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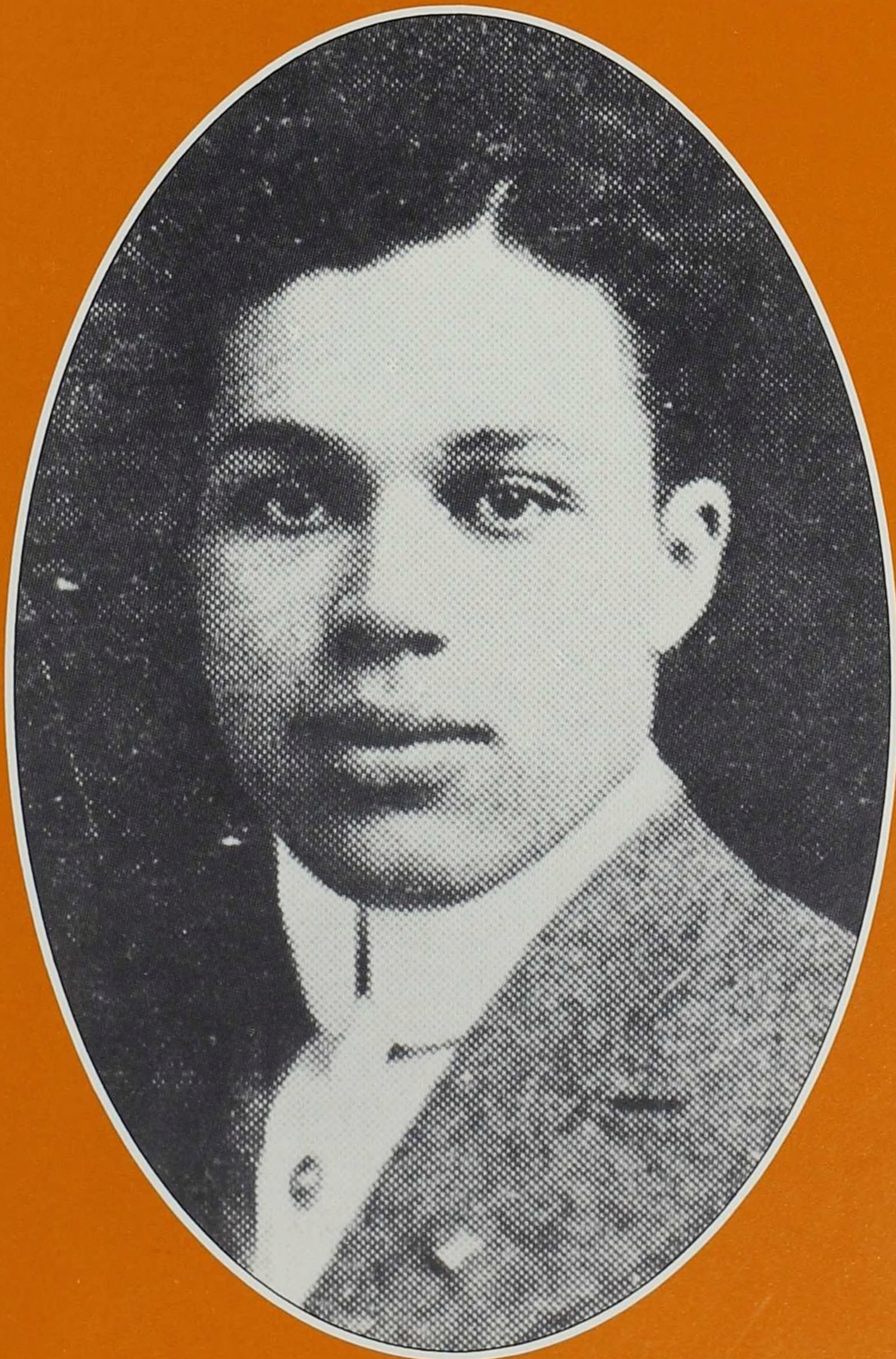

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The PALIMPSEST

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VOLUME 66 NUMBER 3 MAY/JUNE 1985

Mary K. Fredericksen, Editor

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Cover: *Archie Alphonso Alexander in 1912.* (The Hawkeye, *1912)*

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.

"Alexander the Great," Bridge Builder

by Charles E. Wynes

Archie Alphonso Alexander — "Alexander the Great" to State University of Iowa football fans between 1909 and 1911 — "built bridges and freeways, million-dollar apartments and airfields, power plants and railroad trestles, during his forty-two year career as a design engineer and builder." Earlier, Alexander had been the first black football player at the University of Iowa and the first black graduate of its College of Engineering. Later, he was the second Republican — and the second black — to serve as governor of the Virgin Islands. He was twice honored by his alma mater: in 1925 he received an honorary degree in civil engineering; and, in 1947 he was hailed as "one of the first one hundred citizens of merit" among the university's 30,000 alumni. In 1946 Howard University awarded Alexander an honorary doctorate of civil engineering. It was the first such degree awarded by that institution.

In life as in death, however, Alexander was little known in the larger black community. For instance, the 1982 *Dictionary of American Negro Biography*, edited by Michael R. Winston and the late Rayford W. Logan, did not include an entry on Alexander. Blacks may be largely unaware of the achievements of Archie A. Alexander because he worked and moved in a predominantly white world. He had, for example, only white partners in his construction firm, Alexander and Repass, which *Ebony* magazine described as the "nation's most successful interracial business" in 1949. Even Alexander's longtime personal secretary, Ilene Dahltorp, was white and in 1949 his oldest employee was a white master mechanic who had joined Alexander's firm in 1918, just four years after it was founded.

These associations, however, did not make Alexander a "white Negro": he was not above the race problem; that problem did touch him; and he was very much aware of what it meant to be a Negro in his times. Alexander served as president of both the Des Moines chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the local chapter of the Inter-racial Commission. Moreover, he served as a trustee of both Howard University and Tuskegee Institute, two of the most prominent black institutions of higher learning in America.

Such an uncommon career had its beginnings in an uncommon setting for a black American — in the town of Ottumwa, Iowa, located on the Des Moines River roughly halfway between the city of Des Moines and the point where the small river empties into the Mississippi, at Keokuk. It is roughly ninety miles from Ottumwa to Des Moines, the capital and the largest city in the state.

In the late nineteenth century Ottumwa was a small industrial town devoted chiefly to meatpacking, though there was also a great deal of coal mining in the area. The town itself was neatly divided by the Des Moines River, into North Ottumwa and South Ottumwa. The major business district and the nicer residential areas of the town were located in North Ottumwa, the hill section. South Ottumwa contained the town's industrial area and the neighborhoods in which the poorer people

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lived. Like most of small-town America, Ottumwa was a rather ordinary place in which to be born, to live, and to die. Today's residents like to recall that the novelist Edna Ferber, of *So Big*, *Saratoga Trunk*, and *Giant* fame — among other titles — once lived in North Ottumwa as a child, and even commenced public school there. (Miss Ferber's autobiographical account of her Ottumwa childhood, however, indicated little, if any, fondness for the town on her part.)

It was in South Ottumwa that Archie Alphonso Alexander was born, on May 14, 1888. He was the son of Price and Mary Alexander, members of the tiny minority which made up the black community of Ottumwa. According to the 1890 census, that black community numbered only 467 out of a total population of 14,001. Price Alexander was a janitor and coachman. That bit of occupational information is about all that is known of the Alexanders in Ottumwa until eleven years later, in 1899, when they moved from there to a farm on the outskirts of Des Moines where Price Alexander again found employment as a janitor, this time in a bank.

For the rest of his life, Archie Alexander would call Des Moines home. There he attended Oak Park grammar school and Oak Park High School from which he graduated in 1905. He then attended Highland Park College and the Cummins Art School before entering the State University of Iowa, in Iowa City, in 1908.

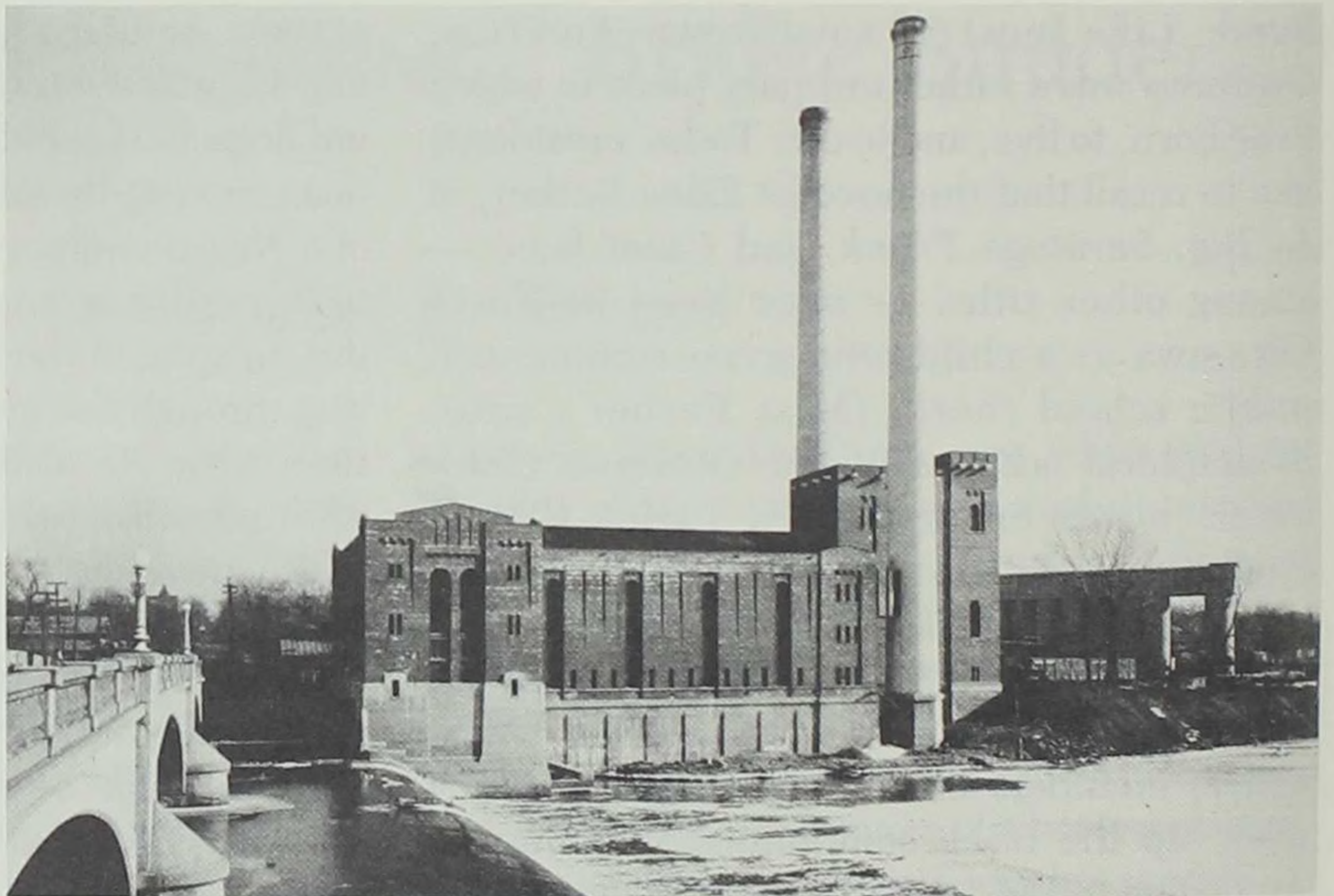
Alexander had lived in a white world in Ottumwa, and an even whiter one in Des Moines. In the 1890 census, Ottumwa's black population represented 3.33 percent of the town's total population of 14,001. Des Moines, according to the same census, had only 1,149 Negroes, or 2.29 percent of the city's total population of 50,093.

Perhaps, then, it came as no surprise to Alexander to find himself the only Negro in the College of Engineering at the State University of Iowa. Actually, he was the first. Upon entering, he was even warned that "a Negro could not hope to succeed as an engineer," while the dean reportedly said that he had "never heard of a Negro engineer." But Alexander first had to succeed as an engineering *student*, which he did, in spite of the fact that he had to work his way through the university at a variety of part-time jobs. He also found time to star on the varsity football team during his last three years at the university — the first black to play football for the university — and to pledge Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, which he later served as national president. It was as a tackle on the football field, however, that he earned the sobriquet "Alexander the Great."

When Alexander graduated in 1912, it did appear as though "a Negro could not hope to succeed as an engineer," since every engineering firm in Des Moines turned down his requests for employment in that capacity. So he took a twenty-five cents per hour laborer's job in a steel shop with the Marsh Engineering Company of Des Moines. Two years later, in 1914, when he left to establish his own company, he was earning $70 a week — as an engineer, in charge of bridge construction for the company in both Iowa and Minnesota.

It was while working for the Marsh Engineering Company that Alexander had met a white engineer, George F. Higbee. In 1917 Higbee joined Alexander's firm as a partner, the firm name being changed from A.A. Alexander, Inc., to Alexander and Higbee. The firm specialized in building bridges, viaducts, and sewage systems throughout Iowa. The partnership endured and prospered, until 1925 when Higbee was killed in a construction accident.

For the next four years Alexander continued the business alone. It was during this period that Alexander received several large contracts for construction projects at his alma mater.



The State University of Iowa's new heating plant in December 1927. Alexander received the contract to build the Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson-designed plant. (courtesy University of Iowa Archives, Iowa City)

These included the university's new heating plant, built in 1926, the new power plant, built in 1928, and the under-the-Iowa River tunnel system, also built in 1928.

Then, in 1929, Maurice A. Repass, another white engineer, joined him as a junior partner in the renamed firm of Alexander and Repass. Repass and Alexander had been classmates at the State University of Iowa where they had played football together. At the time that Repass joined Alexander, he was an instructor in the department of mechanics and hydraulics at his alma mater.

Over the years, Alexander worked to "keep up with his field." In 1921 he had actually turned supervision of the firm over to Higbee while he, Alexander, attended a post-graduate course in bridge design at the University of London.

Ebony magazine claimed in 1949 that the Alexander and Repass construction company was the "nation's most successful interracial business." It certainly was successful. In the firm, Repass was the "inside man," checking contracts and handling the day-to-day details of running the business, while Alexander was the "outside man," making the contacts, seeking out the contracts, and representing the company in the business and engineering worlds. Alexander said that he found his race but "little handicap" in his role, while Repass boasted, "I have met with no adverse criticism, but [rather] have been commended many times for my choice of partners." At the same time, Alexander's white secretary, who served in both the Des Moines and Washington, D.C., offices of Alexander and Repass, said that her white friends "had better not say anything about my working for a Negro."

