

The
PALIMPSEST

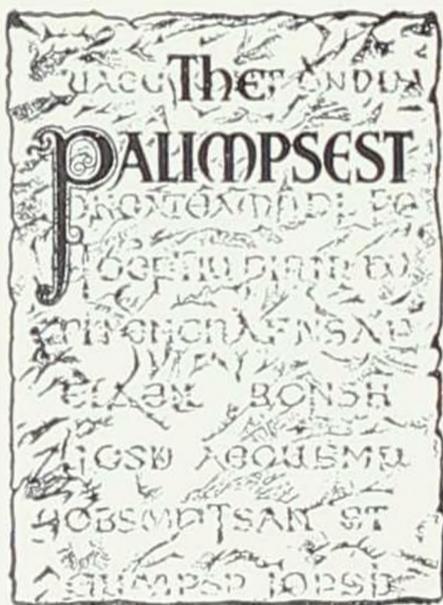


HARRY HANSEN

A DAVENPORT BOYHOOD

Published Monthly by
The State Historical Society of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

APRIL 1956



The Meaning of Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material 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 record 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.

Contents

A DAVENPORT BOYHOOD

HARRY HANSEN

Days of Horses and Wagons	161
Households of the 1890's	168
Brass Bands and Parades	175
A Boy's Horizon Widens	182
Cultural Changes in Davenport	193
In the Steamboat Era	203
The World of Reading	208
Newspaper Beginnings	218
<hr/>	
Harry Hansen	222

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Cover

Front — Harry Hansen in his New York office.

Back — Outside: Burtis Opera House. Courtesy Davenport Democrat.

Authors

Harry Hansen (see pages 222-224).

William J. Petersen is Superintendent of 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

PRICE — 25 cents per copy; \$2.50 per year; free to Members
MEMBERSHIP — By application. Annual Dues \$3.00
ADDRESS — The State Historical Society, Iowa City, Iowa

THE PALIMPSEST

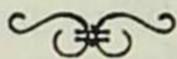
EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

VOL. XXXVII

ISSUED IN APRIL 1956

No. 4

Copyright 1956 by The State Historical Society of Iowa



Days of Horses and Wagons

When I think back to the Davenport of the 1890's, I have to look with the eyes of a little fellow who stands peering through a picket fence at the southwest corner of Third and Harrison streets. His wide-open eyes take in horse cars rattling across the intersection, gray-painted brick buildings across the way, and a road of macadam, ground to powder by the heavy iron-rimmed wagons that roll past endlessly. For his was a horse-drawn world, filled with the pounding of hooves and the shouting of drivers, where dust swirled around corners and got into the little boy's eyes.

The picket fence separated the street from an open space that once had taken in the whole corner lot. Now this area was limited to a yard in front of a one-and-a-half story cottage, wedged between stores and shops. Stores occupied the east third of the property and faced Harrison Street; they backed against the house, which once had stood alone amid trees. The trees had long since gone. West of the house ran a walk and

beyond that the whole west side of the property was occupied by a long, one-story wooden building — my father's wagon works. Here he made the Davenport farm wagon, and occasionally a surrey with the fringe on top, but his principal output was heavy vehicles.

My father, Hans Hansen, was born in Slagelse, Denmark, in 1836. He tried to enlist as a drummer boy in the troubles of 1848, but was turned back because of his youth. Apprenticed to a wagon-maker, he learned the trade and served his time as a journeyman, moving from town to town getting experience, and having his papers properly endorsed by the authorities at each stop. In 1856 he reached Montreal in a schooner after a seven-week voyage. After a short stay there he came to Davenport. I never asked why, but suppose he was influenced by associates. His first partners in wagonmaking were named Saeger and Schultz. When I was born my father had been established at Third and Harrison streets for years and his partners were dead.

The house was a large clapboard cottage that had a wide front porch with square pillars and a sloping roof with dormers above the porch. In front of its west windows stood pots of geraniums and fuschias, popular in every household. Although I lived in this house only the first eight years of my life, I carry such a vivid impression of the locale that I can recall the whole terrain.

To this small boy the most interesting part was the shop, built in the form of an ell. Fronting the street was the smithy; here two men worked at a glowing forge, pounding redhot tires into shape on iron anvils and fitting hub caps over solid iron cones. I recall how hot tires were fitted to the hickory wheels, and how the smoke flared up when they touched the wood, and how anxiously my father watched the proceedings to make certain the product would be sound and durable.

Next after the forge came the carpenter shop where the wagons were put together, and where I liked to play in the long curling shavings. Beyond the carpenter shop came the paint shop, and here painters applied bright green paint to the wagon box, while the wheels received vermilion, and the whole was highly varnished.

All this was manual craftsmanship; everything was done by hand, and before a wagon was turned over to the buyer, my father inspected every plank and often tightened the bolts. In later years I asked him what such a wagon cost. "A plain wagon sold for \$60 to \$100," he said, "and for more money the farmer received extra sideboards, stronger brakes, and so on." On a number of occasions, as we walked along the street together many years later, we would see a heavy-duty wagon, drawn by draft horses and devoid of every vestige of paint, and my father would say: "There goes one of my wagons." He built wag-

ons to last a lifetime, for the theory that replacement creates sales had not yet become current in America.

Years later I happened to be standing with my father at the northeast corner of Third and Harrison streets, waiting for a streetcar to take us "up the hill." Father was staring at the opposite corner and with a smile he said: "It looks different now." I had not recalled for a long time that on the corner opposite once stood the house in which I was born, and adjoining it, father's wagonshop and smithy. Now a one-story structure of stores, uniform in appearance, covered almost half a block. "It's all gone," said my father, "except this."

He pointed overhead. There, attached to steel braces but standing free of the building was an immense wooden rifle, one story tall, its barrel pointing upward like a lightning rod, and luminous with silver paint. It was an example of the advertising symbols that America used so plentifully at the time, and it represented Emil Berg's sporting goods business. "That gun," said father, "was made right across the street, in my shop."

The first brick paving was laid on Third Street before I had entered school. I remember watching the operation from this Harrison Street house. The basic foundation was of cinders, packed down by the steam roller, which we children welcomed with feelings of apprehension and delight.

Then came a layer of brick, laid flat, with a cover of sand above and below. On top of the smooth sand came the heavier paving brick, laid edgewise, with the narrow surface on top. Streets were a foot or more below sidewalk level and called for metal ramps from the curbs at the street corners. These ramps were often broken when heavy wagons rolled over them. They were replaced by metal stoops.

The sidewalks at our corner were of brick, but wood was permitted for a long time in the residential districts. The first concrete sidewalks seemed most attractive, for they were laid with a smooth, polished surface, but so many people slipped on them in wet weather that the Board of Public Works ordered contractors to provide rough surfaces.

Any reference to homely customs of the past shows that they have changed for the better. In the horse-drawn days a hitching post was considered a necessity. The better posts were made of iron; others of wood. Some saloons had long hitching racks, where the farmer could tie his horses. Often horses that had been standing there for hours could be seen pawing holes in the pavement in their restless desire to be off to the home barn. In time teamsters learned that it was simpler to attach a heavy iron weight by a strap to the horse's bit, and posts disappeared.

My father once drew my attention to the steeple

lights that were still in use in Davenport. These were tall metal frames like those of windmills, on which were hung a number of arc lights. The light was diffused over a neighborhood like pale moonlight. They were found impractical. Arc lights were then hung over the intersections of streets, and every morning a man cleaned dead insects out of the bowl and replaced the carbon sticks. Outside the business district he simply threw the used carbons into the street, where wagons ground them into the dirt. Sidewalks were not much cleaner because spitting was general, abetted by the habit of chewing tobacco. The walls of warehouses and grain elevators along the Rock Island tracks advertised Battle Axe, Navy Cut Plug, and similar "chews," before cigarette smoking displaced them.

My father sold his plant to Henning Frank about 1890. One of the last apprentices to work for him was a young German named Hein who, reversing the usual routine, returned to his homeland and opened his own shop there. As in Europe, the apprentice lived in the master's house in Davenport; thus my parents became well acquainted with Hein and kept up a correspondence with him in subsequent years. They did not live to learn the final chapter in Hein's career, which I heard about in an odd way. In the 1930's a German painter was working in my house in Mount Vernon, N. Y., and in asking whence he had

come I found that he had known Hein. The painter told me that during a political riot a stone flung into a crowd had crushed Hein's skull and killed him.

HARRY HANSEN

Households of the 1890's

The household economy of my boyhood was more self-contained than its counterpart is today. Thrift and frugality were generally observed; there was little incentive to compete in new decorations and furniture, and even families that kept horses and carriages lived within their means. The attitude of my people toward debt was typical of their generation. Unless credit was needed to run a business, buy a house or a farm, money was not borrowed. They would not have tolerated buying furniture or other household goods on time. You paid for what you could afford and did not pledge your future earnings. If you did not have the money in hand, you waited until the amount needed had been saved. Because this trait was general, Davenport banks were particularly strong in the savings departments.

Arrivals from Europe, addicted to bargaining, were confronted by the sales policies of Davenport stores, which warned: "All goods plainly marked," and, "One price to all." However, merchants often gave discounts for purchases in quantity for cash. My mother, who was a tireless knitter, always bought her Clark's O.N.T. thread by boxes of one-dozen spools and thereby made

a saving that at the end of a year accounted for several extra boxes. My father's advice was: "Discount all bills and do not endorse notes." The number of endorsers who had been called on to make good their pledges was large, for the claims of friendship, and especially of lodge brotherhood, often overcame caution. Reckless spenders wasted their earnings in saloons. There must have been many, for I often heard commiseration for harassed housewives whose husbands "drank."

The advantage of "having money in the bank" led many Davenport citizens of German birth to make at least one journey to the Fatherland to see the old folks. Although they relived incidents of this voyage the rest of their lives, they often returned critical of what they had experienced and "glad to be back."

We made the customary voyage to Europe when I was 6, and I was able to brag to my playmates that in Copenhagen I had caught a glimpse of the Danish king and the German kaiser as they were driven past at great speed in a carriage drawn by black horses. My mother, Christine Jochims, was a native of Holstein. Her father, who had studied jurisprudence at Göttingen and had known the brothers Grimm, Bismarck, and the elder Keyserling, had held provincial offices under the Danish crown and then supported the Schleswig-Holstein liberation movement, which

collapsed. My mother had come in a big shift of her relatives and neighbors to Davenport and Scott County after the Franco-Prussian War. Today my office windows overlook New York's lower bay, and I often think of the apprehension and hope with which she and her associates arrived at Castle Garden, on the lower end of Manhattan Island.

My father's house had been furnished in mid-Victorian days, and there was no incentive to change the walnut tables, beds and chairs, and the tall, narrow mirror that rested on a marble console between the front windows of the parlor. There was a black, horse-hair settee, but the round table in front of it practically deterred anyone from sitting there. Steel engravings framed in black lacquer with a gold inner edge lingered with us for decades. With youthful enthusiasm for change I managed in time to introduce several pieces of golden oak, and to my later distress the horse-hair settee, which was as good as new, was disposed of before its future distinction was suspected. One prized article of furniture was the cherry wardrobe, in which suits and dresses were carefully preserved, since closets were not built into the older houses.

