

# Political Paraphernalia

by  
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Campaign slogans have been uttered by Americans since the days of John Adams. Such phrases as "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too," "Vote as You Shot," "I like Ike," or "All the Way with L.B.J." are familiar to most students of American history and politics. Some slogans like "Happy Days are Here Again" have become titles of popular tunes, while others such as "Give 'Em Hell, Harry" recently have found their way into movie and book titles.

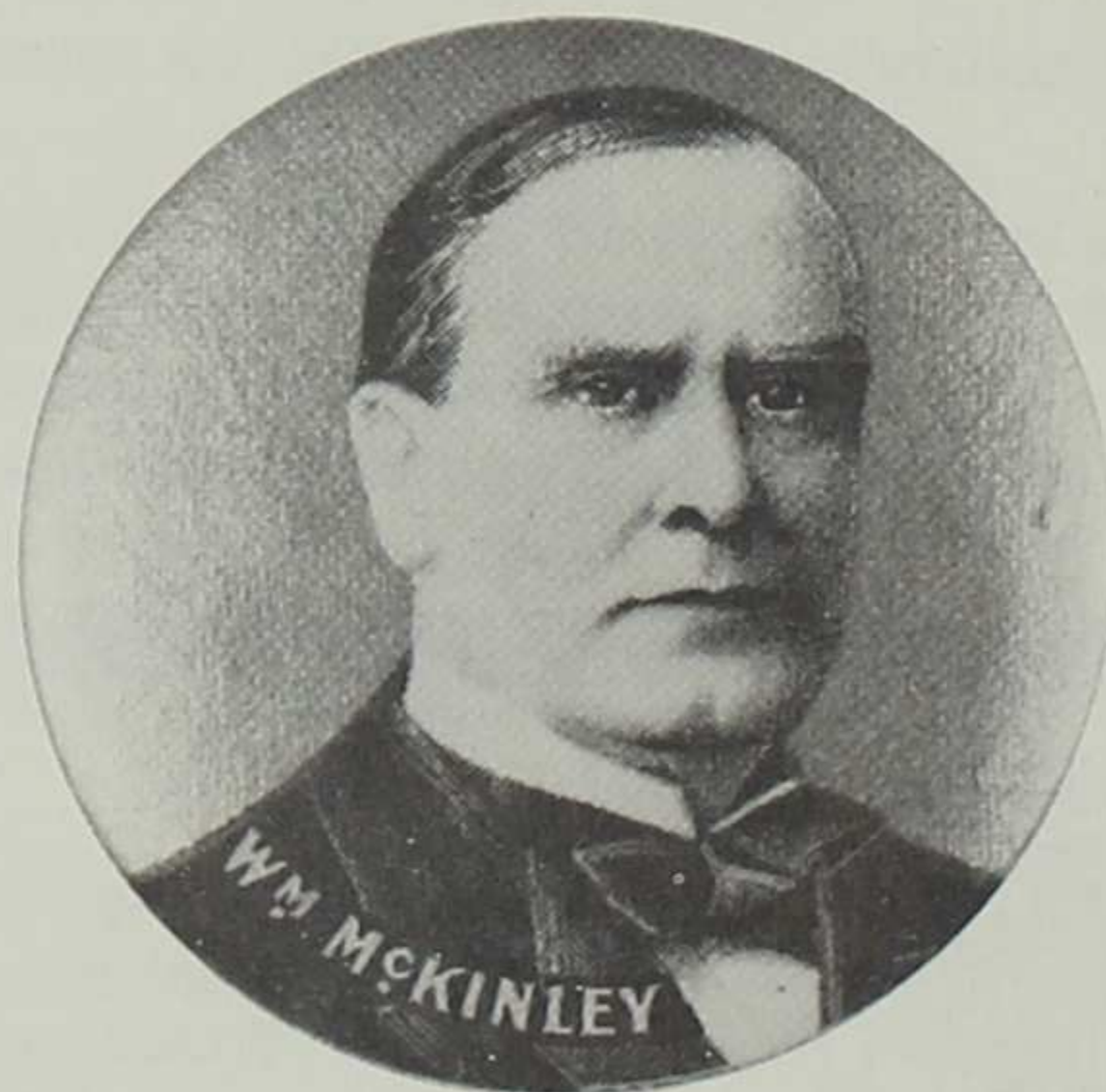
In addition to the catchy phrases of campaign slogans there have been other political paraphernalia used throughout American history to aid candidates seeking the lofty heights of the Oval Office, or even those seeking a seat on the local school board. Canes, hats, pencils, pens, cuff links, pennants, ribbons, medals, and buttons are only a few of the gimmicks which deluge the voter as campaign time approaches. It is little wonder that collectors have found the field wide open for adding to their store of political memorabilia. Some of these items later found their way from attics and basements into the collections of museums and historical societies, and the State Historical Society of Iowa is no exception.

