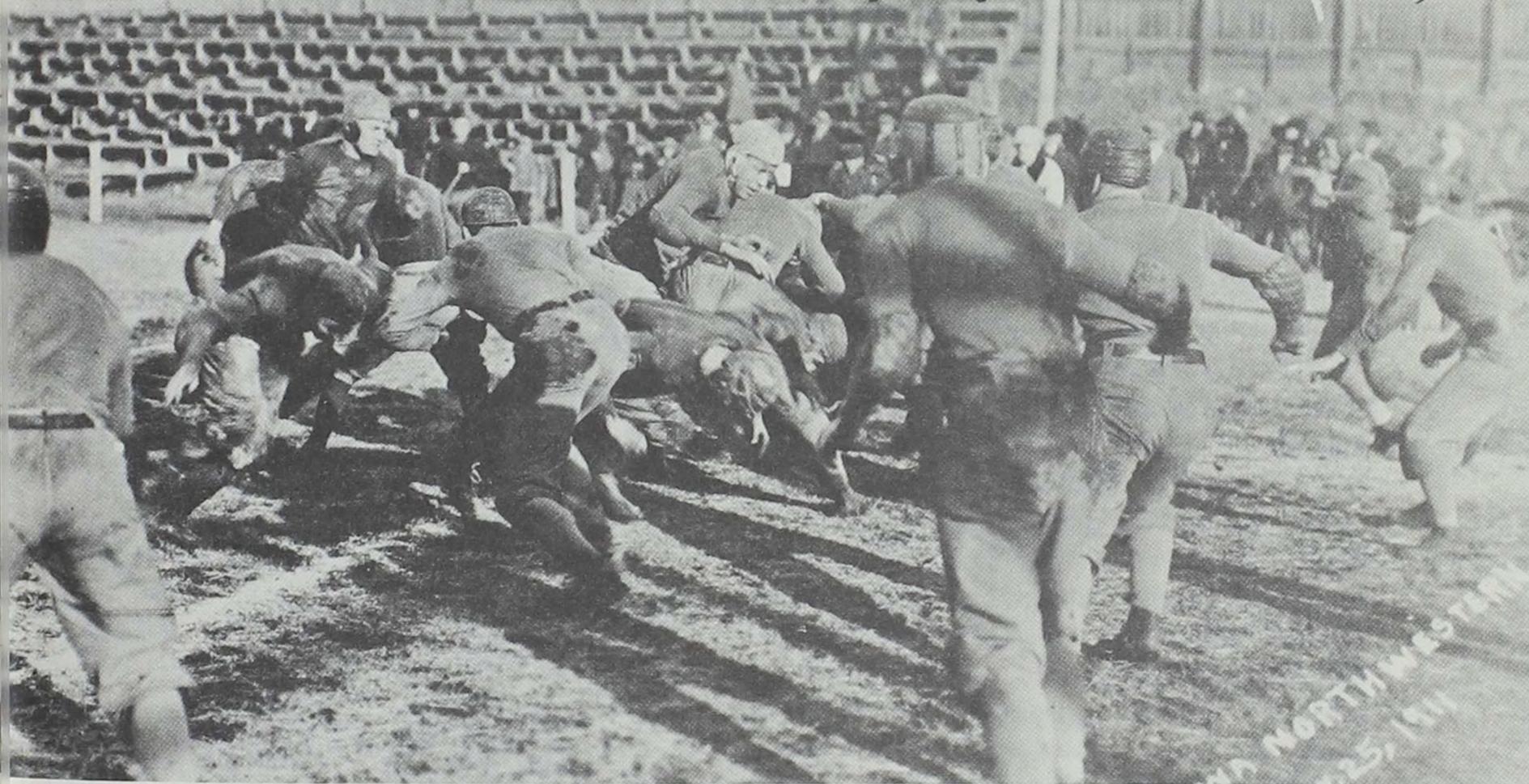


# “He Opened Holes Like Mountain Tunnels”

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,

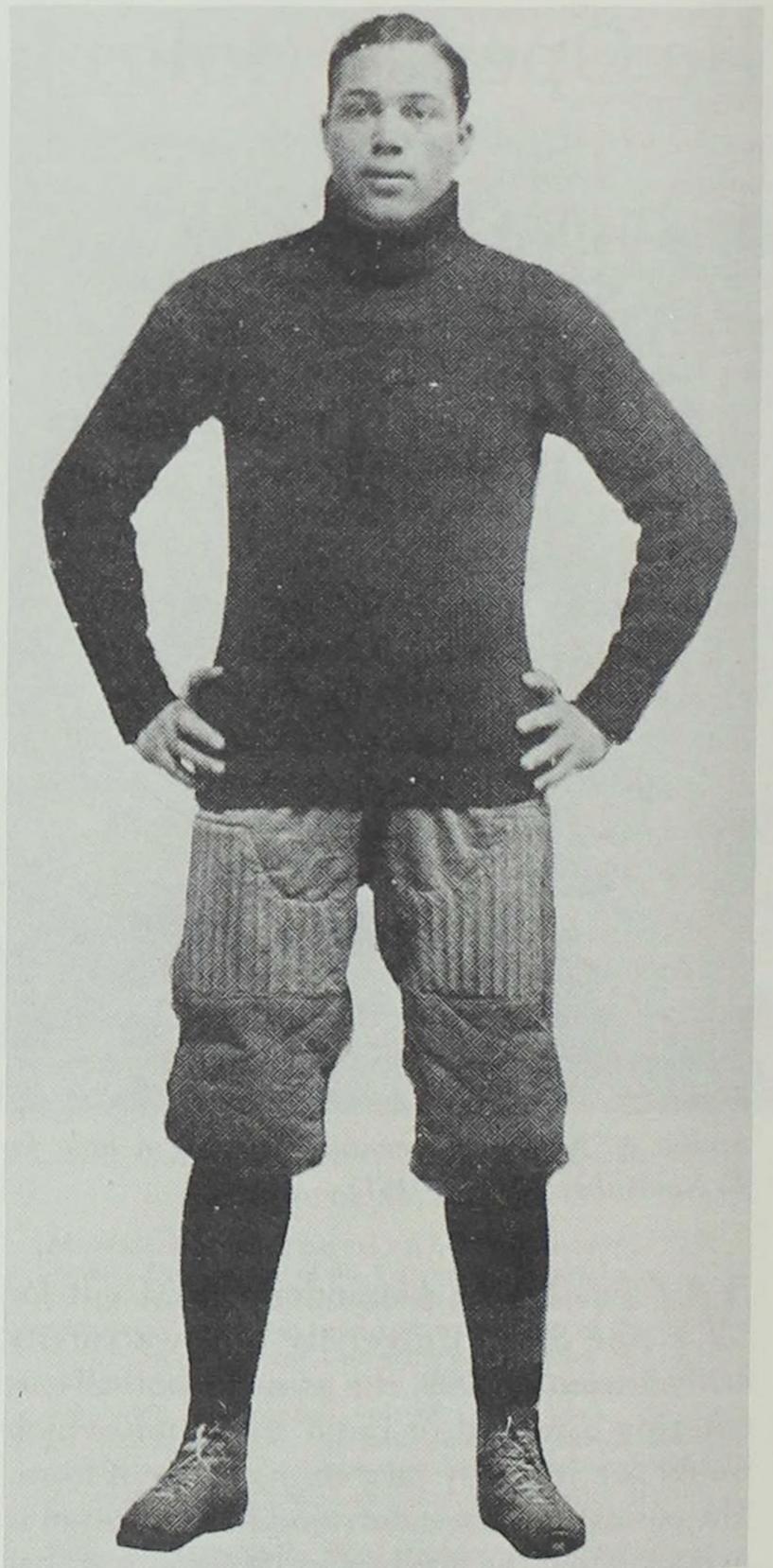
was clear enough:

*There shall be no striking with the fist or elbows, kneeling, 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 Dahlonga (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



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

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

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 Chi-

cago 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."