Domestic help came from farm girls who remained several years and then went back home to be married. Room and meals were important parts of their fees, for the wages were small.

Many a married woman carried a heavy load of housework, yet found time to go calling an afternoon or two a week. She was often the cook, and since canned goods were unavailable, she prepared all dishes from fresh products. Although the ice man daily exchanged a chunk of ice for a ticket, the icebox held far fewer objects than it does today. There was at hand in the shops a tremendous supply of fresh meats and garden truck at little cost.

Juicy steaks were plentiful, and every dinner, served at noon, had a substantial meat course. White and graham bread was baked in the kitchen oven, and pie was such a daily dish that I long thought dessert meant pie. I never have been able to recapture the flavor of lemon pies my mother baked, simply because she made the extract from the lemon rind, another household occupation long since displaced.

Before coffee was sold in packages my mother bought coffee beans green and roasted them in the oven, and I ground them in our handmill. She would not patronize the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, the first chain store to reach Davenport. This had a blazing red front and huge bins of tea and coffee in red with gold trimmings, but my mother distrusted its products because it gave away dishes. Any merchant who gave premiums, she argued, must make up the cost by cheapening the product. A friend served coffee that had for

me the attraction of the unfamiliar; my mother deprecated it as made with chicory which, she said, was a substitute used to make the coffee last longer.

Our economy was replete with specialists. The butter man came every two weeks with a huge chunk of butter, and collected 20 cents a pound in summer and 25 cents a pound in winter. The market price was often lower, but the quality justified the outlay. The milkman dashed in daily with his big milk can, measured a quart into our pitcher, and then slapped in a small dividend, which every housewife expected. Once a week a baker came with a large basket of sweet-smelling fresh rolls, from which we made a careful selection. The most specialized of all these vanished individuals was the mustard man. For a dime he filled a tumbler with dark, German mustard. He came only at long intervals, for he covered a large part of Davenport in his daily walks. Today I look back on this frugal, homely period as a most wholesome one. As a boy I rarely had pennies to spend, yet lacked nothing.

The lumber room of the attic was always an interesting spot for me. Some of the objects that stirred my curiosity were commonplace to my elders; they included a carpetbag, a folding carpet chair, and skates made of wood with iron runners that curved forward to an acorn-tip. My people considered them outmoded trappings and eventu-

ally disposed of them; today such objects appear in antique shops. There in the attic also reposed a long oblong box, locked, in which rested my father's rifle. Carefully oiled and placed in shavings, it was a relic of the days when my father, as a young marksman, used it on Sundays at target shooting.

He had helped establish the Davenport *Schuetzen Verein* and plan Schuetzen Park. For a number of decades after the Civil War this place was the resort of marksmen. Once he had become king in an annual tournament. By the time I was born his interest had subsided, but he treasured the rifle and preserved it. It came into my hands at his death. A beautiful piece, it operated with percussion cap, powder and ball, and was heavy to lift. I also have the powder horns and bullet mold that the marksmen used, and the little brown handbag in which they carried these objects. All these trappings were once as fashionable as the golf outfits men have today.

My father told me that on Sunday mornings the society would collect its members by marching a brass band down the principal streets west of Main Street, and then take streetcars at Turner Hall. The members wore grey coats trimmed with green lapels, typical of foresters abroad. Father's coat hung for years in his wardrobe. One day an actor named Bartels, who appeared with the German stock company in Turner Grand Opera

House, expressed a wish to use the coat as a costume. After that we often saw him stalk the stage in father's coat and felt a special relation to the theater.

HARRY HANSEN

Brass Bands and Parades

In my boyhood brass bands and parades were indispensable to American life. Political rallies, lodge events, conventions, civic affairs, and picnics called for marching through the streets. My home in the heart of town may have had something to do with the spell parades cast upon me. My ears rang with band music; I knew all the marches and discussed them knowingly with other fans when new compositions appeared.

The first performance of a new march was a great occasion, for these were the days of John Philip Sousa, Patrick Gilmore, and Arthur Pryor. I recall a Sunday morning when I was standing at the corner of Third and Scott streets with a group of youngsters waiting for a streetcar to take us to a picnic at Schuetzen Park. Petersen's Band, speeding our departure, played a brisk new march, and I asked Henry Sontag what it was. "It's Sousa's *King Cotton*," he said, "and it's a dandy."

Bands did a lot of marching during political campaigns. The intensity with which party members yelled for their candidates at rallies week after week remains vividly in my memory. In the evening the streets of Davenport were bright with torchlight parades.

These had become popular in the days of Martin Van Buren and survived until the 20th century. Men carrying torches with a large reservoir of kerosene could send up a big flare at the command: "Now then, Sambo, blow your flambeau!" I find it hard to believe that any political battle can be as bitter as that waged to defeat William Jennings Bryan in 1896. The Republicans lined up all factory employees. Democratic friends of ours who worked in a planing mill in Rock Island were ordered to carry torches in Republican parades or quit their jobs.

Conspicuous among marchers on patriotic days were members of the G. A. R., the Civil War veterans. They had adopted a civilian uniform of blue cloth, usually double-breasted, and wore wide-brimmed hats of blue felt with a gold cord and the letters GAR in a gold wreath at the front. Some wore their blue suits every day, but they did not always wear the insignia on the hat. The veterans were present at all patriotic celebrations and invariably spoke in public on the Fourth of July and similar holidays.

A popular method of orators was to call out the names of famous battles and ask those who had fought in them to raise their hands. "How many here marched with Sherman to the sea?" It was an effective method of what is now called audience-participation. But when these veterans addressed a schoolroom, which they usually did

before Decoration Day, they rambled on about military matters that were quite confusing to children. The first general I ever saw was Addison H. Sanders of Davenport, known to his cronies as Add, and he was a great surprise. He was a runt of a man, with a long white beard, and looked like one of the seven dwarfs.

Jacob Strasser was the principal band leader in Davenport in my father's day, and his name still clung to the organization directed by Professor C. Frederick Toenniges. Albert Petersen and Ernst Otto organized bands, and in my high school years I sometimes accompanied Petersen's Band to Black Hawk's Watch Tower and helped in the box office. Later on, Ellery's Band brought unwelcome competition to Davenport. Channing Ellery was a business man who recruited a band among Italian musicians and employed the fiery Guiseppe Creatore as conductor. Creatore would work himself into an acrobatic frenzy in the finale of selections from *Carmen* and *Il Trovatore*. The Davenport bandleaders, who conducted with dignity, were contemptuous of Creatore's exhibitionism and resented Ellery's intrusion into a field so poorly paid that many musicians had to pursue a secondary occupation, such as cigar-making. Ellery's Band was never a financial success, but Creatore rounded out a career in Chicago and New York.

My parents enjoyed attending dances when I

was a little boy and invariably took me with them. Dances were called balls. There were also masked balls, or masquerades, which we attended as spectators. The best were given by the Thalia Society and the *Turngemeinde*. I was never bored at dances, for the moment we arrived I seated myself behind the violinists and remained there entranced the rest of the evening. My favorite violinist was Henry Sindt, who became my first violin instructor. Always a part of the orchestra at these affairs was a broad-shouldered, friendly man named Thiess Herzog, who played the bass fiddle. When Harry W. Phillips became mayor of Davenport about ten years later he astonished everybody, and especially the musicians, by naming Herzog chief of police.

Until the First World War a dance orchestra relied chiefly on strings to carry a clear melody. It comprised first and second violins, bass fiddle, cornet, and woodwinds. Such a group did not use a piano. Drums and traps came into use later, as did the saxophone. Waltzes, strongly influenced by Waldteufel and Johann Strauss, made much use of thirds. My parents danced the polka, rhinelaender, and schottische, all of which were displaced by the two-step. *El Capitan* and *Georgia Camp Meeting* were the most popular two-steps of my boyhood; the latter belonged to the cake-walk series that brought in syncopation, and ragtime dominated popular tunes for two dec-

ades. Among dances that were played endlessly were *Creole Belles*, *Grasshoppers' Parade*, the *Zenda* waltzes, *Loin du Bal*, and *After the Ball*.

My father, who allowed himself to be drafted for all sorts of tasks that entailed work and little credit, was treasurer of the Columbus Day celebration of October 11, 1892. This brought close to home the significance of the occasion. It is difficult to convey the earnestness with which all America observed the 400th anniversary of Columbus' arrival on San Salvador; in a way it was evidence of the pride Americans felt in the growth of their country. I recall my distress when my father reported that Columbus' ship would not carry a full set of sails in the parade because their height would interfere with trolley wires. When completed the ship bore no resemblance to the *Santa Maria* of our schoolbooks; it was like a long fishing schooner with three dwarfed masts. The school children paraded through the streets in honor of Columbus and massed on the Court House grounds singing patriotic songs, of which *America* was then considered our national anthem.

Although the anniversary was observed nationally in 1892, other celebrations took place in 1893 and were spurred by the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, which lasted over six months. For this event school children prepared exercises in penmanship, all of which were carefully bound up and sent to the Fair for exhibition.

We worked diligently to turn out clean pages of script. If this effort was a device to spread news of the Fair, it also served to give children a part in this national enterprise. I used to wonder in what nook of that fairyland, the White City, our exercises were being displayed. My father, who, like most Davenport adults, took in the Fair, reported that he had been unable to find them, but he returned with so many souvenirs that I was easily comforted.

Practically all the men who came to our house wore some kind of emblem in their coat lapels or on their large gold watch chains. They were, I learned, members of the Knights of Pythias, Odd Fellows, Woodmen, and other fraternal orders. Now and then I heard about picturesque rituals in which a man who performed humdrum duties by day, such as selling groceries, was able to put on the fantastic robes of a mythical potentate at night. Most of the organizations were insurance devices, with dues acting as premiums. The Masons had no insurance scheme.

My father was a Mason and also treasurer of a lodge of the Ancient Order of United Workmen. As such he was often consulted by men who arrived carrying books and letter boxes. Soon I became aware, by their earnest tones, that a crisis was impending. It seemed that when the lodge was young, members were easily acquired and benefits were promptly paid. But as the lodge

grew older, it began to lose a disproportionate number of members by death, and benefits could not be paid without special assessments. The recruiting plan was faulty, and before it was remedied some of the older organizations failed. My father eventually resigned, glad to have been of help to his associates and thankful that he had protected his family in its growing years.

HARRY HANSEN

A Boy's Horizon Widens

From the cottage beside the shop we moved to a brick dwelling that stood near the southeast corner of Third and Ripley streets. The actual corner, which we sold later to Schricker & Rodler, was our front yard, and here my father permitted the Turner Grand Opera House to erect two narrow billboards. This was to have a stimulating influence on my education, for with the billboards went a pair of tickets to every performance advertised thereon. Obviously I did not get to see all the plays that the crowded "road" of those days offered, but I saw enough to whet my appetite for the theater. One of the actors on tour was the German tragedian, Emil von der Osten, in repertory. His *Othello* made me eager to learn more about Shakespeare. A friend thereupon procured for me a copy of the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare*, issued in pamphlet form by the Howe sewing machine concern for advertising purposes. I read and reread the stories, and after that the plays were familiar friends.

