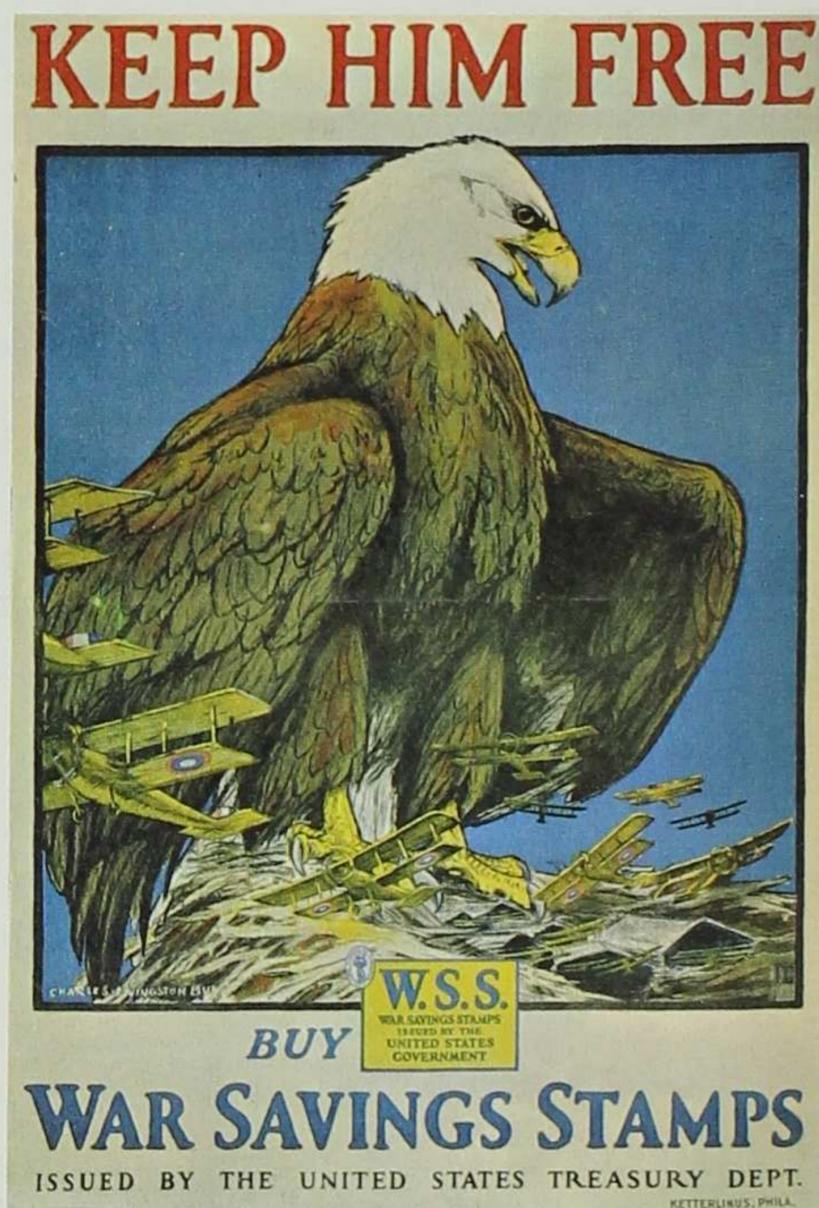
The posters reproduced for this article were donated to the Historical Society's Manuscript Collection by Ray Murray of Des Moines. The powerful symbols used in the three posters shown here operate directly upon the viewer's emotions. The huge eagle towering above Allied biplanes, produced by propagandist George Creel's Committee for Public Information, was drawn by Charles Livingston Bull. The image of the compassionate nurse, such as this one drawn by W. B. King, made an effective appeal for support from the home front. The triumphant American soldier became after the war an image sure to enlist support for any cause. The one here was painted by E. Fuhr.

In 1917 the world found itself still at war. Very little had been accomplished by the four-year carnage but the invention of a new and disenchanting "weapon"—the trench. Europe had machine-gunned and gassed itself to a standstill. Into this "Great War," Woodrow Wilson dragged his anxious and still wary people, trying desperately to convince his ethnic minorities and his embittered intellectuals that he had the best of intentions, the holiest of purposes. Without radio or television, with only an infant and mute film industry, Wilson's government had to rely primarily on the printed word—and the painted poster.

The poster was then a major device—perhaps *the* major device—of mass communication. Cheap and familiar, packing

an emotional wallop newspapers only dreamed about, it was a medium of some artistic pretension, widely accepted by the public at large. Americans, like almost everyone else, had joined the ballyhoo for *art nouveau* posters in the 1890s, perusing the pages of *Harpers Magazine* and *The Century* for commissioned work from Edmund Penfield, William H. Bradley, Maxfield Parrish, while their fellow enthusiasts in Paris slipped off with the latest Toulouse-Lautrec carefully sponged from a cafe wall. "Art" posters advanced the aesthetic and technical side of the medium, but they had very little immediate influence on the realistic and melodramatic images of the World War I propaganda posters.

Drawing on the tradition of popular





prints—of the kind found on calendars and post-card advertising—the propaganda poster used timely and vernacular images to develop something resembling universal archetypes—stern, father-like commanders and Uncle Sams; rugged, squarely handsome, heroic soldiers; compassionate, Madonna-like, motherly nurses; worn, lost, weeping war victims. And for the posters to sway the political sympathies of their audience as effectively as popular prints had been persuading and informing viewers since the mid 15th century, those images had to be something a Currier and Ives often was not—simple, even plain, and always blunt.

By the time America entered the war, off-set printing was well on the way to replacing the hand-made lithograph used for

posters since the '90s and on prints long before. Faster, cheaper, less cumbersome and more precise, using a photographic negative rather than etched metal or greased stone, the four-color process—essentially the same used here to reproduce these posters—allowed American poster-artists a brilliant, and sometimes distressing, range of tone and color value. Printed on the cheapest of paper-stocks in huge runs of 100,000, the posters reached an enormous audience in the American segment of the “Battle of the Fences.”