Over the years, the firm of Alexander and Repass completed projects in most of the then forty-eight states. By 1950 the total number of projects completed since the company's original founding in 1914 exceeded three hundred. Alexander once claimed in testimony before a congressional committee that he and Repass ran a "$6 million outfit," and at least one friend described Alexander's Des Moines home as a "palace." Yet, he was not an inordinately wealthy man, since by 1950 his reputed net assets were only in the neighborhood of a half-million dollars.

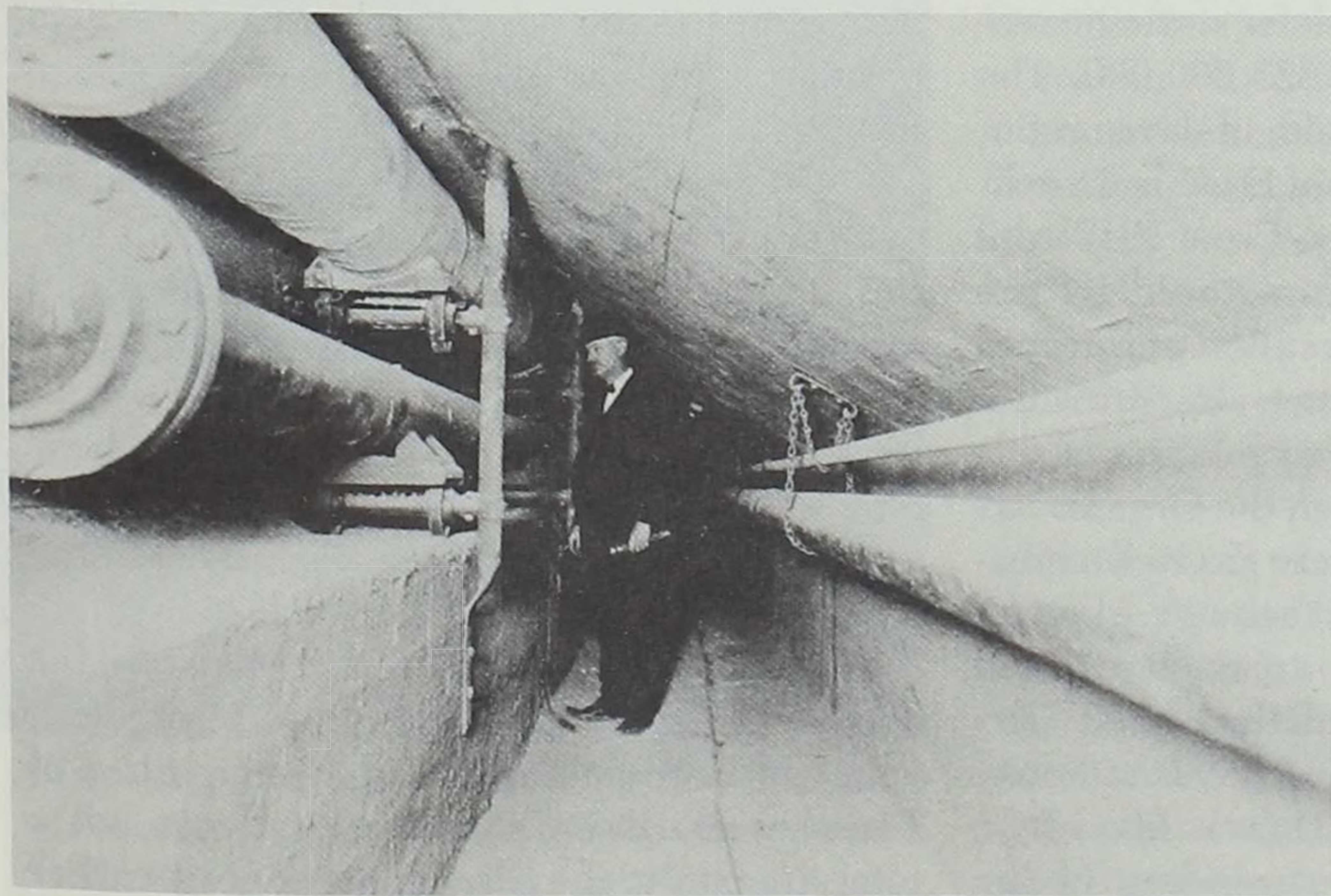
Perhaps the most prominent of the many large projects completed by Alexander and Repass — but only because they were in the

nation's capital, and not because they were necessarily the most technically difficult or challenging — were the Tidal Basin Bridge and Seawall, the K Street elevated highway and underpass from Key Bridge to 27th Street, N.W., and the Whitehurst Freeway along the Potomac River which carried traffic around Georgetown. The $3,350,000 Whitehurst Freeway project required the labor of some two hundred workers for two years.

When Alexander, a racial activist even in the 1940s, ran afoul of District of Columbia union rules that required separate drinking facilities and separate restrooms for white and black workers, he neatly skirted the issue by implementing the use of paper drinking cups and by labeling the two restrooms "skilled" and "unskilled." Thus Alexander did not have to desert his principles, while the unions were almost completely satisfied because only five of the largely black construction crew were skilled workers. That fact in itself was evidence of another union policy that kept blacks from becoming apprentices in the skilled trades.

In politics, unlike most blacks after the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 and the coming of the New Deal, Alexander remained a lifelong Republican. It was no wonder, for not only did he come from a part of the country where the Republican party was the majority party, but he was also a wealthy man by any standard, and one who regularly dealt or associated with the "movers and shakers," or, as some would say, the "country club set." Alexander did not just vote Republican. He was an active Republican, who twice — in 1932 and 1940 — served as assistant to the chairman of the Iowa Republican State Committee, and early in 1952 he joined the "Eisenhower for President" movement. Thus it was not surprising that when Eisenhower was elected he found an office for this black man from Iowa, a state which was represented in the United States Senate at the time by both a Republican, Bourke B. Hickenlooper, and a Democrat, Guy M. Gillette. The post, however, was as governor of the largely black Virgin Islands.

The appointment was a disaster for all concerned. It may well have hastened Alexander's death. It was to prove an immense embarrassment for Eisenhower and the Republican party. And finally, the Virgin Islanders were adversely affected since Alexander's personality and policies tended to exacerbate relations between the inhabitants and the federal



Alexander also received the contract to build the tunnel system under the Iowa River to pipe steam, water, and electricity from the power plant to the west campus. In the 1928 photograph, the tunnel's designer, S.U.I. Professor B. P. Fleming of the College of Engineering, inspects the work. (courtesy University of Iowa Archives, Iowa City)

Virgin Islands Governor Archie A. Alexander waves to spectators after taking his oath of office, April 9, 1954. (courtesy Special Collections Department, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City)

government in Washington, D.C.

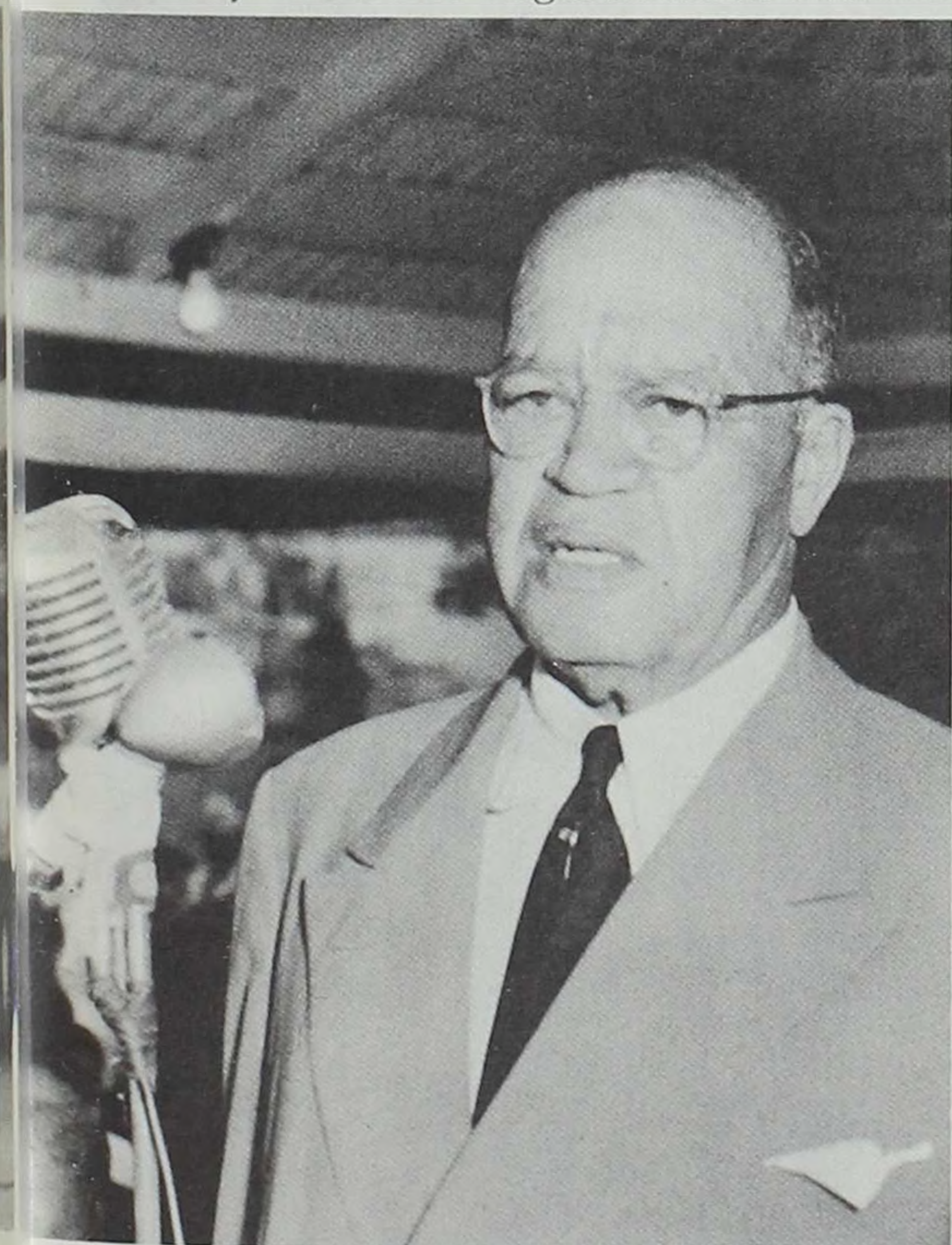
The United States Virgin Islands — comprised of some fifty-odd small islands or cays with a total area of only 133 square miles — were acquired from Denmark for strategic reasons in 1917 for the sum of $25,000,000. The population was largely Negroid, of slave origin, but there was also a minority of Danish, Dutch, French, and English ancestry. From 1917 until 1931 the islands were administered by the Navy Department. They were then transferred to the Interior Department. In 1927 the islanders were granted United States citizenship, and in 1936, through the Organic Act of the Virgin Islands, they were granted a measure of self-government through elected municipal councils which, in turn, constituted the legislative assembly for all the islands. The office of chief executive, once civil authority had been established in 1931, was filled by a governor appointed by the president of the United States. In 1954, following years of agitation by the islanders, the Organic Act of 1936 was replaced by a revised Organic Act which changed the makeup and size of the legislative body, but left the governorship an appointive position, much to the chagrin of the Virgin Islanders.

Always poor, and economically dependent upon sugar, rum, bay rum, cattle, and tourists, the islanders relied on federal financial assistance to such an extent that conservative critics on the mainland referred to them as "wards of the nation." Unfortunately, these critics later included within their ranks the governor-designate of the islands, Archie Alphonso Alexander.

Of course, Alexander had received his appointment as a prominent Iowa Republican who had been among the early supporters of Eisenhower. Even so, Alexander was not a total stranger to the islands. Some years earlier

he had organized and become the first president of American-Caribbean Contractors, which had done construction work in Venezuela and Puerto Rico, and had unsuccessfully sought contracts for sewage disposal plants in the Virgin Islands. Later, Alexander and his wife had vacationed in the islands and thus escaped several cold Iowa winters.

In 1954 the Virgin Islanders needed a governor with the image of President Eisenhower himself — someone warm, outgoing, and almost universally trusted, even by his enemies. What they got in Alexander, however, was a governor cut in the mold of another Iowan by birth, ex-President Herbert Hoover; both men appeared to be doctrinaire, cold personally, and distrusted for reasons that were not always clear. The Virgin Islanders needed a warm and outgoing governor for two reasons: (1) because the government of the islands was about to undergo significant change under the revised Organic Act of 1954 which went into effect just two months after Alexander's inauguration; and, (2) he would be replacing as governor the popular Morris F. de Castro, the first native governor of the islands. Alexander, though black, seemed to represent a backward step to the majority of Virgin Islanders, while the tiny minority of whites were uneasy with the idea of a black governor. There had been only one black governor before Alexander.



Governor Alexander delivering his inaugural address. (courtesy Special Collections Department, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City)

Alexander, as a regular, black Horatio Alger, who had conquered the adversities of both poverty and race, was the personification of the Protestant work ethic. Now he was being sent to govern a population of somnolent, dreamy Caribbean islanders. A later scholar-critic wrote that Alexander was a "midwestern Babbit who brought all the values of small-town America to the Caribbean." The same critic said that Alexander brought with him "an openly contemptuous attitude toward the local people, a brash manner more befitting a gang foreman than a diplomat, and a complete inability to comprehend the subtleties of West Indian intercourse."

Such harsh criticism was not far off the mark. Even at the Senate hearing preceding his confirmation Alexander had referred to the Virgin Islanders as "mendicants" and "wards of the United States." Rather than repeatedly extending their hands outward for more United States support, he had suggested that the islanders should "tighten their belts and go to work."

Word of all this, of course, had preceded Alexander to the islands, and it was a tribute to the Virgin Islanders' hospitality that they received him as warmly as they did. For instance, when Alexander arrived at the airport of the capital city, Charlotte Amalie, the name over the main terminal, "Harry S. Truman

Governor and Mrs. Alexander on the steps of the Government House during carnival. (courtesy Special Collections Department, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City)

Airport," had been shrouded tactfully with a welcome banner. Outside the terminal, Alexander clambered to the top of a crimson, Chevrolet convertible and led a brass-band parade up Crown Prince Street and down Queen Street to the Emancipation Garden where the Danes had freed the slaves in 1848. There, on April 9, 1954, Alexander was sworn in as governor of the islands, ninety-one percent of whose 26,665 inhabitants were black.

Alexander's administration never had even a short honeymoon period. Indeed, his tenure in office lasted only sixteen months. Alexander later claimed that most of his troubles stemmed from the fact that the revised Organic Act of 1954 did not provide for an elected governor. As the appointed governor, he found himself facing a "hostile legislature" from the very beginning, and soon both Democrats and Republicans were calling for him to give up his office, especially after he vetoed the appropriations bill for 1955.