My half-brother, Anthony, who was already in business in the East when I was born, had been dramatic correspondent for the *Chicago World*, a weekly medium of theatrical news. His files and

numerous playbills from Davenport and Rock Island theaters were in the house, and fed my imagination. Represented in these playbills were Edwin Booth, Barrett, Jefferson, Januschek, McCullough, Parsloe, Warde, Clara Morris, Fay Templeton, the minstrel troupes of Haverly, Primrose, Barlow, and West, and numerous other top-rank performers, for no actor could afford to ignore one-night stands. How well the stars profited from performing in these two cities is not in the record. I recall that in one review my brother complained that the star had brought so much scenery of his own that the public did not get to see the scenery newly painted for the Burtis Opera House. I have long since regretted the loss of the files of the *Chicago World*, which went the way of all magazines.

Turner Hall, at Third and Scott streets, was owned by the Davenport *Turngemeinde*, the most influential organization west of Main Street before the First World War. The term community center was not yet in use, but that is exactly what Turner Hall was. When I was a lad running about its corridors Henry Vollmer, former mayor and later representative in Congress, was its presiding officer, Theodore Rudolf Reese had charge of its musical events, and Wilhelm Reuter was its highly competent director of physical culture, head of its *Turn Schule*. I attended its gymnasium classes for years and was thrilled to sing in chor-

uses under Theo. Rud. Reese, as he always signed himself. *Wenn die Schwalben Heimwärts Zieh'n* was a great standby.

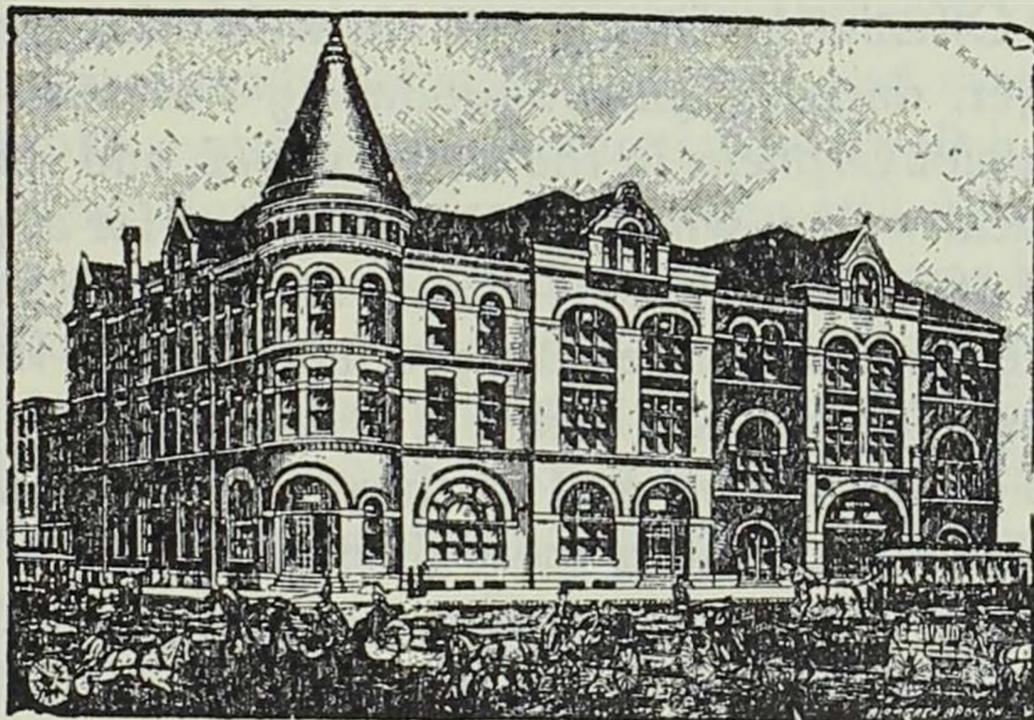
Twice a year gymnasium classes gave a program of exhibitions that were a treat to the young participants. The exercises were opened by all classes marching down the main aisle to the stage, led by Reuter escorting the littlest girl. The program proceeded from calisthenics by the youngest pupils to Indian Club swinging, drills with wands, and feats of strength by the older men. The admission fee was always 10 cents. The exhibitions, prepared long in advance, created a healthy spirit of cooperation and a desire to excel.

Reese conducted the massed choruses of the numerous singing societies. He was also a composer, and his operetta, *Sylvester*, was produced at the Turner Grand. Reese and Reuter were also responsible for such productions as *Snow White*, which had several revivals. For my part as a courtier I had a mustache glued on my face by none other than the talented Gustav Donald, himself a fine amateur actor, who served as makeup man. The star was Martha Reis, a young woman of poise and charm, with whom we all fell in love.

The German Theater, which had flourished in Davenport in the 1870-1880 decade and then lapsed, was revived in the early 1900's by Fritz Singer, a highly gifted actor from Vienna. Performances took place on Sunday evenings, and as

Davenport Turner Hall

DAVENPORT TURNER HALL CLUB, Lessees



Annexations

TURNER GRAND OPERA HOUSE—To rent to first-class attractions (best Sunday night stand in the state).

RESTAURANT—With private dining rooms (bill of fare, everything the market affords).

SALOON—Stocked with the choicest brands of wines, liquors, beers and cigars. Billiard Parlors attached.

BOWLING ALLEYS—The largest in the city.

Also private halls for dancing, entertainments, wedding parties, etc. Courteous waiters and everything modern.

Otto H. Lahrman, Mngr.

Third Street, S. W. Cor. Scott
Telephone No. 330

DAVENPORT, IOWA

Ad in *Stone's Davenport City Directory, 1896-97*

we had season tickets I attended with my mother. Thus I became familiar with a repertory of plays and operettas, some trivial, some pretentious, by authors as diverse as Birsch-Pfeiffer, Kadelburg, and Offenbach. Singer and his wife, Margarethe Singer, dared mightily, producing *Preciosa*, *Fra Diavolo*, *Orpheus in the Underworld*, and similar musical works, which must have called for a great deal of rehearsing, since many of the actors were home-trained. Singer also produced *At the White Horse Tavern* long before it became a great success on Broadway, and its shower of rain pleased the young spectators more than did the plot.

In my teens I never missed the annual visit to the Turner Grand Opera House of the Van Dyke & Eaton stock company. Of its repertory I recall only the Civil War play, *Linwood*, and the serpentine dance that a hefty female gave between acts. An aura of something forbidden lingers in my recollections of the dance, which we adolescents considered too daring to be mentioned before girls. Obviously it was only a mild ballet number. Turner Grand also was the stage for amateur theatricals. In one of the best Realff Ottesen was an exceptionally able leading man, and for a time his friends expected him to adopt the stage. But the law won him; had he taken up acting he would have been a leader in today's wonderful world of entertainment. Another friend, Otto Rieck, who took part in plays with me when

we were still children, took up acting under the name of Sidney Morris and made a success that enabled him to retire over a dozen years ago.

Turner Hall had been established as a center of German-American activities, but when I knew it, it was already strongly bilingual, and most of its public events were conducted in English. In the West End the older generation still adhered to German in the *Claus Groth Gilde*, named for the Holstein folk poet, which conducted its meetings in *Plattdeutsch*. It met in the Claus Groth Hall, a huge wooden building at Third and Taylor streets, on a site now occupied by Friendly House.

For children the annual "bird-shooting" in Schuetzen Park was a tremendous experience. This originated in the German fete, *Vogelschiessen*, in which youngsters contested for prizes by shooting wooden bullets with a cross-bow at a wooden bird high on a stake. There were special prizes for bringing down wings, beak, and tail, and the lad who brought down the body was proclaimed king. Every annual fete had a parade led by a marshal and captains, all of whom wore side arms. The marshal sat on a horse and wore a cavalry sword that nearly weighed him down. For a number of years this job was captured by Hilmar Plath, by persuading a majority of the boys to vote for him a few days before the festival. One year Roy Oelkers, later a justice of the peace

in Davenport, tried to unseat Plath, but to no avail — Plath proved the better politician.

When I was a schoolboy the celluloid button craze swept the country and made collectors of everyone. The little picture buttons of candidates for office, passed around during the election campaigns today, survive from that time. There were buttons illustrating every possible subject, in series: birds, beasts, flowers, heroes, national flags, presidents, naval vessels. There were buttons with slogans, mottoes, and slang phrases, such as "If you love me grin," "I'm as happy as a clam at high tide," "Go 'way back and sit down," "Ladies' Man," and — as part of the Spanish-American War — "Remember the Maine." Buttons came as premiums with packages of chewing gum. Swapping was a major sport. It was not uncommon to see boys with rows of buttons pinned up and down their coats and around their caps. Whitehead & Hoag were the chief button makers.

Although the boys I knew did not smoke, they did collect cigarette pictures, small reproductions of photographs of actresses that came with the packages. The most popular pictures were poses in tights, and older smokers gladly passed on to me pictures of actresses fully attired. A teacher, seeing my cards, asked to inspect them. She found one of a ballet dancer with a flaring skirt and remarked: "Would you care to see your mother like that?" and advised me to destroy it. I saw

nothing reprehensible in the picture and did not follow her advice, which was typical of the inhibitions of that time.

During World's Fair days we moved to a house on Seventh Street, on the hill, and a whole new world opened to the boy who had grown up in the downtown world of brick. Now there were wide lots to play on and lawns to be mowed. Actually we had transported our household goods only five blocks, but the ascent from the river level to land several hundred feet higher made the change seem tremendous. Even today, when I put in a full hour twice a day merely traveling between home and office, I think of our Davenport distances as far greater than they really were.

Among the big events on the hill was the celebration of Independence Day. We boys — and girls — set off firecrackers from early morn till late at night, and parental admonitions to desist were looked on as a lapse of patriotism. The energetic efforts of Henry Hubers, Karl Schmidt, Alfred Rieck, Carl Voss, Walter Rohwedder, and myself made a bedlam of July 4 and even set fire to wooden culverts. It was the custom of the family of Charles N. Voss to serve ice-cream to guests after the fireworks, and we were invariably lingering near the kitchen when the time for distribution came.

My new home on the hill was in a different school district, but I asked and readily obtained

permission to continue attending No. 8 at Fourth and Ripley streets. For this reason I never acquired a bicycle, for I would have had to push it up a steep hill most of the way home. Practically every other boy had one, and during my high school years boys who lived in the West End were able to ride home and back to the high school on Rock Island Street during the noon hour. Talk about "makes" was all-absorbing. Boys who enjoyed speeding favored bikes with large gears, and handle-bars so low that the torso was practically horizontal, giving power to the legs for pedal-pushing. More dignified persons, like the high school principal, W. D. Wells, rode with erect carriage and cared nothing about speed. The chainless, which had a transmission rod, came in at this time and was the subject of much argument by racers. None of us imagined the bicycle would ever lose its great popularity; it was "too useful."

