

The
PALIMPSEST



HENRY A. WALLACE



DANTE M. PIERCE

CENTENNIAL OF A FARM PAPER

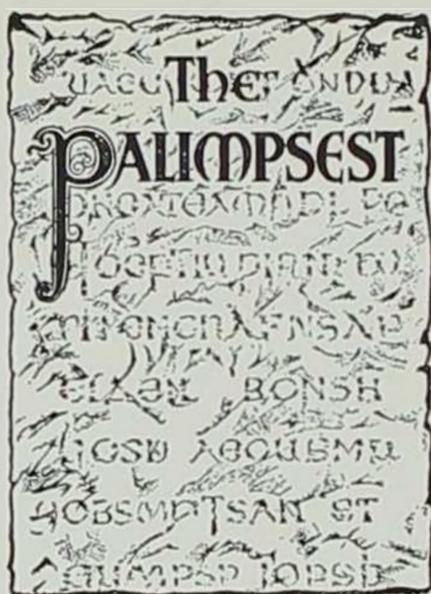
WALLACES' FARMER
and Iowa Homestead

Published Monthly by

The State Historical Society of Iowa

Iowa City, Iowa

SEPTEMBER 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

THE CENTENNIAL OF A FARM PAPER

DONALD R. MURPHY

Beginnings of a Farm Paper	449
Preacher-Farmer-Editor	459
Pierce's <i>Homestead</i>	464
<i>Wallaces' Farmer</i>	470
<i>Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead</i>	475

Illustrations

All illustrations were supplied by *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead*.

Author

Donald R. Murphy served as editor of *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead* from 1933 to 1955.

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

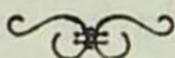
EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

VOL. XXXVII

ISSUED IN SEPTEMBER 1956

No. 9

Copyright 1956 by The State Historical Society of Iowa



Beginnings of a Farm Paper

In Iowa, some farmers report that *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead* magazine has been in their homes for seventy years or more. None, however, can remember back to the day when the magazine was born, for that was about a hundred years ago.

Establishing the exact birth date is difficult. And it is still harder to trace a resemblance between the farm paper of today—with a circulation of over 300,000—and the farm paper of 1856, with its few pages and a few hundred subscribers. But it is no harder than to trace a resemblance between the Iowa of 1856, where the flail was still used on many farms to thresh out grain, and the Iowa of 1956 with its combines for wheat and picker-shellors for corn.

Everyone likes to have a birthday, and a farm paper is no exception. Just when and where was *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead* born? A good starting point might be its first editor, Mark Miller, a book seller whose hobby was starting

farm papers. Miller founded the *Wisconsin Farmer* at Racine, Wisconsin, in 1849. Two years later, in 1851, we find him at Janesville, Wisconsin, publishing a paper called *Wisconsin and Iowa Farmer and Northwestern Cultivator*. The title covered a large territory, but it represented an idea in Miller's mind rather than a fact. Actually, there is hardly anything about Iowa in the early volumes of the little 16-page magazine whose pages measured $5\frac{3}{4}$ by $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

In 1853 Miller printed quite a little about Minnesota, how apples would grow there and that it wasn't really as cold as people said. Even far-away Texas appeared in his pages — wonderful country, come down and see for yourself. But Miller saw where the emigrant tide was flowing and headed for Iowa. In 1856 he moved to Dubuque where he established *The Northwestern Farmer and Horticultural Journal*. It was a weekly with four to eight pages, size $11\frac{1}{2}$ by 16 inches.

Three years before Miller arrived in Dubuque, an Iowa agricultural journal had come into existence. In May, 1853, James W. Grimes and J. F. Tallant started the *Iowa Farmer and Horticulturist* at Burlington, Iowa. Note how horticulture shows up in the titles of these early journals and in the articles. Pioneers must have been hungry for fruit. Sowbelly and beans got dull. Oh, for a barrel of New England or Pennsylvania apples. In those early papers you find discussions of the

Rambo, the Duchess of Oldenburg, Maiden Blush, and Yellow Bellflower. Johnny Appleseed was not the only man on the frontier who had apples on his mind.

After several stops and changes of name, the *Iowa Farmer and Horticulturist* finally wound up at Des Moines in 1861. Late in the same year Mark Miller, hiring a team and wagon to haul type and press, moved from Dubuque to Des Moines where he bought what was left of the *Iowa Farmer*. Shortly afterward, in January, 1862, the weekly farm paper called *The Iowa Homestead and Northwestern Farmer* began publication in Des Moines. Miller had found in *The Iowa Homestead* a name that would stick. Maybe 1862 is the real birthday, just as it is the birthday of the Homestead Act.

So nobody can say exactly how old *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead* is. There are good arguments for 1851, for 1856, for 1862, or for almost any of the intermediate years. *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead* itself decided to celebrate its centennial in 1955, although the editor and publisher might have picked several other dates. Miller himself, if we could ask him, probably would say 1856, for his 1862 paper was marked Vol. VII. And Miller is one of our best authorities.

If we accept 1856 as the centennial year we find it a period of widespread unrest. The financial

crash of 1857 was just over the horizon. More important, there was blood on the ground in Kansas and the Civil War was on the way. In 1856 John Brown killed the Doyle boys on Pottawatomie Creek in Kansas. The abolitionists in the north and the slaveholders in the south were pushing the moderates out of the way and getting ready for Shiloh and Vicksburg.

The Iowa climate showed its versatility in the winter of 1855-56. Winters had been mild for several years and new settlers were slow to pile up a reserve of firewood, especially on the prairie. Suddenly, in midwinter, the blizzard struck. Snow first, then sleet, then snow again. Early settlers in Calhoun County reported farms isolated most of the winter. Folks crawled into their darkened cabins through tunnels in the snow. Wild game died by the thousands from starvation and from legs broken by falls through the heavy crust. Men went out to hunt with nothing but a butcher knife and came back loaded. By spring many never wanted to look at venison again.

Farmers in Iowa were on uneasy financial ground that year. Hogs had dropped to two dollars a hundred in 1856, about half the price in 1855. Wheat was down to 78 cents. Not until wartime inflation did prices rise again. Along the Mississippi, some optimistic farmers built big stone houses and barns in the good times of the early fifties. You can still see some of them. But

nobody was to have that much money for house building for a good while to come.

Despite these signs of economic disturbances, the state was attracting the attention of westward movers. Between 1850 and 1856 the population had nearly trebled, jumping from 192,214 to 517,875. The census for 1856, the first in which information concerning resources and productiveness of the state was gathered, showed that the frontier was pushing steadily in a northwestward direction. Appearing for the first time in this census were the counties of Audubon, Calhoun, Carroll, Cerro Gordo, Crawford, Floyd, Franklin, Greene, Grundy, Humboldt, Kossuth, Mitchell, Sac, and Wright. The increase of products in the state was even more marked than that of the population. Wheat yielded in 1855 more than three times as much as in 1849, which was also true of Indian corn. The production of oats had almost quadrupled in that time. Potatoes, butter, and cheese showed equally high gains. The fields of the young state were indeed fertile.

In the census year of 1860, there were 674,000 people in Iowa. All but 191,000 came from outside the state. The state was too young to have many Iowa-born babies. A few years earlier, folks from Kentucky and other southern states had made up a big share of the population. But that was changing. Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and New York furnished most of the new settlers.

Germans, Irish, English, and Norwegians were coming in, as well as Scotch and a few Swedes.

Most of the farmers, still working on the edges of the timber, used primitive tools — the flail, the ground-hog thresher. On some farms ox teams were breaking prairie sod with John Deere's steel plow. On a few, the McCormick reaper was being used. New farming techniques, however, were on the way. The demands of the Civil War would break up the prairie sod, put reapers to work, and drop the hand-farming methods that had ruled agriculture for centuries.

In this fast-shifting scene of the fifties and sixties the farm paper came to play an important part in the lives of most emigrants in the west. It provided them with much-needed information on the many problems of prairie farming that were new to them; it widened their horizons through articles on out-of-the-way places and peoples; it brought entertainment to the entire family through its fiction and humor.

In the early period, Mark Miller's paper did a good deal of old-fashioned boosting. Come to Iowa where the soil is rich, land is cheap, and the malaria isn't as bad as you might think. After the crash of 1857, there was more talk about prices and farm problems. For the most part, the paper dealt with the routine chores of the farm, what to do for this disease and that, what kind of apples to plant, what strains of oats yielded best results.

During the Civil War, the editor wrote about the difficulties the war brought to farmers. But prices were good, and the critical tone was mild. He also commented on the course of the war. Shiloh was described first as a victory, later as a defeat, still later as a moral triumph for the brave boys from Iowa. It seemed the men from other states were the ones who had run away.

For the rest, the paper ran many items about producing crops and livestock, advice from other farmers, and clippings from the eastern press. The subscriber was talked to in terms of the things in which he presumably was most interested, which generally were how to raise crops and livestock on the frontier.

Hog cholera was always a pressing worry. In March, 1862, S. E. Hampton of Black Hawk County, wrote the editor: "Hogs are dying very rapidly and if there is a remedy or preventive, we should be glad to know it."

There wasn't any remedy and wouldn't be any until 1908, but the editor tried to help. Subscribers submitted their ideas: "Bleed them well by cutting their ears and tails." Burn the dead hogs and "introduce the living hogs to the burnt offering. . . . From that day to this, I never lost a hog nor seen any symptoms."

Fiction and essays helped to fill up the paper. For many farmers, this was their only reading matter. The editor tried to put into his few pages

the same kind of ingredients that a modern farmer gets from household magazines, newspapers, farm papers, radio and television.

After the Civil War the farm situation changed. Prices dropped sharply. As early as 1869 wheat had sagged to sixty cents a bushel. By 1871, hogs were down to \$3.40, far below the \$9.00 peak of 1864 and 1869. These were good prices compared to what was on the way, but the farmers didn't know it. They resented the drop from war-time inflation.

The farm paper felt the slump as well as the farmers. There were frequent changes of ownership. When William Duane Wilson became editor and publisher in 1869, he plunged into the new Granger movement. Partly because of the support of Wilson and the *Homestead*, Iowa became the leading Grange state in 1871, with 102 local granges. For Wilson, as for many of his successors, the role of the editor was that of leader of a farm revolt.

Yet even in this period of Granger development, *The Iowa Homestead* continued to be basically a "dirt copy" farm paper, with, of course, the usual extras. In the issue of January 6, 1871, for instance, there was a report of a Farmers' Institute, an article on "Japanese Ladies," a short story entitled "Miss Hepley," and an article, "Warning to Inebriates." Nevertheless, the paper reflected the growing interest in the Granger

movement. By 1873, the Grange department had expanded from a column, "Patrons of Husbandry," to an entire page on Grange affairs.