Alexander's island critics further accused him of being "too firm" with the native population, and of appointing too many non-islanders to administrative posts at inflated salaries. A. Melchoir, editor of the St. Thomas *Daily News*, said that Alexander was "a good man but not a [proper] government official. He needs under him men who know about government and share his courage. At the moment [his administration] looks like a little circus."

The truth was that Alexander was used to running his own construction company, with no board of directors to be responsible to. Unfortunately, he believed he could run a country the same way. But he now had a board of directors, that is, the legislature, and the legislators not only said "no" at times, they became a focal point of opposition to the governor. Among the populace, on the other hand, there was supposedly much praise for Alexander. Many of the leading residents — more concerned with profits than with self-government — declined to take sides in the growing political furor, and simply credited Alexander with "good intentions." In short, Alexander might have made a good, perhaps even a popular, benevolent dictator. But in the mid-1950s the days of benevolent dictators, even popular ones, were all but over.

Legislative investigation of the Alexander regime led to accusations of: the illegal expenditure of official funds for travel and entertainment of friends and "cronies"; the entering into "excessive and ridiculous contracts" with regard to the perennial freshwater problem; the allocation of funds "without regard to legislative intent"; the issuance of gag-orders for government employees in relation to questions raised by the legislature; the use of government furniture, including lunchroom equipment purchased for the new high school, in the private homes of officials; and the use of "rude and obscene" language, as well as threats, in dealing with his political enemies.

Finally, Alexander was accused of creating a new corporation with some of his business associates, then giving it the use of government-owned equipment, and arranging for it to purchase crushed rock at a low price. Such arrangements would have guaranteed a successful low bid and the winning of a contract for the construction of a half-million dollar, waterfront highway project. The Interior Department subsequently canceled any invitation to the new (and supposedly favored) company to bid on the project. But Alexander was to claim that he had initiated the cancellation because the whole business had become tainted.

The first, and last, anniversary of the Alexander regime was celebrated in Charlotte Amalie on April 9, 1955, with a call for his resignation. Meanwhile, Alexander was observing that anniversary back in Des Moines where, on April 11, he announced that he was "not in the least" worried about attempts to oust him. "It's a small group," he said of those who sought his removal, one that "wants to

control things its own way." Then in the typically blunt style of the man, Alexander continued, "They don't want discipline; and that's what I've been giving them." Alexander was proving to be the wrong man in the wrong job in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The next day, April 12, Alexander returned to Charlotte Amalie, where he was admitted to the Knud Hansen Memorial Hospital for a checkup. He now had little hope of continuing as governor of the Virgin Islands. His opponents wanted him out because they could not work with him. The Eisenhower administration wanted him out to avoid further unfavorable publicity or embarrassment. So Governor Alexander and President Eisenhower engaged in an exchange of correspondence. On August 10, Alexander wrote the president about a "recent heart attack" and offered the "urgent admonitions of my medical advisers" as grounds for the president's acceptance of his resignation. The president, on August 18, replied, accepting Alexander's resignation and dutifully expressing his "appreciation of the many excellent services you have performed," as well as assuring him of his "best wishes for an early return to complete health." The very next day the administration announced the appointment of Walter A. Gordon, black, of Berkeley, California, as Governor Alexander's successor.

Alexander's brief and misguided foray into the world of the political office seeker was over. He was ailing and at the age of sixty-seven he was no longer physically able to be a mover and shaker. But as he looked back over the road of his life — as he must have done — what he saw was probably pleasing to him, with the raucous sixteen-month interlude in Charlotte Amalie a matter of little import. Undoubtedly, more important to him were the memories of his boyhood in Ottumwa, of the years of his youth and his manhood in Des Moines and Washington, D.C., of the struggles and successes, achievements and rewards, and above all, of the recognition which had come to him as an American who had made his dreams come true.

On January 4, 1958, Alexander died of a heart attack at his Des Moines home, 2200 Chautauqua Parkway, which was situated on land once owned by Highland Park College. When Alexander had turned out for the Highland Park football team in 1905, the college's president had rebuffed him with a remark that he already had all the education he needed, and that he should get a job as a janitor.

Alexander's estate was worth $140,505. In his will, Alexander directed that whatever was left from a trust fund established for Mrs. Alexander should, at her death, be divided equally among the University of Iowa, Tuskegee Institute, and Howard University for engineering scholarships. Mrs. Alexander died in 1973, and in 1975 each of the three institutions received $105,000.

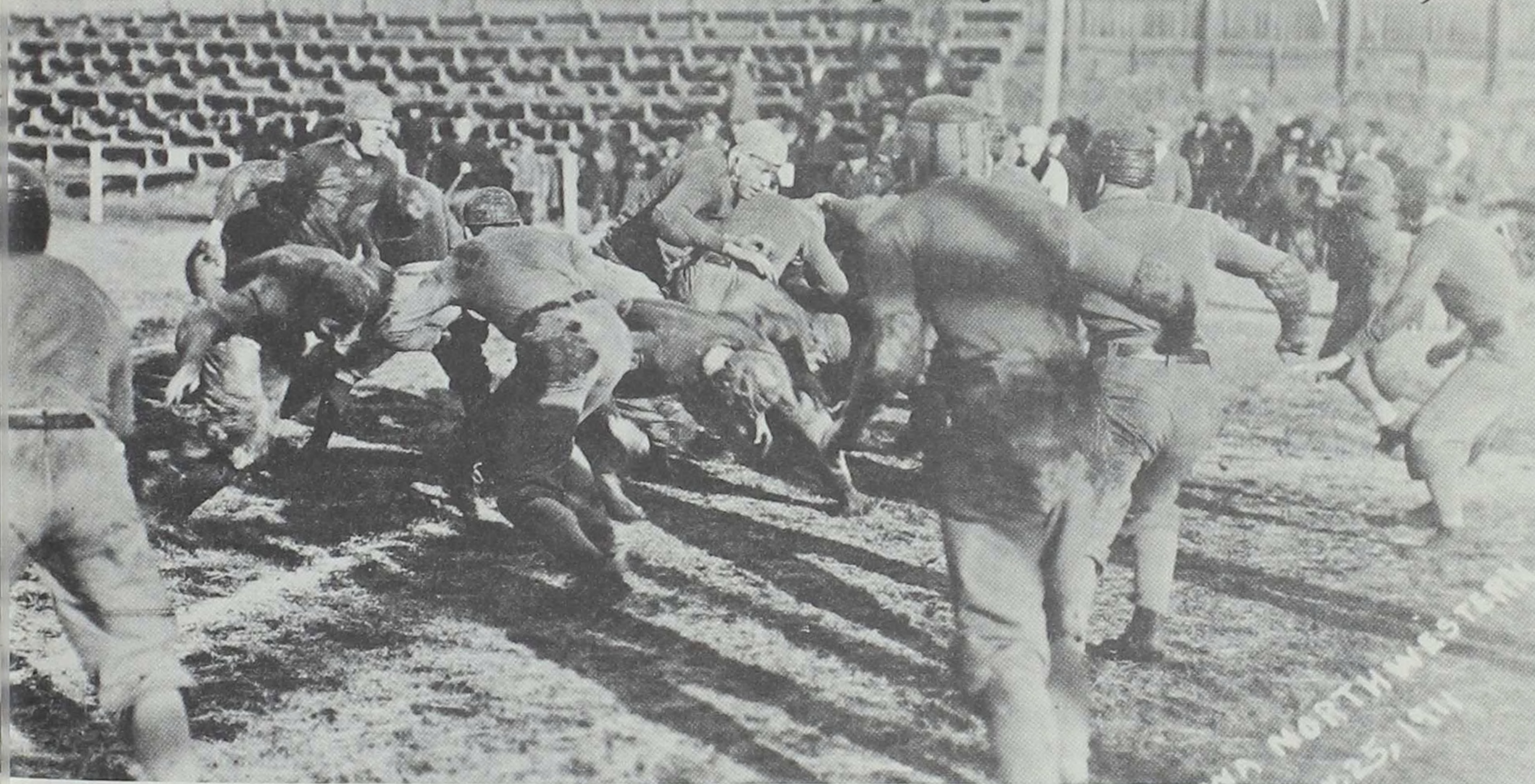
Thus passed Archie Alphonso Alexander of Ottumwa and Des Moines, a man who in not heeding the advice of his college president made the most of his education. □

Note on Sources

Alexander's personal papers are held by the Special Collections Department of the University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City. The collection includes little personal correspondence, however, and consists mostly of trustees' records from Howard University and articles and clippings about Alexander. The *National Cyclopedia of American Biography*, vol. 49 (New York, 1966), pp. 252-53, includes the best published sketch about Alexander's life. The information it contains was checked for accuracy by both Mrs. Alexander and Maurice Repass. There is another sketch in *Current Biography, 1955* (New York, 1955), pp. 9-11. Also, an autobiographical sketch was prepared by Alexander for his nomination hearing: U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, *The Nomination of Archie A. Alexander to be Governor of the Virgin Islands*. 83d Cong., 2d sess., 1954. Of greater value, however, were articles in *Ebony* magazine in April and September 1949; *Time* magazine for April 19, 1954; the *New York Times* for April 11, 1954, April 12, 13, 18, and August 18 and 19, 1955; the *Des Moines Tribune* for November 25, 1947; the *Grand Rapids Herald* for October 4, 1954; and the *Des Moines Sunday Register* for January 5, 1958. On Alexander in the Virgin Islands, see Gordon K. Lewis, *The Virgin Islands: A Caribbean Lilliput* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), and William W. Boyer, *America's Virgin Islands: A History of Human Rights and Wrongs* (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1983).

"He Opened Holes Like Mountain Tunnels"

by Raymond A. Smith, Jr.



Archie A. Alexander, center, opening a hole for the Iowa plunge in the Iowa-Northwestern game, 25 November 1911. (SHSI)

When Archie Alexander turned out for the State University of Iowa varsity football team in 1909, the game of football was entering a period of rapid transition which would see it finally take on its modern form. The easiest way to understand the transition is to realize that the gridiron in 1909 was just that — a gridiron. The playing field was 110 yards long and 160 feet wide and the chalked lines ran both ways, creating a gridiron — a mass of squares five yards on each side. That changed in Archie's playing years as did a number of other rules. The game went from being seventy minutes in length to sixty minutes and it went from two halves of thirty-five minutes to four quarters of fifteen minutes each. In 1909 the field goal was reduced in value from four to three points although the touchdown was still five points. From 1909 until 1911, a team had only three downs in which to make ten yards, but, in 1912, a fourth down was added. In 1909 a touchback was followed for the first time by a scrimmage from the twenty-five yard line. Prior to that time a team taking a touchback had to kick immediately from their end zone. Throughout the Archie years there were serious limitations on the use of the forward pass, on coaching from the sidelines, on freedom of movement on the sidelines, and, finally, on the degree of violence allowable in the game. Rule XXIV of the "Official Foot Ball Rules, 1909," covering the conduct of players,

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was clear enough:

> *There shall be no striking with the fist or elbows, kneeing, kicking, meeting with the knee, nor striking with the locked hands by line men when they are breaking through; nor shall a player on defense strike in the face with the heel of the hand the opponent who is carrying the ball.*

The penalty laid down for such actions was severe. The player involved was to be disqualified and his team was to be penalized half the distance to its own goal. There were further portions of Rule XXIV which covered running into the kicker, piling on, hurdling, tripping, heaping abusive language on game officials, and tackling the ball carrier out of bounds. Roughing the kicker called for disqualification, and abusive language directed toward the officials led to suspension from the game, but all of the other infractions, including tackling below the knees, led to penalties of from five to fifteen yards.

In Alexander's day many things connected with the sport of football were not quite as they are now. Schedules were made to include a number of games fairly close to home. Long road trips were generally discouraged. Games between fairly large universities and relatively smaller colleges were legion. In 1909, for instance, the University of Iowa played Cornell while Nebraska played Knox. Other seemingly uneven games in 1909 included one between Clemson and Dahlonega (Georgia), one between Oklahoma University and Kingfisher College, and another between the University of Utah and Odgen High School.

Although power was moving slowly westward, Walter Camp's All-America Foot Ball Team for 1909 had six players from Yale on the first team and three more Elis on the second. It was generally considered that Yale had the outstanding team in the country in that year. Of the five other players on Walter Camp's first team, two were from Harvard, and one each had played for Brown, Michigan, and Minnesota. Although there was only one representative from Yale on the 1910 first eleven, there were seven other players from Ivy League schools. In 1911 the aggregation selected by Walter Camp included Jim Thorpe from Carlisle, a tackle from West Point, a fullback from the Naval Academy, and, again, eight Ivy

Ready for battle in 1911. (The Hawkeye, *1913*)

League representatives.

There were some legendary figures engaged in coaching in the Alexander years. Fielding Yost was still at Michigan, Amos Alonzo Stagg was at Chicago, and Jim Thorpe's coach at Carlisle was the eminent Glenn S. ("Pop") Warner. Archie was to play at Iowa under two coaches, John G. Griffith and Jess Hawley.

* * *

Iowa football in 1909 was about twenty years old. The first game of non-association football played by the men of the University of Iowa was in 1889 against Grinnell. In the following season Iowa played Grinnell once again and added Iowa Wesleyan to their schedule. Thereafter the schedule generally included five to nine games, although in 1903 it was expanded to eleven games. There were good years, bad years, and middling years. One of the team's first good years was 1896 when it won seven games, lost only to Chicago, and played a scoreless tie with Nebraska. The years between 1899 and 1905 were really banner years for the young football players from Iowa. In that period of time they won fifty games while losing only fifteen and tying two. But after 1905 success on the gridiron was more elusive for the Hawkeyes. In 1906 and 1908 they suffered through losing seasons, and barely salvaged a 3-2 record in 1907 with a victory over Drake in the last game of the season.

In the twenty or so years that Iowa had played football between 1889 and 1909, they had played almost half of their games against Iowa teams, including Grinnell, Coe, Luther, Cornell, Simpson, Drake, Iowa State (Ames), and Upper Iowa. As early as 1891 they had begun playing universities and colleges in neighboring states such as Minnesota, Nebraska, and Kansas and in the first decade of this century they were playing Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Kansas, as well as Chicago and Northwestern. These rivalries proved to be between fairly evenly matched teams. Prior to 1909, Iowa teams had split ten games with Missouri and Ames, stood 4-7-2 with Nebraska, and were generally ahead of their smaller college opponents. For example, Cornell had yet to beat them in four games, and Drake had managed victories in only two of eleven contests. Iowa had beaten Michigan 28-5 in 1900, but in the two succeeding years they had been whipped 50-0 and 107-0 and Michigan thereupon disappeared from their schedule. Iowa had lost six games to Minnesota prior to the 1909 season but more galling, perhaps, was the fact that their neighbors to the north had rolled up 217 points in those six games to Iowa's 4. It is fair to state that Iowa in the first decade of the twentieth century played representative if somewhat erratic football. They had some great victories, a few great years, and they had suffered some embarrassing defeats. They tended to be what one writer of the time called "eccentric."

