

Iowa at the World's Fair

Iowa participated for the first time in a World's Fair at the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia in 1876, where the excellence of the Hawkeye display revealing the agricultural wealth and natural resources of the State lured many new settlers westward. Likewise at the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial at New Orleans in 1884, Iowa took a prominent part with the result that many new markets were found for her products not only throughout the southern States, but also in Central and South America.

In Iowa, too, during the late eighties and early nineties, the palace idea for exhibiting agricultural, horticultural, mechanical, and mineral resources became popular throughout the State. The corn palaces at Sioux City, the blue grass palaces at Creston, the flax palace at Forest City, and the coal palace at Ottumwa were visited by thousands of Iowans and by many people from adjoining States. It was not surprising, then, that Iowa took an interest in the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago, and was the first State to apply for a site for a building.

In fact, as early as April 15, 1890, the Twenty-third General Assembly enacted a measure providing that Iowa should have an exhibit of agricultural, mineral, mechanical, industrial, educational, and

other resources at the proposed Exposition to be held in 1892. Since the next session of the State legislature would not convene until January, 1892, it was necessary that action be taken this early if the State were to participate officially in the contemplated World's Fair. Meanwhile, Congress had been considering the matter of providing for the Exposition, and eventually, ten days after the Iowa General Assembly had taken action, made an appropriation for the support of the Fair and fixed the date for 1893.

In accordance with the provisions of the Iowa law, the Executive Council appointed an Iowa Commission of eleven members, one from each of the congressional districts. On the call of the Governor the appointees met in the Capitol at Des Moines, and on September 2, 1890, organized, elected officers, appointed committees, and forthwith began their work.

The act of Congress fixing 1893 as the date of the Fair gave the Commission plenty of time for their task and so their first efforts were directed toward arousing State-wide enthusiasm for the project. To this end an address to the people of Iowa was published in newspapers throughout the State, explaining the unparalleled scope of the proposed Exposition and the desirability of Iowa being adequately represented.

At the regular meeting of the Commission in February, 1891, a committee was appointed to visit Chicago and to apply for a site for the Iowa State

Building. Indeed, the request from Iowa for a location was made even before the plan for laying off the ground had matured. When the survey of Jackson Park and the plat of the fair grounds were completed it was found that the acre and a half assigned to Iowa lay within the region desired for the buildings of foreign countries, and so a favorable exchange was made whereby Iowa secured a choice location on Lake Michigan, and France and Ceylon obtained the space originally held by Iowa.

A comprehensive plan of promotion and preparation for the Fair was adopted by the Commission. The secretary, F. N. Chase of Cedar Falls, visited many cities of the State for the purpose of securing the coöperation of the press, boards of trade, and industrial organizations. He also issued a circular letter to the farmers of Iowa urging their assistance in making the exhibit a credit to the State. Large quantities of World's Fair literature were distributed during the summer and fall of 1891, at the State Fair in Des Moines, at the Coal Palace in Ottumwa, at the Blue Grass Palace in Creston, at the Corn Palace in Sioux City, at the Flax Palace in Forest City, and at county fairs generally throughout the State.

The next step in preparation for the event was to secure a sufficient appropriation from the Twenty-fourth General Assembly. The previous General Assembly in providing for the participation of Iowa in the World's Fair had appropriated \$5000 for the

use of the Commission in promoting the project. During the summer of 1891, the Populists, Democrats, and Republicans all adopted resolutions at their State conventions in which they favored a liberal appropriation by the next legislature for the Iowa exhibit. Accordingly, the Executive Committee of the Commission made a report to the General Assembly recommending an appropriation of \$300,000. Although special committees of the House and of the Senate recommended the passage of a bill to appropriate the amount recommended, when final action was taken by the State legislature the total was reduced to \$125,000.

This slashing reduction in the contemplated appropriation necessitated a thorough revision and general cutting down of the estimates for the exhibit. The Commission was reorganized, standing committees were rearranged, and the work of collecting exhibits classified into nine departments each of which was placed under the special charge of one Commissioner. From that time forward until the opening of the Exposition, the Commission actively and energetically carried forward the details of preparation, eager to make the best showing possible with the means available.

