

The
PALIMPSEST
SEPTEMBER 1949
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The Des Moines Register

GEORGE MILLS

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

THE MEANING OF 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 records 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.

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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

VOL. XXX

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Frontier Journalism

Few pioneers surpassed the newspaper editor as a trail blazer on the American frontier. The successful editor and publisher helped determine town sites, led in community affairs, and was the self-appointed guardian of the political, social, spiritual, and cultural growth of his neighborhood.

The first newspaper printed west of the Alleghenies was issued at Pittsburgh in 1786. A half century later John King established the first newspaper in Iowa at Dubuque — on May 11, 1836. At that time there were only 10,531 white people in the Black Hawk Purchase, in what is now eastern Iowa. During the next two years newspapers were established at Montrose, Burlington, Fort Madison, and Davenport. But most of these were short-lived. The first inland newspapers in Iowa were established at Iowa City and Keosauqua. By 1846 a score of newspapers had been started, but only half of these were being published when Iowa achieved statehood. Failure of subscribers to pay for their subscriptions and the inability of

editors to collect what was due them from advertisers were the two primary factors in the high rate of journalistic bankruptcy.

Between 1847 and 1849 sixteen newspapers were established in the Hawkeye State. Five of these — the *Northwest Demokrat* (Dubuque), the *Des Moines Valley Whig* (Keokuk), the *Iowa Freeman* (Mount Pleasant), the *Fairfield Ledger*, and the *Iowa Star* (Des Moines) — began publication in 1849. With the exception of the *Frontier Guardian* started by the Mormons at Kaneshville on the Missouri River in 1848, the *Iowa Star* was Iowa's westernmost newspaper.

The honor of establishing the first newspaper in Des Moines must be given to Barlow Granger — a tall, slender New Yorker from Cayuga County who had set type with Horace Greeley, and who had literally followed that New York editor's advice — "Go West, Young Man, Go West." When Barlow Granger arrived at Fort Des Moines he found it a rough, unkempt village on the very cutting edge of civilization. It would take courage and resourcefulness to establish a successful newspaper at this frontier outpost. Barlow Granger, although awkward in appearance, rugged in features, and careless of dress, had the qualities necessary for such an enterprise.

Barlow Granger - Pioneer

Barlow Granger began setting type for his new newspaper one hot July day in 1849 in the village of Fort Des Moines. The air was close and sticky in his log cabin print shop, not far from the junction of the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers. Soldiers stationed at the fort had used this cabin years before, but since the army post had been dismantled in 1846, the building had been deserted.

Fort Des Moines had a population of several hundred by 1849. It had "eight or nine stores, two well kept hotels, 12 or 15 lawyers, 5 or 6 doctors, and a fair supply of mechanics." Why shouldn't it also have a newspaper?

Granger decided to call his new publication the "Fort Des Moines Star." His equipment was modest, to say the least: a few boxes of type and a creaky press hauled overland from Iowa City. One type box contained a handful of fancy large letters, full of scrolls and curleyques. The printer-editor wanted to use that type for the name of the paper at the top of page one, but there were not enough letters to print the name "Fort Des Moines Star." Granger emptied the type back into the box and started over. This time he set a shorter name: THE IOWA STAR.

The change in the title of the newspaper took place in half a minute, yet it was prophetic of things to come. The publication was destined to become a newspaper of all Iowa, not of Fort Des Moines alone.

The *Star* came into being July 26, 1849, when a few hundred copies of the four-page paper were printed. Now, one hundred years later, the *Des Moines Sunday Register* has a circulation of more than half a million copies in a state of less than 700,000 families. The *Star* is the grandparent paper of the *Register*. Nowhere else in the United States is a publication so closely identified with a state as the *Register* is with Iowa.

The reasons for the strong state feeling in Iowa probably are two. First, there are no large metropolitan centers to overshadow the state, as is true in New York and Illinois for example. Then, Iowa newspapers are strongly state-conscious, and this is particularly true of the *Des Moines Register and Tribune*. From the first it has had a deep pride and interest in Iowa and in the affairs of Iowans.

In the opening issue of the *Star*, Granger announced that he would do everything in his power to advertise Iowa, "the heart of the most attractive country in the world." He wrote that Iowa had "within itself all the resources necessary to sustain a dense agricultural and commercial population."

"This favored region," he added, "has settled up more rapidly than any other . . . with an intelligent, industrious and thriving people."

The state did grow rapidly. By covered wagon, by steamboat, and, after 1854, by train, tens of thousands of families moved westward across the Mississippi to the lush prairies of the Middle West. From 1860 to 1870, Iowa gained more than 500,000 population.

The Mormon migrations were in full flow when Granger slowly ground out the first copies of his paper in Fort Des Moines. The California Gold Rush was on. As the decades rolled slowly by, newspapers came and went in Des Moines. States' rights and slavery boiled over into the bloody Civil War. The railroads spread across the expanding nation. There were bumper crops and droughts, Indians and industries, wars, inventions, conquest of disease, and longer lives for human beings.

With printer's ink and paper, men like Barlow Granger chronicled this unfolding of a modern civilization in an area that was wilderness less than two lifetimes ago. The yellowed files of the old newspapers of the prairies bring these bygone years back to life more vividly than rewritten history can ever do.

As one example, history tells us that the victory of the Union armies at Fort Donnelson in the

Civil War caused great rejoicing in Iowa. But how terse and tame is the historical report of this victory when compared with this story from the *Register* of February 26, 1862:

The news of this great success was announced to the general assembly by the presiding officer of each house about noon yesterday! The effect was like an electric shock!

Cheer after cheer went up until the very rafters seemed to feel the inspiration. Adjournment for the day was moved and carried unanimously, and then calls were made for impromptu speeches in honor of the event.

All over the city, at the hotels, in the streets, everywhere — men stopped to shake each other's hands and express the joy they entertained. All this enthusiasm was, of course, clouded by the knowledge that some of our brave Iowa boys had been in the thickest of the fight and had fallen. But there are thousands yet in the state to make good their places, should the progress of the war make it necessary.

The Iowa Star

Granger had several long-range and immediate goals for his one-man weekly newspaper. He and his financial backer, Curtis Bates, wanted to elect Democrats to office. They wanted more settlers to come to central Iowa and they wanted to keep those already there from hurrying off to California to dig gold. They worked to bring railroads to the state and they promoted expanded steamboat service from Keokuk to Des Moines up the Des Moines River. The *Star* supported transfer of the state capital from Iowa City to Des Moines.

Getting out the paper every week was one of Granger's most difficult tasks. The first issue was dated July 26, 1849. The second did not appear until August 23. Granger wrote apologetically: "The disappointment happened in consequence of the wagoner who was to bring the paper up from Keokuk being taken sick on the way. In the future, we shall have a supply of material on hand and our subscribers may expect a paper regularly each week."

Vain hope! On December 14 of the same year the *Star* warned: "We are sorry to inform our readers that we will not be able to issue next week's paper, owing to the extreme cold weather

with which we are at present blessed. As soon as we can move our press into more comfortable quarters, which we hope to do in a short time, we will issue our next number." Tradition has it that Granger heated his ink that winter to keep it from freezing while the paper was being printed. On December 7, he offered to trade subscriptions for fifty cords of wood.