Like many of the boys I knew I had rewarding Sunday School experiences, but they did not ripen into affiliation with any church. My parents were Lutherans, and my mother read me Bible stories at an early age. She had great compassion for the unfortunate, and when a Lutheran clergyman refused to officiate at the burial of a suicide, she ended her attendance. As a little fellow I was taken by other children to the Sunday School of the First Presbyterian Church, where Bible stories

were told with verbal literalness. When I asked for plausible explanations, I was told I must accept them as the word of God. This left me unsatisfied.

When we moved up the hill most of the children there attended the First Unitarian Sunday School and invited me to go with them. In this hospitable atmosphere I found no dogmas to puzzle me. The minister, Arthur M. Judy, was a scholarly New Englander, who stimulated my interest in Emerson, Whittier, Channing, and his favorite poet, Robert Browning. The teacher of my class, John Hornby, was a public school principal and an admirable leader of the young. I drew two books a week from the library. Later I joined in debates and presided at meetings of the young people's society on Sunday evenings. In this chair it was once my duty to introduce a young Harvard graduate named John Haynes Holmes, who has become one of New York's great liberal preachers.

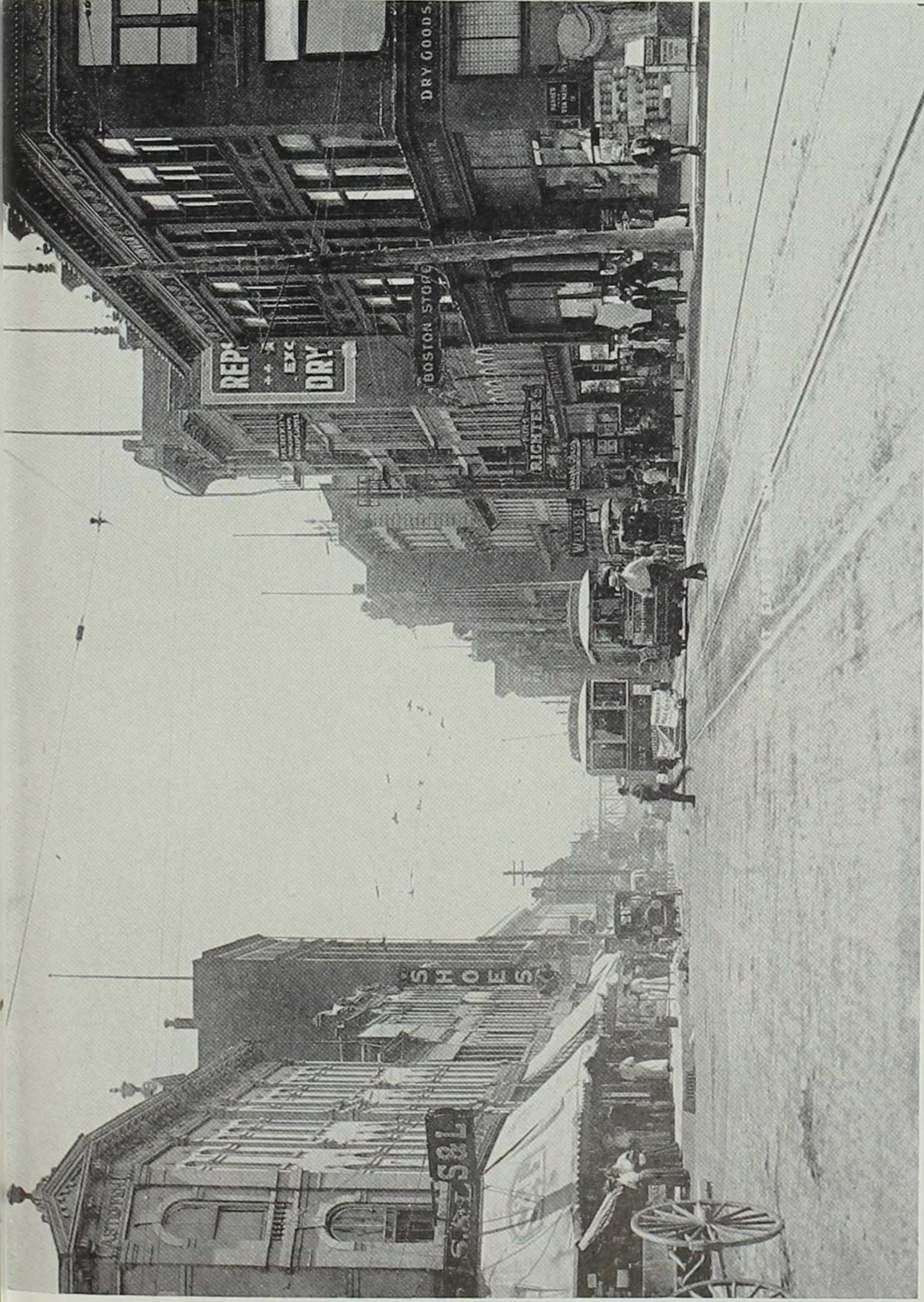
The Sunday Evening Guild had as members young people of all faiths, including several Episcopalians, who invited me to join the choir of Grace Cathedral. This became a memorable experience. Wallace Moody was leader of the choir, and I was tremendously impressed because he was composing light operas. Unfortunately none was ever produced. He was succeeded by Miss Louise St. John Westervelt, a most capable coach. The first two rows of pews were occupied by the

girls of St. Katharine's School, and the older boys warned me that the girls watched the choir to see if we kept step. Consequently, when I marched in the processional for the first time, my heart beat against my ribs and I dared not look right or left. But I stepped bravely forward and reached the choir stalls without a stumble.

I learned the fine *Te Deums* of Dudley Buck and other composers and heard Bishop Theodore Morrison preach on special days. I would ask the rector, Dr. Nassau S. Stephens, such a question as: "What is the meaning of the quick and the dead, Doctor?" and he would explain this patiently. The Bishop's son, Nevin Morrison, became a friend in those days. I have visited many churches in the old world, but in Grace Cathedral I came as near to yielding to the religious mystery as I ever did, and today my memory of it is of beauty and a lift to the spirit.

It is likely that I would have joined a church in these impressionable years had I been asked. But no one asked me, and I was too unsure of myself to apply. In college I studied the Bible under Shailer Mathews and Richard Green Moulton, and my inability to accept a dogmatic view of the universe became fixed.

HARRY HANSEN



Courtesy Davenport Public Museum

Second Street east from Harrison Street in Davenport in the early 1900's.



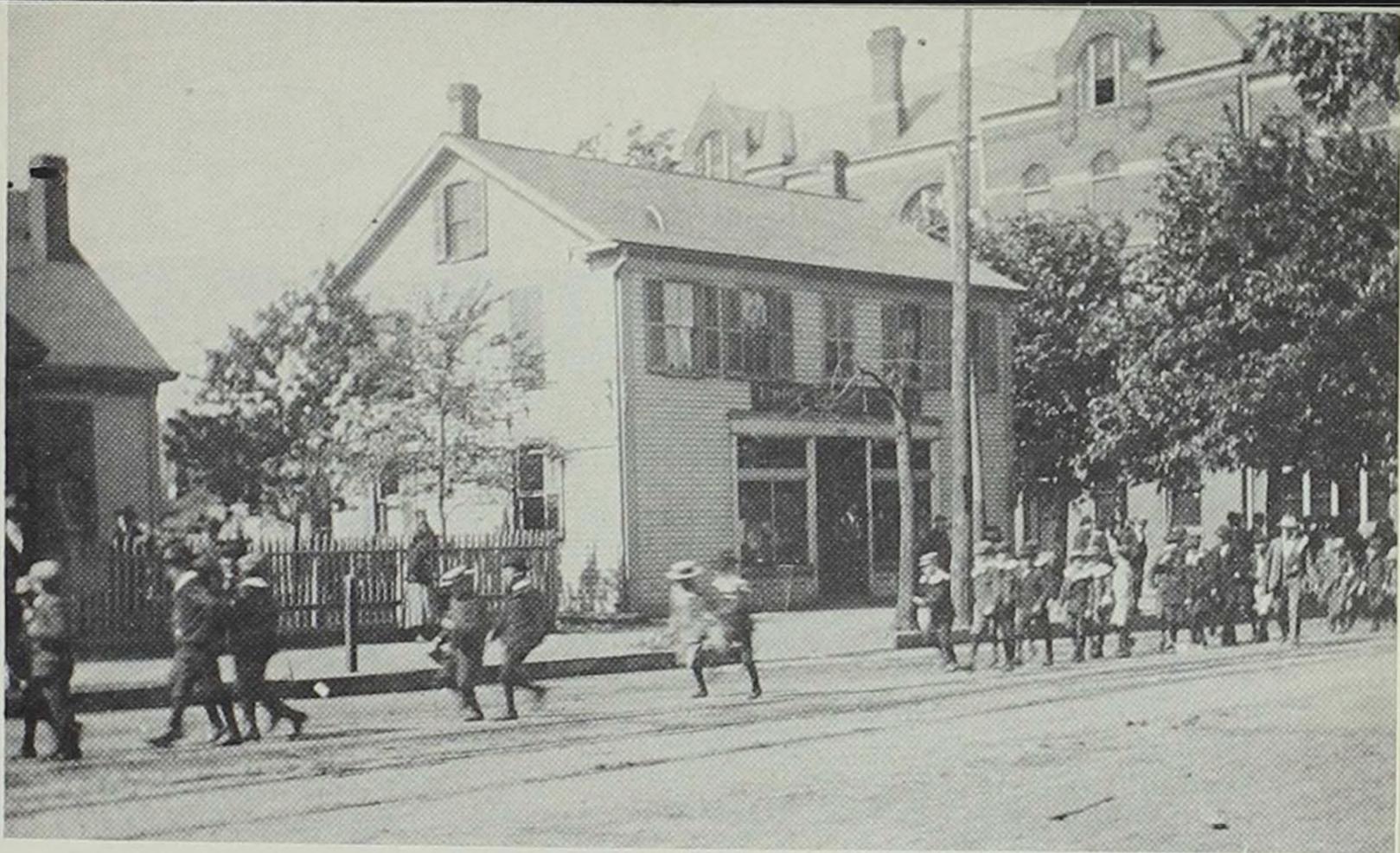
Courtesy Davenport Public Museum

ABOVE: Davenport's Columbus Day celebration of 1892.
"The school children paraded through the streets in honor of Columbus and massed on the Court House grounds singing patriotic songs. . . ."

BELOW: Strasser's Union Band.
"Jacob Strasser was the principal band leader in Davenport in my father's day, and his name still clung to the organization directed by Professor C. Frederick Toenniges."