The Iowa Commission saved considerable expense at the outset by virtue of the fact that on the new site for the State Building stood a permanent structure called the "Shelter" which was then and is still a pavilion for the convenience of Jackson Park vis-

itors. Permission was given to make use of this substantial edifice in any way desired, provided that it was restored to its original condition when the Exposition ended. The "Shelter" was a rectangular building, eighty by one hundred and twenty feet in dimensions, and one story high, built of brick and stone, with conical towers on the corners after the style of a French chateau. The interior was open to the roof, making a hall unsurpassed for exhibition purposes. Adjoining the "Shelter" on the east was a cement promenade protected from the waves of Lake Michigan by an ornamental sea-wall.

A two-story addition sixty by one hundred and twelve feet in size, and architecturally in harmony with the "Shelter", was erected on the west. The principal entrance to the building was on the south side between two large circular towers toward the western end of the structure. Over the central arch of the entrance appeared the word "IOWA" in bold relief. On the two towers flanking the entrance were decorated panels, one set containing the names of Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Clinton, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, Fort Madison, Keokuk, Marshalltown, Muscatine, Ottumwa, and Sioux City — the thirteen largest cities of the State arranged alphabetically. In the panels on the other tower were the following historical inscriptions: "Settled by Dubuque in 1788", "Louisiana Purchase, 1803", "Territory of Michigan, 1834", "Territory of Wisconsin, 1836", "Territory of Iowa,

1838'', "State of Iowa, 1846''. Other panels, medallions, and bas-reliefs on the dormers, turrets, and frieze of the building represented the progress of various industries of the State, the Territorial Seal and the State Seal, and portraits of Keokuk and Black Hawk. Numerous flag poles on the turrets and roof made possible the extensive use of flags, pennants, and streamers.

The firm of Milward and Clark of Sioux City, already well known for their skill in decorating the corn palaces, used twelve hundred bushels of corn and over three carloads of grain in adorning the spacious interior of the "Shelter''. From the ridge of the roof to the walls, the ceiling was divided into three sections separated into panels, each of which was filled with an artistic design made from corn and other grains. The fourteen panels of the middle section depicted scenes representative of Iowa industries, while at each end of the ceiling was a panel showing an American eagle on a shield device. Where the pillars joined the roof was a frieze with elaborate scroll work made of festoons of corn, wheat, and millet seed. The iron pillars themselves were completely covered with mosaic patterns made from ears and grains of corn of many colors, their capitals being worked out in corn husks and millet heads. Facing the eastern entrance of the pavilion was an heroic group made of grain, the central figure of which was a woman representing Iowa fostering her industries. In the space between the pillars

were pyramids and pagodas artistically decorated with products of the farm and mine, and a miniature flax palace of interesting workmanship. In the center of the pavilion stood a glass model of the State Capitol, twenty-three feet long, thirteen feet wide, and twenty-one feet high, and filled completely with grain. The sheer beauty of the interior of the exhibition hall of the Iowa Building, every inch of which, except the floor, was covered with colorful designs made from corn and small grain, never failed to elicit praise from the thousands of visitors who came to see what Iowa had to offer.

The new section of the Iowa Building was arranged for and devoted to the accommodation of the public and officials. It contained on the first floor a large reception hall, parlors for women, a parlor and smoking room for men, a room for the Governor of Iowa, another for the Commission, a post-office, and writing rooms. On the second floor was an assembly hall used also for a display of women's handiwork, two press rooms, and sleeping apartments for officers. The attic served admirably as quarters for the janitors.

The walls of the new section of the Iowa State Building were decorated by fresco artists, and the rooms were furnished with the light-colored reed furniture so popular in the early nineties. Rope portieres in wide doorways, carbon filament electric lights in curlicued, scroll-encrusted fixtures were elegant touches of the latest style. On a mantel in

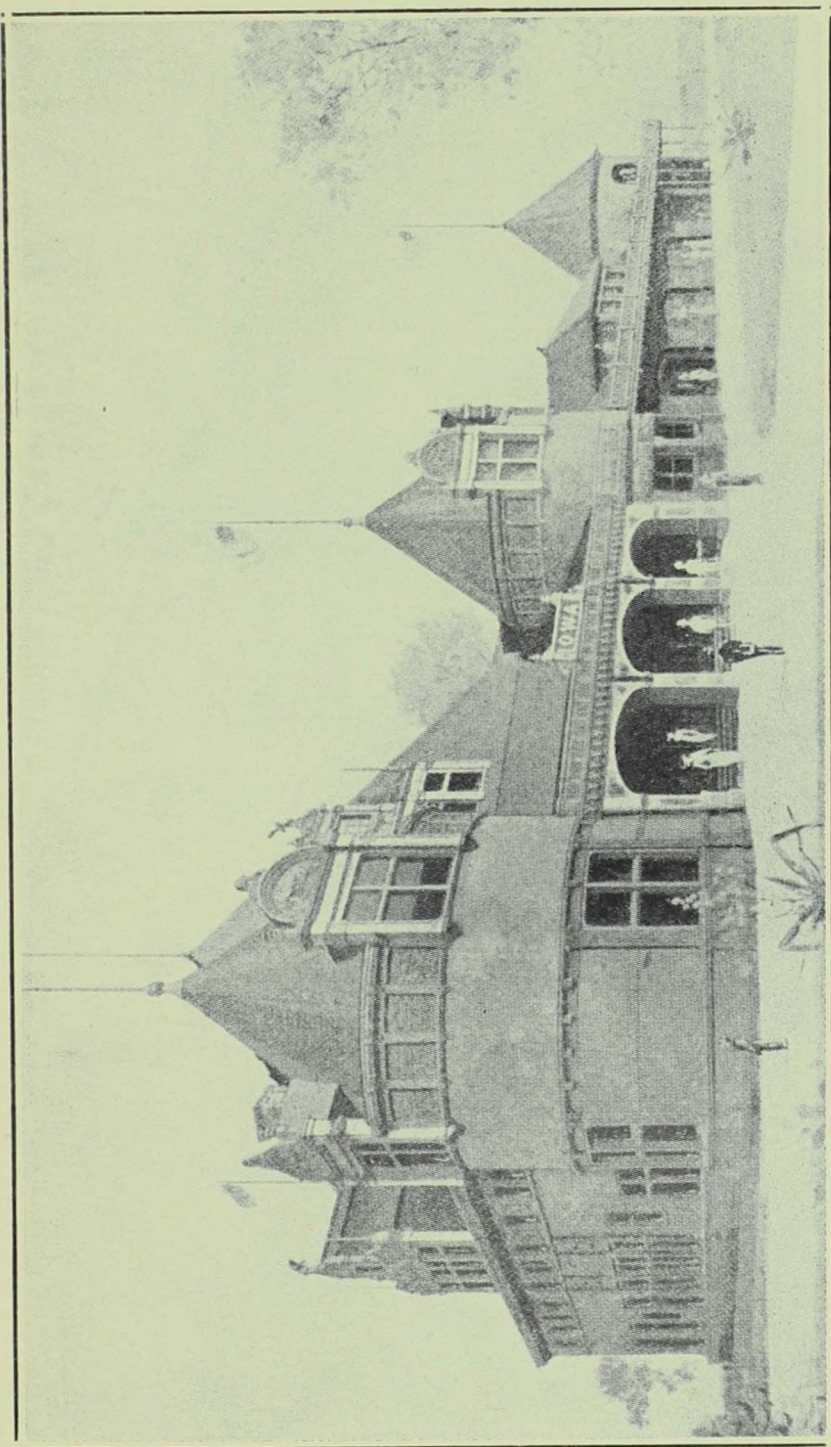
one of the parlors was a clock furnished by the ladies of Iowa City — its case made of Iowa "marble" and modeled after the Old Stone Capitol. The ladies of Vinton contributed a table and two chairs for this room, specimens of their own skill in woodwork, while the ladies of Dunlap sent a large carved chair upholstered in leather.