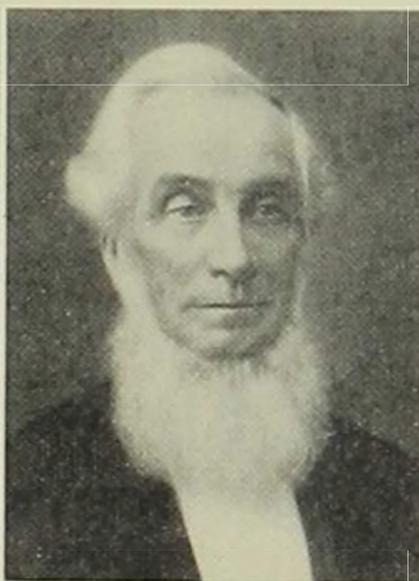
Lack of warmth and of paper were only two of his many difficulties. Another was that he did not get much advertising. When he left the *Star*, a little later, he wrote an editorial telling the troubles of publishing "a seven-column paper in a five-column town." It was not easy in those days to "collect for the paper" from the subscribers. The subscription rate for the *Star* was \$2 a year if paid in advance, or \$3 if payment was not made until the end of the year. Theoretically, a subscriber could not quit taking the paper without paying up. A notice said: "No paper will be discontinued until all arrearages have been paid." Six months was all that Granger could stand as publisher of the *Star*. He turned the paper over to Judge Bates, his backer, on January 15, 1850.

The Granger issues of the *Star* were not overloaded with news. Small wonder. The editor was printer, press-foreman, advertising salesman, subscription solicitor — the whole staff, in fact. The *Star* reprinted a lot of poems, and long reports

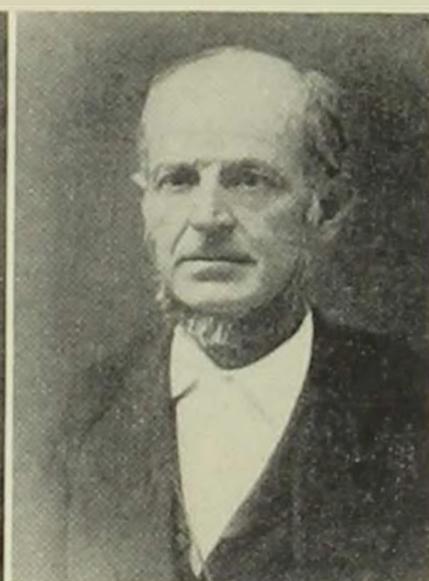
TWO DEMOCRATS AND A WHIG



Barlow Granger



Curtis Bates



Lampson P. Sherman

THE FIGHTING CLARKSONS



Coker F. "Father"
Clarkson



Richard P.
Clarkson



James S. "Ret"
Clarkson

The Iowa Star.

VOL. I.

FORT DESMOINES, IOWA, THURSDAY, JULY 26, 1849.

NO. 1.

THE IOWA STATE JOURNAL.

The Weekly Citizen.

Iowa State Register.

The Register and Leader.

Des Moines Tribune

The Paper With the Pictures—and the Up-to-the-Hour War Maps

The Weather
Unsettled and much
cloudy Saturday; Sun-
day partly cloudy.
—ST. LOUIS, 7:30 A.M. 17.

The Des Moines Register

The Newspaper Iowa Depends Upon

VOL. 20, NO. 289.

DES MOINES, IOWA, SATURDAY MORNING, APRIL 6, 1925.—EIGHTEEN PAGES

PRICE 10 CENTS

EXTRA

SOME ANCESTORS OF THE DES MOINES REGISTER

were carried on Democratic conventions and on speeches given by prominent Democrats. Railroads and Iowa's need for them were topics uppermost in Granger's mind. In one editorial he said: "The absolute wants of our own state and the interests of others will imperatively demand a railroad from the Mississippi to the Missouri long before one can be made." As was true of most papers well up into the 1880's and 1890's, local news always was on the inside pages.

Editors pulled no punches when dealing with their opponents in Granger's time. Yet, when Lampson Sherman started the *Fort Des Moines Gazette*, a Whig paper, on January 14, 1850, the *Star* wrote: "We wish the adventurous proprietor success in everything but the extension of his political beliefs."

Bates edited the *Star* himself after Granger retired. In announcing his editorship, Bates described the widespread influence of newspapers. In a beautifully-written statement on the responsibility of the press, he said: "How important that . . . [the press] urge sound and expedient measures of political economy, that its voice be ever heard for the right! If there is a principle to be struggled for, to the press should our eyes be turned. If a prejudice is to be stormed, we should look to see its pennant wave first above the breach."

He was a man of strong opinions on at least two subjects. He did not like the Whigs (forerunners of the Republicans) and he was bitter over talk of dissolution of the United States. He wrote: "What? The Union dissolved? As well you might expect to see the stupendous Appenines crumble away, that have towered for ages in the blue, immaculate ether. . . ."

But Bates' high-flown language did not bring much cash to the *Star's* till. He too missed an issue now and then. He asked in an 1852 editorial whether subscribers "realize the *Star* must have paper and the editors and printers food and raiment?" Bates kept the publication going for four years by continuing his law practice and using his law fees to pay part of the *Star's* expenses. Even so, "it was all I could do to keep the paper alive."

In January, 1854, Bates gave up. He had become the Democratic nominee for governor of Iowa. A firm known as S. W. Hill and Company took over the *Star*, with D. O. Finch as editor. But the paper continued to be unprofitable. The August 17, 1854, issue appeared with wide black lines of mourning between the columns. One of the publishers had died. The same issue was the obituary for the *Star* also. Although the paper was revived later, the name "Iowa Star" passed into history.

The Fighting Clarksons

In 1872 a row broke out in the Clarkson family, owners of the *Iowa State Register*. "Father" Coker F. Clarkson and his two sons had bought the *Register* in 1870. The boys were James S. ("Ret") and Richard P. Clarkson.

"Father" was a great friend of Iowa Senator James Harlan. The sons favored William B. Allison who was opposing Harlan's bid for re-election to the United States Senate. Editorials favoring Allison had appeared in the *Register*. "Father" Clarkson thumped the desk and declared that the paper would be for Harlan as long as he owned any part of it. Ora Williams, former Iowa curator, tells what happened then:

"'Father' was asked to name his price for his one-third interest. Knowing his sons had no bank account, he said he would take \$30,000. Ret made a trip to Dubuque, and, after an interview with Jacob Rich, came back and laid \$30,000 on the table. After that the elder Clarkson was just the farm editor. The paper supported Allison and he was elected."

The Clarksons were exciting newspapermen. They were individuals of strong opinions and they did not hesitate to express them. They were so in-

tensely Republican that they regarded all Democrats as allies of the rebels of 1861-1865. They fervently believed that this country's prosperity depended upon protective tariffs. They were earnest prohibitionists. For thirty-two years the Clarkson family warmly espoused the cause of Iowa and Iowa's farmers. At the same time they produced a sparkling, well-edited paper. They built the *Register* into a full-fledged state paper.

Newspapers had come and gone in the sixteen years between the demise of the *Iowa Star* and the beginning of the Clarkson era. The Whig paper, the *Fort Des Moines Gazette*, discontinued in 1851, was revived in 1856 as a free-soil Republican paper named *The Iowa Citizen*. In 1860 Publisher John Teesdale changed the name of the *Citizen* to the *Iowa State Register*.

The Clarksons bought the *Register* from Frank M. Mills in 1870. Richard Clarkson had come to Des Moines in 1861 and had worked on the *Register* as a printer. The paper then was under the direction of able Frank W. Palmer, who changed the *Register* from a weekly to a daily in 1862. "Ret" came to Des Moines in 1866 and "Father" followed in 1870. They had been farming in Grundy County before that, although "Father" was an old-time printer and editor from Indiana.

Before that, the Democrats had taken the old equipment of the *Iowa Star* in 1855 and had pub-

lished the *Iowa Statesman*. The *Iowa State Journal* appeared and then the *Commonwealth*. After numerous starts and stops, the *Iowa State Leader* emerged as the strong Democratic paper in 1870 under the editorship of W. W. Witmer. Needless to say, the *Register* and the *Leader* did not see eye to eye. Their differences disappeared only when the two papers were combined in 1902 under the editorship of Harvey Ingham.

