The PALIMPSEST

IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 62 NUMBER 4 JULY/AUGUST 1981

Iowa State Historical Department
State Historical Society Publications Section

PRICE — Free to members. Single issue — $1
MEMBERSHIP — By application. Annual dues — $5
LIFE MEMBERSHIP — $150. HUSBAND AND WIFE JOINT LIFE MEMBERSHIP — $200
ADDRESS INQUIRIES TO: State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, IA 52240

USISSN 0031—0360

THE PALIMPSEST is published bimonthly by the State Historical Society in Iowa City. It is printed in Des Moines and distributed free to Society members, depositories, and exchanges. This is the July/August 1981 issue and is Number 4 of Volume 62. Second class postage paid at Iowa City.

The PALIMPSEST

Peter T. Harstad, Director

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William Silag, Editor

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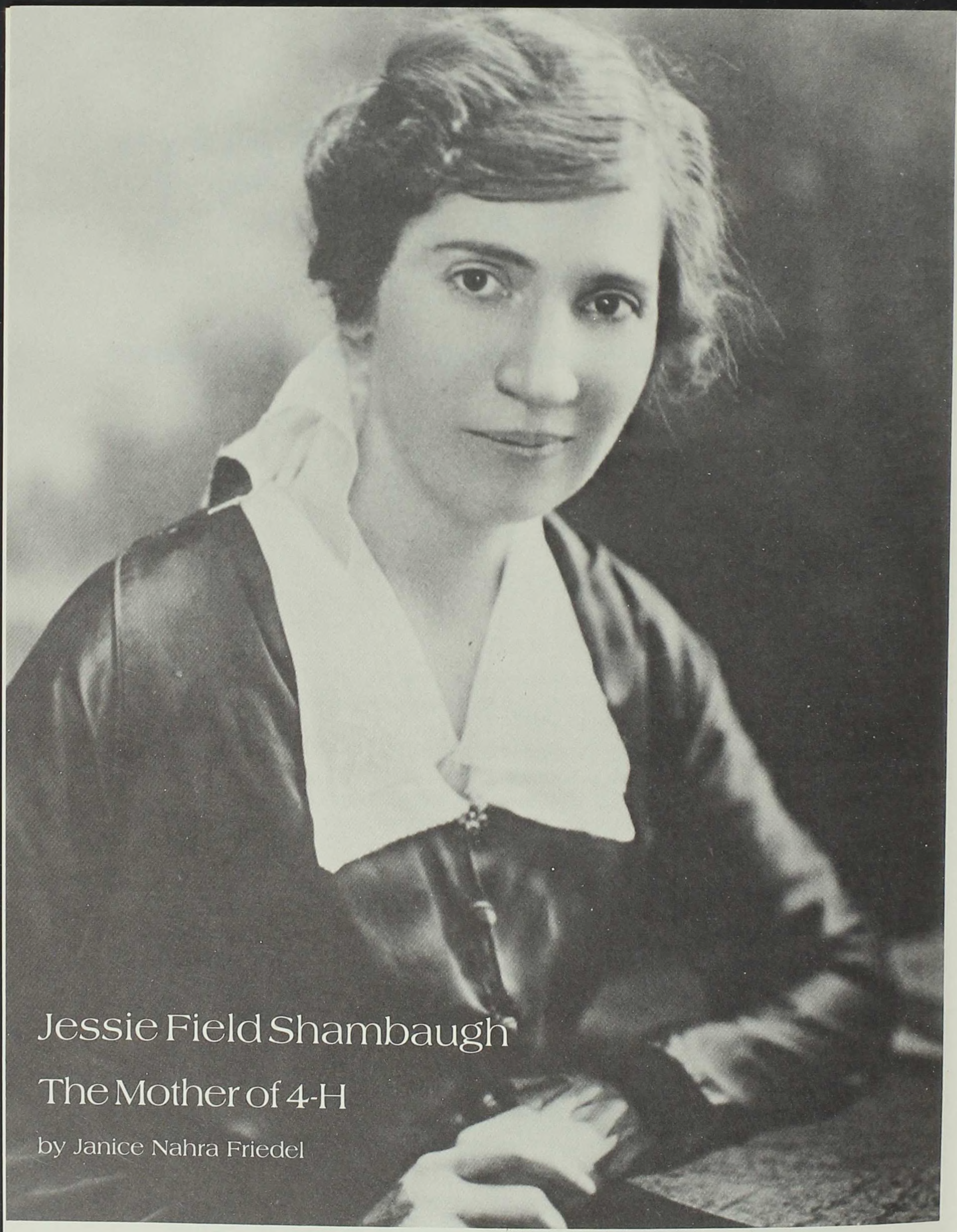
Cover: *Jessie Field Shambaugh (1881-1971), whose innovative teaching and recreational programs for rural youth led to the development of the 4-H Club, is the subject of Janice Friedel's biographical essay beginning on page 98. Ruth Shambaugh Watkins, daughter of Jessie Field Shambaugh, drew the pastel that graces the cover of this issue of the* The Palimpsest. *(courtesy Ruth Shambaugh Watkins)*

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.



Jessie Field Shambaugh

The Mother of 4-H

by Janice Nahra Friedel

It was the beginning of the spring term of 1901 when Jessie Field received a letter from the directors of the Goldenrod School. A teacher was needed, and they had heard of a young woman living south of Shenandoah who might be hired to finish out the year. This woman was said to have an enthusiasm for learning and a way with young people.

Jessie was only nineteen and in the middle of her second year of college. Teaching at the Goldenrod School would be a great challenge; she wondered if she would be able to meet the many responsibilities of teaching and managing a one-room country school. Both of her parents had been teachers, and more than anything else she wanted to be a good teacher. She accepted the challenge and began teaching in March 1901.

Jessie, who understood the importance of a good, sound education, taught her students the three R's, as required by state law. She also believed, however, that school should help foster a feeling of pride and self-worth in farm children and make their education relevant to the needs of rural living. These children would someday be the farmers and homemakers of the nation, but little of what they studied in school was directly applicable to life in a rural community.

Jessie's students needed to know about such things as improved and scientific farming methods and efficient home management. Each spring morning, before school, she taught her students how to properly tend the garden they had planted on the school grounds. And at the end of the school day, when the dismissal bell rang, many students wanted to stay and hear the fascinating things the teacher had to say. They were eager to learn; their teacher was willing to stay. Jessie called these after-school meetings her Girls Home Club and Boys Corn Club. Meeting on alternating days, the girls studied gardening, cooking, sewing, and other homemaking arts, while the boys learned to view agriculture with a scientific eye.

In no time at all, Jessie's students were going home to their parents, telling them about the wonderful new things they were learning in school. Though what Jessie did would not be uncommon today, her students were embarking on an educational innovation for their time. Little did she know that these clubs would rapidly evolve into the national rural youth organization known as 4-H.

Born in Shenandoah, Iowa on June 26, 1881, Celestia Josephine "Jessie" Field was the fifth of eight children, and the third of five daughters born to Solomon Elijah Field and Celestia Josephine "Lettie" (Eastman) Field. Seven of the Field children survived infancy. In order of birth, the children were Henry, Stephen (who died in infancy), Helen, Martha, Jessie, Solomon Jr., Leanna, and Susan.

Jessie's family background had a profound influence on the direction of her life. Her father was originally from Massachusetts, but he came west to serve as a high school principal in Kewanee, Illinois. It was there that he met a delicate young woman, Lettie Eastman, who taught school in the nearby town of Toulon. Solomon was eager to earn his livelihood from the soil, and in 1869 he moved to Shenandoah, Iowa. Homesteading on the prairie and building himself a sod house, Solomon was one of the pioneer settlers of Page County. The work was hard and the hours long, but after a year he could survey with pride the crops that were the fruits of his arduous labor.

In 1870, Solomon travelled back to Illinois and returned with Lettie as his wife. During their first year of marriage, the couple continued to teach, riding on horseback to their

Eighth grade graduation in Page County, 1909: (top row, l. to r.) Nina Cummings, Marie Collier, Claude Frey, "Trixie" Larson, Vera Driftmier, Hal Wamsley, Jessie Field, Nell Reed, — Willison; (middle row) Beryl Bentley, Lucille Downing, Annabelle McCalla, — Coulter, Bessie McCalla, unidentified, unidentified, Paul Harland; (bottom row) Lois Driftmier, unidentified, Beryl Strong, Warren Fleming, Lizzie Fleming, Catherine Annan. (courtesy Ruth Shambaugh Watkins)

respective schools. After their first child, Henry, was born in 1871, the role of teacher for both Solomon and Lettie carried over from the schoolhouse to their home. As the future would show, Solomon and Lettie instilled in each of their children a strong desire for personal excellence, an appreciation and respect for the land and for nature, and a genuine concern for the welfare of others.

Unlike many men of his day, Jessie's father believed that girls were just as intelligent as boys and that his daughters should work as hard as any boy in achieving their personal goals. He encouraged all of his children to excel in school and to become active in the many tasks of efficient farm production and rural living. An avid reader, Solomon fostered Jessie's early interest in scientific agriculture. In the evenings, he would often sit in his rocking chair, with Jessie at his feet, and explain to her the new farming methods and ways of increasing production.

Beginning at the age of twelve, Jessie accompanied her father to the meetings of the Farmers Institute, which were held in the opera house in Shenandoah. The Farmers Institute was a community organization of farm men who met to hear speeches and presentations about agricultural concerns. Women did not usually attend these meet-

ings, but Jessie's father told her that if she sat still and listened quietly to the presentations, he would answer any of her questions on the way home from the meetings. At these meetings Jessie was inspired by "Uncle Henry" Wallace, the editor of *Wallaces' Farmer*. Wallace was a man with considerable leadership ability, an eloquent speaker, and a supporter of the ideals of rural living and the benefits of earning one's livelihood from the soil.

Jessie graduated from Shenandoah High School in 1899. In 1901, while attending Western Normal College in Shenandoah, she began her career in education by accepting the position at the Goldenrod School for $33.50 a month. This experience gave her the opportunity to pioneer an innovative concept in education: relating the school's curriculum more closely to the students' environment and future occupations. Jessie believed that children should take pride in living and working in the country, for, as she would later write:

> *Everywhere through the country, for those who have learned to see and understand, are lessons which point toward the richness and strength of life.*

Though Jessie used Liberty Hyde Bailey's Cornell University nature studies in her regular science classes, textbooks and printed information on crop improvement and home management were simply not available. Drawing from the information she had learned by attending the Farmers Institute meetings and by reading her father's farm journals, Jessie sought to prepare her students for the roles they would assume as adults.

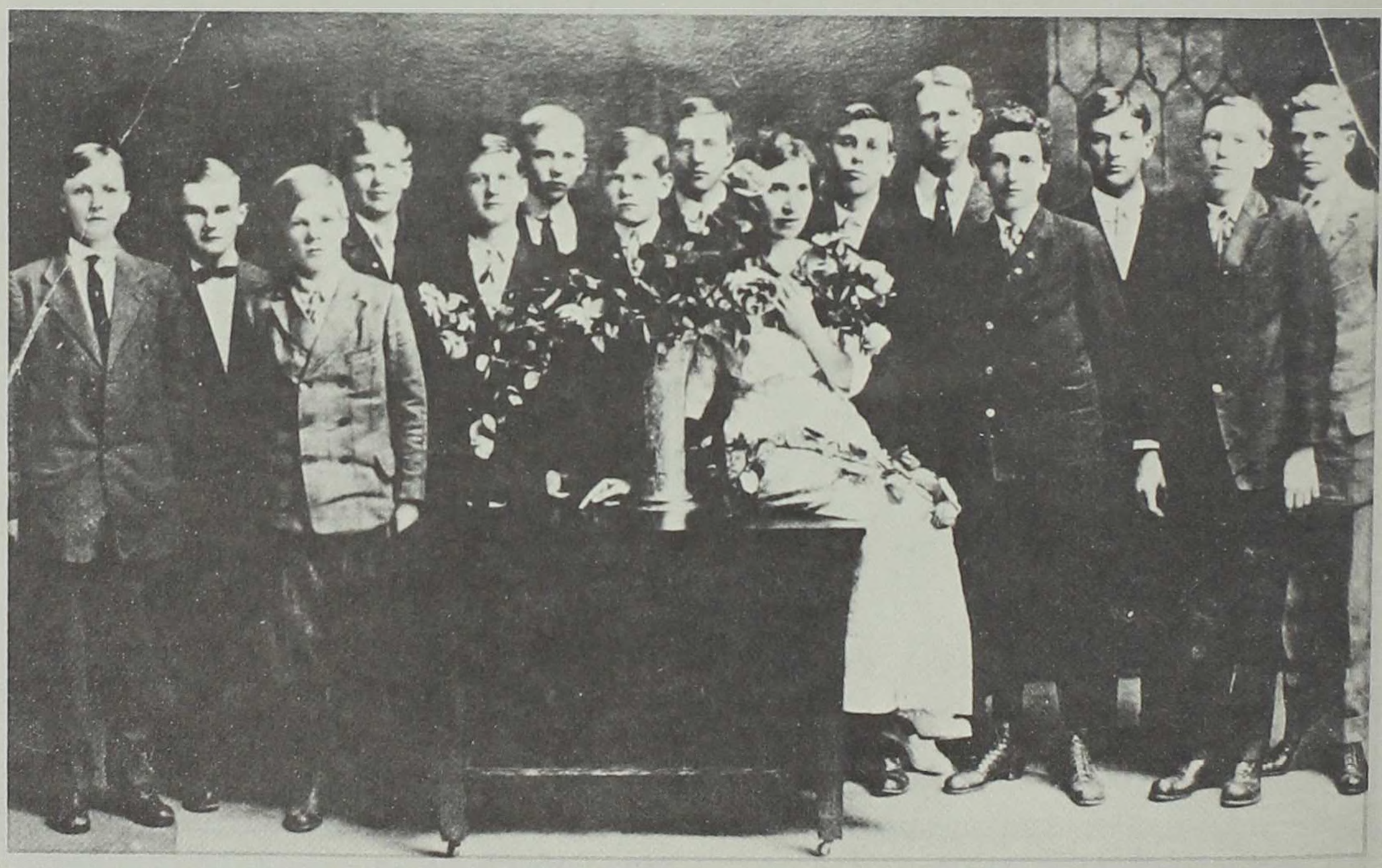
While teaching at the Goldenrod School, Jessie was bothered by the fact that her students had so many questions to which she had no answers. She decided that she needed more education, particularly in science. After teaching one term at the Goldenrod School, she resumed her education and obtained her bachelor's degree from Iowa's Tabor College in 1903. Jessie then taught in Antigo, Wisconsin during the 1903-1904 school year and in Shenandoah in 1904 and 1905.