By 1909 the game was changing both nationally and locally. It was beginning to take on a look which we would recognize in activities both on and off the field. In 1910, for example, Manager Kellogg busily sold season tickets for $1.50 which gave one admission to the three home games that year: Morningside, Purdue, and Drake. In that same year construction was completed on some concrete bleachers which allowed a modicum of comfort for at least 2,000 of the spectators at home games. Football was already *the* spectator sport on the campus and the only one that was capable of producing much revenue. In September 1910 the treasury of the board of athletics reported that they had come out about fifty dollars ahead in 1909. Revenues had exceeded expenses in football by over $3,700. That meant that the financial losses suffered by track, baseball, and basketball could be covered. Only one other sport had ended in the black in 1909 and that was the game of pushball

which had been played to a large crowd and had yielded net revenues of $123.80.

Football squads were small in the Alexander years. Archie's first varsity game was against the University of Minnesota at Minneapolis. Coach Griffith took twenty players on that trip. Later in the 1909 season he managed to take twenty-five players to Missouri. Most often the freshmen squad approximated the varsity squad in size and was used primarily to provide opposition in the hard scrimmaging which made up the bulk of the practice sessions each week. For games away from Iowa City, there was occasionally a band that traveled with the football team. Students and supporters tended to travel in fairly large numbers to games close by or to games where the intensity of the rivalry seemed to require it. Pep rallies and send-offs were common and featured speeches by the coaches and team members. Archie gave a short speech before the Drake game of 1910 explaining that he was from Des Moines and was looking forward to whipping the Blue and White for that very reason.

Other features of football in 1909-1911 have a contemporary ring to them. There were serious questions about the eligibility of players. Not only were grades a bar at times but the greater question of playing "ringers" was often raised in very bitter terms. In 1910 the University of Michigan canceled a game with Notre Dame because they claimed that Notre Dame intended to play a pair of players who had competed for five years in the northwest before coming to Notre Dame. Moreover, it was claimed that the pair had already played for two years at South Bend. But there were also suggestions that some colleges and universities were offering inducements to young men to depart the universities at which they were enrolled in order to avail themselves of greater financial rewards at other schools. At the end of Archie's sophomore year, the *Daily Iowan* published a story which suggested that there was general discontent among the freshmen athletes at Iowa and that many of them might

The State University of Iowa's 1909 varsity football squad. (courtesy University of Iowa Archives, Iowa City)

be moving on.

Many of the stars among the Iowa first year men are reported to be contemplating a change. It is known that another institution has offered legitimate inducements to these athletes.

It is known locally that other schools have regular systems whereby needy athletes are given lucrative positions to make their way through college. At one school, a leading member of the Big Eight, the athletes work for two hours a day in the library or in some other university capacity and receive their tuition which amounts to $120 for the year. One of the most prominent members of the Missouri Valley conference has an organization of alumni which acts as an employment bureau for the athletes. These alumni see to it that there is a big list of good jobs for the athletes every fall.

It has been hinted from several sources that the reason for the present dissatisfaction in the University of Iowa athletic circles is caused by a lack of the foregoing systems employed in sister schools, and employed in a perfectly legitimate manner, according to the belief of the majority of Iowa students.

If money and sports got mixed up at an early stage in the Iowa scene, it should be noted that another continuing problem in sports and games can be traced back to the misty beginnings of organized athletics. That was unhappiness with the poor souls who officiated at the ever more important contests. Consider the case of the unfortunate Lieutenant Beavers who, in 1909, made a decision about ball possession on a fumble in the Iowa loss to Drake. He had been scheduled to officiate at the game the following week between Iowa and Ames but he did the Wisconsin-Minnesota game instead. Why? Because of his call in the Drake game? In part, but as the *Daily Iowan* quickly

The State University of Iowa's 1910 varsity football squad. (courtesy University of Iowa Archives, Iowa City)

pointed out on 9 November 1909, Lieutenant Beavers had been calling the close ones against Iowa throughout the season. He had thrown an Iowa player out of the Drake game for no apparent reason and in the game with Nebraska he had unfairly taken a touchdown away from the Iowa lads. The conclusion to the *Daily Iowan* story is a masterful piece of pseudo-libel:

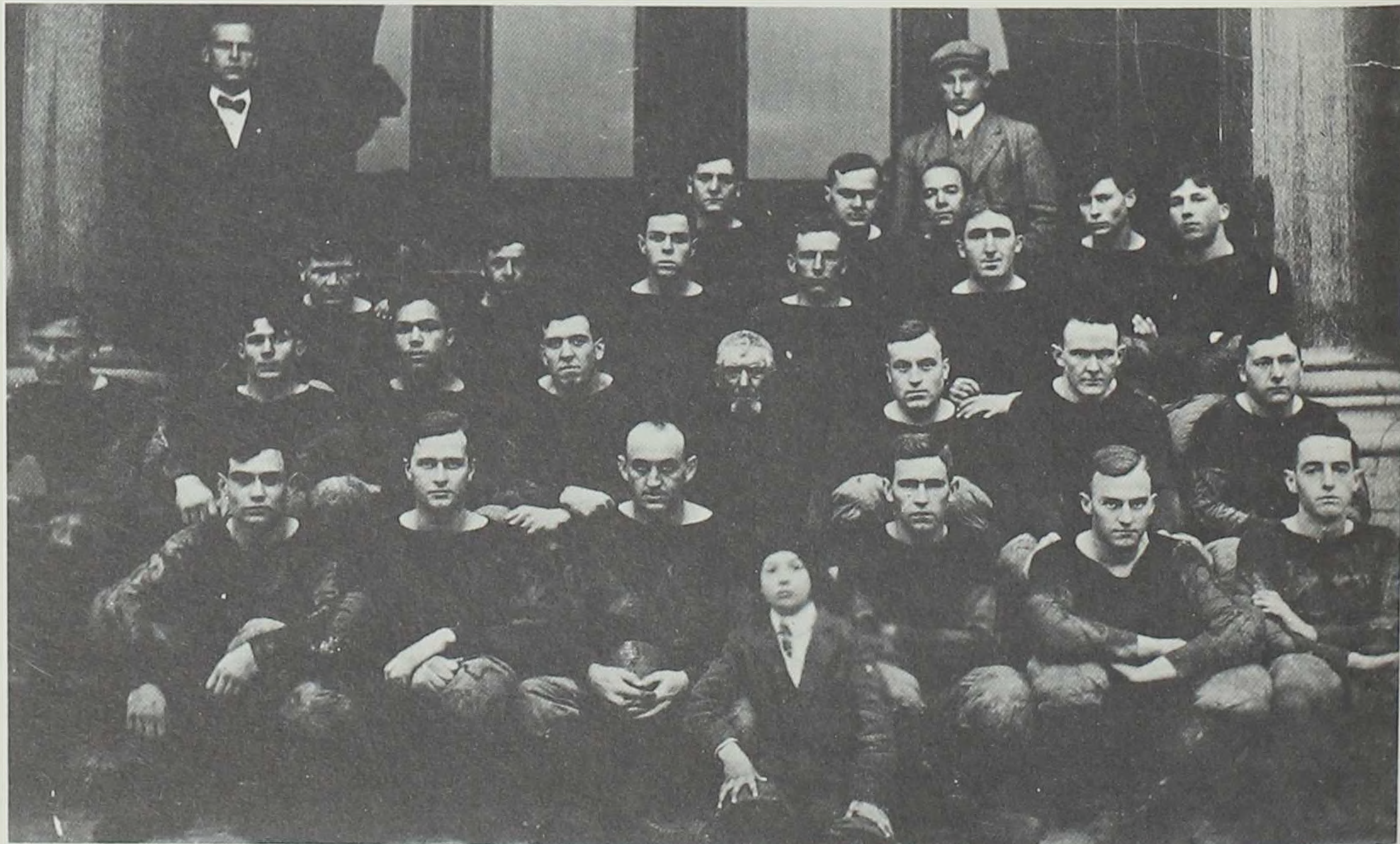
> *There are a variety of other rumors afloat here, such as that Beavers had placed bets on Drake, and that he was influenced by King, who is his superior officer at the army post; but it must be said that none of these have any substantiation. However, they do not make the student body at Iowa love the officials to any greater extent and the more conservative here are glad that Beavers, at least, will seek new fields of endeavor next Saturday.*

Finally, there was the rivalry with Ames which was then as now a tense one. Iowa had joined the Western Conference in 1900, but they had maintained ties with the Missouri Valley Conference (Missouri, Nebraska, and Kansas). Perhaps more importantly, there was an unofficial Iowa title to win each year. It is interesting to see the scaling down of expectations as certain seasons wore on. In 1909, for instance, hope was high at the outset that Iowa could defeat Minnesota, their only Western Conference foe that year. After a loss to Minnesota by a score of 41-0, one Iowa newspaper had the following headlines on its midweek story concerning the Iowa football team:

IOWA HAS MAKING OF STRONG TEAM
STATE UNIVERSITY SQUAD NOT AFFECTED
BY DEFEAT AT GOPHER'S HANDS.
STATE CHAMPIONSHIP THE AIM

CLUB OUT OF RUNNING FOR WESTERN LAURELS

Thus the games with Drake and Ames loomed large each year. Ames was by far the more



The State University of Iowa's 1911 varsity football squad. (courtesy University of Iowa Archives, Iowa City)

IOWA STATE HISTORICAL DEPARTMENT

Office of the State Historical Society

news for members

Make Your Reservations Now for the Society's Banquet—June 22. Join Us for a Day of Fun in Cedar Falls.

All members of the State Historical Society of Iowa are invited to attend the Society's 1985 annual banquet in Cedar Falls. The headquarters for daylong Society activities this year will be a fine Cedar Falls restaurant, The Broom Factory, with the banquet dinner scheduled to begin at 6:30 P.M. Society members are invited to meet at The Broom Factory at 11:00 for coffee and information and lunch—a soup and sandwich lunch will be served at 11:30—before setting off for local site tours, meetings, exhibits, slide show presentations, and afternoon workshops.

The Cedar Falls Historical Society has kindly arranged for three of the city's historic sites to be open for tours by Society members. It will be possible for members to tour these sites individually throughout the afternoon, although the Cedar Falls Historical Society has arranged times for free guided tours of each site. The Wyth House tour will begin at 1:15. The Victorian House tour will begin at 2:00. The Ice House Museum tour will begin at 3:00. (More information about the location of these sites—and a map of the area in which they are located—will be sent to you with your banquet tickets.)

A meeting of the Board of Trustees of the State Historical Society of Iowa will begin at The Broom Factory at 12:00. Interested members are cordially invited to attend this meeting to catch up with what is going on at the State Historical Society of Iowa. Society members are also invited to attend the meeting of the Iowa State Historical Board, scheduled to begin at 2:00 at The Broom Factory.

A series of slide show presentations will run through the afternoon at The Broom Factory, starting at 1:30. Local historical groups from around the state have been invited to set up exhibits and displays for viewing by SHSI members. This will provide a fine opportunity for Society members to learn what kind of history-related work is being done in the state. Representatives of the Iowa Newspaper Project will be available to describe the project, explain its scope, provide examples of the kind of work involved in the project, and answer any questions that SHSI members might have about it. Loren N. Horton, head of the Educational and Community Services program area of the Iowa State Historical Department and a person well known to Iowans interested in history, will talk during the afternoon about preserving historical photographs. Mary K. Fredericksen, editor of the *Palimpsest,* will talk during the afternoon about writing local, community, and regional history.

A social hour is slated to begin at 5:30. The banquet will begin at 6:30. A presentation of achievement awards for outstanding work in state and local history will follow the banquet. We are very much looking forward to a day of fun in Cedar Falls, and the chance to renew acquaintances with members of the State Historical Society of Iowa. Do join us.

A reservation form for the banquet has been included for your convenience in this issue of *News for Members*. Please return it to us by 14 June. If you would like more information about this year's banquet, write to us at Banquet Information, State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240, or call us at (319)338-5471.

SHSI Board of Trustees Election Time

All members of the State Historical Society of Iowa are eligible to participate in the elections for Society trustees. These elections are held to fill vacancies that will open on June 30, 1985, in the First and Sixth Congressional District seats and in two At Large seats. The people elected will serve three-year terms and work to achieve the board's purposes, namely, to further an understanding of Iowa history, to promote activities and endeavors that will help Iowans better understand their own heritage, and to provide general support services to the Iowa State Historical Department.

To cast your vote, mark the ballot provided in this issue of *News for Members* with your choice for one candidate for each congressional district seat and with your two choices for at large seats. You should vote for a total of four (4) candidates.

Do *not* sign your ballot, as this will invalidate it. Clip out the marked ballot (or use a photocopy of the ballot) and mail it to: Election Committee, State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240. Make sure that your name and address are on the envelope in which you mail your

ballot since your name will be checked against Society membership records for voting eligibility. *Your ballot will be invalid if you do not record your name and address on the envelope in which it is mailed.*

First Congressional District

William L. Talbot (Keokuk) was one of the organizers of the Lee County Iowa, Historical Society, and was its president when the Samuel Freeman Miller home was purchased. He was instrumental in obtaining the Dubuque-built sternwheel steamboat *Geo. M. Verity* to house the Keokuk River Museum. Talbot is president of the Midwest Riverboat Buffs, a regional vice-president of ILHMA, a former board member of the Iowa Society for the Preservation of Historic Landmarks, and a life member of the State Historical Society. He is the historiographer for the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa, and president of the Keokuk Public Library Board.

Sixth Congressional District

No nominations have been received for this position on the SHSI board of trustees.

At Large

Margaret N. Keyes (Iowa City): Native of Mount Vernon, Iowa. Education: Cornell College, University of Wisconsin, Florida State University. Present position: professor of home economics (historic interior design and architecture) and director of Old Capitol, University of Iowa. Current memberships: Iowa State Historical Board, Terrace Hill Authority, Board of Trustees SHSI, Victorian Society in America, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and Iowa Museum Association.

Carol A. Newton (Burlington) is a former librarian with a longtime interest in Iowa history. She helped reorganize the Des Moines County Historical Society, helped establish the society's three museums, and to get a preservation movement underway within the county. She is a member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Society of Colonial Dames XVII.

Debby J. Zieglowsky (Iowa City) works for the Office of the State Archaeologist, at the University of Iowa, where she manages site records. She is actively interested in Iowa archaeology and history, and currently serves as secretary of the Iowa Archeological Society. Debby has traced the location of Mormon campsites in southern Iowa, and has given several public lectures to present the results of this ongoing study. She also serves on the board of the Friends of the Iowa City Public Library.