In politics, the Clarksons gave no quarter. In the hotly-contested election of 1876, Rutherford B. Hayes was the Republican candidate and Samuel Tilden the Democratic nominee. Several days after election the result was still undecided. The *Register* declared: "Our faith in the ultimate result [Hayes' election] is unshrinking. We have the ballots. We only need an honest count and that, please God, we're going to have. The whole situation depends on Louisiana. That state we are satisfied we have, and nothing but fraud can rob us of it." Hayes finally was declared winner by one electoral vote in that still-disputed election of 1876.

The day after the presidential election in 1884, preliminary figures indicated that Republican James G. Blaine had won. The outlook changed in the next few days, however. The *Register* said then: "Blaine elected by the ballots of New York but may be counted out by Democratic bulldozers

who control the canvassing board of New York, who have so far refused to grant an honest count or pay any attention to the positive charges made of fraud." Blaine, good friend of the Clarksons, finally was beaten in the New York count and lost the presidency.

Ora Williams says that the Blaine forces in the 1880's once wanted to strengthen their candidate's cause by buying the *Chicago Tribune* and placing "Ret" Clarkson at the head of it. Joseph S. Runnells, a former Iowan who had become head of the Pullman Company, personally offered Joseph Medill a million dollars for the *Tribune*. Medill said "no." Runnells raised the figure to a million and a half. Medill finally told him that the *Tribune* was not for sale at any price.

The tariff was a big issue in 1888 when Benjamin Harrison was elected president. The *Register* headline the next morning read: "Protection has won. The union forever, hurrah boys, hurrah!"

During these same years, the Clarksons were implacable foes of liquor. In 1882 the people of Iowa voted to adopt an amendment to the state constitution prohibiting the sale of liquor. In 1883 the state supreme court declared the amendment illegal on a technicality. The *Register* said: "There will be an awakening if the judicial insolence goes much farther. . . . The decision adds one more chapter to the growing doctrine that this

is not a government of the people but a government of courts and that judges stand supreme over all with power greater than emperor or czar."

"Ret" Clarkson had early become a national figure in the Republican party. He was chairman of the National Republican Executive Committee from 1890 to 1892, and in that same period he was named First Assistant Postmaster General. He sold his half interest in the *Register* in 1891 to his brother and moved to the East. "Father" Clarkson died in 1890.

The Clarksons' most important contributions to the journalism of Iowa were in the fields of state news and farm news. From the first, they sought to put out a paper of interest far beyond the immediate Des Moines area. In 1879 they reported prospecting for gold in northern Winnebago County. In 1873 they told of a Wayne County teacher being fined \$24 for whipping a pupil. In the same year the *Register* carried a story of the reduction of the Davenport police force to four men.

They covered such varied subjects as elections, church and school news, and crime news. In 1885 they announced: "From this time on, the *Register* will be made the daily as well as the weekly paper of the enterprising and intelligent citizens of every city, town and farm neighborhood in the state. We shall strive to be still more an Iowa paper,

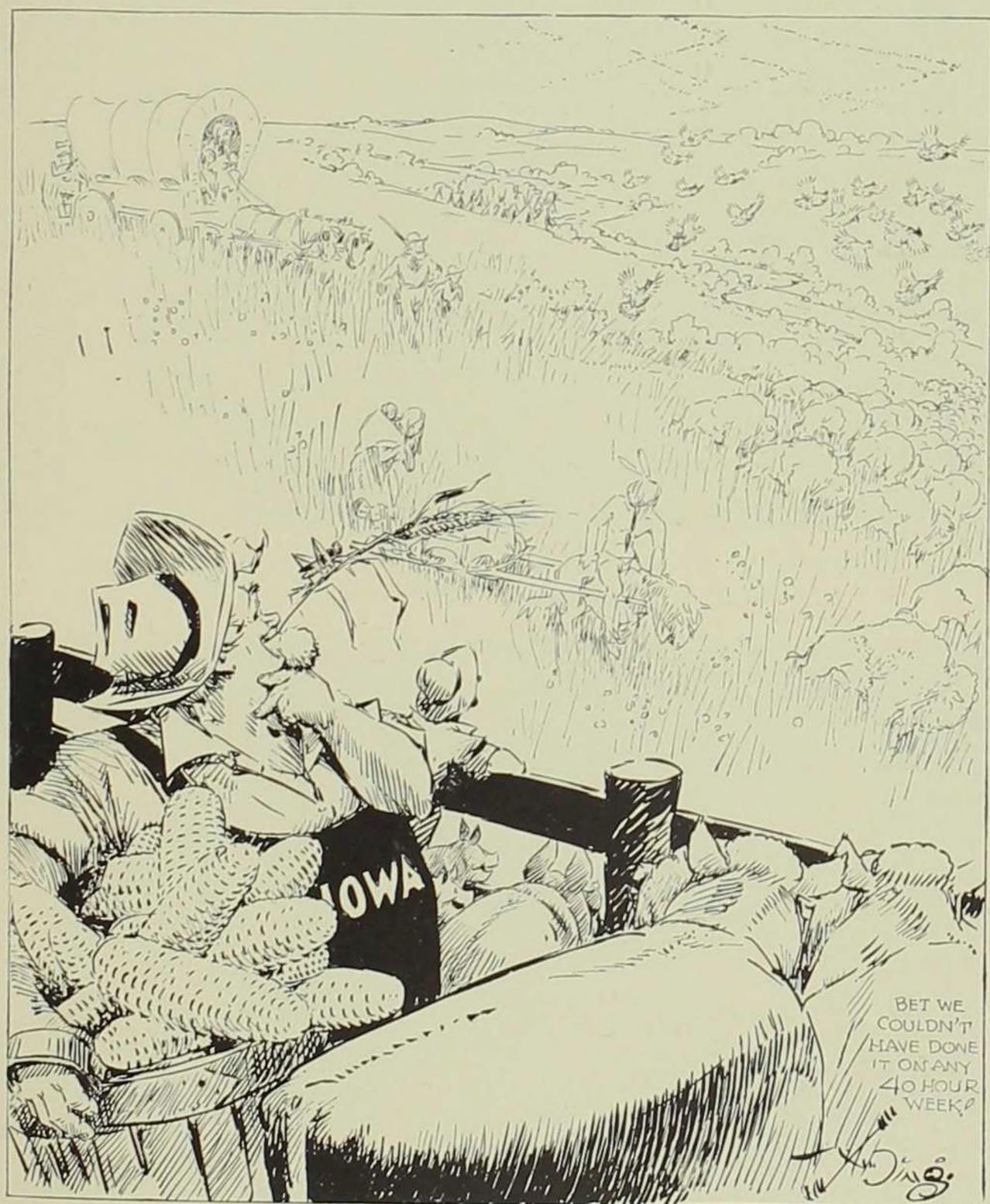
putting our own state first in all our efforts and bending our strength to service in every good way."

No small part of the credit for development of the *Register* into a major state paper belongs to "Father" Clarkson and his column, "Farm, Garden and Orchard." Thousands of farmers read it every week in the Wednesday morning paper. He scolded farmers for going into debt and for using bad farming practices. He gave the farmer advice on how to increase his yields and how to combat crop and animal diseases.

In 1888 "Father" wrote: "We delight to present in various ways arguments and illustrations against contracting debts and mortgaging farms so long as it possibly can be avoided." In 1890 he said that "Iowa has been shipping too much of her raw products to Chicago and other toll gate places. . . . If Iowa can raise the most hogs, it can slaughter them for the consumer. If it can raise the best corn, it can manufacture the corn into starch, glucose or the new soap products. If the state can produce, it can manufacture."