The press rooms of the Iowa Building were masterpieces of the decorator's art of three decades ago. Mrs. John F. Duncombe of Fort Dodge was given permission to embellish these rooms at her own expense. The walls and ceilings were covered with a material called cementico made at Fort Dodge. The center of the ceiling was tinted a bluish green color which blended into a warm buff near the walls. The four corners of the ceiling were decorated in a scroll design with a running vine in which were interwoven facsimile names of the leading newspapers in the State. Where the ceiling met the walls was a pale sage-green molding done in heavy stipple representing icicles tipped with gold. The walls were stippled in light warm buff to the chair rail, and below it in a light terra-cotta color. Above the chair rail was an extensive border adorned with figures symbolic of the printing craft. Newsboys were running after customers, the printer's devil was in evidence, while shears, paste pots, ink bottles, and pens were so arranged as to appear ready for use. Above the baseboard was a band in rosette stipple lined with gold and copper colors. A mantel

over the fireplace was finished in rich tints and a large painting of a printing press labeled the "Iowa Cultivator" filled the fire breast. The woodwork throughout the press rooms was painted to harmonize with the walls and striped with gold.

Not only were visitors at the World's Fair delighted with the charm and comfort of the State Building, but they were equally impressed by the quality and quantity of Iowa exhibits in other parts of the Exposition. In the Agricultural Building, for example, the Iowa display occupied over two thousand square feet of space in the center of the huge hall. The pavilion erected on this space was Moorish in design with the framework concealed beneath a covering of fancy-colored corn, small grain, seeds, grasses, goldenrod, sumach, sorghum cane, cattails, corn tassels, wild sage, and many other seeds, plants, and flowers. In front of the pavilion a railing of glass tubes each six feet long showed the depth of Iowa soil in various parts of the State. Inside the pavilion were six ornamental pagodas decorated with corn and grain, and on them were displayed grains and vegetables in such an attractive manner that the Jury of Awards gave Iowa both a medal and a diploma for the best and most artistically arranged collection of farm and garden products.

Another interesting part of the Iowa display in the Agricultural Building was the section set apart for dairy and apiary products. Iowa butter occupied fifty feet of glass refrigerating cases, and



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received one hundred and twenty awards; while Iowa honey, on account of the delicate color of the comb variety and the clear golden hue of the extracted type, made a tempting exhibit in a glass-enclosed area. Many foreign visitors as well as citizens from other States obtained samples of Iowa clover honey and placed orders for future shipments.

As at Philadelphia and at New Orleans the horticultural display made by Iowa at Chicago was a revelation even to Iowans themselves. Although the sparseness and inferior quality of the fruit crop in 1893 made the collection of fruit in sufficient quantity and of proper quality a laborious process, nevertheless, Iowa was one of the few States with a complete exhibit at the opening of the Exposition. Every species of fruit cultivated in the State was on display at some time during the period of the Fair. Pears and peaches, rich in color; tame plums and wild plums, some thirty varieties in all; and apples (sixty-one summer varieties, one hundred and twenty-four fall kinds, and one hundred and sixty-six winter varieties) occupied long, decorated tables built with pyramid-like shelves. As the summerfruits — strawberries, cherries, raspberries, gooseberries, currants, and blackberries — ripened, they were gathered and forwarded to the exhibit; but the lack of refrigerating service and the time elapsing between the gathering of these fruits and their installation in the heated atmosphere of Pomological Hall

made it impossible to keep them long in presentable condition. The display of Iowa grapes was particularly attractive to visitors. Above a long table near the center of the Iowa exhibit rose two shelves, one above the other, from which and around which were suspended artificial grape vines some one hundred and fifty feet in length. Eighty-nine varieties of grapes from all parts of the State were strung on these vines in such a way that the large and select clusters appeared to splendid advantage.