Also, by 1873, the paper was paying more attention to attempts to get relief for farmers through legislation. Railroad rates were too high; rebates were being given to favorites. A letter of three and one-half columns on page one, April 4, 1873, discussed "Farmers and Their Oppressors." Oppressors, it seemed, meant railroads. An editorial, "Great Congress Steal," pointed out that congressmen had raised their own pay while farmers were going broke.

Low prices, drouth, grasshoppers, high freight rates, and other troubles combined to make farming hard. A picture of the times is shown by the record of hog and wheat prices. December prices in Iowa are quoted.

	<i>Hog Prices</i>	<i>Wheat</i>
1871	\$3.40	\$1.00
1876	4.93	.89
1881	5.23	1.10
1885	3.11	.56

The troubles that beset the farmer also made it difficult to keep a farm paper alive. *The Iowa Homestead* struggled along with several changes of owners and sometimes with a change of name. However, 1883 saw the start of a new era. J. H. Duffus bought the paper and hired Henry Wallace to edit the journal. In 1885, James M. Pierce

bought out Duffus. Wallace continued as editor.

So began the Pierce-Wallace era that made *The Iowa Homestead* a strong farm paper, in spite of continuing low farm prices. Incidentally, the groundwork was also laid for a Pierce-Wallace feud that exploded in 1895 and didn't end until 1932, after both the original principals were dead.

DONALD R. MURPHY

Preacher-Farmer-Editor

When Henry Wallace became the editor of the *Homestead* in 1883 he was 47 years old. Until the age of 41 he had been a United Presbyterian minister. Then, because of his health, he quit the ministry and began to farm. He had tuberculosis, a disease that had ravaged his family. Already his mother, four brothers, and three sisters were its victims. Outdoor life and plenty of fresh milk were supposed to be the cure, and in Wallace's case this worked.

He brought his family to Winterset, in Madison County, Iowa, and bought a farm in Adair County, just across the county line. He drove back and forth to the farm, directing its operation. He introduced clover, started a dairy herd, even built a creamery. These were new ideas to many farmers around him.

As his health improved, Wallace began to take an occasional speaking engagement. One Fourth of July speech in 1878 succeeded in irritating both Greenbackers and Republicans. Of the two groups, the Greenbackers complained the most and Colonel J. B. Cummins, editor of a Republican paper, the *Winterset Madisionian*, found himself, perhaps to his surprise, defending Wallace.

From this came Cummins' offer to Wallace to become farm editor of the *Madisonian*. Wallace accepted. This was a part-time job. Wallace turned out his copy in the intervals of farming and occasional preaching and speaking. It was copy that got talked about. Wallace was not only readable; he had ideas, often controversial ones.

He was not yet "Uncle Henry," the venerable figure known to many Iowans in the later years of his life. Some people, in that day, used the words "upstart" and others less complimentary. Wallace replied in kind.

A Winterset paper, *Beacon Light*, once took him to task in the uninhibited journalese of the period. Wallace's son — Henry C. Wallace — gave this report of how his father responded. "He was in Brig Wheelock's grocery store when a farmer turned to him and said: 'Mr. Wallace, what's good for hog lice?' Father's answer was: 'Take a barrel of rain water, put in a copy of *Beacon Light*, let it stand over night and sprinkle the hogs with it the next morning. That ought to kill the lice and do the nits some damage.' "

Wallace wrote for the *Madisonian* until he and Colonel Cummins disagreed on policy. Cummins wanted Wallace to stick to hogs and clover. Wallace wanted also to write about money, credit, railroad rates, and other subjects that affected agriculture. So the two split up. It was a forecast of what was to happen later.

By 1883, Wallace had a small following in central Iowa. He had proved he could write on farm subjects. Duffus was taking no risks, especially when it is noted that Wallace was to be paid only ten dollars a week.

Wallace continued to live at Winterset, look after his Adair County farms, and send in his copy. Then, in 1885, James Melville Pierce bought the *Homestead* and asked Wallace to continue as editor. Wallace learned that Pierce had paid \$20,000 for the *Homestead*. It seemed to him that this was eight or ten thousand too much. So Wallace offered to continue at ten dollars a week. But he asked to be given a chance to buy stock later.

The Iowa Homestead then was an eight-page weekly, the pages about the same size as in Mark Miller's *Homestead*. There were a few advertisements for livestock and farm machinery. Clippings, notes of Farm Institute meetings, letters about catching gophers and avoiding hog cholera made up most of the paper. But the editorial pages — and sometimes the first page — began to take on a new flavor.

Those were the days of the Greenbackers, of the Farmers' Alliance, and of the Populists. They were also the days of unswerving allegiance by many farmers to the old parties. Republicans were still advised to "vote as you shot." Henry Wallace waded into this riot of politics with a heavy and impartial club. He found claims of

many politicians on all sides ridiculous. He also resented suggestions that he stay out of politics.

On April 30, 1886, he re-stated a fundamental principle: "Ever since we have been connected with the *Homestead*, we have felt that the transportation question was as fitting a subject for an agricultural paper as the best methods of growing crops or feeding cattle, or in other words that the farmer's work was but half done when his stock was ready for market."

He was hard on the congressmen who campaigned on farm issues and then got absent-minded after election. On February 19, 1886, when anti-monopoly bills were up and in trouble, he wrote: "We shall await the ayes and nays and see how many of the boys who put hayseed in their hair and played granger during the campaign will stand up to the rack now."

But "dirt copy" was still the main reliance of the editorial page. Wallace had an inquiring mind; he pumped information out of farmers and scientists; he took hold of new ideas in farming and urged that they be tried out. Furthermore, he was a remarkably interesting writer. As a preacher, he had learned how to keep folks in the pews awake. He noted (February 26, 1886): "Quite a number of agricultural writers and journals shoot entirely over the heads of the common farmers just as the preachers are apt to shoot clear over the pews."

Henry Wallace rarely made that mistake. He opened an editorial with a brief, dramatic statement of his theme. Then he threw in a couple of anecdotes to make the theme come alive. As in his sermons, he followed with his "firstly," "secondly," and "thirdly," although he never called them that. And every time, after a somewhat abstract statement of policy, he brought the subject down to earth by a report of what he had seen in Adair or in Humboldt County.

Outside the field of agriculture, he expressed grave doubts about the eight-hour day in the city, but found the labor boycott interesting and perhaps suggestive to farmers. "At the very least," he said, "it (the boycott) brings the capitalists to a prayerful consideration of the just demands of labor."

Farmers read him and believed in him and in the *Homestead*. But this was a period of hard times, and the task of keeping the paper alive was an arduous one. For this part of the story we must look at James Melville Pierce.

DONALD R. MURPHY

Pierce's Homestead

When James Melville Pierce bought *The Iowa Homestead* in 1885, he was thirty-seven. A big man, six feet two and with plenty of bone and muscle, he had driven hard at his objectives all his life, and was to go on that way until his death at seventy-two.

He came west from Ohio in 1870, bought newspapers at Grant City and Hopkins, Missouri, moved into Iowa at Bedford and Osceola with other weeklies and then in 1885 took the big plunge with *The Iowa Homestead*.

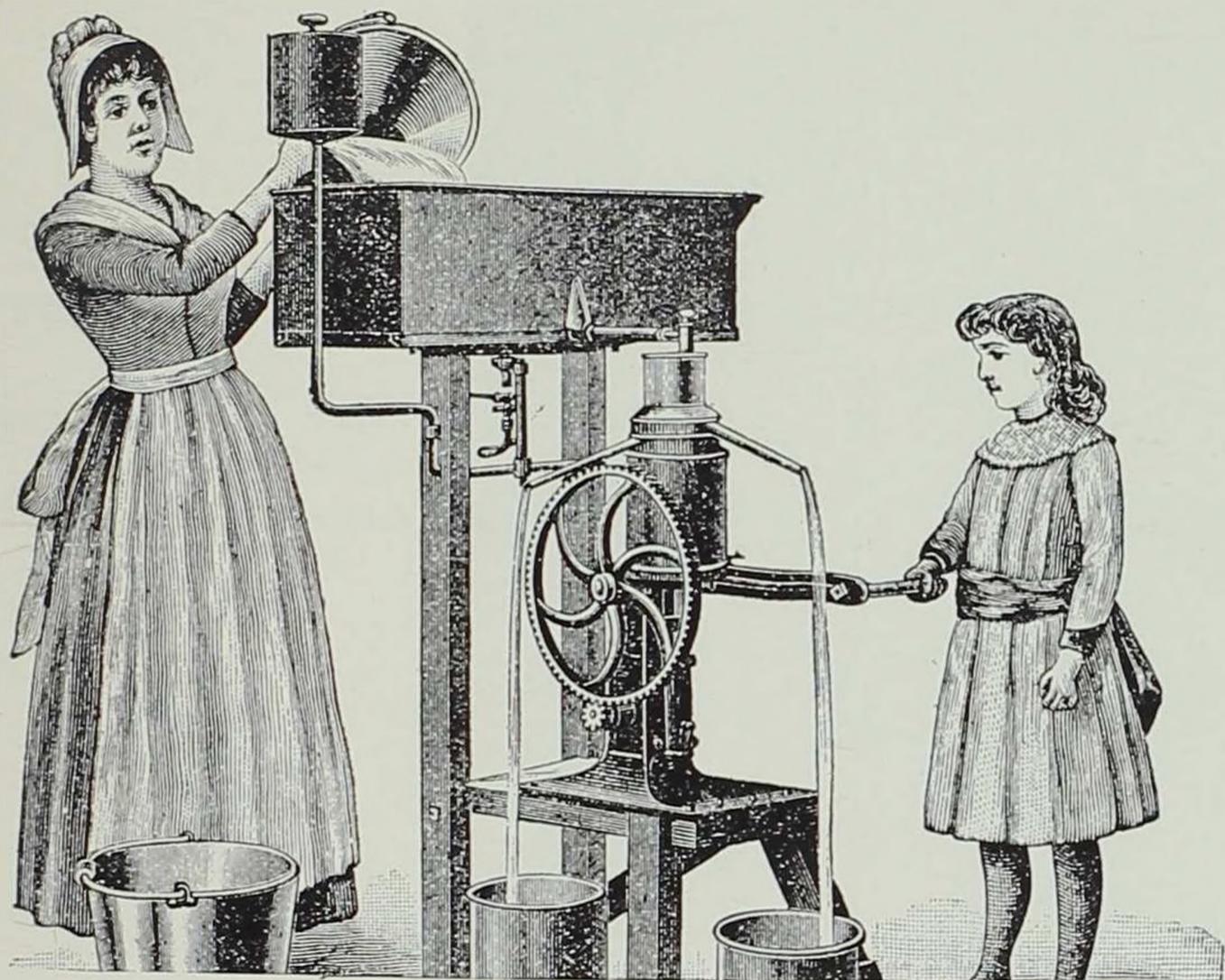
Pierce told about it (January 10, 1918) in this way:

I must have been pretty optimistic and venturesome in those days, else I would never have quit the proven profitable field of county-seat newspapering for the uncertain field of agricultural journalism.