His most sustained attack was on the Washburn-Moen "barbed wire trust" which forced the farmer to pay high prices for his fence wire in the late 1870's and in the 1880's. Iowa was just coming into her own as a livestock state, and farmers everywhere were badly in need of fences.

IOWA HAS COME A LONG WAY IN A HUNDRED YEARS

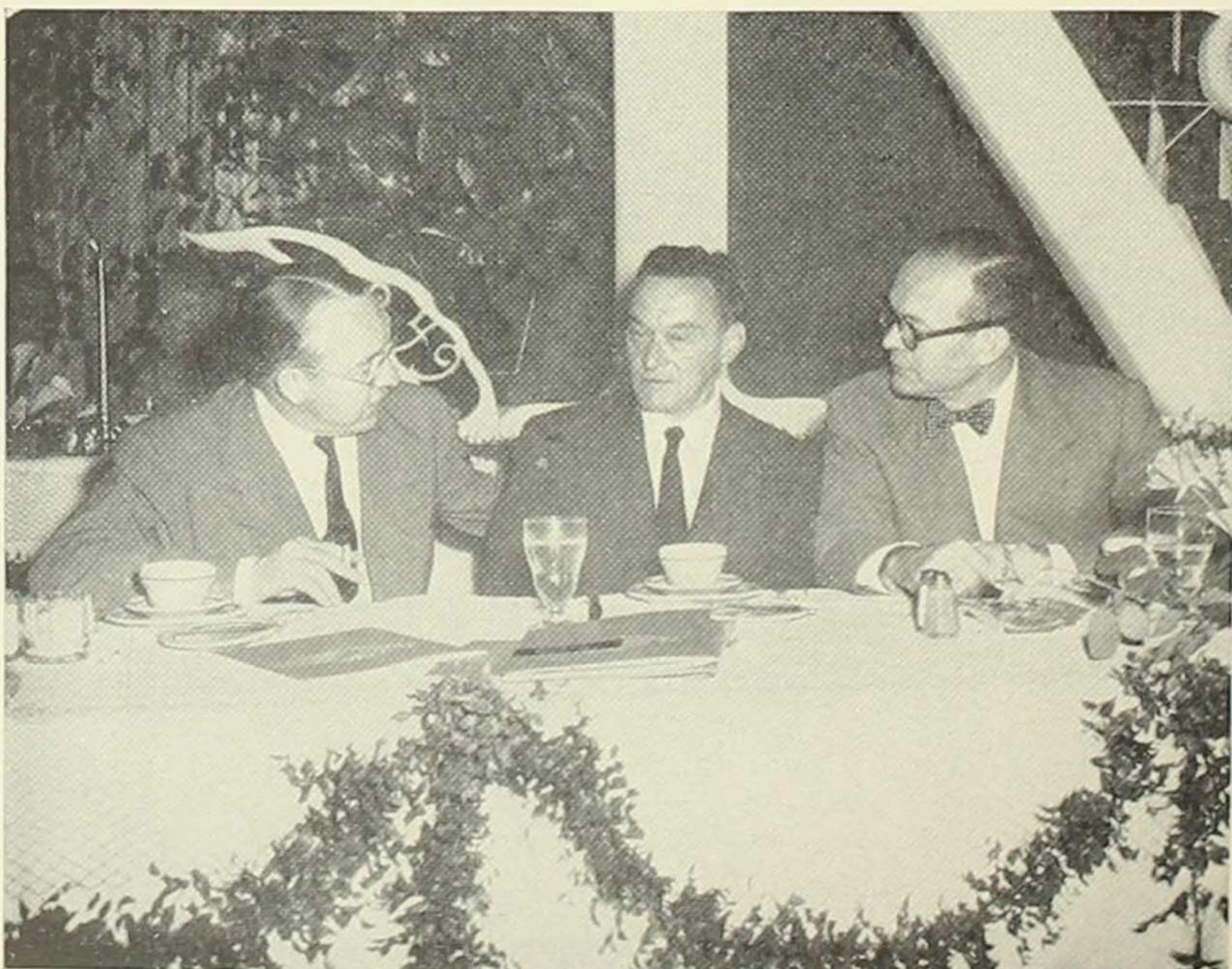


BET WE
COULDN'T
HAVE DONE
IT ON ANY
40 HOUR
WEEK!

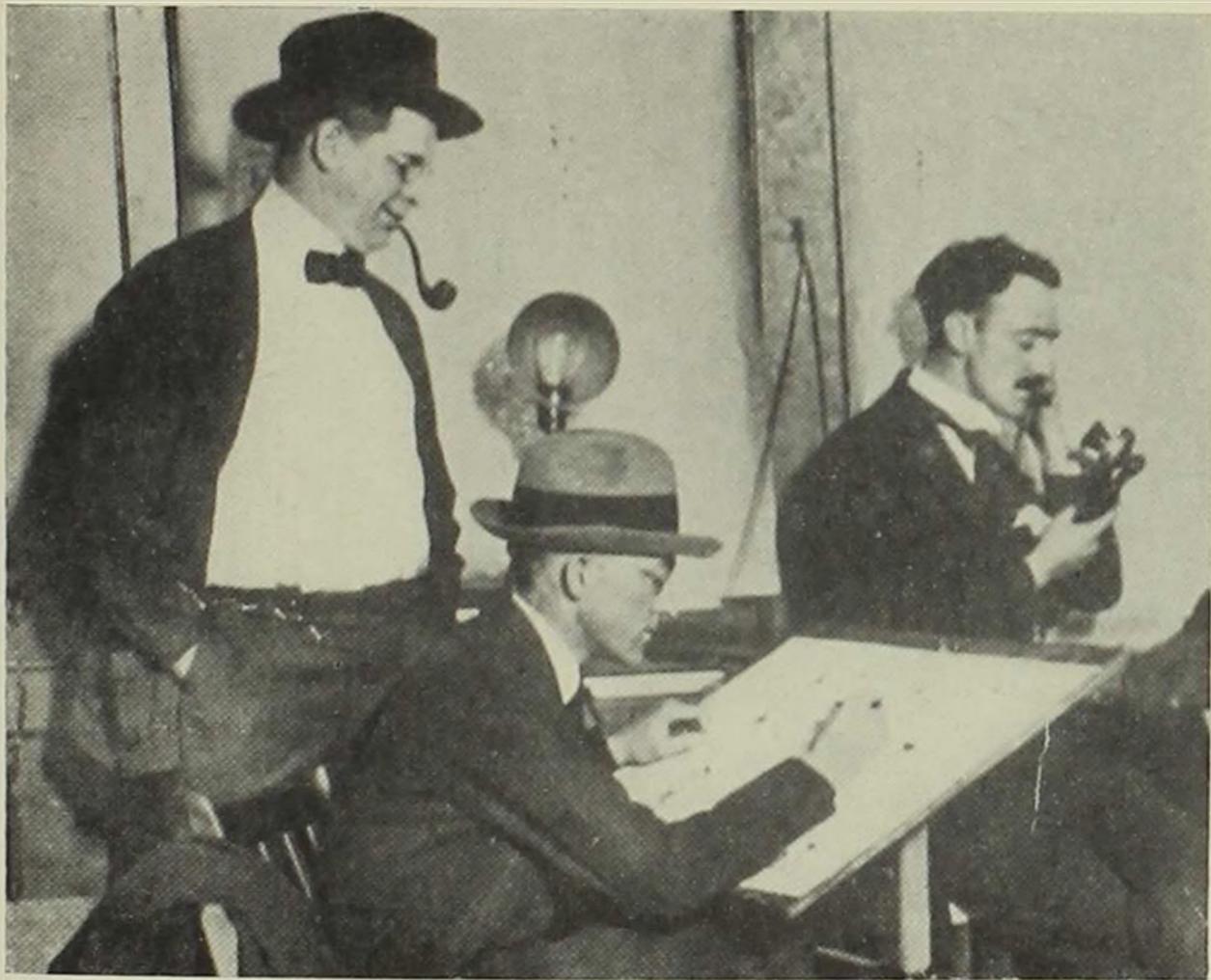
Cartoon by "Ding" Honoring Centennial of Iowa Statehood — 1946



