

THE PALIMPSEST

PETER T. HARSTAD AND L. EDWARD PURCELL
ASSOCIATE EDITORS

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The Palimpsest: Old Friend with a New Face

By now most of our readers are aware that several changes are being made in *The Palimpsest*. The last *News For Members* announced that from the first issue of 1973 onward the size and look of the Society's magazine would be different. We are taking this opportunity to explain some of the changes to you, our readers.

The Palimpsest has had several major changes in its history. The original magazine of 1920 was quite different from the one you hold in your hand. A glance at this issue's cover will show the obvious differences. The first magazine was brown with some red lettering on the cover, had no pictures, and used a different sort of type than the one we are now familiar with.

By 1950 times had changed, and so did *The Palimpsest*. The new look of the fifties and sixties was brighter, had more illustrations, and used a new type which had been adopted in 1931. Al-

though the style again was altered slightly in 1957, it has continued to be much the same magazine until today.

The Board of Curators has now approved changes which you will see in your next issue. The most striking differences will be in the size and look of *The Palimpsest*. The new page will be about seventy percent larger than before. Instead of single columns the new magazine will have double columns, but the type size will remain the same.

There are several advantages to the larger size. More material can be printed on each page, so the number of pages can be cut down without reducing the amount of material printed. In addition, pictures can be printed in larger sizes and in a pleasing visual relationship to each other and to the text. One of the major attributes of modern popular history is the freedom to illustrate material with photographs, drawings, and paintings. In order to take full advantage of these possibilities for illustration, a bigger page is necessary.

At present *The Palimpsest* is printed by the letterpress method. While this is an effective process of printing, it has many limitations. When letterpress is used illustrations must be converted to engraved plates which are then set in a matrix with the molded type and used to imprint the page directly. Because of this process illustrations must be printed on a slick paper insert. Therefore *Palimp-*

sest illustrations usually have fallen in the middle of the magazine, even though the points they illustrate may occur elsewhere in the text.

From now on the magazine will be printed by a photographic process, placing the images of both type and illustrations on a flexible metal plate, which is then wrapped around a circular drum and used to print the pages on individual sheets, four pages at a time. This process, known as "offset", is highly flexible. No engravings are necessary, since illustrations may be photographed from the originals. Slick paper is not needed for offset printing, so illustrations can be placed anywhere in the text to harmonize with the story.

There will also be a change in the type used for *The Palimpsest*. This is not so much an innovation as a return to the traditional. The original magazine used a type which belonged to a group of styles known as "transitional." These faces are legible, clear, unaffected, and restful to the eye, qualities which make them ideal for the setting of texts. The new style belongs to this family and is very much like that used in the first *Palimpsest*.

One difference you will notice is the length of the new magazine. In the past *Palimpsests* have varied greatly from issue to issue in the number of pages. One reason was the small page size which meant that if an author wrote only a little bit more copy, the magazine rapidly expanded in size. In the future, *The Palimpsest* usually will be

thirty-two pages long. Because of the bigger pages and double columns we will be able to print the same amount of material in one thirty-two page magazine as would have appeared in two of the smaller, old magazines. A year's run of *The Palimpsest* will have about the same total of words, but have fewer pages.

Of course, one of the biggest changes is in the publication schedule. For a long time *The Palimpsest* has been a monthly. While this schedule has advantages, it has drawbacks also. Producing a monthly magazine strains everyone involved. Authors are rushed in preparing their manuscripts; the editors are under great pressure putting together enough copy to fill the magazine; and the printer is in an never ending production cycle which limits his chance to maintain high quality. The result of all these pressures is to make it much harder to produce a quality product. It is easy to understand why *The Palimpsest* has occasionally fallen behind its schedule. The time taken each month for the technical procedures alone cuts sharply into the editors' opportunities for soliciting and preparing articles.

For these reasons a new schedule has been adopted. Beginning in February, *The Palimpsest* will be published six times a year on a bi-monthly basis. The first issue will be number one, January/February 1973. The March/April issue will be published on about the first of April, and so on

through the volume year. We are confident that a bi-monthly schedule will allow less harried editing and writing, and better printing.

Since the magazine will be a bigger package (although appearing at less frequent intervals) the devotion of one issue to a single topic will occur less often. The original *Palimpsest* carried two or three articles on varied topics, a practice to which we hope to return. Occasionally, however, there will be a single topic issue, for example, Frank Nye's customary account of the Iowa General Assembly.

As a further note on editorial policy, we do not anticipate that *The Palimpsest* will be written exclusively by the editors or staff. Most of the time stories will come from writers who are historians, teachers, newspapermen, students, housewives, in short, anyone who can present finished manuscripts to the editors. Since October, we have been publishing a call for contributions in the back of both *The Palimpsest* and the *News For Members*. We take this call seriously and invite the participation of Society members in the writing of *The Palimpsest*.

Since 1920, *The Palimpsest* has itself become a part of Iowa history. Despite the changes in appearance and schedule, the editors feel *The Palimpsest* should continue its historic role as a magazine of popular history. In no sense do we intend to allow it to become a journal that only special-

ists will want to read. The aim is to present articles on important topics, written and edited with the interests of the membership in mind. As we have said elsewhere, the objective is "to present Iowans with a lively and significant magazine of history." This is a challenging goal, and one we intend to pursue to the best of our ability.

Finally, we invite your comments on the new *Palimpsest*. As you view the changes over the coming year, let us know how well we live up to your expectations. *The Editors.*