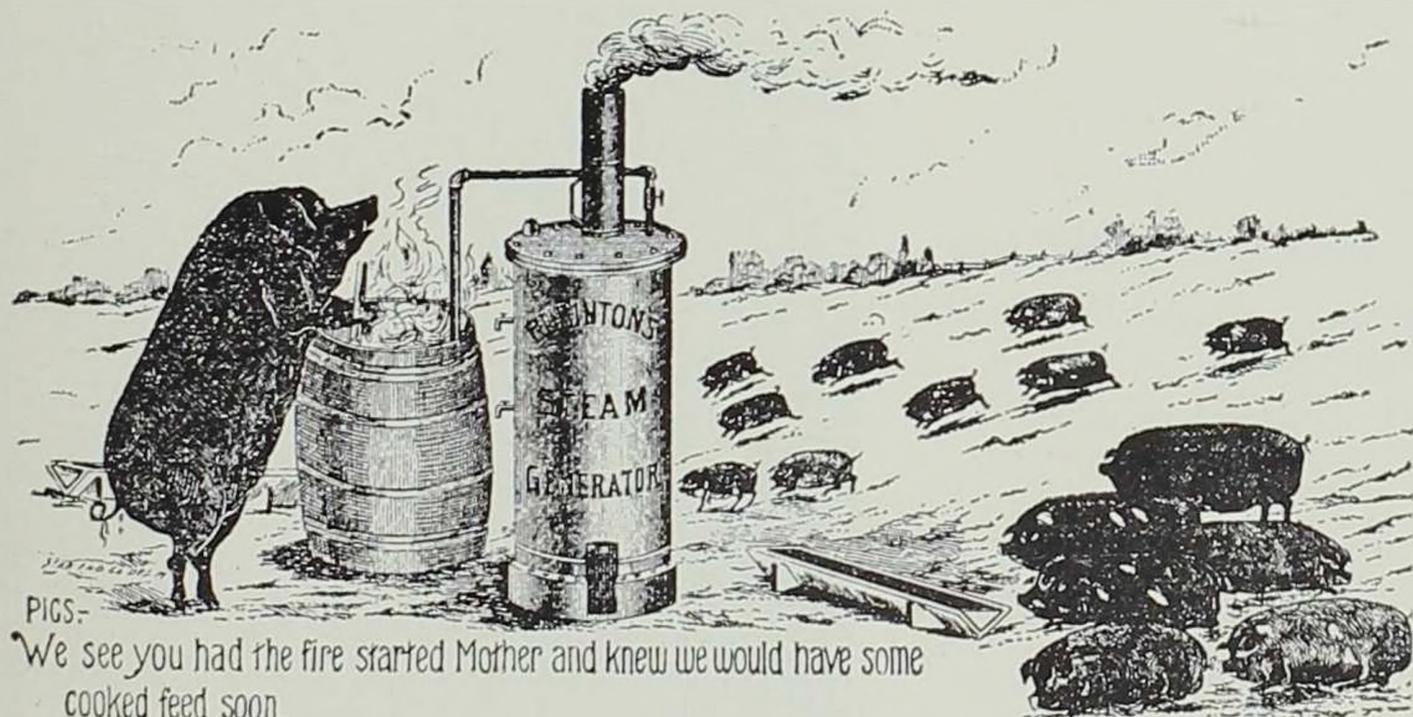
At any rate, I bought *The Iowa Homestead*, then struggling for its existence, a sort of journalistic waif floundering in a morass of debt and troubles of various and sundry sorts.

When I took this paper over, in March, 1885, there were upon the books something like 1,000 paid subscribers, the total circulation being around 6,000 copies.

It was tough going in those first years. Dante M. Pierce, son of J. M. Pierce, recalls that his

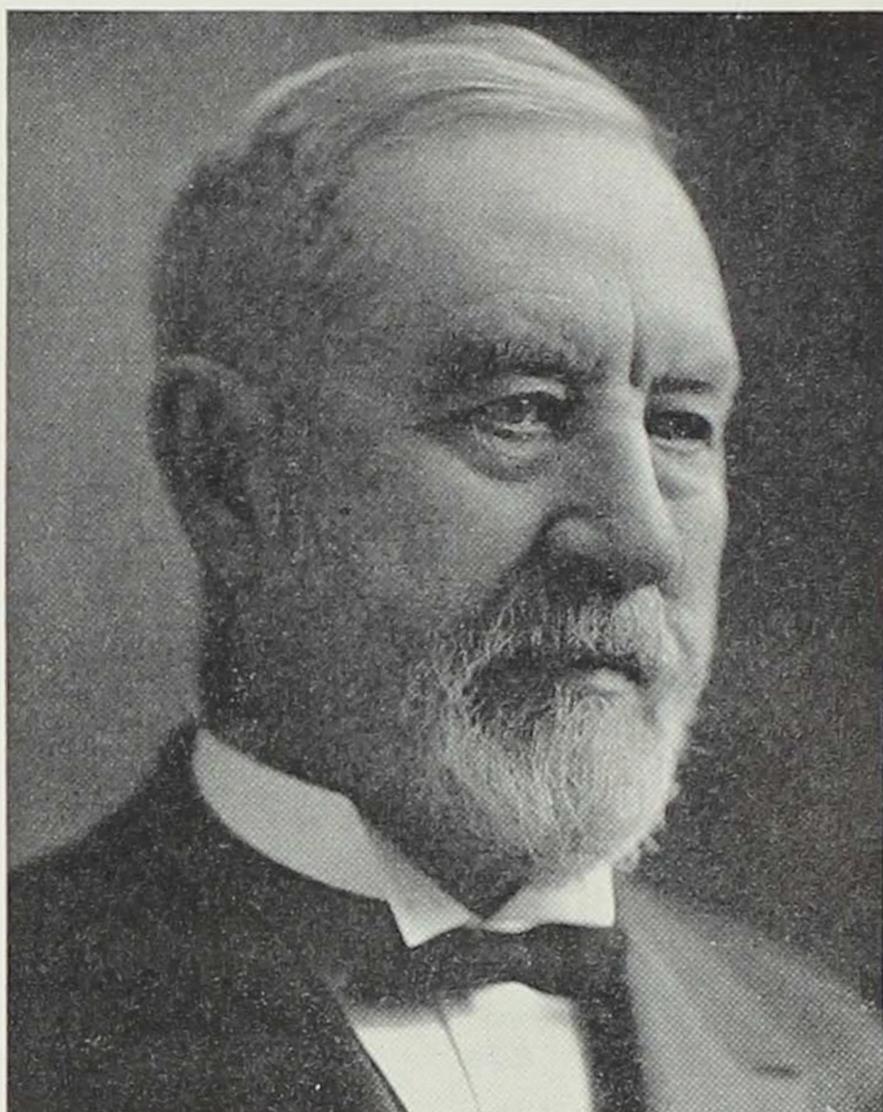


The Iowa Homestead brought farmers word of new tools for the farm. Most folks were skimming milk by hand in 1890, but there was a new DeLaval separator, turned by hand, advertised September 26.



PIGS:-
We see you had the fire started Mother and knew we would have some cooked feed soon.

Hogs and hog feed were the subjects of many advertisements, then as now. Cooking rations for hogs was recommended by this advertiser, November 28, 1890.



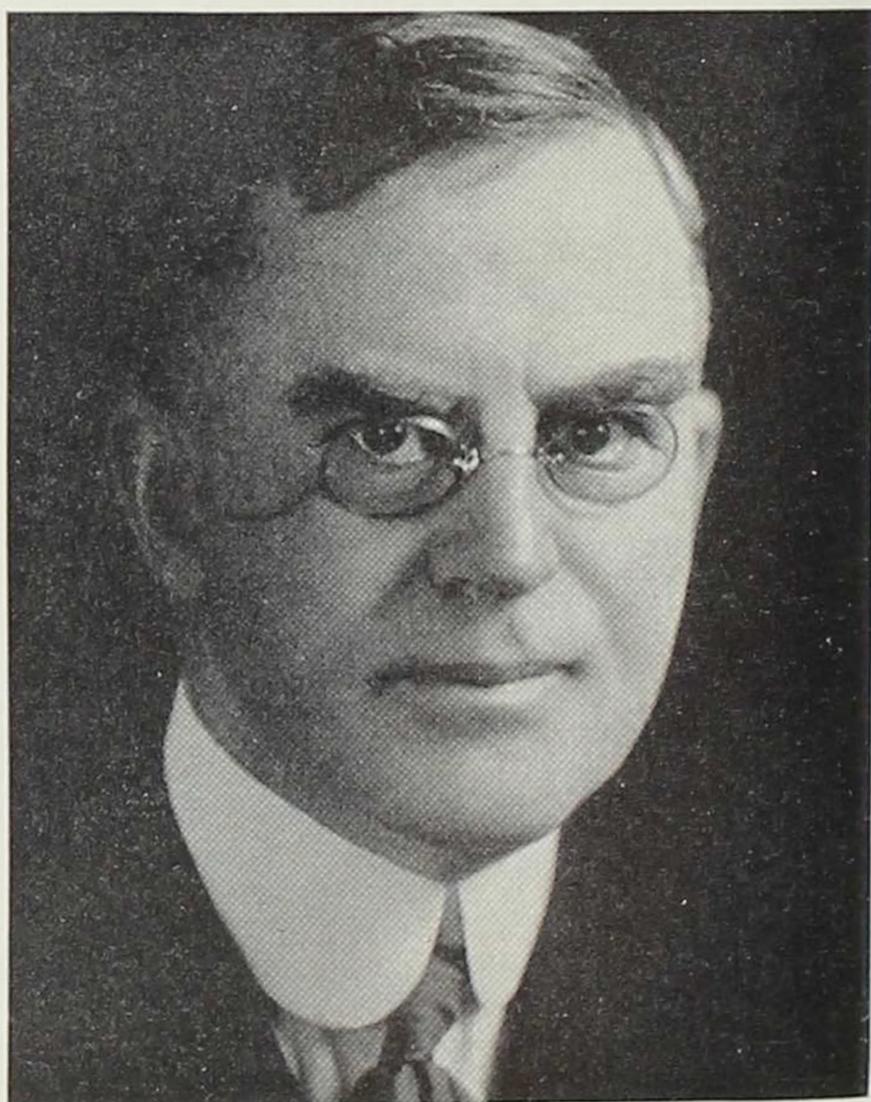
HENRY WALLACE

"UNCLE HENRY"