While serving as principal of the Jefferson School in Helena, Montana in 1905, Jessie received a telegram from her father suggesting that she return home to run for the office of Page County Superintendent of Schools. George Colbert, the Page County Superintendent, had accepted a position at Northwest State Normal College in Maryville, Missouri. Jessie also received a long letter from her older brother Henry, who, like her father, continually urged her to participate fully in public life. Henry's letter convinced Jessie that as county superintendent she could have a much broader effect on the quality of education in the schools than she could as a teacher or school principal. Jessie was appointed Acting Superintendent, and she returned to Page County in June 1906. She was elected county superintendent in the fall of 1906 without opposition, and was re-elected for a second three-year term in 1909.

"Miss Jessie," as she was called by her students, was only twenty-four years old when she became county superintendent, but she had the responsibility for one hundred thirty county schools. Knowing that she was one of the youngest individuals ever to hold such a position and that she was one of the very first female county superintendents in the state, Jessie was committed to making the schools of Page County the best they could possibly be.

Jessie's first task as county superintendent was to obtain a suitable horse and buggy to take her on her school visits. She purchased a horse and buggy from Mr. Colbert. The horse was considered "too wild for a woman to handle," and Mr. Colbert had been using an extra restraining rein to control it. After a

ACTIVITIES FOR RURAL



Jessie Field's programs for the boys and girls of Page County provided an outlet for individual talents and an opportunity to learn useful skills. Pictured above are members of Page County's winning corn judging teams, 1910-1912. Below, Wilma Driftmier with the sewing machine she won at the International Corn Show for her collective sewing exhibit. (courtesy Ruth Shambaugh Watkins)

YOUTH

By 1912 Jessie Field's activities for rural youth had evolved into the 4-H Club. The young women pictured on the right are wearing the first 4-H uniforms, which they made themselves using patterns sent from Ames. Here they are busy with a demonstration of cold pack canning by the boiler method; (l. to r.) Zua Richardson, Florence Finley, Rose Faris, and Neola Edmonds. The photograph dates from 1916. (courtesy Ruth Shambaugh Watkins)

One of Jessie Field's most successful programs was the Road Dragging Club, whose members cared for Page County roads with equipment they built themselves. This is the winning team in a road dragging contest held in 1910 (l. to r.): Jay Loghry, Ray Winter, Luther Eden, Ray Loghry, Charles Winter, Ralph McCory, Jessie Field, Vern Robinson, Clarence Penwell, and Axel Eden. Teams of horses — pulling split-log road drags — stand in the background. (courtesy Ruth Shambaugh Watkins)

few months of travel on the county roads under Jessie's direction, however, the horse was so tame that she could often drop the reins and let the horse find its own way to the next school. The taming of the horse was a source of much joking for Jessie.

Those were the days of mud roads and slow travel by horse and buggy; nonetheless, Jessie visited each of her one hundred thirty schools at least twice during the academic year. Her students were amazed that she knew each one of them by name. Jessie was both respected and loved by the children of the Page County schools, and she made an enduring impression on them. More than seventy years later the details of her appearance were still clearly etched on the mind of one:

> *Miss Jessie would walk into the school wearing a finely starched white blouse, and a dark, floor length skirt. A wide belt with a beautiful buckle encircled her small waist. On the left side, tucked into her belt, but visible to all, would be a snow white handkerchief. Her long hair would be piled neatly on the top of her head, covered by a black hat.*
>
> *One day, Miss Jessie had some English violets pinned to her blouse; we had never seen such beautiful flowers and we couldn't believe our eyes — because there was snow on the ground and she was wearing* violets*! It was the first time we had ever seen flowers from a hot-house plant.*

Knowing that teaching should be an organized and systematic process, Jessie worked closely with her teachers and assisted them in developing a course of study in each subject. She encouraged her teachers to demonstrate good housekeeping skills by keeping the schoolhouse clean and neat. Floors were scrubbed, new curtains draped the windows, and schoolyards were planted with shrubs and flowers. To limit the spread of sickness among the students, the old common drinking cup used by all the students was replaced by a different cup for each one.

Jessie assisted in landscaping each schoolyard. In 1907, she received six thousand tulip bulbs from her brother Henry (of the Henry Field Seed Company) and distributed almost four dozen to each school. At a time when most people in Page County had never even seen a tulip, each school had a Tulip and Garden Club.

Realizing that teachers had to be kept informed of new teaching materials and methods, Jessie and Perry G. Holden, a professor in the Extension Department of the Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts in Ames, conducted teacher institutes. Beginning in 1907, the teacher institutes covered a variety of topics, including improved farming methods and new teaching techniques and materials. Jessie also organized the teachers into roundtable groups, known as the Page County Progressives, so that the teachers could share successful teaching ideas and methods with others.

Each school had a corner display of pamphlets and leaflets about farming and home management. More important, both the students and teachers used these shelves to display their projects and handicrafts. Jessie believed that every student had some special talent, so during the course of the school year each child would display at least one item for everyone else to see and admire.

Jessie was the Page County Superintendent at a time when the federal government was concerned about the quality of life and education in rural areas. President Theodore Roosevelt's Commission on Country Life reinforced Jessie's convictions concerning the need for relevancy in the school curriculum. By 1908 the commission, under the leadership of L. H. Bailey of Cornell

University, had completed a study of religion, health, eduction, recreation, and government in rural communities and had prepared a set of long-term objectives for improving rural education. The commission concluded what Jessie had long known: the country school was not clearly related to the students' environment, and practical education in farming and homemaking was necessary.

Jessie's goal as superintendent was to give all students an awareness of their own abilities by working successfully with the things around them. Emphasizing the teaching of academic skills that would be of practical value to rural youth, her two objectives were, first, to involve the colleges and Farmers Institutes in educating youth about scientific and improved farming techniques, and, second, to improve the teachers' skills and instructional materials so that the schools would be more vital and useful for rural living. She assisted in this process by writing *Farm Arithmetic: A Book of Real Problems for Farm Boys and Girls*. This textbook was used to supplement the seventh and eighth grade math curriculum in the schools. Published by the Henry Field Seed Company in 1909, copies of the book were distributed without cost to Page County residents. There was such widespread interest in practical farm arithmetic that the supply of books was soon exhausted and a new edition had to be printed.

Jessie's philosophy of teaching was based on the idea that organization and friendly competition stimulates interest. Competition was used as an instructional technique in both the traditional academic disciplines and in agricultural and domestic science.

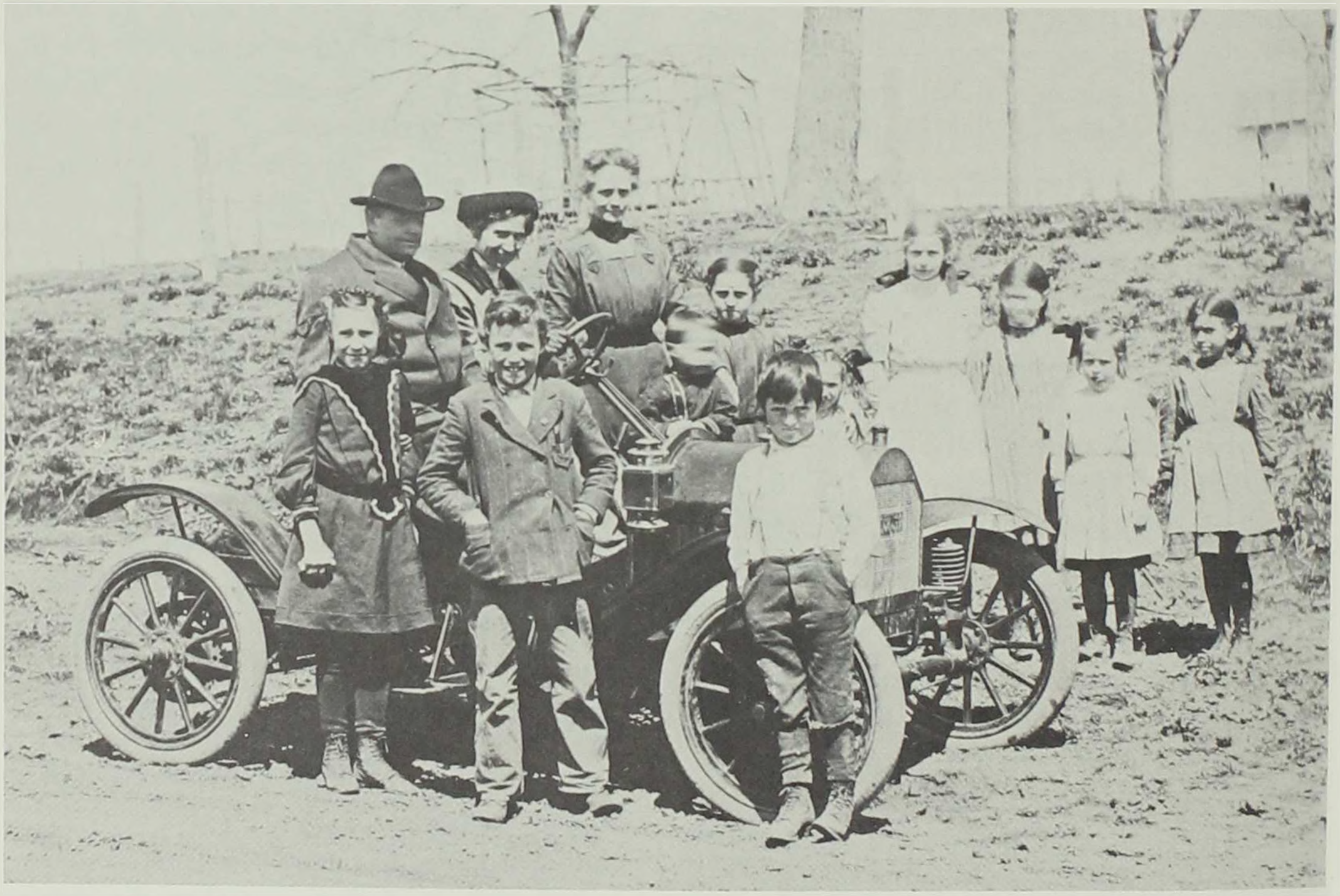
In 1906, Jessie began to establish a Boys Corn Club and a Girls Home Club at each of her one hundred thirty schools. With the assistance of P. G. Holden and other staff members from Iowa State College, the students learned improved farming methods. Club activities included an update of new information related to farming, lessons in testing seed corn, instruction in the use of the Babcock milk tester, crop and livestock judging, and competition in the homemaking arts and road dragging.

It was through these Boys Corn Clubs that many Page County farmers learned from their sons the benefits of crop rotation and seed corn testing. These clubs attracted ever greater numbers of students because, as one of the club members recalled:

> *It is difficult for people today to imagine living in that era. It was a time without the radio, television, and the automobile. As soon as one was old enough, he or she began to help with the chores. School was one of the few opportunities to be with others outside of our family.*
>
> *Miss Jessie made school fun and worthwhile. We looked forward to the day when she visited our school, and our club projects kept us busy when the roads were too muddy to go anywhere, or the snow blocked us in.*
>
> *Our world had been a "dull gray," and Miss Jessie and her clubs turned it into a "sparkling white." We just loved Miss Jessie. She made us feel good about ourselves, and proud to be from the country.*

Jessie believed that it was important for the parents to support the clubs and projects of her students. Occasionally, a father would object to Jessie's ideas, saying, "What does a woman know about farming?" or "My daughter can learn how to bake at home from her mother." But when their activities resulted in awards, increased farm production, delicious baked goods, and finely-made clothes, the objectors were silenced.

Transportation in Page County was often



Page County School Superintendent Jessie Field visits the Kile School, accompanied by Massachusetts Secretary of Education William Orr. Her automobile was a gift from Page County students who won the Brush runabout in competition at Omaha's International Corn Show in 1909. Also pictured here are Kile schoolteacher Eva Plank and students Mellisa McClelland, Rodney McClelland, Fay Johnston, Glen Johnston, Grace McClelland, Ruth Middaugh, Iva McClelland, and Netha Middaugh. (courtesy Ruth Shambaugh Watkins)

difficult due to the poor condition of many dirt roads. To help remedy this situation, Jessie formed Road Dragging Clubs at her schools. Road dragging was a method by which roads were graded using a team of horses pulling weighted logs. Individual club members first built a model of a road drag. Then, as a group, they built a King Split-Log Road Drag. Each club member was to take care of the road around his farm, and competition would determine who maintained the best roads in the county.

In 1910, W. C. Brown of Creston, who was president of the New York Central Railroad, donated an award of $200 to the team of boys who had the best five-mile stretch of road. The boys numbered ten to a team, and ten teams competed for the prize. The winning strip of road is today U.S. Highway 71 southeast of Hepburn. Because of the road-dragging work of her club members, it was said that "Miss Jessie and Page County had the best roads in the state."

In order to share with the community the fine work of Page County children in these clubs, Jessie organized the first Junior Exhibit Achievement Show in 1906. The Junior Exhibit was held with the Farmers Institute in the basement of the Clarinda

Armory. All students were encouraged to enter. In addition to awarding certificates, medals, and ribbons, prizes were donated by the merchants of Clarinda. There was a prize for every contestant, and enthusiasm for the clubs grew.

The 1906 Junior Exhibit Achievement Show was only the beginning of such events. Each year, the students' work on the exhibits started earlier in the year and there were more entries. The clubs' motto became: "To make the best better." In 1908, one of the club members submitted a peck of corn for competition with the adult corn growers at the fair in Clarinda, and he caused a sensation when he took first place. And in 1909, the agricultural and domestic science exhibits from Page County won first place at the Iowa State Fair.

When Henry Field heard that the 1909 International Corn Show was to be held in Omaha, Nebraska, he convinced Jessie to take the entire Page County Junior Exhibit Achievement Show to Omaha to compete. About six hundred Page County boys and girls entered exhibits in the Omaha competition. The collective Page County exhibit won first prize — a red one-cylinder Brush runabout worth $550 — and individual awards totalling about $200. After winning the automobile, the students had to determine what to do with it. They voted to give the car to Miss Jessie so that she could travel with greater frequency to their country schools. It was a proud moment for club members when the county superintendent arrived at their schools in the automobile they had won for her.

P. G. Holden was so impressed by the county's performance at the Omaha show that he invited the top ten winners to attend a "short course" at Ames for training in corn judging and other farm work. The course was held during the college's winter break in early January and was attended by high school boys. R. K. Bliss, of the Extension Department, helped the boys learn skills that they could teach to others at home and school. For most of them, the short course in Ames was viewed as a once in a lifetime experience in which they took pride.

Jessie also used competition to stimulate student excitement in academic areas. In 1907 she organized the first Page County spelling and writing contests. The following year, her students began to compete in county-wide ciphering (arithmetic), geography, and declamatory contests. In the ciphering contests, the questions were similar to the students' school work; the problems involved the application of arithmetic to farm problems, such as determining acreage production and the volume of corn cribs. In the geography contests, students developed a variety of projects, such as maps and displays depicting the lay of the land on their parents' farm.

