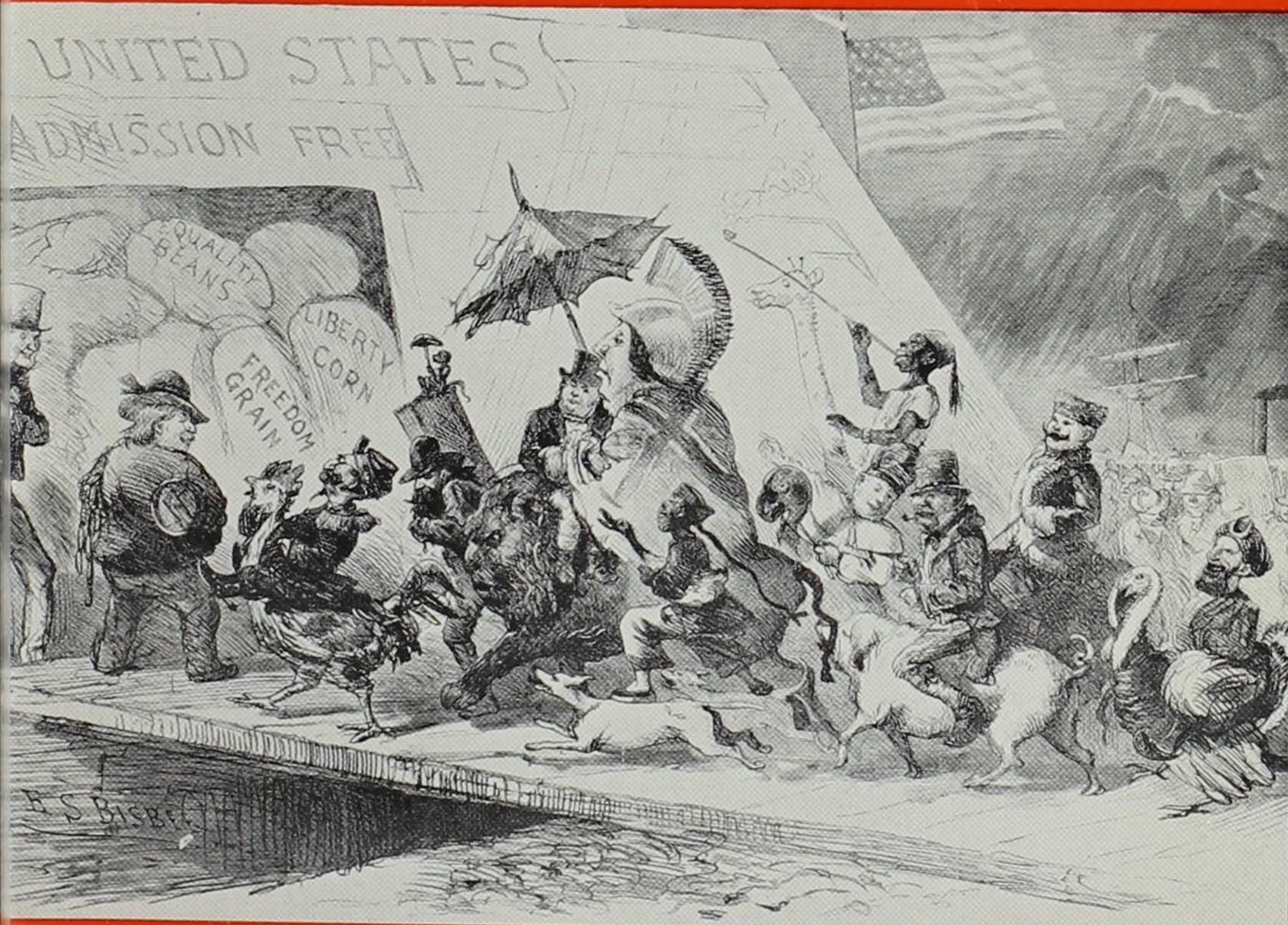


# *The* **PALIMPSEST**



THE MODERN ARK

**The Coming of the Foreigners**

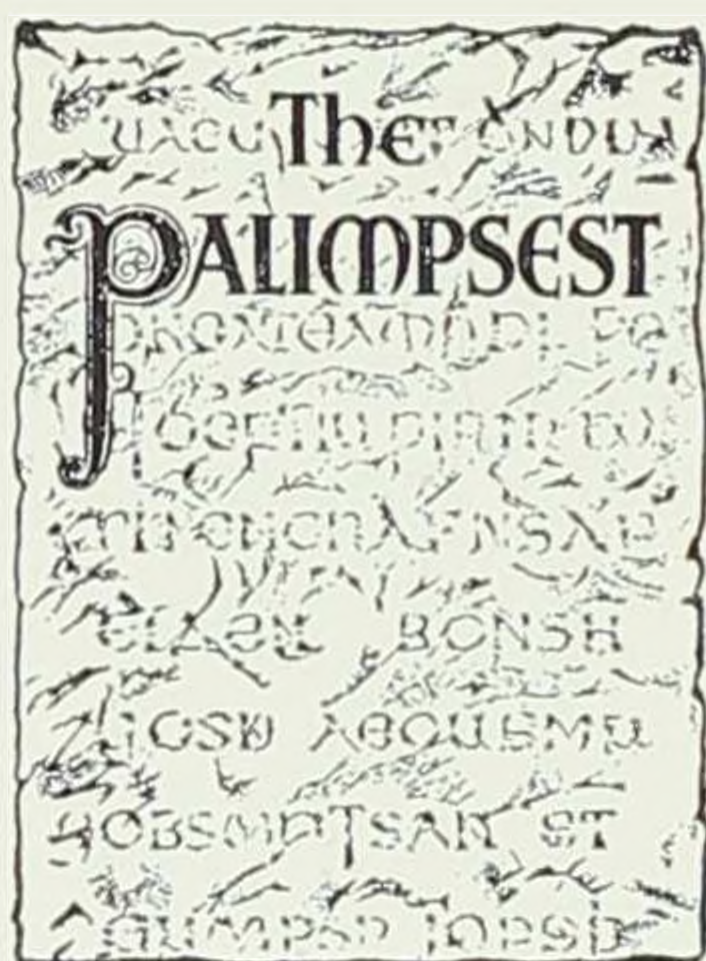
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## *The Meaning of Palimpsest*

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.

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HOMER L. CALKIN

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## *Illustrations*

All maps and graphs were prepared by Dr. Homer L. Calkin, and the pictures selected by him and photographed by the Library of Congress from various issues of *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*.

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# THE PALIMPSEST

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## From Many Lands

In 1840 the population of the Territory of Iowa, which was only two years old, numbered 43,112. A century later more than two and one-half million people lived within the state's boundaries. "Whence came all these people?" to quote an early observer of American life. The same person provides the answer to this question: "They are a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans and Swedes." For Iowa one should add the Danes, Norwegians, Italians, Bohemians, Hungarians — in fact, almost every nationality of the world. The concept of the United States as a great melting pot for all races and nationalities has been repeated in Iowa on a somewhat smaller but no less complex scale.

Iowa has had many close associations with foreigners from earliest days. The first white men to set eyes on this land were Frenchmen, Joliet and Marquette. However, it was not until 1833 that permanent settlement began. Not a single permanent settlement was made during the 130



years covering the French and Spanish periods of Iowa history.

The tide of emigrants came first chiefly from Western Europe, the British Isles and British possessions in the Western Hemisphere. Although we may not be sure how fast this early tide of emigration rose, we do know that there were 20,969 foreign born persons in Iowa by 1850. This amounted to 10.9 percent of the total population. The peak was reached in 1890 when more than one out of every six Iowans was born in a foreign country. For another twenty years more than ten percent were foreign born. Even in the census of 1950, Iowa's population included 84,582 foreign born residents.

The first concentrations of foreigners in Iowa were usually in the more settled areas, especially along the Mississippi River, the Iowa River and the eastern half of the Iowa-Minnesota boundary. By 1860 Dubuque County led all others numerically and on the basis of percentages; foreigners numbered 12,958 or 41.5 percent of the total population. Other counties having more than 5,000 from the old country included Clayton, Clinton, Lee, Scott and Winneshiek. At the extreme northwest part of the state one could find few, if any, who had braved the tortuous voyage across the Atlantic, avoided the many pitfalls of the port cities like New York, found their way a thousand miles or more across the United States and tried



to gain a living from the tough virgin soil. For instance, there were only three families from Ireland and four from Norway in Emmett County in 1860.

During the next thirty years the number of foreign born in Iowa had tripled, to 324,920 or 16.9 percent of the total. By 1890 seventy-six of the counties had undergone increases. Thirty-five had more than twenty percent from foreign countries. Scott County had the greatest number with 13,208 although Dubuque and Woodbury counties were not far behind. With a greater emphasis on settling northwest Iowa, there was a comparable increase in that area while the percentage of immigrants in eastern Iowa became less.

For instance, Audubon County had only twenty-six foreigners in 1860. By 1890 large numbers of Germans and Danes brought the total to 2,345. Buena Vista had only one foreigner in 1860 but 3,547 in 1890. They were mostly Germans, Swedes, and Danes. Irishmen made up the principal group that caused an increase from twenty-one to 1,853 in Greene County while the Dutch accounted for more than half the increase, from none to 6,220 in Sioux County.

In the next three decades, 1890-1920, foreigners in Iowa decreased by approximately 100,000 while the overall population increased by twenty-five percent. Numerically, Polk County was in the lead with 13,603 while Sioux County had the largest percentage of foreign



born — 22.1. Even so, the census enumerators reported increases in a number of cases due to the larger and later influx of Russians, Italians, and Bohemians.

In 1920 the foreign born in Iowa were made up largely of those who had emigrated from home by 1900 or earlier. Fully 60.3 percent were in this group whereas 14.7 percent emigrated from 1901 to 1910 and 10.5 percent from 1911 to 1919. Some 14.5 percent did not report when they had emigrated.

By 1950 restrictions on immigration and lack of opportunities in Iowa for cheap land or industrial work began to have an effect. The number of foreign born was slightly more than 84,000 or only 3.2 percent of the total population. Thus, the state as a whole was back to the level which eight agricultural counties in south central Iowa had maintained throughout the century. Only ten counties could show more than five percent whose native lands were other than the United States. As might be expected, Polk County had the largest number, but that amounted to only 7,481 by 1950.



## In Search of a New Home

To become an emigrant there must be some strong impelling force. The thought of venturing from one's home where his family had lived for centuries, crossing an ocean which might take weeks, and entering a new world lacking many of the refinements which were to come later must have caused many to consider carefully the great step they were undertaking.

The causes of emigration included bad weather, poor crops, meagre returns from the land, small wages, famine, religious persecution, political oppression and compulsory military service. The motives were the prospects of material betterment, personal independence, the spirit of adventure and curiosity. Other factors which had an effect on immigration were the efforts of steamship and railroad companies, emigrant agents and American consuls to spread the good word about the United States. The broad distribution of emigrant guidebooks and other literature, letters from successful settlers and financial inducements from relatives and friends also helped.

During the first half of the nineteenth century several efforts were made to point out the advantages of Iowa as a new homeland. These



included "A Description of the United States Lands in Iowa," by Jesse Williams, published in 1840, and "A Glimpse of Iowa in 1846; or The Emigrant's Guide," by J. B. Newhall.

Bishop Loras of Dubuque was still another who did much to bring new citizens to Iowa. Whenever he found a group coming to the United States that he thought would be useful to Iowa, he ardently encouraged their immigration. To do this he repeatedly wrote letters to the Boston *Pilot* and other journals in which he invited people of the eastern states and European countries "to come west and make their homes in Iowa."

After the Civil War many Iowans felt that greater efforts should be made to encourage immigration to the state. It was said that Iowa was "not advertised enough." Emigrant guidebooks and pamphlets, emigrant agents and a board of immigration were badly needed in order to compete with other midwestern states. "How much longer," queried one, "are we going to sleep on in our shiftlessness?"

In urging the appointment of an immigration bureau, the preparation of publicity and the taking of other actions, the editor of the Des Moines *Iowa State Register* asked, "How long shall we continue to whistle away our opportunities?"

In another editorial in 1860 he wrote, "The plain fact of the business is, Iowa is not trying to lead immigrants to her borders. . . . It is about



time for us to open wide our gates and advertise our superiorities the world over. . . . Can't we wake up a little?"

Articles about the natural resources, early establishment, industrial opportunities, transportation facilities and other aspects of the various counties appeared frequently in the newspapers. Iowans were urged: "Support your home papers liberally, subscribe for extra copies, send them broadcast through the East and into the Old World . . . and you will find that Iowa, before another ten years . . . will . . . wear the proud chaplet of the richest agricultural State in the Union."

In 1870 the General Assembly responded to the many appeals. A Board of Immigration, consisting of the Governor and one member from each of the six Congressional districts, was created. The Board was authorized to send agents to the eastern states and to Europe to aid immigration to Iowa.

This was a short-lived activity, however. Before long, information about the opportunities in Iowa had to come again from other sources — unofficial spokesmen who encouraged the migration of others from their native lands, non-official guidebooks, the various publications of the United States government and the other means that had been effective in the past.

For instance, American Consuls throughout



Europe had much to do with encouraging emigration and answering questions of would-be emigrants. In 1870 Benjamin Moran at the London Consulate wrote to many inquirers that Iowa, among other Midwest states, would be excellent for anyone who wished to pursue farming in the United States. This section of the country offered the "greatest inducements" to agricultural laborers.