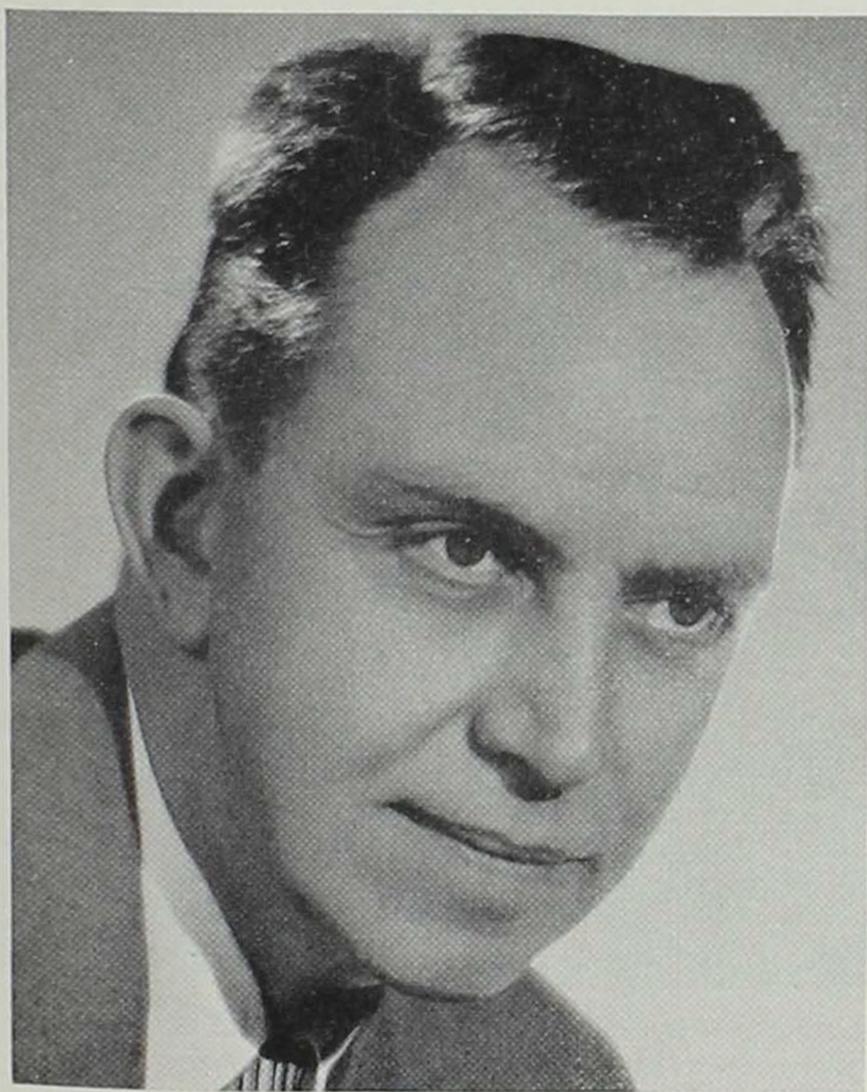
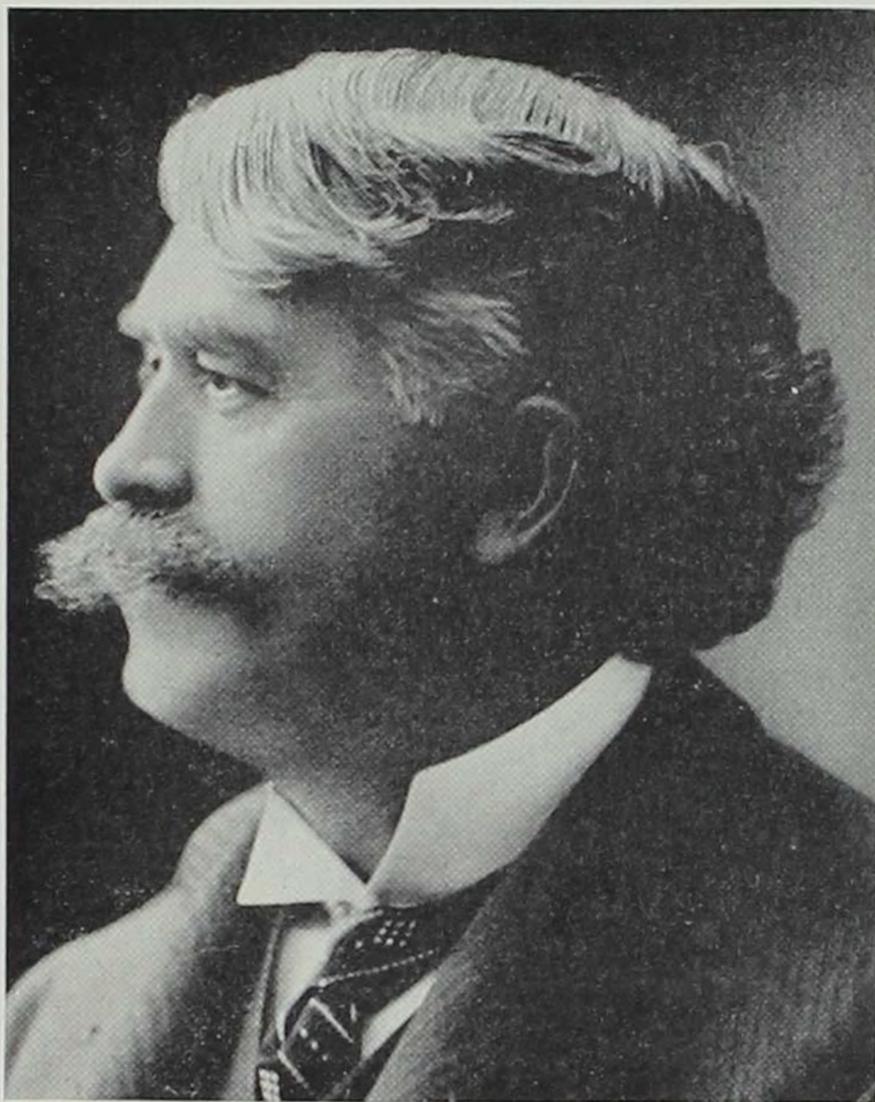
Editor, *The Iowa Home-*
stead, 1883-1895

Editor, *Wallaces' Farmer*,
1895-1916

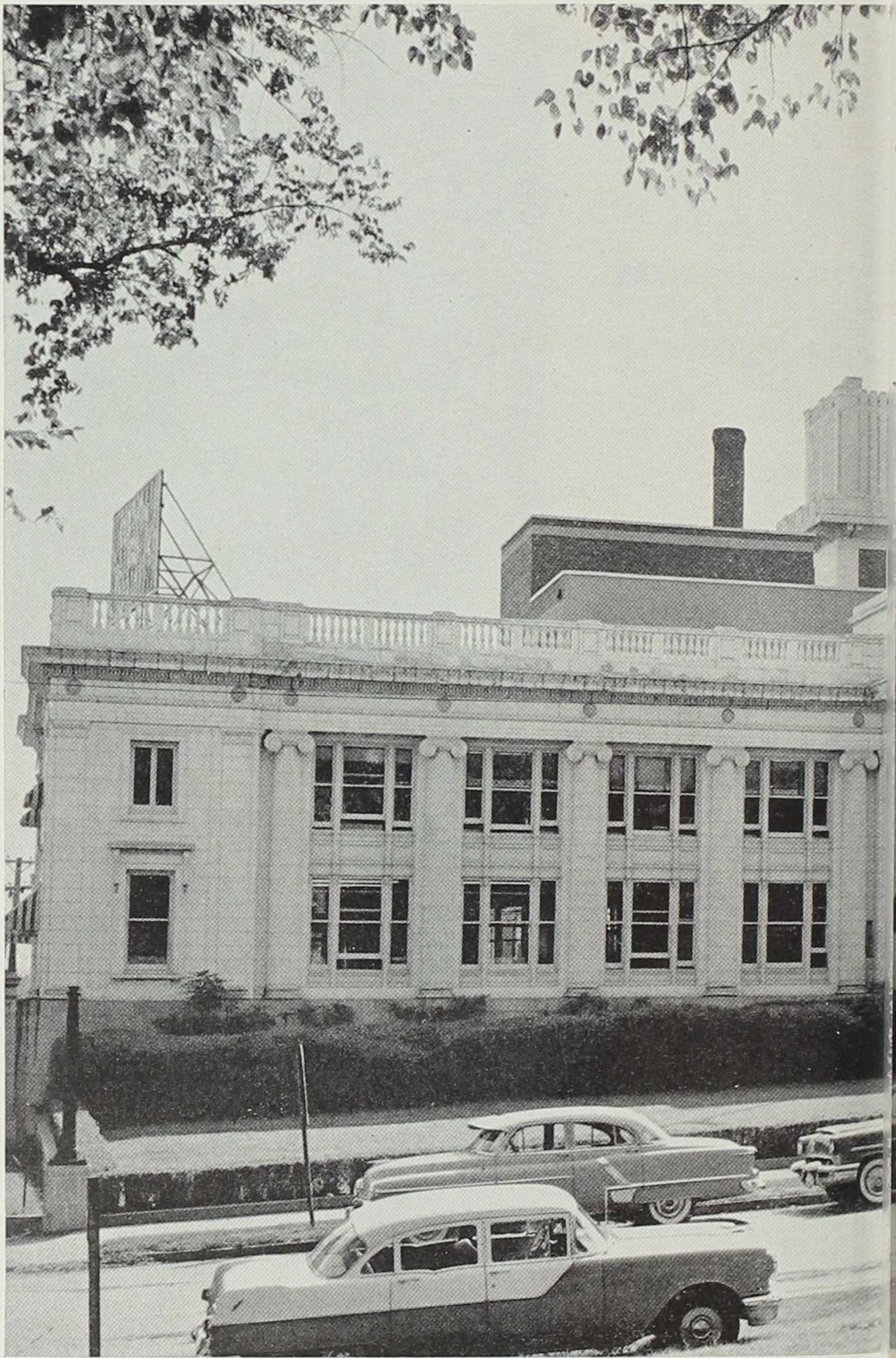
HENRY C. WALLACE
Editor, *Wallaces' Farmer*,
1916-1921
U. S. Secretary of Agricul-
ture, 1921-1924