Because of her students' outstanding performance at the Junior Exhibit Achievement Shows and the innovative curriculum and activities of the Page County schools, Jessie's work as superintendent attracted national attention. In October 1909, under the sponsorship of the Rockefeller Southern Educational Fund, fifteen state superintendents from the South visited the Page County schools. Accompanying the superintendents were Robert Ogden, Director of the Rockefeller Southern Educational Fund; Dr. A. E. Winship, editor of the *Journal of Education*; and Dr. P. P. Claxton, the United States Commissioner of Education. These observers were astounded by what they saw: clean and orderly schools, gardens cared for by the students, lessons in seed corn and milk testing, instruction in homemaking, displays of student products, dirt roads skillfully maintained by the students, and an enthusiasm for school and learning that was beyond belief. They reported that Jessie was a

"genius" and "a prophet in her own country." A. E. Winship concluded that "What Jessie is doing many other men and women are approximating, and what she has achieved others may accomplish." Educational journals commended the schools' innovative curriculum, teaching methods, and rural youth clubs. For the next decade, the schools of Page County would serve as models of exemplary rural education.

What Jessie began in the Page County schools was being transported by Perry G. Holden and the college Extension Service throughout the state of Iowa. The rural youth movement spread quickly; children in other counties could be found participating in similar school-sponsored clubs and activities. With the visitors from the southern states, these ideas were implemented in other parts of the nation, for as the *New York Times* reported on June 9, 1910:

> *Starting with one small club in Page County several years ago, these organizations of county boys have spread throughout the State, have overlapped the boundaries of Iowa, and have been crawling eastward until they are now at the threshold of New York State and ready to step in.*

As Superintendent J. Y. Joyner of North Carolina later reported to a convention of state superintendents, "Page County has won a national reputation. Its schools are under the direction of an enthusiastic and consecrated county superintendent."

To encourage participation in her clubs, Jessie designed a three-leaf clover pin to represent technological, agricultural, and domestic science. The clover symbolized conservation in agriculture, for it was one of the crops farmers used in rotation to build up nitrogen in the soil. The letter "H" was placed on each leaf, symbolizing "Head," "Hands," and "Heart." In the leaflet that accompanied each pin, it was explained that the "H" on the Page County emblem represented "trained 'Heads' to think and know, trained 'Hands' to do the everyday things well, and 'Hearts' that will use all this to help others." In the center of the clover was a kernel of corn, with the word "Page." The stem slanted to the left and contained the name of the state, "Iowa." The idea of such a pin was first formulated by Jessie in 1907, but it was not until 1910, when J. Ren Lee and W. C. Brown donated money for its production, that it was first distributed to club members. Upon completion of a project, a club member received a pink slip, and after having obtained a specified number of pink slips, the member was awarded a pin.

The outstanding work of Jessie's students continued. In 1909, the *Kimball Dairy Farmer* of Waterloo offered a $250 championship trophy for the best boys corn judging team in the state of Iowa. The state contest was held in early January, in conjunction with the short course in Ames. In order to better prepare the boys for the competi-

Note on Sources

The National Board of the YWCA in New York City has Shambaugh's booklet, *College Women and Country Leadership* (1915) and a 1913 speech, "The Country Girl." Other articles by Shambaugh, all in the *Journal of Education*, include: "Educating the Country Boy and Girl" (May 5, 1910); "The Best Teachers for the Country" (November 17, 1910); and "Polly Stanton's Eight Week Club" (December 24, 1914). For information about her work see: "The Best Rural Schools in America," *Page County [Iowa] History* (Clarinda, Iowa, 1942), pp. 42-48; A. E. Winship, "Ideal Rural School Work," *Journal of Education* (June 24, 1909), pp. 688-90; Franklin M. Reck, *The 4-H Story: A History of 4-H Club Work* (Chicago, 1951); and Faye Whitmore and Manila Cheshire, *The Very Beginnings* (Shenandoah, Iowa, 1963), an account by friends of Shambaugh who were 3-H and 4-H members. Obituaries appeared in the *Des Moines Register*, January 18, 1971; Council Bluffs *Nonpareil*, January 17, 1971; and the *New York Times*, January 18, 1971. Additional information was provided by Shambaugh's daughter, Ruth Shambaugh Watkins, and by Faye Whitmore, Manila Cheshire, Merrill Dryden, and Florence Huddle — all of Clarinda. Death record provided by the registrar of Page County, Iowa.

The editor wishes to thank Ruth Shambaugh Watkins for her help in locating and identifying photographs for use with Dr. Friedel's article.

tion, Jessie and R. K. Bliss taught classes in corn judging. They emphasized that it was not enough to be able to select the best seed corn, but that one must be able to give good reasons for the selection.

In January 1910, the Page County Boys Corn Judging Team returned with the first place trophy. In order to keep the trophy, however, it had to be won by the same county in three consecutive years. For the next two years, the Page County team continued to win the first place prize. The Kimball Dairy Farmer Trophy was theirs to keep, and Page County residents celebrated for weeks.

The club members had worked so hard to win the trophy permanently that many residents were surprised to learn that the team had voted to return it. The boys were afraid that, without the trophy as an incentive, interest and enthusiasm for the yearly contest would wane. After displaying it for the year, they returned it so that it could be used in future competition. When Page County continued to win the trophy for the next two years, however, the members decided to keep it.

The first of Jessie's farm camps, a forerunner of today's 4-H camps, was held in 1910. Jessie and Professor E. C. Bishop, the Nebraska State School Superintendent, organized a ten-day summer Boys Farm Camp in connection with the Teachers Institute and the Chautauqua. Jessie sought financial support from Page County merchants, businessmen, and farmers, and teachers from Ames came to teach short courses at the camp. The camp's program included horse and livestock judging, livestock and agronomy classes, military drill, and athletics. There was much to learn and do at the camp, and Henry Wallace saw another advantage:

> *Perhaps not the least value of the boys camp came from the boys being away from home and rubbing against one another. This developed a feeling of self-reliance and knocked off some of the bashful corners.*

At the end of the ten-day camp, one of the boys suggested having a camp for the girls so that their sisters could participate. The idea caught on, and there were two farm camps in 1911, one for the boys and another for the girls. The girls camp was called the "Camp of the Golden Maidens." Held on the Clarinda Fairgrounds at the same time as the Chautauqua, the boys continued their studies and exhibits, while the girls studied and competed in such homemaking arts as housekeeping, sewing, cooking, canning, and breadmaking. At the conclusion of the ten-day camp, the girls and boys presented Jessie with a gold watch, engraved with the 3-H emblem, in appreciation of her work and kindness.

It was at the first girls camp that one of the camp leaders pointed out to Jessie that some of the members had been involved in her clubs for a number of years and asked her whether something different from the 3-H pin could be designed so that these members could receive further recognition. Taking this suggestion, Jessie added another leaf to the pin, making it a four-leaf clover — the symbol of good luck. A fourth "H" was added symbolizing "Home," but it was later changed to "Health." Jessie regretted the change, for she believed that "Home" encompassed a larger meaning — including health. The first 4-H pins were distributed in Page County in 1912.

In order to be of as much assistance as possible to her boys in teaching them how to select seed corn scientifically, Jessie attended an adult corn judging class in Ames in January 1912. She found herself to be the only female in the class. Following completion of the course, she competed in the State Adult Corn Judging Contest; once again, she was the only

A FAMILY ALBUM

The family of Solomon E. Field in a portrait made at home in Shenandoah shortly after Christmas, probably in 1892. From left, Mr. Field (with daughter Susan, age five, on his lap); Helen (16); Sol Jr. (9); Jessie (11) seated in front of Sol, Jr.; Martha (14); Leanna (6); Henry (21); and Lettie Eastman Field. Below left, a picture of Jessie (l.) and Martha, taken by the girls as a surprise for their parents. Jessie was eight years old. Below right, the Field sisters (l. to r.): Jessie Shambaugh, Martha Eaton, Leanna Driftmier, Sue Conrad, and Helen Fischer.

Above, Ira William ("I.W.") Shambaugh and his bride embark on a Hawaiian honeymoon in June 1917. Shambaugh was a prominent Clarinda miller. Above right, Jessie Field Shambaugh reads "The Mother's Prayer" to her children Bill and Ruth. Right, a Field family reunion at Helen Fischer's home in Shenandoah in about 1950; (l. to r.) Susan, Leanna (in wheelchair), Sol Jr., Jessie, Martha, Helen, and Henry. (all photos courtesy Ruth Shambaugh Watkins)

female in a group of over two hundred men. Much to her surprise as well as the judges and the other participants, Jessie won first place. The prize was a corn sheller and, since she had no personal use for it, she donated it to be used as an award at the 1912 Farmers Institute in Clarinda.

In 1911 Jessie's book, *The Corn Lady: The Story of a Country Teacher's Life*, was published. Describing her work in supervising and teaching in rural schools and in organizing farm youth groups, *The Corn Lady* presented an idealized view of a country school through the eyes of a young teacher. "A Country Girl's Creed" was also written at this time, and has been recited by millions of 4-H girls throughout the United States:

I am glad I live in the country. I love its beauty and its spirit. I rejoice in the things I can do as a country girl for my home and my neighborhood.

I believe I can share in the beauty around me — in the fragrance of the orchards in the spring, in the bending wheat at harvest time, in the morning song of birds, and in the glow of the sunset on the far horizon. I want to express this beauty in my own life as naturally and happily as the wild rose blooms by the road side.

I believe I can have a part in the courageous spirit of the country. This spirit has entered into the brook in our pasture. The stones placed in its way call forth its strength and add to its strength a song. It dwells in the tender plants as they burst the seedcases that imprison them and push past the dark earth to the light. It sounds in the nesting notes of the meadow lark. With this courageous spirit I too can face the hard things of life with gladness.

I believe there is much I can do in my country home. Through studying the best way to do my every-day work I can find joy in the common tasks done well. Through loving comradeship I can help bring into my home the happiness and peace that are always so near us in God's out-of-door world. Through such a home I can help make real to all who pass that way their highest ideal of country life.

I believe my love and loyalty for my country home should reach out in service to that larger home that we call our neighborhood. I would join with the people who live there in true friendliness. I would whole-heartedly give my best to further all that is being done for a better community. I would have all that I think and say and do help to unite country people near and far in that great Kingdom of Love for Neighbors which the Master came to establish — the Master who knew and cared for country ways and country folks.

The clubs and activities initiated by Jessie in Page County and extended to other parts of the country attracted the attention of the federal government. Committed to the recommendations made by Teddy Roosevelt's Commission on Country Life, Congress passed the Smith-Lever Act in 1914. This act created the national Cooperative Extension Service, in which the United States Department of Agriculture, state land grant universities, and counties were to share the leadership and cost of a "learn by doing" approach to agriculture. The national 4-H organization was formed, and the farm clubs and camps Jessie began in Page County came under its auspices.

At this time, Jessie resigned from the Page County superintendency and moved to New York City in May 1912 to become the National YWCA Secretary for Small Town and Country Work. Though she had received a great deal of personal satisfaction from her

work in Page County, she felt that she would have a much broader effect on the quality of life of rural children through the YWCA. She was also upset, because "the city continues each year to claim an immense number of country people." Jessie believed that the YWCA could counter this movement by improving the domestic, social, and religious life of women living on farms and in small towns. The YWCA could bring to country girls:

> *mastery of everyday work; companionship and play; a chance to make money themselves; a love for the country; and best of all, the spiritual things without which their lives would remain dreary and discontented.*

Jessie travelled throughout ten mid-Atlantic states, working to establish local branches of the YWCA in rural areas. She travelled into the poverty-stricken areas of Appalachia and spoke to young girls, often instructing them in the skills necessary to be a good homemaker and a self-sufficient member of society. Fully aware of the financial plight of many of these families, Jessie looked for an outlet for their handicrafts in New York City.

Many of the wealthy patrons of the YWCA were impressed by Jessie's quiet country charm, her sincerity, dedication, and honesty. One of these patrons, Mrs. Gilbert Colgate, assisted Jessie in having the handiwork created by the young women from the the mountain country of the Virginias and the Carolinas marketed in one of New York City's finest linen stores, McCutcheon's on Fifth Avenue.

It was through Mrs. Colgate, too, that Jessie met and discussed mutual concerns with John Burroughs, the world-famous naturalist, and Thomas Edison. While working with the YWCA, Jessie collaborated with Scott Nearing on the textbook *Community Civics* for rural adolescents.

While Jessie was in New York City, what had begun several years earlier as a working relationship with Ira W. Shambaugh, one of Clarinda's most eligible bachelors, slowly evolved into a romantic courtship. At fifty-five, Ira was twenty years older than Jessie and was well-established financially as the owner of Shambaugh's Flour Mill. Each wrote letters regularly to the other, and Ira travelled several times by train to New York to visit his sweetheart. Jessie resigned from her position with the YWCA in 1917. She and Ira were married on June 9 of that year at the home of her parents in Redlands, California. The newlyweds had planned a honeymoon cruise around the world, but World War I limited their sightseeing to the Hawaiian Islands.

The Shambaughs returned to Clarinda, where Ira had built a beautiful brick home for Jessie. In future years, its large basement would frequently serve as the meeting place for the numerous community and charity groups in which Jessie was active. As a wedding present, Ira gave her an acre of land. This land became known as "Sunnyside Gardens," and within a very short time it was transformed into a lovely nursery for iris and rock-garden plants.

Though Jessie devoted the rest of her life to her family and community and did not continue her career in rural education, she was by no means an idle individual. During the flu epidemic of 1918, Jessie served as a volunteer relief worker. She visited the sick, tended to their children, and cooked warm meals for their families. She spent many hours in the poor east-end section of Clarinda.

The Shambaughs' love and desire for children of their own made the stillbirth of their son, James, in September 1919, a tragedy felt by the whole community. Jessie and Ira's grief over the loss of their child was com-

pounded by Jessie's affliction with pernicious anemia. Her recovery was slow, but their wish for children was answered with the births of William H., in November 1920, and Phyllis Ruth, in October 1922.

Jessie published *A Real Country Teacher: The Story of Her Work* in 1922. This book included the letters previously published in *The Corn Lady* and added an update entitled "Fifteen Years Later" and a supplement devoted to farm arithmetic problems.