BALLOT—PLEASE RETURN

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1985 BOARD OF TRUSTEES ELECTION BALLOT

Vote for **One** Candidate in Each Congressional District:

First District
- ☐ William L. Talbot
- ☐ ____________________

Sixth District
- ☐ ____________________

Vote for **Two** At Large Candidates:
- ☐ Margaret N. Keyes
- ☐ Carol A. Newton
- ☐ Debby J. Zieglowsky

Do **not** sign this ballot. Your name and address **must** be on the envelope.

The ballot must be received by **June 15, 1985.** Send it to:

Election Committee
State Historical Society of Iowa
402 Iowa Avenue
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

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---please clip along dotted line---

1985 SHSI BANQUET RESERVATION

The Broom Factory, Cedar Falls
Saturday, June 22, 1985, 6:30 P.M.

Yes, I plan to attend the 1985 banquet:

Name ____________________
Mailing address ____________________
City ____________ State ________ Zipcode ________

A variety of menu selections is available. Please indicate your choice:

☐ Prime Rib @ $14.00
☐ Chicken Breast Sautéed in Wine and Mushrooms @ $9.50
☐ Chef's Salad @ $6.50

Please list the names and menu selections of any guests that you are enclosing payment for:

Name ____________ Menu Selection ____________
Name ____________ Menu Selection ____________
Name ____________ Menu Selection ____________
Name ____________ Menu Selection ____________

Would you also like to join us at The Broom Factory for lunch before touring Cedar Falls' historic sites? A soup and sandwich lunch will be served at 11:30. Please enclose $4.00 per person if you would like us to make a lunch reservation for you and your guests.

Return this form, accompanied by payment to:

Banquet Reservations
State Historical Society of Iowa
402 Iowa Avenue
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

YOUR RESERVATIONS AND PAYMENT MUST BE RECEIVED BY JUNE 14

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The Home Front in Iowa During World War II

In the summer of 1985 the Iowa State Historical Department and the board of trustees of the State Historical Society of Iowa will jointly sponsor an oral history project. The purpose of the project is to document, through the use of video-taped interviews, the home front experiences of Iowa women during World War II. The Iowa State Historical Department is searching for Iowans who are willing to reminisce about the World War II era.

Even though social structures were affected by World War II, traditional ideology still defined women primarily as wives and mothers. We will explore the roles of Iowa women during the war years and investigate how these roles were changed or expanded as a result of the war. In order to gain fuller understanding of the home front years, we will delve into the individual's prewar and postwar experiences. In this study we will examine such topics as employment patterns and work experiences, community support and expectations, available child care and housing, the quality of home life and the effect of home front restrictions, and the impact of family participation in the military effort.

We plan to select women from both rural and urban backgrounds, women who held jobs in the public as well as the private sector, and women who were directly involved in the war effort and those who were not. Survey forms will be sent to people who express interest in the project. By early June the project staff will be selecting participants and setting up interview dates. An interview team will travel to selected sites during July. In late summer the staff will develop ideas about how to best share the

information gathered from project participants.

The project was originally proposed by two Iowa State Historical Department staff members: Alsatia Mellecker, administrative assistant, and Mary Bennett, photo archivist, who will serve as coordinators for the project. Mary Allison Farley, a graduate student in American studies at the University of Iowa, will serve as the project researcher, and Jan Heinen, who has a master of arts degree in instructional design and considerable experience with video-taping at the University of Iowa, will act as the video consultant for the project. This team will conduct interviews with selected participants and assist in the development of project materials. Professors Linda K. Kerber, Sarah Hanley, and H. Shelton Stromquist of the University of Iowa's history department also assisted with project planning.

If you would like to participate in the project, please contact: **Alsatia Mellecker or Mary Bennett, Iowa State Historical Department, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.**

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS, 1985

May 9-11	Midwest Archives Conference, Chicago, Illinois
May 11	Opening and Dedication of Iowa Hall, Museum of Natural History, University of Iowa, Iowa City
May 23-26	Victorian Society in America, Des Moines
June 9-13	American Association of Museums, Detroit, Michigan
June 22	**Annual Banquet, State Historical Society of Iowa, Cedar Falls**
August 15-17	Federation of Genealogical Societies, Kansas City, Missouri
Sept. 4-7	Association for Preservation Technology, San Francisco, California
Sept. 10-13	American Association for State and Local History, Topeka, Kansas
Sept. 17-20	Midwest Museums Conference, Cleveland, Ohio
October 9-12	Western History Association, Sacramento, California
October 9-13	National Trust for Historic Preservation, Seattle, Washington
October 10-12	European Studies Conference, Omaha, Nebraska
October 16-20	American Folklore Society, Cincinnati, Ohio
October 24-26	Plains Anthropological Conference, Iowa City
October 26-27	Iowa Genealogical Society, Des Moines
October 26	Iowa Local Historical and Museum Association, Des Moines
October 27-29	Iowa Museum Association, Iowa City/West Branch
Oct. 28-Nov. 1	Society of American Archivists, Austin, Texas
Oct. 31-Nov. 3	Oral History Association, Pensacola, Florida
November 1	**1st Annual Iowa History Symposium, Iowa City**
November 2	Iowa College Teachers of History, Iowa City

Iowa Newspaper Project Receives Generous Support (More Needed)

The staff of the Iowa Newspaper Project would like to thank the following people and organizations for supporting their work with generous financial contributions:

Story County Genealogical Society
Bruce Stillians, Waimanalo, Hawaii
Kent H. King, Mankato, Minnesota
Wellington M. Watters, New York, New York
W.A. Logan, Keokuk, Iowa
Carol Hoerner, Ames, Iowa
Mary Strohbehn, Davenport, Iowa
Harold McLeran, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa
Harold Peterson, Portland, Oregon
Christine Vilsack, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa
William Eberline, Des Moines, Iowa
William H. Cumberland, Storm Lake, Iowa
Michael Galvin, Los Angeles, California

Recent Photograph Acquisitions

Iowa Railroad Depots. 23 photos of railroad depots loaned for copying, including the towns of Rose Hill, Logan, Wright, Council Bluffs, Spencer, Pacific Junction, Fairbank, Sigourney, Jessup, Westgate, Beacon, Nugent, Oran, Atwood, and Tioga. Donor: Nicholas L. Pitsch.

Mather, J. E. 95 contact prints of original glass plate negatives loaned for copying, including views of Mather family members and scenes in Cedar County, Iowa, ca. 1888-1910. Donor: Merlin E. Mather.

Iowa Scenes, ca. 1960-1985. About 100 color slides of scenes in Iowa City, Dubuque, Keokuk, and Ames, Iowa. Includes several views of Iowa State University campus, ca. 1960s. Donor: Earl Rogers.

important opponent. In 1909 there was much talk of the renewed rivalry between the two schools since they had not met in 1908. The student newspaper at Iowa ran an interesting editorial suggesting that the two student bodies show a bit of "COLLEGE COURTESY." In fine terms the editorial writer called for spirit without spite:

We need not let rivalry feed our prejudices. A hearty and honest enthusiasm in one's team need not disparage the prowess of our opponents. Moreover, Ames is not such a backwoods farm, nor is Iowa such an Athens as some of us think she is, that we need to treat each other as indifferently as though we represented the opposite extremes of society.

The rival student bodies seemed to get along fine even though the Iowa team won by a score of 16-0. Unfortunately, the celebration in Iowa City that evening took the form of a thousand students pushing into the Coldren Theater. The police removed them bodily, but stones filled the air shortly thereafter and a number of windows were broken.

The rivalry drew hosts of spectators to the games, however. In 1909 some 5,000 watched the Iowa-Ames contest and in 1911 the two teams played before a record crowd, estimated at 8,000, at Iowa Field.

* * *

Archie A. Alexander had been born in Ottumwa, Iowa, raised in Des Moines where he had attended high school, and had attended Highland Park College prior to his matriculating at the State University of Iowa. He was a black man, he was larger than the average student, and he had to work to stay in school. Between work and athletics and his courses, he sometimes had difficulty staying eligible for sports. In respect to the aforementioned characteristics, Archie differed from most of his teammates only in being black.

In 1909 Archie was listed in the team statistics as enrolled in the College of Applied Science, Class of '12. His age was listed as twenty-three although he was only twenty-one. He was 6'2" tall and weighed 177 pounds. Archie was a sophomore at the time. A comparison of Archie with members of the freshman class in 1909 is informative. The average freshman at the University of Iowa in 1909 was just over 5'7" tall and weighed 135 pounds. The largest male member of that class was just under 6'1½" tall and weighed 183 pounds. Archie could well be described as a big man.

The question of eligibility for most athletes at the time was generally one of making up deficiencies. In 1909 Coach Griffith had to open the season against Minnesota without his starting quarterback, Fee, who returned to the team before the season had progressed very far, however. In 1910 the opening of the school year found only thirteen eligible players from the previous year's team. Among the ineligible were team captain Hyland, Archie Alexander, and a pair of other stalwarts. By the second or third day of practice Hyland and Alexander had made up their academic work and were in uniform, but at least one of the other two did not return to school in the fall. If one can believe newspaper reports that chalk drills sometimes lasted until 9:00 P.M., it is little wonder that athletes working their way through school had difficulty keeping up in their class work.

When Archie hit the practice field at the beginning of the 1909 season he was considered by most observers as capable of winning a starting position at tackle. He wouldn't replace the team captain, Raymond Gross, from Dubuque, about whom Walter Eckersall wrote:

Gross . . . is a player of great promise. He is fast and aggressive and one of the best in the west in carrying the ball from his position on tackle-around plays. He

keeps his feet well and is mighty hard to stop. He always manages to open up holes for the backs and gets down the field on kicks and forward passes. His only weakness is charging on defense. He charges ahead in grand style but up in the air instead of keeping low.

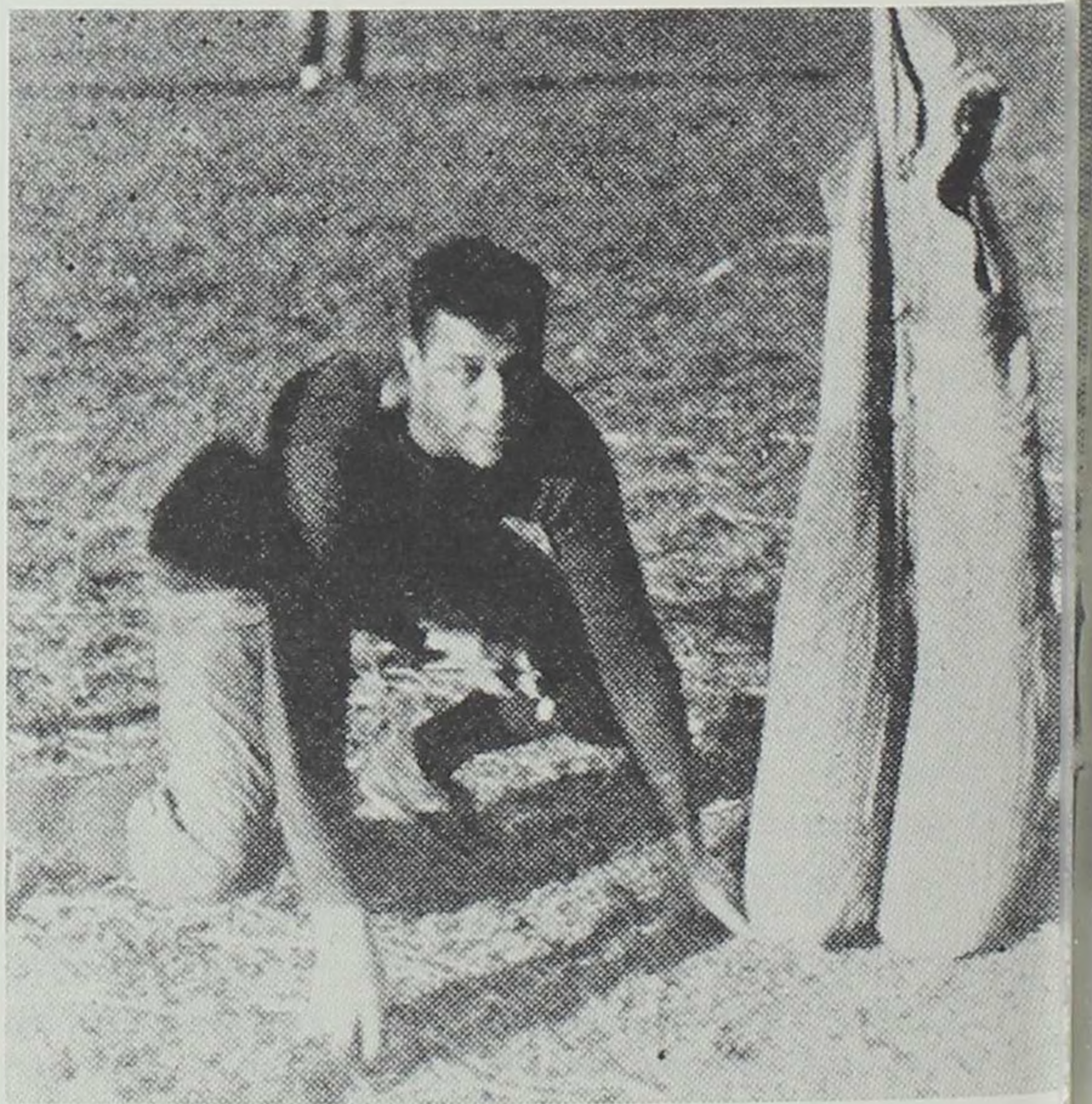
Gross was to have a great year in 1909 so any chance Alexander had to crack the starting lineup meant replacing Ehret at left tackle. In the opening game of the season against Minnesota, Alexander got in the game as a substitute for Hull at guard, and the following week he was substituted into the Cornell game for Ehret. From that time forward Alexander and Ehret seemed to match playing time, injuries, and desire. Archie seemed to hit his stride in early November against Drake and Ames, and in the season finale against Kansas he started in place of the injured Gross at right tackle.

Throughout 1910 and 1911 Archie A. Alexander was a fixture at tackle for the University of Iowa. Occasionally he was tried at end or guard but never for long. He had found his place and only injuries and a couple of football teams from the neighboring state of Missouri could keep him off the field.

Football in Alexander's day was a rough sport. His active years at Iowa were not that far removed from the days in which Theodore Roosevelt had threatened to ban the sport. Equipment for the compleat player was minimal. It included canvas pants, jerseys (or sometimes canvas jackets), shinguards, and shoulder pads. Helmets were described by one outfitter as "light as a feather on the head," and sold for somewhere between $1.00 and $4.00. Kneepads and football shoes sometimes completed the outfit of the well-dressed footballer. Some of the roughness of the game had been done away with by rules which banned the wedge and other types of heavy play, but injuries were very much a part of the player's athletic life. By mid-October 1909 it was suggested that John L. Griffith might well resign his position as coach to become a "trained nurse." It was reported at that time that his starting quarterback had a severe cold (he had been knocked out in the Minnesota game), that another player had an injured knee, Alexander supposedly had a broken rib (actually it was no more than a cracked rib), one player was out with a terrible charley horse, yet another had a sprained ankle, and Captain Gross had an elbow that resembled an "ostrich egg." Some other players were hobbling and wobbling about, and all of this on a squad which numbered at the time no more than twenty to twenty-five men.

