

Editorials -- Purely Personal

[This issue of THE PALIMPSEST is one of a series projected on journalism in Iowa. Credit for originally suggesting Ralph Shannon and the *Washington Journal* goes to Richard Stephens and Robert Buck of Ainsworth. The Editorials, Purely Personals, and "Quips" were gleaned from the *Journal* by Mrs. Robert Day, Mrs. Merle Eckels, and Mrs. Henry C. Hull; they were typed by Mrs. Russell Goodin. Out of this vast collection the Editor has selected representative items in each category to illustrate the thoughts of a typical Iowa editor.]

During the past quarter century the writer has come to know personally scores of Iowa editors — men who were highly respected by their fellow citizens. This feeling is understandable, for able editors invariably take the lead in all things pertaining to the community good. For years before he met him, the writer had heard the editorials of Ralph Shannon praised by readers of the *Washington Journal* as well as by editors throughout the state. A study of Shannon's editorials and a few visits with him quickly revealed why he had risen to such high stature.

Since Washington is a typical Iowa county seat town and since Ralph Shannon is a typical editor, it might be well to present some of the nuggets that have won such wide acclaim. During his lifetime the Washington community has left an indel-

ible impression on Shannon's personality and character; in turn Shannon has deftly molded the lives of individuals and communities — although he himself would be the last to admit it. The following "Purely Personal" comment sums up his own opinion of his influence.

The little calendar on my desk tells me I have been whittling out copy for this department for twelve years. At least you must say I've been persistent. During all that time the public has been kind and forbearing — and I might add, forgiving. . . .

Twelve years is a long time. If all that copy were cut out and pasted in one long strip it would reach beyond the county line, and you would have a heck of a time with it in a high wind. . . . If I were suddenly required to prove the value of this department, I would be deeply embarrassed, and the search for proof most likely would be humiliating.

Why do it then? . . . Editorials are something of a tradition in the newspaper world. They're like the buttons on the sleeve of your coat — they serve no particular purpose but for some reason they are supposed to be there. The presence of an editorial column, convention speakers say, gives the newspaper a certain tone and prestige, which may be true, but it's hard to put one's finger on the values. Such claims must be accepted in blind faith and sublime hope.

Writing a column once a week would be a snap, but doing it once a day is a never-ending chore. It's like milking the cows. When you finish the job today you know you have to do it again tomorrow.

And because it is a daily chore, it often reads like it. The job is not in the writing, it's in deciding what to write about, and that's where the stuff narrows down to the

good old generalities, like law violation and high taxes. When there isn't any other material at hand, taxation is always good for a paragraph, and political corruption another. They're the old dependables, and always a certain sign that ideas are short today in the editorial department.

The easy — and maybe the best — way to do an editorial column is to buy the stuff already written . . . by top-flight writers who . . . have crashed the syndicates. You would thus read better editorials and know what the bigger minds are thinking about, but there is one thing those fellows can't provide — that's the local angle, the home-town atmosphere. If the *Washington Evening Journal* is to live and move and have its being at the grass-roots, we think it should try to express that viewpoint.

And so we keep pecking away at the job, day after day, month after month, year after year. I am encouraged to believe sometimes that people do follow our meanderings sympathetically, then again I know positively they don't. . . . All of which sounds as though I'm taking this chore very seriously. Actually, I don't. I doubt if I have ever changed any opinions or molded public thought in any measurable degree. The real purpose is merely to throw the topics open for discussion, whatever they are, and out of the discussions may come improvement and progress. I don't know how well the idea works, but it's a good theory anyway.

And if, in this little personal breeze today, I have imparted the idea that this job is heavy and distasteful, you have me all wrong, for it isn't that way at all. I look upon it as a little daily visit in which I have all the advantage and you have none. I do all the talking.

But it's a real treat when you talk back. Letters from readers are a joy, whether in agreement or not. For out of such letters and your personal comments come the only

assurance I have that suitable obsequies are not in order. I can still do gardening.

Few Iowa editors have been more concerned over domestic and international affairs than Ralph Shannon. In his "Quips" and editorials, Shannon constantly revealed his concern over corruption in government, unbridled spending, a balanced budget, and faithless, blood-sucking allies. An apostle of honesty, self-reliance, and resourcefulness, Shannon believed wholeheartedly in the American way of life. The outbreak of war in Korea and the difficulties facing the United States in Europe were matters of real concern to him.

Reason for all the confusion in world affairs is, no doubt, that the problems are so big and complex that nobody can know or understand what goes on. Even the experts guess at it, thereby adding their opinions to the confusion. But out here at the so-called local level a lot of people look at it this way: We're in another war, the third in 33 years. What have we got to show for all that military effort? Some of our best manhood killed or wounded. Tremendous debt. Uncontrolled inflation. Fewer friends among our neighboring nations, even those we have helped most. Since World War II we have sent more than 45 billion dollars to some 80 countries, and the signs of rehabilitation in some of those countries are still hard to find. Are we expected then to see in our foreign policy a great achievement on the grand plan? Should we applaud and shout "Bravo"? The plain and obvious fact is that we're not doing so hot under the present program. What should be done? We don't know the formula and apparently, neither does anybody else. But at least we can begin thinking of our own survival first, instead of try-

ing to save everybody else — including some who don't want to be saved. Those are the points which account for so much hostility toward the present American foreign policy, and those up front can't seem to understand why.

For almost a decade the State Department has endeavored to placate the Russian Bear and find some mutually acceptable solution for peace. Apparently no such solution can be found. It did not take Ralph Shannon long to probe the machinations of Stalin and the Russian objectives. Writing of Communism, Shannon declared:

Most of us who rate as plain ordinary citizens probably give more importance to communism than it deserves. We are too much inclined to believe that this is a war between capitalism and communism. In reality we are bracing our feet against Russian imperialism — the Soviet effort to push out and take over. . . . Those boys are out for power and control. Communism just happens to be in their sales kit, a tool which they have learned how to use quite effectively. So far as the philosophy is concerned, let the Russians have their communism. Let them prove to the world that the collective doctrine can build a better civilization, but let them do it within their own borders and leave the rest of the world alone. If communism is all the Russians say it is, then the rest of us will adopt it in due time. The plain fact is that we have little to fear from the doctrine of communism. It has been tried time and again, and found wanting on every test. But when a country goes all out to build its military strength while other nations ask only for peace, you may be mighty sure it is out to conquer and exploit. And the only thing left for the other nations to do is to prepare to defend themselves.