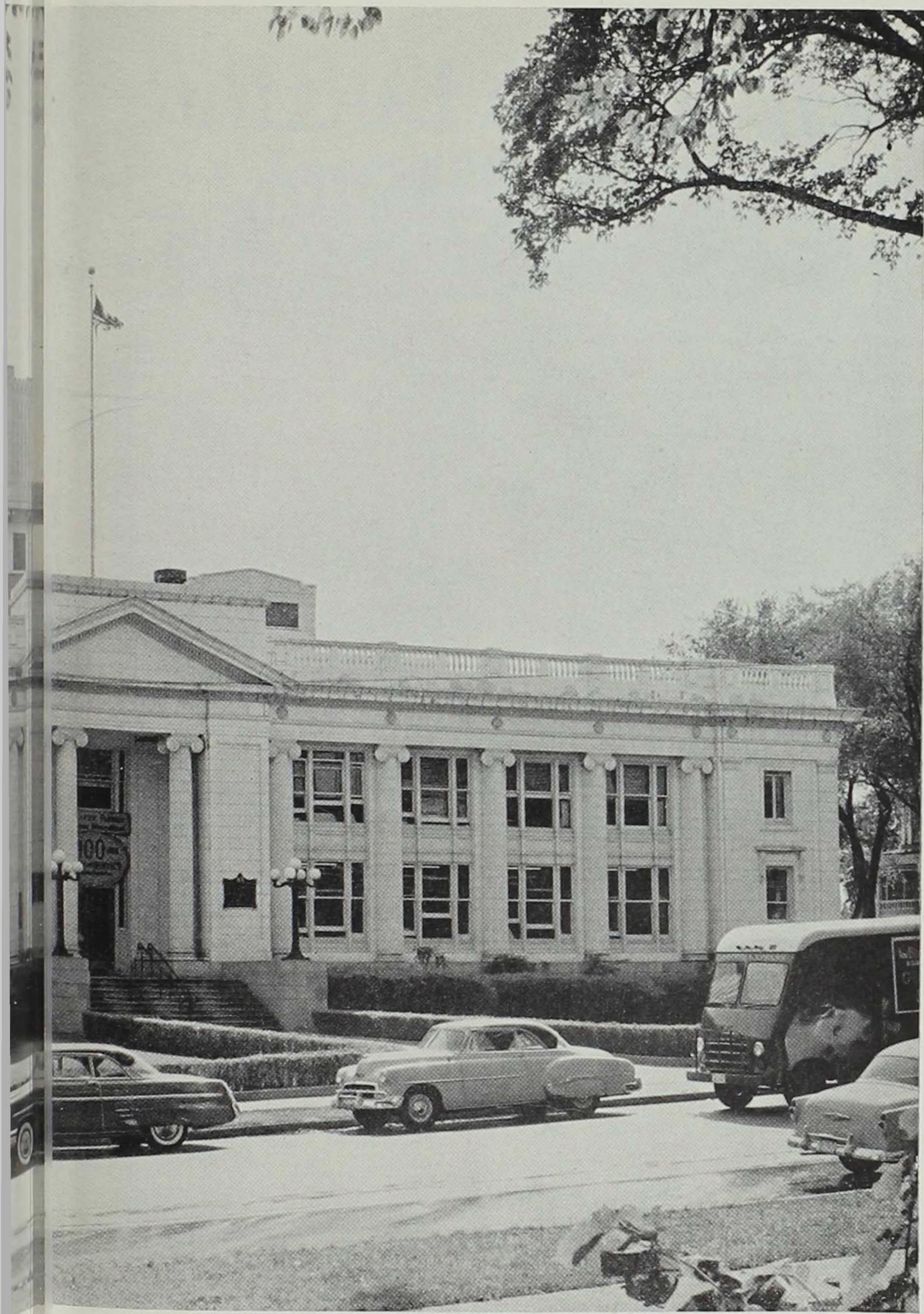
JAMES M. PIERCE
Publisher, *The Iowa Home-*
stead, 1885-1920



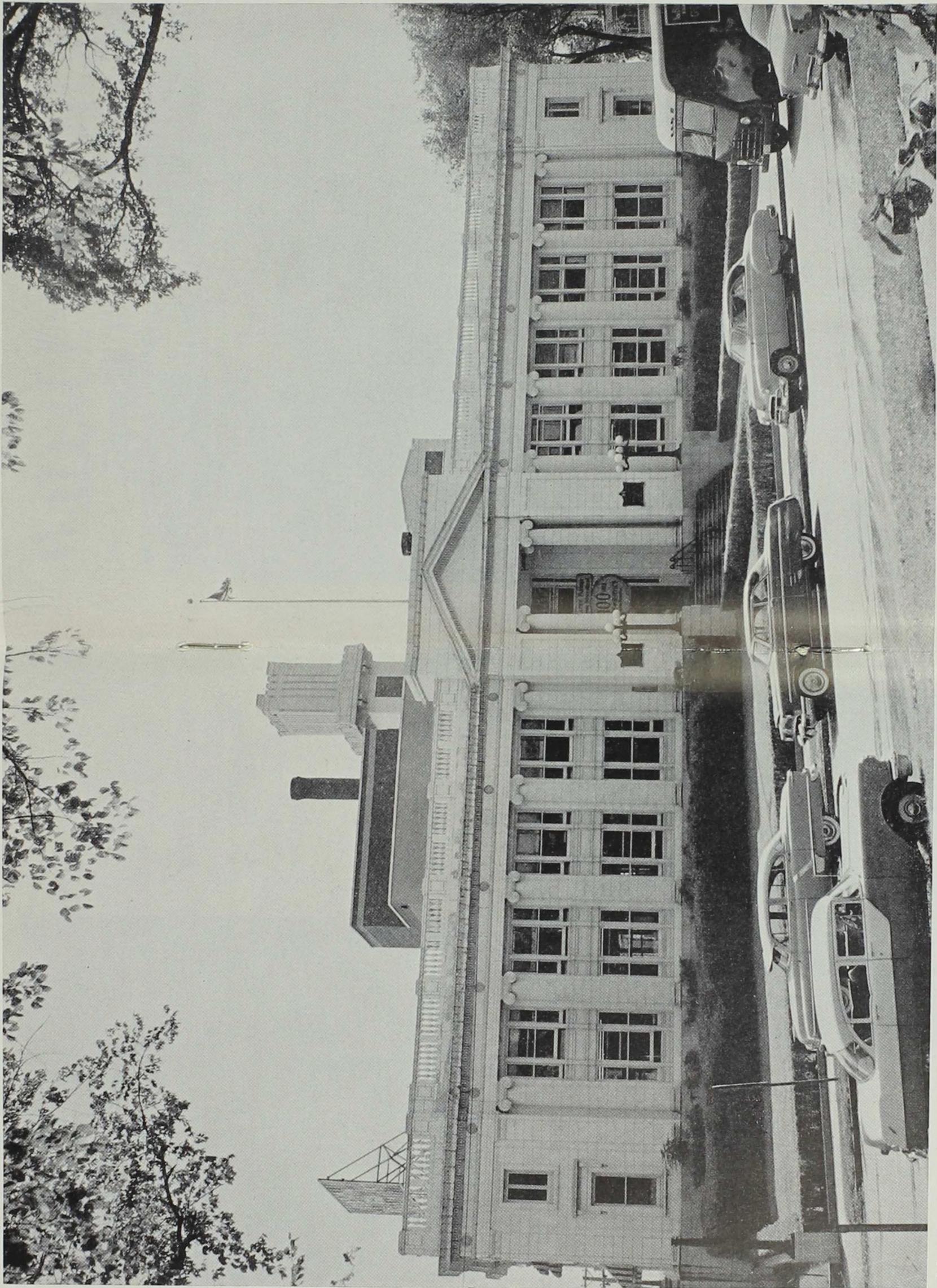
RICHARD S. PIERCE
Publisher, *Wallaces' Farm-*
er and Iowa Homestead,
1955-



Administration building of Wallace-Homestead Company, 1912 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa. Two seven-story buildings are out of sight on the slope down to the Raccoon River.



This building, started in 1916 and expanded greatly since, has room for a job printing plant as well as the big presses that run off *Wallaces' Farmer* and *Iowa Homestead*. The company employs 235 workers.



Administration building of Wallace-Homestead Company, 1912 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa. Two seven-story buildings are out of sight on the slope down to the Raccoon River.

This building, started in 1916 and expanded greatly since, has room for a job printing plant as well as the big presses that run off *Wallaces' Farmer* and *Iowa Homestead*. The company employs 235 workers.



AND WEEKLY NORTHWESTERN FARMER.

VOL. VII, NO. 39.

DES MOINES, THURSDAY, OCT. 23, 1862

NEW SERIES, VOL. I, NO. 39.

THE IOWA HOMESTEAD.

MARK MILLER, Editor and Publisher.

Solomon Lowman, Corresponding Editor.

Office S. E. Corner Savary Block, First Floor.

TERMS.—Single copy, 2c. Three copies, \$1.50—Ten copies, \$12, and an extra for the agent fees—Twenty copies, \$22, with extra for agent. Twenty-five copies, \$25, and so on, in proportion to the amount.

Claims not have their papers sent to different Post Offices if desired. Additions to clubs may be made at any time, at the old rates.

Agricultural Department.

For the Iowa Homestead.
Essay on the Management of Stock.

BY H. P. DAVIS, OF CEDAR COUNTY, IOWA.

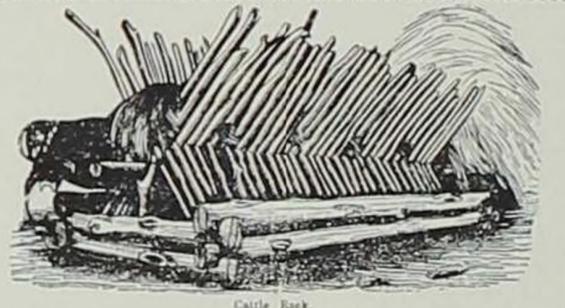
For a successful breeding or raising of cattle, there ought to be a regular system. The merchant in his business is regular, or else too late he finds a balance on the wrong side of the ledger. So the farmer would find the benefit of such a system. Farming is made up of details, and success is in proportion to the amount of attention given to it. This only is good management, and, as in all things, there must be a beginning, good management has its starting point: First, a proper selection of breeding animals with reference to the particular end in view. There is perhaps no branch of agriculture that calls for more experience, or shows the effects of good management, than stock raising; and it will prove to the advantage of farmers in this State, to turn their attention more to this subject—where there is any quantity of "free pasture," especially, would it be profitable. And even the "small farmers" must devote some time and attention to this business. Hat care and attention are requisite for success. Grain farming alone cannot pay, therefore stock and its management must make part of the business of farmers, and it is necessary that they should possess some general knowledge on the subject. There seems to be a neglect in providing sufficient shelter. We find cattle standing shivering in the fence corners—shivering in the cold northwest wind, whilst their owners sit by the fire wondering why the cows give no milk, or the steers do not fatten. Good and sufficient shelter should always be provided, both for the comfort of the animal, and profit to the owner; as cattle consume about one third less food when kept in a warm stable, and particularly in the difference seen in fattening cattle. There are many ways of making such shelter, according to the taste and fancy of the individual, so that it is not requisite to give any description of buildings, or sheds, for there is a full range from a shed "shingled with straw," to one cased with boards. But I should by all means prefer to tie up cattle, and to use stanchions in the place of chains, or other fastenings. By tying up stock there is a chance of discriminating in their food, and have better control of the beasts; and I prefer stanchions, as the cattle do not take up as much room as when tied with a chain round the neck, and the head is confined so as to prevent much injury to each other by their horns, and is the quickest and easiest way.