The Consul in Switzerland asked for a map of the United States to hang on the wall. Then he could point out their future homes to intending emigrants. Most Consuls distributed reports of the Land Office, the monthly reports of the Department of Agriculture and other government and non-government publications which would provide information about various sections of the United States.

The effectiveness of the appeals to emigrate is best illustrated by the fact that very few returned to their native countries to live and then usually because of health or other special reasons. They often revisited their homelands in the winter when there was little work on the farms. And almost as often, they came back to the United States with another group of new settlers.



## Emigrants from Germany

The most numerous group who came to Iowa was the Germans with nearly 36,000 arriving by 1860. The peak of German immigration was reached by 1890 when there were 127,246. From that time until the present their numbers have diminished, but they have always been in first place among Iowa's foreign born. As late as 1958, 306 Germans stated upon arrival at United States ports of entry that they wanted to live permanently in Iowa.

When they arrived in Iowa, the Germans were so numerous that it was impossible for them to concentrate in a limited area. Consequently, every section of the state has had its Germanic element at least in part. In 1870 there were only twelve counties in which the Germans were not one of the four largest nationality groups.

These immigrants during the past one hundred years have come largely from the German states of Bavaria, Prussia, Hesse, Wurtemberg, Oldenburg, Saxony, Hanover, Baden, Darmstadt, and Hamburg. However, probably every German state has been represented to some degree.

During the nineteenth century there were two basic reasons why Germans emigrated. The first



was to avoid compulsory conscription and extensive military service. The second was the confident hope that they could improve their own conditions and open up promising careers for their offspring.

This second cause was aided by the increasing volume of personal letters which arrived in Germany. On one trip a passenger who mingled with the travelers in steerage asked each one why he had left home. Without exception each took from his pocket a letter from a brother, cousin, son, daughter, friend or acquaintance. Handing over the letter, each would say, "Read this."

The Franco-Prussian War was given as a reason for increased emigration in the 1870's. In addition, many of the German states had removed or eased restrictions on emigration by that time.

Iowa newspapers during the nineteenth century were continually attempting to encourage one group or another to come to Iowa. In 1839 the Davenport *Iowa Sun* had learned that several thousand Germans had arrived at New York, all destined for the West. "There is room enough in the valley of the Mississippi for millions of such emigrants and the sooner they come over the better both for their own interests and for ours." At the same time the *Iowa Territorial Gazette* of Burlington was sounding an alarm. "They must, however, come soon, else we shall have no room for them."



Five years later the *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot* of Burlington was saying of the Germans:

Let them come. . . . We have an immense territory of the finest soil in the world, now lying useless and uncultivated, which needs but the plough of the husbandman with ordinary diligence to yield a rich and abundant harvest. . . . Here, industry is sure to furnish all the necessities of life. . . . Let the enterprising, industrious German come among us — he shall receive a hearty welcome.

. . . .  
Here, he will find all, socially and politically equal, and the naturalized foreigner has the same rights, and stands on the same footing of equality with the proudest of the land.

Let them come then, we repeat, and when they land on the shores of America, let them not tarry in our cities or linger about the sea board in the old states, but let them spread themselves over the fertile prairies of the West, where a trifle of money makes them, at once, land holders and where the soil is sure to render an ample return for their labors.

But let not the idle and dissolute come — such will find that here . . . industry is an absolute requisite to prosperity.

In 1867 land was still available. The area around Lyons was beginning to fill up with "hard-working Germans, whose quiet and orderly lives make them good citizens — whose small farms and frugal habits make a rich community." The next year increasing numbers were settling in the corners of Grundy, Franklin, Butler, and Hardin counties. Ackley was the center of "this miniature Germany."



Each year large numbers were added to the population, "fresh from the Faderland." Iowa could "stand a million of such people," said the *Des Moines State Register*, "and grow richer and better by it."

In 1869 a group of at least forty Hanoverians arrived at the Farmer's Hotel in Dubuque. The next day they left for Charles City. They had been persuaded to emigrate by the favorable representations of friends who lived there already. "If one or two can do this much in inducing emigration," asked the editor of the *Dubuque Daily Times*, "how much more could a regularly organized society do?"

The German colony in Westphalia Township, Shelby County, owed its origin to an advertisement in a newspaper. Emil Flusche from Grand Rapids, Michigan, undertook to sell railroad land in Iowa. The railroad company contracted to pay \$1.00 per acre on all land sold to German Catholics who became settlers, provided there were forty within eighteen months. Many Westphalian Germans responded to Flusche's ads, and there was a population of 207 within two years.

The account of the arrival of a German emigrant ship in New York City in 1853 gives a vivid description of this momentous event.

Moustached peasants in Tyrolese hats are arguing in unintelligible English with truck-drivers; runners from the German hotels are pulling the confused women hither and



thither; peasant girls with bare heads, and the rich-flushed, nut brown faces you never see here, are carrying huge bundles to the heaps of baggage; children in doublets and hose, and queer little caps, are mounted on the trunks, or swung off amid the laughter of the crowd with ropes from the ship's sides. Some are just welcoming an old face, so dear in the strange land, some are letting down huge trunks, some swearing in very genuine low Dutch, at the endless noise and distractions. They bear the plain marks of the Old World. Healthy, stout frames, and low-degraded faces with many; stamps of inferiority, dependence, servitude on them; little graces of costume, too — a colored head-dress or a fringed coat — which could never have originated here; and now and then a sweet face, with the rich bloom and the dancing blue eyes, that seem to reflect the very glow and beauty of the vine hills of the Rhine.

It is a new world to them — oppression, bitter poverty behind — here, hope, freedom, and a chance for work, and food to the laboring man . . . to the dullest some thoughts come of the New Free World.

These were the Germans who were to become a part of Iowa's population. Within a short time most were gainfully employed at a great variety of occupations.

Among the Germans farming was the most common. In 1920, 21,073 foreign-born Iowans owned farms, 208 were farm managers and 10,940 were tenant farmers. More than half of this total were Germans, tilling over two and one-half million acres.

As early as 1870 many had already become quite prosperous. For instance, there was Jacob Leophaidt, a Wurtemburger, who lived in Lan-



sing Township, Allamakee County, and had property worth \$21,000; or John Deitchler of Mills County who had accumulated land valued at \$32,500 since coming from Hanover; or William Wertz who emigrated from Darmstadt to Johnson County and was now worth \$22,600.

Many Germans had been trained in various professions before coming to Iowa. Only a few can be mentioned to illustrate their influence. Mary Dollmer of Henry County was a physician, perhaps the first woman doctor in Iowa. Two professors at Wartburg Seminary, Golfreed and Sigmund Fritschell, came from Bavaria while their students were from Hesse Darmstadt, Prussia, Bavaria, and Wurtemberg. At the State University of Iowa, Gustavus Hinrichs, Professor of Physical Science, had been born in Holstein while Charles A. Eggert, Professor of Languages, had been born in Prussia. At the other end of the employment scale at the University was H. Ruppert, a janitor from Mecklenburg.

A few held public office during the nineteenth century. Emil Bechman from Mecklenburg was county treasurer of Grundy County and Charles Bergh held a similar position in Humboldt County. The Deputy U. S. Surveyor in Dubuque in 1870 was George L. Fischer from Wurtemberg.

There are two interesting sidelights in connection with Iowa legislative bodies. Mrs. Margaret Funck, who was born in Germany in 1813,



came to Burlington in 1836. There she boarded members of the first legislatures of the Territory of Iowa. Another German who came to Mt. Pleasant in 1855, Theodore Schreiner, served fourteen years as door-keeper of the Iowa Senate.

Many nineteenth century Germans brought their skills with them and started new businesses in Iowa. John Bury, a Bavarian, made wagons and plows in Burlington, and a Prussian, F. M. Pleins, manufactured soap and candles in Dubuque.

Bellevue is typical of many Iowa towns. Joseph Luke, a Prussian, manufactured boots and shoes; Henry Engleken, another Prussian and Herman Aman, from Wurtemberg, were furniture manufacturers and Mathias Walter's product was soda water.

Brewers were usually German. Those in Dubuque, for instance, included John Stallman from Bavaria and Anton Heeb from Hesse. The latter hired nine brewers, all from Germany. In Council Bluffs both Charles Bock and Charles Stephan were brewers from Prussia. The dispensers of the wines and beers, the saloon keepers, were usually, but not exclusively, either German or Irish.

One would also find some foreigners in the entertainment field. At Lansing two Prussian tragedians, Louis and Maria Schram, were living in a hotel maintained by another Prussian, E. Ruprecht.



Occasionally there were some very unusual occupations performed by the people who had emigrated to Iowa. Jacob Luther, a German in Anamosa, gave his occupation as "water wheel patentee" in 1870. Or there was Daniel Silster, a Prussian in Algona, who called himself a "dog artist."

In 1870 an "ice cream saloon" in Burlington was operated by Henry Woellhaf from Wurtemberg. George Feuchlinger, another Wurtemburger, was printer of a German newspaper in Burlington. Germans were also often found following the occupations of shoemakers, clothiers, horticulturists, druggists, carpenters, joiners, cabinet makers, butchers, distillers, tanners, stone cutters, merchants, bakers, confectioners, hotel operators and inn keepers.



## The Scandinavians

The Norwegians were the first of the Scandinavians to migrate to Iowa in large numbers. In 1840 Kleng Pearson led a settlement at Sugar Creek, twelve miles northwest of Keokuk. This settlement grew and gradually extended into Henry, Mahaska and Marshall counties. Strangely enough, the Norwegians never became the largest nationality group in any county in this section of the state but were to be found more in north central Iowa. From 1860 to 1880 more Norwegians than Swedes came to Iowa, but from that time on the situation was reversed as Swedish immigrants forged ahead.

As early as 1844 a Norwegian ballad was telling of the appeal of the midwest:

When pointed icicles cling to eaves  
And snow goes whirling above the leaves  
When through my kitchen the cold winds blow  
To the Mississippi I fain would go.

The appeal to emigrate had to be strong to overcome many of the hardships. During the mid-nineteenth century most Norwegians emigrated to the United States by way of Quebec. Passage on most ships took from eight to ten weeks. Unfortunately, most emigrants usually



provided themselves with provisions for only about six weeks.

One ship from Skien, Norway, was without fuel and water and nearly without provisions of any kind for seven days. On another ship there were thirty-three deaths during the passage, and a third ship from Arendal had forty-seven deaths and sixty sick passengers. In June, 1862, there were about four hundred, mostly Norwegians, in the quarantine hospital at Quebec who were destined for the United States. As a result "great prejudices" began to arise in Norway against emigration to America.

A quite different account was told of a crossing made eight years earlier:

When the weather was pleasant, we often had a good time, for all kinds of games and amusement were allowed. We frequently danced. Even the Captain, himself, was often with us, entertaining us with adventure and hunting stories and the like. On the evening of the day after Pentecost we had a ball. We each gave twelve cents and the Captain contributed the rest. We had three musicians, and then we danced and drank till late in the night. We each contributed a little money and bought a gold watch chain for our captain. It cost fifteen dollars.

Two things often went hand-in-hand in increasing emigration. Better times and good wages in America was the first requisite. The second was a noticeable depression in trade, commerce, wages, and the general standard of living in the emigrant's home land.



Most Norwegians in 1867 were leaving because of the "melancholy state" of the poor farmers "who cannot gain so much from the unfertile soil as is sufficient for their livelihood." In 1883 it was the same story. Small farmers and country laborers in Norway were faced with "narrow prospects here," and they were "wanting in the new world to improve, and come better forward than they can expect here."

Three years later the number of Norwegians emigrating had increased even more. Cade, the American Consul at Kristiansand, reported to the State Department:

The harvests in Norway have been very light during the last years and the increasing drain by emigration to America shows the distrust with which our rural population regards their future prospects here. . . . In the mountainous districts, where the crops have repeatedly frozen and the consequent distress has been great, the population seems to have lost an interest for their fatherland and hasten to leave it, as soon as they receive sufficient assistance from friends or relatives in America.

Frequently, people sought assistance from the United States government to aid in payment of passage. A group of 185 persons in Tromsø, Norway, petitioned for such help in June, 1864. Since it was illegal for the government to give this assistance, it was suggested that private companies advance the money and make contracts by which the emigrants would repay the loan by their labors.



As the number of any nationality group grew and prospered in the United States, it became possible for them to send money home for the passage of relatives and friends. For example, there were 8,162 emigrants, mostly agricultural laborers, from Norway in 1887, the greater part of whose passages were paid with money from the United States. The next year it was reported that "the Norwegians do no longer seem particularly attached to their mountains and America does not appear to them to be very far off." Almost every family in the rural districts had some near relatives or friends in America sending home money or tickets.

The reactions to Iowa of one Norwegian, Ole Nielsen of Estherville, are revealed in letters to his family in Norway. In 1866 he wrote:

I still believe that if God will allow me to keep the same good health I have now, and if you, my dear parents, were here, I should be able to support you more decently than I was able to do at home. In Norway you have to quarrel with your neighbors for a square foot of barren hills with no vegetation whatsoever. All kinds of laws and regulations force pedestrians to follow certain roads. . . . And yet a man is supposed to be free, and supposed to be living in a free country!

The land here is so beautiful and fertile that it would be difficult to find any that is better. From the land you can get anything you need, even things like broomtwigs, spoons and various kinds of toys for the children.

