

Building Across the Years

The decade of the twenties was a fruitful period for Kiwanis in Iowa — thirty-three clubs were formed during those years. In 1920 alone, clubs were organized in Dubuque, Davenport, Clinton, Fort Dodge, Waterloo, Sioux City, Council Bluffs, Cedar Rapids, Ottumwa, and Mason City. In the biennium, 1921-1922, eleven other cities in Iowa joined the ranks of Kiwanis — Grinnell, Iowa City, Marshalltown, Oskaloosa, Storm Lake, Webster City, Ida Grove, Missouri Valley, Newton, Sac City, and Waukon. Some of these cities have made distinct contributions to Kiwanis history in Iowa, and in each of these cities, Kiwanis has made its imprint on civic growth and development.

At an early date various Iowa cities welcomed Kiwanis conventions, and Iowa newspapers were quick to note the presence of Kiwanis visitors. In September, 1922, Sioux City welcomed the 300 representatives from 19 of the 29 clubs of the Nebraska-Iowa District attending their annual convention. Commenting on the reception accorded the delegates, the *Sioux City Journal* said:

The downtown business district put on gala attire in honor of the visitors, business places were decorated with

gay bunting and placarded with welcome signs, and the Martin Hotel took on the appearance of a Club house on a festive occasion.

In 1923 the Illinois-Eastern Iowa District Convention met in Dubuque. Delegates from each of the 70 clubs then operating in that district were present, with a total membership of 786 in attendance. The Dubuque *Telegraph Herald* ran a twelve-page special edition dealing with Kiwanis activities. In this edition it was pointed out that "Kiwanis gives to the world two fundamental products — personality and leadership."

Illustrating and exemplifying this viewpoint, was an address by Dr. J. W. Bolotin, a noted Chicago physician, who had been born blind, but who had developed a strong personality and attained a position of leadership. Having been elected Trustee and Chairman of the Education Committee of the all-Chicago Council, Kiwanian Bolotin came to Dubuque to address the Convention on the subject "Over the Top in Darkness" — stressing the opportunities awaiting the alert handicapped youth of our day — a theme that is so much a part of the over-all Kiwanis program.

During the year 1923 clubs were formed in Ames, Burlington, Creston, Denison, Hamburg, Harlan, McGregor, Rock Rapids, and Shenandoah. Before the end of the decade of the twenties, three other cities in Iowa — Algona, Muscatine, and Clarinda — had formed clubs. With

more than thirty clubs then operating within the borders of Iowa, Kiwanis had become influential in widespread civic affairs.

Speaking at Des Moines in October, 1924, Raymond Crossman, International Trustee and former Governor of the Nebraska-Iowa District, described Kiwanis as a Service Club that "believes in the principle of fraternities but has no ritual, no secrecy, either in plan of organization or in method of operation. It believes in politics, but stands without partisanship. It believes in religion, but does not pretend to usurp any field of the Church or to substitute for any of its activities." In his own dramatic way he noted that "Kiwanis Seeks Service First."

Indicative of the trend of the times is the report of the Illinois-Eastern Iowa District Convention held in Davenport in September, 1926. On the opening day the *Davenport Democrat* ran a twelve-page special "Kiwanis Section" welcoming Kiwanis and commending its civic activities.

On the first page of this edition Mayor Louis E. Roddewig is shown presenting a large key to the city to Kiwanis. According to Mayor Roddewig:

Kiwanis has always meant a great deal in the progress which has marked the recent development of industry and commercial interests in Davenport. The spirit of Kiwanis has been back of every noteworthy civic and cultural project, and we owe much to the unselfish motives which have backed the efforts of Kiwanis to make our city a greater Davenport.

Flags were flying and the holiday spirit filled the air, as the hundreds of delegates reached Davenport. According to one editor, Kiwanis "crystallizes community sentiment for municipal improvement. It cultivates public opinion for purer politics and promotes community cooperation in all good things. It develops leadership, urges harmony in all dealings and furnishes a forum for the discussion of all fair and interesting questions."

While the Davenport meeting was in session, special entertainment features were provided for Kiwanis ladies, including theater parties, a reception at the B. J. Palmer residence, and a Mississippi steamboat excursion. More than 1200 delegates attended — almost 300 from Chicago alone. The convention was presided over by District Governor Nic LeGrand, a resident of Davenport. This is a case in which an Iowan, serving as Governor of the Illinois-Eastern Iowa District, presided over a district convention in his own home city.

In the decade of the thirties Kiwanis continued to expand its influence in Iowa. During this period clubs were formed in Cresco, Mt. Pleasant, Lansing, Onawa, Cherokee, East Des Moines, Lake City, Estherville, Perry, and Sheldon. Meanwhile, leaders of municipal activities and men of influence in State and National affairs continued to commend Kiwanis for its unselfish service, its program of community building, and the

ideals which it sought to maintain in all public affairs.

Speaking to Kiwanians at Fort Dodge in 1934 Frederick F. Faville, a former Judge of the Iowa Supreme Court, declared:

We need a *patriotism* that will recognize true liberty as the cornerstone of civilization, and *intelligent courage* that will raise men to lead America forward, a faith in God that will enable us to bring up our children to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, and a *spirit of service to mankind*. With these our civilization cannot fail.