While Iowa was expected to make an unusually fine display of agricultural products it was a bit difficult to convince those in charge of the Mines and Mining Building that the State should have as much space as was desired for a mineral and geological exhibit. In order to show the quality and extent of the coal fields of Iowa, blocks of coal from twenty-seven counties were built up in the form of a pyramid with a miniature coal mine on the top. Nearby was a realistic representation of a miner at work showing the entry room to a mine, a track and car, and a vein of coal. In a grotto furnished by the ladies of Dubuque were displayed many specimens of lead ore and stalactites and stalagmites found in the limestone caves in that section of the State. Another attractive feature of the exhibit was a mantle made of different colored, highly polished "marble" from Iowa quarries. Blocks of gypsum from the vicinity of Fort Dodge, limestone cut and dressed for building blocks, clays and clay products

— brick, tile, pottery, sewer pipe, and terra-cotta ware — made an imposing array of geological specimens and products.

The extensive educational exhibit made by Iowa in the gallery of the Liberal Arts Building occupied some two thousand feet of floor space. The work shown, which consisted of specimens of every branch of school work from the kindergarten through the high school, attracted the favorable attention of American and foreign educators. The commissioners from France and Germany asked for part of the exhibit to carry back with them, while the proposed Columbian Museum, the Philadelphia Educational Museum, and the National Bureau at Washington, D. C., applied for part of it. Many awards were received by Iowa schools for the excellence of the work displayed at Chicago.

Perhaps, however, one of the most praiseworthy achievements of the Iowa Commission was the publication and free distribution of twenty-five thousand copies of a hundred and fifty-four page volume entitled *A Hand Book of Iowa*. This handbook was given to many citizens of Iowa and other States, to commercial agencies, public libraries, educational institutions, editors, foreign and State commissioners, and to all who requested copies as long as the edition lasted. The project was an interesting bit of publicity that called attention to the history and resources of Iowa.

Undoubtedly part of the favorable impression

made by Iowa at Chicago in 1893 was due to the Iowa State Band. Assisted by a donation from the Executive Council, the Iowa Commission engaged this well-known Des Moines organization, supplemented by expert musicians from other places in the State and under the leadership of Bandmaster Frederick Phinney, to give two concerts daily at the Iowa State Building and to participate at special ceremonies in which Iowa had a part. The band began its services on May 1, 1893, the opening day of the Exposition, and became at once a leading attraction. Its excellent music, splendid appearance, and the gentlemanly deportment of its personnel attracted the attention of State Commissions, foreign Commissions, and the Board of Management of the Exposition so that its services were in constant demand by these groups for parades and ceremonies. Later, the Board of Management of the Exposition engaged the band at a liberal salary to give daily concerts at various band stands throughout the grounds. In addition to its regular engagements at the Iowa Building, the Iowa State Band assisted at the dedication of many State and foreign buildings. It played at a banquet given to Princess Eulalia, Infanta of Spain, in the parade for the "King of Kings" of India, at the Congress of All Nations, at the grand parade of premium live stock of the world, and at the opening of the celebrated Ferris Wheel. At the close of the Exposition the Iowa State Band was engaged for the World's Chrysan-

themum Exposition at Chicago, played for thirteen weeks at the Mid-winter Exposition at San Francisco, and made a successful tour of the principal cities throughout the United States.

Certain days during the World's Columbian Exposition were of more than ordinary importance to Iowans. For example, on October 22, 1892, the day following the general dedication of the Exposition buildings and grounds, the Iowa State Building — then nearly completed — was presented to Governor Horace Boies by James O. Crosby, of Garnavillo, president of the Iowa Commission. The Governor, in turn, dedicated the building and tendered it to the Board of Management of the Exposition. The presence of the Governor and his staff, members of the Executive Council, the Iowa State Band, several companies of the Iowa National Guard, officers of the World's Fair, and a host of Iowans and other visitors made this celebration a memorable preliminary to the World's Fair.