In 1868 Nielsen wrote:



Since I live so close to the river I suppose that I ought to tell you a little about its inhabitants, too. There are neither crocodiles nor alligators in it, which may be a disappointment to those at home who believe that these creatures are found in all rivers here. . . . We have several kinds of frogs, and they keep up a peculiar music during the spring and summer nights, while the blackbird entertains us every morning with his melodious notes.

### *Swedes*

The third largest group in Iowa were the Swedes. In 1860 there were only 1,465 Swedes in Iowa, due to the lateness of the start of Swedish migration to the United States. Within twenty years there were twelve times as many — enough to rank Iowa third in the nation in number of Swedes. From 1880 to 1890 there was a seventy-two percent increase in their numbers, bringing the total to 30,276. They were predominant in a number of central and southern Iowa counties. In 1950 they were still the third largest nationality element in the state.

Religious persecution was one cause of emigration from Sweden. Dissenters from the established church in Sweden were planning to form a colony in the Midwest in 1846. The "strong hand of religious tyranny" was credited with being responsible for driving them out.

From Sweden it was reported in 1865 that emigration would be greater now that the Civil War was over. It was accelerated by the conviction that the rebellion in the states had been subdued



and that there would be a great demand for labor in all branches of industry. In addition to the ordinary inducements, there was the problem of repairing the waste and destruction of the war.

Shortly after this, Sweden was faced with crop failure and famine. J. C. Savery, General Agent of the American Emigrant Co., wrote that thousands in Sweden were asking for assistance. Therefore, the Company proposed to bring any family of four to Des Moines upon payment of half of the \$288.25 required.

It has been thought that upon this proposition of the Company to give their credit for half their fare and feed them gratis during their journey, others might be interested in their behalf. . . . It is rarely the case that a Christian community is called upon to aid a more worthy object than the one herein proposed.

The Des Moines *State Register* of April 23, 1868, had an editorial on the same subject. The Swedes had been found to be quiet, law abiding, industrious, frugal, generally intelligent and always loyal. The editor asked:

In this age of steamship and civilization, can an intelligent nation stand with doless arms and nerveless hearts and see thousands starving to death while a few dollars, and a generally preconcerted movement, would rescue them all, and bring them to this land of plenty, upon which Heaven never imposes plagues nor famine?

The United States once before took a famished nation up in its arms — Ireland in 1846 — and blessed it with food and life: and should it not avail itself of the noble



opportunity now offered to parallel its own greatness of charity?

One of the more successful efforts to establish a Swedish settlement was that of Reverend Bengt Magnus Halland. In 1869 he inspected railroad land between the West Nodaway and East Nishnabotna rivers in Montgomery and Page counties. He advertised that it was only for non-drinking, God-fearing Swedes. From 1870 to 1873 many Swedes flocked to the area, paying \$6 to \$11 an acre. Swedish communities were formed in the vicinity of Red Oak, Creston and Nybum with Stanton as the hub.

#### *Danes*

The third Scandinavian group, the Danes, did not arrive in Iowa nearly as soon as the Swedes and Norwegians. There were early Danish settlers such as Nils C. Boge who arrived at Muscatine in 1837, moving on to Lisbon in Linn County and finally settling down in Iowa City as a merchant in 1842.

Rev. Claus L. Clausen was one of the early religious leaders among Danes and Norwegians in Iowa. Planning to become a missionary to Africa, he was persuaded to go to America where there was a great need for missionaries and teachers among the Norwegians in southern Wisconsin. In 1852 he founded St. Ansgar, the westernmost white settlement in northern Iowa at that time. He served in the Iowa legislature in 1856-1857.



Meanwhile the first permanent colony of sixteen Danes was started near Luzerne in Benton County in 1854-1855. A year later small settlements were started in Center Township, Clinton County, Iowa Township, Jackson County, and in Burlington.

In 1869 Clausen visited Denmark and spoke fervently for a Danish Lutheran mission among his emigrated countrymen. A. S. Nielsen was one who answered the call, serving as a lay preacher to the Danish congregation Clausen founded in Cedar Falls in 1871.

A permanent settlement was started in 1865 at Elk Horn, Shelby County. Gradually the group spread into Audubon County, reaching a total of 2,672 in 1900, the largest Danish settlement in Iowa. In 1867 other settlements were started in Cerro Gordo and Cass counties. The movement of Danes into the northern and western parts of the state came later. It was not until 1920 that a peak of 18,000 was reached, forty years after the top year of Danish immigration to the United States.

The great majority of the immigrants were farmers, farm laborers, and artisans. Their chief resource was a desire to succeed. They were widely known as men of industry, perseverance, honesty, and integrity. As might be expected, they have been most interested in establishing dairy farms, often cooperative in nature.



## English, Scotch, and Irish

Many came to Iowa from countries where English was the native tongue. Customs and language of the native Americans were for the most part familiar. Therefore, adjustments in a new home were easier to make for the Irish, English, Scotch, Welsh and Canadians.

The "Poor British Emigrant's Farewell" illustrates the feeling of many nineteenth century emigrants who had made the decision that it was to their best interests to emigrate.

From Albion's verdant vallies,  
From Scotia's barren moors,  
From Erin's flowing rivers  
And her bold and rocky shores:  
From the dark and crowded city —  
From the hardness of the times —  
(We ask not for your pity,) —  
But hie to other climes.

From want and from starvation,  
From penury and pain,  
We thus relieve our nation,  
Nor will again complain.  
We enter on our voyage,  
And bid a glad adieu  
To the factory and the forge,  
As Britain fades from view.



As might be expected, the Irish have been the most numerous of these. The peak of Irish immigration to Iowa was reached earlier than the Germans, for instance, but still not until 1880, thirty years later than was true of the United States as a whole. Many had stopped in other states before finally reaching Iowa. In 1870 the Irish were the predominant element in twenty-one counties. This was to undergo a very definite change. By 1920 the Sons of Erin could not claim a single county in which they were the largest foreign born group. In 1958 only eleven Irishmen indicated that they wanted to go to Iowa when they arrived at their ports of entry into the United States.

As early as 1850 the *Boston Pilot*, an Irish-American newspaper, was urging, "Let all emigrants go to the West." It pointed out that the great numbers joining the California Gold Rush made the Midwest a better place to go. Many additional appeals and inducements were necessary, however, before the Irish came in large numbers.

### *The English*

The third largest group in Iowa in 1860 were the English. In that year there were approximately 11,500, increasing to more than 26,000 by 1890. They were the most numerous nationality group in six scattered counties in 1870 and in five, but not the same, counties in the year 1950. In 1958,



fully 154 Englishmen were planning to go to the Hawkeye State where they could establish permanent homes.

A common practice among the English was to inquire extensively about conditions in the area to which people were wanting to immigrate. For example, Morris Phillips of Pembrokeshire, England, wrote to Percival, Hatten & Company, real estate agents in Des Moines in 1869. Phillips wanted to know about the price of unimproved and improved land, the description of various kinds of soil, the availability of flour and saw mills, the amount of timber grown, climate, fruit trees, schools, wages, and weather.

He was agent for the Liverpool, New York and Philadelphia Steam Ship Company and sent many thousands to America. For himself, Phillips declared, "Iowa is spoken of as a very thriving state, and I would like to come on there." The reply to Phillips stated that Iowa was believed to "be the best adapted to English immigrants of any part of the United States."

Public lecturers from the United States also told of the attractions to be found in America. In 1879 England was in a "distressed condition." A minister of the gospel from the Midwest went to England to tell the people of the advantages to working men, and especially small farmers and farm laborers to be found in Iowa and the other agricultural states.



*Canadians*

The Canadians accounted for another large segment of English speaking citizens. In 1880 there were more than 21,000 who had left the more rigorous Canadian winters for the fertile farms of Iowa. French-Canadians formed about five percent of this total.

As early as 1838 emigration from Canada to Iowa had become a general thing. At that time it was suggested that the administration of governmental affairs in Canada was responsible for many seeking new homes. Unless a change should take place in a short time, Lord Durham "will have but few subjects left to rule over; they will be found in Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, &c."

The interest of Canadians in the Midwest in 1838 was so great that the Mississippi Emigration Company was formed. Delegates came to examine the Iowa country and published their findings in the Toronto and Kingston newspapers. The report stated that Iowa citizens were "almost without exception, exceedingly kind, hospitable, intelligent, sober and unassuming, but firm to maintain their rights."

The report also said there had been many reports that, "in order to prevent emigration from Canada to Iowa," some people in Upper Canada "have been constantly representing all the Indian wars in Florida and at Red River as being in Iowa." The report covered such topics as the



soil, crops, the countryside, wild animals, the Indians and means of traveling from Canada.

A contemporary editorial in a Burlington newspaper said that Iowa was described to the Canadians "as very desirable for those who wish to emigrate." Therefore, "if their plans are carried into effect the result will materially affect the interests of the young territory of Iowa and of Upper Canada. Many of those enlisted in the enterprise are men of character and worth, who would be valuable citizens in any country."

Thirty years later the interest of Canadians in Iowa was still very much in evidence. J. Spear of Malcolm, Iowa, wrote in 1869 that he had been taken with the "Iowa Fever" two years earlier while living in Stanstead, Canada. "I tried at first every way to break up the fever but every effort failed to do any good." After he came to Poweshiek County, the fever left him.

"I am willing to do all I can," Spear wrote, "to induce those that are grubbing away among the hills and stone to get a little corn and perhaps a few bushels of wheat, to come to Iowa and cultivate these broad and extensive prairies."

In reply to a request from Canada regarding the best area in which to settle, the editor of the *Iowa State Register* of Des Moines wrote: "Iowa is the best place on God's green earth for any colony to locate." The editor continued:

We have room and land for all. . . . Come on and



bring all Canada with you. You fellows make good settlers; and we'll make you good neighbors. . . . Canadians are a good class of people; intelligent, law-abiding and frugal. Iowa has enough unoccupied land for ten times ten thousand such colonies, and is anxious to have them.

### *Scotch and Welsh*

The Scotch and the Welsh completed the bulk of those who did not have to learn a new language when they arrived in Iowa. Both were more numerous in 1890 than at any other census taking, either before or since. In no county has either ever been the predominant foreign born group. However, there were 302 Scots in Boone County in 1890 with Keokuk, Linn, Polk, Pottawattamie, Tama, and Woodbury counties each having more than two hundred. The Welsh were to be found in considerable numbers in Iowa, Lucas, Wapello and Mahaska counties with the latter having the largest number — 487 in 1890.

The Scottish newspapers did much to aid emigration. The *Edinburgh Scotland Daily Review* in 1869 gave glowing accounts. "Perhaps," the paper stated, "of all the western States in the Union the best to take as an instance of present and prospective prosperity is that of Iowa." The vast prairie and the inexhaustible soil which was available for a very small sum of money were big inducements.

"Who should go?" queried the editor. To which he replied,



One of the most worthy and the most deserving of pity among all our classes, the educated man with a large family and limited income, who wishes his sons to start in life . . . where he left off. . . . Twenty pounds would clear a young emigrant to Iowa City, with some pounds to spare; and if he went in the spring, and unless all accounts of the land are false, he might save and send back money enough in six months to have his sweetheart or his young wife beside him.

John Tasker, a Scotchman living in Jones County, was another who was trying to bring his countrymen to Iowa. He had been in the United States thirty-two years and a citizen for the past twenty. In 1874 he returned to Scotland for six months. It was reported:

While on his visit he will endeavor to lay the advantages which our unequalled State presents as an emigration field before enterprising Scotchmen who may desire a new and wider field of operation. . . . It is to be hoped that he will be able to induce many of his countrymen to come to Iowa and make their homes in the grandest and most fertile portion of this habitable globe.

As early as 1852 Joshua Jones had come from Wales to become a blacksmith on Flint Creek, Des Moines County. Jones wrote his relatives who had remained at home:

We understand that a great number of our fellow countrymen are suffering in poverty, while we, the few Welshmen in this state, are well off. . . . There is plenty of wheatland, easy to farm, in this state which would take all the people of Wales and many more but there are fewer Welsh in this state than in any other free state.



There are only three small Welsh settlements in the whole of the state but they are better off than the largest settlements in Wisconsin and the other states. . . . The agricultural advantages are the best corn land, easy to work and very beautiful. . . . There is nothing to do but break the soil in lovely meadows and throw the seed in to get bountiful crops of Indian corn, wheat, oats, potatoes, buckwheat, melons, rye, etc. etc.