Along with her four sisters, Jessie also assisted her brother Henry in the radio broadcasting business of station KFNF in Shenandoah. Helen Fischer, the oldest sister, was called the "Flower Lady" because of the advice she gave to listeners on how to be successful gardeners. (Her daughter, Gretchen Harshbarger, would later serve as the editor of the *McCall's Garden Book*.) Another sister, Martha Eaton, though a resident of Des Moines, read her original poetry and discussed current literature over the radio whenever she was in Shenandoah. Jessie broadcast the "Mother's Hour" until she became too busy with children of her own to make the twenty-mile drive from Clarinda to Shenandoah. For the many listeners who wrote to Jessie requesting advice on caring for and raising children, she wrote the "Mother's Prayer":

> *Dear Father, Thou Who has given me the great gift of mother-love, help me to show that love every day in a gentle voice; tender, skillful hands and a brave spirit.*
>
> *Save me from nervous hurry and worry, from nagging, from short-sightedness and from dimness of vision that I may tuck my children in bed at night with a serene light still shining in my eyes.*
>
> *Grant to me an understanding heart that I may always prove worthy of the trust of my children for I long to have them turn to me with their mistakes and failures as well as their achievements and successes.*
>
> *Work within me, Thou who has made the rich colors of autumn and the tender skies of spring, that I may see beauty and make it a part of my home. Teach me Thy way of gladness, for I would ever keep a merry heart, a keen zest for the new and untried and pure fun in the give and take of every day companionship.*
>
> *Dear Father of All, may the love, the patience, the understanding, the beauty and the gladness of my home reach out to other homes and so help to bring in Thy Kingdom on earth. Amen.*

Jessie Field, visiting at her sister Helen's house, ca. 1918 (courtesy Ruth Shambaugh Watkins)

A third sister, Leanna Driftmier, broadcast an hour-long daily program called "Kitchen Klatter," which gave the rural homemaker innovative and useful ideas for making life easier. Finally, Susan Conrad, the youngest Field sister and a potter, filled in on the program whenever she was needed.

As a wife and mother, Jessie continued to

advise 4-H groups and to perform welfare work. She was a charter member of the Page County Social Welfare Board and state vice-president of the Federated Garden Clubs of Iowa, and, from 1922 to 1937, she chaired the Board of Park Commissioners in Clarinda. Jessie was awarded an honorary degree as Doctor of Humane Letters from Doane College in Crete, Nebraska in 1951.

After the death of her husband in June 1951, Jessie devoted her time to the upkeep and care of her private garden, to her community projects, and to the responsibilities of a loving and caring grandmother. In 1971, at the age of eighty-nine, while suffering from a hip fracture, Jessie developed pneumonia and died. She was buried in Clarinda.

Jessie Field Shambaugh in 1960, with her grandson Jared Watkins (courtesy Ruth Shambaugh Watkins)

Jessie Field Shambaugh was one of those few individuals whose life reaches out to touch untold thousands. Challenging convention, she was driven by a firm commitment to the human spirit's constant struggle for personal fulfillment and the betterment of society. Motivated by a vision of what could be accomplished for country boys and girls, Jessie acted with gracious sincerity and a confidence in the ability of others. Her understanding of human nature, coupled with a marvelous talent for working with all kinds of people, allowed her to make great strides in rural education and in the rural youth movement. Jessie Field's vision of a better life for country boys and girls became a reality during her own lifetime, expanding beyond the boundaries of Page County, the state of Iowa, and even the United States, to the present international setting of the 4-H movement.

Despite the notoriety and attention her achievements brought her, Jessie shied away from fame and personal recognition. When asked why she did not seek to receive credit for her work in establishing farm clubs and the 4-H, she replied that "I'm sure the idea must have been in many minds at the same time — this wish for helping country boys and girls . . . . The important thing is that a way *was* found, and it *did* help them."

Truly, Jessie Field Shambaugh helped to initiate one of those few movements that prove to have an undeniable effect on improving the lives of generations of people. Acknowledged as the "Mother of 4-H," Jessie Field Shambaugh's character was described by journalist William Allen White: "Probably even on the streets of Heaven, Jessie will find some small angels who need her nurturing." □

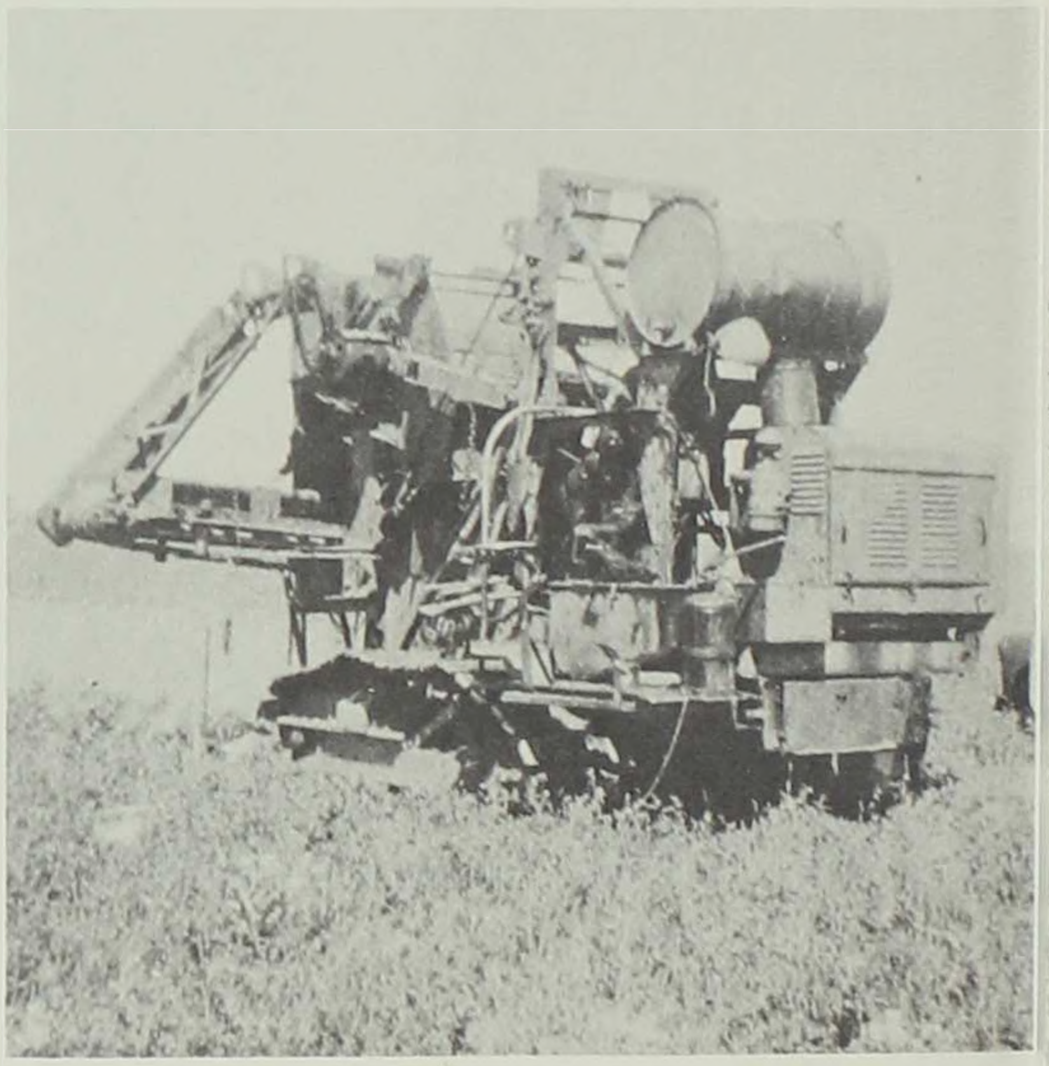
The Army Helps the Farmer

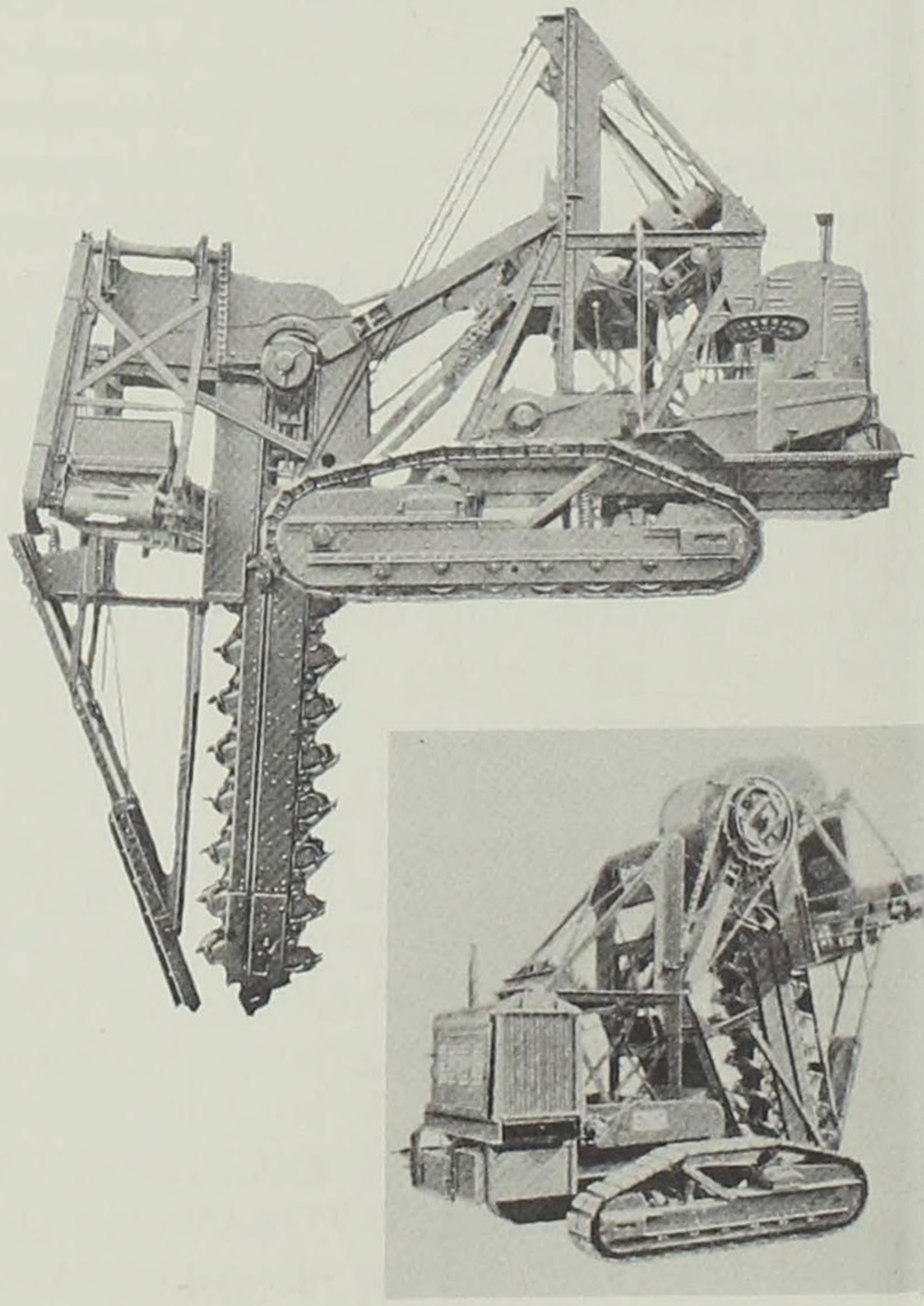
by James E. Ferguson

In March 1945, the United States Army released this ditching machine to Everett F. Ferguson (1901-1957) of Grand Junction, Iowa. Built by Barber Green, the eleven-ton mechanical digger cost $7,500. Before Ferguson could buy the machine, however, the Army required that he obtain statements from bankers, landowners, and Agricultural Adjustment Administration and Farm Bureau officials attesting to the digger's utility in a variety of farm chores. The Army had never before released such equipment for sale to civilians.

The machine proved itself immediately, making quick work of such tasks as laying tile and digging trenches for sewers, water mains, and gas lines. Under favorable weather conditions, the digger removed earth at the rapid — for 1945 — rate of five feet per minute. The extensive land drainage made possible by the digger and similar machines helped Greene and Boone County farmers such as Ferguson increase crop yields in the postwar years, an ample return on their investment.

Everett Ferguson was the grandson of James Hickey, the first judge in Palo Alto County, and the nephew of Maggie (Hickey) McNally. Pictured on the opposite page with Ferguson (left) is Emmett M. Henry (1886-1970).





The digging machine released for civilian use by the United States Army in 1945. Pictured at right is one of two machines purchased by Greene County farmer Everett F. Ferguson. (all illustrations courtesy the author)