Courtesy Davenport Public Museum



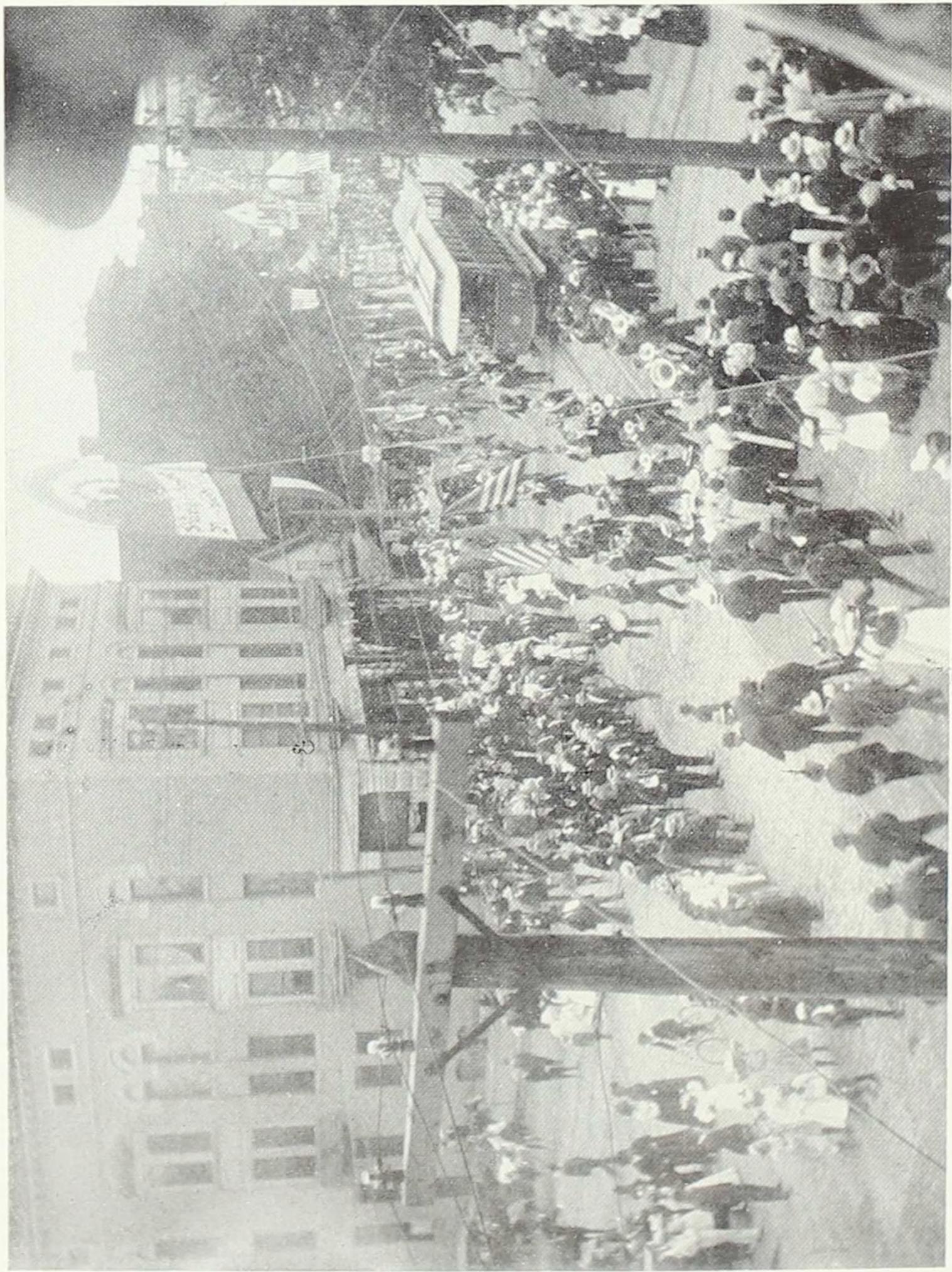


Courtesy Mary Strohhahn

These are believed to be pictures of Davenport youngsters on their way to the annual *Vogelschiessen* celebration sometime in the 1890's.
"For children the annual 'bird-shooting' in Schuetzen Park was a tremendous experience."

Courtesy Mary Strohhahn





Courtesy Mary Strohbehn

Spectators line the streets at the corner of Scott and Third to watch a parade during the eighteenth National Saengerfest held at Davenport in July, 1898.
"In my boyhood brass bands and parades were indispensable to American life."

Cultural Changes in Davenport

When I grew up in Davenport the city still had two well-defined cultural elements: the American, which derived from the westward movement of families from New England, New York, and Ohio, and the German, which represented immigrant groups that began coming before the Civil War and arrived in large numbers during the 1865-1890 period. The American-born were well established east of Brady Street and included some of the more affluent merchants and professional men; the later arrivals occupied the hill district west of Main Street, and the West End as far as Rockingham Road. There were still a few veterans of the German risings of 1848 and 1866 hobbling about; they must have been pretty venerable by the time I became old enough to hear about them. They were outnumbered by veterans of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, who had left their native shores immediately after the war, and who were followed by thousands of younger Germans who wished to avoid military service.

It is difficult today to comprehend the aversion many Germans of that time had to universal service, which Prussia had forced on the newly-as-

sembled empire. While much of the huge emigration was prompted by the desire to find a better living in America, the fear of losing two (later three) years out of a man's working life was an important incentive. Young men who fled to the United States before they could be called up sometimes faced a certain frustration when they became prosperous. For Germany made military service a condition of citizenship and for a long time refused to recognize naturalization in other countries as binding. When a German-born naturalized American voyaged to Germany to visit his aged parents, he was unmolested if he had completed his military service. But if he had never served, he was confronted by the local authorities, who asked him to report for military duty or leave the country within a number of hours. As a boy I heard of two Davenport citizens who were shown the gate when they visited their birthplace.

The veterans of 1870-1871 were in their twenties when they reached Davenport, and hence averaged a decade younger than the veterans of the Civil War, who held most of the government jobs. These Germans were known as *Krieger* (Warriors). The *Krieger Verein* was an organization of lively middle-aged men who marched in all the important parades, held an annual masked ball, and were vocal on all issues that touched their interests, particularly the tax on beer.

As a boy I was captivated by battles of long

ago and loved to hear veterans talk about them. I soon learned that men who had a part in them had little comprehension of the sweep of events described in schoolbooks. One of my favorites was a veteran of the Franco-Prussian War who lived in Walcott, and who, because of a relationship on my mother's side, was called Uncle John. John had served in the artillery at Worth, Spicheren, and Gravelotte. I used to prod him to talk about his battles, and he would tell me how he swabbed the gun barrel, lifted the round shot out of the caisson, and put cotton in his ears to deaden the shock of a volley. But when I asked him about the movement of armies he was mum. I read up on Gravelotte and went into a long discussion of how the armies maneuvered, and John nodded his head in cautious acquiescence. I realized later that his limited knowledge was typical of what the average soldier sees.

Many of these veterans were still alive in 1914. They suffered sentimentally when Germany went to war, but their sympathies were mixed. Few had a kind word for the Kaiser, whom they considered a blunderer. Their sons, who had no memories of foreign battles, fought courageously as American-born citizens. The second generation married freely with the sons and daughters of immigrants from other European countries, forgot the German they had heard in their fathers' homes, finding English sufficient for their needs.

Our Germans came chiefly from Schleswig-Holstein, where *Plattdeutsch* was the popular tongue. This they carried into their business life in Davenport. Nevertheless, polite German (*Hochdeutsch*) was used in proceedings of societies and on formal occasions, with the exception of meetings of the *Claus Groth Gilde*. Davenport also had citizens who had come from Bavaria, Saxony, and the Rheinland, and who spoke other dialects but understood *Platt*.

At times animated conversations would be carried on in West End stores by a customer speaking German and the storekeeper answering in *Platt*. It used to be said that a salesman could not expect to sell goods to farmers of Scott County unless he could talk the dialect. Although German is a highly inflected language, *Platt* is crude and borrows words from everywhere; in this it is like Pennsylvania Dutch. In Davenport men speaking English would occasionally use a word or phrase in *Platt* to make an amusing point, much as comedians today will drop into Yiddish.

I found *Platt* of use when I began to read Dutch and the Scandinavian languages. Thomas Mann was proficient in *Plattdeutsch*, but Hendrik van Loon was the only man with whom I ever talked it in the East. When later I traveled in Schleswig-Holstein, I found German was the formal language there as it had been in Davenport, and *Platt* was looked upon as a folk dialect and

ignored by many. Actually it is older than the German now in use, for it belongs to the Frisian group that has supplied important elements to the languages of northern Europe, including English.

With Davenport in mind, I have been able to observe how quickly and effectively Americanization is accomplished. My parents' generation lived conscious of its European background; mine was only partially so, whereas the next generation, now come to maturity, is quite oblivious to foreign beginnings. In my boyhood I became familiar with a great number of place-names abroad because my parents and their friends had a practice of identifying families of Davenport and Scott County by adding whence they had come. A farmer in Blue Grass would be from Heide; a man in Durant would be from Brunsbüttel; a West End grocer hailed from Hamburg; and so on. Thus my boyish mind became familiar with a whole foreign geography. This had an interesting result. When in Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark, I found various names of railroad stations quite familiar and often met at some milkstop a name buried deep in my memory, which now suddenly evoked recognition.

One of the major cultural advances of our time lies in the tremendous growth of musical appreciation and performance. The hours given to music in the Davenport public schools early in this century were devoted chiefly to singing. Instru-

mental lessons were given privately. Numerous girls thumped Chopin and Scharwenka at an upright piano, and many a lad like myself lugged a black varnished violin case.

The inspiring music of symphonies and concertos was heard rarely; orchestra leaders preferred overtures and selections from operas to hour-long symphonies. Walter Damrosch occasionally brought opera singers on tour; I did not dream that long after, when Doctor Damrosch was a gray patriarch with an unquenchable interest in musical education, I should often sit at luncheon table with him and hear him reminisce about those years. Paderewski played a piano recital at the Burtis Opera House, but made newspaper headlines because he used the Government drawbridge to turn his private railroad car around, so that he could sleep with his head toward the front of the train.

Will Heesch, a pupil of Albert Petersen, was a violin virtuoso whose name I fully expected to see on billboards, but he turned instead to manufacturing. Some of the other young friends who played the violin were Otto Witt, Otto Niemand, Carl Wiggers, Ernest Oberholtzer, Ella Phillips, and Walter Matthey. My instructor at that time was Conrad Friedrichsen, a true artist, with an earnest devotion to the classics, an unsatisfied desire to compose music, and an exasperated intolerance of shoddy performance. He would goad

CULTURAL CHANGES IN DAVENPORT 199

BURTIS OPERA HOUSE
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3rd

WM. A. BRADY'S Immense Musical
Comedy and Rapid-Fire Hit

Foxy Grandpa

Book by R. Melville Baker
Music by Jos. Hart

Direct From Its Six Months' Run in New York City
A STUNNING PRODUCTION

Swell Chorus—New Songs—Pretty
Girls—Catchy Music—Fetching Cos-
tumes—The Tickling Triumph of the
Times Rolling Fat with Fun—Thirty
People.