Four years later another Welshman, William ——— of Llewellyn, Iowa, wrote to his parents, "If this were populated by good men it would be a second Canaan. . . . My adopted country is better than the land of my birth." Instead of returning home he preferred to "say like the Yankees":

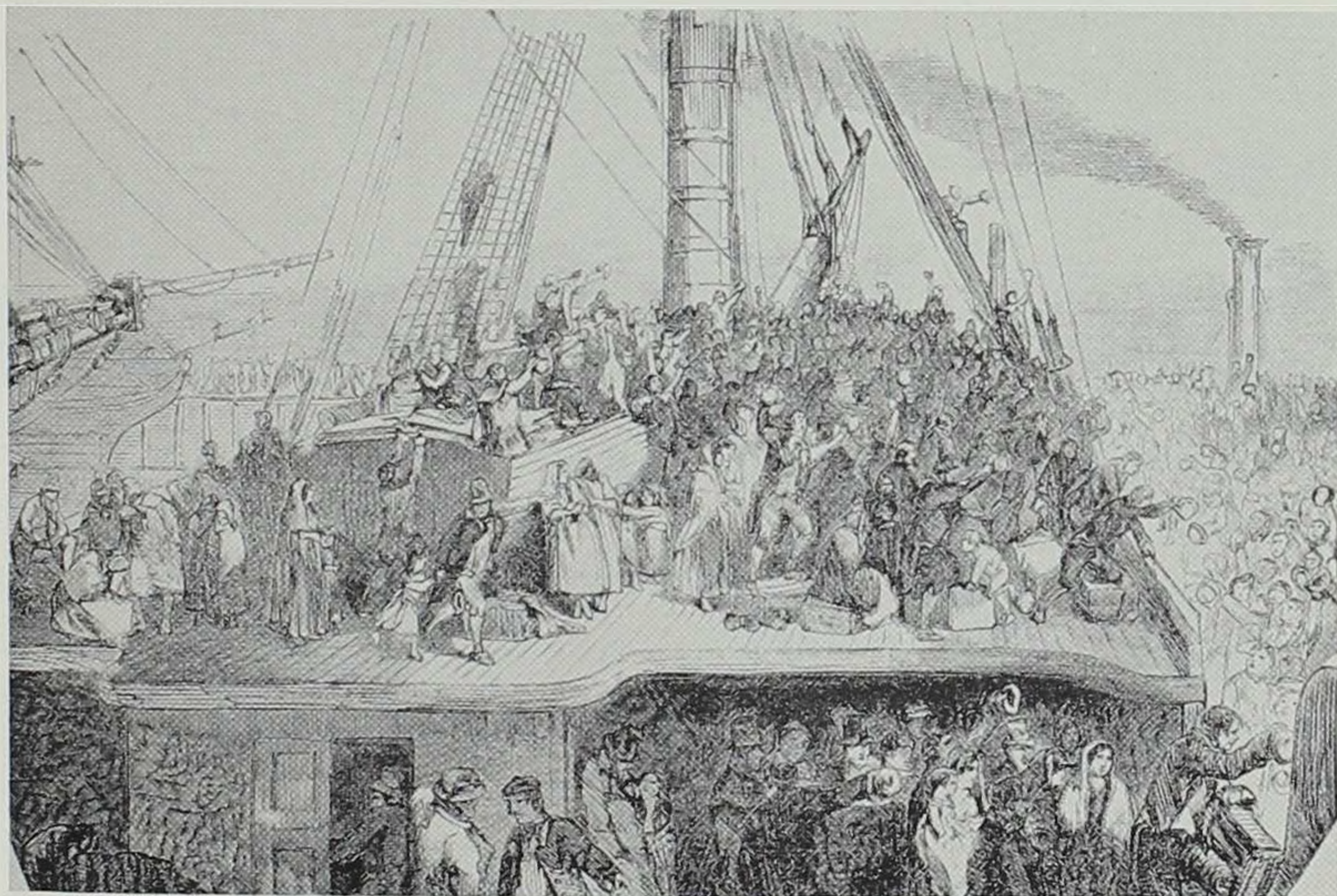
Come along, come along, make no delay.  
Come from every nation and come from every way,  
Our lands they are broad enough, don't feel alarm  
For Uncle Sam is rich enough to give us all a farm.

The largest proportion of these English speaking Iowans were farmers or farm laborers. They ranged from the many who worked for little more than room and board to prosperous land owners such as Thomas Meredith, an Englishman in Cass County, worth \$50,950 in 1870, or C. A. Marshall of Howard County, who had acquired property valued at \$27,300 since coming from Ireland.

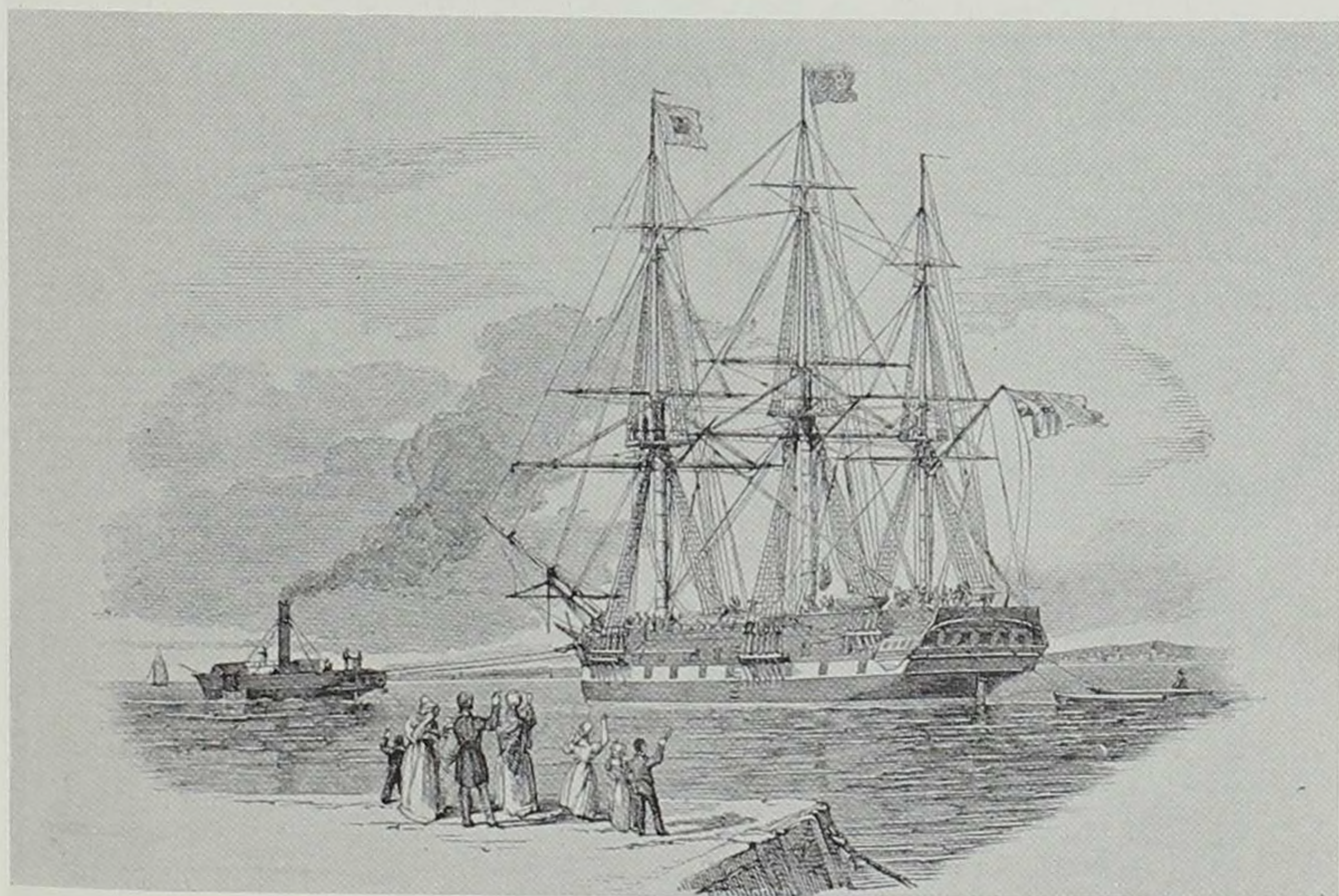
Traditionally, the Irish have worked on Iowa's railroads. However, the Irish and others contributed much to other kinds of labor so essential in a young state. For instance, Iowa had numerous



WESTWARD THE COURSE OF EMPIRE TAKES ITS WAY!