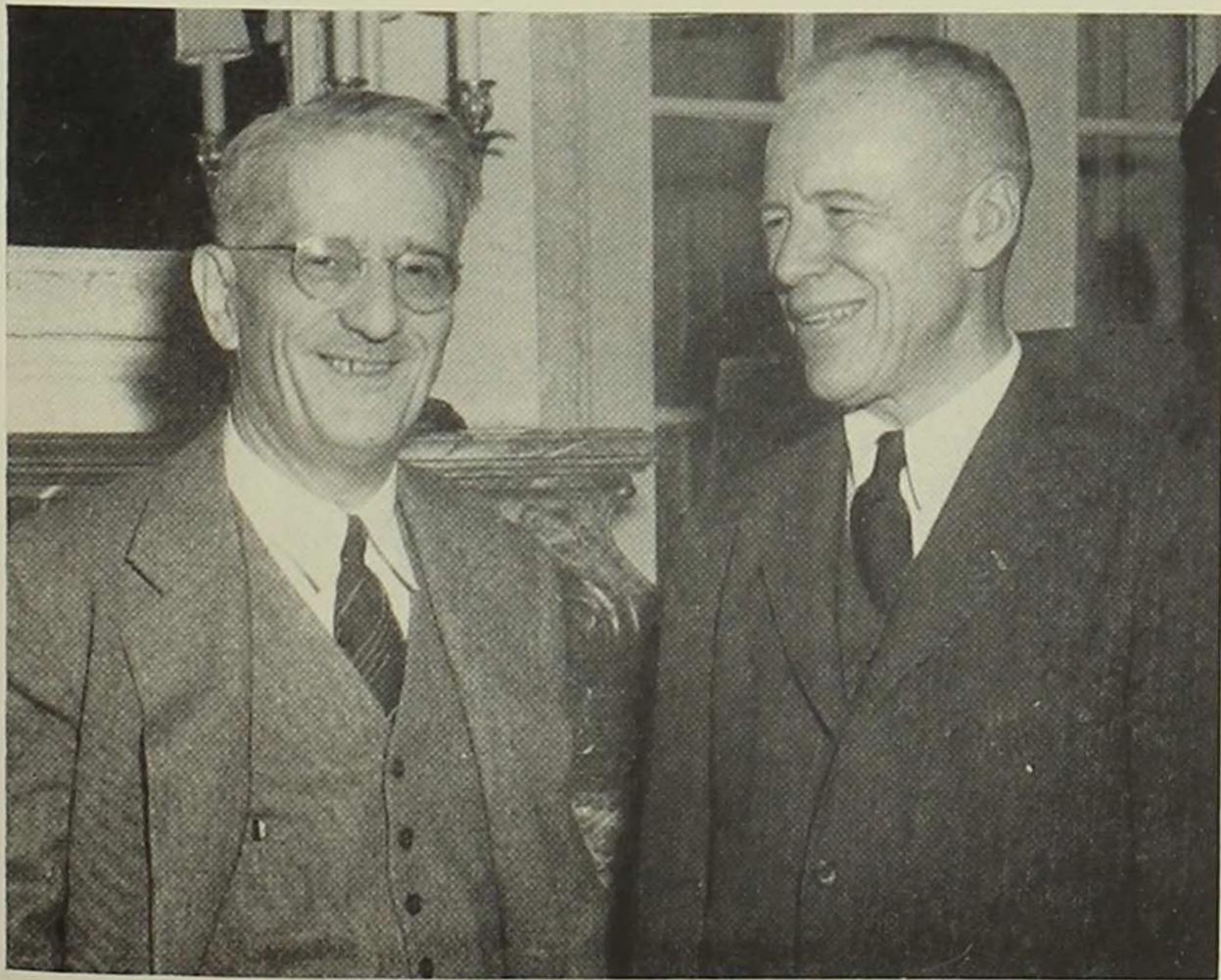
Harvey Ingham and Gardner Cowles, Sr. (1937) Celebrate
Ingham's 35th Anniversary as *Register* Editor



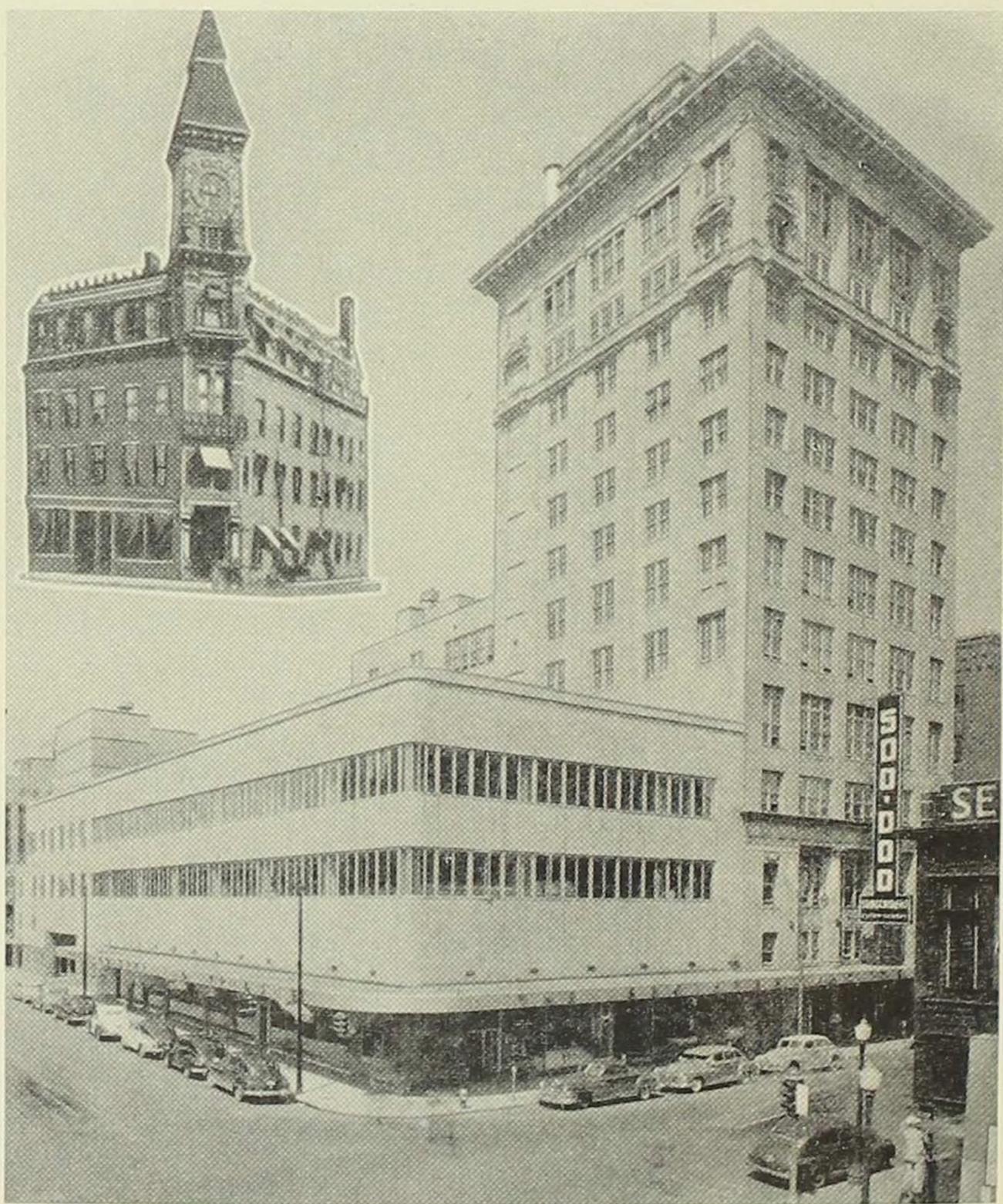
John Cowles, Walter Lippmann, and Gardner Cowles (1949)
at the *Register* Centennial Celebration