PRICES: 25c, 50c, 75c and \$1.00

BURTIS OPERA HOUSE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4th

PRE-EMINENTLY THE BEST
COMPANY ORGANIZED

JOSEPH, JR., AND WILLIAM W.

JEFFERSON

WITH THEIR ALL STAR CAST
IN THE BRILLIANT COMEDY ...

THE RIVALS

HANDSOMELY MOUNTED
BEAUTIFULLY COSTUMED

PRICES: 25c, 50c, 75c, \$1.00 and \$1.50
Carriages 10:45

BURTIS OPERA HOUSE
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5th

HENRY MILLER
... IN ...

The Taming
...of Helen

A MODERN COMEDY IN THREE ACTS
BY RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

PRICES: 25c, 50c, 75c, \$1.00 and \$1.50
Carriages 10:45 ... No Free List

Burtis Opera House, Saturday, Feb. 7
Matinee and Night

HENRY W. SAVAGE presents the Newest Musical
Comedy

**PRINCE
OF
PILSEN**

By Pixley and Luders, Authors of "King Dodo"

5 Months in Boston 3 Months in Chicago	100 in the Cast 60 Chorus Girls
---	------------------------------------

A Galaxy of Gorgeously Gowned Girls
Much Music and More Fun

Prices—Matinee 25c, 50c, 75c, \$1.00, \$1.50.
Night 50c, 75c, \$1.00, \$1.50.

Within a space of five days in February, 1903, patrons of the Burtis Opera House in Davenport were entertained by these four outstanding attractions. This was typical of the varied bill of fare offered in these years by the Burtis and other Davenport theaters.

me to practice harder by relating how well Walter Matthey played the *Souvenir de Haydn*. Later Carl Wiggers, Will Westphal, and I formed a violin trio and met at one another's houses in turn. We played Mozart, de Beriot, von Suppé, and other classic composers, but oddly enough, were not familiar with Bach.

We heard about Florizel, but never knew him. He was the gifted son of a Davenport family named Reuter, and when still a child was taken abroad to study the violin. He played one recital in Davenport when still in short pants; I do not recall that he ever came again. As Baron de Reuter he was living in Berlin when the last war closed; he had been given a title by that Queen of Roumania who wrote prose under the name of Carmen Sylva.

Davenport was visited regularly by touring opera companies, including the Aborn; the repertory included melodious popular operas, such as *Carmen*, *Chimes of Normandy*, and *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Grand opera in English came when Henry W. Savage sent a highly competent touring company to present *Il Trovatore* and *Aida* at the Burtis. But most of the musical performances were light opera and musical comedy, with Schumann-Heink in *Love's Lottery* and Anna Held in *The Little Duchess* as exceptional nights in my youthful experiences.

The first motion pictures that came to Daven-

port were, I believe, part of a program demonstrating them at the Burtis Opera House. They were in the form of what we now call a news reel, and consisted of half a dozen or more short subjects. This was repeated so frequently that I have a clear visual memory of the pictures. One depicted the arrival of fire wagons on a busy street, and as the crowd hurried up a boy with a bicycle, wearing a white sweater with a dark stripe across the shoulders, walked conspicuously in front of the camera. I used to wonder who he was. The final subject was the Empire State Express; as soon as it had passed by a group of young people ran on the tracks waving their hands. The pictures had unsteady, flickering light, and after each showing the rewind had to be completed before the next could be shown. I also saw an exhibition, about 1904, of Cinematoscope pictures in color of the coronation procession of Edward VII. The colors were quite realistic but may have been added by hand.

Within a few years the first commercial motion picture theater was installed in a store on Harrison Street above Third. Its equipment comprised a white curtain, picnic chairs, a piano, and the apparatus. The price was five cents, and the performance became "the nickel show." The manager made no money there, but I like to think he moved on to greater fortune with the industry. The most popular film of those early days was, of

course, *The Great Train Robbery*. On Saturday nights it was projected across Main Street to a wall of the brick structure that preceded the present Lane Building. It was shown free because slides advertising Davenport stores were inserted at intervals.

HARRY HANSEN

In the Steamboat Era

Since Davenport was a Mississippi River town, all the boys of my acquaintance enjoyed riding on steamboats. We went aboard for Sunday School picnics, which invariably wound up at Port Byron upriver or Linwood downstream. The wheezing stern-wheeler had a barge attached and an orchestra that played for dancing. On a few Sunday excursions I traveled as far as Clinton, then quite a voyage. There also were moonlight trips, but I was far too young for that romantic experience. Steamboating got into my bones, and as I wrote once, in an introduction for Ben Lucien Burman's *Steamboat Round the Bend*, I can still hear steamboat whistles in my sleep. When I grew older I made longer trips as a reporter. I loved to stand in the pilot house behind Captain Walter Blair and watch for the markers toward which he steered his craft, meanwhile taking in his rich fund of river lore. To me the panorama of the upper river, unfolding as the steamboat wove back and forth between its banks, was enchantment.

My insatiable curiosity led me, on several Saturday afternoons, to climb the steep stairs to the power room on the drawbridge of the Government

bridge. The engineers were friendly and explained the mechanism, which operated on a turntable. It was a great thrill to watch a raft go through and count the strings of logs that it propelled.

I used to visit the levee to talk with Captain Jim Osborn, the steamboat agent, whose office occupied a corner of a dingy warehouse. The big event was the semi-weekly arrival of a Diamond Jo liner, usually the *St. Paul* or the *Quincy*, sidewheelers that operated between St. Louis and St. Paul. They were many times the size of the slim packets that made the daily run to Clinton, or the *W. J. Young, Jr.*, which ran semi-weekly to Burlington. The shuffling Negro stevedores added picturesqueness to the river; they had an easy lope and a ready chuckle, and no one would have predicted their disappearance.

Once I was standing on the levee looking up at the promenade deck of a Diamond Jo steamer and listening to the music of a group of Negro players who performed with great gusto. Suddenly they burst into a rollicking song that made every spectator want to shout and prance and clap his hands. It was Metz's *Hot Time in the Old Town*, destined to become one of the country's most infectious tunes and to hang on for years and years.

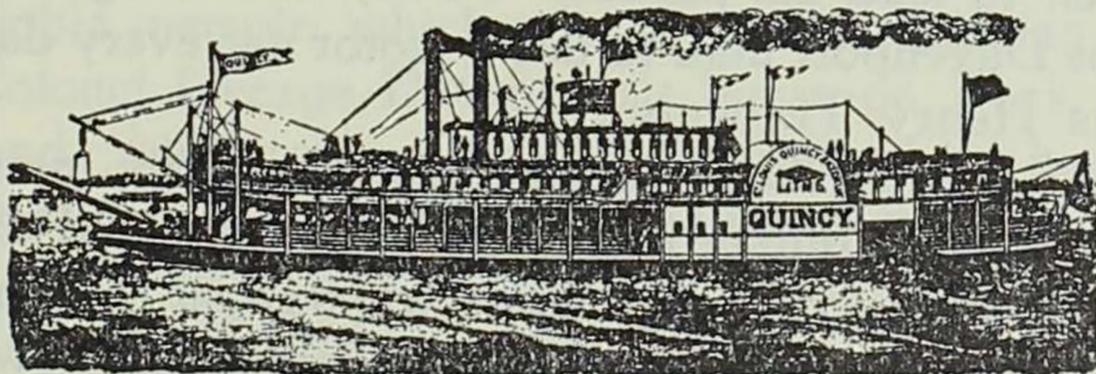
The calliope was not part of the steamboat noise when I was a small boy; I saw it only at

LISTEN

To what we say. You can
travel by the Old Reliable

DIAMOND JO LINE STEAMERS

Cheaper than Board at a First Class Summer Resort



PATRONS OF THE GREAT RIVER ROUTE

Secure all the Elegance and Comfort of a First-Class
Hotel while seeing the ever changing and Magnificent
Scenery of the Mississippi River.

THE STEAMERS of this line are provided with every known
Convenience for Safety, Comfort and Speed; are com-
manded by Able and Experienced Officers, and their Tables are
supplied with every Obtainable Luxury.

For Rates and Information apply to

JAMES OSBORN, Davenport, Iowa

or ISAAC P. LUSK, Gen'l Pass. and Freight Agt., St. Louis, Mo.

Ad in Stone's Davenport City Directory, 1898-99

the end of the circus parades, when the cry was: "Hold the horses!" But later one of the Streckfus boats installed a calliope, and Lee B. Grabbe, who played for dances and had a local reputation as a songsmith, operated it. I recall it as a horrendous contrivance of ear-splitting noises.

In a machine shop at the foot of Brady Street, a mechanic named Pugh was tinkering with a horseless carriage. It was a four-wheeled buggy, with an engine box attached. I never did see it run. I believe the first motor car to reach Davenport was a runabout used by Hi Henry, the minstrel, to lead his parade. To my knowledge the first Davenport man to use a motor car every day was Henry Techentin.

As a schoolboy I became tremendously interested in the Indian history of Davenport and the surrounding country. I was always eager to stand on a historic site. Camp McClellan, where Iowa soldiers had drilled prior to leaving for the Civil War, was then untouched woods, sometimes used as a picnic ground. I searched the terrain for relics of the past, and when, on one occasion, I picked an Indian arrowhead out of a brook, I was elated.

I recall my surprise at learning that my schoolmates not only did not know that the War of 1812 had reached our city, but refused to believe it. I never did get to investigate Credit Island, later Offerman's, where Major Zachary Taylor was

routed by a band of British and Indians on September 6, 1814, but I wandered over the island above East Moline where Lieutenant John Campbell's party was attacked, and tried to determine where he had beached his boat.

I read Black Hawk's story, but found it hard to visualize a conference with General Winfield Scott north of the Rock Island tracks at Perry Street, for Antoine Le Claire's house had not yet been reproduced. I used to talk with a collateral descendant of Le Claire, who had a law office in the Masonic Temple, and whose swarthy complexion was an Indian legacy. I also read the Goble memoir, which tells about the building of Colonel George Davenport's house on Rock Island. Although I often saw the ruins of the house from the decks of steamboats, I never stood beside it until after it had been restored. I also read Franc Wilkie's *Davenport Past and Present*, Edward Bonney's *Banditti of the Prairie*, and Ambrose C. Fulton's autobiography, *A Life's Voyage*, which Fulton gave me when he was over 90.

HARRY HANSEN

The World of Reading

From my earliest youth I have had my nose in a newspaper. The habit began before I entered school and has held me in subjection since. To my father's house came the *Leader*, a Democratic organ; *Der Demokrat*, the German daily published by the Lischer family and edited by the capable Dr. August Richter; the *Dannebrog*, a weekly that satisfied my father's mild nostalgia for his native land, and the Sunday issues of the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* of Chicago. Some of the topics discussed in these media left an indelible imprint on my memory. The *Staats-Zeitung* campaigned against the display of the American flag before schoolhouses as a needless extravagance. All the newspapers published accounts of the Holmes-Castle murders, and when, years later, I became acquainted in Chicago with the police captain who had worked on that celebrated case, I was able to keep pace with his reminiscences by recalling what I had read as a child.