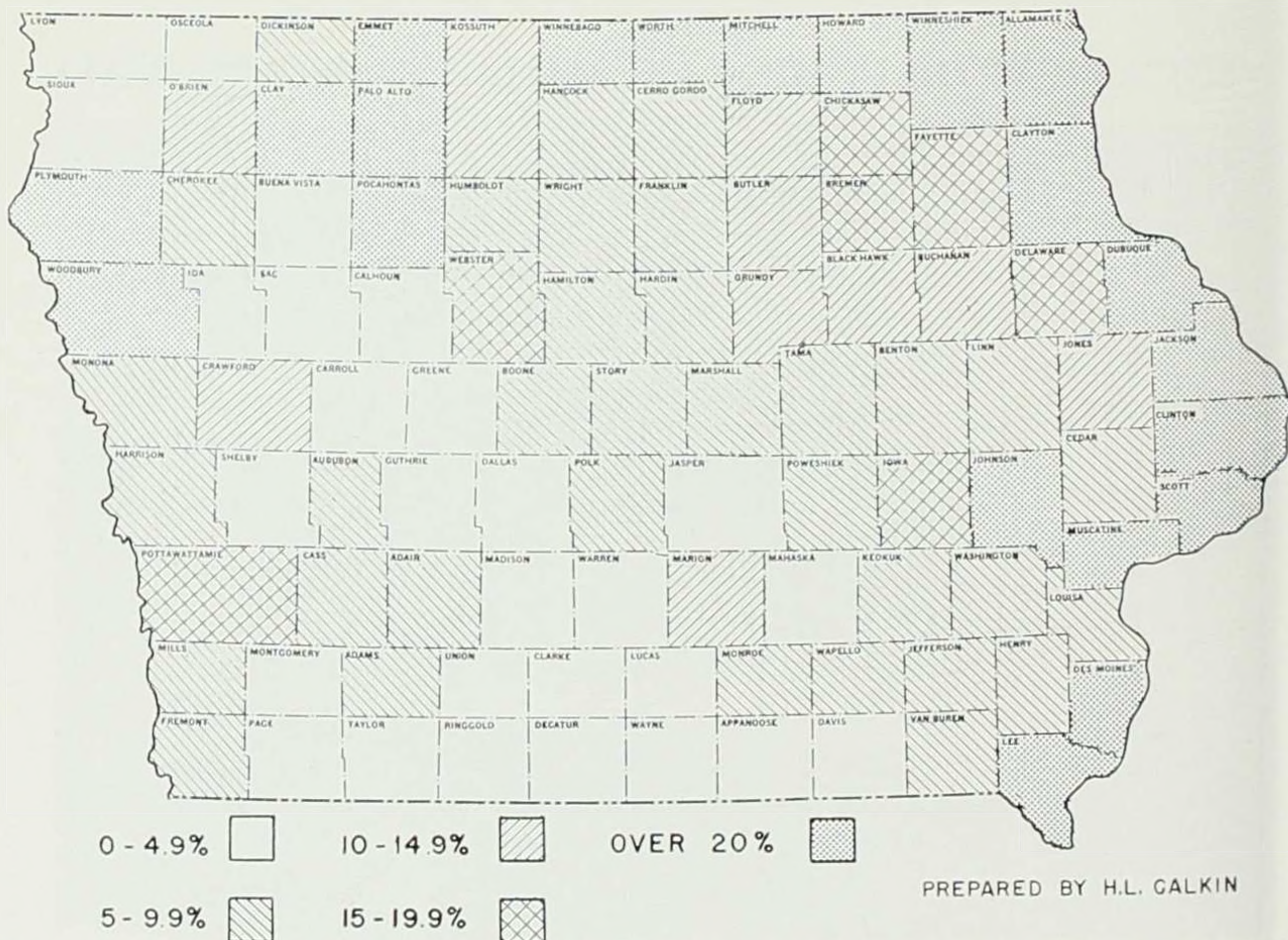
Emigrants Departing from the Homeland



Emigrant Ship Being Towed to Sea

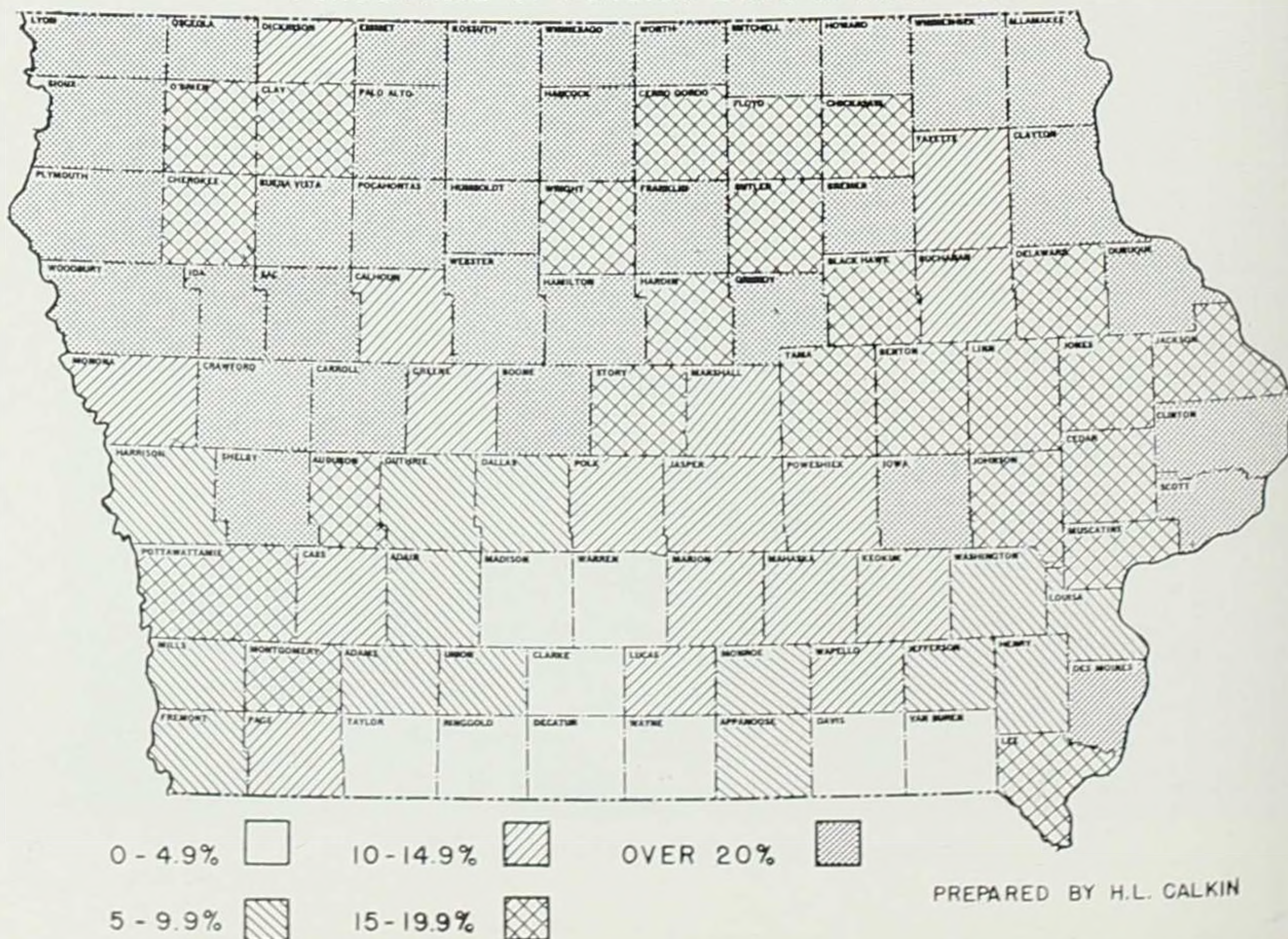


# PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGN BORN IN IOWA - 1860



PREPARED BY H.L. CALKIN

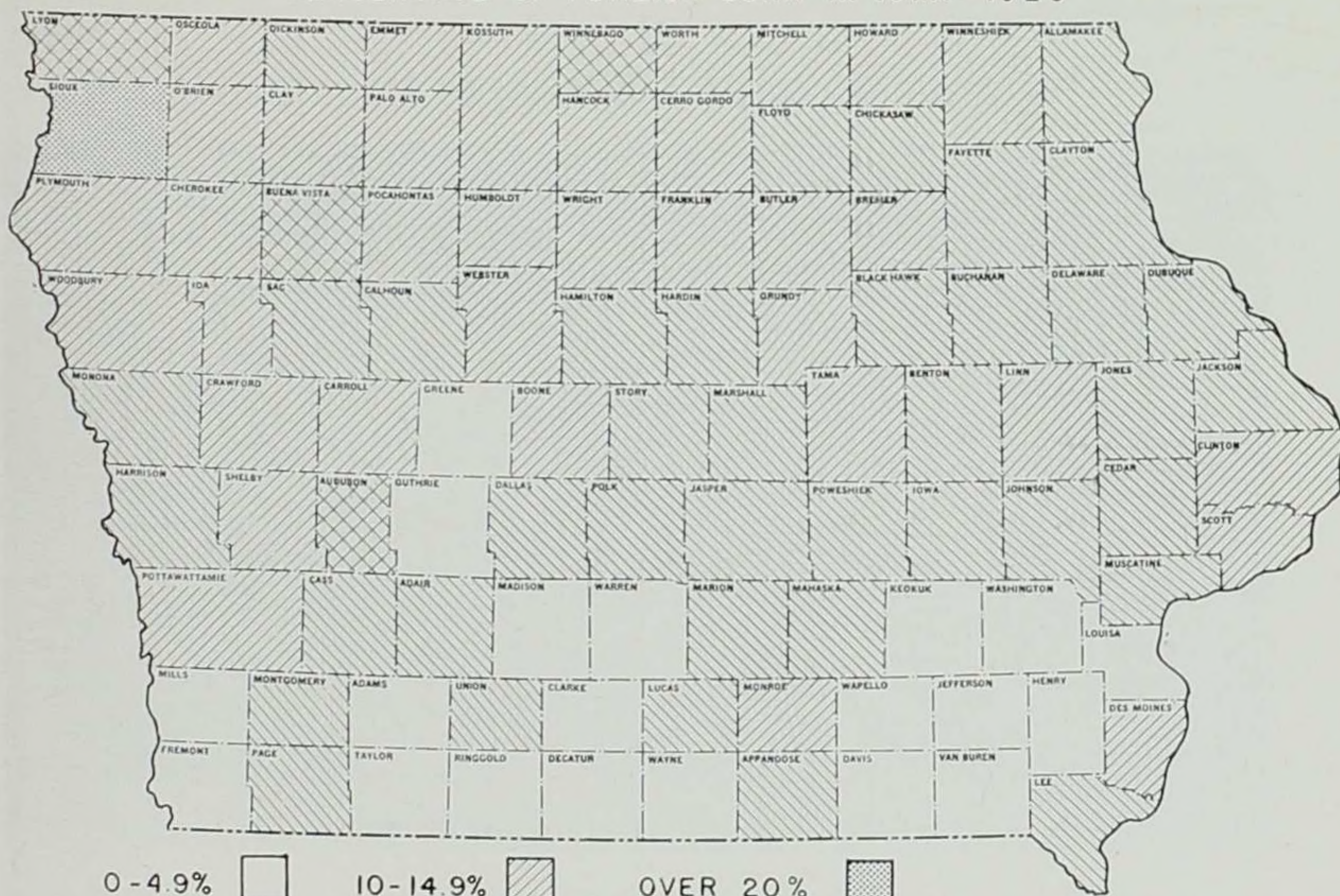
# PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGN BORN IN IOWA - 1890