"Ding" Darling, Russell Cole, and George Yates (1920)
Cartoonist, Illustrator, and Photographer



W. W. Waymack and Robert P. Patterson, Former Secretary of
War, at a Civil Rights Dinner in New York



HOMES OF THE REGISTER

B. F. Allen Bldg.
Before 1918
Fourth & Court

Present Home
Since 1918
Eighth & Locust

Clarkson wrote of the trust: "If this monstrous monopoly is allowed to collect these intolerable royalties, farmers will feel the grinding power as long as Washburn-Moen have their hands on the throats of the people." After a long battle in which Clarkson figured prominently, the trust was vanquished.

The Clarkson era waned as the end of the nineteenth century approached. With "Father" Clarkson dead and "Ret" out of the business and living in the East, the paper lost part of its punch.

Des Moines had four papers by that time, the *Capitol* and the *News* as well as the *Register* and the *Leader*. The *Leader* had struggled for years to keep alive. The situation called for a change. That change was to come through the efforts of two middle-aged men then living in Algona, Iowa. Little did Harvey Ingham in his weekly newspaper office and Gardner Cowles in his bank realize that in a few years they would uproot themselves and plunge into the hectic and dangerous business of rebuilding a metropolitan newspaper that supposedly had seen its best days.

Cowles and Ingham

Gardner Cowles, Sr. proved to be an outstanding circulation and business executive in the newspaper field. He even memorized Iowa train schedules in his unceasing campaign to provide the best possible newspaper service for every section of the state. There is little point in putting out a good newspaper, he reasoned, unless the paper reaches the subscriber without fail and in the shortest possible time.

He insisted that the *Register and Leader* should not claim more circulation than it actually had. His Chicago advertising agency left him because he would not be a party to padding circulation figures, a common practice in those days. "The more honestly a paper is conducted, the more successful it will be," he said. At his direction, the *Register* in 1909 announced it no longer would take liquor advertising. That policy still is in force. His maxim was: "Things don't just happen. Somebody makes them happen."

He gave Harvey Ingham full leeway in running the news end of the paper. Together Cowles and Ingham constituted a remarkable newspaper team. They saw the opportunity in Iowa of building a great newspaper serving a whole state much as

the metropolitan papers in the East serve the cities where they are located. But nobody could be certain what would happen when they took over the *Register and Leader* in 1903.

The two newspapers had been consolidated into a morning daily, the *Register and Leader*, in 1902 by George Roberts, publisher of the *Fort Dodge Messenger*, who had persuaded Ingham to come to Des Moines from his Algona weekly to serve as associate editor. Ingham embarked on the unknown waters of editing a large daily when he was forty-four years old. Roberts spent nearly all his time in Washington where he was director of the mint. Things did not work out well back in Des Moines and he decided to sell the paper.

A group of noted Iowans, F. L. Maytag among them, almost closed a deal with Roberts and his partner, Samuel Strauss, for the *Register and Leader*. Ingham held only a minority stock interest; had this group succeeded in buying the paper he probably would have been removed as editor.

"Uncle Harvey," as he was called in later years, sent a telegram to his banker friend, Gardner Cowles, asking him to come at once. Cowles, then forty-two, skipped church in Algona one Sunday morning and came by train to Des Moines. He and Ingham talked late into the night about the paper. Early Monday morning Cowles offered Roberts and Strauss \$300,000 for the paper. They

said "yes" before he could change his mind. The price was high in those days for a paper \$180,000 in debt and with 14,000 subscribers.

Cowles and Ingham had their work cut out for them. A large bribe was offered to Cowles in the early months of his operation of the *Register and Leader*. Though the paper was losing money, he turned it down.

Don Berry, now an Indianola, Iowa, publisher, was a reporter on the *Register and Leader* in those days. He was advised to "go slow" on a certain story because prominent people were involved and there were strong differences of opinion in Des Moines on the subject. Berry talked to Ingham about it. The editor ordered: "Write the truth and let the chips fall where they may."

Ingham had set the pattern for the newspaper in an editorial he wrote when the *Register and Leader* were consolidated in 1902. The editorial said in part: "The first and supreme purpose of everyone concerned is to make a worthy newspaper in the broad and modern meaning of the word. This requires that the news service shall be ample and reliable, and maintained scrupulously independent of the editorial opinions of the paper. It means that the editorial conduct must be dignified and unprejudiced, appealing, where it attempts to influence, to the judgment of its readers, seeking to instruct and enlighten, and recognizing that the

primary function of the paper in all its departments is to gather and present with fidelity to its subscribers the facts and considerations that are essential to right conclusions."

The editorial declared that the paper would support the policies of the Republican party. The party was described as being obligated to "preserve the country from experiment and alarm." "And yet [the party] must be responsive to the developments of the times," the editorial added.

Stating that "the field of the paper is Iowa," the editorial then continued:

Special efforts will be made to cover the news of this state and to make a paper more satisfactory to Iowa readers than any paper published in another state, with its own local constituency to serve, can possibly be. . . .

It will give the local news, it will give all the facts bearing upon any issue, but it cannot enter editorially into all the local strifes, or occupy its space with protracted discussion that is neither instructive here nor of interest outside.

And, as it cannot spend its strength in local quarrels, neither can it give its influence to the service of individuals, or its energies to factional or personal politics. It will not undertake to make or unmake the political fortunes of individuals.

This does not mean that the paper will never have a choice for a political position, but that it conceives its first responsibility to be to its readers, and that every choice will be a free one, made when the occasion arises, and not predetermined by factional alliances or considerations.

Within eight months after Cowles and Ingham took over, the paper was in the black financially. By 1906 it had a circulation of 27,514. The *Register and Leader* acquired the *Des Moines Tribune* in 1908. By 1910 the *Register and Leader* had a circulation of 35,271, and the afternoon *Tribune* distributed 16,802 copies daily. In 1921 the *Sunday Register* passed the 100,000 mark.

These circulation achievements seem low now compared with the present circulation of the *Des Moines Register and Tribune*. The *Sunday Register* circulation reached 550,000 with its centennial edition July 24, 1949. The six-months average has exceeded 515,000. The combined circulation of the daily *Register and Tribune* exceeds 360,000.

Only ten cities in the United States have a Sunday newspaper with a circulation exceeding half a million and Des Moines is one of them. The other nine are much larger than Des Moines, whose estimated population is 180,000. The nine are New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, and Detroit. What a far cry from the days in pioneer 1851 when Lampson Sherman's struggling *Fort Des Moines Gazette* had only 125 subscribers!

Notable Journalists

Competent and forceful men have edited Des Moines newspapers down through the years. Iowa has liked their work. That is evident from the success of the papers, particularly after they enlarged their field to serve the entire state. Though presentation of the news is the primary function of a newspaper, it is through editorial interpretation and comment that a paper provides leadership. Notable editors have supplied such leadership in Des Moines from the time of the *Iowa Star*.