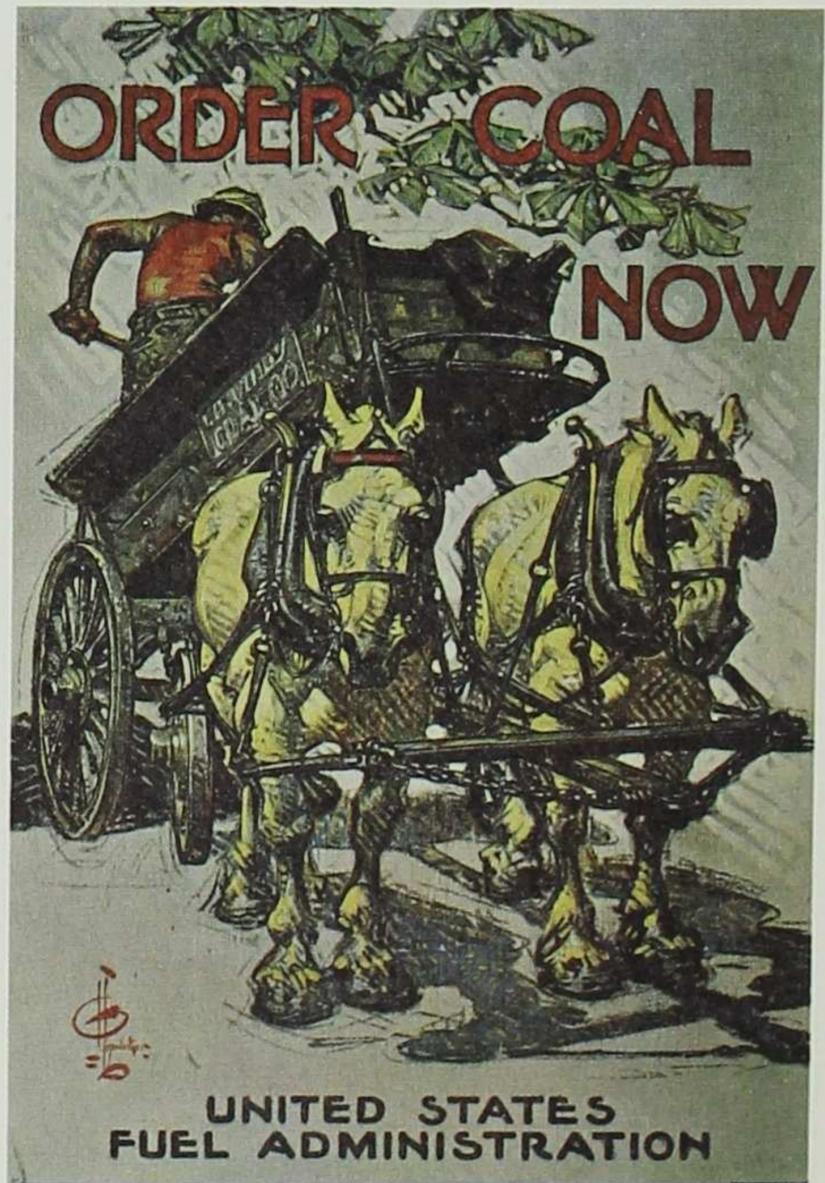
In America the artists usually came to the government through two means—the nation’s academies or Charles Dana Gibson’s Division of Pictorial Publicity — though there were other agencies, and the Navy had its own division. The network of uni-

versities and colleges in the United States rallied round the flag, organizing competitions and providing mass exposure for young artists. Gibson's outfit, consisting of experienced commercial artists, was a federal agency organized early in the war and produced by far the greater number of posters. The background of the artists and the propagandistic goal of the government does much to rebut the criticisms often leveled at the posters: they are academic, uniformly and spiritlessly realistic; they paint all too gay and carnival-like a picture of a dismal and deadly affair; they are factually inaccurate. Young, inexperienced painters and commercially successful illustrators working for cautious bureaucrats and politic generals to produce emotionally-charged images for a popular audience simply do not paint impressionistic masterpieces depicting without bias the horrors of war.

Conceding that the posters are not great art, we have no accurate way of measuring their effectiveness. But we do know they are valuable as historical documents. Maurice Rickards has argued in his *Posters of the First World War* that the posters appeared in marked phases forming a logical pattern. The pattern, he claims, followed the sequence of the war itself, mirroring the stages of the country's involvement. First there was the call for men and money, then the call for help for the fighting man and for comfort for the troops through sacrifice at home, and finally a call for help for the wounded, the orphan, the refugee.

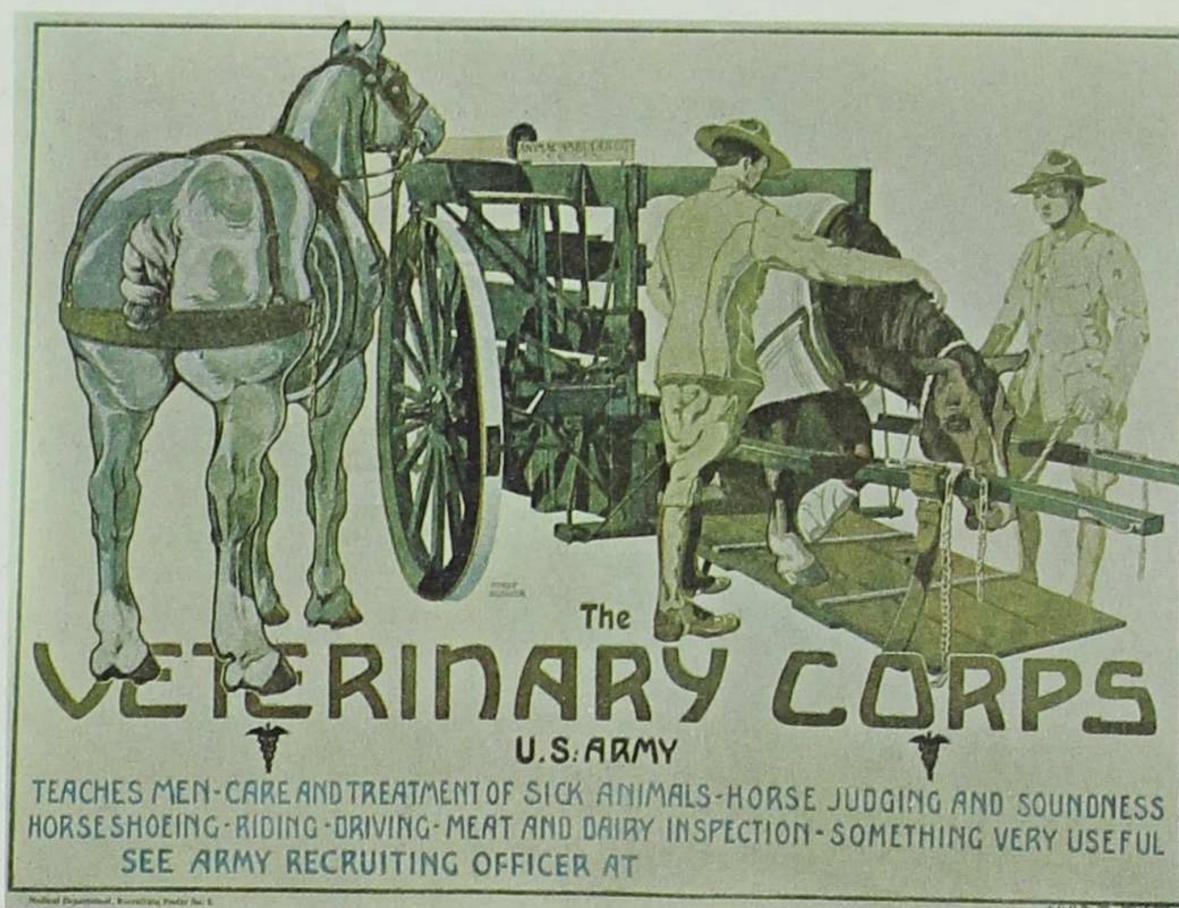
Similarly, the posters form an index to national character and the nature of a country's war commitment. The near frivolous and slightly unreal images of American posters have often been commented upon, as well as the importance women play in

American poster imagery. If nothing else, the posters provide a clue to the things that worried Woodrow Wilson's wartime government. And perhaps, just as television advertisements and sitcoms tell us something about the way Americans today would like to conceive of themselves, these posters provide us with an insight into the mind of the generation that went to war in order to end all wars. — C.P.