Again on May 1, 1893, the opening day of the Exposition, the Iowa State Building was thrown open to the visiting public, and Iowa was one of the few States with an exhibit completely installed. From the southeast corner of the Iowa Building visitors had a magnificent view of the cobalt expanse of Lake Michigan to the east, of the Esplanade in front of the Court of Nations to the south, and of Midway Plaisance to the west.

On August 3, 1893, members of the Iowa Press

Association were guests at the Iowa Building. Commissioner J. W. Jarnagin gave the address of welcome, to which Lafayette Young, president of the Press Association, replied in a felicitous manner. The Iowa State Band played several selections and later in the afternoon the Iowa Commission, assisted by the Iowa Board of Lady Managers, held a reception for the Iowa editors and members of the United States Board of Lady Managers.

Late in September cadets from West Point, who had been in camp at the Exposition for several weeks, were given a taste of Hawkeye hospitality at the Iowa Building prior to their departure for the East. They, as well as all other guests and visitors at the Iowa Building, were convinced of the truth of the motto which they saw above a fireplace in the main hall — "*Iowa*: the affections of her people, like the rivers of her borders, flow to an inseparable union".

But the gala days for Iowa at Chicago were September 20 and 21, 1893, designated by the Board of Management as "Iowa Days". It seemed to observers that the whole State had turned out en masse to celebrate the occasion. All day long, September 19, long trains with crowded cars rolled into Chicago from Iowa. Thousands hurried directly to the Exposition grounds without looking up a room or a canvas cot for the night. As soon as they passed the turnstiles they made a bee-line for the Iowa Building, and stood in line to register. Every loyal

Hawkeye father felt it his duty to write his name and the names of his children in the big book.

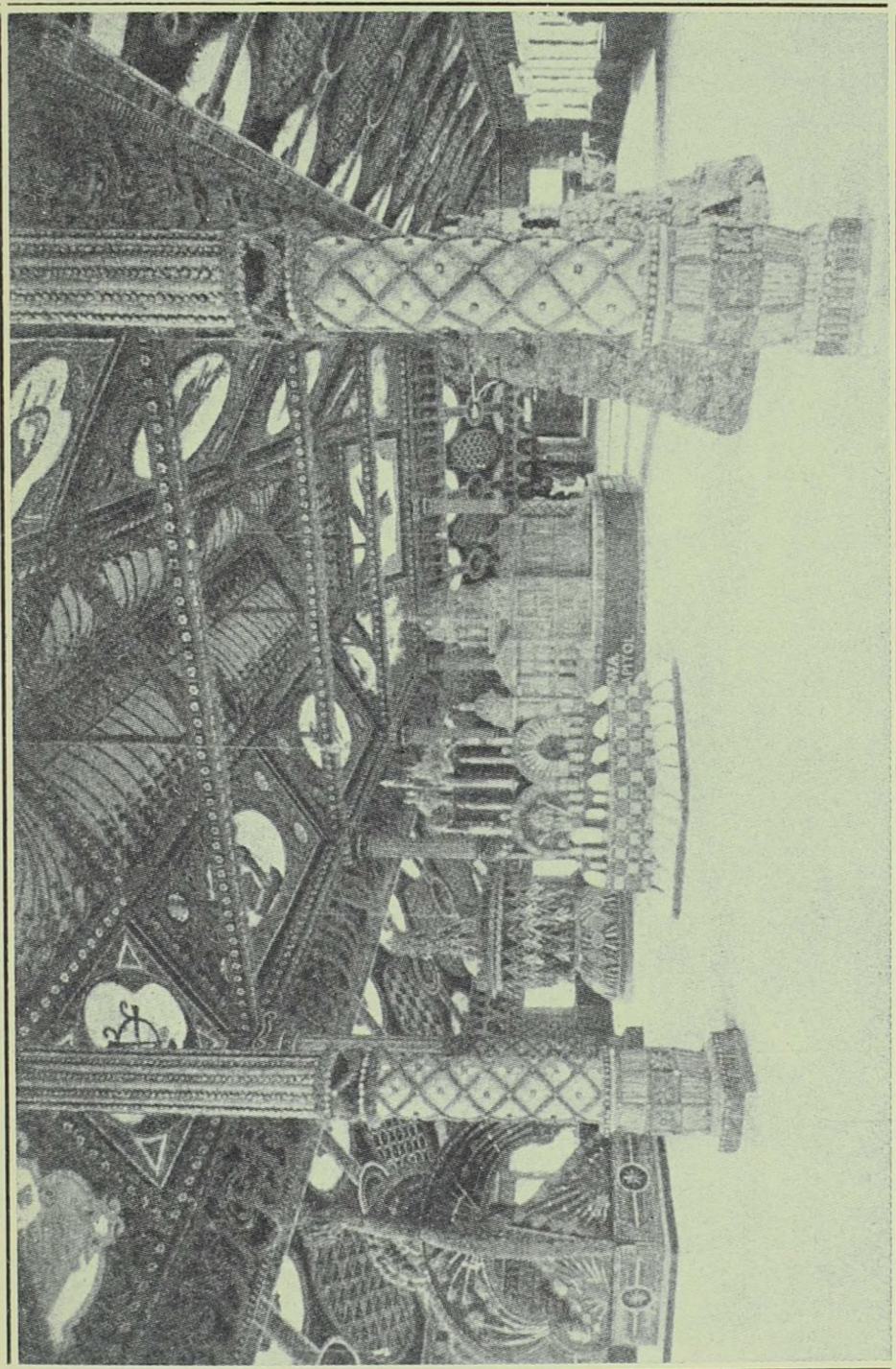
For the first time in weeks the morning of September 20th threatened rain, but nothing could dampen the enthusiasm of the thousands of Iowans who had come to participate in the celebration. At eleven o'clock, Governor Boies and his staff, followed by a long line of horsemen and carriages, were met at the Fifty-seventh Street entrance to the grounds by the State Commission, the Iowa State Band, and the cadets from Iowa State College at Ames. The cadets, over three hundred in number under the command of General J. Rush Lincoln, formed the main body of the escort. Behind them marched half a hundred maidens, also from Ames, attired in blue Zouave jackets, blouse waists, blue skirts, and turbans. The officers of the lady battalion had swords while the others carried spears in lieu of muskets. Then came thirty "stout and stalwart men of Lyons", the crack drill corps of the State, under the command of Colonel C. L. Root. The Cadet Band from the Agricultural College, twenty-five in number, added another colorful touch to the procession.