Most editors are generally considered to be very

serious souls, weighed down as they are with national and world problems. Although Ralph Shannon has always been fully aware (and perplexed) by these problems he was perfectly capable of seeing the more humorous side of life. On November 2, 1950, he wrote a thoughtful editorial entitled "Hole in Pants" that penetrated to the very heart of things.

In the years we have been operating this corner of Washington County's largest daily, we have noted that readers respond much more to the affairs of daily living than to controversial matters. A heavy article taken right out of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* doesn't seem to click, but simpler items of life often bring surprising comment. So today when this department should be devoted entirely to the loftier affairs of state, we suddenly discover — of all things — a hole in our trousers. We can't imagine how it happened. It's neither a rip nor a tear. Evidently it's just plain worn out, the result of hard usage, and it comes at a most inconvenient time as we're heading into another winter. The hole is just north of the 38th parallel, about midway between Huchang and Hamjong. By sheer good luck, however, we have another pair. They have descended from a suit we owned before we owned this one, a bit shiny perhaps in certain areas but good for at least two more seasons. Beyond that we have no plans. All of which, the text books say, should have no place in dignified journalism. But to us, at the moment, it is more important than the pending negotiations between Afghanistan and Pakistan — if they have any negotiations pending. If you have ever suffered a similar catastrophe we believe you'll agree.

The small town editor is generally considered a

veritable fountain of wisdom. Readers frequently write in to him for special information, sometimes of a highly technical nature. Personal experience accordingly is often helpful to the average Iowa editor. On May 20, 1950, Ralph Shannon clearly disclosed that even such an intricate subject as "Folding Chairs" held no qualms for him. A "constant" reader of the *Journal* received the following suggestions for handling a folding chair that "lays down and won't get up."

Lift the chair from its reclining position and hold it in front of you with both hands. Examine it carefully. You will see that there is a top part and a bottom part. To say definitely which is which, however, calls for a little experimentation. But you must make a guess. The bottom part probably is the top part, if you get what we mean, and you should start with that assumption. Now, with your right hand grasp the top part and shake it vigorously. This won't do any good, but something might happen. You never know. Next, with your left hand see if you can't swing the bottom part up over the top part, or vice versa. If this fails, try putting your right foot on the middle section and then pulling outwardly on both the top and bottom parts simultaneously, which is a remarkable trick if you can do it. By this time you are getting too close to the edge of the porch. You can get a bad fall that way. Better get back to your original position and start over again, this time beginning with the top part, which you thought at first was the bottom part. Try to be calm. There's no sense in getting all riled up over a folding chair. Study the danged thing once more. Remember that the chair is intended to conform to your general anatomical contour, and this might give you a clue. Try to

imagine if you can what the manufacturer had in mind when he designed the contraption. Hold the chair by each corner — a corner at a time — and swing it gently to and fro. If this doesn't start the parts unraveling, then kick the tangle viciously, and go into the house and lie down on the davenport for a while. An hour or so of rest should bring your blood pressure back to normal. Then tomorrow buy a new chair — one that will neither fold nor unfold.

World affairs might perplex him, an unbalanced budget appall him, or an innocent query stump him, but one thing was always crystal clear — the need for people to cherish their home town, their state, and their nation. And by cherishing their heritage, Shannon did not mean mere lip service — let the other fellow do the work. In his "Purely Personal" column of October 14, 1950, Shannon paid the following tribute to the Hawkeye State.

In Iowa you should take a foliage trip each autumn. It feeds your aesthetic side, if you have one, and serves to sooth the soul. Here in Iowa we haven't any Catskills or Adirondacks but we have the bluffs along the Mississippi. In any season they are beautiful and interesting. Just now they're gorgeous. . . .

As a sort of missionary for the Iowa Press Association I have been making territory, as the salesman says, in eastern Iowa. It has been strictly for business purposes, but there is nothing in the assignment that says we can't look at the scenery as we drive along. The "we" includes the Missus. Area covered this week — east and north of Washington.

Iowa is a marvelous state, which is about as trite a com-

ment as anybody could make. If you have seen it from the air — say, about 5,280 feet up — you have witnessed a vast checkerboard of irregular geometric designs, sketched in yellows, greens and browns. The yellows are the fields of small grain, the greens are corn and pasture land, and the browns are freshly cultivated soil. Streams are bordered by fringes of timberland, and the whole map is streaked by a network of highways. That's how it looks from the air.

But you get a more intimate touch on the ground. Down here is where the people live. The houses and barns and fences and machinery bespeak of life as we live it in Iowa, and the panorama along the highway somehow gives you a sense of comfort and security. And it's not the social-security type of thing, either. It spells out self reliance and independence. A native, dyed-in-the-wool Iowan can't fail to catch a thrill from a well-kept herd of dairy cows browsing on the hillside, or a car load of fat steers stuffing themselves at the feed bunk. The aroma from the feed lot isn't exactly lily-of-the-valley but in its pungency there is promise of sizzling steaks this winter — if you can raise the dough to buy 'em. To me, however, the most interesting sight of all is a swarm of little pigs pulling at the buttons on their mother's vest. That's a picture that ought to be included on the Great Seal of Iowa. It would be much more appropriate than the bald eagle, or whatever it is they use for the stamp of officiality.

There are scads of little towns in Iowa — communities with populations under 1,000. And they all run to about the same pattern. There's the main street, the bank on the corner, the elevator down by the depot, the restaurant, a tavern or two, and down at the end of the street the newspaper office. There you'll find the editor, publisher and printer. Not three persons, as you would gather, but one man — the busiest man in town. Often his wife helps out,

and after school hours you'll sometimes find a boy in the back shop feeding the press. In one place we found a girl standing up there on the cylinder press, shooting the sheets through one by one.

There's loyalty, peace and patriotism in these smaller towns. The people live on a plane of intimate, friendly relationships. The one half always knows what the other half is doing, which possibly makes for better behavior and bigger church attendance. When I asked an old man on a bench in front of the restaurant where I might find the local editor he was happy to give me all the information he could. "I just saw him go by here in his car. He had his mother with him, and while I ain't sayin' for sure, I think he's takin' her out to her place east o' town a couple o' miles. In that case he ought to be back here in thirty minutes." And sure enough he was.

That bench in front of the restaurant or tavern is always occupied on sunshiny days. Usually there are two benches, that is, if the main street runs north and south. One is on the east side of the street, the other on the west. Thus the Sons of Rest can enjoy the morning shade on the east side and the afternoon shade on the west side. In the group you'll always find an Uncle Charley. He moved into town a few years ago and his boy is running the place now. He is friendly and jovial. And he knows everybody in town, old and young, big or little.