Among the more interesting political items are the campaign buttons which carry campaign slogans or pictures of the notable (at least in some cases) men seeking public office and political fame. The buttons in the collection of the State Historical Society which date back to the McKinley era of the late 1890s came from various donors, but the largest collection

of buttons was given to the Society by Johnson Brigham.

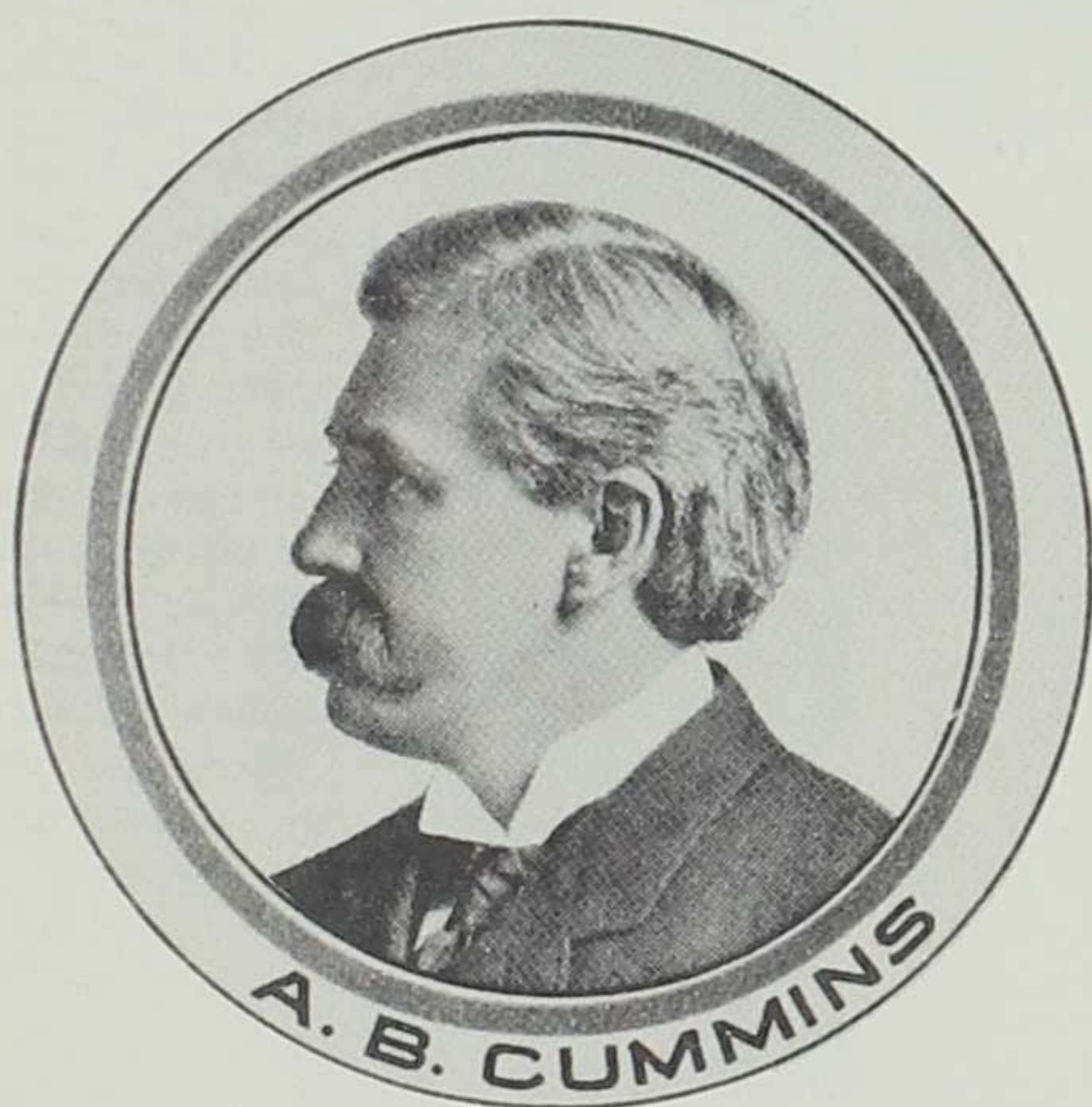
Mr. Brigham himself had an interesting career. Born in 1946 in New York, he came to Iowa in 1881 to become the editor and part-owner of the *Cedar Rapids Republican* newspaper. Several years later he became founder and editor of the popular *Midland Monthly* magazine. In 1898, Governor Shaw appointed him State Librarian, a position he held until his death in 1936. It was in this position that Mr. Brigham had a vantage point from which to observe the leading political battles of his day.

It is due to Mr. Brigham's keen political interests that we have today the collection of campaign buttons preserved at the State Historical Society. Campaign pins and buttons date back to the earliest days



Supporters of William McKinley proudly displayed this celluloid button during the campaign of 1896. McKinley ("the stocking-foot orator" from Ohio) ran a leisurely "front-porch" campaign against the Democratic-Populist candidate from Nebraska, William Jennings Bryan. McKinley's victory ushered in a period of G.O.P. ascendancy.





*Albert B. Cummins, one of Iowa's leading politicians during the early twentieth century, campaigned with this button made for him in New Jersey by the Whitehead & Hoag Mft. Co. Cummins was Governor of the state (1902-1908) and U.S. Senator. He was a major figure among Progressive Republicans in the U.S. and, incidentally, a life member of the State Historical Society of Iowa.*

of the Republic and have been worn on the lapels of voters ever since. Actually, buttons have not always been popular. The Democrats in the 1840 election were made so furious by the "log cabin and hard cider" gimmicks used by their opponents that they actually wrote a plank in their party platform condemning "factious symbols" which insulted the intellect of the voter. Nonetheless, such criticism did not halt the mass production of such symbols. It has been estimated that one hundred million buttons are produced for the average presidential campaign at an average cost of \$8 per thousand. This may seem to be an exaggerated figure until

one realizes that in the 1960 presidential campaign alone there were 14 candidates running on tickets ranging from Kennedy and Nixon on the traditional Democratic and Republican tickets to Rugherford L. Decker and Farrell Dobbs on the Prohibition and Socialist Workers tickets respectively. Added to this is the fact that nearly 80 political party affiliations have been represented in campaigns since 1789. While not all of these were full-fledged campaigns, most of the parties utilized some type of political paraphernalia to rake in votes for their candidates. One can be sure that the mass production of campaign buttons will not decrease in the years ahead. The year 1976 will likely see an upswing in political awareness combined with the bicentennial celebration of our nation. This alone will make it a bonanza for the collector.

The following are some of the more interesting campaign buttons and political paraphernalia from the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa. □





During the election campaign of 1896, McKinley and his running mate Garret Hobart advocated a national policy of "sound" money, basing the dollar on the single standard of gold. Bryan, the Democratic opponent (endorsed also by the Populists), was famous for his demand for a bi-metallic standard of both gold and silver. The question of the gold standard was one of the major issues dividing parties in the 1890s. This partisan emblem is engraved on mother-of-pearl, which is neither gold nor silver.



A delegate's badge from the Republican state convention in Iowa in 1896. As it turned out, this was a bad year for Iowa's favorite-son candidates. William Boyd Allison, ballyhooed by supporters for the Presidential nomination, lost at the national convention to McKinley. On the Democratic side, Iowan Horace Boies was in the running for the nomination but lost to Bryan.



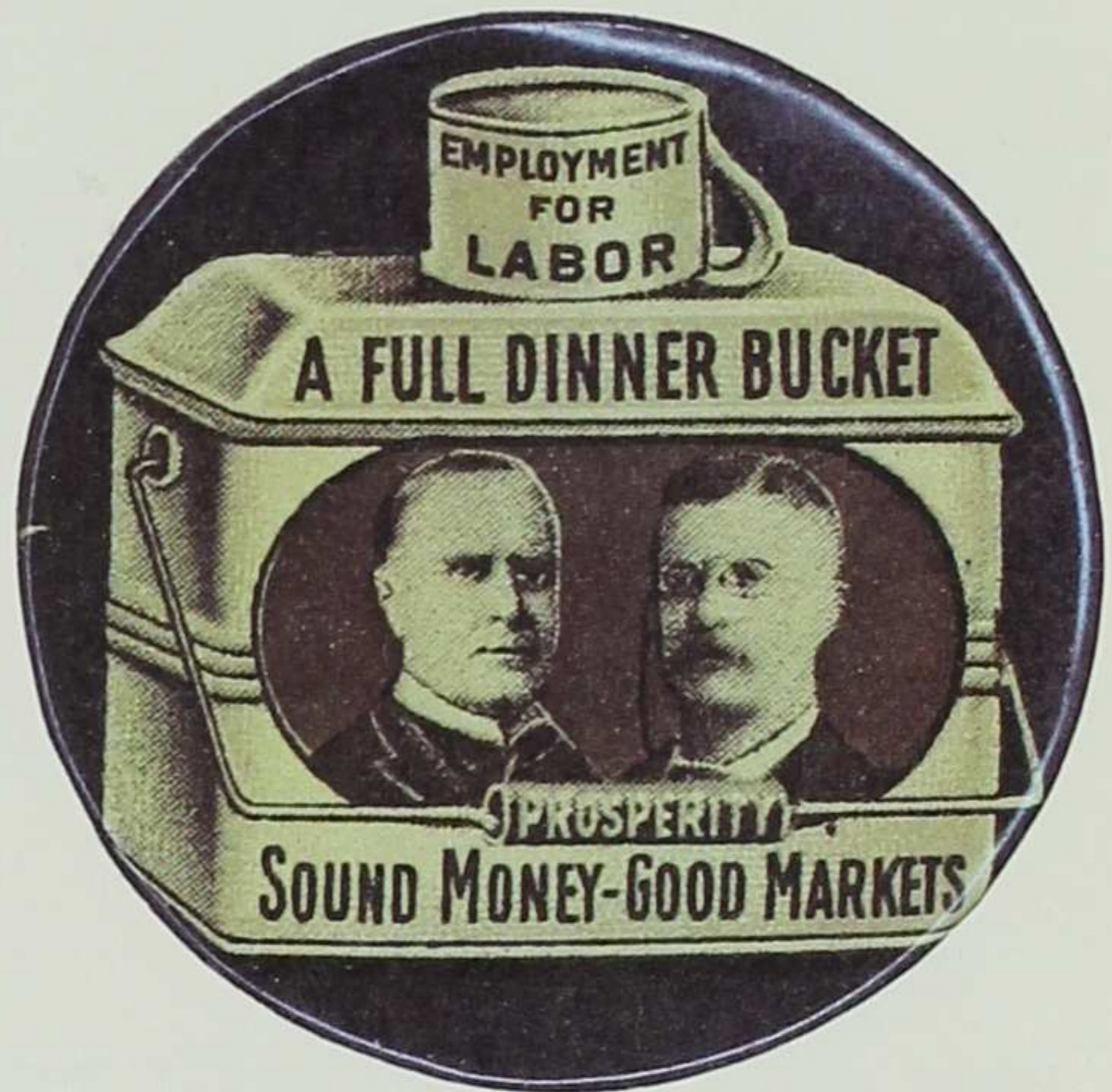
In 1898, the Spanish-American War captured the hearts and minds of most Americans. This Uncle Sam pin, mounted on a card bearing suitably martial sentiments, shows the old gentleman setting out to teach the Spaniards a lesson. Iowa sent more than 5000 men into the fray, including several future state political figures such as Dan Turner, Floyd Thurston, and Guy Gillette.



Iowans should remember the Maine since a young Red Oak, Iowa naval engineer, Darwin R. Merritt, was killed when the vessel blew up and sank in Havana harbor.



A rare "jugate" button (showing side by side pictures of both Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates) for the Republican slate in 1900. McKinley ran with the "hero" of San Juan Hill, the irrepressible Teddy Roosevelt. Promising a full dinner pail and prosperity (always a good political ploy), the ticket swept to victory.



Iowans at the state convention in 1904 might have sported this be-ribboned emblem for T.R., who had ascended to the White House after McKinley's assassination.

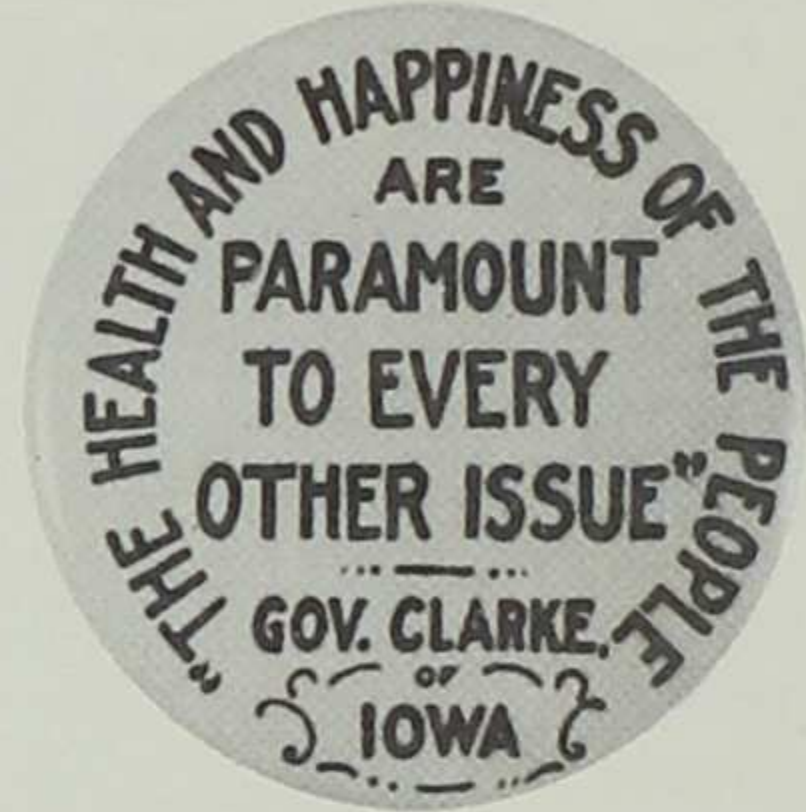


The off-year election of 1914 found Woodrow Wilson in the Oval Office. The state convention in Iowa was held at Council Bluffs.





William Howard Taft, Teddy Roosevelt's hand-picked successor as the Republican standard-bearer, was supported by Iowans in 1908. When T.R. broke with Taft and ran independently as a Bull-Mooser in 1912, Iowans stayed with Taft. This celluloid button was lithographed in Baltimore by the Hyatt Mft. Co.



George W. Clarke, a lawyer from Adel, Iowa, pushed himself with this pin, lithographed in St. Louis. The candidate was successful, serving as Governor from 1913 until 1917.



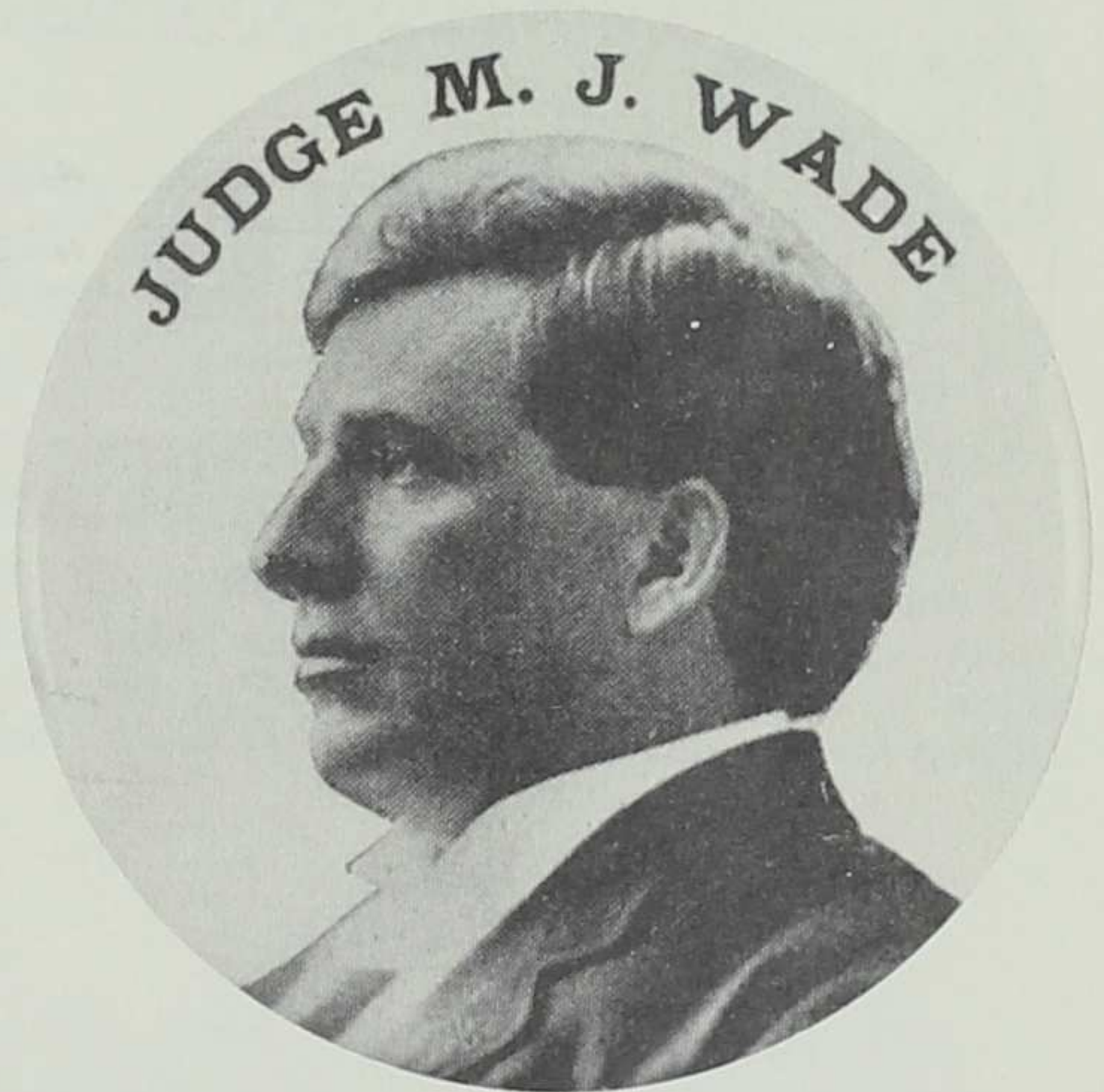
Woman-suffrage advocates could display their sentiments with this button, but unfortunately without success. Iowans voted many times on a change in the state laws to allow women the vote. The women always lost, however. It was not until an amendment to the national Constitution was finally ratified in 1920 that women took to the polls.



An official badge for delegates to the state convention of Democrats in Des Moines, 1920.



A candidate for judicial office, Judge Martin J. Wade was one of Iowa's leading lawyers. He was professor of law at The University of Iowa and had a law firm in Iowa City. He served as U.S. District Judge for Iowa's Southern District from 1915 until 1931. He was an expert on Constitutional law and emphasized loyalty and patriotism to the extreme of advocating a penalty for all citizens who failed to vote—believing in government by the people.



Alfred E. Smith of New York headed the Democratic ticket (along with Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas) in 1928. Facing Iowa native-son Herbert Hoover, Smith was anti-prohibition and a Catholic. He lost to Hoover, but began forging the national coalition of urban liberals, minorities, and labor which eventually put the next Democrat in the Presidency. Note the prominent union "bug" on the pin, showing Smith's use of union labor for manufacturing the device.

"A chicken in every pot, two cars in every garage" was Herbert Hoover's campaign slogan. Hoover holds a special place in the minds of most Iowans since he was born in West Branch, Iowa and was the first President born west of the Mississippi River. Sen. Charles Curtis of Kansas was his running mate both in the 1928 and 1932 elections.





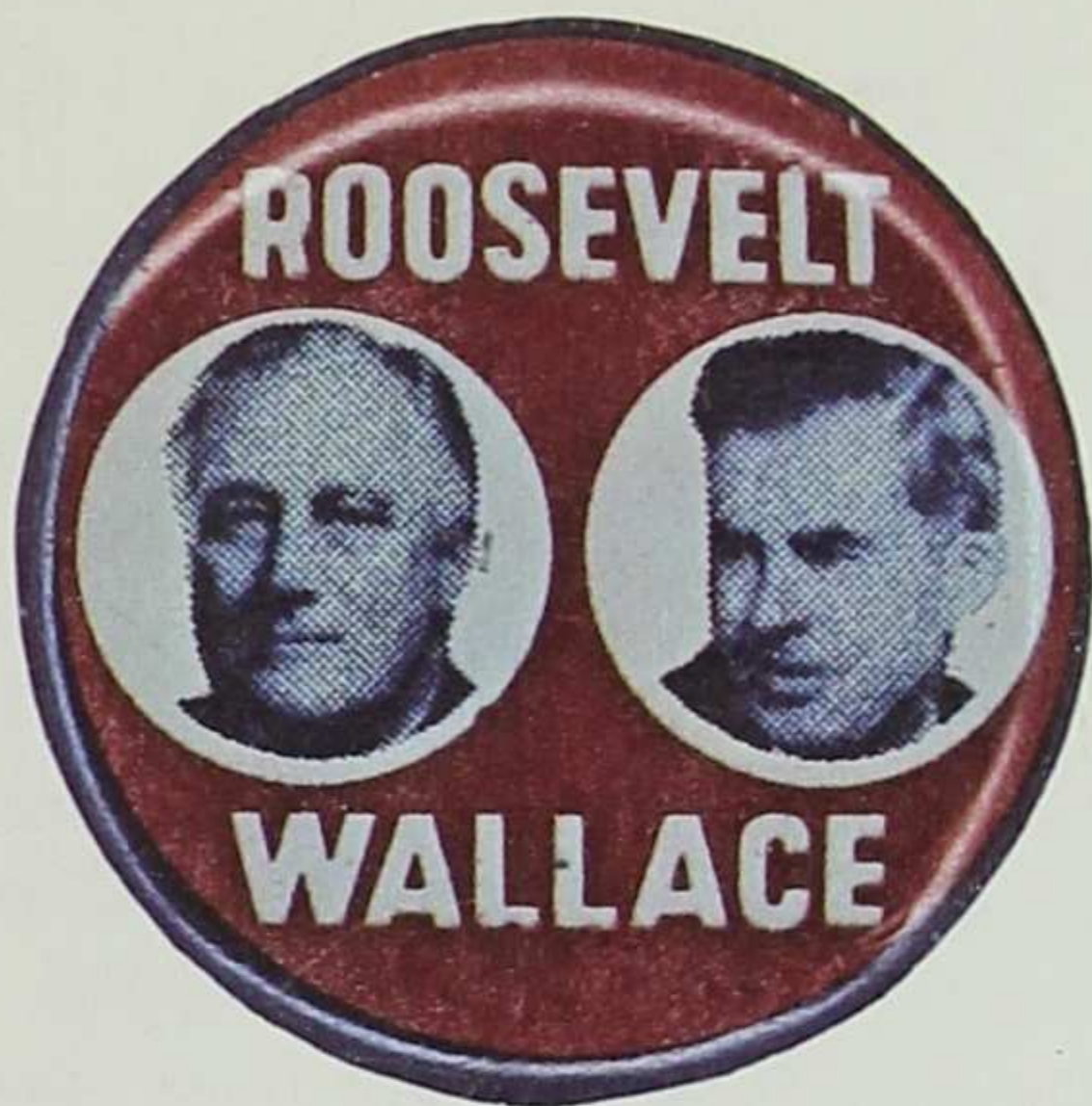


*The trauma of the Great Crash in 1929 and the following economic depression was too much for Hoover's political career, even among his fellow Iowans. Franklin D. Roosevelt administered a crushing defeat to the incumbent in 1932, taking the election by a landslide. Iowans perhaps saw this sign, tailored for the corn-belt and printed in Des Moines.*