The 1909 game with Ames, which Iowa won, 16-0, was marred by injuries to both captains. The *Des Moines Register and Leader's* account included the following comments:

The pitiful side of the game was that both captains were severely injured.



Alexander in training in 1911. (The Hawkeye, *1913)*

Gross played the last fourteen minutes with a dislocated shoulder. No one knew it for he was in the thick of the fray to the end. Captain Wilmarthe of Ames was carried from the field unconscious. He was injured in the second half just before Iowa made its third touchdown. He was rushed to the university hospital and at a late hour last night was still unconscious. A blow in the head was responsible for his injury.

Archie got through the 1910 season in fairly good shape but in the 1911 season he was hampered by a bad knee which may have prevented him from receiving more post-season recognition on all-league teams than he did.

It was not injuries that kept Archie from taking the field against Iowa's opponents. In his three years of varsity football at Iowa, Archie A. Alexander never missed a game because of injuries. He missed three games because opponents refused to play against the Hawkeyes if they put a black man on the field, however. The problem came up at the very outset of his football career. Iowa was scheduled to play the University of Missouri on 30 October 1909, but even before the first game of the season rumors began to circulate that both Kansas and Missouri would ask the Iowa coach not to play Alexander against their boys. The temper of the times was perhaps best illustrated by a comment that appeared in the *Council Bluffs Nonpareil* of 3 October 1909:

With an ideal build and a good football disposition, Alexander has displayed great possibilities the last week and the coaches hate the idea of relegating him to the side lines for the Missouri or Kansas games. However, the Iowa authorities are anxious to avoid any stirring up of feeling between the local institution and the southern schools and if the request is made that Alexander not be played it will undoubtedly be willingly granted, though a severe blow to the local eleven.

Such a request was not unexpected from Missouri which had as far back as the early 1890s refused to take the field against the legendary black footballer from Nebraska, J.C. Flippen. A clear indication of the difference between the two schools and their policies could be seen in the fact that Iowa had played Nebraska in the Flippen years.

In 1909 the Hawkeyes deferred to the wishes of the University of Missouri and Archie sat out the Missouri game, even though it was played in Iowa City. He played the season finale against Kansas, however. The following season, 1910, Archie was forced to forego the Missouri game a second time when it was played at Columbia. Moreover, he was the victim of a request from Washington University of St. Louis players that he be left off the Hawkeye squad which was to play its season finale in St. Louis. It should be noted that the coach at Washington University at that moment was an American Indian, Cayou, from Carlisle. The positions of the black and the American Indian in sports at the time were not the same. The American Indian had far less trouble participating in sports of all kinds in the early years of this century. One has only to consider that there was no line barring them from major league baseball. The careers of Chief Bender, Chief Meyers, and others are clear evidence of that.

Archie Alexander was a better than average football player. At the conclusion of each of his three seasons of varsity football he was picked on somebody's "All-Iowa" or "All Missouri Valley" first or second teams. The *Omaha Bee* put him on their Missouri Valley eleven in 1909 while he made the *Des Moines Register and Leader's* All-Iowa eleven on the second team. In 1910 he moved up to a first

team position on most All-Iowa elevens.

Archie obviously had some magnificent games in his three years at Iowa. Against Drake in 1909, a game which Iowa lost 17-14, the *Des Moines Register and Leader* singled Archie out for particular praise. While trying to figure out what was wrong with the university football team and the reason for its essential lack of spirit, their reporter wrote:

> *In the game Saturday Alexander, the negro, most of the time played good football and no lack of team work appeared when he carried the ball. But Iowa's team work in the first half especially was outclassed by that shown by Drake. The everlasting helping spirit was not there.*

Perhaps his finest game was the 16-0 triumph over Ames in that same 1909 season. The *Daily Iowan's* summary of the game included fulsome praise for Alexander:

> *Time after time, Murphy, Alexander, Dyer, and greatest of all, the mighty Gross plunged through the farmers' tackles for great advances. . . .*
>
> *Alexander gave a great exhibition at left tackle. He alternated with Gross on tackle smashes and made some of the best gains of the game. He it was who crossed the line for the last touchdown in the second half. . . .*
>
> *In the march for the touchdown Gross made 10, Alexander 6, Gross 5, Alexander 5, Murphy 10, Dyer 3, Alexander 6, Gross 5, Gross 3, Murphy 2 and Murphy carried the ball over the line.*

After being held out of the Missouri game in 1910, Alexander came back the following week against Purdue with perhaps his best game of that season, which caused Coach Hawley to say, "Alexander strengthened the right side of the line, a flank which could have stood it at Missouri."

Alexander seemed to be strong in all phases of the game in which tackles of the time had to excel. He was strong on defense, he was swift in moving downfield under punts, he ran hard and was generally successful on tackle arounds and smashes. Most importantly, he opened holes for the Iowa backs. During his career the comments on his ability in that phase of the game were many, but perhaps the summary statement was made by one writer who put it succinctly: "He opened holes like mountain tunnels whenever the Iowa plunge came through his position."

When Archie A. Alexander had finished his football career at the State University of Iowa in 1911, he was remembered as a consistently strong player, popular with his teammates and with the Iowa partisans who had watched him throughout his career. He finished that career on a winning note, incidentally. In his last game, Iowa avenged their loss of the previous year to Northwestern by beating the Royal Purple, 6-0. It was suggested by a writer on the *Daily Iowan* that three starters who played their last game that day against Northwestern, Murphy, Alexander, and "Fat" O'Brien, would "be remembered as long as Iowa puts out athletic teams." As a gentle reminder to some of our younger friends of today who think it all began within their memories, we hope the Murphys, the Alexanders, the O'Briens, as well as many others are all long remembered. □

Note on Sources

The history of football at the University of Iowa has been covered by Chuck Bright, *University of Iowa Football: The Hawkeyes* (Huntsville, Alabama: Strode Publishers, 1982). Two issues of the *Palimpsest* (September 1953 and October 1957) were given over to lengthy descriptions of football in Iowa. John Ely Briggs offered a detailed account of one of Alden Knipe's finest teams in "That 1900 Football Team," *Palimpsest* 3 (November 1922):345-63. Newspapers still remain the best source for much of sports history. For Hawkeye teams of the Alexander era see the *Daily Iowan*, the *Des Moines Register and Leader*, and the *Council Bluffs Nonpareil* during the 1909-1911 seasons. For rules, results, and conference resumes, one should consult *Spalding's Official Foot Ball Guides*, published annually by the American Sports Publishing Company.

The Mark of Horace Mann on Iowa Education

by John A. Beineke

The quality of the public and private educational institutions in the state of Iowa enjoys a highly regarded national reputation. The roots of this tradition can be traced to two prominent Easterners. One was a man whose influence was so notable that he has been given the designation "Father of American Education" — Horace Mann of Massachusetts. The other figure to give direction to early Iowa schools was a New Yorker, Amos Dean, who also served as the first president of the State University of Iowa.

In 1856 these two men were appointed by the Iowa General Assembly to serve as commissioners with the assignment of rendering suggestions for the revision of the state school laws. A third man, Judge F.E. Bissell of Dubuque, Iowa, was unable to serve. Therefore the nine-page report, submitted by Mann and Dean, lacked what they termed the "local knowledge so essential to all just and wise legislation." Although they wrote their report from a perspective outside the Iowa experience, the authors were certainly not strangers to education.

Horace Mann (1796-1859) was the brilliant attorney and legislator who had relinquished a promising career in politics to become the first secretary to the state board of education in Massachusetts. The position had all the earmarks of a step into obscurity. But for twelve years, beginning in 1837, Mann led a bold crusade on behalf of the state's public schools.

Taking to horseback, Mann sought to convince the parents, citizens, and taxpayers of his state that the older and informal modes of learning were no longer adequate. His reforms, documented in his *Annual Reports* between 1838 and 1849, called for numerous changes. They included proposals for teacher seminaries, improved school buildings, more taxation to support education, and better textbooks for the classroom.

At the time he coauthored the Iowa report, Mann was serving as the first president of Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. While in Ohio, he traveled to both Illinois and Indiana and vacationed on occasion in Michigan. It is doubtful, however, that he ever ventured as far west as Iowa.

Mann's colaborer, Amos Dean (1803-1868), had visited Iowa twice in connection with his position as chancellor (president) of the State University of Iowa. As a youth, Dean had been a village schoolmaster in Vermont before going on to college and a career as an attorney. His educational experiences included both the teaching of law and the writing of several volumes of history. Dean spent the summer of 1858 in Iowa during which time he and the board of trustees decided that the university should close for a year due to financial problems. In 1860 he resigned. This was due, in part, to the concern of some Iowans over a part-time president for their university.

Iowa schools in the 1850s, which Mann and Dean sought to improve, were indeed in an underdeveloped stage. The first Iowa territorial school law in 1839 authorized county school districts. But four years later John Chambers, governor of Iowa Territory, unhap-

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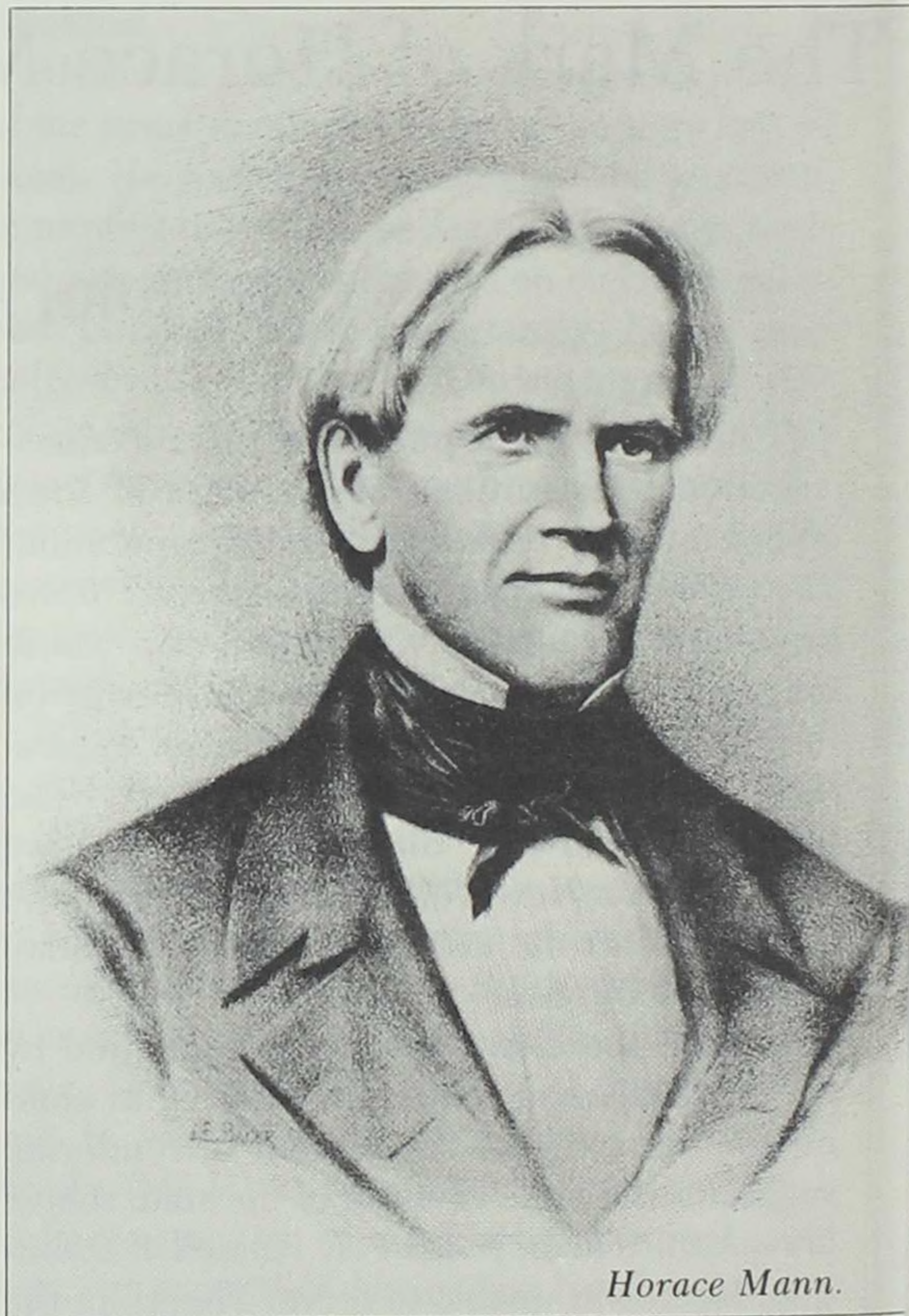
pily reported how "little interest the important subject of education excites among us."

From statehood in 1846 to the constitution of 1857 the legislature took some note of education, but did little to advance it. Only a few schools during the pioneer era in Iowa were graded. At best, schools met intermittently throughout the year. The minimum legal school year was twenty-four weeks. Local officials were allowed to extend that period if finances permitted.

A combination of home instruction and the one-room schoolhouse was the norm for much of Iowa. A cadre of teachers was formed from local preachers and young men and women from New England who journeyed west to teach on the frontier. A few private academies, usually associated with religious or ethnic groups, also made positive contributions to Iowa educational needs. By the mid-1850s the towns of Tipton and Muscatine claimed schools offering instruction beyond the eighth grade. A few private colleges had begun to appear by that time also.

But an increase in Iowa's population, from 192,214 in 1850 to 674,913 by the end of the decade, made alterations in the state's educational system necessary. An examination of the state's schools was an obvious first step in such a process. It was Iowa's good fortune to secure for this task the knowledge and counsel of the nation's foremost educational reformer — Horace Mann.



Horace Mann.

In the 1856 report of their findings, officially titled the *Report of the Commissioners of Revision of the School Laws*, Mann and Dean judiciously refrained from enumerating specific criticisms of Iowa's schools. In one sentence, though, they made the obvious comment that the state's school laws were fragmentary in character, lacking in general aims, and "entirely wanting in unity or completeness." They then commenced the *Report* on a positive note concerning Iowa's potential:

> *Here, for the first time, a great State, situated in the centre of a mighty Union, possessing exhaustless resources of agricultural and mineral wealth, binding together its various parts by a net-work of iron, demands a system of public instruction adequate to the full development of its great physical resources, and of the intellect and moral power of its people.*

With this preface, Mann and Dean presented four underlying principles that had served as standards and had guided them in their work:

1. *Every Iowa youth was entitled to an education. The state would be the ultimate beneficiary of such training.*

Amos Dean.