PREPARED BY H.L. CALKIN



# PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGN BORN IN IOWA - 1920

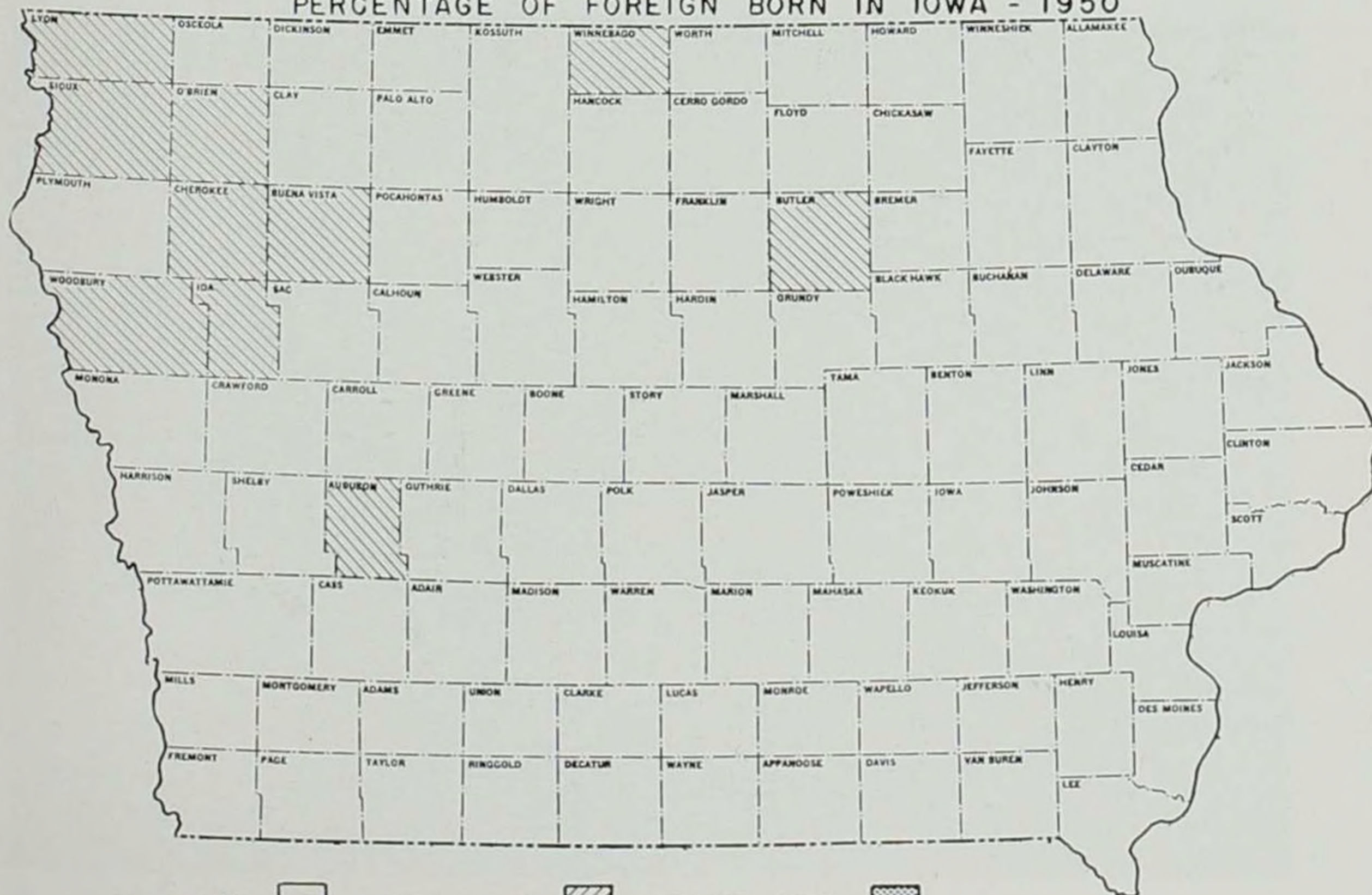


0 - 4.9% 10 - 14.9% OVER 20%

5 - 9.9% 15 - 19.9%

PREPARED BY H.L. CALKIN

# PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGN BORN IN IOWA - 1950



0 - 4.9% 10 - 14.9% OVER 20%

5 - 9.9% 15 - 19.9%

PREPARED BY H.L. CALKIN



## LIFE AMONG THE STEERAGE PASSENGERS



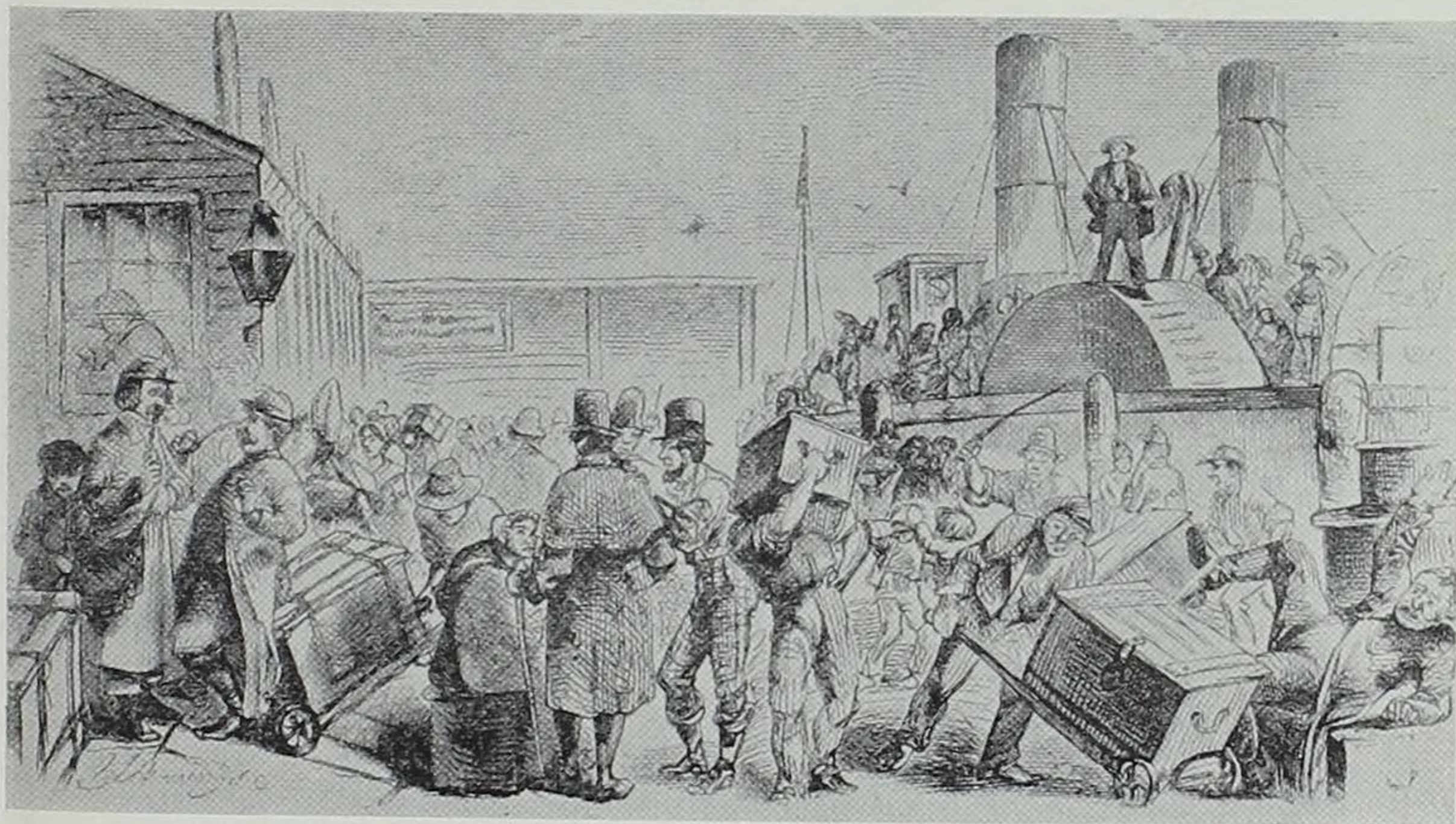
Emigrants at Dinner in Hold of Ship



Horrors of the Emigrant Ship



## STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND



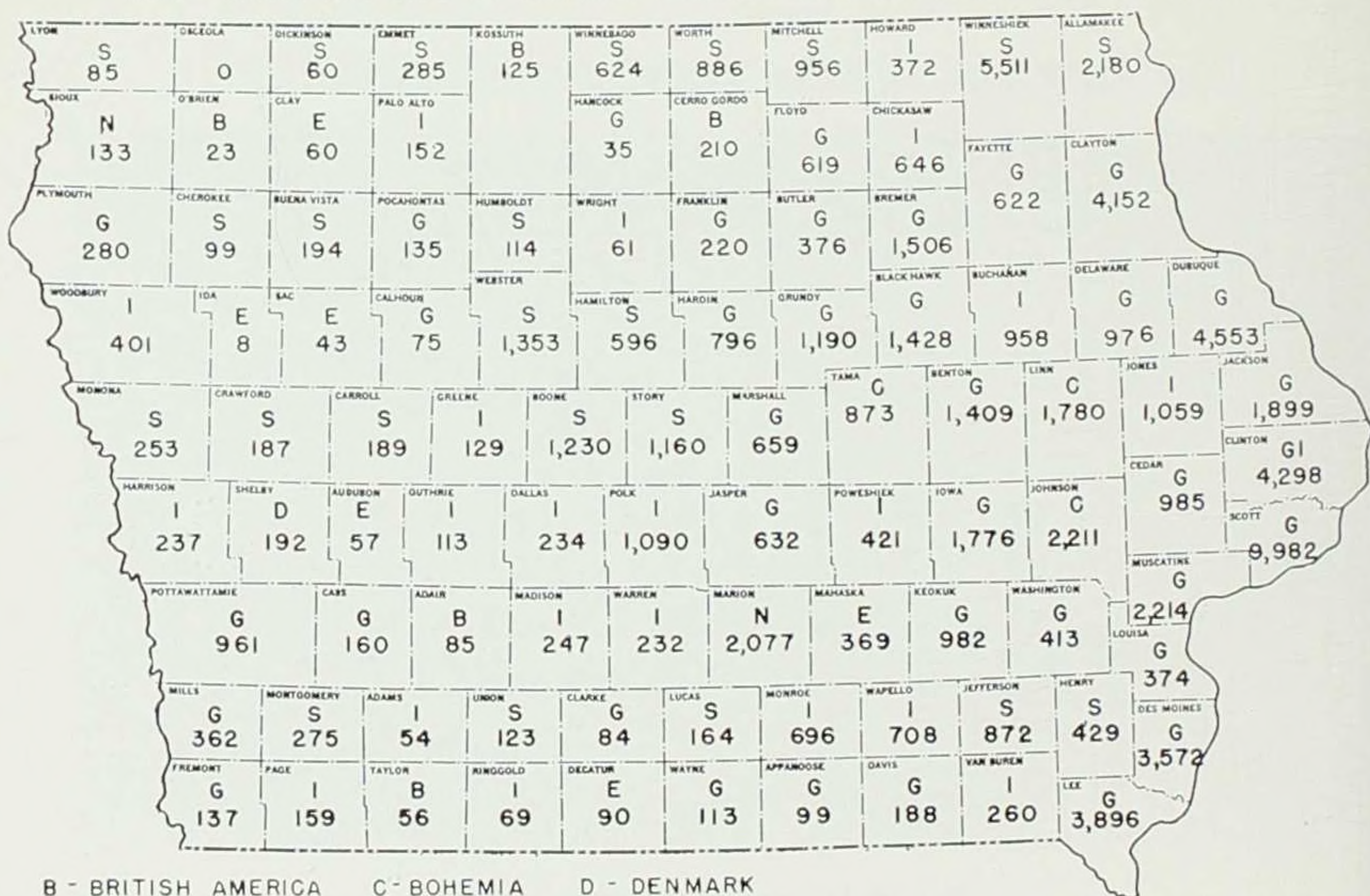
Emigrants Landing in New York



Emigrants Departing for the West



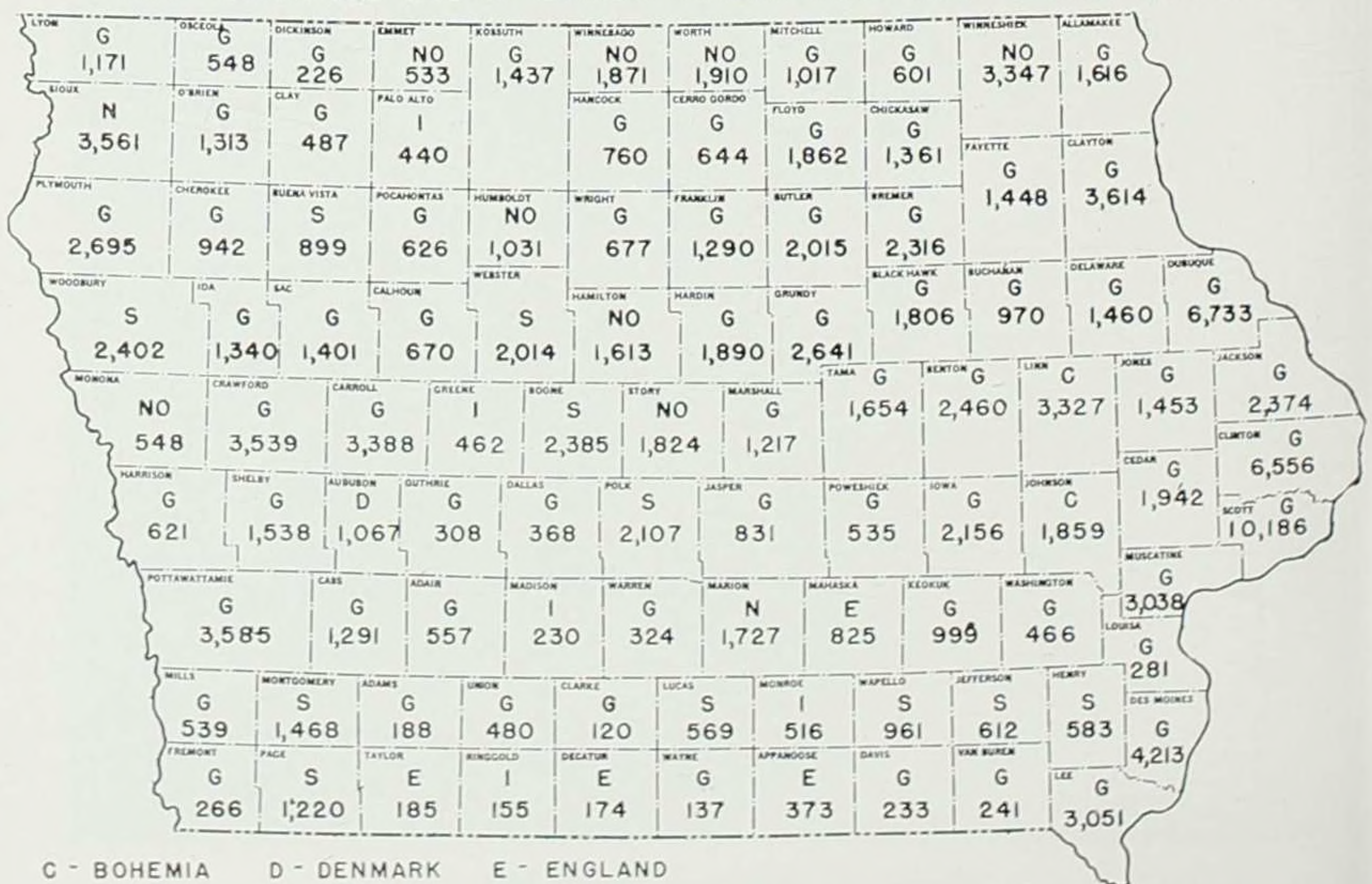
# 1870 - ORIGIN AND SIZE OF LARGEST FOREIGN BORN GROUP IN EACH IOWA COUNTY



B - BRITISH AMERICA C - BOHEMIA D - DENMARK  
 E - ENGLAND & WALES G - GERMANY I - IRELAND  
 N - NETHERLANDS S - SWEDEN & NORWAY