For pasture, moderately rolling prairie is better than perfectly level, provided it is supplied with good water—natural streams are the best, as they always afford a supply, although artificial streams, when properly made, answer every purpose; such as can be made in most all alongs by running a mole ditcher in them, by which springs can be made, saving the trouble and expense of lifting water, and in a large stock this is very considerable. And then stock can drink

when they please. There should always be a full supply of salt kept accessible to stock, both summer and winter. There ought to always be a pasture fenced off, according to the wants of the farm, even if there is plenty of "free pasture," for cows and calves, and any other stock that is wanted at home. Then the farmer can breed his cows to any bull he chooses, and keep his calves where he wants them, and not spend his time riding over the prairie after lost cattle—Many spend enough time running after "strays" as would bring forty acres, in one season. Our free pastures are too large, and in many places farmers must soon depend upon sown pasture. And when the time comes for weaning calves they have a pasture for them with better feed than on the prairie, and where they cannot get away; as calves are very apt to stray, and make trouble. Some pastures come earlier in the spring and last longer in the fall. When stock is taken up for the winter, the calves and young cattle should be separated from the older cattle, both for convenience of feeding, and protecting them from injuries, to which they are liable from being knocked around by older cattle. They need the best fodder for the first winter, and I would make another division of the yearlings from the rest, as they would do very well on coarse hay. The cows used different care and food from work cattle, or fattening stock; but as I do not propose to treat upon the management of a dairy, I will merely say in reference to cows that they need care at the time of calving; not too much confinement, but a quiet attention to their wants and welfare. It is not often that they need assistance, but it should be at hand, ready for any emergency. Bulls should never be allowed to run with the cows, until they are all with calf, for then the line of bulling and calving is known, and the animal can be treated accordingly. On some farms the cows run at large on the prairie, taking the chance of catching some scrub, their owners seeming not to care anything about them, preferring a scrub, when they can secure the services of a thoroughbred at a moderate cost, acting upon the principle of a "penny saved is two pence earned." There should be a stock book kept, with a list of all stock, time of being served, time of calving, &c., and would prove a valuable book of reference as well, showing at a glance the exact condition of the herd. By all means use a thoroughbred bull, for a grade bull is not to be depended upon, and his "get" is very uncertain; by chance you may get a calf that shows many good points, but the chances are against you. And as to any particular breed, that depends upon the situation and taste of the farmer. A breed that is most profitable for the butcher cannot be best for the dairy, so that a recommendation of any is useless, and must be left to the discretion and experience of the purchaser. And it is only necessary to give a word of caution—do not be too ready to believe in any until you have tried them. The Durham is highly recommended for rich pasture, the Devon and Herefords for lighter soils. The Ayrshires are the best for milk, but of little value for the butcher. The cattle stable should be kept clean and well littered every morning with fresh litter, as cattle will not thrive well when kept standing in manure, and have no place to lay down. There should be particular attention paid to this. The "fancy prices" of blooded stock, has placed it beyond the reach of most farmers, and stood much in the way of the improvement of our native cattle, although we begin to see traces of good blood, owing to the public spirit and enterprise of a few. Lastly, in the management of stock, there should be a gentle firm-

ness, not too much bluster and noise, which only serves to confuse, and make them unruly. Cruelty is always to be condemned as unnecessary and disgraceful. Kindness and gentleness will invariably serve. The owner should exercise a careful supervision, and employ only careful and sensible attendants. Care should be taken not to breed in-and-in, or let a bull go to his own calves, and can be done by changing

bulls as often as three years. Thoroughbreds will not pay to raise for the butcher, but the higher the grade the better, and a system of judicious crossing can but produce good results, by selecting good native cows and crossing them with a thoroughbred bull. Much more can be said, but in this disjointed sketch, I have endeavored to be accurate and concise.



Cattle Rack.
FEEDING RACKS AND BOXES.

Some kind of Rack should be provided in every yard, from which stock should be fed, instead of picking it off the ground half trodden under foot. We care not how cheap fodder may be, every farmer will find it for his interest to provide his yard with some kind of rack, however unorthodox, wherein fodder can be placed, instead of throwing it upon the ground, where an inconsiderable portion is trampled under foot.

Every farmer has the material and ingenuity to make a feeding rack after the plan represented by the foregoing figure. Two or more forked posts, according to the length desired, are firmly set in the ground, and mounted with strong, stiff poles. Upon this structure, rails or poles are set up alternately on either side. Such a rack is within the means of every farmer, and answers an excellent purpose. Try it.

Wax and Honey

The prevalent opinion respecting the origin and nature of wax and honey, as expressed in many treatises on bee culture, and as implied in the definition of the terms as given by the dictionaries, are essentially erroneous. The current impression, derived from these sources, is that wax is contained in the honey or pollen, and is simply extracted by some process in the stomach of the bee; while honey is supposed to be made from the nectar of flowers. Precisely the converse of this is the fact.

1. Wax is a product elaborated by the bees. A simple experiment will suffice to demonstrate this conclusively. If bees be fed with a concentrated solution of loaf sugar and then confined in a box, we shall, in the course of twenty-four hours, find between their abdominal rings thin scales or plates of wax, such as they use in building their combs. Now, probably no one will undertake to maintain that loaf sugar contains wax. It contains only the elementary ingredients of that substance, carbonic acid, hydrogen, and oxygen—which become separated in the body of the bee, and re-combined in different proportions and relations, thus resulting in the formation of wax.

—which are the constituents of common honey in its pure state.

I fed a colony with a solution of sugar colored with indigo, scented with lavender, and diluted with milk. When the bees had carried this into the cells of a new comb, no difference could be perceived between the contents of the cells and those of the feeding-box—they had the same color, the same taste and the same smell.

If honey & the nectar of flowers remain in the cells, it will in process of time undergo a change. But this change is produced spontaneously, and not by the interaction of the bees, except merely so far as the internal heat of the hive may tend to accelerate it. It results, first, from the gradual evaporation of the aqueous particles contained in the nectar of fresh honey, till a certain degree of consistency is attained; secondly, from the still more gradual dissipation and loss of its agreeable aroma; and, thirdly, from the ultimate conversion of the more saccharine cane sugar, which constitutes an ingredient of the nectar of flowers, into the more insipid grape sugar—a change which all honey undergoes with the lapse of time.—Donner

2. It is otherwise in the case of honey. This is in no proper sense the product of the bees, but merely a substance collected by them from the boundless stores supplied by nature.

The matter collected by the bees undergoes no change before it is deposited in the cells. The nectar of flowers and freshly gathered honey are, in all their constituents and properties, one and the same substance. Both have a sweet taste and an aromatic flavor. If we sip nectar from the calyx of the honeysuckle, we shall find that it has precisely the taste of freshly gathered honey. When I analyzed the wax plant (*Hoga thuga*), which exudes in large drops from the calyx of the flower, I found it was composed of sugar, gluten, and an aromatic substance

How to Stow Potatoes and Preserve them from Rot.—A correspondent of the *Scientific American* says:—I have tried the following plan for four years, and it has proved a sovereign remedy, so I have not lost a bushel in that time after they were harvested, though in some cases they were half diseased when taken out of the ground.

Dust over the floor of the bin with lime and put in about six or seven inches deep of potatoes, and dust with lime as before. Put in six or seven inches more of potatoes, and lime again; repeating the operation till all are stowed in that way. One bushel of lime will do for forty bushels of potatoes, though more will not hurt them—the lime rather improving the flavor than otherwise.

Above, first page of an eight-page issue, October 23, 1862
Right, first page of a 76-page issue, May 19, 1956

WALLACES' FARMER and Iowa Homestead

IOWA'S LEADING FARM NEWSPAPER

MAY 19, 1956



Take a break, for safety

THE PRESSURE is on. Planting must be finished. Other jobs are waiting. Push! Push! Push! On many farms, the whole family pitches in to get work done. That was the case on the Herb Johnson farm, Floyd county, Iowa, when cover photos were made.

But don't push too hard. Remember that tired tractor drivers are a risky bet. They tend to neglect



ordinary safety precautions. And they react less quickly in surprise situations.

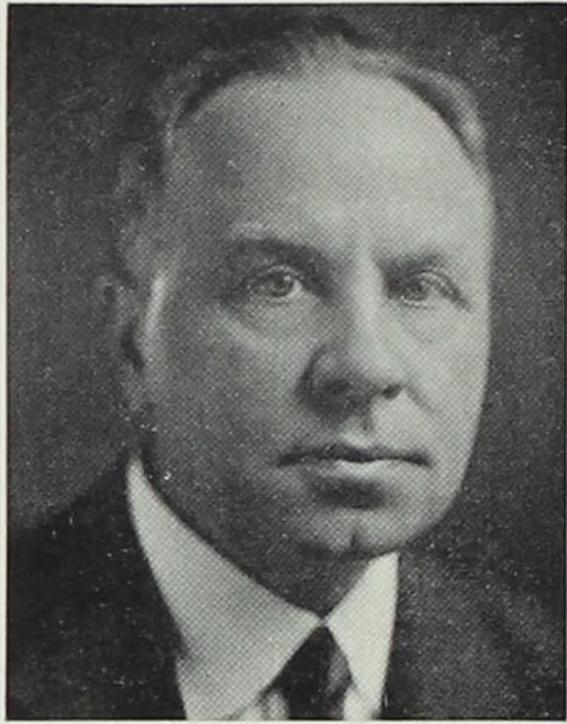
Better break up those long days on the tractor seat with a glass of milk or a cup of coffee—and a little chatter. Relaxation makes accidents less likely.

Which tractor fuel for you? . . . 36

Who got soybean profits? . . . 56

She works AND keeps house . 44

Want extra research farm . . . 68



JOHN THOMPSON
Editor, *The Iowa Homestead*, 1918-1929



DONALD R. MURPHY
Editor, *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa
Homestead*, 1933-55

ARTHUR T. THOMPSON
Editor, *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa
Homestead*, 1955-



father did all kinds of work around the paper in that period.

He assisted in preparing much of the "copy," writing the words out slowly . . . on an old decrepit typewriter. . . . At night he kept the books. When the time came to go to press, my father fed the papers through it and oft-times ran the folding machine. . . . It was no unusual thing for him to mail the entire issue of the paper himself, unaided.

An old expense book shows the scale of the business then. In January, 1892, for instance, total expenses for the month added up to \$3180.44. The weekly payroll was around \$150. The big item for the month was a payment of \$1000 to a local bank.

Farm product prices were still low, although 1892 saw a rise in hog prices to \$5.65. Corn was 31 cents a bushel. More trouble came in 1894, with the worst drouth in Iowa history. The lowest point came in 1896 when corn in December sold for 14 cents a bushel. Hogs were \$2.84. After that, things got better. Interest rates dropped; hogs rose; corn made 57 cents a bushel after harvest in 1901.