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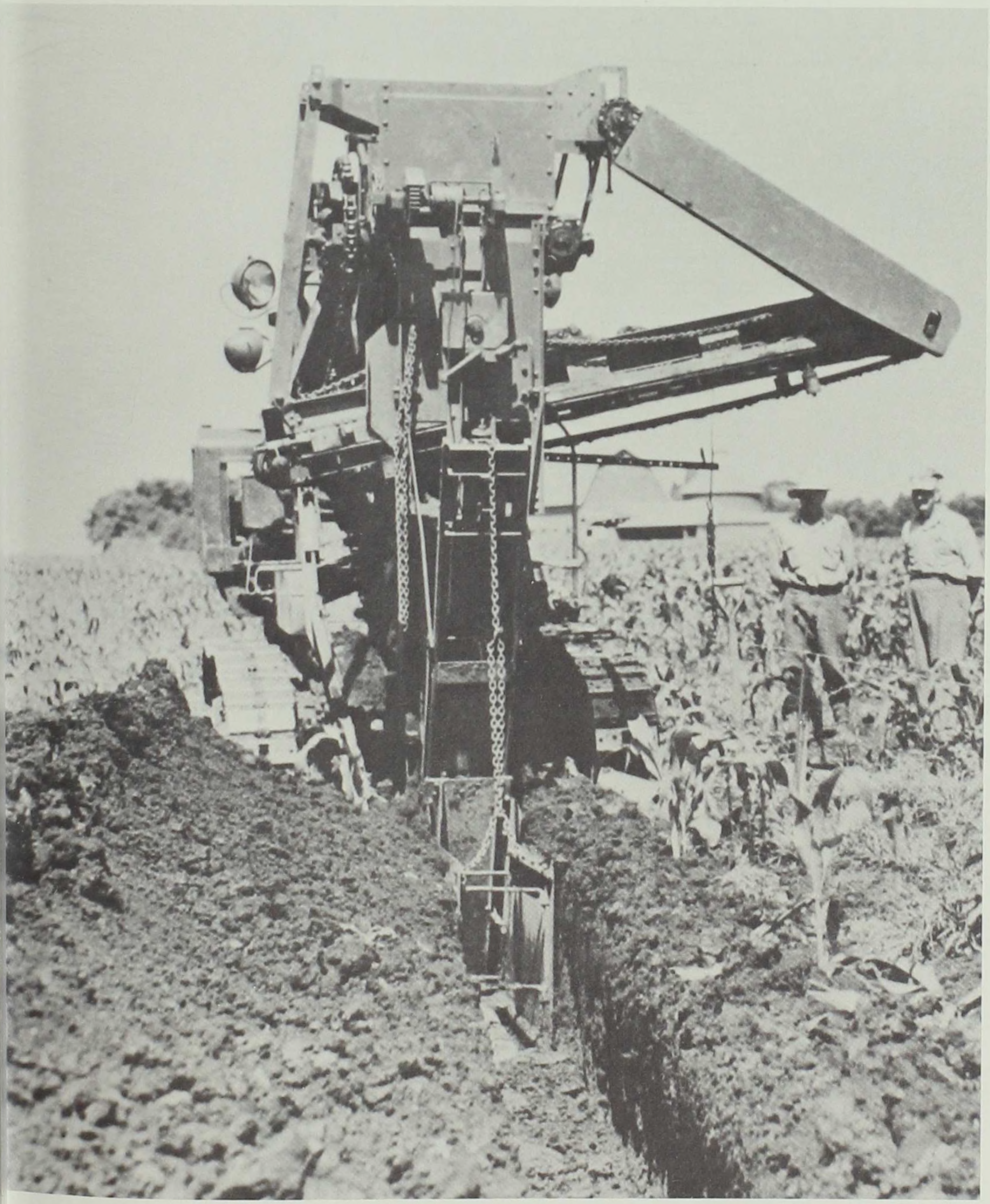
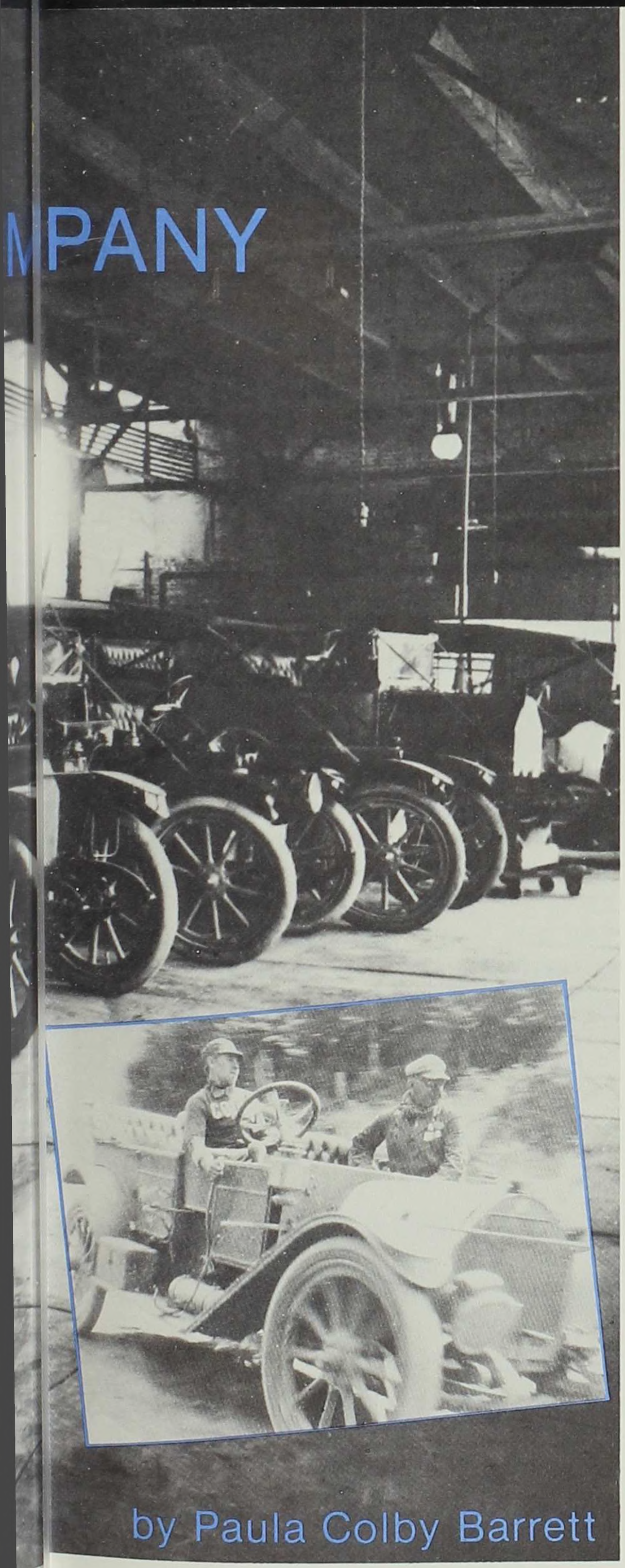


IOWA INNOVATIONS

THE COLBY MOTOR COM

Road-ready Colbys receive finishing touches at the Mason City factory; (inset) racing down Sullivan Hill, 1911 (courtesy the author)

MPANY



by Paula Colby Barrett

Not even the most enthusiastic salesman in the automobile business would have predicted the speed with which the American consumer took to the motor car in the early 1900s. By 1908, just a dozen years after the introduction of automotive technology from Europe, nearly two hundred thousand Americans owned motor cars. In Iowa, there were but forty autos registered in 1900; by 1910, the figure had soared to more than ten thousand. Much of the nation's automobile manufacturing had already concentrated in Detroit by the turn of the twentieth century, but in these early years there were also dozens of smaller auto makers scattered throughout the United States. One of these, the Colby Motor Company of Mason City, Iowa, built automobiles on a par with the finest produced in America before World War I.

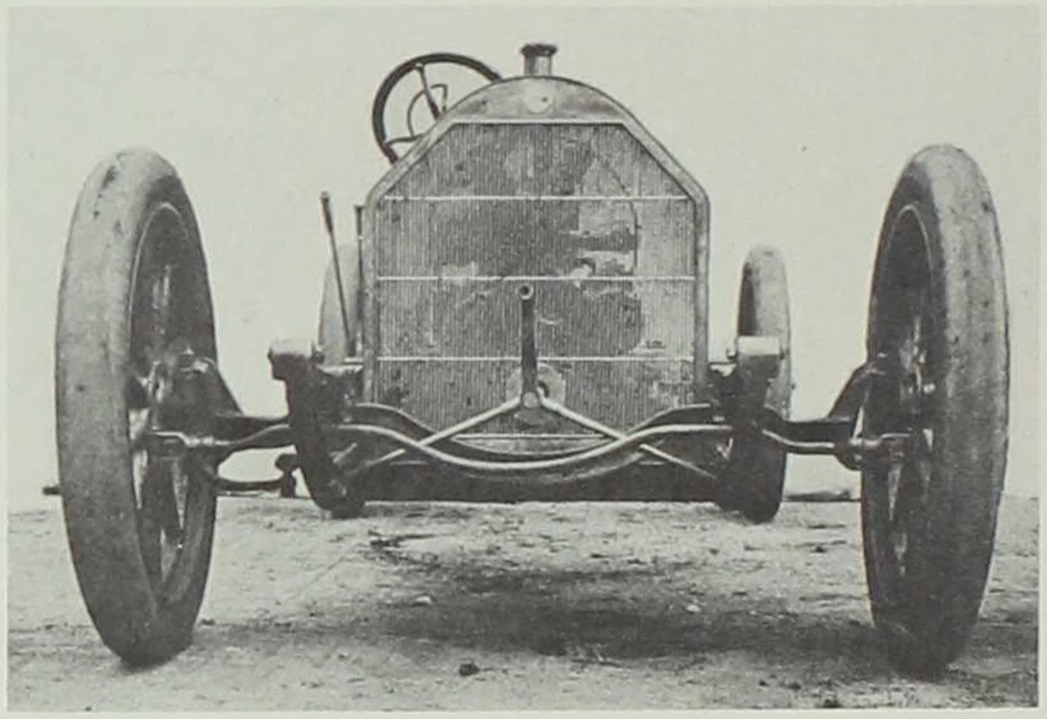
In 1910, Mason City was a growing community, and its citizens were especially receptive to any new businesses that might appear. Into this atmosphere stepped William Colby and the Colby Motor Company, which was formed in the fall of 1910. The epidemic of automobile fever was already sweeping the country and Colby, a successful businessman, worked aggressively to establish his company as a high-quality, competitive automobile manufacturing firm.

Colby was no stranger to Mason City. He had been born in Primrose, Wisconsin in 1875, the tenth child of Colbjorn and Anluag Oscar Colby, who had come to America from Sigdal Parish in Norway in 1850. But in 1876 the Colby family moved to Mason City, where Colby's father rapidly accumulated respectable holdings in land and cattle.

As a young man, William Colby had strong ambitions, but not as an Iowa farmer.

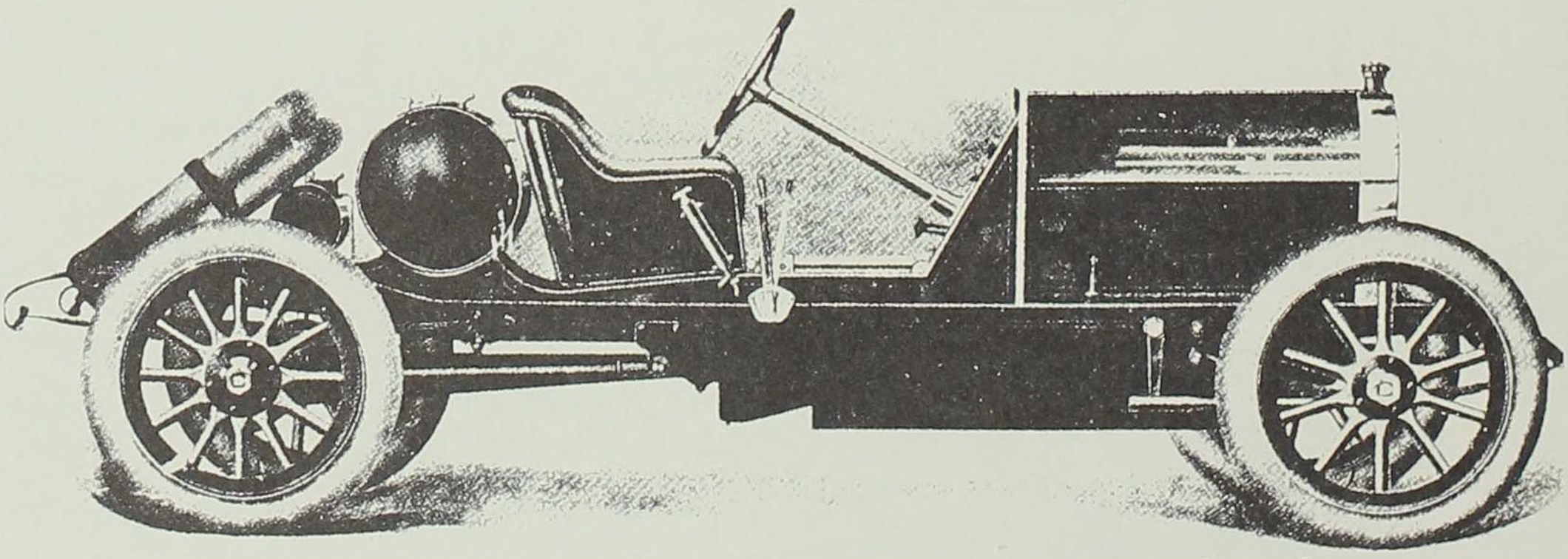
Instead, he directed his energy to becoming a versatile and successful entrepreneur, a goal well-suited to the speculative business atmosphere of the early twentieth century. Colby's training ground for this career was the Plano Harvester Company, where his older brother Oscar worked. After several years as a salesman for Plano, he turned to insurance sales, with a territory that included Minnesota and the Dakotas. Then, in 1906, he returned to Mason City, where he exercised his maturing entrepreneurial skills in promoting and founding the Northwestern States Portland Cement Company.

By 1910, when Colby became involved in automobile manufacturing, he had already established himself as a successful promoter of new businesses, a general entrepreneur. Between 1907 and 1910 he promoted and directed the construction of brick, tile, and sewer-pipe companies in Fort Dodge, Mason City, and Lehigh, Iowa, and in Spokane, Washington. Following the completion of his activity in the Spokane project — the construction of a two-million-dollar plant for the Washington Brick, Tile, and Sewer Pipe Company — Colby returned to Iowa and moved into banking. He was one of the organizers of the People's State Bank in



Mason City and was appointed to the bank's board of directors. But this was only until he began work on the firm that was to become his next venture: the Colby Motor Company.

Colby applied all his entrepreneurial skills to the new company. On September 29, 1910, the Mason City *Globe-Gazette* announced that a forty-acre site had been purchased for the firm. The site had been carefully chosen. It was located along the tracks of both the Des Moines Short Line Railroad and the Chicago and Great Western Railroad, and the Mason City and Clear Lake interurban ran just north of the land. Thus the site was already served by both freight and passenger transportation facilities.



The Colby Model G Roadster, retail price — $1,650 (courtesy the author)

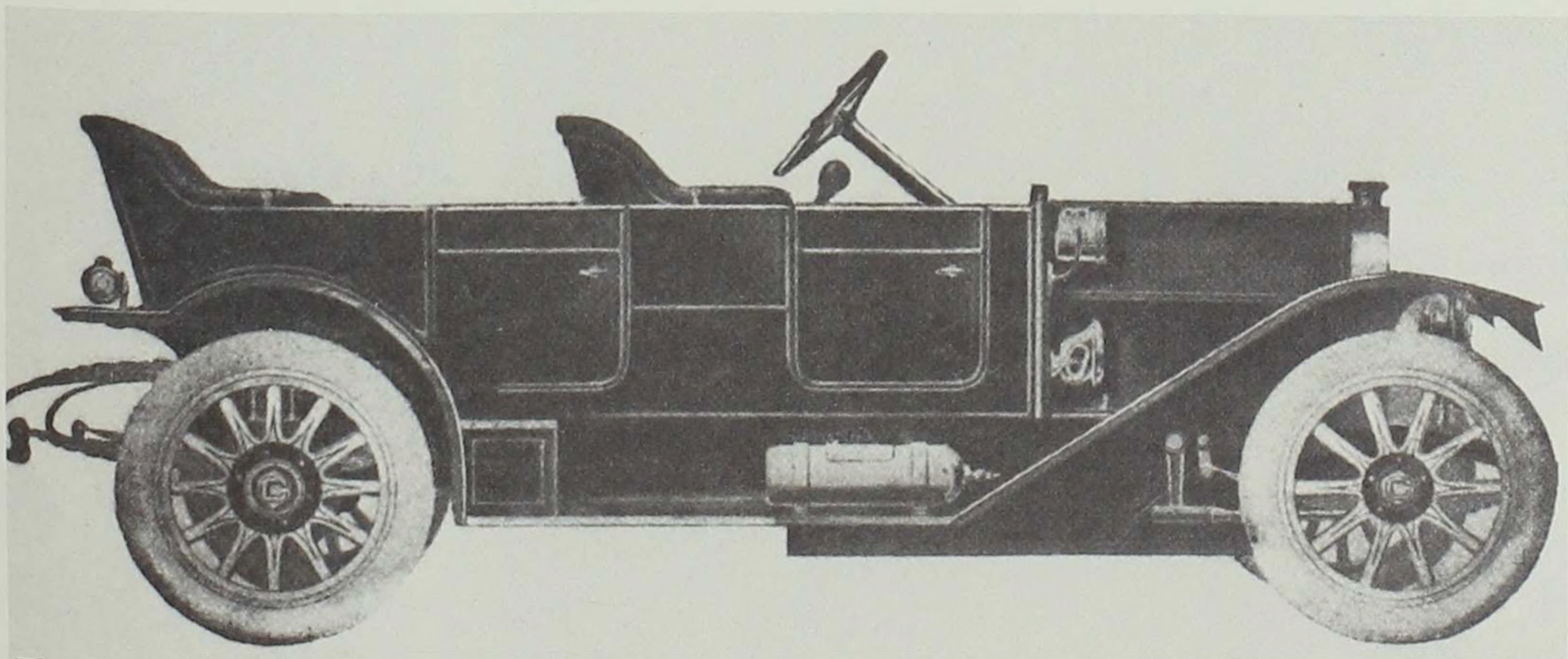
Next, Colby wasted no time in enlisting people who would work hard for the success of the company. For technical expertise and marketing experience, he hired David W. Henry of Muskegon, Michigan, who had designed and built his own automobile named, appropriately enough, the Henry Car. Considered to be one of the most knowledgeable men of his day in the field of motor transportation, Henry served as the Colby Motor Company's first general manager.