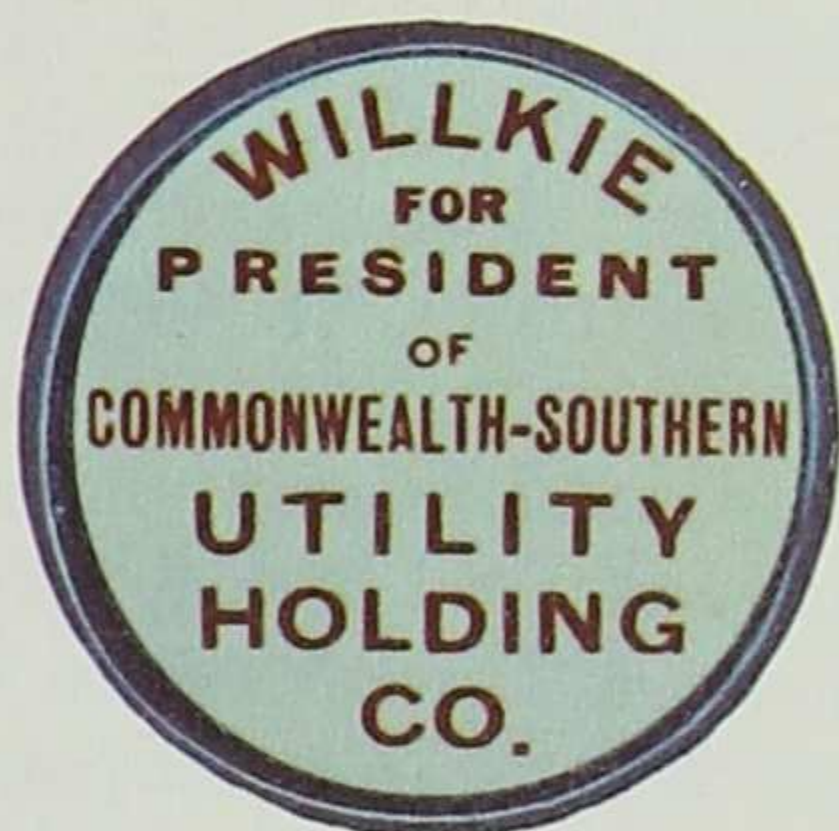


*During the 1936 Presidential campaign, Kansas Governor Alf Landon headed the G.O.P. ticket. He and his running mate, Frank Knox, used the Kansas sunflower motif on much of their campaign material. The opposition responded with the slogan, "sunflowers die in November," and they did.*





An Iowan rose to prominence on the national ticket again in 1940. Henry A. Wallace of Des Moines moved over from the office of Secretary of Agriculture to run alongside F.D.R. The duo overcame the third term stigma and went on to lead the nation during the first years of WW II. This tin button was made in Chicago by the Charles Geraghty Co.



Foe of F.D.R. and Wallace was Wendell Willkie the "Abe Lincoln of Wall Street," who was born in Indiana and had worked as a boy in the cornfields of Iowa. He began his career as a lawyer and became president of Commonwealth and Southern Utility Co. in New York. He was opposed to government ownership of utilities, and the Democrats issued this button, deriding his affiliation with the power company.



Perhaps one of the best political slogans of the last decades, the "I Like Ike" buttons were ubiquitous during the General's campaigns in the 1950s.