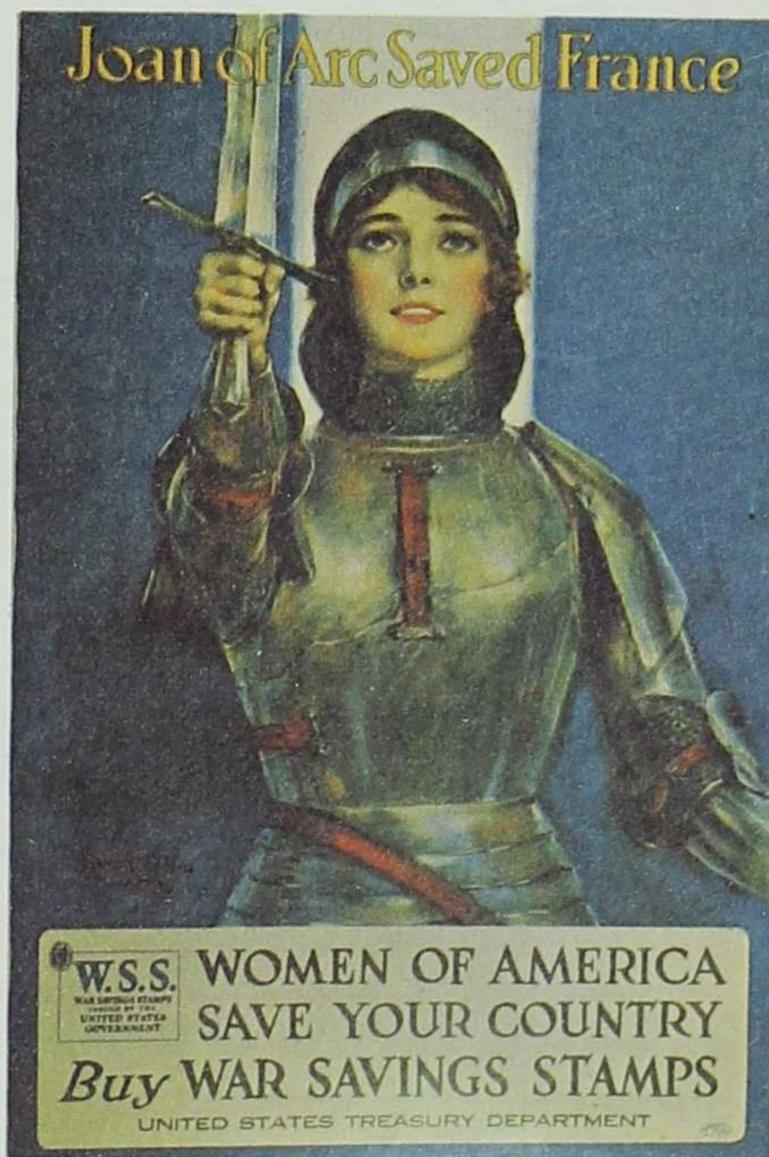
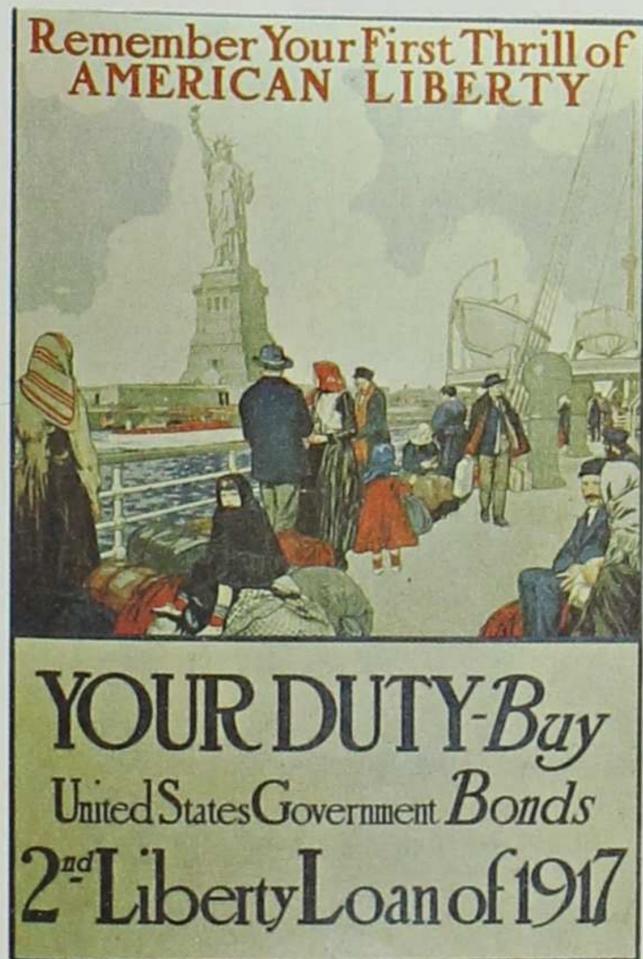


Support from the home front required careful consumption and conservation not only of food, but of scarce commodities such as coal and scrap iron. The artist here is J. C. Leyendecker.

recruitment was not limited to stern appeals to conscience and self-sacrifice. Work experience and job opportunity became attractive as selling points for the army that so efficiently conquered the Hun. Horst Schreck painted this poster.



Wilson's government had to convince a very heterogeneous audience and overlooked no opportunity to appeal to common concerns such as the immigrant experience and religious sentiment. Two examples are the anonymous poster below and H. Coffin's rendering of Saint Joan.