Colby then hired George W. Howland to be the new company's secretary and appointed two local men — I. W. Keerl and Senator A. H. Gale — and his own younger brother, James A. Colby, as the firm's incorporators. Beyond the company's officers, however, Colby also hoped to make every stockholder an active promoter and agent for the new automobile he planned to manufacture.

Colby and Henry envisioned the first Colby production model to be a five-passenger, forty-horsepower automobile, though they hoped later to add a runabout and a larger passenger car to the line. They agreed that the Colby should be produced only from top-grade parts and that the engine should be tested to adapt it to the rigors of the cold Iowa winters. At the same time, they wanted

(l. to r.) James Colby, Oscar Charles Colby, William Colby (courtesy the author)

Colby Motor Company officials present a display of current models at the Mason City plant (courtesy the author)



The 1911 Colby Model H, a five-passenger, four-door touring car costing $1,750 (courtesy the author)

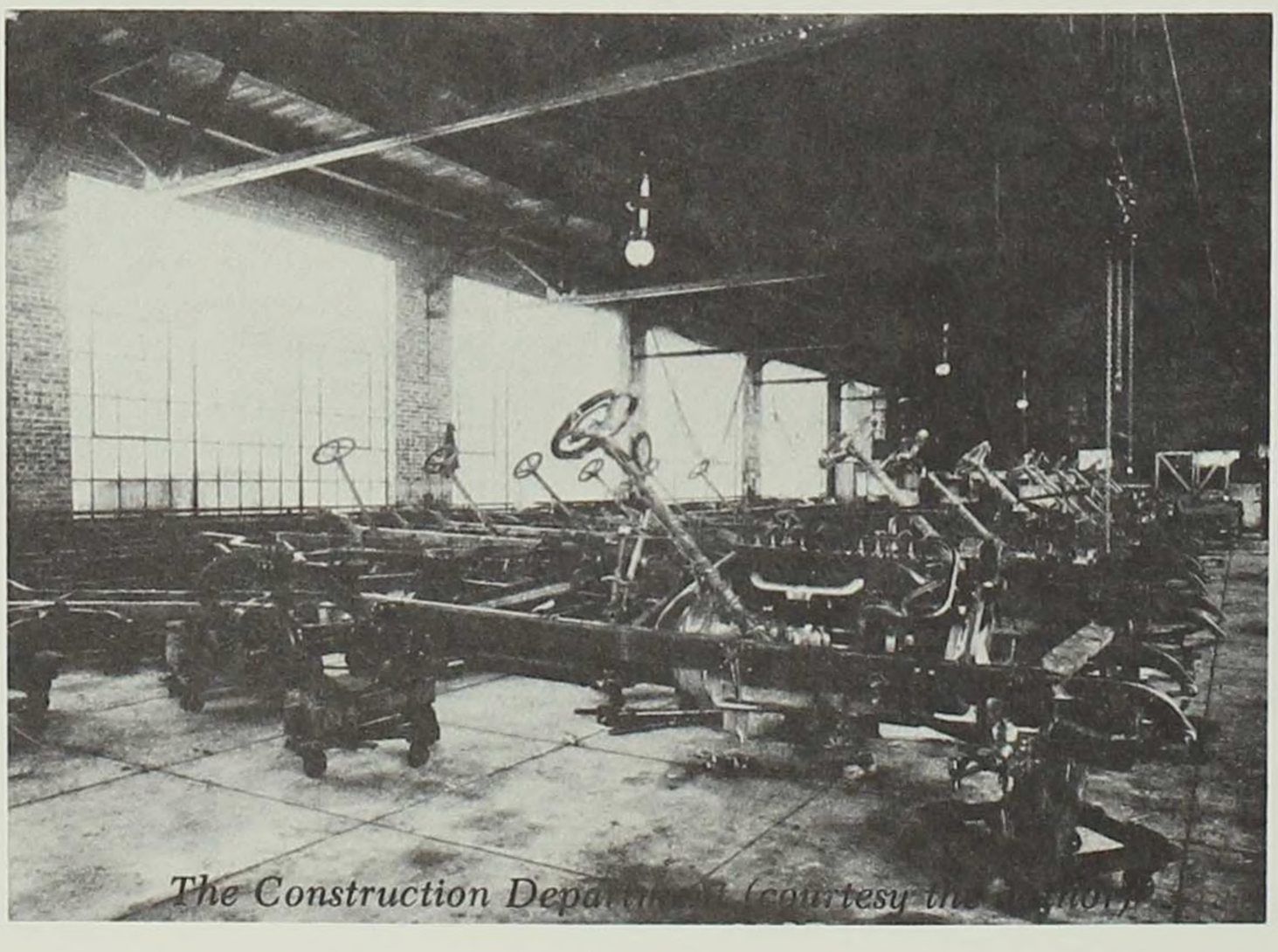
a car that would fare well among the competition at the new auto shows.

Since company officials hoped to have the first Colby ready for an auto show in Chicago in February 1911, they had to begin work immediately on the new factory. Plans for the factory included a single five-story-high assembly building four hundred feet long and one hundred feet wide. It was to be constructed of concrete and steel and was designed to make maximum use of natural light. Initially, the cars were to be assembled at the factory from parts produced by other firms, but Colby planned eventually to manufacture many of the automobile's components at the Mason City site.

In the early morning hours of November 1, 1910, machinery experts from Chicago installed the machinery necessary to produce the first Colby automobiles. While the factory was under construction, the firm had leased the Catlin Building in Mason City as a temporary site. Huge lathes and other machinery soon filled the once-vacant building. With the new equipment installed, Colby enthusiastically predicted that the company's first motor car would be driven along the streets of Mason City within three weeks. Since the firm had already contracted to build two hundred and fifty Colbys, company officials were understandably eager to begin assembling the new cars.

Sales agents were quickly interviewed, hired, and trained to fill the orders for the spring factory output. Plans were completed for the permanent building on the city's south side, and local newspapers reported daily on the progress of the new company. The first Colby was completed on November 12, 1910, a full week ahead of Colby's own optimistic estimate.

As the first auto rolled off the line, Merle Armstrong, the company's chief mechanic, was anxious to test its performance, so he took it for a test drive through Mason City. It performed well and proved to be a speedy automobile — too speedy, in fact, for the local police. Armstrong planned to hold the car down to a sedate eight miles per hour, but he found that it easily leaped to twenty-four. A policeman also noticed this, and he nabbed the Colby mechanic for speeding. In court the next morning, the judge fined Arm-



The Construction Depa[illegible] (courtesy the [illegible])

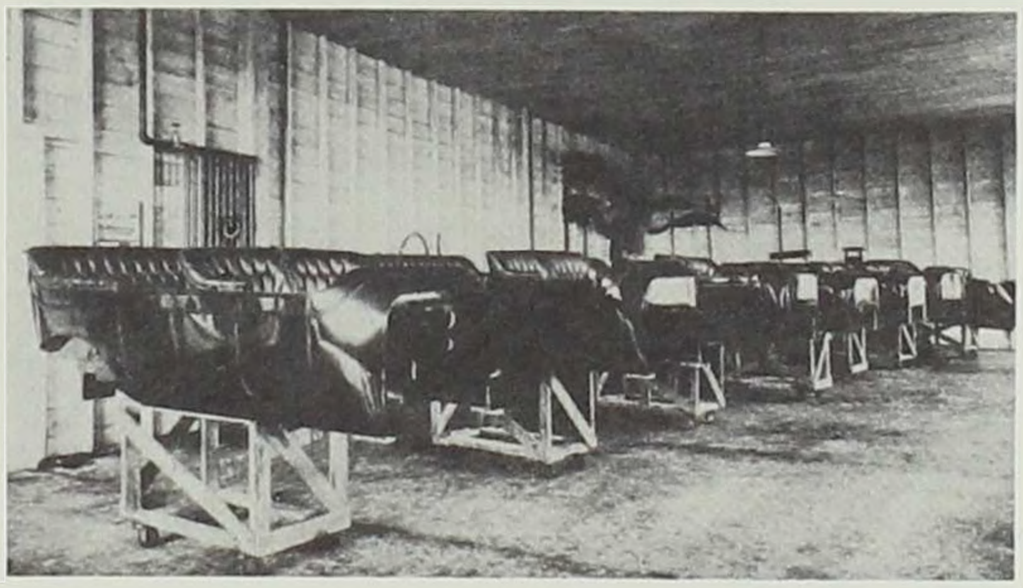
Leather seat ready for inst[illegible]

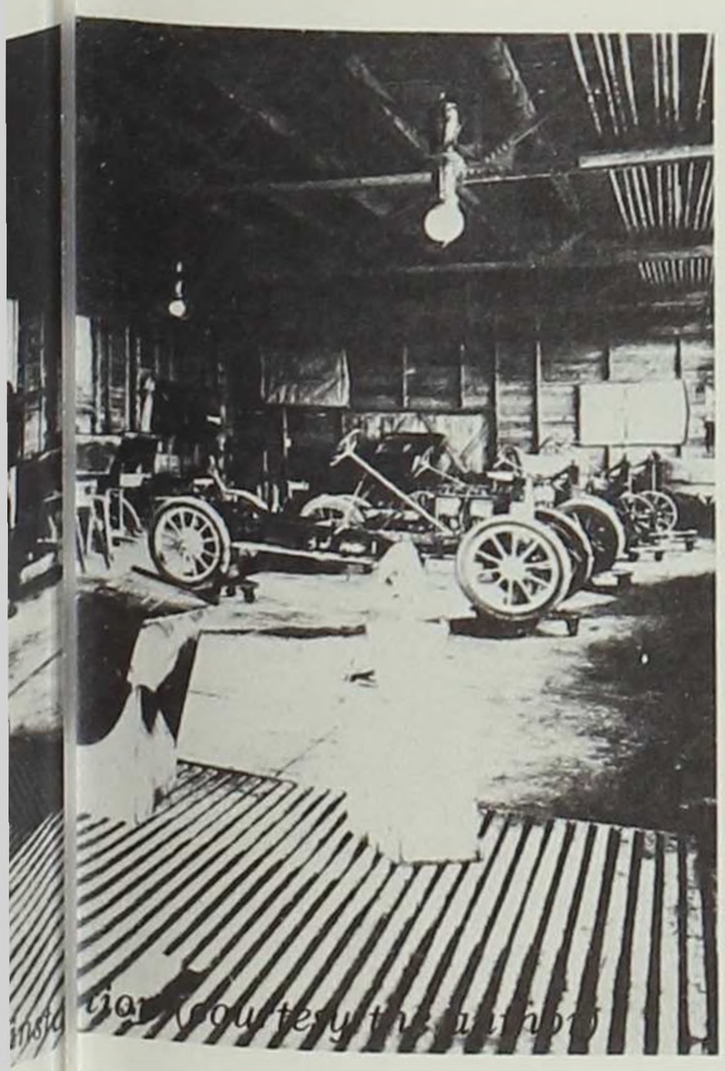
strong ten dollars. The Colby Company immediately apologized to the city for breaking its ordinances, but, privately, Colby officials rejoiced over the performance of their first production model.

By January 24, 1911 the factory's forty employees had readied three automobiles for the coming auto show in Chicago, and they had nearly a hundred more ready for final assembly. The date also marked the beginning of construction on the company's permanent factory building, with a crew of from fifty to seventy-five men assigned to the project by the Nelson Construction Company. Their work also included the construction of an office building to the east of the factory and a power house to the south.