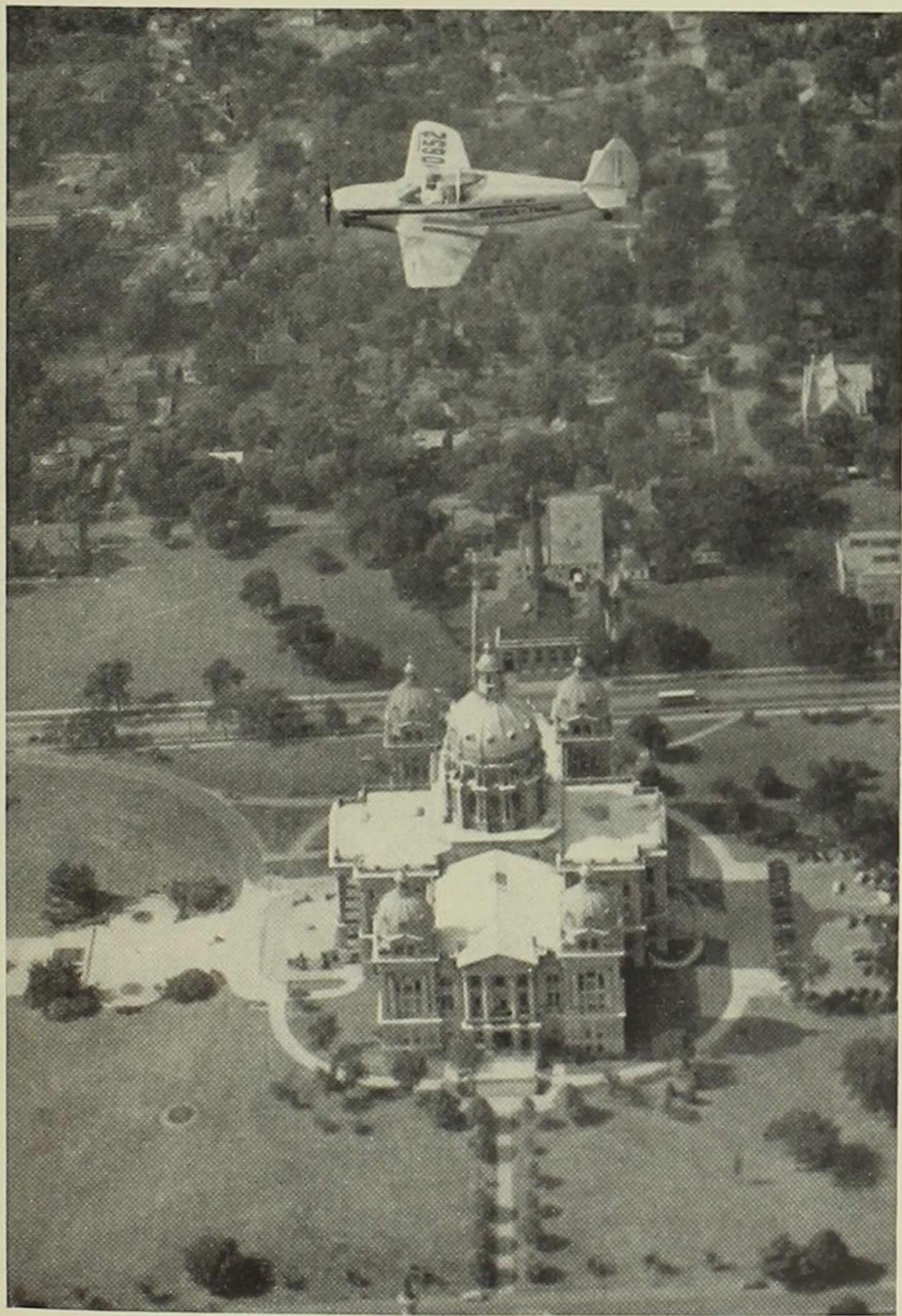
Both Barlow Granger and Curtis Bates of the *Star* were powerful figures. The *Star's* interest in saving the Union and in such programs as railroad building has been referred to. Some of the meritorious things Bates recommended have not come to pass even yet. For example, he wrote in 1850: "We believe that the constitution of the United States requires further amendments in order to make it keep pace with the spirit and intelligence of the age. One of these would be the election of the president and other officers of the general government by a direct vote of the people."

Another early editor, John Teesdale, is identified with the story of John Brown, the famous,

albeit foolhardy, abolitionist. When Brown and his band passed through Des Moines on their way east to Springdale, Iowa, Teesdale paid their ferry charges across the Des Moines River. Shortly after that, Brown and his men attempted to start an insurrection of slaves at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in a battle which some authorities regard as the first violence of the Civil War. Teesdale said of Brown's capture: "He has rendered his name immortal. His boldness and frankness command the admiration even of his enemies; while his prisoners all testify with one voice to his kindness and forbearance to them." The editorial said that "there is no escape for the old man — his fate is sealed." Brown was hanged.

Editor of the *Iowa State Register* through the Civil War period was able Frank Palmer, later an Iowa Congressman. When President Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation in 1862, the *Register* said: "Events have proved that liberty and slavery can not exist in the same union together, and the executive head of the government has decreed that in order that the government may live, slavery shall die. The nation and the world will sing halleluiahs, for the great day of jubilee is near."

Palmer was bitter against southern sympathizers but he deplored the destruction by Union soldiers of a Copperhead newspaper at Fairfield in



REGISTER PLANE OVER IOWA CAPITOL

STATE HOUSE ON FIRE

A DEADLY TORNADO.

Central Iowa Swept with a Terrible Storm Last Night.

REBBL. RAID INTO IOWA.

IOWA BOYS IN GLORIOUS VICTORY

**Bumper Oats
And Soybean
Output Also**

Spencer Not Discouraged

E. L. C. White, editor of the Spencer News-Herald, estimated the fire loss at \$2,000,000. Seventy business firms were destroyed.

JUDGE BEATEN

CHAMBERLIN LANDS

**DOGS TAKE TRAIL
FROM HOME WHERE
EIGHT WERE SLAIN**

CHARLES CITY MURDERER LYNCHED

IOWAN GETS FIRST U. S. CORN LOAN

EXTENT OF THE GREAT STORM.

**The Most Sudden Change
perature in Iowa for
Years.**

THE OFFICIAL VOTE OF IOWA.
For ABRAHAM LINCOLN, 72,110 votes; for McCLELLAN, 47,071. LINCOLN's majority, 25,039. The counties yet

REPEAL WINS IN IOWA, 3 TO 2

IOWA HEADLINES OF YESTERYEARS

1864. "The paper should have been permitted to live," he wrote. "Its existence was a substantial benefit to the union cause."

Palmer took his seat in Congress in 1869 and the next year the Clarksons, father and two sons, opened their vigorous era in Iowa journalism. In 1873 they denounced the whipping of children in school. ("This process might do well in arguing wild mules down to business.") In 1882 they explained how the location of a factory in any Iowa city is of benefit to the state as a whole. In 1883, a "mud road" period if there ever was one, they wanted something done soon "to improve the highways of Iowa." In 1884 the Clarksons criticized the practice of giving free railroad passes to politicians and newspapermen. In the same year they asked: "Do the people of Iowa know they have 2,500 insane requiring hospital care, and room for only one-third that number?" The next year, commenting on mob murders at Audubon, the *Register* declared that "mobs are never to be defended and always to be condemned."

In 1887 they supported the state parole system for prisoners and in 1890 they demanded better fish and game laws to prevent the extinction of wild life. In 1896 the *Register* commented: "Sound money is essential, but we may have all the coined silver in the world and we will not have prosperity unless our laboring men have work at

good wages. Money is all right, but men must also have the opportunity to earn it."

With the end of the Clarkson era came Harvey Ingham. All his newspaper life he fought for equal rights for the Negro and for all races and creeds. He hoped in 1914 that world disarmament would be the result of World War I. In the same year he wrote that the "abolition of the liquor traffic is bound to come. The quicker it is over and disposed of, the better." He also demanded a fair share of the national income for the farmer.