# CAN

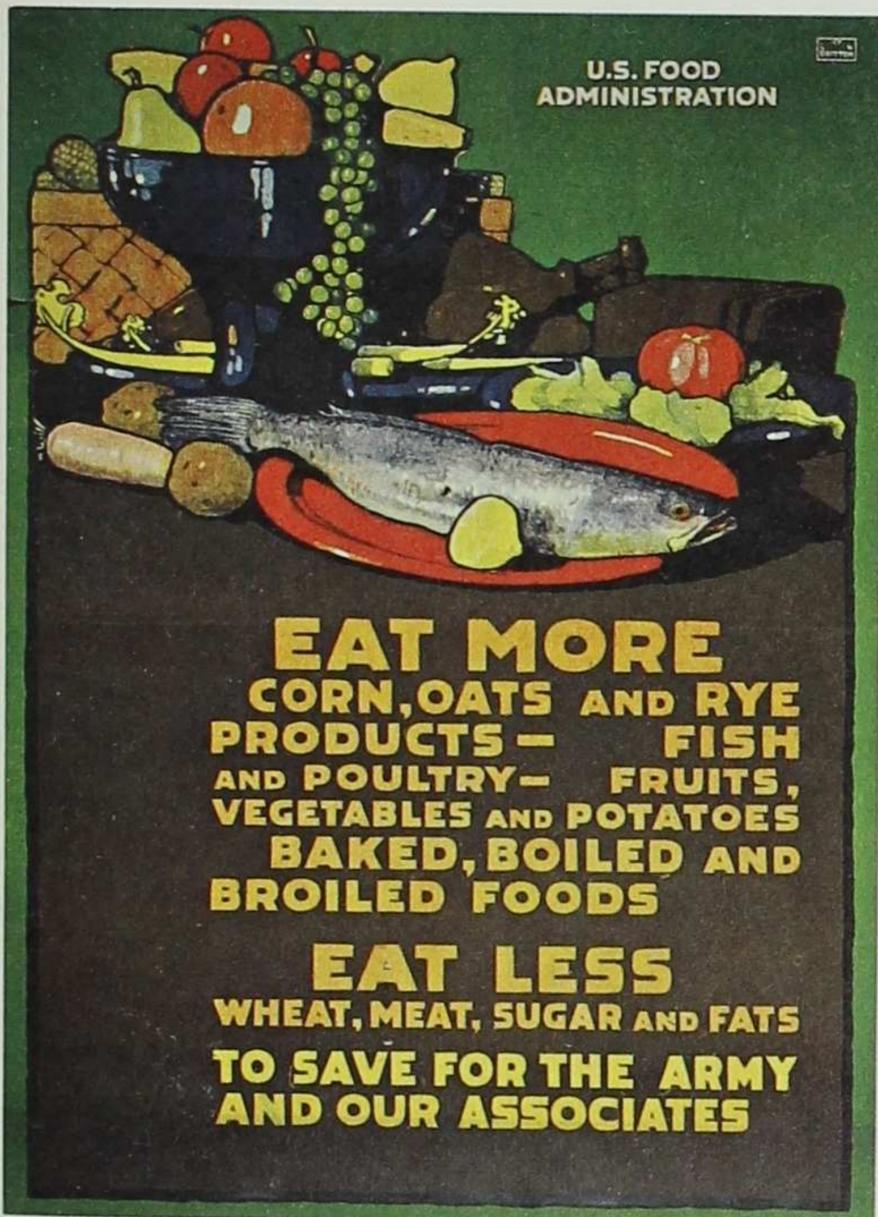
## Vegetables Fruit AND the Kaiser too



**Write for Free Book to  
National War Garden Commission  
WASHINGTON, D. C.**

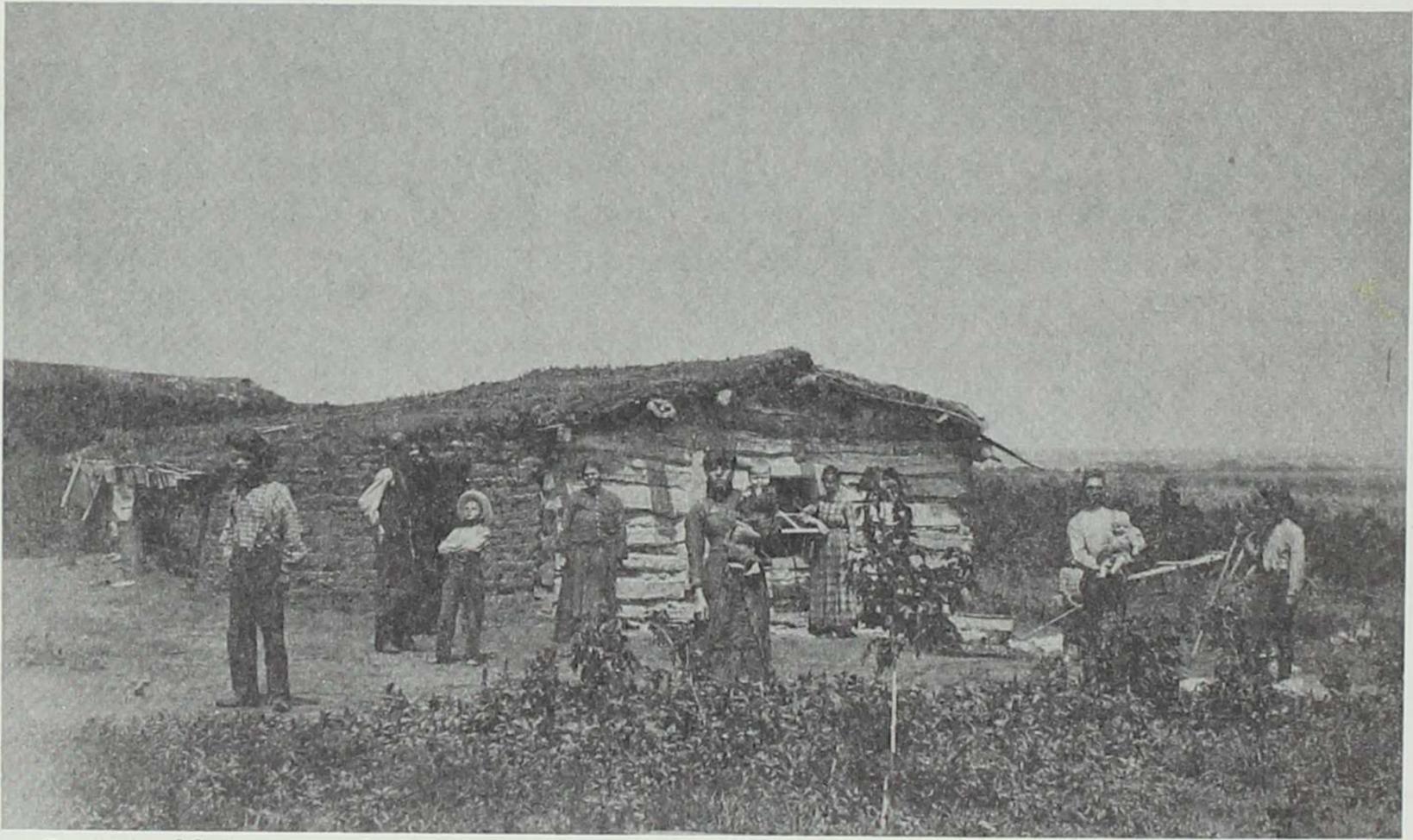
**Charles Lathrop Pack** ~ President

**P. S. Ridsdale** ~ Secretary



Food conservation was an integral part of the war relief effort. Herbert Hoover, as head of the U.S. Food Administration, was instrumental in mobilizing support for this program. Americans were encouraged to plant victory gardens, observe meatless Tuesdays and wheatless Wednesdays, and to build silos to store surplus grain. The four posters here show various ways food could serve as a weapon in "the war of the fences." The artists were J. Paul Verrees (opposing page), L. N. Britton (above), L. C. Clinker and M. J. Dwyer (above right), and an unknown commercial artist, whose poster was used by the Iowa State Council of National Defense (right: from the Metcalf Collection).





*Prairie sod house, typical of the time and region, similar to those made by early Sioux County settlers*

# A New Colony in Northwest Iowa

by

Nelson Nieuwenhuis



The first immigrants from the Netherlands to settle in Iowa arrived in 1847. They crossed the Atlantic in four three-masted sailing vessels, landing at Baltimore, Maryland in June. Led by Rev. Henry Peter Scholte, more than 800 immigrants made their weary way by rail and riverboat to St. Louis. After a month's rest there they proceeded to Marion County, Iowa, where they established a village, named Pella ("The City of Refuge") by Scholte.

Among this first group was a lad of 17 years named Henry Hospers, who came as advance agent for the Jan Hospers family. He traveled with the Gerrit Overkamps, staying with them until his family arrived in late August, 1849.

First employed as a school teacher, then a surveyor's assistant for a few years, Hospers finally took up real estate. Hospers prospered as an agent, and after marrying Cornelia Welle in 1850, he built a new home and office. He won the respect and admiration of his fellow townspeople, and they elected him to the office of alderman when Pella was incorporated in 1857. Purchasing the weekly Dutch newspaper, *Pella-Weekblad*, Hospers successfully campaigned for mayor in the mid-1860s.