In many of the smaller towns the ghost of depression days still stalks Main Street. You'll see its presence in the bank front — the building with the columns and high windows in front, now occupied by a drug or hardware store. Beneath those stately columns somebody's hopes and aspirations, you just know, ran into bitter disappointment. If you had time to dig into the history you would find, no doubt, some sad chapters. Local enterprise took a beating. Life savings went down the flume. Hearts were broken.

But business goes on, and in the hey-day of inflation, things look rosy and bank accounts bulge. I hope history is not in the process of repeating itself, but the lesson of the thirties is too fresh to be forgotten completely. One bank in eastern Iowa had a sublime faith in the future. It had engraved on its cornerstone the rate of interest it paid on savings. It may have been 3 per cent or 4 per cent, I don't know. But whatever it was, it has been chiseled out of the lettering, leaving an unsightly spot in an otherwise neatly engraved granite sign. No bank can stand committed now to such interest rates as prevailed in 1930. These rates have long since been chiseled off the records.

If you are looking for beauty, drive to Davenport and take the river road north. But better hurry. The leaves are falling fast.

Ralph Shannon has always been fond of small Iowa towns, and especially those in Washington County. On January 30, 1950, he outlined the following advantages for small towns.

A quarter of a century ago it was pretty freely predicted that the small towns were losing out to paved roads and motor transportation. But the prediction apparently wasn't well-founded. The small towns in this area are definitely holding their own, some doing even better than that. The parking problem, undoubtedly, has its influence. The smaller towns have no such problems, and live merchants have been quick to see this advantage. Another thing you will note — the tendency of large business concerns to seek locations away from the busy trade centers. Frequently you will see big new retail buildings along the main highways. Customers, they say, prefer to drive several miles rather than walk a few blocks and fight traffic. Besides, the taxes out along the highway are less.

Shannon could always count friends and ad-

mirers in Ainsworth by the score. On November 4, 1950, he recorded with deep satisfaction the "come back" of this bustling little community.

A few years back they were saying that the small town was on its way out, that paved highways had spelled its doom. But "they" didn't know about that mysterious thing called community spirit. Take our neighboring town of Ainsworth as a shining example. Just a few years ago Ainsworth was showing unmistakable signs of community discouragement. Then somebody re-sparked the generator. A bank was established. Vacant store rooms became occupied. New homes began to appear. And a community club emerged which includes not only the business interests of the town but the whole trade area. And Ainsworth now has a parking problem. On busy days and evenings visiting cars have to be driven off the main drag to find space. And all because a group of energetic men and women, with determination and vision, are working together in a common cause — the most important cause in the world when you stop to analyze it. It's the cause of higher living standards, improved schools and churches, better neighbors, and greater prosperity.

The rebirth of such towns as Ainsworth was not a mere happen-stance. It took a lot of individual effort and sacrifice as well as a rekindling of the community spirit. Time and again, in his editorials and "Quips," Shannon emphasized the need for individual push and joint cooperation. As early as January 18, 1945, Shannon had written:

The difference between a live town and a dead town is largely a matter of organizational activity. A live town has lots of such activity, a dead town usually has very little. Any city that hasn't energy and interest enough to

maintain an active Chamber of Commerce isn't much of a city, if you'll take the time to investigate. An energetic Chamber is a certain sign of progress. If the organization does nothing more than express that spirit of progress, it has justified itself. . . . Of course there have been always the few who have chosen not to participate. It is ever thus. But even those nonparticipants will agree that they live in a "live town," and they are inordinately proud of that fact. Investment in a Chamber of Commerce membership card doesn't always provide a very thrilling ride on the community band wagon but it does help to keep the steam up. And after all it's the steam that counts.

Shannon received innumerable ideas for his editorials from fellow citizens. The need of encouraging youth was ever uppermost in his mind and heart. But when a self-made Washington citizen expressed the hope his children would not have to undergo his own hardships Shannon penned an editorial on "Self-Reliance," concluding as follows:

Thus he would deny them a valuable heritage. The very experiences that made this man sturdy and self-reliant and successful are the experiences he would withhold from his children. Strong men and women are not made by being shielded from hardships. And self-reliance is not taught in the school of social security.

It should be emphasized that the genial editor of the *Washington Journal* was not inclined to scold his readers continually. The futility of such "scolding" was aptly expressed on December 11, 1951:

It doesn't do much good for the preacher to scold his

congregation for a lack of spiritual interest. The ones who need the scolding most are not there to listen. It's the same way with editorial warnings about our communistic trends. Many of those who are helping to create these trends don't read the arguments, pro or con. They are interested only in how much they can get from the government.

Some women, especially if they are young, do not look forward with pleasure to becoming grandmothers. Most women, happily, are delighted with this role, taking as deep an interest in their grandchildren as they did in their own children. Few men have assumed the role of grandfather more happily than Ralph Shannon, whose editorials and quips on children have brought many a chuckle to *Journal* readers. On March 5, 1942, Shannon wrote:

There is a small baby visiting at our house this week, a modern version of the ones who used to live there. The fundamentals, we believe, have not changed to any great extent so far as our observation goes. The laundry department goes into high gear, same as in the olden days, and household activities are spaced in between feeding times. That's old stuff, of course, and accepted as standard practice. But there are some innovations. There is the matter, for instance, of fitting on that highly essential undergarment. The style of this garment, as we recall, was formerly designed in the form of an equilateral triangle, the corners of which were brought forward and pinned securely in front. One good safety pin was sufficient, and the whole operation was quick and handy. True, we occasionally ran into difficulties. There were times when one corner failed to get itself pinned and the resulting effect

was neither neat nor efficient, but that was the fault of the technique, not of the garment. Now, that's all changed. The modern design is a four-sided arrangement, in the approximate proportions of a landing field, and it requires two pins instead of one, hence a natural loss of time and effort. We don't like it so well. Another modern development which we think is just one more of "them hifalutin" ideas hatched by the medical profession is the practice of "burping" the baby. Immediately after the feeding you are supposed to lop him over your shoulder and pat him gently on the back. Pretty soon, BURP. And what he doesn't do to your shoulder sometimes is a matter for you and the dry cleaner to discuss in private. Stripped of these problems of management, however, a baby still holds the reins of civilization. He is the center of the universe. For him we subjugate all personal plans and make any sacrifice. 'Twas ever thus. Take from civilization that inborn love for children and we'd have nothing worthwhile left.

In addition to getting out a newspaper at a profit and offering free advice to the subscribers, an editor was frequently confronted with serious personal problems. On November 13, 1945, Shannon editorialized on "Granddaughter and Snow Suits."