A glimpse of what went on in Davenport before and during the Civil War came to me quite unexpectedly as a result of roaming around the Scott County Court House. My school was located across the street from the Court House.

Sometimes we boys would ascend the tall tower, which since has been removed. This tower did not have a steel skeleton but was built of reinforced brick. It had several flights of stairs inside and then a long ladder that led to the cupola. It was a harrowing ascent for there were only a few rays of light in the tower, but by keeping our eyes looking up and not down we reached the top.

Having conquered the tower, we next investigated the vaults, which contained files of old Davenport newspapers. These were kept locked, but Sheriff Edgar D. McArthur would give me the key, and I would go there to read them. These newspapers disclosed the bitter animosities that divided citizens during the Civil War. Davenport had some who, although not favoring the extension of slavery, resented the war and fought the draft. The newspapers published their names. This taught me what the school histories did not stress — that in every democratic community there are persons with views not welcome to the majority. By the time I read this history all trace of bitterness had vanished.

Any person who has reached maturity seems quite old to a schoolboy. His teachers carry so much authority that they seem even farther removed from him than other adults. But after passing adolescence he suddenly sees the barriers of the years fall away. I had this experience with several of my grade school teachers. After col-

lege I renewed acquaintance with them on a basis of mutual respect. Miss Anna Mittelbuscher, for instance, enrolled for courses at the University of Chicago when I was an undergraduate there. Another teacher told me that she was only 20 when I was 10, and asked whether I recalled how often she came to the classroom sleepy and listless, the result of dancing into the early morning hours. She was surprised to learn that I had observed no such derelictions, whereas I was surprised that one in such a position of authority actually had been gay and frivolous. I did recall two teachers who showed little interest in their pupils, and who left teaching to marry. Practically all, however, were devoted men and women, working harder for less than members of other professions, as they do everywhere.

I also recall, with respect, the principal, H. T. Bushnell, who taught us American history, and who came every day in his surrey, and J. B. Young, the superintendent of schools, who looked like Uncle Sam. The janitor, Paul Schmacher, found me a sympathetic listener when he recited his tribulations, and in return showed me the workings of the big steam boiler that heated the school.

The first library of which I was aware occupied an old-fashioned what-not in the corner of a schoolroom at old No. 8. I said to the teacher, Miss Alice Croul, that I knew a better way of arranging the books, and she, sensing my hunger,

appointed me librarian on the spot. I had a wonderful time lending books to my classmates and reading them in my spare time. Among them were *The Pathfinder* and *The Spy* of Cooper, *The Heir of Redclyffe* by Charlotte M. Yonge, *John Halifax, Gentleman* by Dinah Maria Craik, which drew tears from the girls, and tales by Hawthorne and Irving.

One day Kuno Struck, who was buying sectional bookcases and already had three shelves filled, came to school with a copy of *Tom Sawyer*. I was enchanted by the drawings and begged to be allowed to take it home, which Kuno granted. A wet snowstorm was raging; I hugged the book to my chest inside my coat as I faced the customary weather. When I reached home I saw with dismay that the covers had suffered water stains. These I tried hard to obliterate. I read the book three times before returning it; then I stammered my regrets that it had suffered in the storm. Kuno looked over the book, but said nothing. I know now what my feelings would have been in such a situation, but Kuno was a gentleman at every age.

At the 5-and-10 I found a copy of *Treasure Island* for 10 cents, and it led me to look for *Kidnaped* and other stories by Stevenson. The Davenport Public Library was located on the ground floor of a building at the southwest corner of Sixth and Brady streets. The second story had a dance floor where we held high school assemblies, and

where many of us learned dancing from Professor Frank Clendenen. While still in grammar school I put in Saturday reading bound volumes of the *Youths' Companion*, *St. Nicholas*, and more adult magazines in the library. Such stories as *Chris and the Wonderful Lamp*, which Sousa worked into a children's opera, and Brander Matthews' *Tom Paulding*, remained indelibly in my memory. Soon I was reaching for back numbers of *Scribner's*, *Harper's*, and *Century* and becoming acquainted with a society described by Henry James, Edith Wharton, William Dean Howells, Mrs. Burton Harrison, and George W. Cable.

I joined my schoolmates in debating the merits of Rudyard Kipling, whose vast popularity was being impaired because he had dared write an unhappy, but logical, ending to *The Light that Failed*. I approved the unhappy ending. Today an author who writes a happy ending must tremble at the bar of criticism. For a few months high school students published a magazine called *The Red and Blue*, of which Arthur D. Ficke and Ned Crossett were editors, and to which I, as a freshman, contributed some stories. How far we have moved from our beginnings! I write this in New York City; Ficke, poet and art connoisseur, sleeps in a dense wood off a country road in Columbia County, New York; Crossett, who inherited a vast lumber domain, died a few months ago in California.

Early associations are tremendously important to a growing boy, because they give him measures by which he sizes up his world. One of my earliest friends with a serious attitude was Carl J. Wiggers, now a leading authority on cardiovascular research. Carl's father was host of Wiggers' Hall (also known as Lahrmann's Hall) at the southeast corner of Second and Ripley streets. Its second floor had one of the oldest stages in Davenport. Carl and I played games on its ancient stage. Its front curtain was attached to a heavy wooden roller, known as a "barrell," and when operated rolled up from the floor.

Carl bought the *Strand* and I bought *Pearson's* every month, and we exchanged them and read A. Conan Doyle, Cutcliffe Hyne, Barry Pain, and other English authors. I bought the *Atlantic Monthly* now and then. When S. S. McClure was stirring up interest in *McClure's*, I was eager to read it, but my spare pennies from carrying papers did not reach that far. I had to choose between *Atlantic* and *McClure's*. Sometimes I managed both by imposing on the good nature of Fritz Wernentin, who ran a stationery store in Harrison Street. I would buy one magazine, read it overnight, and give it back for another the next day. I remember his kindness as typical of the friendliness that adults have for growing lads.

The youth who opened my eyes to wonderful reading was Charles Reining, whose good taste

in literature was unerring and contagious. He first handed me Ibsen's *Ghosts*, and when I was greatly affected by its dramatic power he fed me other volumes from his Ibsen shelf; then Schopenhauer and similar philosophers. When we got to Kant I bogged down; this did not deter Charley from patiently trying to clarify passages for me while driving over country roads of Scott County. I never met another friend who combined so well an interest in ideas with patience in describing them. I missed him sorely when he chose to study at Stanford, where he got his doctorate. His early death gave me some hard conclusions about the unreasonable inevitabilities in life, which no amount of philosophizing has been able to dispel.

S. S. McClure's dynamic editing also made itself felt in Davenport. He had attended Knox College in Galesburg and made periodic visits to the West looking for talent. His employment of Ida M. Tarbell to trace the footsteps of the young Abraham Lincoln opened the world of Lincoln lore to me. McClure called Edward Collins from the office of the Bradys' Davenport *Times* to take charge of the manufacturing department of *McClure's Magazine* in New York. After illness forced Collins to return to Davenport, he resumed newspaper work and later was elected recorder of Scott County. The milk of human kindness flowed deep in Collins. I sat spellbound when he described in familiar terms authors who passed

through the McClure office, all great names to me.

We young and aspiring writers spoke with admiration of Susan Glaspell, who had won the huge prize of \$500 for a short story in a contest held by *Black Cat* magazine. We studied the magazine carefully and wondered whether we could do as well. George Cram Cook, whom Miss Glaspell later married, and about whom she wrote her wonderful book, *The Road to the Temple*, was on a farm at Buffalo, near Muscatine. Floyd Dell, who became a reporter for the Rock Island page of *The Daily Times*, joined Cook there and later was associated with him in the literary section of the *Chicago Evening Post*. One day Floyd Dell told me that McClure had bought a poem of his, and as we walked down the street Dell recited it. This was the nearest I had ever come to knowing a successful author, and I glowed by reflected light.

The writing fashion at the turn of the century was local color, expressed chiefly in the short story. The magazines were saturated with it. It included the portrayal of quaint characters who talked dialect. It was invariably goodhumored writing, done with a touch of condescension toward the characters described. One of the principal writers in this *genre* was Miss Alice French of Davenport, who wrote under the pen name of Octave Thanet. Some of her stories had Davenport backgrounds; I remember especially one that

dealt with a rector at Miss French's church, Grace Episcopal Cathedral. Miss French also made use of Davenport material in her long novel, *The Man of the Hour*. She prompted the Iowa Chapter of the Colonial Dames of America to offer prizes for literary essays, two of which I won.

Miss French was instrumental in getting Andrew Carnegie to give Davenport a new public library. She never took credit for this. When the library went up at the corner of Fourth and Main streets I became enthusiastic over its simple, dignified lines, so thoroughly in keeping with its purposes. I did not at the time know the meaning of functional architecture. Some Davenport citizens thought the building commonplace; they wanted French turrets and dormers. Judge John F. Dillon, who lived in Davenport as a young lawyer in the 1850's, became a judge of the Seventh Judicial District and of the Iowa Supreme Court, and then moved East, was called from New York to deliver the dedicatory address May 11, 1904. Only a few years ago I picked up, in a New York bookstore, historical works from his library, bearing his signature and the notation, "Davenport, 1853."

During one summer vacation from high school I began writing a historical novel. I had done a great deal of reading in this field and my plot had a strong resemblance to the popular stories of the day. I would write diligently at home in the morn-

ings, and then go down to the office of the newspaper of which I was high school correspondent and beat out my copy on the only available typewriter, by a two-finger method. One afternoon, while en route to the office, I learned that a great fire had broken out in the lumber yards east of Rock Island Street. When I arrived there the fire had spread over a wide area. Getting as close as I dared, I climbed to the top of a freight car and from that platform saw whole blocks of frame houses disappear in the flames.

The fire had a disastrous effect on my novel, for in the course of scrambling to the top of the car I lost a chapter. What the disaster meant to others was brought vividly home to me weeks later when my English teacher, Miss Jennie Cleaves, after describing how she had treasured a bit of the original staircase of Old North Church in Boston, suddenly broke down, sobbing: "It's all gone!" The fire had destroyed her house and all her possessions.

HARRY HANSEN

Newspaper Beginnings

My newspaper career began as a carrier boy. We did not use the term newsboy, which was applied to boys who shouted their wares in Chicago and New York. I obtained a route by applying at the Davenport *Daily Leader*. The pay was about \$1.15 a week and the work included evening deliveries for five days and an early Sunday morning chore. Within a few months I had the added duty of carrying papers from the press to the carriers' room, which the circulation manager gave me in order to add 25 cents to my week's wages. He was George W. Davis, a man of great kindness, whose loss I mourned deeply when he was drowned at Black Hawk's Watch Tower while giving his boys a boat ride.