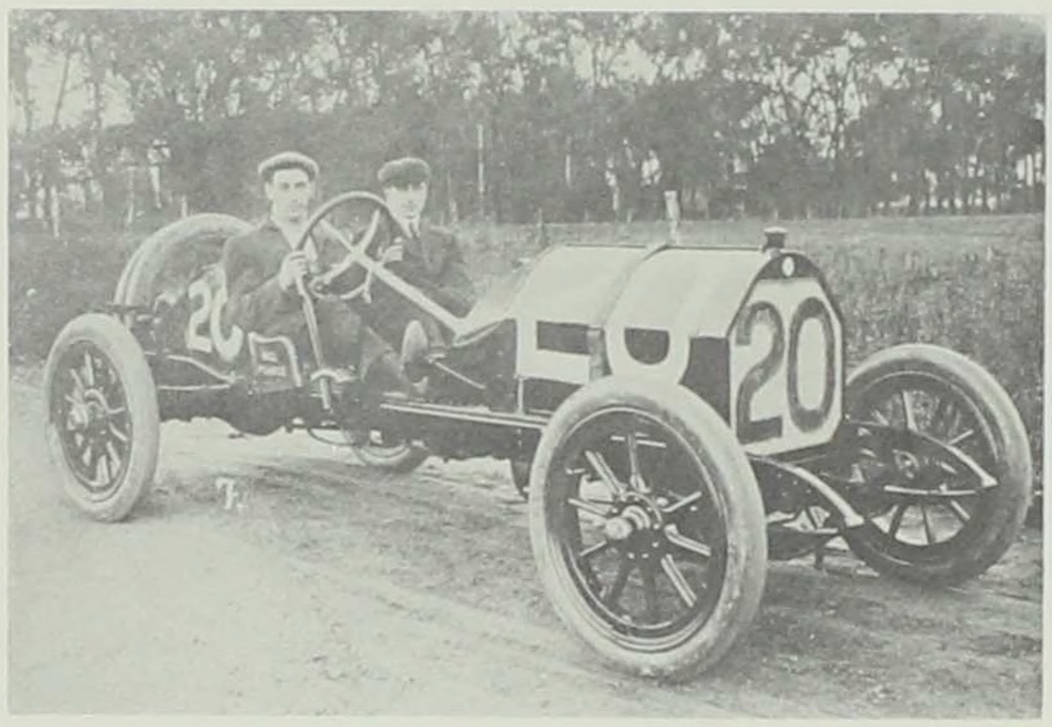
When the first production model — the Colby 40 — began to appear in quantity in the spring of 1911, it proved to be very popular with the public. In an article in the New York *Globe and Commercial Advertiser*, Arthur R. Tator of the Empire City Automobile Company reported that he had tested the Colby on an endurance run of his own design. "Talk about your endurance tests, Glidden

In the Colby Company's main office (l. to r.): Aline Colby Griffin, niece of William and James Colby; James Colby; and Hugh S. Murphy, general manager of the Colby Motor Company. Trophies won by Colby drivers line the walls of the office. (courtesy the author)

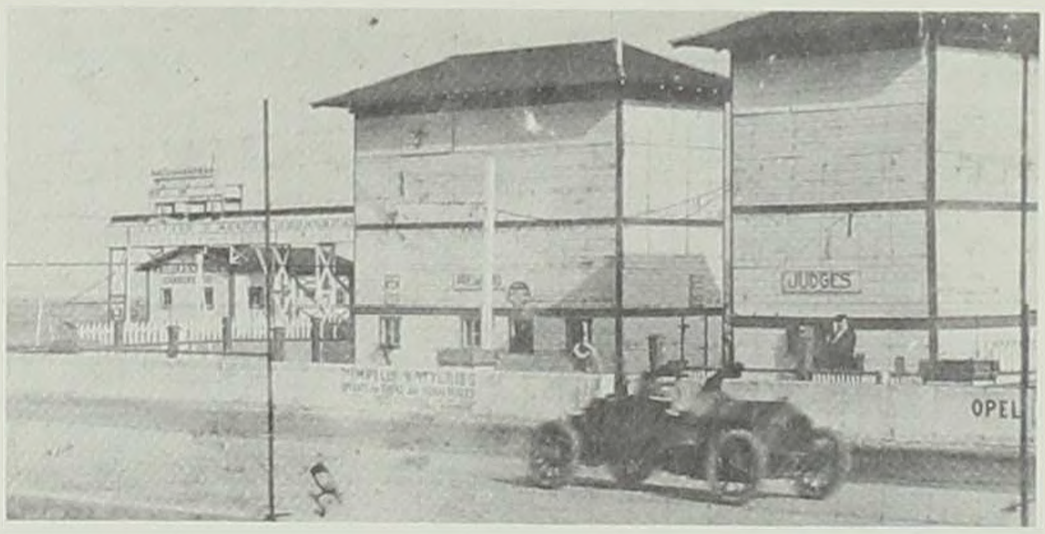




Colby automobile workers. At left (extreme left) was the Colby Company's [illegible] employee. (courtesy the author)



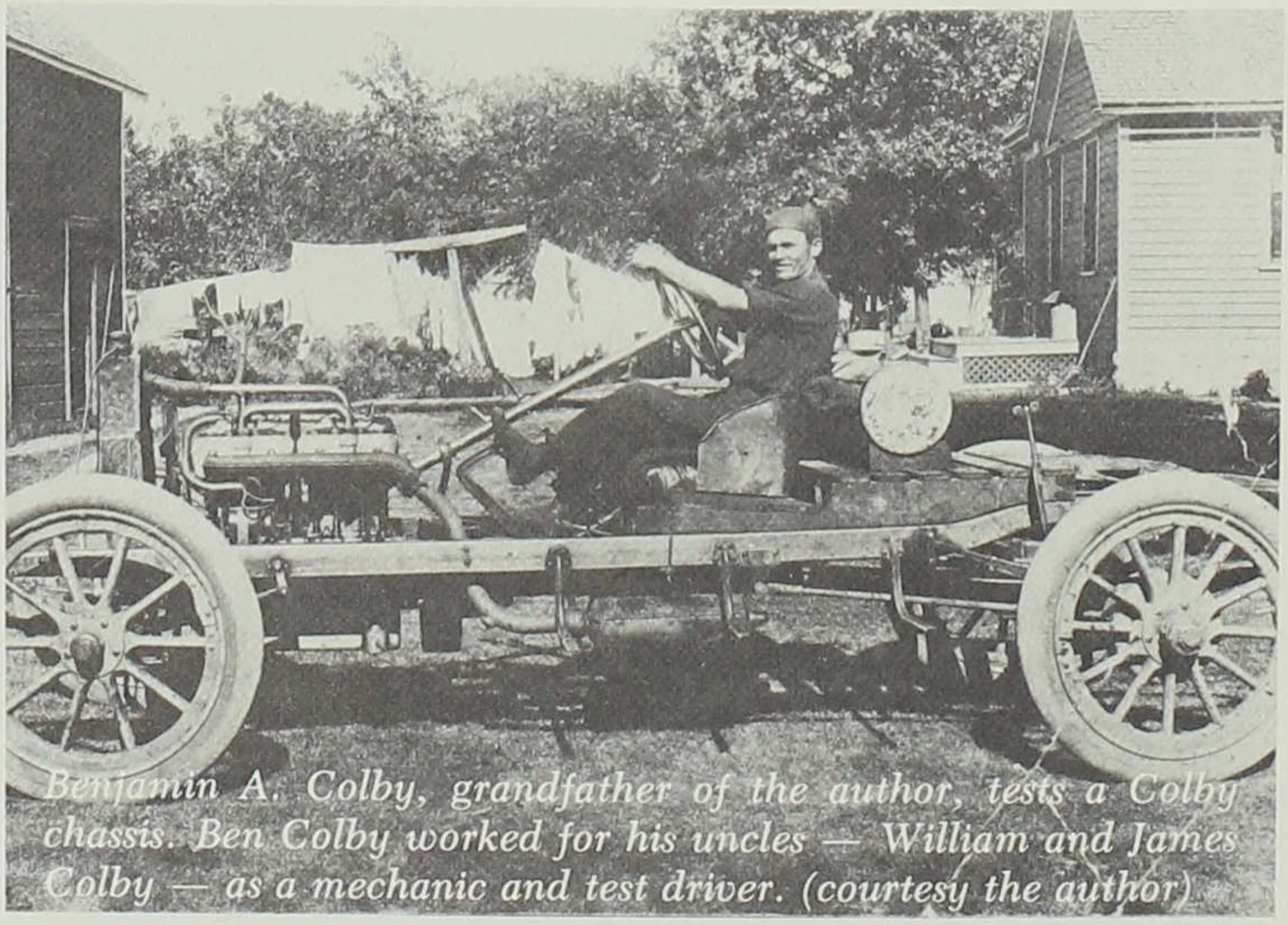
Billy Pearce (left) in his Colby Red Devil. Pearce left this photograph with a Sioux City Journal *reporter on the morning of a race at Woodland Park; he died on the race track that afternoon. (courtesy the author)*



A Colby car races past the judge's position (courtesy the author)

Tours, and twenty-four hour struggles," he declared, "we certainly had almost everything on that trip that is ever coming to a motorist." Tator had taken his Colby on a 275-mile trial, and he arrived home with no trouble, despite the fact that the car had sometimes been up to its hubcaps in mud. He concluded that "I am so pleased with the work of the car that I am going to enter it in many of the official tests during the coming summer."

As letters of praise began to arrive at the company offices, Colby and Henry became convinced that their high standards of materials and workmanship had been rewarded. They began work on a new Colby 40 roadster, which was built along the lines of the original Colby 40, and the firm's mechanics began testing new motors and a new carburetor for the 1912 models. On April 25, 1911, Merle Armstrong and B. A. Hubbard (an expert from the Stromberg Motor Devices Company) made a test run on the new designs, driving the 130-mile route from Minneapolis to Mason City in four hours and fifty-five minutes. The new Model L Colby was finished in time to be presented to the



Benjamin A. Colby, grandfather of the author, tests a Colby chassis. Ben Colby worked for his uncles — William and James Colby — as a mechanic and test driver. (courtesy the author)

The Colby car arrives in Minneapolis in 1911.

world in the August 1911 issue of the *Cycle and Automobile Trade Journal.* It carried a thirty-horsepower engine, a new underslung body, and a price tag of $1,250.

The year 1911 also brought improvements in Colby's Mason City factory. In early May a new electric trolley line connected the company with Mason City. The line originated at the factory and merged with the main trolley line at the intersection of Huntley and Main. The streetcar began running at 7:05 in the morning, in time to bring the factory's employees to work, and continued throughout the day at thirty-minute intervals, so that town visitors had a ready opportunity to tour the factory site.

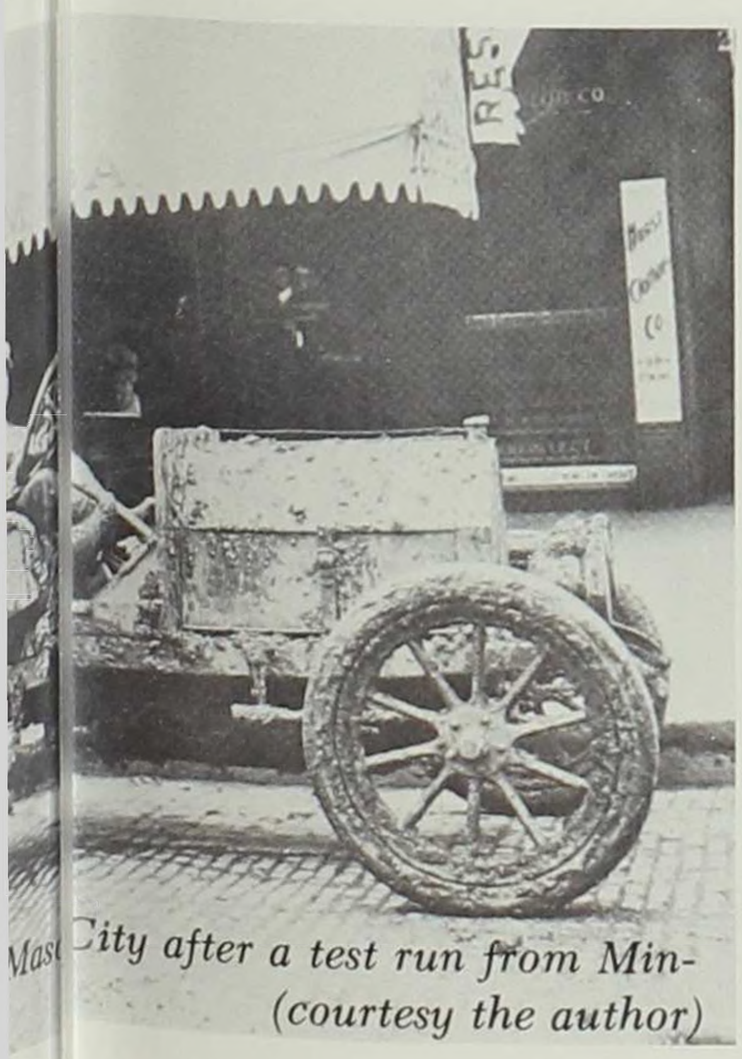
Meanwhile, the company continued to test the limits of their new car's performance. On July 29, Colby received a telegram from Helena, Montana from his mechanic, Armstrong, announcing his latest success:

> I HAVE TROPHY FOR SECOND PLACE FOR THE FIVE PASSENGER TOURING CAR. THE MARMON FINISHED FIRST. I CARRIED THE PILOT AND PACEMAKER FLAG FOR ONE DAY. HAVE LOADED THE CAR AND WILL BE HOME WEDNESDAY.

This latest trial had been a rough one. A hundred autos had entered the 658.5-mile endurance run from Minneapolis to Helena. Road quality was often poor — paved highways were a dream of the future — and Armstrong admitted that the car had encountered some problems, but none of them had been serious. Armstrong's second-place finish brought the Colby the Warner Trophy and, more important, proved the car's endurance capability. One of Colby and Henry's most important goals had been met.

When Armstrong returned to Mason City, he was invited to be the guest of honor at a large banquet attended by everyone from the Colby factory workers to state and federal officials. The one hundred and fifty guests toured the factory and were later entertained at the Cerro Gordo Hotel. The banquet speakers praised Colby's persistence and Henry's genius as a winning combination.

Colby then set out to prove that the new car possessed speed as well as endurance by entering the world of dirt-track auto racing. The company sent several of its automobiles



City after a test run from Min-
(courtesy the author)

A Colby racing team at the track in St. Cloud, Minnesota, 1911
(courtesy the author)

to the August 1911 races in Elgin, Illinois. As one of the drivers, Colby sent William "Billy" Pearce, an experienced driver who had already demonstrated his ability at the Indianapolis Speedway before coming to work for Colby. In his brief career with the company, Pearce proved to be its best driver.

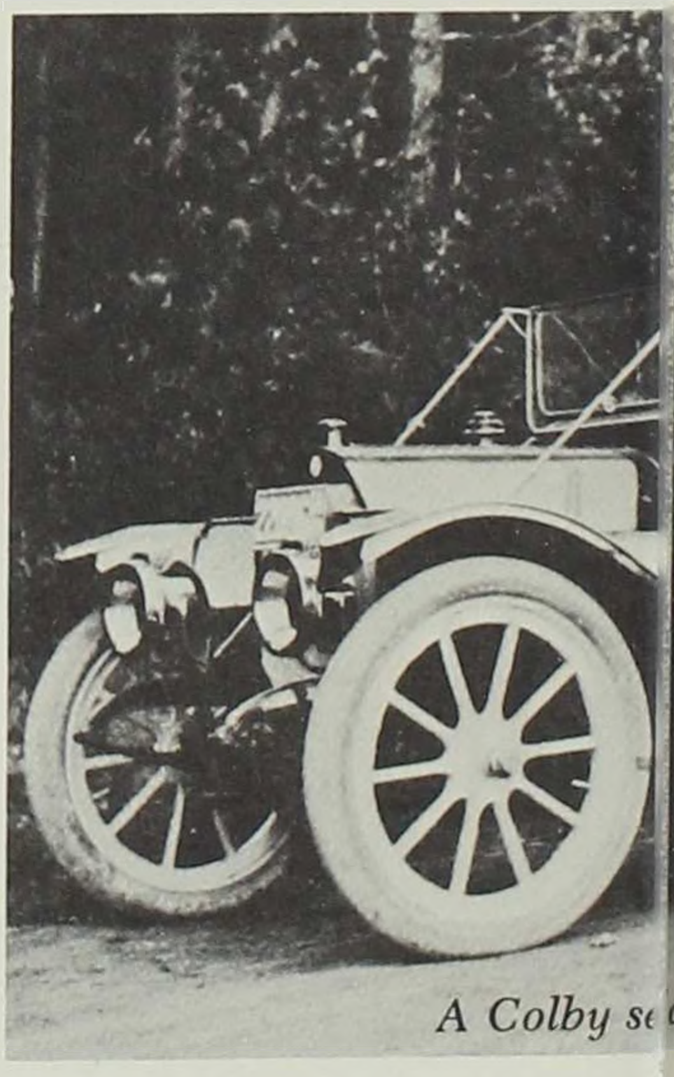
The Elgin races, held on an eight and a half mile track and attended by a crowd of 80,000 people, were considered to be among the best in the world at the time. They were especially important for small auto companies, like the Colby Motor Company, because they brought with them publicity — and business — that the small companies might otherwise have found difficult to attract.