With the two bands alternating, they played the Governor all around the grounds, past the Women's Building, the Horticultural, Mines, Electricity, and Government buildings, thence north along the Esplanade bordering Lake Michigan. There was a continuous ovation given to the marching Iowans by the

immense crowd along the route of the procession. The parade halted at the Iowa Building while General Lincoln put his cadets through a fancy drill. Then the young ladies gave an exhibition of their military knowledge and their dexterity with the spear. Next the Lyons Drill Corps executed a series of military evolutions faultlessly. In the afternoon a reception was given for the Governor, attended by State and foreign Commissioners, the Board of Lady Managers, and thousands of Iowans and visitors.

The program for the day closed with a magnificent display of fireworks. One set piece pictured the Iowa State Capitol, and another presented a large portrait of Governor Boies. A repetition of the parade and drills on the following forenoon was no less interesting than the first, while formal exercises of speeches and music in Festival Hall ended the Iowa celebration.

It had been a strenuous two days for the visiting Iowans because many of them tried to see everything in that space of time. In addition to participating in the State celebration many wanted to visit the machinery exhibit from their home city, or perhaps to see some neighbor's fancy work in the Women's Building, or to compare the excellent live stock exhibit from the home State with that from the rest of the world, as well as to see everything else en route. Then there was Midway Plaisance with its many attractions, and the Court of Honor,



THE PAVILION IN THE IOWA BUILDING

and the replicas of the ships used by Columbus, and the Government Building, and a thousand other features of this fairyland of wonders. But notwithstanding the wealth and appeal of other attractions the Iowa excursionists left Chicago, justly proud of the showing made by their own State at the World's Columbian Exposition.

BRUCE E. MAHAN