Before this, in 1895, James M. Pierce and Henry Wallace parted company. Friends of both had said for years that each wanted his own way, that one company could not hold them both. That turned out to be true. Wallace claimed that Pierce was leaving out some of his editorials.

Pierce felt that Wallace was overrating his importance to the paper.

The final clash came over a disagreement on the paper's policy on an increase in freight rates. Wallace said he wanted to go after the railroads hammer and tongs and that Pierce objected. Wallace left and joined his two sons, Henry C. and John P., in the publication of *Farm and Dairy*, later *Wallaces' Farmer*. *Wallaces' Farmer* and *The Iowa Homestead* were to be rivals until 1929.

After 1895, Pierce went on by himself. He had associates from time to time; he hired editors; but there never was any question as to who was the big boss.

In 1913, Pierce started a new department, which soon came to be the most prominent feature of the paper. It was entitled: "Publisher's Views on Topics of the Times." Here the Pierce gift for vigorous controversy brought in readers and likewise occasional lawsuits. In World War I, he took the unpopular side by protesting against high-pressure methods used to sell Liberty Bonds to farmers. He also fought against the wartime tendency to pin disloyalty charges on farmers of German descent.

On March 7, 1918, he denounced attempts to "hold up Bremer county as a hotbed of pro-Germanism in Iowa." Pierce declared: "The facts were that Bremer county showed the largest num-

ber of voluntary enlistments and the largest subscription to war funds in proportion to its population of any in the state."

"Pub Views," as it was called around the office, got into almost every good fight. Enemies took the paper to "see what the so and so is up to this week." The "Publisher's Views" were written in the first person and in an intimate, folksy style. James M. Pierce, a publisher busy with a thousand jobs, probably had time to write very few of them. But there was no question about the authorship of the ideas. The "Pub Views," no matter who helped "ghost" them — and several talented newspapermen helped from time to time — always sounded like Jim Pierce.

While Jim Pierce played the role of farm leader in politics and economic affairs, he also kept up a solid supply of "dirt copy." James Atkinson was editor in charge of everything but "Pub Views" from 1901 to 1918. John Thompson succeeded him and stayed with the paper until the merger in 1929. Thompson came back later in 1932 as associate editor and served until his death in 1935.

World War I was a period of inflation and money-making — at least on paper. The *Homestead* published issues that ran over a hundred pages a week in war time. Much of this was in purebred livestock advertising. Unfortunately, some of the profits were in notes that turned out to be of little value.

James M. Pierce died in 1920, at the age of 72. His son, Dante M. Pierce, succeeded him as publisher and as owner of the controlling interest in the paper. Dante M. Pierce was 40 years old in 1920 when he took charge of affairs. He had had almost twenty years experience with the paper. After he came home from the Spanish-American War, he worked in the office and then served as a livestock field man in Illinois. Later, he came back to Des Moines as his father's assistant.

The burdens which the younger Pierce assumed were formidable. The big new building of the *Homestead* had still to be paid for. Farm prices were dropping sharply in a post-war crash. Dante Pierce found it necessary to take in sail. Two small papers, *The Missouri Homestead* and *The Kansas Homestead*, were sold. He held on to *The Iowa Homestead* and to *The Wisconsin Farmer*.

Also, at the cost of some business, he carried out a moral obligation inherited from his father. James M. Pierce had been closely associated with the senior Bob LaFollette in Wisconsin and had pledged support for him in the 1924 presidential race. The *Homestead* lived up to its pledge and supported LaFollette with its usual vigor. LaFollette ran ahead of Davis, the Democratic nominee, in most farm counties. In a few counties, the farm vote gave LaFollette the edge over Coolidge, the Republican nominee. This was, in a way, a preview of the 1932 election. Iowa farmers, habitu-

ally Republican in national affairs, in 1924 learned how to split the ticket.

The *Homestead*, through Dante Pierce's management, got through the post-war crash, survived the criticism by some advertisers of the support of LaFollette, and came to the year of the stock market crash, 1929. In that year, Dante Pierce arranged the consolidation of *The Wisconsin Farmer* and *The Wisconsin Agriculturist*. He then made a deal to sell *The Iowa Homestead* to the Wallaces. In October, 1929, the merged papers appeared as *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead*.

DONALD R. MURPHY

Wallaces' Farmer

When "Uncle Henry" Wallace joined his sons in the publication of *Farm and Dairy* at Ames, the paper was the feeble descendant of a number of earlier farm papers. The three Wallaces soon changed the name to *Wallaces'* (plural for the three men who founded it) *Farmer* and moved the paper to Des Moines.

Henry C. Wallace, oldest son of "Uncle Henry," was general manager and an assistant to his father on the editorial side. John P. Wallace, second son of "Uncle Henry," looked after advertising.

These were the days of Farm Institutes. "Uncle Henry" spoke at many of them, always with a block of subscription blanks in his pocket. Farm friends volunteered to send in more subscriptions. While *Wallaces' Farmer* never caught up with *The Iowa Homestead* in circulation in Iowa, it gained enough so that when the hard times ended, the paper was in a position to make money.

Some of the farmers enthusiastically supported Wallace's paper. Others were suspicious of farm papers. This is clearly indicated by a letter in the editorial column on April 19, 1901:

I tried a year ago to get some of my neighbors to take your paper but they thought they did not need any paper to know how to farm. I used to be of the same opinion. . . . But I soon found out, however, that I did not know much and now the more I read the more I want to read.

To which "Uncle Henry" replied:

We do not greatly blame farmers for not taking many agricultural papers which are forced upon them. . . . Farmers who were farming "the way father did" looked upon us as a hare-brained enthusiast. Finally they began to do as we did and to ask us for the reasons of things. This is the way we came to be an editor of an agricultural paper. Our correspondent must have patience with these folks. They will find out bye and bye that they need help and until they find that out it is scarcely worth while to push it on them.

While "Uncle Henry" was writing editorials, making talks, serving on public jobs like President Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission, Henry C. was working closely with farm groups in Iowa. He led in founding the Corn Belt Meat Producers, farmers who wanted improvements in marketing methods. When the Farm Bureau movement came along, Henry C. was one of the leaders in supporting it.

"Uncle Henry" died in 1916 at the age of 80. At that time, there were three generations of Wallace editors on the paper. In addition to "Uncle Henry" and Henry C., there was Henry A. Wallace, son of Henry C., and grandson of "Uncle Henry." After graduation from Iowa State Col-

lege in 1910, Henry A. had begun to work on the paper.

This new Wallace brought to the paper a passionate interest in experimental work, particularly in corn. As a boy, he began testing some of the corn breeding theories of the day. He early decided that the score-cards by which corn ears were judged had little to do with yielding ability.

From 1918 on, Henry A. Wallace experimented with hybrid corn, wrote about it, made speeches about it, secured official yield tests to show its productive powers, and prepared Iowa and the corn belt for the revolution in corn production.

He began to experiment with inbreeding of corn and cross-breeding of these inbreds. In December of 1919, he printed a picture of some scrawny hybrid ears and challenged the show corn champion of the International to a yield contest. The challenge wasn't accepted.

Under Henry C. Wallace, *Wallaces' Farmer* kept hammering on the economic needs of agriculture and on the importance of acquiring more economic facts. When Henry C. went to Washington in 1921 as United States Secretary of Agriculture under Harding and later under Coolidge, he carried on this purpose by establishing the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, for years the major source of information on economic data relating to agriculture.

Henry C. Wallace died in office in 1924. Gifford Pinchot paid a high tribute to him for actions farmers heard little about, his work to defeat "efforts to take possession of and destroy Alaska and the national forests of the United States."

Henry A. Wallace became editor of the family paper in 1921 when his father went to Washington. This was the period of the depression after World War I. *Wallaces' Farmer* supported the McNary-Haugen bill, as a device for giving the equivalent of stiff protection to farmers who sold on the world market. The McNary-Haugen bill was vetoed twice by President Coolidge, with the advice and approval of Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover. Since *Wallaces' Farmer* had charged Hoover with breaking agreements with hog producers in World War I, his action on the McNary-Haugen bill was not a surprise to the editor.

While Henry A. Wallace took an active part in leading these politico-economic fights for agriculture, he also kept the paper strong in its week-to-week reports on new ideas in farming and on what to do next on the farm.

This was a time in which farm papers died off rapidly. It became clear that one farm paper was about all any state could afford. So after the usual dickering, the Wallaces bought the *Homestead* in 1929. Henry A. Wallace was in Europe at the time. He cabled an objection to the deal.

He saw more storms on the economic horizon.
However, the purchase went through.

Henry A. Wallace became editor and John P. Wallace publisher of the combined *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead*.

DONALD R. MURPHY

Wallaces' Farmer-Iowa Homestead

The first issue of the combined *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead* came out on October 26, 1929. This was the fatal month when the nation's worst depression started.

Farmers shared in that depression, perhaps even paid for it. In 1932, when industrial production was cut 40 per cent under 1929, farm production dropped only three per cent and that was on account of weather. Because farm production remained steady, most of the nation continued to eat. But farmers took a terrific beating on price. Prices of farm products dropped 57 per cent under 1929, while industrial prices came down only 23 per cent.

When farmers suffer, farm papers bleed. *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead*, like other farm papers, shifted publication from every week to every other week. The issues shrank in size. Advertising fell off. There was no use trying to sell goods to farmers who had no money.

Henry A. Wallace was one of the farm leaders who thought government action could help agriculture. The McNary-Haugen plan was out of date; higher tariffs around the world had killed its possibilities. But there was a chance to cut down

production of surplus crops, put more land into grass, "store fertility in the soil." And there was urgent need to stop the wave of mortgage foreclosures by federal action of some kind.

What Henry A. recommended came to pass later, but too late to save the Wallaces and their paper. In early 1932, it became clear that they couldn't continue publication. Dante M. Pierce, representing the principal creditor, was called back as receiver. In 1935, the Pierce interests bought the paper at sheriff's sale.

When Dante M. Pierce came back to the *Homestead* plant in April of 1932, almost his first action was to walk down the long hall to the office of Henry A. Wallace. Pierce asked Wallace to continue serving as editor. Again as in 1885-95, a Pierce was to be publisher and a Wallace editor.

Henry A. continued to fight hard through the paper for remedial farm legislation. And Dante M. Pierce tried to get enough business to meet the payroll. Both had tough jobs. Wallace was sure there was no hope for the farmer in Hoover. He went to Hyde Park to talk to Roosevelt and came back convinced he would help the farmers.

In the fall, Iowa went Democratic and Roosevelt started looking for a secretary of agriculture. There were plenty of candidates. Characteristically, Henry A. wrote Roosevelt recommending George Peek of Illinois. Finally, however, Roosevelt named Wallace.

In March, 1933, Henry A. Wallace went to Washington as secretary of agriculture. Dante M. Pierce stayed in Des Moines as publisher. The editorial work was carried on by Donald R. Murphy, who had been with Henry A. Wallace since 1919, and John Thompson, who had been with the *Homestead* since 1918. Murphy handled the editorial pages and the general editorial direction of the paper. Thompson concentrated on "dirt copy."