PREPARED BY H.L. CALKIN

# 1890 - ORIGIN AND SIZE OF LARGEST FOREIGN BORN GROUP IN EACH IOWA COUNTY

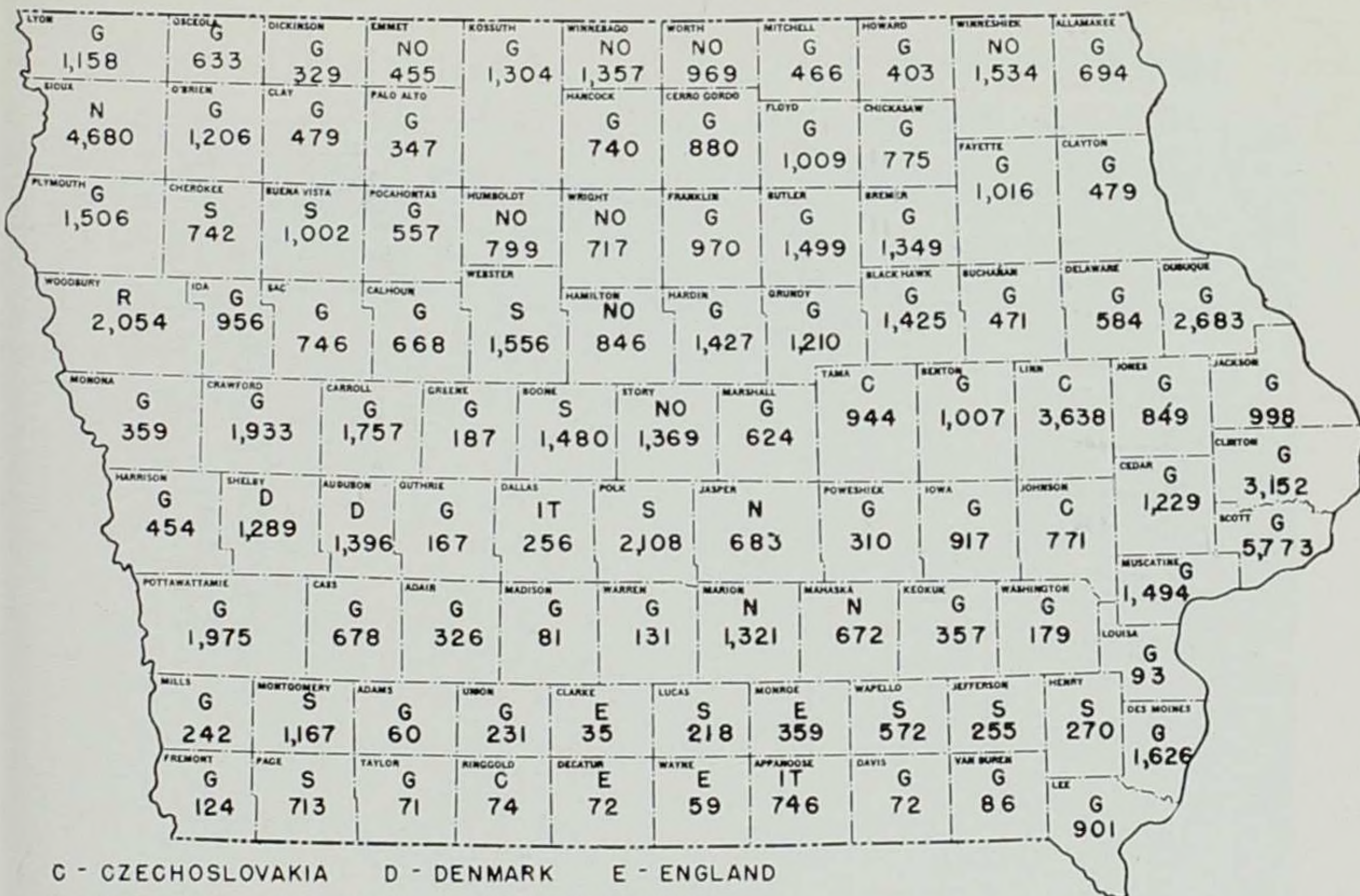


C - BOHEMIA D - DENMARK E - ENGLAND  
 G - GERMANY I - IRELAND N - NETHERLANDS  
 NO - NORWAY S - SWEDEN

PREPARED BY H.L. CALKIN



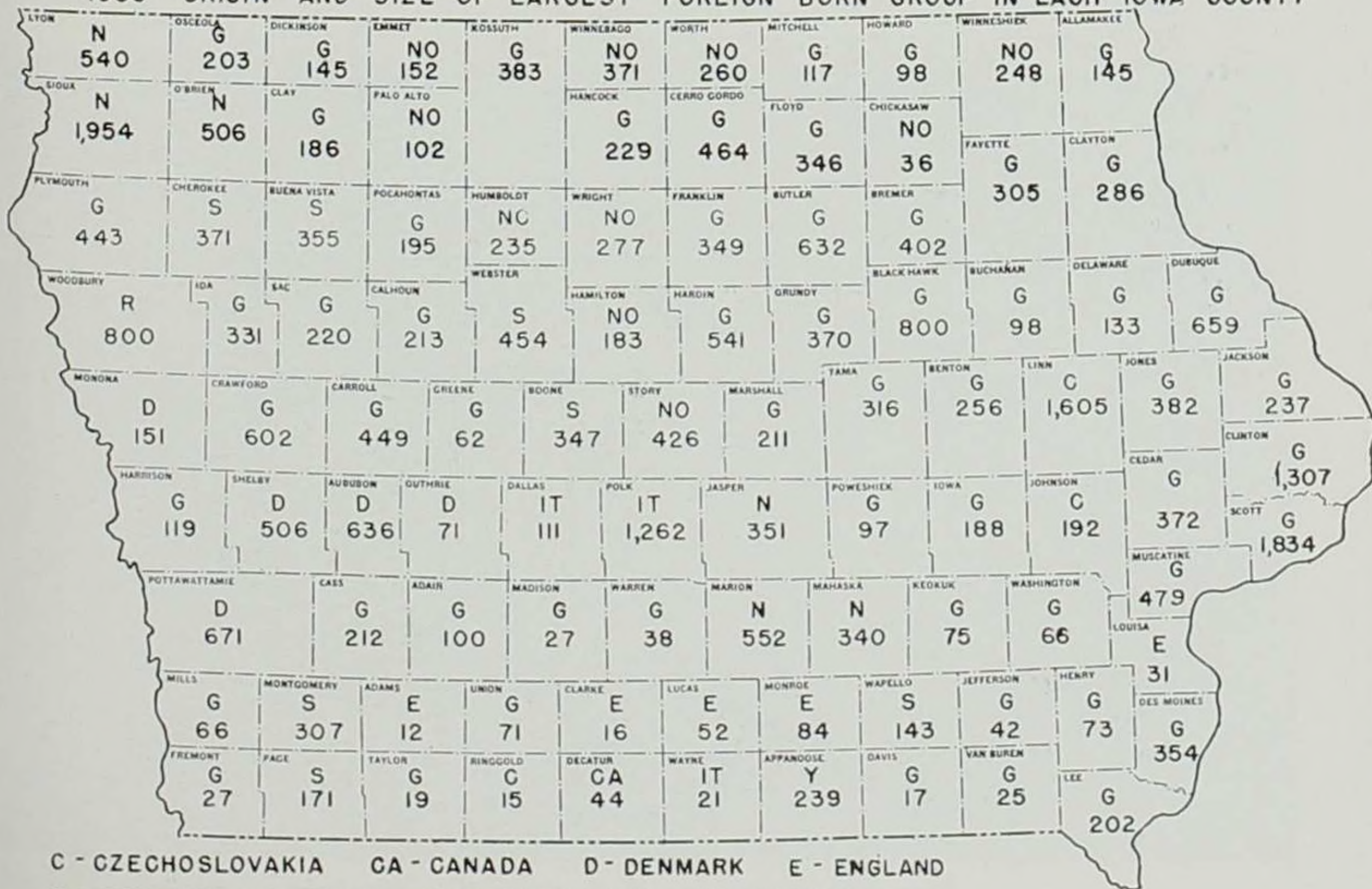
## 1920 - ORIGIN AND SIZE OF LARGEST FOREIGN BORN GROUP IN EACH IOWA COUNTY



C - CZECHOSLOVAKIA    D - DENMARK    E - ENGLAND  
G - GERMANY    IT - ITALY    N - NETHERLANDS  
NO - NORWAY    R - RUSSIA    S - SWEDEN

PREPARED BY H.L.CALKIN

## 1950 - ORIGIN AND SIZE OF LARGEST FOREIGN BORN GROUP IN EACH IOWA COUNTY



C - CZECHOSLOVAKIA    CA - CANADA    D - DENMARK    E - ENGLAND  
G - GERMANY    IT - ITALY    N - NETHERLANDS    NO - NORWAY  
R - RUSSIA    S - SWEDEN    Y - YUGOSLAVIA

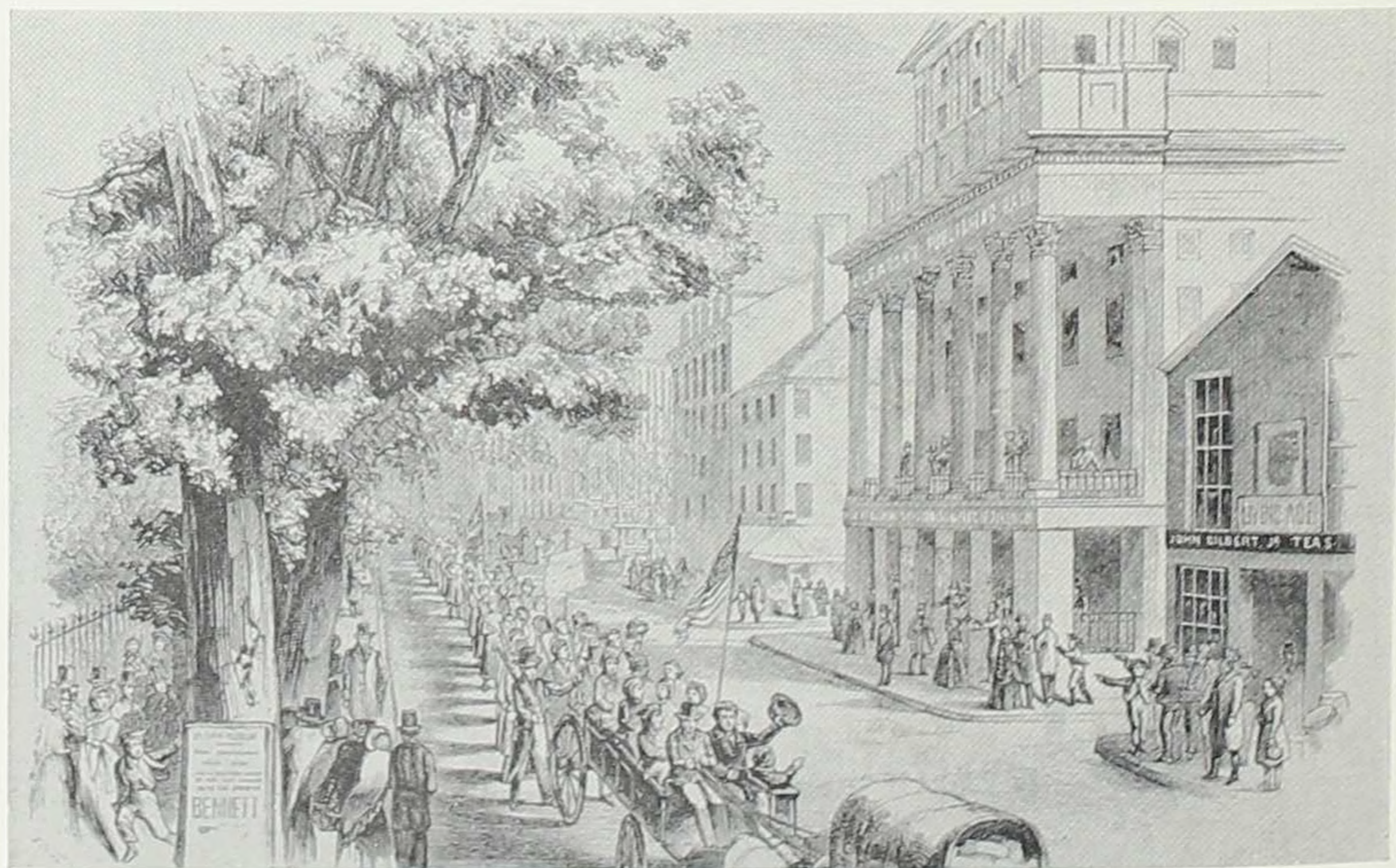
PREPARED BY H.L. CALKIN



## HEADING FOR THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY



Emigrant Wagon on Way to Railroad Station



## Swedish Emigrants Bound for the West



mines that must be worked. The Webster County coal miners were from Ireland, England, and Canada. In the coal mines of Scott and Jefferson counties, the miners came from Scotland. There were eighteen Englishmen, five Welsh, five Swedes, two Scots and one Dane working in the mines in Des Moines Township, Boone County, in 1870.

J. A. Green, an Irishman, owned a stone quarry at Anamosa in 1870. His laborers were mostly Irish — seventeen in number. He also had two Scotchmen, two Englishmen, and one Canadian.

Many manufacturers came from England and Canada. In Burlington an Englishman named Henry Jarvis made concrete bricks while Harvey Ray, Jr., another Englishman, manufactured agricultural implements. In Dubuque, Joseph Trudell, a Canadian, was a prosperous manufacturer of carriages and wagons. William Bokirk operated a woolen factory in Guthrie County. His entire labor force consisted of I. C. Fox, finisher, Henry Chessel, wool sorter, William Anderson, dyer, and John Story, weaver, all from England.

In the nineteenth century numerous public offices and local government jobs were held by immigrants. For instance, James Wood, an Englishman, was Mayor of Vinton in 1870. Ten years earlier he had been the postmaster.

Among those who held county office was the sheriff of Bremer County in 1860, J. G. Elliss, an



Englishman. In 1870 the county judge of Linn County was Daniel Lothian, Scotchman. The county treasurer of Dubuque was an Irishman, Arthur McCann.

Those who were elected to Congress from Iowa included three from Scotland and one from Ireland. The Scotchmen were Daniel Kerr of Grundy Center, David B. Henderson of Fayette County and James Wilson of Tama County. The Irishman was William Smythe of Linn County. Henderson and Wilson were both Speakers of the House, and Wilson became Secretary of Agriculture under President William McKinley.

In addition to those occupations mentioned, Scotchmen were often coopers, and merchants, while Englishmen were frequently bankers, lawyers, engineers, millers, speculators, and merchants. In addition to being laborers of various types, those with an Irish background were bricklayers, lime burners, locomotive engineers, switchmen, and land surveyors.



## Other Foreigners

The first of the white settlers in Iowa was a French Canadian. In 1788 Julien Dubuque obtained permission to work the lead mines around present-day Dubuque from the Fox Indians. This right was confirmed in a Spanish Land Grant in 1796. Louis Honore Tesson received a Spanish Land Grant near the present site of Montrose in Lee County in 1799 and Basil Giard was awarded a similar tract in what is now Clayton County opposite Prairie du Chien in 1800.

Nicolas Boilvin, another Frenchman, was interpreter to the Osage Indians as early as 1804 and later an Assistant Indian Agent for those tribes along the Mississippi River above the mouth of the Missouri River. In western Iowa Peter A. Sarpy, a French trader, built a trading post within the area of the present Pottawattamie County in 1824.

In spite of this early beginning few Frenchmen came to Iowa. The most notable settlement was the Icarian community in Adams County. The Iowa colony under the leadership of Etienne Cabet was started in 1858 when factions developed among the Icarians at Nauvoo, Illinois. It was made up of "people seeking release from the



religious and economic tyranny of revolutionary Europe. Revolting against oppression in the home land, these people came from socially disturbed France, from religiously torn Germany, and from politically unsettled Hungary." After twenty years the colony was dissolved by court order and the property divided between two factions.

Among the French in Iowa were many whose occupations were closely associated with early pioneer life. For instance, there was Louis Wise, a peddler in Ringgold County, George Wagner, a plowmaker in Bellevue, and Joseph Vilondre, John Gardfee and Louis Chairmon, Indian traders who lived in Fremont County in 1860. Other Frenchmen were saddlers, saloon keepers, carriage makers, marble cutters and gardeners.

#### *Dutch*

Although the Dutch have been closely associated with Iowa for a long time — particularly at Pella and Orange City — they as a whole, like the Danes, were slower to arrive and settle in Iowa. In 1950 they were the fourth largest group in Iowa. The man who led the Dutch to Iowa was Henry P. Scholte, who said he settled the fertile prairieland because he was "convinced that the settlement in some healthful region will have, by the ordinary blessing of God, excellent temporal and moral results, especially for the rising generations."

Scholte had secured title to 18,000 acres of land



in Marion County where he and 600 followers laid out the town of Pella in 1847. Soon frame buildings superseded dugouts and sod houses and their Iowa cheese acquired an excellent reputation in the markets of St. Louis. Truck gardening was followed more extensively than the tilling of large farms of corn or wheat.

In forming the Dutch colony at Pella, one of the principal reasons for leaving home had been religious persecution. A few years later an unusual assist came from Nicholas Anslyn who had been the Netherlands Consul at Keokuk in 1858 and 1859. After serving as commercial representative of the Government of Holland, Anslyn returned home to "use his influence . . . there to induce emigrants to come to this State [Iowa]." Anslyn had found the Hollanders in Iowa to be "an industrious and intelligent class of people" but few of them were "men of means." He expected to induce men of capital to emigrate "by proper presentations of the mercantile and agricultural facilities which will be afforded them in Iowa."

Pella was the source of settlers for other areas. In 1867 Jerry Pelmulder went with others to found Orange City. There they were joined by Dutchmen from Wisconsin. By 1874 this later colony was well established and had its own newspaper, *De Volksvriend*, published by Henry Hospers, a Pella founder who often contributed his efforts to encourage Dutch emigration.



*Hungarians*

One of the most dramatic reasons for emigrating was that of General Ladislaus Ujhazy and his band of Hungarians. In the Revolution of 1848 they were forced by the Russians to capitulate and surrender the Fortress of Comorn. They were allowed to emigrate without their property.

Prior to leaving New York for Iowa, General Ujhazy said: "To these shores I was driven by tyranny; to the fields of the west I am now borne by the desire of winning from mother Earth what is so necessary to the American Republic, a free and independent existence."

