

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

VOL. XV

ISSUED IN MARCH 1934

NO. 3

COPYRIGHT 1934 BY THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA



Political Foundations

No more fundamental or complex problem challenges the genius of mankind than the process of erecting a political structure. A sense of conscious responsibility and the inexorable power of democracy as displayed by the fathers of our Commonwealth are vividly portrayed in Benj. F. Shambaugh's volume on The Constitutions of Iowa, from which these pages are selected. — The Editor

Three score years and ten after the declaration went forth from Independence Hall that "all men are created equal", and fifteen years before the great struggle that was to test whether a nation dedicated to that proposition can long endure, Iowa, "the only free child of the Missouri Compromise", was admitted into the Union on an equal footing with the original States.

Profoundly significant in the history of American Democracy are events such as these, since the real life of our Nation spreads throughout forty-eight Commonwealths and is lived in the

common places of the shop, the factory, the office, the mine, and on the farm. Through the Commonwealths the spirit of the Nation is best expressed; and every American community, however humble, participates in the formation and expression of that spirit. Nothing is more misleading than the idea that the life of our people is summed up in the census reports, the debates in Congress, and in the archives of the departments at Washington.

Here in the country west of the Mississippi a new Commonwealth has grown to maturity, and now by common consent occupies a commanding position in national politics. To narrate briefly the creation of this Commonwealth is the purpose of these pages. It is fitting that this should be done in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the establishment of civil government in Iowa.