2. *For education to be successful, it had to be considered a "distinct and separate pursuit and business." Therefore school laws and educational agencies should be established.*
3. *That adequate funding had to be provided for education since property and material wealth "owes its existence to the mind."*
4. *Three elements were necessary to perfect a system of education: the organizing, the financial, and the educational.*

Although coauthored, there were portions of the *Report* that could easily be traced to either Mann or Dean. Amos Dean, for example, suggested that financial support for Iowa schools be patterned on the property tax system of his native New York. Teacher training institutes, one of Mann's successful innovations in Massachusetts, received special note and attention from him. In fact, both states were pointed to as stellar examples:

> *Your commissioners could not deem the educational system of any state complete without a liberal provision for Teachers, Institutes. This feature gives to the systems of Massachusetts and New York a decided superiority over those of other States, and from its highly beneficial effects as there displayed, every new State should be admonished of the propriety, nay, necessity of its adoption.*

Another idea from the East Coast stressed in the *Report* was the establishment of high schools. These schools were referred to as "high, Academic, or Polytechnic." It was suggested that a high school be established in an Iowa county as soon as its population reached 20,000.

One of the largest segments of the *Report* was devoted to patterns of school organization. The authors' basic intention was to shift from a local or district school unit to something larger based on the township. They reasoned that such reorganization would require fewer school boards, create equalization of community support for facilities, and lead to larger schools. Instructional motives for enlarging district boundaries included the potential for more graded levels and also the possibility of attracting better teachers.

To oversee the townships the commissioners suggested that the position of county superintendent be created. Endowed with numerous duties, these powerful officers were deemed important components in the whole new scheme of school organization. It was even suggested that the larger the county, the greater the financial remuneration for the superintendent. A state superintendent of public instruc-

tion was to be at the apex of the organizational pyramid with the understanding, however, that the actual authority for school supervision would reside with the county superintendents.

Mann and Dean made their strongest appeal on behalf of higher teacher salaries. They believed excellence in teaching was directly related to the level of compensation provided by the community. In no uncertain terms they stated their case:

> *No common school system can ever succeed, where the compensation is so meagre as to encourage only those of the most ordinary talents and attainments to embark in it. Although the teacher should have higher aims and objects than mere pecuniary recompense, yet it must be obvious that the grade of compensation is not only important as furnishing a means of living, but also as indicating the high or low estimate which a community places upon the character of the service.*

An active and participatory role in the schools by those in control of the schools was also deemed essential. The "visitorial power" was strongly endorsed not only as a way to expose and detect problems, but to provide an "approving smile" when outstanding educational achievements were evident. Annual meetings involving several school districts at which directors might compare experiences were also encouraged.

Mann and Dean concluded the *Report* with an emotional flourish:

> *They desire to send into every family of Iowa, now, and through all future time, a spirit-stirring impulse, an animating principle, which shall penetrate the depths of every young heart, and arouse the latent energies of every young spirit, and thus carry forward the common school system into the fullest and completest realization of its glorious mission. They submit that the young State of Iowa owes it to herself, after having rejected the clog of human servitude, and banished the evils of intemperance, to adopt such an educational system as will develope in harmonious proportions, and push to their extremest limits, both the intellect and the moral power of each coming generation.*

And as if to convey their own commitment to the task that Iowans would undertake, they closed by saying,

> *Your Commissioners now feel that their task is ended. In the spirit of their recommendation to enlist in this great cause the unpaid services of others, they beg to present this result of their labors free of all charge, except for necessary expenses. It only remains for them to await, with no small solicitude, that legislative action upon which, in their judgment, hang such important consequences for the future.*

While not all issues of educational importance were included in the *Report*, it is of interest to note which topics were left unmentioned. Although Mann and Dean commented on moral, ethical, and social issues such as slavery, temperance, and the perfectability of man, they did not take up such questions as the role of private schools or the place of religion in the educational system. The phrase "education of young men" appeared, but no similar reference to females was ever made. Agriculture, an essential aspect of Iowa society, received only scant attention.

Nor did the authors of the *Report* refer to the subject of phrenology. Phrenology was a nineteenth century psycho-physiological phenomenon that attempted to explain human behavior and mental development by measuring various parts of the cranium. Horace Mann

and Amos Dean were both devoted adherents of phrenology, but neither the study of the bumps and knobs on the head of mankind, nor the use of such a science in education — or any other specific educational method — found its way into the *Report*.

The impact of the *Report* on subsequent school legislation is difficult to assess. Mann's proposal for teacher training was given serious consideration by the Iowa General Assembly, but no positive action was taken. Preparation for a career in teaching continued to be undertaken in the state's private colleges and academies. Within a decade after the Civil War, however, the General Assembly made a commitment to a state teacher training institution. Located near Cedar Falls and opened in 1876, it was first known as the Iowa State Normal School and later as the Iowa State Teachers College. Today it is the University of Northern Iowa.

Other suggestions in the *Report* were adopted in due time. The constitution of 1857 did create a state board of education which functioned well, although briefly, until it was abolished in 1864. The commissioners' concept of a county superintendent found its way into law and remained a part of the Iowa education system well into the twentieth century.

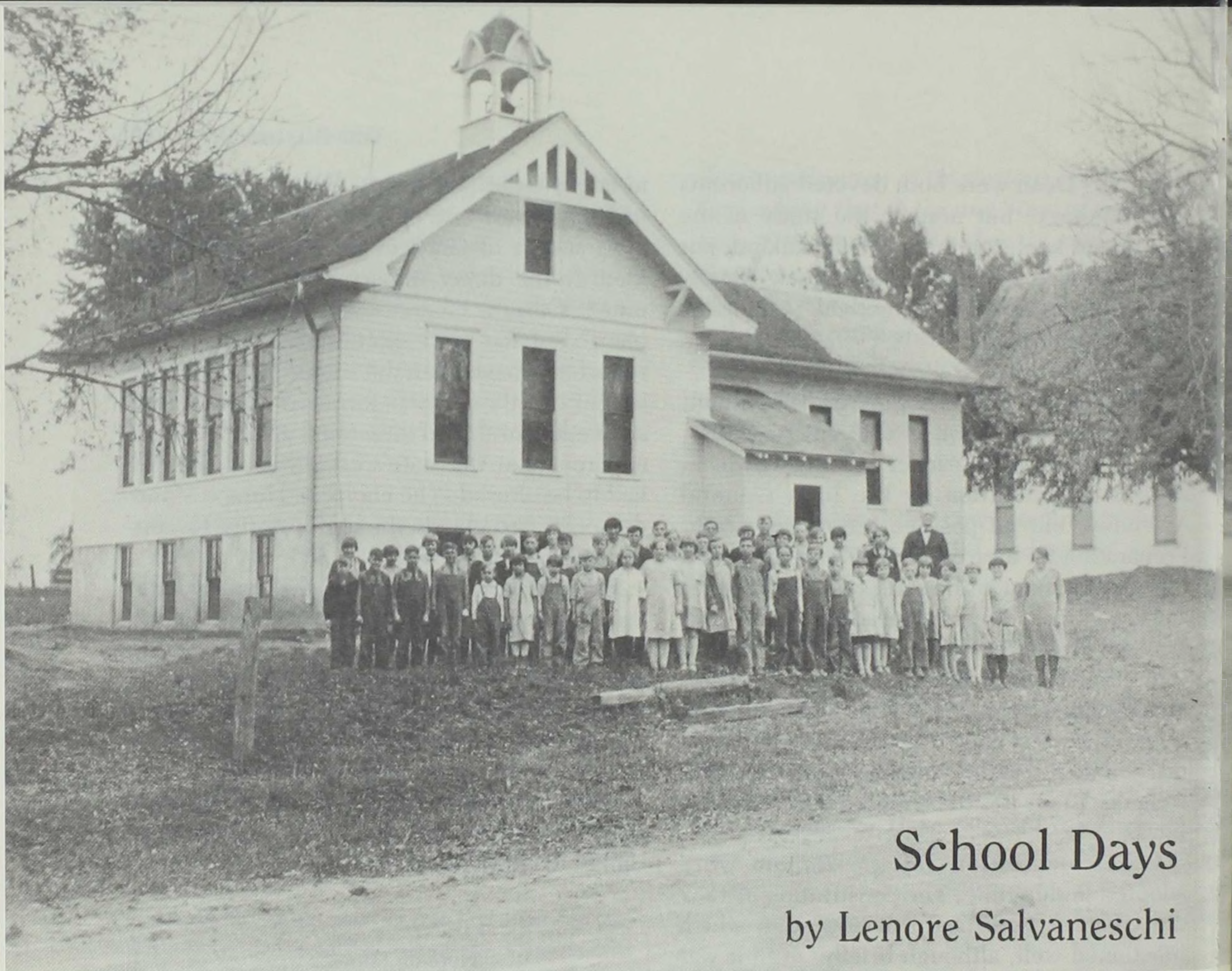
But the consolidation of school districts, as envisioned by Mann and Dean, was to be a slow and protracted process. For years the one-room schoolhouse remained the norm except in larger cities and towns. Yet, in 1870, Iowa had the lowest rate of illiteracy in the nation.

At such a distance in time it is difficult to identify the direct impact of the 1856 document. Certain changes, as noted, did take place. But the most significant feature of the report may have been the simple fact that Iowa sought out the nation's foremost educator for advice, counsel, and direction when it became apparent that the state's educational patterns had to be altered. The choice of Horace Mann demonstrated clearly the high priority Iowans placed on their schools.

Horace Mann died in 1859, three years after the completion of the *Report*. A month before his death he gave his final commencement address at Antioch College. In that speech he issued his famous challenge to the students, "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity." This was his charge to all Americans. His zeal touched Iowa education almost at the outset and its citizens have continued to cherish that legacy. □

Note on Sources

The most important source for the preparation of this article was the 1856 *Report of the Commissioners of Revision of the School Laws*. Two issues of the *Palimpsest* dating from the early 1930s provided information about pre-Civil War Iowa schools. The biographical information on Horace Mann was drawn from a chapter in the author's manuscript about famous educators, currently in progress. Material about Amos Dean was drawn, in part, from an *Iowa Historical Record* article published in 1895. Several general Iowa histories were used to sketch out the educational setting in Iowa's pioneer school era.



School Days

by Lenore Salvaneschi

The students of St. Stephen's Lutheran School, Atkins, Iowa, in 1926, with their teachers, H. Albrecht (back row, right) and Rose Schueler (front row, right). (G. Rickels Collection, SHSI)

School days, School days,
Dear old Golden Rule days;
Readin' and writin' and 'rithmetic,
Taught to the tune of a hickory stick;
You were my queen in calico,
I was your bashful, barefoot beau;
You wrote on my slate, "I love you Joe,"
When we were a couple of kids.

Out of the memories associated with school there is the sound of this jingle introducing a radio program that we children loved to listen to. It was called something like "Dr. Katzenjammer's School" and it was made up of simple silly jokes the like of which I have heard at two very separate moments in my life: once when my family and I celebrated New Year's Eve in a folkloristic Zurich restaurant; and, many years before, during the "dialogues" St. Stephen's schoolchildren used to present on the Fourth of July.

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The abovementioned St. Stephen's School, when I had reached the very venerable age of six, was the goal of my ambitions. It seemed that my whole life had been directed to this one purpose: to be a First Grader. Nothing could be more exciting. Heaven help the child so eager to begin school, trembling with determination and the bursting necessity TO LEARN. There were many frustrations in being a pupil

in St. Stephen's School of Atkins, Iowa; how the "educationists" of today's graduate schools would deplore the methods used; but in spite of the many sick headaches which that school literally provided me, its effects — both good and bad — are still with me, and in the balance the good outweighs the bad.

The physical properties of the school were anything but comfortable. Old wooden benches — for the younger pupils, double benches — were screwed to the floors, adorned at the right-hand side with a stained and acrid smelling hole the size of a dollar for the inkwells, and inscribed with the initials and other deeply graven signs of previous scholars. A small shelf underneath would hold the precious books I couldn't wait to acquire. The furniture otherwise consisted of the teacher's golden oak desk, with the recess bell, a long ruler, and the hand eraser (ammunition against unwary dreamers) on the desk, his captain's chair, an upright piano, the round piano stool, and one cupboard to hold history books and the American flags for the annual Fourth of July flag drill (about fifty in number). Oh yes, there was one shelf in the back of the room which held the *World Book Encyclopedia*, the only "library" our school boasted of. This luxury was not provided until I was in the sixth grade, and I remember clearly the discussion by the trustees over such an unwonted expenditure. And there was a big dictionary, which I'm sure was rarely consulted, since the parochial school pupils and our teacher himself had little need for an extensive vocabulary.

The floor of the classroom was of narrow reddish pine boards and always redolent of sweeping compound and barnyard manure, the former used in a vain attempt to dispose of the latter. Water was provided by a pump on the schoolhouse grounds and by a big earthenware crock with a spigot, inside the school. A tin cup next to the crock effectively spread any colds lurking in the student body. Heat was provided by a round iron stove in the back of the room, which I remember chiefly as the source of little warmth, despite the coal and wood my father or Teacher Albrecht had hauled from the old barn many yards on the other side of the church property. But the stove was the source of many rare and steamy odors as the pupils dried or thawed out on cold winter mornings. Garments were especially

"Reading? All of a sudden there it came, and the world was before me!" The author enjoying a favorite pastime in May 1924. (G. Rickels Collection, SHSI)

fragrant on days the households were "butchering"; the smell of home-rendered lard and fried-down pork mingled with a variety of sausage combinations.

Our coats, caps and mittens, and enormous four- or six-buckle overshoes were left in a narrow hall leading to the schoolroom. Dinner pails with their two-inch thick sandwiches of home-baked bread, homemade sausage, pickles, cake, and doughnuts were set among the overshoes, beneath the coats. This hallway, with a long wooden bench, was a great place for "drilling," the practice of sending out of the classroom a group of pupils under the supervision of a seventh- or eighth-grade pupil for the purpose of special study, perhaps preparation for the dreaded county exams or just an exercise in grammar or spelling. During the course of the drill, lunch pails and clothing often got mixed as thoroughly as verbs or nouns, and the resulting dust might be occasioned by the teacher's anger as well as by the intensity of the learning.

Of sanitary facilities we had a minimum, two greyed plank structures behind the school, between the congregational cemetery and the ball diamonds, designated for the boys and girls, respectively (though not always respectedly: occasionally a gang of screaming girls took refuge in their facility while boys pursued them with garter snakes or pelted them with snowballs). Always innocent of real toilet paper, the girls' outhouse occasionally boasted the remnant of a Sears Roebuck catalogue which some proper person had lugged from home.