Sunday this writer was assigned the task of shoving a nine-months old granddaughter into a snow suit — one of those garments with legs and arms in it and buttons all the way down the front. The job calls for skill and experience, and we were pretty tired before we got the little lady all buttoned up. She didn't cooperate. She simply relaxed on our lap and permitted us to do all the work. Pushing a completely relaxed leg into the right compartment while its owner tries to pull the clasp off your necktie is something of an ordeal under the most auspicious cir-

cumstances. But when you get the leg into what proves to be a sleeve and it sticks there, and the little lady gets fed up with the proceedings and begins to stiffen, and when the buttons take position up the back instead of the front, and the room is warm and stuffy, and the baby's hood gets screwgeed down over one eye, and a very limp arm gets itself doubled in the sleeve and has to be taken out again — brother, you're in trouble. Who invented these new-fangled garments, anyway? Why not wrap the baby in a blanket and be done with it?

Having become an expert on diapers and snow suits old grandpa Shannon could editorialize with considerable feeling on Father's Day. On June 22, 1942, he wrote:

Father's Day grows more and more delightful each year. Dad hardly knows what to do with a day devoted exclusively to him, and he finds himself a bit uneasy and uncomfortable. As one local father said about the occasion last year, "It wasn't as much fun as I expected. I kept wondering what they were going to ask me for later." We don't know who invented the idea. We suspect it was a necktie manufacturer. Or it may have been that after Mother's Day was so well established somebody happened to notice Dad hanging disconsolately around the place, so they fixed him up a day, too. And it's perhaps fittin' and proper. . . . There's no tragedy in life quite equal to a father who has been deserted by his own children. The only thing that surpasses such a spectacle in tragic consequences is when the kids walk out on Mother. The love and respect of children for their parents is one of the important keystones in the arch of civilization, and it's a good thing to have a Mother's Day and a Father's Day for that reason.

Shannon loved all forms of animal life and fre-

quently wrote about them. One can draw lessons from his comments on rabbits, owls, and quail. His editorial on the ants who had the effrontery to attempt to stake out a claim in his own back yard is thoroughly delightful and his conclusions illuminating.

I suspect that the colony is communistic. If I am any judge at all, the organization is under a stern dictatorship. They're all for the state, and the individual doesn't amount to a tinker's darn so far as importance and influence is concerned. One member who evidently was on guard duty away out at the edge of town, started to explore the inside of my pants leg, and I gave him a hefty blow from the outside. Then I recovered his battered body and put him back among his comrades, fully expecting there would be general bereavement and maybe a little memorial meeting in his honor. He wasn't even noticed. One or two ants stopped a moment to twitch an antenna, then went on about their work without so much as a shrug of their shoulders. If the guy was careless enough to crawl up a man's pants leg it was his own lookout, and he couldn't expect any sympathy at home.

Building an ant hill is accomplished by cheap labor and mass production. The workers own their own tools — a set of strong legs and a pair of heavy snippers in front — and in return for their collectivized effort they get their room and board. I don't pretend to know the rules or the psychology which account for the ant's activities, but I would guess that life in an ant hill doesn't call for much imagination. . . . Like the bees, each colony is presided over by a queen, and she looks after all the egg laying and the more important matters about the house. The workers have long hours and don't belong to the union.

So — King Solomon to the contrary notwithstanding —

I am forced to the conclusion that there is not much wisdom in the ant. I will concede one point, however, and I'm inclined to think it is what Solomon had in mind. That is the lesson of industry and diligence. No ant quits the job. If he does he more than likely winds up before the board of review and has his license taken away from him. Which no doubt would mean the end of him, because he couldn't get a job anywhere else save in his own colony.

The ant is not an individualist. He buries his identity in the job he has to do and has no ambitions beyond that. This is Joe Stalin's idea, too. The Russians didn't invent it, as they may claim. The ant beat them to it.

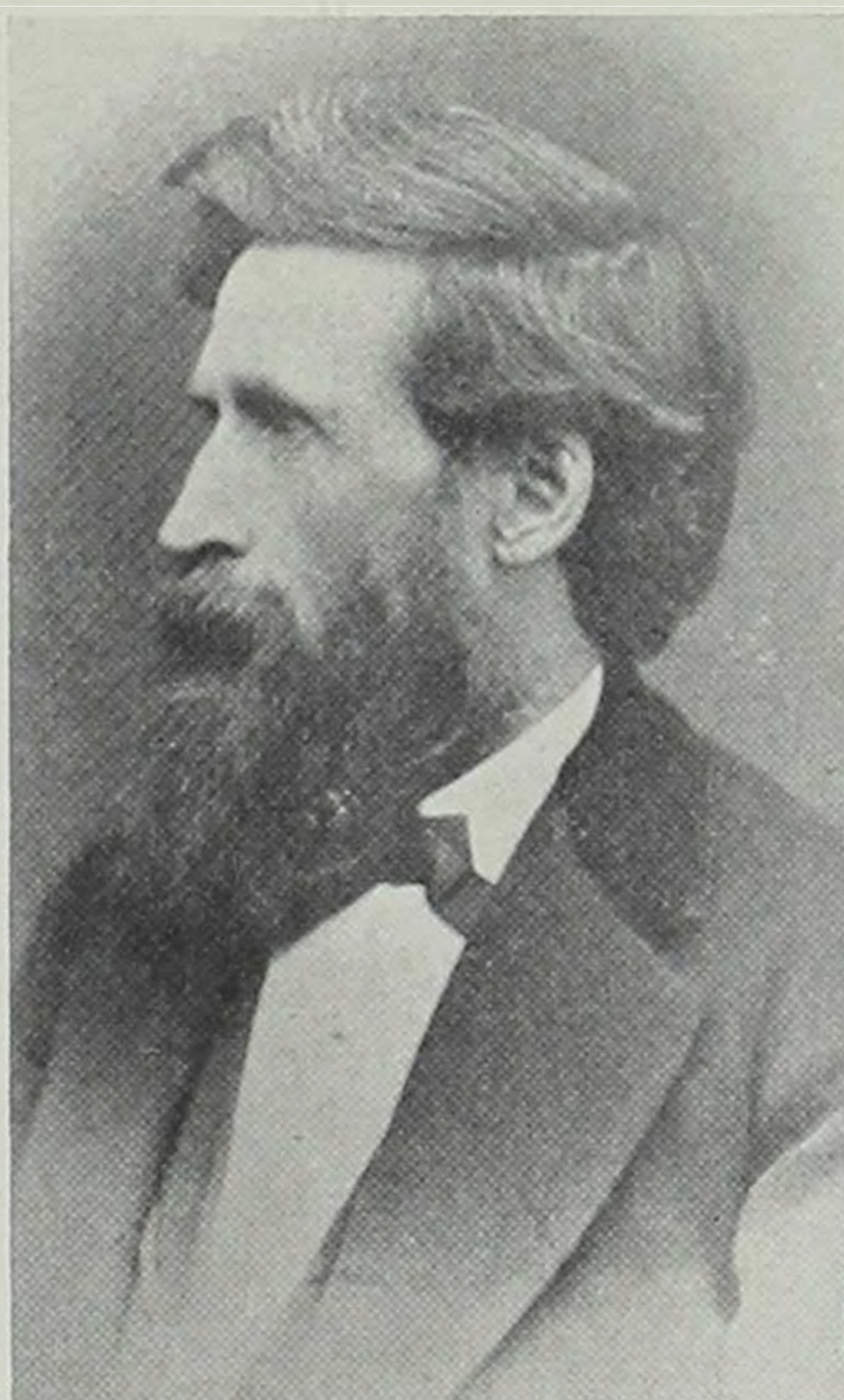
What Iowan has not had his nocturnal slumber broken by the mellifluous caterwauling of a congregation of cats? Shannon recorded a typical feline convention beneath his window sill:

There was a meeting of the feline committee down on our street Thursday night. It was a called meeting, evidently, to consider such business as might come before it. The proceedings began shortly after midnight just outside my bedroom window. Minutes of the last meeting were read and approved, after which a motion for adjournment was offered but failed to pass. An amendment to the original motion also failed. The meeting was then thrown open for general discussion and it became clear that the sentiment was completely divided. The matter was argued pro and con until 2 a.m. then a recess was called and the meeting was moved to new quarters across the street. Other motions were made but voted down. At times the arguments became loud and blasphemous. At 3 a.m. somebody along staid old West Main Street raised a window and yelled "Scat," but after a momentary silence business was resumed. At 4:15 a.m. there was a sound of rifle fire — just one shot — and the meeting adjourned sine die. It

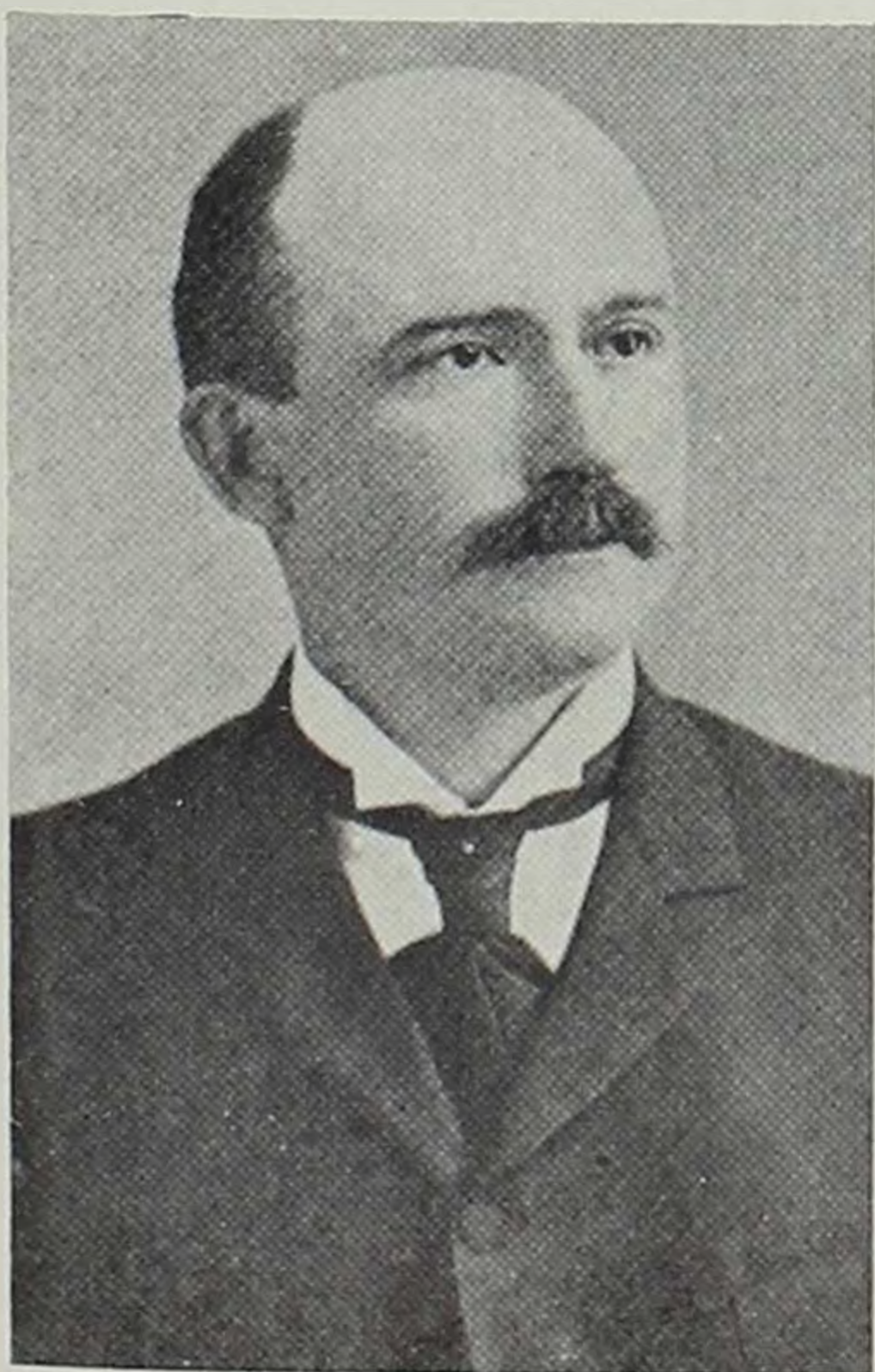
WASHINGTON'S NEWSPAPER PIONEERS



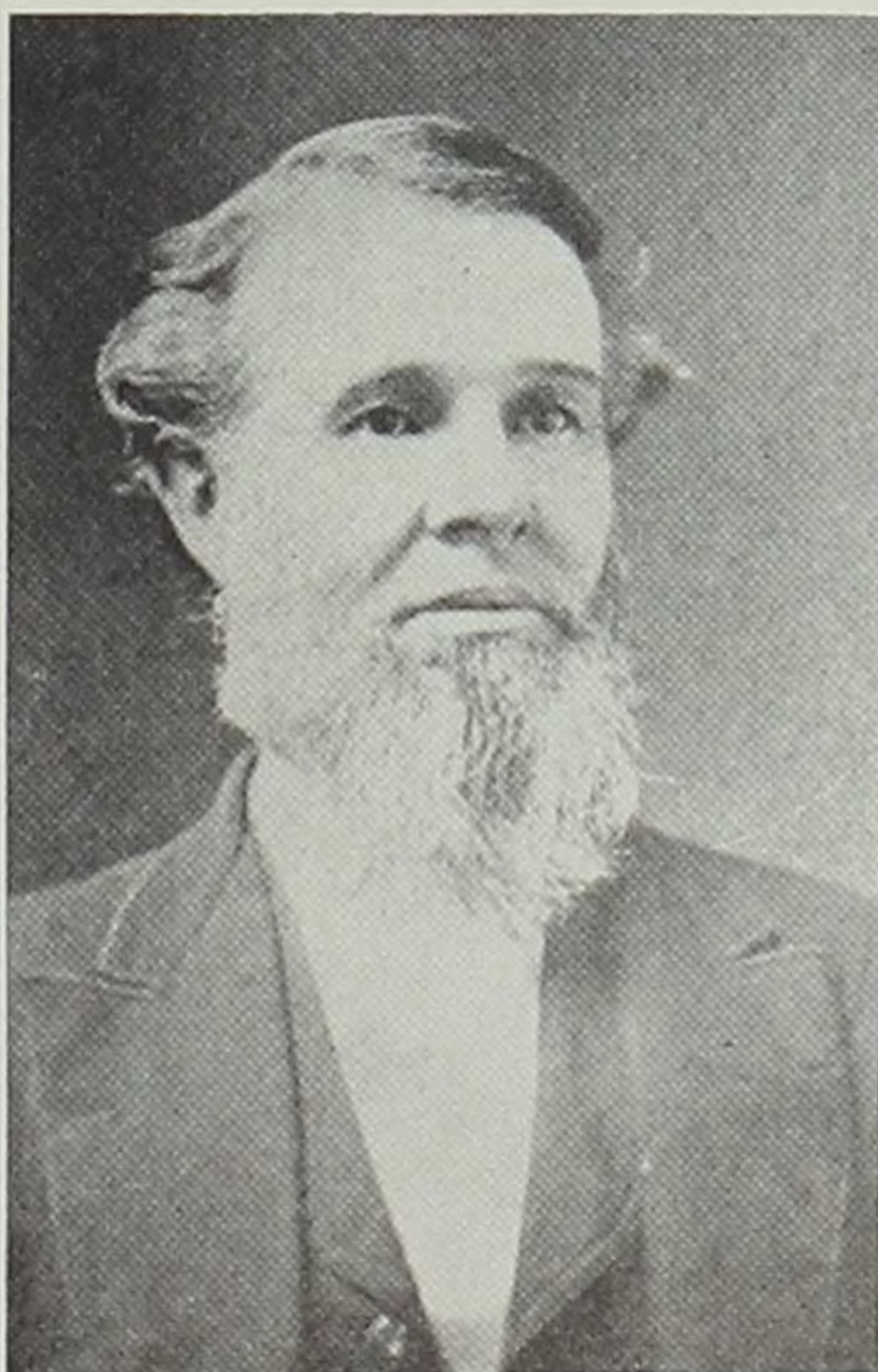
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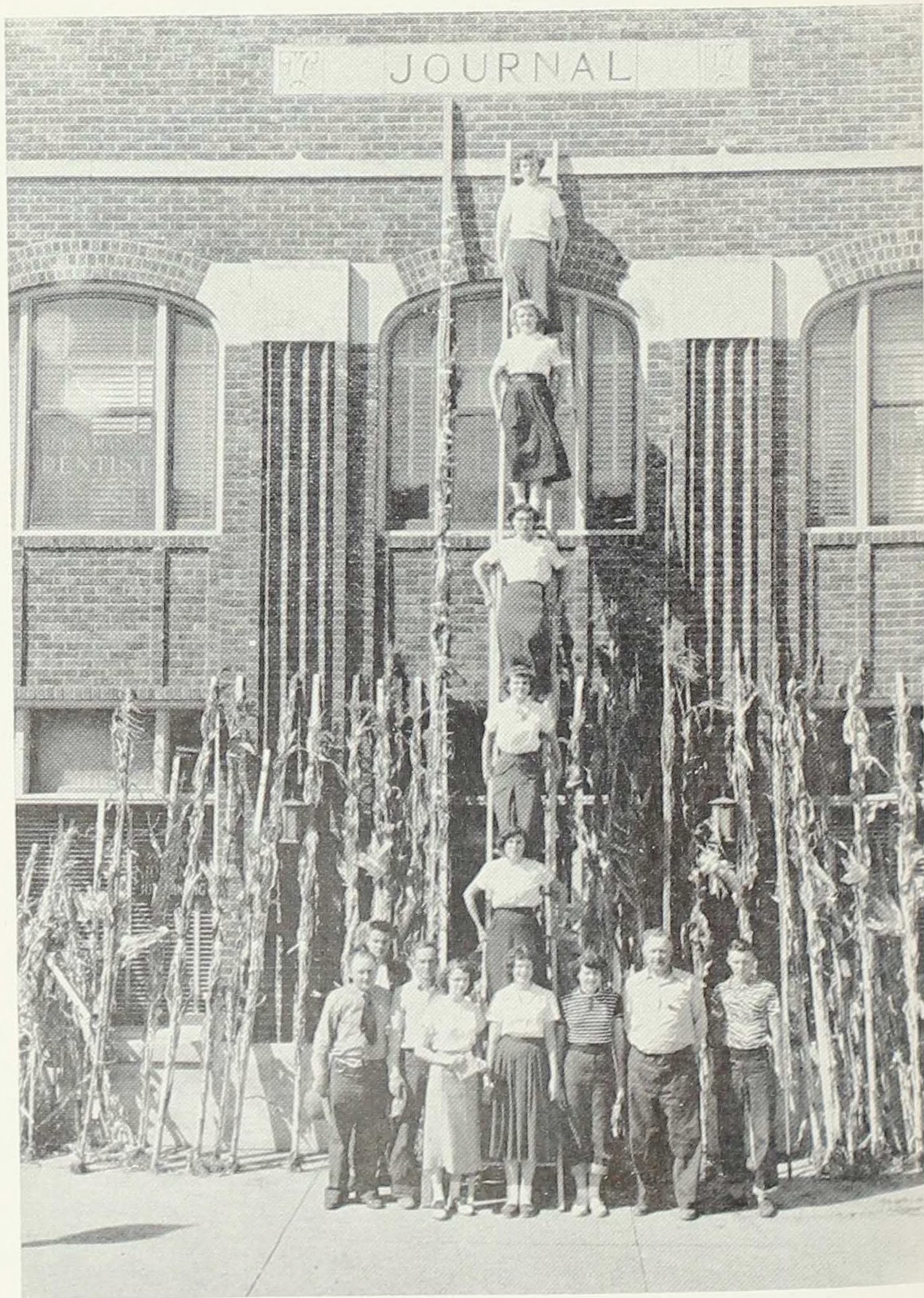
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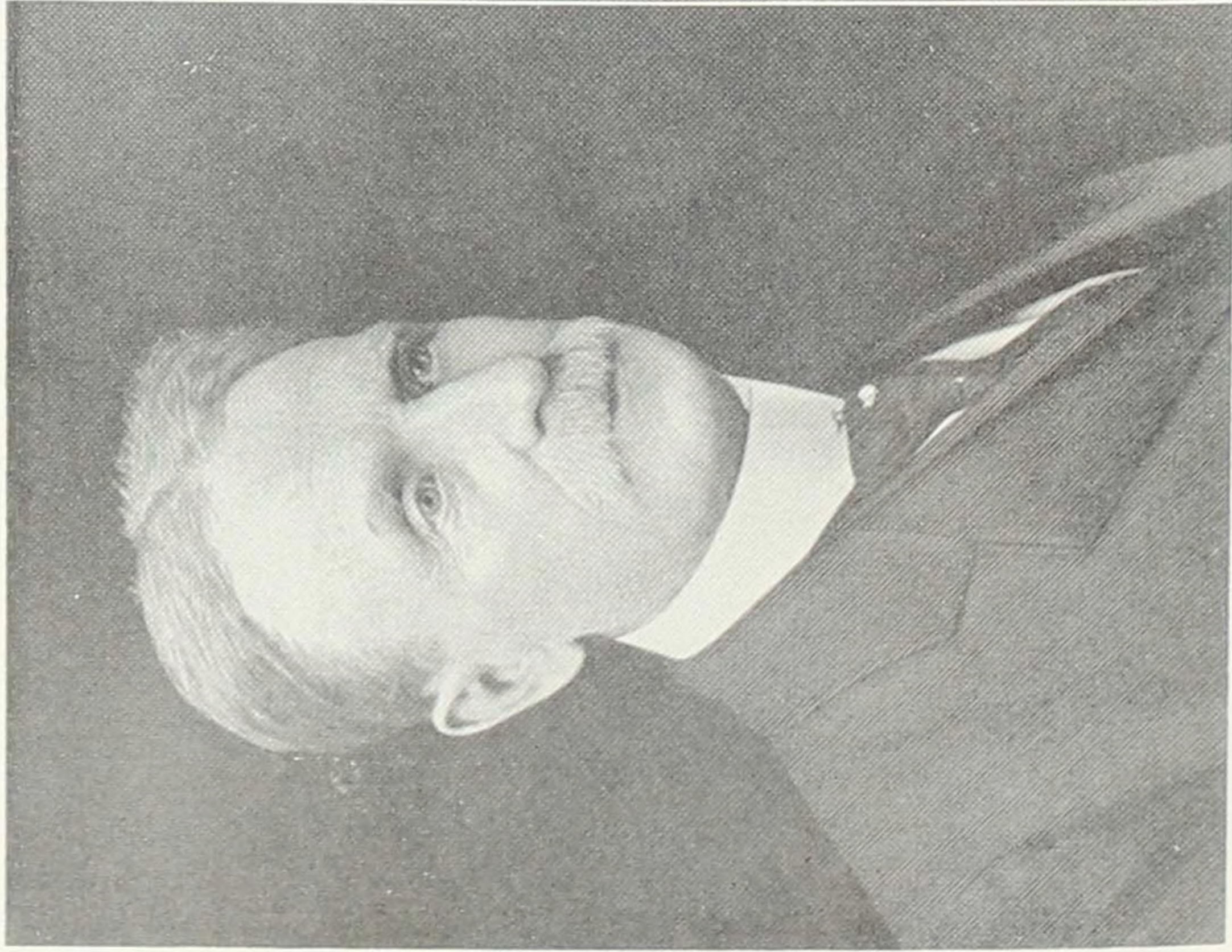
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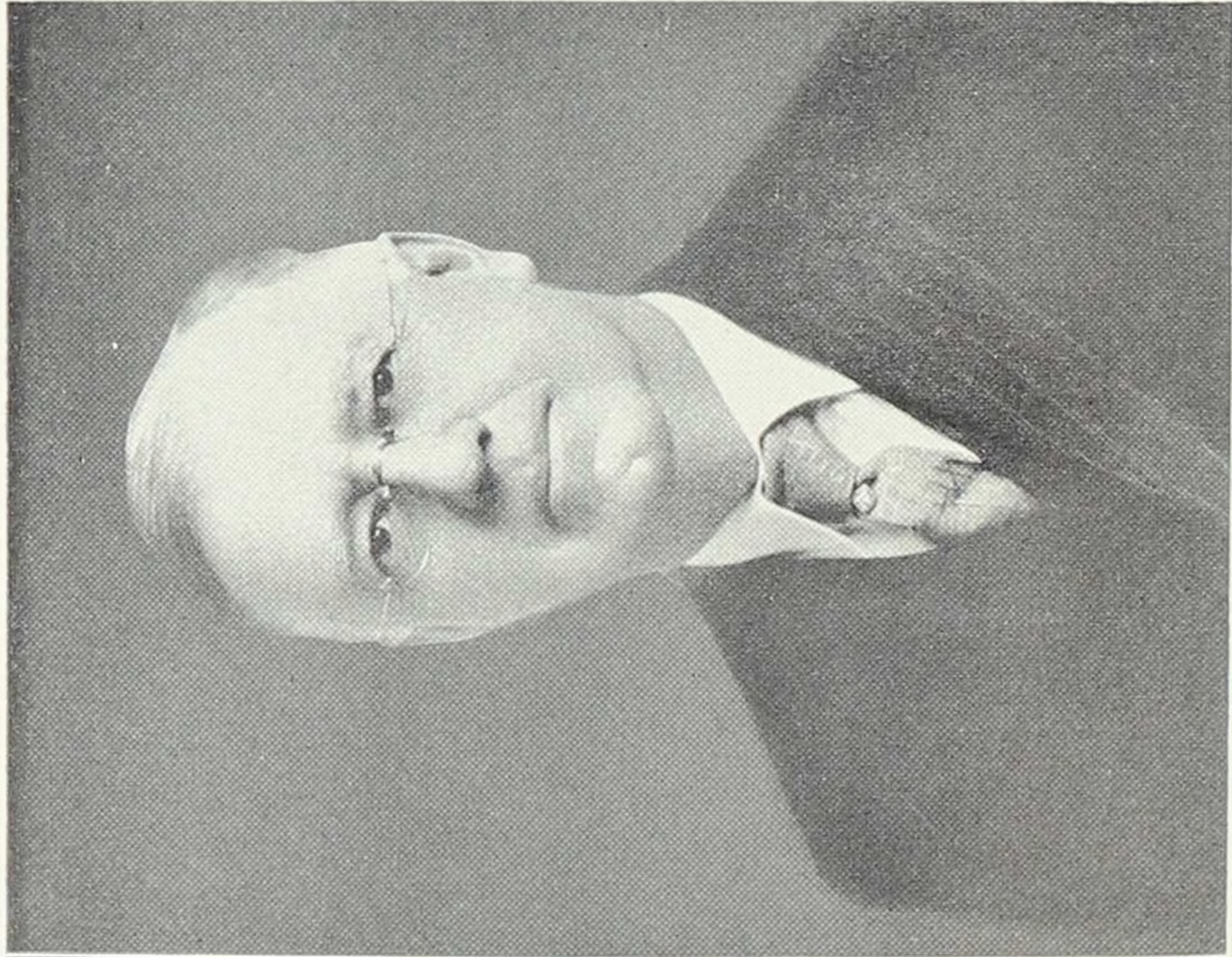
Don Radda (second from right) with Winning Entry in *Journal's*
1952 "Tall Corn" Contest