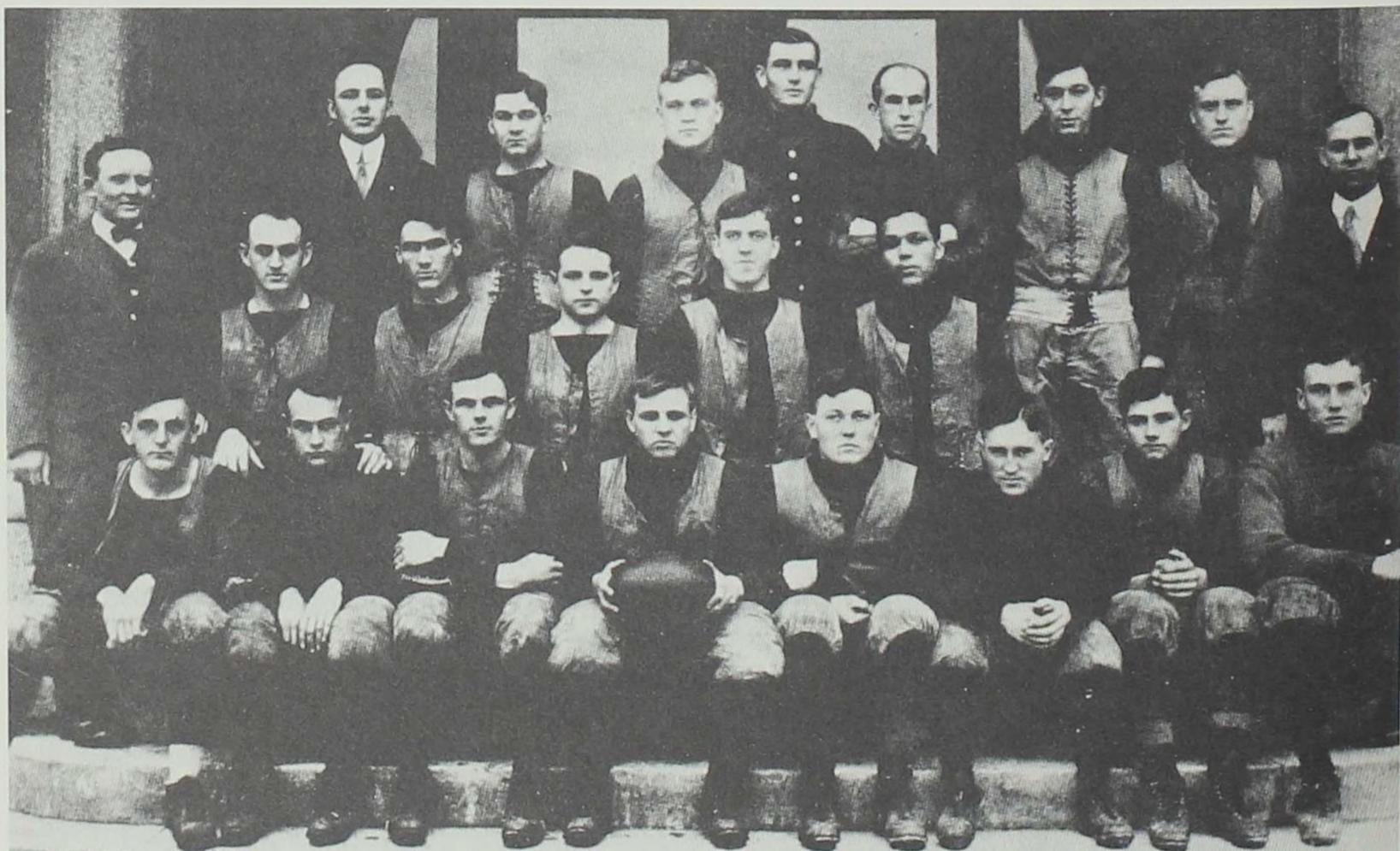
By 1909 the game was changing both nationally and locally. It was beginning to take on a look which we would recognize in activities both on and off the field. In 1910, for example, Manager Kellogg busily sold season tickets for \$1.50 which gave one admission to the three home games that year: Morningside, 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:

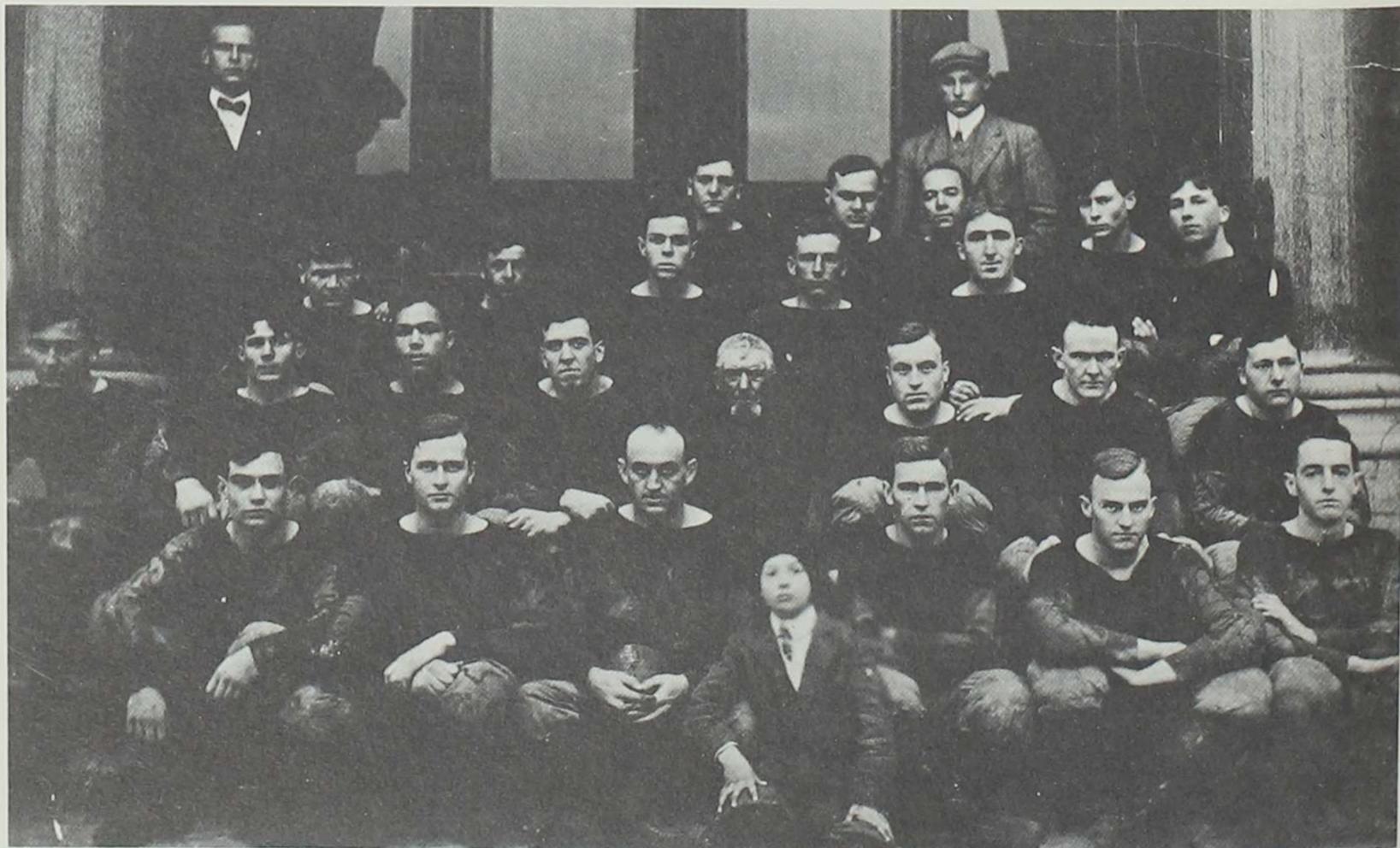
*There are a variety of other rumors afloat here, such as that Beavers had placed bets on Drake, and that he was influenced by King, who is his superior officer at the army post; but it must be said that none of these have any substantiation. However, they do not make the student body at Iowa love the 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)*