Well do I remember the first day in September when I officially entered the desired sanctum of St. Stephen's Lutheran School. Providentially, my parents had consented to "bob" my hair of the long curls I detested. Thus with hair neatly brushed and held in place by a barrette, attired in a new cotton dress sewn by my mother, which in turn was covered by an embroidered apron (no uniforms in our school, but uniformity in style), I was taken to the hallowed building by my father. Throughout the entire day Dorothy and I, the only two first-graders, were under the observing eyes and hateful grins of the eighth graders. One big Freddy especially annoyed me with his knowing eyes and teasing words. I was sure a fly was sitting on top of my head, a sensation I have not to this day been able to overcome whenever I am nervous. By evening tragedy had struck: we had not been taught to read on the first day of school. Since that had been my goal I felt cheated and staged the most immediately effectual protest of my life. By suppertime my father had had enough. Privately I am sure he agreed with me — hadn't he been the one to instill this eagerness? — and after a brief conference with Teacher Albrecht he returned home with the news that Dorothy and I would be permitted to begin READING. Oh, it was beautiful. Phonics? I loved them, and couldn't go fast enough. Reading? All of a sudden there it came, and the world was before me! Open sesame — and it did! By the end of the first spring we two spindly youngsters discarded not only first but also second grade together with our long winter underwear, and I knew the delight of that word VACATION.

Vacation did not mean freedom *from* reading, rather it meant freedom *for* reading. Long stockings having been discarded with the long underwear, I could curl up barefooted in the high bluegrass between the rows of grape vines on the parsonage property and alternate between making long bittery dandelion curls and reading some marvelous adventure. The wrens scolded as they built their nests and the bees hummed strenuously over the blossoms of the nearby grape arbor while I imagined myself climbing mountains or sailing dangerous seas.

For two years, grades one and three, I sat in the old schoolhouse and ate voraciously whatever bits of knowledge I was fed. I always secretly finished the readers in the first week

they were handed out, but I found arithmetic to be a ghastly plague, with multiplication tables designed to be as baleful as loose teeth, both occasioning an anguished cry to *der lieber Gott, "Warum?"*

By the time I entered fourth grade, the congregation had decided to add another room to the school, and a "lady teacher" was hired. Here I was introduced to girl friends, of the kind with whom one compared one's clothes — theirs always better than mine I thought — and measured the calves of one's legs, longing to have enough girth to make them appear attractive in the much-desired silk stockings which our grown-up sisters wore. Of learning during my two years of sitting in the "little room" I can remember none, except what I got from home. The fault probably lay as much with me as with the teacher, though I do remember my father's contemptuous snort when I came home one day and told about the marvelous steed Peg*a*sus, the accent coming exactly where my teacher had told me.

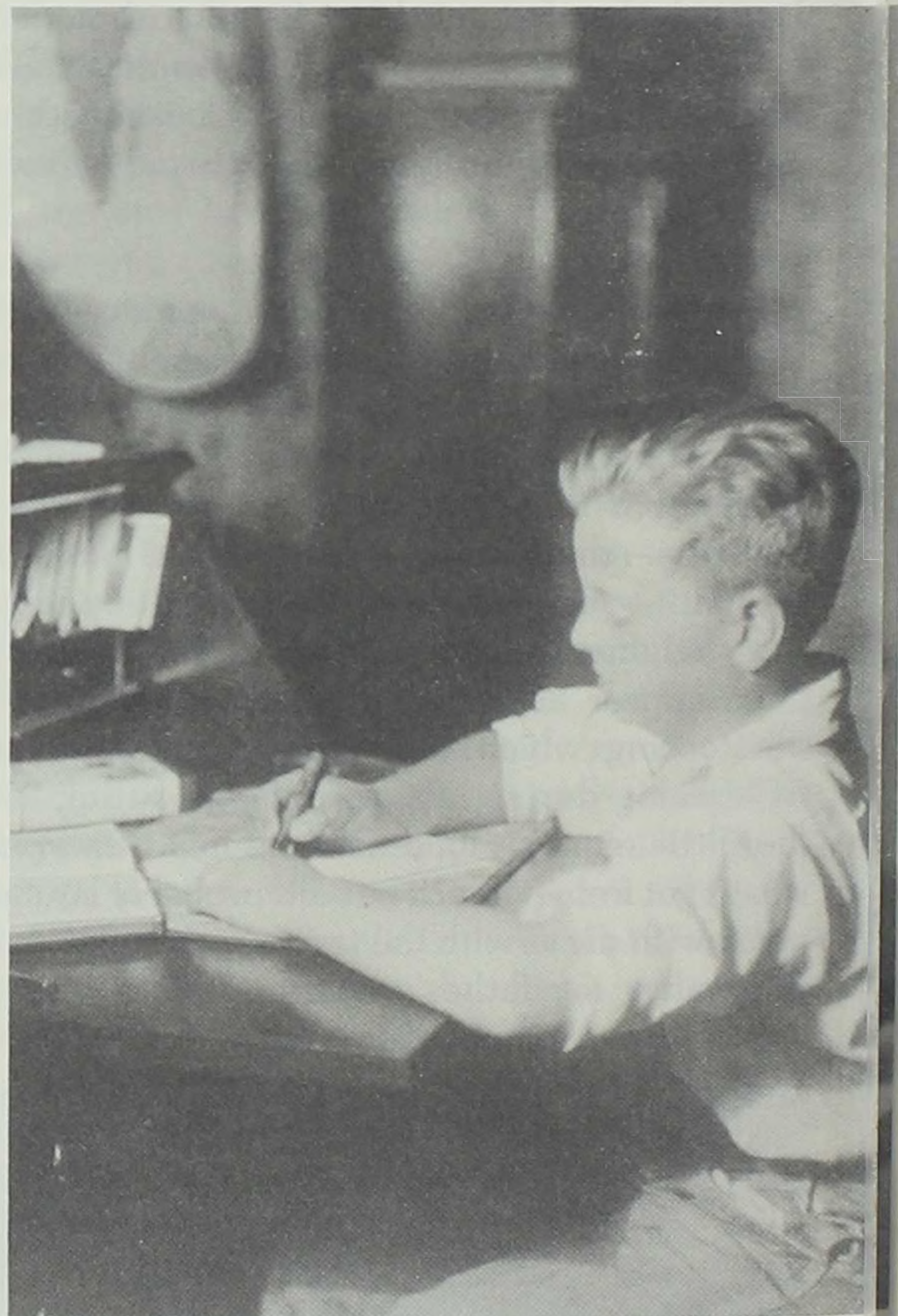
These also were the years in which I began to be interested in poetry, of the kind I found in my father's library, by nineteenth century English and American poets. For a time, Tennyson was a favorite together with Shelley, and I tried to become a "missionary," deeming it my duty as well as my really earnest wish to convince the kids in my grade that poetry was something to be loved. Ill-fatedly I tried to form a poetry club in the Ladies Aid kitchen beneath the schoolroom, but my friends would have nothing of it. They came only to eat the cupcakes which my mother had kindly provided and then to run laughing out of the room. This was my first and most tearful experience with Philistines, which heretofore I had known about only from the Bible. Another attempt at a "literary club," which met twice in the unlikely setting of an igloo we had constructed from big snowdrifts and branches left over from the

Some of St. Stephen's schoolchildren rode ponies to school. Gerhardt Krug (left) and Willie Kreutner (right) on the church grounds south of the parsonage. (G. Rickels Collection, SHSI)

church Christmas tree, froze on the proposal that we talk about boys instead of books. To console myself over these disappointments, I read all of Longfellow's *Hiawatha* and then tempered this orgy of romanticism with an even worse glut of Plutarch's *Lives*, which I had discovered in my father's fine print copy. Having read myself into a deadly headache, I lay on the green plush sofa near Father's desk and hated the vitals of my sister's Sunday night suitor when he ha-ha-ed, "too much reading again!"

The return to the "big room" when I entered sixth grade was a good feeling. As a matter of fact, sixth grade was a marvelous challenge in human relationships. As far as studies went, they went flowingly — no county exams to worry about yet, and everything else was easy. Only arithmetic gave me an inkling of the *Weltschmerz* that was to come.

Just about this time I began to realize the worth of boys. Hardie Albrecht, the teacher's son, had always been special, but then we had so much in common: long curls, until we went to school; papas who in our opinion were both about to become bankrupt; mutual love for robins' nests in the willows lining the road between his house and mine; an equal fondness for willow whistles; and an equal enjoyment of all the things in the Sears Roebuck catalogue. But now my feelings were different, and usually directed toward a member of one of the Schirm families. Pleasantly enough, the admiration seemed to be mutual for a time, much of it based upon a shared interest in baseball. All of the Schirms were noted for their outstanding ability to play this game, and what other game did we ever play during recess when the weather was warm enough than baseball, or softball, if the girls were to be included? The big boys usually preferred baseball and Teacher Albrecht usually pitched for them. We younger champions played softball and quarreled bloodcurdlingly over the honor of being pitcher or catcher. I am not ashamed to say that for one bright and shining year, even the Schirms thought I wasn't too bad at either job.



The author's brother, Robert, working away at a desk in their father's study in November 1931. (G. Rickels Collection, SHSI)

When winter put an end to ball-playing, our greatest sport was either Prisoner's Base, with the rear portion of the church serving as base, or "shinny," our own thoroughly satisfying version of hockey. With curved sticks, still tangy with the scent of the evergreen boughs from which they had been sculptured, and with an old tin can between us, we dared our opponents with the battle cry "Shinny on your own side" as advertently and inadvertently we gave each other whackingly permanent remem-

brances of the appropriately named game. Football had its attractions for us in the fall — in the spring the Atkins mud would have been too deep to permit this sport — but suddenly it was placed beyond my reach when my mother insisted that "Girls can*not* play football." Since I had been doing quite well at clawing my way out of any heap of kids who might land on me, I could not understand the prohibition. When Mother refused to explain, I considered her even more obtuse than usual, but somehow didn't quite have the courage to ask my father for enlightenment.

Only once was the joy of the sixth grade year destroyed; it was a day when Teacher Albrecht must have been feeling particularly "ornery," as we pupils termed it. Undoubtedly, the vexations of teaching in that particular setting must have prompted many feelings which this truly dedicated teacher usually suppressed. Perhaps that is why there was often a degree of teasing within his methods which could be painful for a youngster who felt his selfhood invaded, and even excruciating for the bashful and tender-hearted. One favorite method was to "christen" a pupil anew, a practice which most of us endured good-naturedly, but which was halted eventually by an irate father who didn't like his Louise transformed into a Lizzie. Another very common approach was an unexpected piece of chalk thrown accurately behind the ear of a youngster gazing longingly outdoors, or an eraser tossed at the head of someone luckless enough to have fallen asleep. The sneezes from the cloud of dust brought even the deepest sleeper to his senses.

The author, c. 1926. (G. Rickels Collection, SHSI)

Unfortunately, my fate hit me on the day when I had just lifted the lid of my new desk, one of the joys of being in the "big room" since the lifted lids afforded a marvelous chance for conversation and flirtatious looks if one were lucky enough to engage in them at a time when Teacher wasn't looking. This time I had innocently lifted the lid to take out some legitimate object when Teacher strolled down the aisle and discovered my Treasure Box. From the time I began walking down country roads and picking up stones, I had been a collector. But my collections, no matter how interesting to me, always collided with the interests of my sister with whom I had to share a room. Thus, what more private place to hide the treasures than my covered desk at school? Now the teacher had invaded it and he promptly began to remove its secrets: a tiny celluloid umbrella pencil, with which he walked down the aisle, tapping its point upon each desk; a monarch butterfly of dried and damaged wing, but marvelous in my eyes, which he held up to the room and referred to as "that dead thing" in my desk. By then I couldn't hold back the tears and I added a momentary hatred to the resentment I had felt when he had once noticed the long

underwear showing beneath my sleeve. His ensuing lecture to the delighted room on the virtue of such attire shamed me before my peers who had long since been liberated from such armor, and confirmed me in the opinion that my parents were living in a moldy, moth-infested age.

With the prohibition against football perhaps an omen, I found that seventh and eighth grade brought their share of sorrow. Not only did we work long and often sweaty hours at drilling from the beginning of the school year until May for the formidable county exams which were given in both seventh and eighth grades, but we also began to grow in physical ways which were both frightening and puzzling. Developing more slowly than my classmates and certainly less subject to the facts of life than those who lived on a farm, I could only be bewildered by their knowing whispers, and hurt because they thought it inadvisable to share their secrets. The cherished friendships were no more as lipstick appeared from time to time on the faces of favorite friends and acne blossomed on mine. Fulsome figures were revealed by the shortened dresses of the other girls, while knobby knees were only accentuated by the made-over skirts I had to wear.

Two events stand out in those troubled years. One was my first experience in a public school, mingling with the "heathen" who had gathered for the same purpose of taking seventh grade exams. Enough reference has been made to these county exams to require an explanation. Each year the county superintendent of schools arranged for the administration of written tests at various centers throughout the county. Ostensibly, the tests were to determine whether one could pass from seventh to eighth grade and from eighth grade to high school. Practically, I never heard of anyone's not passing, though any grade below seventy was considered a public disgrace. On the appointed day in May, I was brought to Atkins

Opposite: Some of St. Stephen's schoolchildren ready to go home after school, c. 1926. *(G. Rickels Collection, SHSI)*

High School, a misnomer since it only went through ninth and tenth grades at that time and was not accredited, together with the other hopefuls from St. Stephen's to write the exams in physiology and two other subjects which I no longer remember. Probably the only reason I remember physiology is that I barely passed with a seventy, to my parents' and teacher's chagrin; in the other subjects I had marks in the nineties. After the tests were written I was permitted to go "up town," all of three blocks, to Elma Mitchell's store, where I had enough money to buy lunch — a bag of potato chips. Since this was my first taste of such a delicious confection, I felt constrained to consume the whole bag. For some time after that big splurge of independence and indigestion, Atkins High School stood as the symbol of moral disintegration for me.

The other event which had more lasting results was the uncomfortable and, to me, unjust situation in the spring of eighth grade when I was not permitted to be confirmed with my class. According to the rules of the congregation, only those pupils who had arrived at thirteen years of age could aspire to that rite of passage in the church. Since confirmation occurred on Palm Sunday, in either March or April, I was out of luck because my birthday came in May. Other pupils managed from time to time to circumvent the regulation, but as a preacher's kid I had to obey the rules. This prohibition only served to cut me off more from my classmates. Gradually I began to sense that I might not follow their example. The future began to look bleak. I couldn't raise corn, for my father owned no land; I couldn't raise Cain, for my father wouldn't permit it. The only thing I might aspire to, it seemed, was college. At the age of fifteen that was still, albeit tantalizing, a vague and distant prospect. □

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