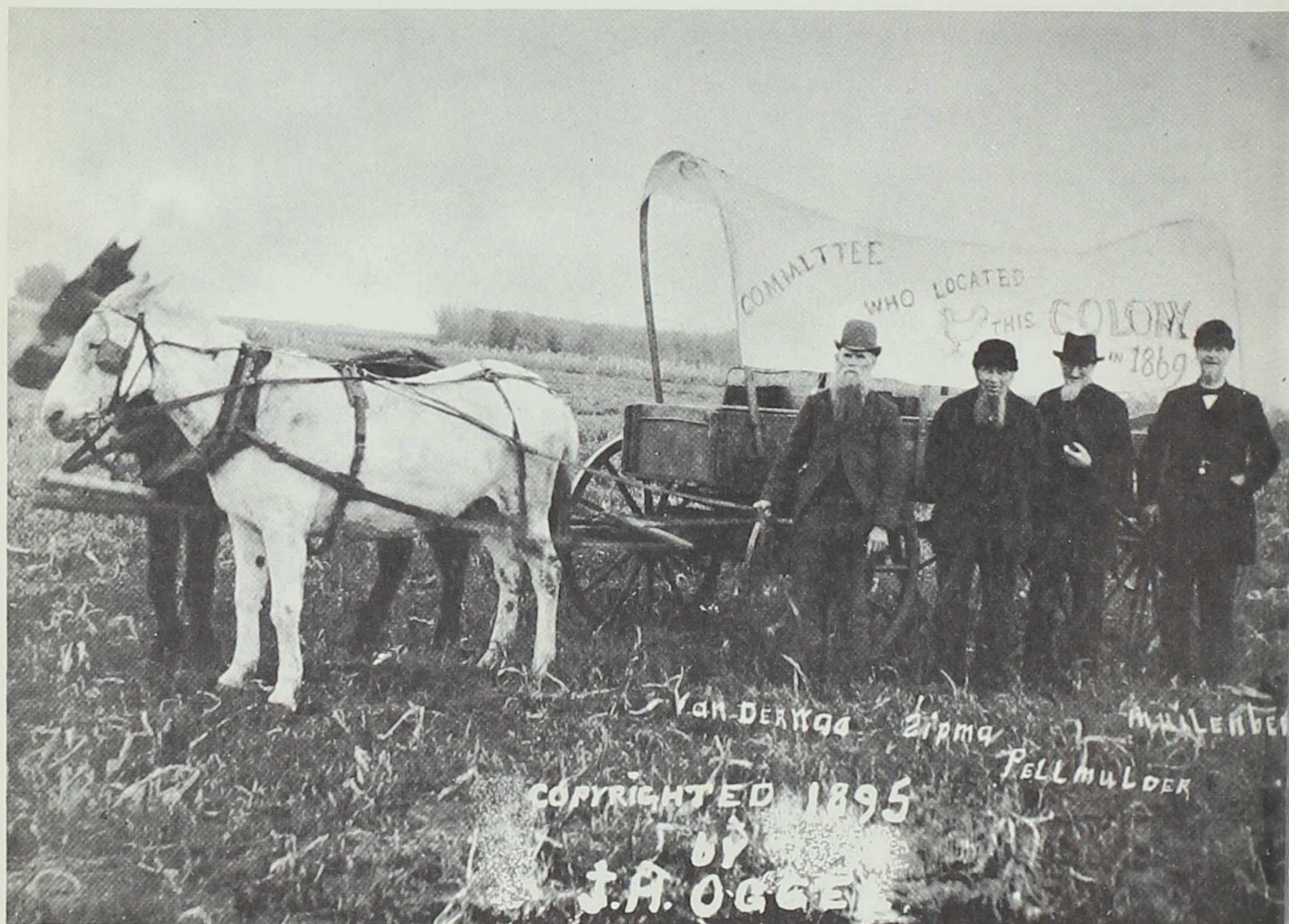
As early as the 1850s, while Dutch immigrants continued to stream into Pella, many townspeople realized that before long the area would be saturated, and they began to look for other spots with potential as settlements. On a business trip to St. Joseph, Missouri in 1860 Hospers saw long lines of covered wagons headed West, carrying families in search of cheap land. He talked to some of the men, and they

impressed him with their courage and their determination to make new homes in the West.

When he returned to Pella, Hospers talked to his friends about establishing another Dutch colony while government lands were still available. Many of them expressed an interest, but outbreak of the Civil War delayed definite plans for some years.

After the War interest revived. In the late 1860s, an immigrant association of 44 members sent a three-man committee to investigate conditions in Texas. However, while in New Orleans, the three men fell into the hands of a thief who stole all their money. Another association sent a few families to Kansas to found a settlement, but extreme drought conditions there forced the families back after only two years. A few families went to Oregon and Nebraska, but they, too, found conditions unsuitable.

In 1867, Jelle Pelmulder focused attention on Iowa once again when he wrote to land offices in the northwestern part of the state for lands. Hospers credits Pelmulder as "the first draftsman of the plan to settle a Dutch colony in northwestern Iowa." Meetings in Pella throughout the winter and spring of 1868-69 generated much interest in this plan, interest that Hospers helped to sustain and promote with heavy publicity in the *Pella-Weekblad*. As chairman of a committee to investigate land in northwestern Iowa, Hospers learned promising information from another Pella citizen, H. J. Van der Waa. For the past two years Van der Waa had rented land near Pella, selling a third of his crop each year to pay the rent. He and his wife had decided that Pella land prices were too costly for them to ever own their own farm, and Van der Waa wrote to W. S. Harlan, a



H. J. Van der Waa, S. A. Simpa, Jelle Pelmulder, and Hubert Muilenburg pose before the wagon they drove to investigate Storm Lake in 1869. The photograph was taken in 1895. (from The Orange City Centennial Book, 1970)

land agent near Storm Lake, to ask about availability of land in the northwest. When Harlan replied that homesteads were plentiful, Van der Waa went to Hospers' printing office to have bills of sale made up. He told Hospers of his discovery.

Hospers wrote to Harlan as well, and he, too, received an auspicious reply—one favorable enough, at least, for Hospers to call a meeting at his newspaper office. A large crowd gathered for the meeting and chose Van der Waa, S. A. Simpa, Hubert Muilenburg, and Jelle Pelmulder to investigate the Storm Lake area. The assembly unanimously passed a resolution to seek a

place for settlement that would provide an "abundance of cheap land and opportunity for agriculture on an extensive scale." The site should be large enough to form a community "compatible with our national character as Netherlanders, where Netherlanders may find a hospitable welcome."

Van der Waa offered the group his team and wagon for the journey, and the group agreed to pay him a dollar a day. On the morning of departure, Van der Waa traded his team of horses for fresh, young, never-harnessed mules, and spent the better part of two hours attaching the new team to his wagon. Finally he and the others managed

to get the mules harnessed, and the group set off "in quick time." (They had placed a covering over the light wagon and packed enough provisions to last them for the four-week journey.) Their route took them through Newton, Story City, and Webster City, to Fort Dodge, where they rested for a day or two. They traveled westward from there, following the stakes of the Iowa Falls and Sioux City Railroad (later taken over by the Illinois Central) to Storm Lake before pushing on to the small settlement of Cherokee. Here they rested for a day and learned that west of Cherokee was open and unoccupied country. Ten more miles west the Dutchmen stopped for a close look at the soil, sub-soil, drainage, and water-level. Satisfied, they agreed they had found an excellent spot for a colony. The land was good, and for miles in every direction they saw no sign of a settler's cabin.

The committee moved westward into Plymouth County, where they camped along the Floyd River at Melbourne. It was Sunday, May 9, 1869. The German settlers at Melbourne invited them to attend their worship service. The Dutchmen did not understand German, but their spirits were high, and they felt the minister delivered a good sermon.

The two-weeks' journey ended the next day in Sioux City. At the land office they notified the agents of their interest in land west of Cherokee. The land office told them land was available not only at Cherokee, but also in Sioux, Lyon, and O'Brien Counties. Because the group had no authority to sign for the land, they returned to Pella.