In supporting the League of Nations he said that Americans "can not get out of our world duties if we try. . . . The wisest nationalism the American citizen ever will show will be the nationalism that is international." Of President Woodrow Wilson, Ingham wrote in 1919: "He has always been on the large side. . . . We remember with honor the men who have been ahead of their times, but not in a solitary instance the men who have been behind their times. It will be to the everlasting glory of America that in a time of world babble the American voice was heard above them all in ringing tones of assurance to a better world, a more livable world, a more humane world. . . ." It can be said with equal truth that Ingham too was "always on the large side" and was "ahead of his time" in reporting and interpreting human affairs.

Contemporary with Ingham on the *Register* was Jay N. (Ding) Darling, one of the greatest cartoonists of his time. His work was widely syndicated and tens of millions of American newspaper readers have chuckled every morning for years at his sharp yet humorous and human drawings. He retired in 1949 after forty-three years on the *Register*.

Nobody ever was left in the dark as to where Ding stood on an issue. He is a fighting believer in the American way of life, a vigorous proponent of conservation of natural resources and preservation of wild life, a strong advocate of international cooperation. He twice was given Pulitzer awards. In 1923 he was so honored for his cartoon: "The Good Old U.S.A." The drawing pictured the success that some hard-working young Americans had achieved. The final caption observed: "But they didn't get it by hanging around the corner drug store."

Although he and Ingham sometimes drastically opposed each other, Ding strongly supported the League of Nations in 1919 and 1920. Following through on that idea, he published a devastating cartoon entitled, "Eventually, Why Not Now?" after World War II. The drawing pictured the charred framework of a world destroyed in atomic warfare. One skeleton-like human being is on a telephone asking: "Hello! Hello! If there's any-

one left alive, I'd like to unite with 'em in a world league to outlaw war."

His favorite topic was conservation. He cried out against the senseless loss of our soil through erosion, and one of his cartoons sarcastically noted: "We poison our rivers near home — and then drive 300 miles to find one fit to wade in."

Another stalwart of the Cowles-Ingham era in *Register* and *Tribune* history is thoughtful William W. Waymack, who succeeded Ingham as editor of the papers in 1943. The measure of Waymack's reputation and worth is the fact that President Truman appointed him to membership on the nation's first atomic energy commission. He left the *Register* and *Tribune* to accept that nationally-vital appointment.

Waymack, who came to the *Register* and *Tribune* in 1918, was an Ingham type of editor. He examined events and trends from the long-time point of view. His editorial page had a tremendous following. In 1937 he was awarded a Pulitzer prize for distinguished editorial writing the previous year. That award undoubtedly was based in large part on an editorial series entitled: "The Farmer and the Land."

Pointing to the danger of increasingly heavy farm tenancy, Waymack wrote:

It is the property owner who must obviously be the bulwark of capitalism. It goes without saying that property

must be fairly widely diffused if a social order based on it is to endure in a political democracy. . . .

If we permit land ownership to concentrate so that no large part of the population consists of actual capitalist farmers; if we reduce the farmer, too, to a hireling with no more emotional or practical stake in capitalism than the city proletarian has; if we bring face to face on the land as well as in the crowded streets the capitalist and the proletarian, the ultimate answer can hardly be doubted. Capitalism will go.

All these men, from Granger to Waymack, belong to *Register* history now. Ding and Waymack are the only living members of this illustrious line and they both have retired.

Present-day editors of the *Register* and *Tribune* are a new generation in the never-ending flow of men and ideas needed to keep newspapers alive and alert to the task of serving a constantly-changing people. The best measurement of the abilities of men who edit newspapers is the public's appraisal of their product.

Nowhere in America are newspapers serving an expanded field more widely accepted than are the Des Moines *Register* and the *Tribune*.

The Register Today

The newspaper that is delivered to the front porch each morning and evening is not a big item physically. It usually weighs seven or eight ounces. A Sunday paper may weigh up to two and one-half pounds. Also, a daily newspaper is a perishable product. It is tremendously valuable for the first few hours of its existence, yet its "life" is rarely longer than twenty-four hours. By that time succeeding papers have captured the attention of the readers.

Though its career is brief and it is not large in size, the newspaper nevertheless is costly to produce. The Des Moines Register and Tribune Company spends an average of \$30,000 a day on newspaper operations alone. The *Register* and *Tribune* have 1,250 full-time employees in Des Moines and over the state, in addition to 6,400 carrier salesmen and 1,250 motor route men. The route men deliver Sunday papers to farmers. The *Sunday Register* has the largest farm circulation of any newspaper in the United States.

Publishing a newspaper is a highly complex process. News pours into the *Register* and *Tribune* offices over press service wires at a rate of 500,000 words a day. Staff writers in Washing-

ton, Des Moines, and elsewhere add tens of thousands of words to that daily volume. A vital cog in the news-gathering machinery is the Register and Tribune Iowa News Service. This service collects news and pictures from more than three hundred correspondents in all ninety-nine Iowa counties.

In addition to publishing the two newspapers, The Register and Tribune Company has moved with considerable success into the radio and magazine fields. The Cowles radio stations are KRNT, Des Moines; WNAX, Yankton, South Dakota; and WCOP, Boston, Massachusetts. The Cowles magazines are *Look* and *Quick*. Gardner Cowles is president of The Register and Tribune Company while John Cowles is president of The Minneapolis Star and Tribune Company.

Directing the news operations of the *Register* and *Tribune* are Executive Editor Kenneth MacDonald and Managing Editor Frank Eyerly. Editor of the editorial pages is Forrest W. Seymour, winner of a Pulitzer award in 1943 for distinguished editorial writing. Richard Wilson heads the Washington bureau. Two of the *Register's* most popular departments are the farm and sports sections. Farm Editor J. S. Russell is editor of the Iowa Farm and Home Register, a magazine printed once a month as part of the *Sunday Register*. Sec Taylor, long-time member of the *Regis-*

ter and *Tribune* staff, has charge of the widely-known *Register* sports section. The *Register's* football coverage is among the most complete of any newspaper in the United States.

The newspapers also have been pioneers in the use of news pictures. The *Register* was the first newspaper to use the technique of telling a story by a series of pictures. That method is widely employed by the large picture magazines of today. The *Register* and *Tribune* receive more than 50,000 pictures a year from their own fifteen staff photographers, from Associated Press wirephoto, and from other major picture services.

A newspaper, however, does not rise or fall on the basis of these qualities, important though they are. In a 1915 editorial, Harvey Ingham told what it takes to make a real newspaper:

Two avenues of popularity are open to the newspaper. The first is to yield, to flatter, to cajole. The second is to stand for right things unflinchingly and win respect. . . .

A strong and fearless newspaper will have readers and a newspaper that has readers will have advertisements. That is the only newspaper formula worth working to. . . .

After making all allowances, the only newspaper popularity that counts in the long run is bottomed on public respect.

The State Historical Society of Iowa

IOWA CITY IOWA

Established by the Pioneers in 1857

PUBLICATIONS OF THE SOCIETY

The Iowa Journal of History and Politics
The Palimpsest—A monthly magazine
The Public Archives Series
The Iowa Biographical Series
The Iowa Economic History Series
The Iowa Social History Series
The Iowa Applied History Series
The Iowa Chronicles of the World War
The Iowa Centennial History
The Miscellaneous Publications
The Bulletins of Information

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the State Historical Society may be secured through election by the Board of Curators. The annual dues are \$3.00. Members may be enrolled as Life Members upon the payment of \$100.00. Persons who were members of the Society prior to March 1, 1948, may be enrolled as Life Members upon payment of \$50.00.

Address all Communications to

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN, Superintendent

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

Iowa City Iowa