Children Viewing Washington's Colorama Fountain
Symbol of Civic Enterprise



HOWARD A. BURRELL
Editor of the *Press* from 1866 to 1903



ORVILLE ELDER
Editor of the *Journal* from 1900 to 1940

was daylight by then and too late to go back to sleep. These business meetings that run late and deal with technicalities are very tiring, aren't they?

In contrast to the above is his description of the meeting of two belligerent dogs in 1943.

Two dogs met on a street corner yesterday. One was a big black dog. The other was medium sized, with a four-inch chest expansion. They were mad at each other. You could tell by the expressions on their faces. Plainly there was mutual dislike and distrust. They walked stiff-legged and approached each other with great caution. One showed his teeth a little and growled. Each assumed a belligerent stance and looked afar off into space as though daring the other to knock the chip off his shoulder. For a full minute they stood there in a stiff, menacing attitude. It began to get tiresome. The middle-sized dog tried to relax a bit and move off about his business, but that seemed to be interpreted as cowardice. Instantly the big dog went into action and there was a furious melee that sounded like great damage was being done. But it ended quickly with the two dogs assuming the same stiff-legged stance and the belligerent attitude. Again they looked afar off beyond the horizon and breathed blasphemous threats, and we came away convinced that neither one of them wanted to fight very badly and that four-fifths of the show was bluff. People often act the same way. So do nations.

On October 5, 1951, Shannon saluted the half million newspaper boys in the United States — with special emphasis on the home town carriers. Since tens of thousands of Iowa boys have carried papers (the writer delivered the Dubuque *Telegraph-Herald* for five years) there is a universality

to this experience that is shared by parents as well as carriers.

I have been pretty closely associated with *Journal* carriers for more than 40 years. I have attended their annual parties, listened to their choice line of repartee, and watched them put away lots of food. I have seen the wide-eyed excitement of those who won prizes. I have also seen the expressions of disappointment in the faces of those who didn't. But I've always had the impression when the party was over that here is a grand group of kids.

In fact, if I had a dozen sons I would want each one to take the paper-carrier course. Again I speak from experience. I carried *Journals* many years ago when subscribers were scattered and there were no bicycles to ride. Cement sidewalks in my area hadn't been introduced. Then the two boys at our house came along and in due time each took a *Journal* route. I was much prouder than they when each eventually copped the big prize — a gold watch — because I knew by then what this business of paper carrying really means to a boy's education.

Perhaps 500 boys have carried *Journals* during this paper's existence, some serving for two or three years, which is about the limit, others for shorter terms. We've made a great blunder at the *Journal* because we didn't keep a complete record, down through the years, of those who carried. If we could produce those names now we could show you a list of splendid citizens, most of whom would testify, I'm sure, that what may have seemed a hardship during those *Journal*-carrying days, now is a source of real pride.

Come to think of it, I don't believe I have ever known a good, competent carrier who ever failed to become a good, competent citizen. Our local school men have told us many times that good carriers are usually good students, and the responsibilities which go with a *Journal* route have a way

of reflecting themselves favorably on the school report card. Here the parents have a tremendous influence. Some fathers and mothers — if I may be allowed to say so — let their natural sympathies clash head-on with the best interests of the boy. It isn't easy to see Junior sloshing out in a pouring rain or slogging into the swirling drifts of a blizzard, to deliver his papers. But of such experiences strong men are made.

You — the route customer — can also be very helpful to your carrier. A word of commendation now and then, as the opportunity presents itself, is usually loaded with encouragement. Maybe he did miss your porch the other night, but how about the 311 other evenings during the year when your paper landed — thump — just where you wanted it? Which are you most likely to mention?

In any case, you can help tremendously to make your carrier feel that he is an important cog in your daily routine — which he is — and that you have full confidence in him. That's one of the lessons he'll be remembering when he moves on up into the bigger job ahead. He'll know from his *Journal*-carrying days that there are a lot of fine people in this world.

And he will have another choice possession in his later years. No boy who contributes his own self-support through a useful job can miss it. It's the lesson of self-reliance.

Golly, how we're going to need men like that in the years just ahead.

Shannon's contributions run the whole gamut of human life from the value of the family doctor's services to the art of stemming gooseberries, building a robin's nest, or a profound discussion of the human race. Whatever he wrote, his followers read avidly. On his 65th birthday he opined:

I was 65 the other day. That makes me eligible for retirement, social security, an extra tax exemption, and all the other glories which go with serene senility.

There is another privilege, too. I now have the right, in due fatherly fashion, to talk down to youngsters of 40 and 50. From now on out advice will be my middle name, my stock and trade. Let there be none among you who would heed not the words of the prophet! . . .

Statistics say 10.4 percent of Iowa's population has reached the age of retirement. It's an exclusive group. They represent the rule of life, the law of the jungle. It is known as "the survival of the fittest."

Anyway, that's what you'll be thinking and saying when you're 65.

It is worth noting that members of the press of Iowa were not slow in heeding the words of wisdom of their latest member to enter the role of patriarch at 65.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN