

The  
**PALIMPSEST**  
AUGUST 1935  
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*Iowa in 1934*

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THE EDITOR

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT IOWA CITY BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MATTER JULY 28 1920 AT THE POST OFFICE AT IOWA CITY IOWA  
UNDER THE ACT OF AUGUST 24 1912

### THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

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### THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials 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 records 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.

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PRICE—10c per copy: \$1 per year: free to members of Society  
ADDRESS—The State Historical Society      Iowa City Iowa

# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

VOL. XVI

ISSUED IN AUGUST 1935

NO. 8

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## Sunburn, Dust, and Insects

The happiness and prosperity of Iowans in 1934 was subject as usual to the eccentricities of the weather. Three factors — a scorching sun that resulted in excessive and prolonged heat; an increased wind movement that caused higher consumption of water as well as greater evaporation; and a deficient precipitation that left the soil parched and arid — combined to produce the most serious crop shortage on record in most southern and western counties. The extension of this drought over a great portion of the Mississippi Valley aided two other plagues, the chinch bug invasion and the dust storms. The ravages of the weather were probably more far-reaching in political, social, and economic consequences than anything else that occurred in Iowa last year.

Old Sol himself glaring down upon the State in unrelenting prodigality deserves the epithet of Iowa enemy number one. The average temperature for the State in 1934 was 51.5°, the third

hottest on record. Although this was only  $.7^{\circ}$  above that of 1933 and  $3.6^{\circ}$  above the average for the past sixty-two years, it was the excessive heat of spring and early summer that ruined crops. May averaged  $69.6^{\circ}$ , the warmest ever recorded. Indeed, the average temperature was above normal every month except September and December. At Lenox in Taylor County the thermometer registered  $100^{\circ}$  or over on forty-two days, which was three times the greatest number ever before reported in Iowa. The highest temperature since 1873 was  $113^{\circ}$ , but in 1934 a new record of  $118^{\circ}$  was established at Keokuk on July 19th. In addition to this, new monthly and seasonal high temperatures were established at many points in southern and western Iowa. It is significant that twenty-three of these counties produced less than five bushels of corn per acre.

The blazing heat which beat down on Iowa took a heavy toll. Scores of Iowans flocked to rivers, lakes, and shady timbered tracts. Highways were clogged in early May with motorists seeking to escape the burning sunshine. As the summer advanced, the heat became so intense that people died. The merciless sun caused livestock to expire in the fields: on one hot July day the carcasses of two hundred hogs, twenty-two cattle, and twenty horses were brought to a single

Des Moines rendering plant. Carl Cromwell, a prudent albeit a dishonest young Dubuquer, was jailed for stealing his winter's supply of coal with the temperature at 104°.

The Iowa farmer had just cause for alarm when the closing four months of 1933 registered a sub-normal rainfall. With a single exception every winter since 1929-1930 had been deficient in precipitation. The year 1934 opened with the Mississippi River at Keokuk 4.2 feet below zero, the lowest stage on record. By February many streams established new record low stages. It was not until July that Iowa received a normal precipitation. By that time numerous communities in southern Iowa had exhausted their water supply. Creston was in the worst plight. A train of forty tank cars, each holding 10,000 gallons of water, sped daily from Council Bluffs to empty its precious cargo into the filter basins that fed the Creston water mains. Water rates in Creston rose from 35 cents to \$1.50 a thousand gallons. Chariton and Osceola also suffered, the latter finally resorting to a pipe line.

A total of 26.85 inches of rain fell in Iowa in 1934 compared with a sixty-two year average of 31.60. The heaviest local precipitation was 37.47 inches, at Muscatine, the lightest 16.77 at Glenwood. A "freakish" precipitation of 36.65 inches

for the year at Davenport gave no indication of the devastating spring drought, 8.54 inches deficient from January 1st to June 19th.

The combination of drought and increased wind movement in 1934 produced a strange phenomenon in Iowa. On January 28th the western sky turned sickly pale and the sun was dim behind a yellow haze. The smell of dust was everywhere. Not a blizzard but a mid-winter dust storm swept over the State. During the following month high winds brought several deposits of soil across the Missouri River. Dust storms occurred on nine days during March, the worst in the history of northwestern Iowa being on March 16th.

To make matters worse, rainfall in April was thirty-nine per cent below normal. Dust filled the air on twenty-two days of that month. Soil and seed were blown about by high winds, causing a spotted condition in small grain fields. The sun was obscured, motor driving was often hazardous, and housewives futilely resisted the dusty adversary. On April 23rd an ominous cloud darkened the morning sky and remained until after sunset. This storm was described as the worst of the season. At Davenport visibility was reduced to a quarter of a mile, while the "thick brown fog" at Keokuk left the Illinois shore entirely invisible. Air mail pilots reported that the dust extended to

a height of over two miles. In some places snow plows were used on the roads to clear drifts one to three feet deep. Dust storms were common throughout May, sometimes obscuring the sun and even burying snow fences. Grave apprehension was expressed that a continuance of such storms might turn the garden of the nation into a desert. The formation of the loess hills was no longer a mystery.

With the drought came armies of hungry chinch bugs. Having eaten acres of barley, oats, and wheat they invaded corn fields. Rexford Tugwell, visiting a farm near Ankeny in June, expressed "surprise as well as horror and disgust when he examined a stalk of corn and found it literally alive with chinch bugs." Miles of paper and chemical barriers were constructed in forty-seven counties in Iowa, and slightly more than 3,000,000 gallons of creosote were used for this purpose. By fall the chinch bugs had caused more than \$25,000,000 damage, and their presence in menacing numbers in eighty counties portended disaster for crops in 1935.

Sunburn, dust, and insects made 1934 memorable in Iowa. These tribulations were all the more conspicuous because they were abnormal. Nature, disporting herself unnaturally, imparted a somber hue to the whole history of the year.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

## The Political Scene

Caught in the maelstrom of the economic depression, it is not surprising that the people of Iowa should have been attracted by the personality and philosophy of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal. The Republicans, complacent in their habitual incumbency, were overwhelmed by defeat in the election of 1932. Apparently the old regime was discredited. The wheel of political fortune was turned in reverse and the Democrats assumed control. In the House of Representatives of the Forty-fifth General Assembly, the ratio of partisanship was changed from seventy Republicans and thirty-eight Democrats to seventy-six Democrats and thirty-two Republicans. Although the term of only half the Senators expired in 1932, the Democrats increased their power by twenty seats, so that the dominance of forty-five Republicans was reduced to a tie with twenty-five.

The influence of the Democratic party upon political events in 1934 is reflected chiefly in the work of the Forty-fifth General Assembly, which met regularly in 1933 and again in extra session from November 6, 1933, to March 12, 1934.

Measures for the relief of debtors, reduction of taxes, control of government expenditures, and sale of beer indicated the character of public problems and the trend of Democratic policy in 1933. More conclusive was the work of the extra session, called by Governor Clyde L. Herring to enact legislation on "tax revision, liquor control, emergency relief, and other matters of vital public interest".

This extra session, the tenth since Iowa became a State, lasted longer than any regular session of the General Assembly and longer than any special session save that of 1923-1924. The most conspicuous accomplishments of the extra session were the levying of new taxes on incomes, sales, and corporations; the establishment of an old age pension system; the assumption of the liquor business by the State; and provisions for extensive poor relief during the depression.

The subject of tax revision evoked heated debate in the regular session of the Forty-fifth General Assembly. With the exception of taxes on inheritances, liquor, motor vehicles, gasoline, and cigarettes, Iowa has depended almost completely upon property as the source of public revenue. It was not surprising that the adoption of new taxes was defeated: people considered taxes already too high. The acute distress of

agriculture and labor, however, required some shifting of the burden. A committee composed of members from both houses was therefore appointed to study taxation and submit a bill for the consideration of the extra session. The result was a measure providing for a personal net income tax, a business tax on corporations, and a retail sales tax, which was finally adopted. It was the greatest change that has ever been made at one time in the tax system of Iowa.

Another product of the extra session of the Forty-fifth General Assembly was the Iowa Old Age Assistance Act, which became operative on November 1, 1934. Any person who had been a citizen of the United States for fifteen years, had resided in Iowa for ten years next preceding the date of his application and in the county two years, if he or she was sixty-five years of age and had an income of less than one dollar per day, might receive a pension of not more than \$25 a month. To provide funds, a poll tax of two dollars a year was imposed upon every resident of Iowa who is a citizen of the United States more than twenty-one years of age. On the day set for payments to begin, Joseph Newt Finney of Waverly, a bachelor seventy years old and a pioneer of Bremer County, received the first old age assistance warrant. It was decided that the

first pension would be granted in Bremer County because that county had the best record of old age assistance tax collection — ninety-one per cent of the assessed amount.

Control of the liquor traffic has been a perennial bugaboo in Iowa politics. At the extra session a new method was authorized — the sale of all intoxicating liquor, except beer, by the State government. The business, being a monopoly, is supposed to yield handsome profits and at the same time encourage temperance. An experienced commission of three men promptly established liquor stores in twenty-six Iowa cities, and before the close of 1934 this number had more than doubled. By the middle of May, Iowans read of the purchase of ten carloads of assorted wines, whiskies, and gin, at a cost of \$88,000 — the first order under the new plan. By July, 19,486 permits to purchase liquor had been issued to individuals, the names of whom are kept secret. Before the year ended, patrons were complaining about the high prices charged, employees in at least one large store had been found untrustworthy, and the Liquor Commission chairman himself had given some State seals to a friend.

A maze of issues confronted the electorate as the elections of 1934 approached. Taxation, economy in government, control of the liquor

traffic, and bureaucracy, were hackneyed problems in comparison with such issues as reduced interest rates, the old age pension, unemployment insurance, and a state highway patrol. The social and economic implications involved in such questions indicate the trend of affairs.

The State primary election was as torrid as the weather. Armed with arguments that often served only to befog the issues, sweating candidates stumped Iowa to plead their cause before microphones in radio stations, before huge crowds with the aid of loud speakers, and at clubs, in churches, and upon every convenient occasion.

The Democratic primary is traditionally quiet in Iowa, because Democratic candidates are usually defeated in the final election. The victory of 1932, however, stimulated political ambition so that three State offices were contested in 1934. Charles J. Zylstra of Hawarden, George Finch of Sioux City, and Clyde L. Herring of Des Moines wanted to head the Democratic State ticket. On the other hand, four Republicans sought nomination for the office of Governor in the primary election — ex-Governor Dan W. Turner, Robert W. Colflesh, Clarence A. Knutson, and Wallace M. Short. Governor Herring easily won the Democratic nomination, but the banner of the Republicans was placed in the hands of Turner only

after a strenuous campaign. Although more than twice as many Republicans as Democrats voted in the primaries, the Republican vote was almost 70,000 less than in the primaries of 1932.

The ensuing campaign was unusually bitter. The Republicans, being out of power, found fault with the way the government was being run, while the Democrats jeered at the Republicans and cheered lustily every time the name of Roosevelt or Herring was mentioned. Recognizing their strategical advantage, the Democrats basked in the popularity of the national administration. They claimed that Iowa had reaped cash and credit benefits amounting to \$354,400,000 through such agencies as the AAA, the HOLC, the CCC, and the FERA. Nor did they shrink from parading their own accomplishments: reduction in the cost of government, tax revision, reorganization of Iowa banks, debt moratorium, refunding of road bonds, the old age pension, and the liquor control system. Meanwhile, Lieutenant-Governor Kraschel compared ex-Governor Turner to Nero who "fiddled in the face of ruin".

The Republicans in turn severely condemned the New Deal, Turner charging Herring with building a gigantic Tammany machine and attempting to ride into office on "Roosevelt's coat tails". Who, queried the Republicans, was to pay

for the millions of dollars the federal government had spent in Iowa? Had not the national debt risen ten billions and actually reached the peak established during the World War? Would not Iowa have to assume its share of the burden in paying this debt? As to reducing taxation, the Democrats had actually added new taxes.

The outcome of the contest was not apparent, even to close students of Iowa politics. In 1932, Herring had received 508,573 votes, or 53,428 more than Turner. But, argued some, the Democrats had been swept in by a Rooseveltian tidal wave and could not hope to win again. During the preceding decade the Republican gubernatorial candidates averaged 471,501 votes compared with 217,632 for Democratic opponents. Would a normally Republican State revert to its traditional partisan allegiance in a campaign uninfluenced by a Presidential election? Were the farmers and other Iowans pleased with the New Deal and the Herring administration?

When the smoke of battle cleared away, the Democrats had won a smashing victory. Herring was reëlected with a majority of over 70,000 in a total vote for the office of Governor that approached 900,000. Apparently Democratic rule had won positive approval. The year 1934 was a crucial test of political policy and partisanship.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

## Uncle Sam Lends A Hand

Iowa is an agricultural Commonwealth. Though factories, mines, and urban commerce contribute much to the total wealth, the fields are still the most important resource. If the farmers languish their cousins in the city also suffer.

When Iowa revolted against Republican rule in November, 1932, the monthly price index of farm products was 49 compared with 100 for the five-year period between 1910 and 1914. Even in 1931 it had averaged 86. Meanwhile, the cost of goods the farmer needed had not fallen as fast or far, so that the gap between selling and purchasing power was constantly widening. Moreover, land which had been bought for \$400 or \$500 an acre just after the World War could not be sold for a fifth as much. Debts contracted in gold dollars worth one bushel of corn had to be paid in terms of ten bushels per dollar. No wonder indebtedness multiplied. No wonder mortgages were foreclosed. No wonder banks failed.

The woes of agriculture were cumulative. Taxes on farm land consumed two-fifths of the income. Delinquency spread until it covered about one-fourth of all Iowa farm lands and amounted

to more than eleven million dollars. Tax sales were boycotted or, if attended, surly neighbors bid five cents to fulfill legal requirements and yet prevent the loss of property. When insurance companies attempted to take a farm, angry citizens resisted dispossession of the former owner.

Since the prosperity and welfare of the entire State is inextricably bound up with the condition of the farmer, it was natural that industrial and commercial activity was strangled. The decline in freight loadings is a good thermometer to measure the effect of sick agriculture upon dependent industry. Hundreds of miners were thrown out of work in the coal fields. Curtailment in building and road construction stifled lumber, iron, cement, and allied industries.

In the midst of such general prostration, Uncle Sam came to the rescue. Activities of the United States government constituted a prominent feature of the history of Iowa during 1934. One or more members of the alphabet brigade — the AAA, the CCC, the CWA, the FERA, the HOLC, the PWA, the RFC, to mention a few — paraded daily in the press. Everybody was affected, directly or remotely. Roads and rivers, schools and post offices, farms and city dwellings, all benefited by the solicitude of the New Deal.

With thousands of people out of work, with

industry paralyzed, with the price of hogs and corn far below cost of production, poverty became common. In normal times the cost of poor relief outside of county homes is about two and a quarter million dollars, but in 1934 over \$6,820,000 was drawn from county treasuries for this purpose, not including nearly \$460,000 for soldiers' relief. And still the resources were inadequate to prevent people being hungry, cold, and shabby. Meanwhile, the population of the county homes, composed of permanently poor people, had not increased much.

Realizing that the problem of national poverty could not be solved by local communities, the United States government created the Federal Emergency Relief Administration in May, 1933, to aid States and cities. Governor Herring had already organized a State relief agency through which Federal funds could be spent. Local overseers of the poor lost their independence and became the representatives of higher authority. Under this centralized administration the FERA contributed over \$6,358,000 in 1934, which brought the total expenditure last year for outdoor relief in Iowa to \$13,648,674.52.

Direct aid took a variety of forms. Food, clothing, fuel, household necessities, rent, and cash were supplied. In 1933 seventy per cent of the

total expenditure was for food, but in 1934 only thirty-five per cent went for food on relief orders while forty-three per cent was in the form of cash for work on relief projects. In addition to these traditional methods, various schemes of self-help were instituted. For subsistence gardens the government distributed \$23,943.15 worth of garden seed to needy families in Iowa. Other phases of direct relief activity included the canning, seed corn, and surplus pig programs.

A number of departments participated in the mitigation of distress in drought-stricken Iowa. The Farm Credit Administration, coöperating with the Agricultural Extension Service of Iowa State College and the Iowa Emergency Relief Administration, established Emergency Crop and Feed Loan Offices in each of the drought counties in the southern part of the State. The AAA inaugurated a Cattle Buying Program in August, 1934. Approximately 17,000 head of cattle were purchased, about 8000 of which were turned over to the Iowa Emergency Relief Administration for processing. In addition to the cattle bought in Iowa, about 18,000 head were shipped in from other States for slaughtering and processing. Nearly three million cans of roast beef and over one million cans of beef broth, 528,000 pounds of fresh meat, and 71,000 pounds of bologna sausage

were prepared for distribution. The Federal Surplus Relief Corporation supplied feed for livestock in barren areas, and even a Water Program was developed for the benefit of people as well as livestock in some localities.

Two other national agencies contributed mightily toward alleviating distress in Iowa, particularly among the farmers. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration, organized in 1933 to control production and facilitate marketing, formed county associations of farmers who agreed to limit their production of corn and hogs. In return the government promised increased prices and direct benefit payments. Corn-hog benefit checks in 1934 totalled \$73,000,000, and in some instances comprised nearly all the cash a farmer had. The Farm Credit Administration, also created in 1933 to provide a complete and coördinated credit system for agriculture, lent enormous sums on land and crop security.

If Iowa fared well at the hands of Uncle Sam, the reason may be attributed chiefly to the fact that State officials went to Washington with sound, carefully investigated projects that won the approval of Federal authorities. For example, when the Federal corn loan program was adopted, mainly upon the recommendation of Governor Herring and Senator Louis Murphy, the first

loan in the United States was made on November 24, 1933, to W. W. Eral of Pocahontas County. Eral announced that he intended to use the money to pay some bills and buy three cows, machinery, clothing, groceries, furniture, and curtains.

Within ten days Secretary Ray Murray had an active field force of five hundred warehouse board members and six hundred bonded sealers operating in every part of the State. Iowa had utilized \$6,000,000 before any other State had contracted a single loan. Although it was originally estimated that only \$27,000,000 would be borrowed in corn loans, a total of \$61,000,000 was actually borrowed in less than five months. These loans saved the farmers from selling their crop at ten cents a bushel and allowed most of them to dispose of it when the price was over fifty cents a bushel. The threat of farmers' strikes in the corn belt was effectively dispelled. Every dollar was repaid, with four per cent interest, a record seldom equalled in the United States.

It would be impossible to discuss all the projects that were undertaken or completed during 1934. Thus, the work of the PWA in building twenty-six locks and dams for a nine-foot channel in the Mississippi River between Saint Paul and Saint Louis is the most colossal engineering feat ever attempted in this part of the country. Thousands

of men have been employed and millions of dollars expended, the huge roller dam at Davenport alone costing over \$4,000,000. At nine other points along the eastern border of Iowa similar works are being built.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was established in March, 1933, to rehabilitate young men physically and mentally, to relieve a part of the existing distress and unemployment, and to conserve natural resources. The CCC gave young Iowans between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, who were citizens of the United States, unmarried, and unemployed, an opportunity to work. Iowa's original quota was 6000 men but 7,923 were in the thirty-five CCC camps between April, 1933, and December, 1934. During this same period almost \$2,500,000 of their earnings went to their dependents in Iowa.

More than half of Iowa's CCC men were common laborers. Half of them had been unemployed for six months or more and one-fourth had had no employment for a year or more. Nine out of ten had completed grammar school and seven out of ten had had some work in high school. Three out of every hundred had been to college. The CCC was expected to restore unproductive forest areas, check soil erosion, build roads, and prevent losses from fires and floods. Several

artificial lakes were constructed and valiant service was rendered in fighting chinch bugs.

The work of the Iowa State Planning Board is in some respects the most far-reaching of all, forming part of a "broad national plan for the preservation, restoration and wise use of our resources in an effort to eliminate exploitation, waste, and selfish greed, and to assist in the stabilization of economic and social life". An extensive preliminary report appeared in September, 1934, followed by a second report in April, 1935. No one can study the four major subjects (land, water, people, commerce) considered in these reports without being convinced that Iowa has come of age.

Seven-league strides were taken in the conservation movement during 1934. It was estimated that the twenty-five-year plan of the Conservation Board has been advanced ten years under the direction of the Iowa Emergency Relief Administration coöperating with the United States Biological Survey and the Iowa State Fish and Game Commission. Trees and shrubs were planted to prevent erosion, nearly 6000 winter shelters and wild-life feeding stations were constructed by sportsmen, farmers, and relief workers, 400 tons of food collected, fifty miles of Iowa streams improved, and several artificial lakes created. The

Federal government through the CCC, FERA, and CWA, spent approximately \$12,000,000 on conservation labor projects in the last year and a half. Meanwhile Iowa contributed only \$100,000.

The New Deal, combined with other factors, had a tremendous influence upon conditions in Iowa during 1934. The index of farm products rose to 74, and during the first quarter of 1935 almost reached the price level of things farmers have to buy. Business increased twenty-two per cent over the previous year. Twelve per cent more people were employed. Department stores and life insurance companies benefited by the prosperous trend, but cigarettes and gasoline were almost as popular, while sales of new automobiles gained forty-two per cent.

The morale of the people was decidedly strengthened in 1934. Bank deposits increased. Debts were paid. The worst of the depression seemed to be past. But the ultimate appraisal can not yet be made. The cost has been enormous. Federal indebtedness is more than it has ever been. Tax payers will long be conscious of the Herculean efforts to win the greatest battle against economic adversity this nation has ever fought. The year 1934 may be the crisis of that titanic struggle.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

## The Web of Life

The hypothetical Average Iowan in 1934 talked about the weather and politics but he or she was primarily concerned with private affairs. Fortunately the Federal government proffered a helping hand to restore the normal standard of living. After several years of penury, some of the luxuries as well as the necessities of life were within reach. Telephones were being installed again: the sale of automobiles and radios increased. While the two houses of the General Assembly haggled bitterly over appropriation bills that differed by two million dollars, Iowans calmly spent that amount on dog biscuits. At the same time the Average Iowan probably contributed less to the church — at least the per capita contribution in the United States dropped from \$16.11 in 1933 to \$12.07 in 1934.

To illustrate the significance of religion, an Iowa historian once described the State as a "Corn and Bible Commonwealth". Despite reduced support, churches were stronger than ever in 1934. A survey of membership in the United States revealed a gain of 1,222,064 members for all denominations over the preceding year. In

Iowa as well as in the rest of the country the larger Protestant churches exhibited a general movement toward recovery in morale and a definite striving to make themselves more effective in their ministry. It was more and more evident that the church was serving a social as well as a religious function among people long oppressed by adversity.

Although the church in Iowa has made appreciable gains, many people saw hidden reefs ahead. A gloomy picture of the doom of the Protestant clergy was painted by Edward A. Steiner of Grinnell before a meeting of the Iowa Ministerial Association. He declared that a moron could get by a theological seminary and upbraided the church for its low standards, laxity, and general decay. Sermons, he asserted, were so dry they were almost brittle. To Oskaloosa came the Reverend Abram E. Cory, to address the State convention of the Disciples of Christ on the need for stronger clergymen and laymen. Iowa born and bred, Reverend Cory declared: "A great layman loves God, the church, and reform. We need fanatics in the church, fools for God. For churches to live, poker-faced preaching must end."

On the assumption that Iowa needed some regenerating influence, Aimee Semple McPherson

conducted a seven-day camp meeting at Fairfield. But A. R. Liverett of Indianapolis had no patience with those who felt Christianity was dying. Speaking before the Disciples of Christ at Oskaloosa, he declared: "Churches are the most live concerns to-day. Only one out of 2,400 churches have failed financially compared to one out of every six banks." Nearly 10,000 persons attended the first Church and Bible School Day at Marshalltown in June. A feature of the program was the huge parade of 2500 people, several bands, and thirty floats.

The problems confronting the various denominations are usually discussed in their national conventions. In 1934 world peace commanded the attention of the Disciples of Christ at their eighty-fourth convention in Des Moines. They condemned the war system, which included military training, the profit motive in the manufacture and sale of arms and munitions, and approved the rights of conscientious objectors. D. W. Morehouse of Drake University was elected president of the 1935 meeting.

Some measure of the culture of a people may be found in their appreciation of the arts. Few States have exhibited a deeper or more abiding interest in music than Iowa has. In 1928 Walter Damrosch described Iowa as "the most musical

State in the Union." Six years later Iowa was still demonstrating her right to such flattering distinction. The Cornell Music Festival, the Federated Music Clubs, the Cedar Falls Band Festival, and the High School Music Festival have played important rôles in stimulating an appreciation and love for good music. The latter, for example, attracted over five thousand young musicians to Iowa City in May. These were the finalists, the best among thousands who had practiced faithfully at home and in school for many weeks. No one was surprised that the judges rated 101 contestants "superior" and 124 "excellent" in fifty-one events. Mason City, Roosevelt of Des Moines, Iowa City, and Abraham Lincoln of Council Bluffs won the most distinction.

When the National High School Orchestra Association met at Ottawa, Kansas, the Mason City orchestra shared superior rating in Class A with Topeka and Joplin. Early in June five thousand high school musicians attended the National Band Contest at Des Moines. Arthur Pryor, Edwin Franko Goldman, and Captain Charles O'Neil served as judges. Again Mason City High School demonstrated its prowess by tying with Joliet, Illinois, and Harrison High of Chicago for "highly superior" honors. Roosevelt and North High of Des Moines were among the eight

schools that won a superior rating in Class A. Iowa City won a superior rating in Class B and Blainstown won the same distinction in Class C.

A hopeful aftermath to such musical accomplishments was reflected in the fact that one Des Moines music dealer sold more pianos in 1934 than he had sold in the preceding five years. Moreover, the guitar, the clarinet, and the accordion had supplanted the saxophone and ukelele as best sellers. It was claimed that youthful Iowans were tired of "canned" music and wished to play their own instruments.

Education has always been dear to the hearts of the people of Iowa, yet during the depression schools suffered from reduced appropriations, heavier enrollment, inadequate facilities, and under-nourished students. The plight of education was discussed at the Thirty-eighth National Congress of the Parent-Teachers Association which met in Des Moines in May. John W. Studebaker, then superintendent of the Des Moines school system, struck the keynote of the convention when he declared: "The saving of the democracy of free learning is the most important problem before the nation to-day."

The salaries of Iowa's 24,631 teachers had been reduced to pitifully small amounts. Mrs. Bertha Jorgenson continued to teach without pay

while two Fremont County townships quarrelled over which was responsible for paying her. In contrast to such conditions was Herbert Hoover's praise of his boyhood teacher, Mollie Brown Carran, who died at West Branch on May 16th: "Especially did she represent that noble service of the country school teacher whose contribution to the national welfare is daily manifest, and, although that appreciation is perhaps unexpressed, it is still deep in the hearts of millions of our people."

For many years Iowa has led the nation in literacy. During the school year 1933-1934, 424,568 of the 461,890 children between the ages of seven and sixteen were enrolled in school. At the same time 547,574 of the 721,932 between the ages of five and twenty-one were enrolled in elementary and high schools. With such a large attendance it is not surprising that 99.2 per cent of the population can read and write. No other State has less than one per cent of illiteracy, the average for the nation is 4.3 per cent, and one State, South Carolina, has 14.9 per cent.

Early in May 53,000 pupils in 281 high schools took one or more of the standard examinations in seventeen different subjects. About 1100 of the best then competed for individual honors in scholarship at Iowa City under the auspices of

the State University. Fifteen-year-old Florence Green of Red Oak was first in Latin, American government, American literature, and second in eleventh-grade English correctness. She had previously won similar academic championships in 1932 and 1933.

Reminiscent of pioneer days was the State Spelling Bee, which was won by ten-year-old Richard Ovington of Council Bluffs. At Washington he succeeded in placing fourth in the national match.

Institutions of higher education continued to do effective work although with greatly curtailed budgets. President Eugene A. Gilmore, newly appointed President of the State University of Iowa, may have been gratified to learn that his university was ranked tenth among the great schools of the country by an educational expert. College enrollment increased, which was partly due to financial aid given to 6522 students by the Federal government.

Iowa has always ranked high in the field of journalism but 1934 proved to be a banner year. On May 8, 1934, Edwin Percy Chase, fifty-four-year-old editor of the *Atlantic News-Telegraph* won the \$500 Pulitzer Prize with an editorial on the subject: "Where Is Our Money". A few days later the School of Journalism of the Uni-

versity of Missouri tendered the Melbourne (Australia) *Argus* and the Des Moines *Register and Tribune* an award "for distinguished journalism". The owners and editors of the Des Moines papers were praised for their "professionally sound and socially constructive service" to Iowa. The Iowa Press Association awarded silver plaques to four Master Editors and Publishers of Iowa for "pre-eminence in newspaper work": W. C. Jarnagin of the Storm Lake *Pilot-Tribune*, W. P. Wortman of the Malvern *Leader*, F. A. Moscrip of the Marshalltown *Times-Republican*, and Grant L. Caswell, managing director of the Iowa Press Association.

From work the Average Iowan turned occasionally to play. Sports, pictures, parks, music, news, and literature beguiled the leisure hours. A single Iowa newspaper, read in the homes of a quarter million Iowans, must have had a powerful influence upon public opinion. The radio seems to have become an almost essential part of the Average Iowan's home: there were 71,467 receiving sets on Iowa farms on January 1, 1934.

More than 25,000 miles of surfaced highways made pleasure haunts accessible by automobile. Thousands of Iowans flocked to the State parks to enjoy the recreation which these scenic or historic spots afford. It took the Mormons five

months to cross Iowa in 1846: it would have taken only that many hours for the 592,350 automobiles registered in Iowa to transport the entire population out of the State in 1934. But city dwellers would have been obliged to help the country folks because only 195,107 motor cars were owned on Iowa's 213,769 farms. Such mobility must affect the life of any people.

County fairs were well attended. The Iowa State Fair opened officially with an attendance of 59,460, half of whom were children admitted free. A crowd of 12,000 saw the Sidney Rodeo during August, while the Silver Jubilee of the Waterloo Dairy Cattle Congress attracted 138,000 visitors.

Athletics of all kinds — football, baseball, basketball, track, tennis, and golf — found favor with Iowans. Fully 53,000 swooped down to the Iowa stadium on October 27th to watch Minnesota defeat the University of Iowa football team by a score of 48 to 12. The week before, over 18,000 had seen the State College football team humiliate the State University by a score of 31 to 6, the most crushing defeat the Hawkeyes had ever received at the hands of the Cyclones. Decked in gay and summery attire, another 18,000 attended the Drake Relays — the largest crowd that ever witnessed Iowa's premier track meet.