Office of the State Historical Society

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

### 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.

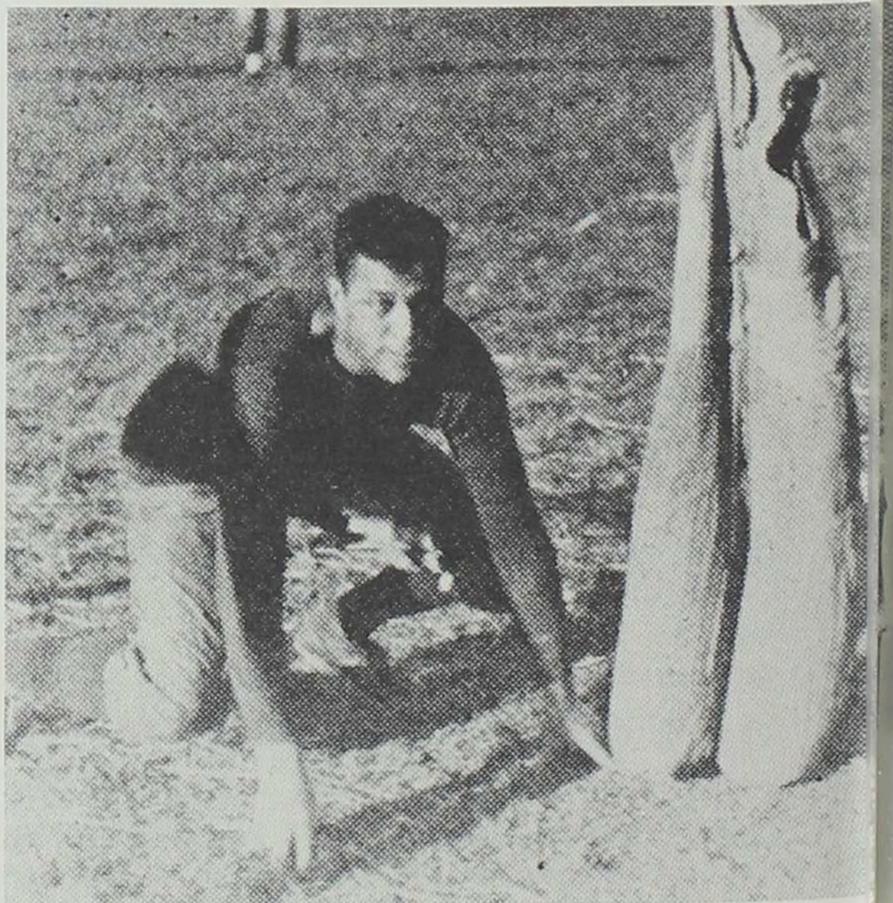
Throughout 1910 and 1911 Archie A. Alexander was a fixture at tackle for the University of Iowa. Occasionally he was tried at end or guard but never for long. He had found his place and only injuries and a couple of football teams from the neighboring state of Missouri could keep him off the field.

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 complete 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 inju-

ries 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 out-classed 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.