Through the thirties, the big news was what the AAA and other governmental agencies were doing for the farmer. *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead* explained what was going on, recommended changes, fought hard to keep what was gained.

In 1936, the paper supported Roosevelt again. Dante M. Pierce used to say proudly that his paper was one of the few farm papers in the nation that did support Roosevelt. The paper's policy on this issue was built around Dante M. Pierce's convictions on two points: (1) that Henry A. Wallace knew what he was doing and should be supported at Washington. (2) that a farm paper publisher was a fool if he didn't support measures that promised to help farm income.

This seemed plain enough to Dante Pierce, but not to everybody. Some advertisers hated both Roosevelt and Wallace. They let their political views persuade them to keep advertisements out of

the paper. Most advertisers, fortunately, looked at the circulation total, at the farm paper's popularity with farmers and came back with business as farm income increased.

The paper continued with three main jobs, not too different from those attempted by *The Iowa Homestead* of 1862:

1. Fight for farm interests in the legislature and in Congress.
2. Give farmers timely information that would help them to do a better job of farming right now.
3. Give them advice on future markets and on future plans for production that would help them to do a better job of farming and make more money next month and next year.

New competition was coming up in these fields. Colleges put out more information on farm economics, marketing, and production. Many farmers took a daily newspaper, a weekly newspaper, two or three farm magazines, and four or five general magazines. Every farmer had a radio, and probably three-fourths (by 1956) had television.

Could the state farm paper survive under these new conditions? *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead* had, in 1956, over 200,000 subscribers in Iowa and 100,000 in counties bordering Iowa.

But if there were new competitors in 1956, there were also new tools for the state farm paper. In 1938, Donald R. Murphy with the support of the publisher and of Clifford V. Gregory, associate publisher, started the Wallace-Homestead Poll.

This was a survey, conducted through personal interviews, which aimed to find out what Iowa farm people read, as well as farm attitudes on the various questions. The editors, for the first time, began to have some accurate measure of how they were getting along. Some departments were dropped; some were added. Localized copy was written in terms of farm experience and of experiment station knowledge. More pictures were used.

The Statistical Laboratory at Iowa State College was brought in to survey farm people and to find where farmers went for information. It turns out that on many subjects most of them still go first to the state farm paper, or, in Iowa, to *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead*.

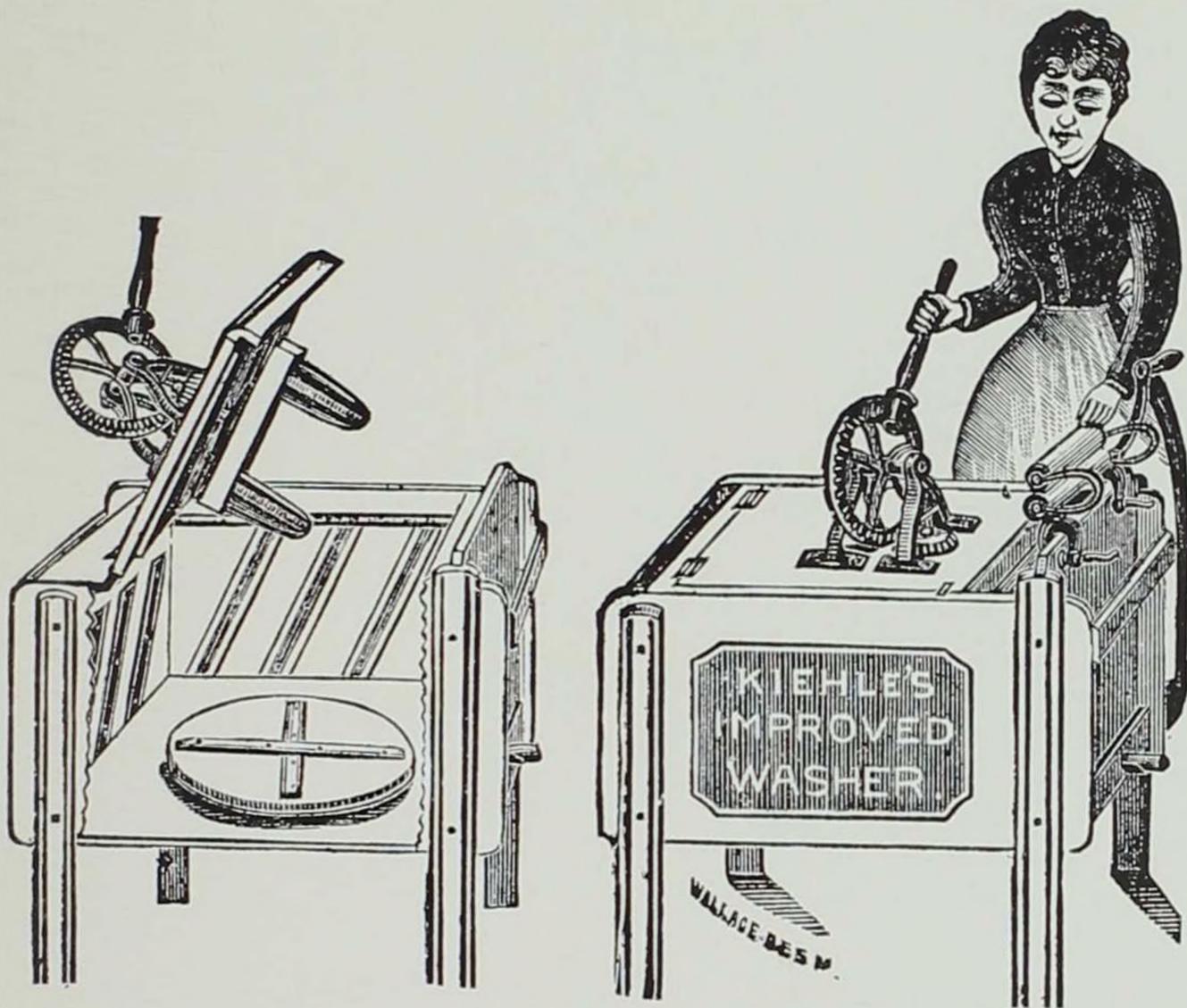
Dante M. Pierce died at 74 in July of 1955. His son, Richard S. Pierce, succeeded him as publisher. Richard Pierce was 43 at the time, just a little older than Dante had been when he took over as publisher in 1920.

The new publisher has been with the paper nineteen years, first in the job printing department and later as assistant to the publisher. In the editorial department, Donald R. Murphy continued as director of the *Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead Poll*, but Arthur T. Thompson, fresh from seven years on a Greene County, Iowa, farm, came in as editor. Thompson had served on the editorial staff in the thirties and later with the Department of Agriculture.

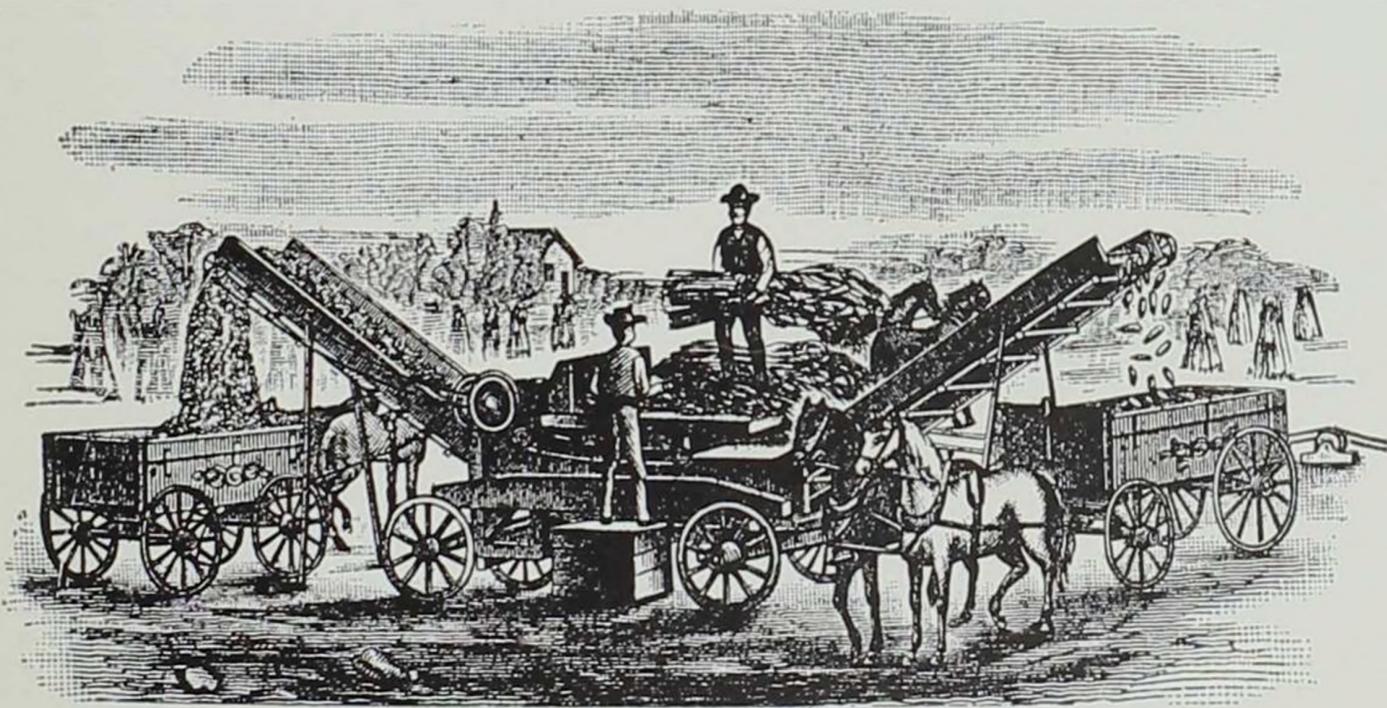
What happens to a farm paper in its second hundred years? There will be more and more claims on a farmer's time. Fewer will sit down for an evening with one farm paper, as in the old days. But there still seems to be plenty of farm support for editors and publishers who are not afraid to differ at times with state colleges, farm organizations, and national administrations. Farmers like independent views.

There continues to be a place for a farm paper that tries to make the farm reader the hero of almost every article. The goal is to have the reader say of an article: "This wouldn't work in North Dakota, or Florida, or California, but it will work for me in Page County, Iowa. And I think I'll go out and get started on it this afternoon."

DONALD R. MURPHY



The old scrubbing board still handled the washing on most farms, but modern improvements were on the way in 1890. This hand-powered washing machine was advertised in *The Iowa Homestead*, March 21, 1890.



If everything worked right, this machine husked corn and cut up fodder at the same time. This was the claim of the Keystone Company, August 29, 1890.