College football and track attracted thousands during 1934 but the attendance at basketball was the most remarkable of all. The average attendance at the six Big Ten basketball games at Iowa City was 10,233. A record-breaking crowd of 13,200 saw the Iowa-Purdue game — a number which caused provincial New Yorkers to gasp in astonishment. East Sioux City High won the State basketball championship and Wellsburg High School won the girls basketball championship.

National attention was won by Marvin Nelson of Fort Dodge in the fifteen-mile Canadian National Exhibition Swim. Despite the cold and choppy waters of Lake Ontario, Nelson outswam eighty-nine rivals to finish in seven hours and forty-six minutes. Another Iowan, Mack Garner, a veteran jockey from Centerville, rode Cavalcade to victory in the famous Kentucky Derby for a purse of \$28,175. Early in 1934, Urban "Red" Faber of Cascade, Iowa, announced his retirement after twenty years with the Chicago White Sox. While Faber was ending his career, Harold "Hal" Trosky, of Norway, Iowa, made his debut in the major leagues with the Cleveland Indians. The colorful slugger hit thirty-five home runs his first season — three of them in one day. Batting .330 in 1934, Trosky scored 117 runs on 206 hits

that went for 374 bases. Dick Crayne of the University of Iowa was voted the outstanding Iowa amateur athlete for 1934, receiving almost double the number of votes cast for Lucille Robinson and Floyd DeHeer.

A new era in transportation history was inaugurated by the railroads in 1934. Following its exhibition at the Century of Progress, the new Union Pacific streamlined train passed westward through Iowa in February to be put into service. This epoch-making invention attracted an audience three hundred miles long: ten thousand craned their necks at Cedar Rapids, fifteen hundred looked on in wonder at Marshalltown, and two thousand surrounded the train upon its arrival at Boone.

In the afternoon of May 26th the Burlington *Zephyr* raced across southern Iowa on its non-stop record run of 1015 miles from Denver to Chicago. Pacific Junction, Iowa, 542.61 miles out of Denver, was reached in seven hours and six minutes. The articulated train whizzed across the 274 miles of track between the Missouri and the Mississippi rivers in three hours and thirty-two minutes, averaging 73.3 miles an hour. A speed of ninety-two miles an hour was attained between Villisca and Corning. At 7:09 in the evening the *Zephyr* glided triumphantly into Chicago, having

completed the trip in thirteen hours and five minutes.

Not to be eclipsed by this feat, the Union Pacific sent its crack Diesel-engined train scooting out of Los Angeles for New York in October. This swift streamlined phenomenon made the run of 2364 miles to Chicago in thirty-nine hours and finished the coast-to-coast trip in fifty-six hours and fifty-five minutes.

An unusually large number of railroad accidents occurred in Iowa in 1934. Early in March a head-on collision between two Milwaukee trains ten miles north of Dubuque killed two and injured four persons. A memory of horror and suffering followed the wreck of a Milwaukee passenger train a few miles below Guttenberg — four being killed and eighteen injured. The derailment of a crack Milwaukee flyer west of Spencer in November resulted in the injury of three persons. On May 7th one man was killed and five injured when fourteen Rock Island freight cars piled up seven miles east of Muscatine. In October another Rock Island train wreck a short distance east of Iowa City killed two and injured eight.

Casualties on the railroads seem insignificant, however, in comparison with automobile accidents. Thousands of people were hurt in motor traffic on the highways. The number of automobiles and

the speed at which they travel have quite out-distanced the care and ability of drivers. Through negligence or incompetence 374 Iowans lost their lives in automobiles. Aviation was relatively safer, though several tragic airplane crashes occurred. Five persons were killed at Saint Ansgar on a Fourth of July excursion flight.

Altogether, accidental deaths increased thirty-nine per cent during 1934! Falls accounted for 400 fatalities or an increase of eighteen per cent. Automobiles took a toll seventeen per cent above 1933. Heat was responsible for the loss of 300 lives which represented an increase of eleven hundred per cent. Many drownings occurred as Iowans vainly sought relief from the broiling sun. At Pillsbury Point on Lake Okoboji four Orange City girls and their chaperon were drowned while wading.

During 1934, the birth rate far exceeded the rate of mortality. There were 42,500 births compared with 26,799 deaths. This excess of births over deaths was aided and abetted by the advent of quadruplets to Mr. and Mrs. Larry R. Wycoff of Sac City on June 9, 1934. The four children were born in the Wycoff home within thirty minutes of each other. It has been estimated that quadruplets occur only once in 512,000 births, hence the incident attracted State and even

nationwide attention. The whole community took an active interest, nurses were provided, presents came from near and far, and everything was done to aid the bewildered parents. Unfortunately one of the four died in August. The heaviest toll of life in Iowa was taken by diseases of the heart, cancer, cerebral hemorrhage, accidents of all forms, and pneumonia. Davenport, which lead all American cities in 1932 and 1933 in suicide rate, took a turn for the better in 1934.

Iowa again won distinction as a producer of health champions when Clista Millspaugh of Mount Pleasant, National 4-H Club Health Champion in 1933, was judged the healthiest girl in the United States at the Century of Progress. A blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked blond, Miss Millspaugh stood five feet and five inches in height, weighed 127 pounds, and attributed her health to "plenty of sunshine" and "loads of vegetables and milk". In December of 1934, Doris L. Paul, fifteen-year-old Muscatine County girl, was selected as the National 4-H Club Health Champion for 1934. A month later Miss Paul came down with the measles. In the thirteen years Iowa entrants have competed, they have six times won or tied for the national championship and failed only once to receive honorable mention.

Not since the days of Jesse James have outlaws

and hoodlums played such a conspicuous rôle in Iowa history. In a desperate gun battle on January 6th, Chicago police killed "Handsome Jack" Klutas, believed to have been the murderer of Sheriff Fred Sweet and Marshal Aaron Bailey of Washington, Iowa, on June 26, 1930. On March 13, 1934, seven bandits, one of whom was identified as John Dillinger, staged a sensational daylight bank robbery in Mason City. The bandits gathered up \$52,244 behind sputtering machine guns and fled with twelve hostages to protect them from police fire. On June 7, 1934, Tommy Carroll, a Dillinger henchman, was shot five times and died in a Waterloo hospital. Carroll was identified as one of the Mason City bank robbers. Iowans breathed a sigh of relief when Dillinger was trapped and killed in Chicago in July.

But the end was not yet. Early in October, officers surprised "Pretty Boy" Floyd on a farm near McIntire, Iowa, but he and his two companions escaped, only to be mowed down by Federal men ten days later on an Ohio farm. On November 27th, Herman E. Hollis of Des Moines, an agent of the United States Department of Justice, was slain by "Baby Face" Nelson in a fierce duel. Nelson's body was found the following day riddled by seventeen bullets. Probably the worst burglary was the looting of the Sheaffer

Pen Factory at Fort Madison of \$100,000 in October.

In Guthrie Center lived a venerable old gentleman named John Motz. The seventy-eight year old pioneer had developed an intense dislike for automobiles. On two occasions he had been struck by cars — incidents which only served to kindle his hatred. When his wife died, Motz insisted that she be borne to her grave in a horse-drawn hearse. After considerable search such a vehicle was located at Bayard. In December, 1934, Motz was struck for the third time by an automobile. The injuries he sustained proved fatal and he died two weeks later. He, too, was carried to his final resting place in the old horse-drawn hearse that had borne his wife to her grave three years before.

In Mahaska County lived a seventy-seven year old Iowan named William Swartout who loved automobiles. In 1909 he had bought a Chalmers. In 1934 he drove his "Pride of Barnes City" all the way to Des Moines. Passing motorists in high-powered, streamlined cars slowed up to gaze at the archaic machine. When he stopped at a filling station along the way a curious crowd gathered about his car. Wherever he drove in Des Moines the traffic was sure to be jammed as crowds gathered to marvel at the ancient vehicle.

"How fast will she go?" inquired one onlooker.

"They tell me she'll do forty", Swartout declared. "Course you'd have to take her top down."

John Motz and William Swartout represent contrasting types among the older generation of Iowans. They hark back to the days of the livery stable, the covered bridge, and the dusty, winding roads, thickly studded on either side with golden rod, sumac, cat tails, brown-eyed susans, daisies, and clover. Paved highways and graveled roads, concrete bridges and viaducts, screaming billboards and hot dog stands, afford an entirely different atmosphere to the present generation. The Iowan of 1934 had become familiar with radio and television, streamlined locomotives and automobiles. Airplanes roared over his head. In 1934 he read about wirephoto, little realizing how quickly the new year would usher in this novel invention. Some are happy in this speed-crazed age; others long for the comfort and quiet of the old mill stream. The year 1934 seems to have struck a dominant note of progress. But what will be the shape of things to come?

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

## Comment by the Editor

### *ONE YEAR*

No one place is precisely like any other locality. Of the innumerable stars in the heavens each has a distinct identity. Worlds, continents, mountains, cities, trees, and insects — all differ from the others of their kind. People are as various as they are numerous. No two things or beings are quite alike, yet each possesses resemblances that save phenomena and species from utter chaos of particularity. With all the harmony of confusion, there is infinite variety in the order of nature.

History is concerned with the rhythm of events. Though time and place and personality are eternally mutable in their manifestations, there is in the affairs of men a general scheme of repetition. In the multiplicity of incidents, sequence and significance are discovered. As the material world is a perpetually unfinished mosaic of similar yet different forms, so human experience weaves unceasingly a complex pattern of familiar deeds against a background of strange circumstances. Always separate yet ever parallel, the lives of people derive meaning from the unifying factors of locality and date.

According to the formula of place, the scope of history is as extensive as the area of the region selected. Herodotus and Wells reviewed the world; while a modern Machiavelli might describe the march of time within the bounds of a simple village. Biography and the chronicles of great epochs are common forms of history circumscribed by time. To portray the principal events of a single year in the history of Iowa is to recognize the limits of both duration and space.

Out of the maze of occurrences, from the jungle of news, amid the complexity of motives and the diversity of opinions, some salient features of life in Iowa during 1934 appear. Dominant conditions, general trends, and significant events can be discerned. Through the intricate detail of personal daily accomplishment, the pattern of social achievement is formed. The character of the Commonwealth was permanently affected by the triumphs and tragedies of last year.

"One year", said Edward Gibbon, "is no contemptible portion of this mortal existence."

J. E. B.

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