In 1936 the annual Kiwanis Convention of the Illinois-Eastern Iowa District was held in Burlington. Among the distinguished guests present were Governor Clyde L. Herring of Iowa, and two former Kiwanis Governors of the District — Nic LeGrand of Davenport and George H. Alfs of Burlington. In addressing the assembly, Governor Herring joined the citizens of Burlington in welcoming the convention to Iowa and added that he was "highly appreciative of the work of Kiwanis in building the moral fibre of our citizens."

In the decade of the forties, Kiwanis formed clubs in fifteen additional Iowa cities: Logan, Pella, Gowrie, Spencer, Hampton, Keokuk, Polk City, Postville, Cedar Falls, Spirit Lake, Vinton, Woodbine, Boone, Monona, and Marengo. During the forties, six of the ten annual conventions of the Nebraska-Iowa District were held in Iowa.

Two of these meetings — those of 1942 and 1947 — were held in Council Bluffs. The other convention cities were Mason City, Sioux City, Marshalltown, and Waterloo.

The 28th annual convention of the Nebraska-Iowa District, held in Marshalltown in 1946, was especially important to Kiwanians interested in agriculture. Mr. H. J. Gramlick, General Agricultural Agent of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway, told Kiwanians that “as residents of the greatest farming area in the world, they should respect their situation and do everything in their power to further the development of better agricultural methods.” Agriculture, he declared, is “the great creator of new wealth, and soil conservation methods should be practiced to the fullest extent. Get next to the farm and the farmer,” he said, “and try to understand their problems.”

In December, 1948, the expansion of Kiwanis ideals was graphically described by Professor Harrison John Thornton, of the State University of Iowa, on the occasion of the organization of the Marengo Kiwanis Club. Dr. Thornton referred to the new Club as “a great social enterprise — another unit in human relations and good citizenship.” This, he said, “is a community venture; a national venture; an international venture. It is an adventure in manly comradeship. It reaches into every vital aspect of community life. It is a social cement. It is a bridge across the avenues of

trade." Concluding, Dr. Thornton declared: "Man's long journey through time and space, might be synthesized in the two word sentence" — the motto of Kiwanis — "We Build."

The decade of the fifties was another period of growth in Iowa. During the first half of the decade clubs were organized at Eldora, Washington, Marion, Armstrong, Charles City, Northwest Des Moines, Ankeny, Evansdale, Highland Park, Sibley, Monroe, Pocahontas, Roland, Manson, and Slater. Some of these Clubs have become very active in community-building projects and have won achievement awards of distinction in recent years. Evansdale and Manson, for example, both won achievement awards in 1959.

In 1956 the Metropolitan Club in Cedar Rapids and the Morningside Club in Sioux City were organized. Other clubs formed during the latter half of the fifties were Indianola, Inwood, Melvin, Nora Springs, Radcliffe, Toledo, Aurelia, Central City, West Des Moines, and Winterset.

In the decade of the fifties district conventions continued to be well attended. In September, 1952, Kiwanians of the Nebraska-Iowa District met at Fort Dodge for their annual convention. Governor H. Pierce Witmer of Des Moines was the presiding officer. He was ably assisted by two other Des Moines Kiwanians — Herb Plambeck, program chairman, and Joe Moore, song leader.

As in previous years words of encouragement,

inspiration, and helpfulness were given by various speakers. Ex-Governor Kim Sigler of Michigan urged Kiwanians "to be in effect personal ambassadors, rather than leaving the matter of foreign relations to politicians." He declared that "The greatest job of public relations in the world today is being done by American businessmen."

Dr. Marcus Bach of Iowa City addressed the Kiwanis Banquet on the theme, "The Quest for Utopia." In connection with the Kiwanis theme of the year — "Liberty — Let's Keep It," Dr. Bach said: "The best way to keep Liberty is to share it and give it to others."

Cedar Rapids was host to the Forty-first Annual District Convention in 1959. Governor Don Isett, a resident of Cedar Rapids, was the presiding officer. On only one other occasion in the history of the Nebraska-Iowa District has an Iowan presided over a District Convention in his own home city. The convention opened unofficially on October 3rd, with 200 Kiwanians attending the Iowa-Northwestern football game in Iowa City.

Kiwanis International was represented at this meeting by Immediate Past International President, Kenneth B. Loheed, of Toronto, Canada, and International Trustee, Don I. Parker, of Lincoln, Nebraska. Other speakers were President Joseph E. McCabe of Coe College and Herb Plambeck, Farm Director of Radio Station WHO-TV.

Past President Loheed stressed the theme "Build Individual Responsibility." During the year 1960 two new Iowa clubs were organized in the Nebraska-Iowa District — the Merle Hay Club in Des Moines and the Mondamin Club. Thus there are now 88 Kiwanis Clubs operating in Iowa — 76 in the Nebraska-Iowa District and 12 in the Illinois-Eastern Iowa District.

Four decades have passed since Kiwanis moved into Iowa. These have been fruitful, constructive years. Iowa is known for the wealth of its corn and its cattle, its fertile fields and its golden prairies. But its real wealth lies in the character and steadfastness of its citizenry. Kiwanis is effective and strong in Iowa as it recognizes true worth, and gives primacy to human values as it continues its program of "Building Across the Years."