On June 1 the committee presented its report, and in glowing language favored settlement, adding that "[we] could not find words enough to describe the beauty of Northwestern Iowa, especially the neighborhood of Cherokee." At a meeting

in Pella later that month those seeking homesteads made their first declaration before a county clerk and signed applications. Homesteads would be distributed according to lot, and 60 men signed for shares in a townsite. The new settlers chose a name for the future town—"New Holland"—and one-third of the land on the townsite was granted to Hospers. Eighty-six men signed up for homesteads, and another 13 indicated their intention to buy additional lands. The future citizens of New Holland signed for over 18,000 acres at this meeting.

A second committee of Hospers, Leendert Van der Meer, Dirk Van den Box, and Van der Waa, was formed to make a definite selection of land for the colony and to secure the land in accordance with the national homestead and preemption laws. Authorized to determine a site for the town and do whatever was necessary to provide for the new colony, the committee hired Van der Waa at \$2.50 per day for the use of his team and wagon.

**H**enry Hospers took the train to Sioux City—a spur line of the Northwestern having reached that city the year before—while the other members of the committee traveled overland in Van der Waa's wagon. Hospers met them with bad news—land speculators had grabbed all the land in the Cherokee region after learning of the intentions of the Pella people.

The land officials told them, however, that both Sioux and Lyon Counties were still open for colonization. The group stocked up provisions, arranged for a surveyor to accompany them, and started out early the next morning for Sioux County. Accompanied by Wynn, the surveyor, the

committee traveled along the wagon road from Sioux City as far north as Le Mars, then nothing more than a store and a few homes. The next morning the five men followed the course of the Floyd River to a farmhouse near Seney, where they spent the night. Next morning they came to a point between the border of Plymouth and Sioux Counties, the southern corner of present-day Nassau and Sherman Townships. They marked the spot with a mound of earth. From this point Wynn directed measurements due north using compass and chain, a procedure familiar to Hospers from his days with American surveyors back in 1848-50 around Pella.

Step-by-step, the surveying party moved northward over the Sioux County prairie. It was early in July. The sun was warm and the sky above a deep blue, marked here and there with white, billowy clouds. Below lay gently rolling hills and valleys covered with the waving prairie grasses and scattered clusters of brightly-colored wild flowers. As the men from Pella walked over the rich and fertile prairie soil, now and then one of them would exclaim in his native tongue, "Oh, what a beautiful sight! Such rich soil! Where could one find a better country? Would that our friends and relatives back home could see this now!"

By midday the group reached a point marking the northern corner between present-day Nassau and Sherman Townships, having measured off exactly six miles. They rested and ate lunch and then sent one of their party with the team and wagon east to the Floyd River to make camp and prepare the evening meal.

Shortly after they resumed their measurements—on a hill some distance to the north—a figure on horseback appeared, silhouetted against the sky. They

stopped work to watch the stranger approaching them at a gallop. Growing larger and larger, as he came nearer the figure began to assume definite shape—the shape of an Indian, armed with a rifle.

The surveyors realized that they had left their guns in the wagon, now out of sight—and out of reach—behind them. The Indian reined his horse abruptly and came to a dead stop in front of the men. Hospers acted as spokesman for the surveyors. He later described the encounter:

The Indian gazed in wonder at us, and appeared to be fascinated with the moving needle on the compass. He was also, no doubt, in wonderment at our likely "Dutch" appearance. And we, of course, were amazed to see him. He may have noted our apprehension at his unexpected appearance. We may have looked more like fearful men than as immigrant surveyors. Whether we spoke to him in Dutch, German, English, or French, it made no difference. All he could reply was the typical "Ugh." He would only shrug his shoulders in answer to our questions. On both sides then, the conversation was without meaning, and the Indian sensing this perhaps, turned his horse and left as quickly as he had come.

The surveyors returned to their measurements. Just before sunset they arrived at campsite along the banks of the Floyd River. Their cook had hot coffee, bacon, and bread waiting. They ate and they talked about the surprise visitor, about the day's work.

Darkness settled. One of them discovered off to the south a flickering campfire. They could see men were walking around the fire. They must be Indians. Hospers said the Indian the surveyors had seen earlier was probably down there. The five Dutchmen, isolated, in country far from home and unfamiliar, decided to take turns guarding the camp throughout the night. Some of them went inside the tent, tried to



*A party of surveyors (courtesy Division of Historical Museum and Archives)*

sleep. No one heard a sound for a few hours. Then the shout went round the camp: "Boys, here they come!"

The men in the tent rushed out, excited, expecting the worst. But the guards could only point to a distant clump of bushes. The group investigated the clump and found that what the guards had thought were bloodthirsty warriors stealing upon them in the night were a few tall reeds bending slightly in the breeze. Satisfied that no one was sneaking about after their scalps, the men changed guards, and all was quiet once more.

The next morning the men continued surveying, and in a few days they returned

to Sioux City. In the office of the surveyor the committeemen drew lots to choose homesteads for themselves and their relatives, according to the prior agreement. The three who had come by wagon returned to Pella while Hospers stayed several days longer to complete the legal paperwork, making out over 80 affidavits in the name of the Pella Association.

**S**ettlers could obtain public lands in two ways—homesteading and preemption. The Preemption Act of 1841 legalized settlement prior to purchase. Settlers who staked claim to public-surveyed land and

labored to improve the land could buy up to 160 acres at \$1.25 per acre. Under the Homestead Act of 1862, an individual could enter a claim for up to 160 acres of surveyed public land and gain the title by continuous residence, improvements within five years, and a fee of \$26. Or, if the homesteader wished to gain full title earlier, and could prove six months' residence and improvement on an acre or more of land, he could do so by paying \$1.25 per acre.

In 1862, preemption was extended to include unsurveyed public land, while the Homestead Law continued to apply only to surveyed land. Both laws were recognized simultaneously and consequently a person could claim as much as 320 acres, 160 under preemption and 160 under homesteading.

In September, 1869 some 75 men with 18 wagons, teams, plows, plenty of provisions, and accompanied by three surveyors, journeyed to Sioux County. Homesteads and claims were staked out, and some preliminary plowing was begun to comply with the law. For most of them this was their first sight of the land where their future lay. As their sharp steel plows cut into the virgin prairie, turning the sod, they offered prayers of thanksgiving and praise to God. As one said, "This is God's leading. To the glory of God alone!"

All 18 members of Sioux County lived in the Big Sioux River valley along the western border. Calliope (Hawarden), a small village in the southwest portion of the county along the east bank of the river, served as the county seat. One of its four or five log cabins was the courthouse.

Four enterprising young men from Sioux City organized the county in February, 1860. Frederick M. Hubbell, acted as county clerk, holding this office for about a year before moving to Des Moines. Hubbell spent the rest of his life in Des Moines,



*Henry Hospers*

where he was known as a successful real estate man, railroad financier, and insurance executive. He became Iowa's wealthiest man, perhaps Des Moines' most prominent citizen.

The next spring several wagon trains left Pella for Sioux County. Hendrik J. Van der Waa, who had made the journey three times before, led the first train. That spring and summer other groups followed with their families, livestock, and household goods. Arriving at their homesteads or claims, they erected temporary shelters. Some made crude dwellings called "dugouts"—sod houses with foundations cut into the east or south side of a hill. Some built temporary shanties with lumber bought in Le Mars, 15 miles away. Others lived for weeks in tents or covered wagons,

building more secure dwellings of wood before winter. The men, whose ages averaged 38 years, spent the summer and fall breaking the prairie sod and constructing their homes.

Wagon trains to Pella passed through Fort Dodge, Storm Lake, and Cherokee, following stakes for the projected railroad from Dubuque to Sioux City which would eventually offer quicker transportation to the Dutch colonists.