On New Year's Day we carriers distributed calendars to the people on the route. The newspaper furnished the calendars at cost, usually 10 cents apiece. We then rang doorbells and presented them, in hopes of a generous gift. Every one of us knew exactly what a route was good for on New Year's. My Brady-Perry-Main Street hill route was one of the good ones, where a number of customers — including C. A. Ficke — were known to give the boy \$1. There were many

quarters, and quite welcome; I also received a pair of mittens from a kind woman.

The press held my fascinated attention, no less than its big brother of 25 units does today. It was a flat-bed machine, printing from type, and it ground out papers methodically and slowly. Only one Davenport newspaper of that day, the *Republican*, used stereotyped plates on a rotary press. But I did not linger in the pressroom. What lay beyond, in the front office and the editorial room upstairs, stirred my curiosity.

The *Leader* preserved the furnishings of the General Grant period — fixtures of polished walnut, with huge ornate portals through which impressed customers handed their 15-cent want-ads. The editors' desks upstairs were no less antique. They were built like a square piano, with similar legs. All the copy was written by hand except that of the city editor, Sherman W. Searle, who used a typewriter. He wrote practically all the local news at great speed and worked feverishly and for endless hours. I bothered him with questions, and he always responded courteously. He was absorbed in his profession, and I respected him greatly.

I began submitting high school notes and soon was writing my head off. When news items were few, I invented events — that is, I organized debates and even clubs, with the sole object of reporting them. The newspaper printed everything

I wrote. But I didn't like its free silver politics, and its interminable front-page editorials attacking the gas company. I had a conviction that the front page should be devoted solely to news.

That year I offered to write up a Washington's Birthday celebration and was told to go ahead. This was apart from school news that I had been turning in. About a week after my report was published I went to Mr. Searle and asked for my pay. Mr. Searle was visibly shocked. He stared at me, and then said he would confer with the editor. The editor, Joseph E. Halligan, was a tall, broad-shouldered, bearded man who appeared formidable until he began to speak in a high, shaky voice. He conferred with Tom Feeney, the business manager. Finally Mr. Searle asked whether 50 cents would be acceptable. I said it would. He sent me to the business manager with the order, and that gentleman flicked me half a dollar with an expression of great pain.

For a number of weeks I continued writing my high school column. Then I found the Davenport *Republican* more compatible with my admiration of Theodore Roosevelt and what I considered newspaper enterprise. I transferred my talents to the latter and found a ready welcome. The plant was a microcosm of newspaper making. It had an editorial writer of experience and a strong editorial page. The news departments were clearly defined.

Through the kindness of Charles W. Daly, the city editor, I found open to me all sorts of new experiences. And when school vacations came, Daly hired me at \$3 a week. On his personal card he wrote a notice to all whom it might concern that I represented the *Republican*. At my first assignment a bespectacled reporter from another newspaper arrived on his bicycle. I showed him my card, and he smiled and extended his hand to his "colleague." He was Ralph W. Cram of the Davenport *Democrat*.

My graduation from high school took place in February, 1903. A few days before Daly told me he had a job for me. The graduation took place, I believe, on a Friday, and the following Monday at 7 p.m., Daly gave me the telegraph editor's chair. It was a great moment for me, such as can be appreciated only by those to whom newspaper-making is second nature. A few days later a number of my high school pals held a sleigh ride; tooting horns and ringing bells they arrived in front of our lighted newspaper office and shouted for me to join them. I came out and waved them on, and hardly heard the bells receding in the distance as I turned back to the news services. I had broken with adolescence and begun a long, arduous, and always wonderful association with the printing press.

HARRY HANSEN

Harry Hansen

Harry Hansen has served for over three decades as one of America's outstanding literary critics. Born in Davenport on December 26, 1884, Hansen grew up in a community that placed a premium on literature, music, the theater, and the arts. Few cities could have afforded young Hansen a greater opportunity to develop his literary wings. Alice French, writing under the pseudonym Octave Thanet, was the leader of a school of writers that included such names as George Cram Cook, Susan Glaspell, and Arthur D. Ficke.

From earliest boyhood young Hansen took advantage of every opportunity to broaden his literary horizon. He likes to recall that he began his newspaper career on the day Admiral Schley defeated the Spanish at Santiago; at least he delivered newspapers on the streets of Davenport that day and has loved the smell of printer's ink ever since.

While attending high school in Davenport, Hansen wrote both for his school magazine and the *Leader and Republican*. After graduating from high school, he attended the University of Chicago where he majored in English. Graduating in 1909, Hansen served as alumni secretary and

as an editor of *University Magazine* until he accepted a job as reporter on the *Chicago Daily News*. In later years he frankly confessed he was "rotten on murders, but good on interviews." This quality, coupled with his knowledge of languages, led to his appointment in the spring of 1914 to the quiet post of correspondent in Berlin.

Although attention was focused on the Mexican border early in 1914, Harry Hansen found himself sitting on a powder keg in Berlin. The assassination at Sarajevo was followed by the outbreak of World War I, and soon Hansen was dogging the heels of the German army into Belgium. With such illustrious men as Irvin S. Cobb, John T. McCutcheon, and James O'Donnell Bennett, Harry Hansen followed the Germans uninvited into France. Later he covered Flanders, the siege of Antwerp, Scandinavia, Italy, and Austria. In 1919 he attended the peace conference. He wrote *The Adventures of the Fourteen Points*, a reporter's account of the Versailles conference.

Upon his return to Chicago, Harry Hansen became literary editor of the *Chicago Daily News* just in time to participate with Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, Sherwood Anderson, and a score of others in the Middle Western movement. In 1923 he described his contemporaries in *Midwest Portraits*. In 1926 he succeeded Laurence Stallings, literary editor of the *New York World*

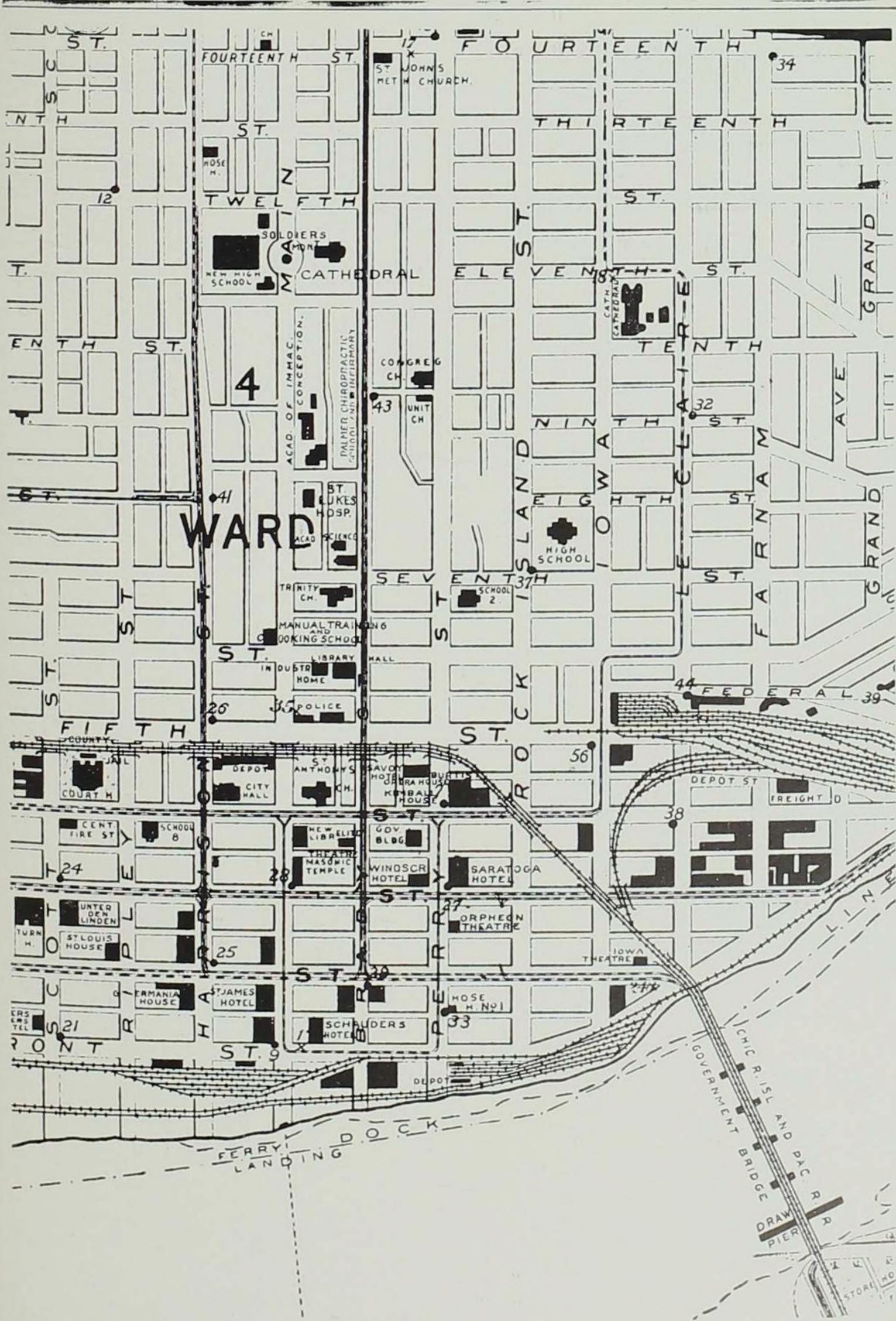
and writer of "The First Reader" comment on books, which Hansen developed into a daily column. When the *World* merged with the *Telegram* in 1931, Hansen took "The First Reader" into the new *World-Telegram*. Of critics and reviewers he later wrote:

A critic may do anything he wishes; but a reviewer possesses no charter to be anything more than an interpreter and announcer of books. A critic may write purely to entertain himself, or to impress other critics with his learning . . . the reviewer must read as he runs, shouting his opinions, among the din of ponderous presses. . . .

Harry Hansen's contributions are many, including *Carl Sandburg: The Man and His Poetry* (1924); *Your Life Lies Before You* (1935); *The Chicago* (Rivers of America, 1942); *Journalism in Wartime* (1943); *The Aspirin Age* (1949); and *Scarsdale* (1954). He has contributed to many magazines and encyclopaedias, translated several books, and served as chairman of the O. Henry Memorial Short Stories from 1933 to 1940. He was a member of the Armed Services editorial board during World War II and served as judge of the M-G-M \$200,000 novel award. Since 1948 he has served as editor of the *World Almanac*. He is married to Ruth McLernon of Chicago. They have two daughters, Ruth and Marian. The Hansens live in Mount Vernon, N. Y.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

DAVENPORT IN 1905



A section of the map in the *Atlas of Scott County, Iowa* (Iowa Publishing Company, Davenport, 1905). Many of the places mentioned by Harry Hansen may be found on this map. Schuetzen Park was located about two miles west (to the left) of the area shown here.