The first day of the Elgin races included three important contests: the Illinois Cup, a 200-mile race; the Kane County Cup, a 170-mile race; and the Aurora Cup, a 130-mile race. Three Colbys were entered in the Kane County Cup race, with Armstrong and Pearce as two of the drivers. The day was one of catastrophe in many ways; one hundred spectators were injured when the grandstand collapsed, and two drivers were killed in accidents on the track. But the races continued, and Pearce captured third place in the Kane County Cup race. The race proved both the Colby's speed in relation to the competition and Pearce's own skill as a driver.

Colby officials were proud of their new driver, who seemed to be a natural at bringing out the speed of their vehicle without bringing on the problems that plagued so many racing cars. Pearce was a true racer at heart; he played what he called "the game" with cool calculation, but he always took the mile in a minute or less.

Billy Pearce continued his success on the racing circuit throughout the remainder of the 1911 season. At the Omaha AK-SAR-BEN celebration in October, Pearce and the Colby 40 he was driving broke many of the track records and won the Silver Trophy awarded by the Omaha Speedway Association. The Omaha *Bee* reported that "with the indomitable Billy Pearce at the wheel, the Colby Car cleaned up almost everything in sight Wednesday afternoon on the Omaha speedway, when the first day's racing of the three day meet was held." On the third day of the races, the *Bee* noted that Pearce "was pushed in the fifty-mile race by Eddie Rick-

A group of happy passengers in a 1913 Colby owned by T. C. Ryan of Daugherty, Iowa (courtesy the author)



A Colby se an

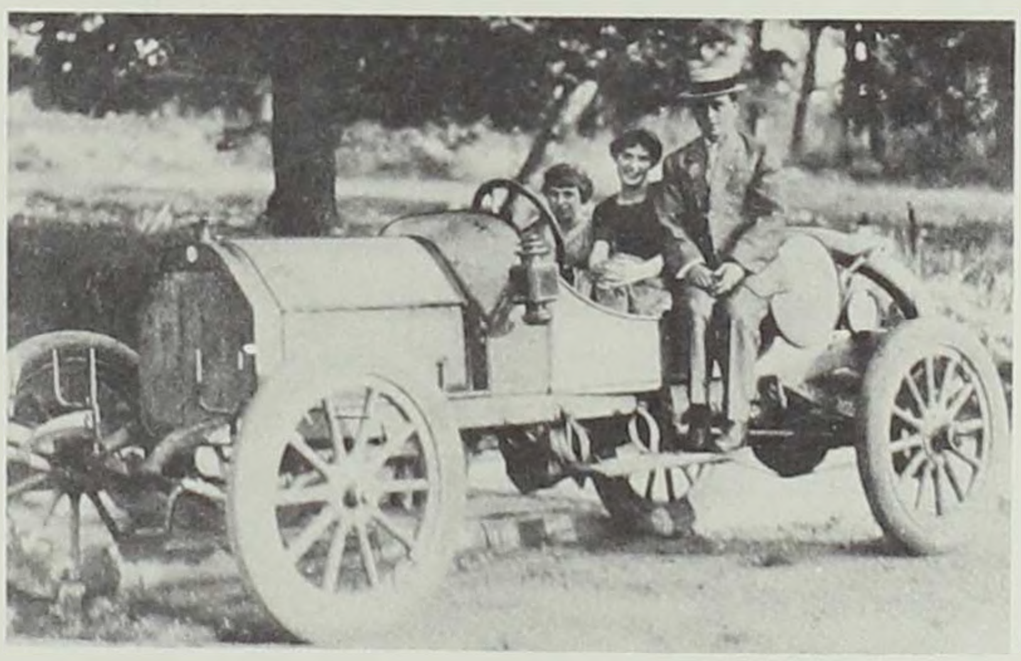
enbacher in a Firestone-Columbus '30,' but at no time was in danger of losing the fifty-mile run."

After his victory in Omaha, Pearce took the Colby to the Woodland Park races in Sioux City. With his successes in the 1911 season and an earlier appearance at the Sioux City race track — in which he had trimmed a second off Barney Oldfield's track record for the ten-mile race — Pearce was rated as the favorite in the Woodland Park races.

On the morning of the race, Pearce stopped by the office of the Sioux City *Journal* to deliver pictures of himself and the "Colby Red Devil" — his two-seater race car. "I don't expect to be injured," he remarked, "but the pictures may be of use." That day, however, his cool control over the Colby Red Devil failed him — he swerved in a hairpin turn, crashed into the fence, and died instantly in the impact.

The news of Billy Pearce's death shocked both the Colby Company and his many fans. The Red Devil was repaired and would have been able to race again, but with the death of its driver, an era had ended for the Colby Motor Company.

New excitement: touring in a Colby (courtesy the author)



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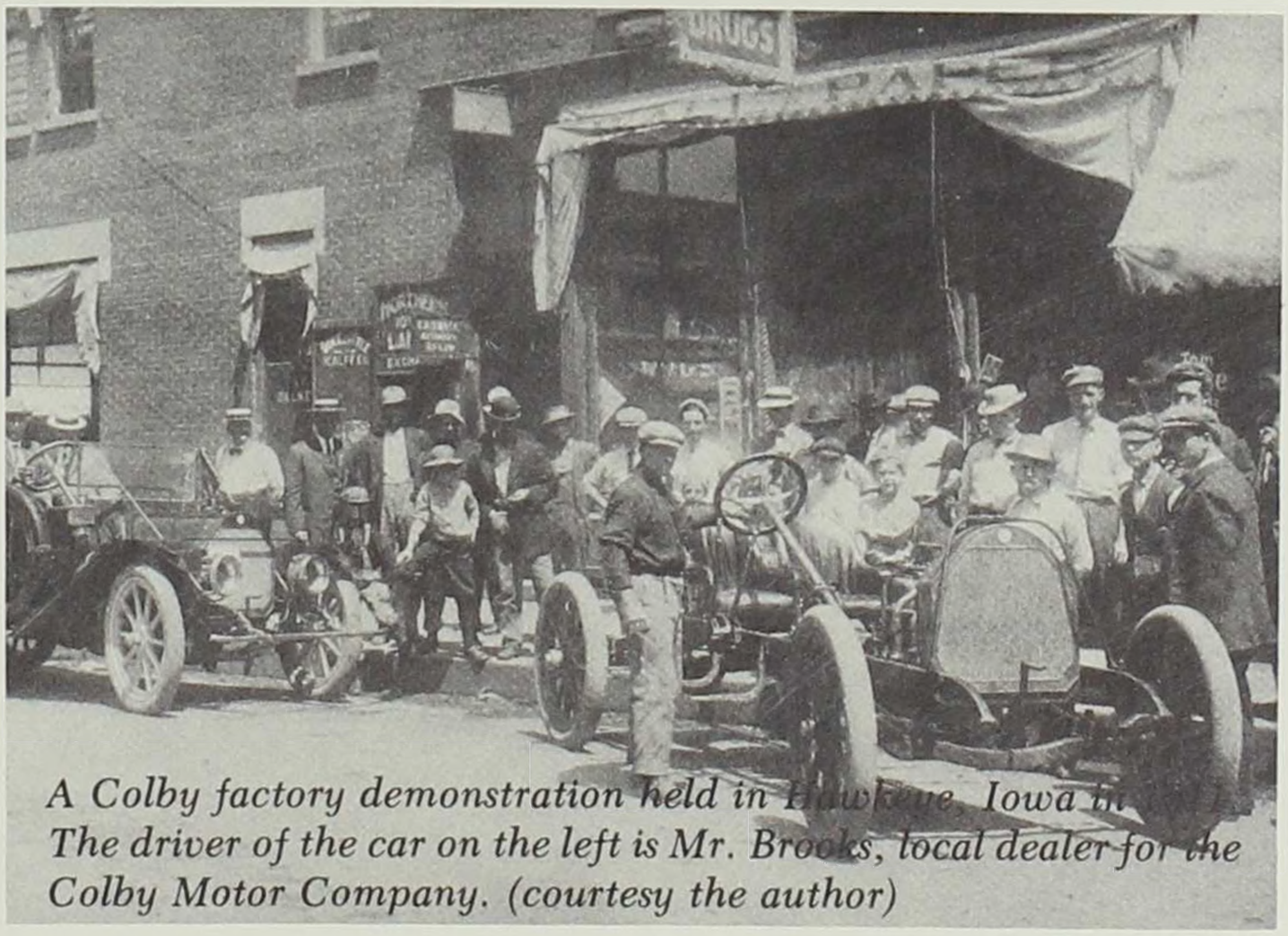

A Colby factory demonstration held in Hawkeye, Iowa in [illegible]. The driver of the car on the left is Mr. Brooks, local dealer for the Colby Motor Company. (courtesy the author)

On December 7, 1911, the Mason City *Globe-Gazette* announced that important changes were underway at the company. Under an arrangement with the National Cooperative Farm Machinery Company of Davenport, the two firms would be merged. The new firm's name would continue to be the Colby Motor Company, and William and James Colby would retain their positions, but many Colby employees (including general manager David Henry) would not.

With H. S. Murphy as the new general manager, the wide-open promotional tone that entrepreneur Colby had set changed to one of financial conservatism. Concerned mainly with the economic stability of the company, Murphy kept a tight rein on expenditures. He restricted the company to the realistic production figure of one thousand automobiles for the 1912 season. After taking inventory, he strictly controlled the company's stock to avoid the irresponsible ordering procedures that he had found. To balance the company's expenditures, Murphy required purchasers of Colby cars to pay for their new automobiles on delivery.

Despite Murphy's efforts to stabilize the firm's finances, on October 29, 1913 the company underwent more extensive changes in its structure. William Colby was replaced by C. H. MacNider of Mason City. MacNider represented the Standard Motor Company, which had already merged with the Minneapolis Motor Company. The Minneapolis Motor Company, in turn, announced plans to construct a new three-million-dollar factory in the Twin Cities that the Minneapolis *Journal* called the "largest automobile manufacturing plant in the west and one of the largest in the entire country." The Minneapolis firm planned to continue producing Colby automobiles at the Mason City plant until completion of its new factory.

Although the Standard Motor Company announced that it planned to add a line of tractors and trucks to the Colby production lines, only a few of these vehicles were manufactured. In May 1914 the equipment in the Mason City plant was sold, and the building went on the auction block soon afterward. By the summer of 1914, the Colby Motor Company had ceased to exist.

Today, the only known extant Colby automobile is on display at the Kinney Pioneer Museum in Mason City. It is a 1911 Model D Semi-racer that was renovated by M. S. "Hap" Cherney of Cedar Falls. As recently as fifteen years ago, traces of the Colby Motor Company's test track could still be seen adjacent to the former factory building, which now houses the Associated Milk Producers plant. As is true of nearly all the small automobile firms from the early years of this century, very little now remains of promoter William Colby's experiment in automobile manufacturing. □

Note on Sources

M. S. "Hap" Cherney of Cedar Falls, Iowa provided invaluable help on the research of the Colby Motor Company. John Martin, of Associated Milk Producers, Incorporated in Mason City provided pictures of the factory that once housed the Colby Company. The Helena *Independent*, July 28 and 29, 1911; the Minneapolis *Journal*, October 8, 1913; the Elgin *Daily Courier*, August 24, 25, and 26, 1911; the Sioux City *Journal*, October 16, 1910, and October 20, 1911; the Omaha *Bee*, October 6, 1911; the Mason City *Globe-Gazette*, Centennial Supplement of June 1, 1953, and issues from September 1, 1910 through August 1915, were used in the study. Periodicals that were of help included: *Cycle and Automobile Trade Journal*, August 1911; *Motor Age*, August 31 and October 26, 1911; and the *Automobile Trade Journal*, February and March 1913. The *History of Cerro Gordo County*, by J. S. Wheeler (Lewis Publishing Company, 1912), provided family information on William Colby. The federal censuses of 1860, 1870, and 1880 were consulted for additional Colby family information.

The public libraries of Sioux City, Mason City, Omaha, and Minneapolis were a great help, along with the Lewis and Clark Library of Helena, Montana, the Gail Borden Public Library of Elgin, Illinois, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the Detroit Public Library (National Automotive History Collection), and the museum library of the Indianapolis Speedway.

The editor wishes to thank Ben A. Colby of Rock Rapids, Iowa for his help in preparing photographs of the Colby Motor Company for publication.

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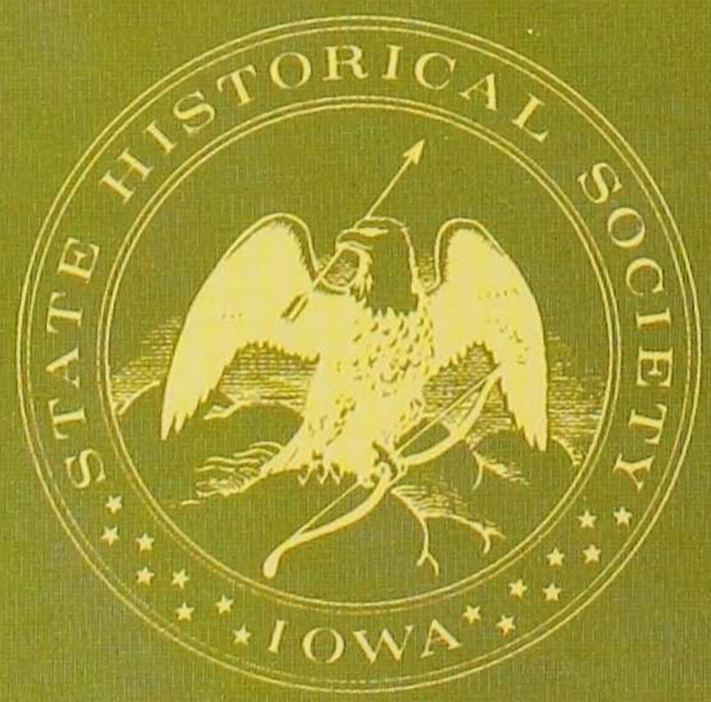

THE PALIMPSEST *is published bimonthly by the State Historical Society in Iowa City. Second class postage paid at Iowa City, Iowa. Postmaster: send address changes to State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.*

USISSN 0031—0360

The State Historical Society of Iowa is a Division of the Iowa State Historical Department, a state agency created by the Sixty-fifth General Assembly. Along with the Society the Department includes a Division of Historical Museum and Archives (formerly Iowa Department of History and Archives) and a Division of Historic Preservation.