Tjeerd Heemstra, one of the first to settle, set up a general store on his farm a mile south of the townsite, and was elected to the county board of supervisors that fall. Jelle Pelmulder, who had been a school master in the Netherlands, was elected clerk of courts, a position he held for many years.

Although mayor of Pella and well established in business, Henry Hospers decided to join his friends in northwest Iowa. As president of the townsite company, Hospers made a number of trips to the new colony during the spring and summer of 1870. He publicized the new enterprise in his newspaper, the *Pella-Weekblad*, and in other Dutch publications in Michigan and the Netherlands.

Hospers arranged for surveyors to plat the town in the new colony. Once the northeast quarter of section 32 in Holland Township was decided upon, they marked a public square, staked out lots, and named streets. Hospers called the settlement Orange City after William the Silent, the Prince of the House of Orange-Nassau, who led the Dutch in their war for independence against the mighty forces of the Spanish Empire in the 16th century.

Four more townships were given Dutch names: Holland, Nassau, East Orange, and Capel (Kapel) — named after the ancestral home of the Van Oosterhout family.

During the summer of 1870 the first buildings in the townsite were erected. The carpenter, A. J. Lenderink, built his house across the street from the village square, now Windmill Park, then put up a frame schoolhouse on the square.

In July, 1870 the State Board of Immigration commissioned Hospers to travel to his homeland to promote Dutch immigration to Iowa. Fearing the Netherlands might become involved in the Franco-Prussian War, Hospers delayed his departure until October and arrived in the Netherlands early the next month.

Home again after 23 years, Hospers hurried to the village of Hoog-Blokland, which he hadn't seen since a boy of 17. His arrival caused great excitement among the villagers. Friends and relatives called on him at the home of his uncle, William Middelkoop, or stopped to chat with him on the streets.

Hospers soon placed this advertisement in a number of Dutch newspapers:

Mr. Henry Hospers, Mayor of the City of Pella, in the State of Iowa, United States of America, specially commissioned by the Board of Immigration of the said State of Iowa, will remain in the Netherlands until the 15th day of January, A.D. 1871, for the purpose of giving detailed information to all who wish to emigrate to Iowa, about the country, climate, and prospects of said State. All letters will be promptly answered without charge; and further notice will be given at what places and times persons interested can have a general conference with him.

During the next two months Hospers held over 20 conferences in different cities. Saturdays he answered letters, Sundays he accompanied the Middelkoop family to the village church in Hoog-Blokland, which he had attended as a boy. Taking time off on such days he called on old friends and relatives. A visit to his old home revived child-

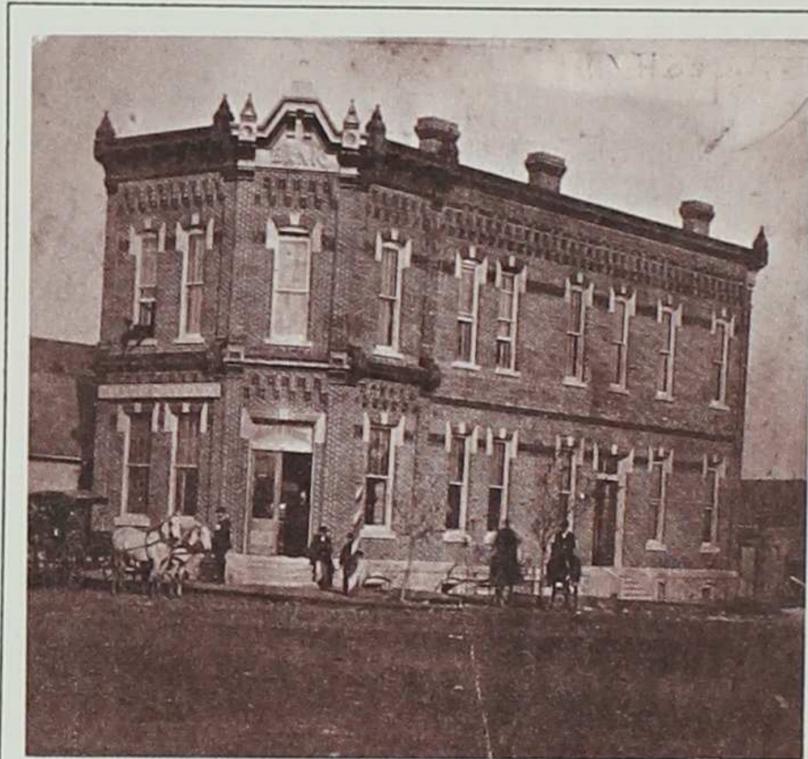
hood memories, and time passed swiftly. Before leaving, he placed notices in various Dutch newspapers, giving his address and stating he would answer all letters from those requesting information.

Hospers returned to Pella around the first of February, 1871. His report to the Board of Immigration for Iowa revealed that many people with large families were interested in Iowa, some of considerable wealth, "willing," he wrote, "to leave those comforts behind, in order to better the positions of their children." Some were taking steps to emigrate and others planned to move the next year after selling the property. Mechanics and capitalists, professional men and farmers, factory owners and workers, contemplated the move.

Hospers made up his mind to join the new settlers in Sioux County. He sold his properties and real estate business, arranged to dispose of the *Pella-Weekblad*, and resigned as mayor. His father objected strongly and begged him to stay, but 40-year-old Hospers was determined to go.

In the spring of 1871 Hospers contracted with a Pella carpenter named Gleysteen to build a store and house in Orange City. By June the house was ready. The Hospers family reached Le Mars by way of the Illinois Central; horse and buggy took them the final 15 miles to their new home. When Hospers walked into his store, which had opened a few months before, someone remarked, "There is the father of the colony, from now on, everything will go well."

The "Pioneer Store" was located just north of the village square. Many settlers were short of cash and Hospers soon set up a system where "store orders," took the place of money. Hospers issued these orders to those he employed for jobs such as plowing or cutting hay. It was then up to Hospers to transfer these bills of exchange



Built in 1884, Hospers' bank was called the Orange City Bank. It still stands. (courtesy of the author)

into legal currency.

During 1871 the village of Orange City acquired eight houses and a number of businesses, including a hotel, barbershop, blacksmith, and a shoe store. Houses, barns, and graineries were going up on the countryside. Farmers planted trees for shade and windbreaks, and set out fruit trees.

From the start Hospers was a leading figure in the colony and after building an office just east of the village square from which he conducted his real estate business, he continued to be its most ardent promoter. He supervised the townsite company, was notary public, attorney-at-law, and trustee of Holland and Floyd Townships. For a few months he served as village postmaster and county superintendent of schools, but he resigned these posts when elected to the board of supervisors in the fall of 1871.

The Hospers house soon proved too small for the family of eight. Within a few



years Hospers had a larger house, a prefabricated structure made in Pella, erected on the corner of the block where the post office now stands. Hospers had trees and shrubs planted, and in time it came to be called "Maple Corners." An invalid friend, Hendrika's (Hospers' second wife) nephew, and Henry's brother Cornelius shared the house with the family. Visitors to Orange City often stopped at the Hospers home. On one occasion, when unexpected company arrived just before dinner, the Hospers served a hastily prepared batch of pancakes, to the satisfaction of all.

Occasionally, wealthy parents in the Netherlands sent hard-to-manage sons to Hospers, requesting that he watch over them. He did what he could, but at times they caused him much anxiety and grief.

Some visitors from Holland were more pleasant to receive. In November, 1873 the Hospers family entertained the distinguished Dr. Cohen Stuart and his wife. Dr. Stuart had come from the Netherlands as a delegate to the Sixth Conference of the World's Evangelical Alliance held in New York City. When Hospers learned that Dr. Stuart was in New York he invited him to visit Orange City.

Hospers met the Stuarts at Fort Dodge and accompanied them to Le Mars. After a chilly buggy ride the last 15 miles, the party arrived at the Hospers home early Saturday evening. Here after a warm greeting from the Hospers family and Rev. Seine Bolks, they sat down to enjoy a hot meal.

The next day, Sunday, dawned clear and crisp, with a slight breeze. Later Stuart described the scene as "The little settlers' town with its widely scattered wooden houses, and beyond, here and there, at a great distance, a little blue cloud of smoke rising from the green field of this or that farm hidden in the fields of undulating

prairie." As Stuart walked the two blocks to church, families arrived in buggies and wagons. Others rode horseback. The school house on the public square served as a house of worship. Stuart preached at both morning and afternoon services and later described his feelings as he faced the pioneer audience:

Would that my friend Bosboom, who understands so well the charm of light and brown and knows how to put feelings and even poetry into a stable or a landscape, would that he were here for a short quarter of an hour to catch the ray of light which the pale winter's sun causes to play through the little open side-window against the dark wainscot and upon so many quiet and pious upturned faces; or would that Rochussen could reproduce that audience with a few of his ingenious, characteristic figures: men with quiet power and strength written in their bearing and upon their faces, and women some of whom were nursing children, with hands clasped in prayer . . . I have seldom if ever been more inspired by an audience than the one in the midst of which I was permitted to stand that morning, and if I returned any of the inspiration which those hearers unconsciously gave to me, that Sunday morning on the prairies was not entirely lost for eternity.

The next morning the Stuarts boarded the train at East Orange for St. Paul. Stopping briefly at a station named Hospers, Stuart thought of his host. The St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad, which had been in operation about one year, was the first line to reach Sioux County, at this time but four villages—Calliope, Orange City, East Orange (Alton), and Hospers.

The county seat was moved from Calliope to Orange City, the largest of the four villages, in 1872. With a population of about 250, the town comprised over 50 buildings, including two general stores, a hardware store, a shoe store, two hotels, two land offices, a furniture store, a school, and the businesses of three lawyers, one



*Henry Hospers' first house in Orange City, built in 1871 by Gleysteen, burned to the ground in the 1930s. (courtesy of the author)*

doctor, and two blacksmiths.

It was impossible for the early residents of Orange City and the surrounding area to foresee the troubles that lay ahead. The first hint came in June, 1873. Suddenly one Sunday afternoon great swarms of Rocky Mountain locusts swept down from the sky, devouring all crops, pasture grass, and gardens. Only a few fields in northwest Iowa escaped the destruction.

Grasshoppers struck again and again during 1874-79. Discouraged, many settlers sold their farms and businesses, leaving the area at great sacrifice. But most settlers persevered, hoping for better times.

As realtor and local banker, Henry Hospers refused to buy up the land which now

#### Note on Sources

Most of the references in this article are to Jacob Van Der Zee's *The Hollanders of Iowa* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1912). Hospers published accounts of the early settlement in *De Volksvriend*, the Dutch newspaper of Orange City; other details appear in *The Sioux County Herald*. These newspapers are held in microfilm at the Division of the State Historical Society in Iowa City. Dr. Cohen Stuart's description of Orange City may be found translated in the *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, 11 (April, 1913) 240-47. The Hospers Papers are kept in the Dutch Heritage Collection, Ramaker Library, Northwestern College, Orange City. An explanation of the homestead and preemption laws was provided by Roy M. Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1936* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962). Also useful was *Iowa: The Home for Immigrants* (1870) reprinted by the State Historical Society in 1970.

went for a low price. Instead he tried persuading farmers and businessmen to remain, giving wise counsel to all who asked him for advice and helping many with loans. Henry Hospers was convinced better times lay ahead. In his Dutch weekly newspaper, *De Volksvriend* (*The People's Friend*), he urged people to stay, insisting that northwest Iowa would become one of the most prosperous agricultural regions of the Midwest.

**A**s the years passed conditions steadily improved. The 1880 harvests were abundant, and more settlers arrived each year. Other communities were started, including Maurice, Sioux Center, North Orange (Newkirk), Middleburg, Rock Valley, Sheridan (Boyden), Pattersonville (Hull), Granville, and Ireton.

Early pioneer leaders in Orange City dreamt of establishing a school of higher learning. The by-laws of the townsite company provided that one-fifth of the money received from the sale of lots would be

deposited in a special fund for the formation of such a school. But the economic hardships of the late 1870s postponed these plans. As the early pastor, Rev. Bolks said, "The grasshoppers flew away with our hopes."

But in 1882 Hospers, Rev. Bolks, and others, revived these plans, forming a board of trustees to direct the affairs of the projected school, the Northwestern Classical Academy. Classes began in September, 1883 with 25 students. Henry Hospers had always hoped that one day the Academy might develop into a college. This became a reality in 1966 when Northwestern College was established.

Hospers contributed much to the Dutch settlement of northwest Iowa. His professional experience as journalist, banker, realtor, and public office-holder eased many of the problems the early settler encountered. More important, Henry Hospers believed in the Dutch people and in the Iowa prairie; from this combination came a new life for the immigrants and their descendants. □

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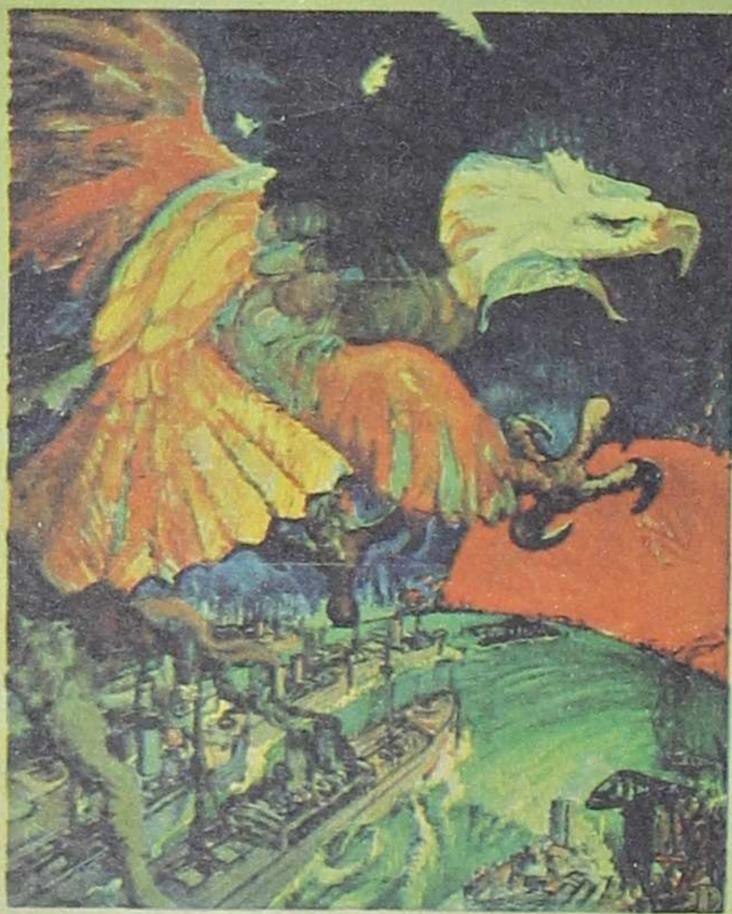
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