Upon their arrival at Burlington in 1850 Mayor H. W. Starr welcomed the Hungarians: "I only express the common sentiment of our people when I say you are welcome to Iowa — as citizens. . . . Her free soil is open to you and all your compatriots, and we are proud to number you among our people." To which Ujhazy replied,

We had an opportunity to choose our home out of the thirty stars which illuminate the firmament of American freedom. Our views were directed to the great West, and in the West to the youthful State of Iowa, where a truly republican and virtuous people are rapidly growing to wealth and power, and where nature by a most fertile soil, so lavishly aids the laboring man.

Among this band were Francis Varga, who was to hold public office in Iowa, and George Pomutz, who was an ardent promoter of New Buda,



their settlement in Decatur County. Later Pomutz served in the Civil War and became Consul General to Russia.

Just as Ujhazy, George Pomutz, Ferdinand Takacs and others fled Hungary during the Revolution of 1848 so did many twentieth century Hungarians. Following the October, 1956, revolt against the Communists, approximately 26,000 Hungarians were admitted to the United States. Of these, several scores followed the path which those a century earlier had taken to Iowa. In 1959 some 120 recent arrivals were reported.

#### *Bohemians*

The first impetus to migration of Bohemians or Czechs also came with the failure of the Revolution of 1848. The second cause was economic with America offering opportunities for land and other gains impossible at home.

The first permanent settlement of Bohemians was in Jefferson Township, Johnson County, and the southern part of Linn County, most coming in 1854 to 1856, but stragglers followed for a number of years. Cedar Rapids was the goal of many others when they arrived in New York. By 1856 at least 129 had arrived. Other Bohemian communities were established at Spillville, as well as in Benton, Tama, and Ringgold counties.

#### *Swiss*

Sometimes a single person did much to get his compatriots to emigrate. Chris Bathman was a



Swiss barber in Des Moines with one of the "best tonsorial divans between the two oceans." He constantly sent Iowa German language newspapers to Switzerland. As a result, he received numerous letters in the spring of 1869 saying that several dozen Swiss were coming to Iowa that year. These Swiss included house and sign painters, bookbinders, brewers and coppersmiths.

As was true on a national scope, the twentieth century in Iowa was marked by a swing of immigration from the British Isles and Western Europe to eastern and southern European countries. As a result, the Greeks, Italians, Russians, Poles and Yugoslavs began to arrive.

As early as 1850, however, at least one Italian was present in Iowa. He was Domenico Ballo, a music teacher in Council Bluffs. In 1860 there were still only thirty Italians, and they were living in scattered communities. Among them was Peter Pillezzaro of Dubuque County who followed a traditional Italian occupation, tending a vineyard.

Italian laborers were being told in 1862 that there were four conditions which would lead to prosperity in America. These were liberal wages, free schools, cheap land and cheap bread. Gradually such arguments became effective. By 1920 Italians were the largest foreign-born group in Appanoose and Dallas counties. They were also present in large numbers in Monroe, Webster, Polk, Pottawattamie and Woodbury counties.



In 1860 only a single Greek was reported as living in Iowa. In 1920 they were the third largest group in Cerro Gordo County with 430 being listed in the census. Woodbury County had 531 Greeks that year, the most of any Iowa county. Other counties with more than two hundred were Linn, Black Hawk, and Polk.

The Poles were never too numerous. The greatest concentration was in Polk County with 349 in 1920. The same year there were 288 Yugoslavs in Appanoose County. In Woodbury County there was a large settlement of 2,054 Russians in 1920. The counties of Webster, Polk, Pottawattamie, Scott, Cerro Gordo, Black Hawk and Linn all had more than two hundred Russians that same year.

Although most foreigners came from Europe and North America, there were a few from the Far East in Iowa. In 1870 there was a single Chinese family in Marshall County. By 1880 the number had risen to thirty-three in thirteen counties. Nine of these were in Polk County. In 1890 thirty counties had a total of sixty-four Chinese, fourteen of whom were in Sioux City. In 1900 there was only one Japanese in Poweshiek County, but by 1910 the number had increased to twenty-nine. There were 104 Chinese in Iowa that same year.

Most nationality groups followed a pattern in emigrating from their home countries and pro-



ceeding to areas where others speaking the same language and having the same social customs were already established. However, there have been a number of isolated cases in Iowa's nineteenth century history that are hard to explain. Mention of some of them will help to illustrate why Iowa has truly been a melting pot for people from all over the world.

For instance, there was Rosa Mix of Butler County, who was born in Venezuela and lived in Illinois and Wisconsin before coming to Iowa with her husband in the 1850's. In Dubuque in 1860 one could find Abraham Freibley, a day laborer from Ceylon, or in Worth County, Fred Folette, a harness maker who had been born on the Indian Ocean in 1841. Lydia F. Elliott, a music teacher in Benton County in 1870, was born in Hindustan. In Henry County there was another Hindustani, Barney McMahon, photographer.

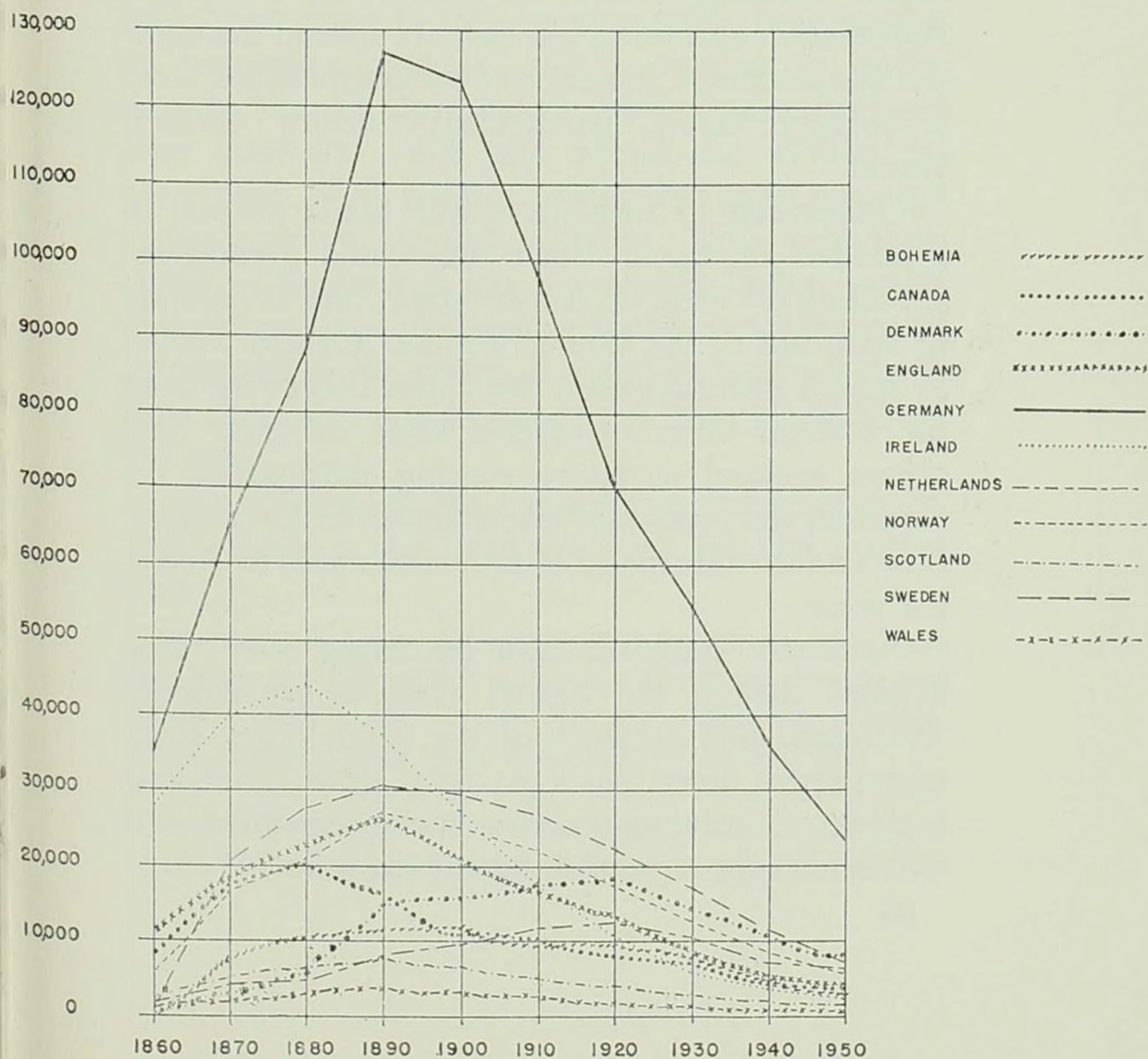
In Boone County, John and Pauline Baumgart and the four children of George Gasson, were born in Australia although their parents had been born in Prussia. W. D. Horton, a hired man in Hardin County, had come from Tasmania. Solum Toliver, a lawyer in Greene County in 1870, had been born in the East Indies. Java was the birthplace of Mary A. Brown, wife of an English merchant in Cresco. James Smith lived in Buchanan County in 1870. He had been born of Irish parents at the Cape of Good Hope.



Clara Hitchcock, daughter of Clark Hitchcock of New London, was born in the Sandwich Islands, as were the two children of James Bennett, a farmer in Howard County. Margaret James of Mitchell County was born in Maracaibo, Venezuela.

## PRINCIPAL FOREIGN BORN GROUPS IN IOWA

1860 - 1950





## Opposition to Foreigners

Although there were many who were anxious to foster widespread immigration to the United States, there were others with unfavorable attitudes toward the alien. Native Americanism, the Know Nothing Party, the American Protective Association and other movements spread throughout the nation. Charges and countercharges were frequently made, particularly during election years.

Opposition to foreigners was made evident in a number of ways. Some advocated greater restrictions on them so fewer would find it possible to emigrate to the United States. Others wished to repeal naturalization laws and otherwise keep the foreign born as second class citizens. Still others seemed to enjoy making derogatory remarks in the press and elsewhere in order to show how undesirable many of the newcomers to America were.

American nativism was becoming ever more evident during the period from approximately 1840 until the outbreak of the Civil War. Iowa newspapers were quick to take sides. National incidents involving nativism were recounted and editorials supported one side or the other.



The Dubuque *Iowa News* of August 11, 1840, told of 250 Whigs in Illinois petitioning for the repeal of naturalization laws. These Whigs, who were supporters of William Henry Harrison for President, argued that further admission of foreigners to political rights exercised by native Americans would be destructive of republican institutions in the United States.

The editor commented on this by saying he could not imagine how "intelligent foreigners, who have come to this country with the intention of becoming citizens" could support a party, namely the Whigs, which had always opposed their interests. Not only would the Whigs deprive them of all political rights, but send them out of the country, the editor wrote. "We wish them to tell us how much less prosperous Dubuque and Galena are in consequence of the participation of foreigners in the political rights of native Americans than they would have been had this not been the case."

The editorial in the *Iowa News* for August 25, 1840, made a still stronger case for the foreign born:

Would it be wise or politic to reject those who have fled from the old world, and have sacrificed friend, and country, and home . . . to become American citizens, merely because they were born under a foreign sky? . . . We are almost ashamed of our country when we see associations called "Native American" spring up in many parts of the United States, whose object is to prevent the emi-



gration of foreigners to our shores, by repealing the existing laws for their naturalization. . . . Naturalized foreigners are almost without exception the supporters of pure democratic principles; they are found in most cases arrayed on the side of the people, and opposed to all infractions of the Constitution. . . . The naturalized citizen . . . when governed by correct motives, is scarcely ever wrong.

Since the foreign born constituted a strong element in Dubuque, it is not surprising that the *Iowa News* continued its editorials on behalf of the foreigner, pointing out that "this nation was originally formed by settlements made by Europeans." Upon reaching the shores of America they were imbued with sentiments of liberty and the principles of republicanism.

Since that time "millions have immigrated to our country and have found the asylum they so fondly expected," the Dubuque editor declared. Because of the naturalization laws of the United States, the oppressed European "who sighed for freedom in his native land" found himself "redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled" after a few years. The first time he approached the ballot box to vote was the "noblest and most happy moment in his life." Therefore, any attempts to repeal the naturalization laws should be thwarted.

The nativists argued that the naturalization laws should be repealed because European countries were ridding themselves of paupers by sending them to the United States. The *Iowa News*



agreed that paupers had arrived in this country at various times and in considerable numbers. It also agreed that they "have become chargeable to the parishes where they landed, but we may venture to assert that not one in a hundred of the immigrants who arrive annually at our shores are of this description."

The Dubuque editor thought that the paupers would still come even if the laws were repealed. The great majority who sought asylum were those "who flee in disgust and horror from the tyrannical governments of their native lands." The *Iowa News* concluded:

They constitute the fresh streams and rivulets which are constantly pouring themselves into the stagnating pool of our republicanism. . . . The experience of man has conclusively shown that republican governments cannot long exist without a renovation of their citizens by admixture with foreigners who have experienced the evils attended upon other forms of Government.

About this same time the *Burlington Gazette* raised its voice against nativism. On February 13, 1841, the *Gazette* declared that the people in the Territory of Iowa were indignant and horrified at the efforts of officials "seeking to destroy the influence and restrict the privileges of the poor foreigners who, throwing off the tyranny of the old world, have sought the enjoyment of freedom among the people of this Union." The *Gazette* looked upon the formation of Native American



Associations "as unjust to the foreigner and disgraceful to the country."

Such sentiments did not deter some Iowans from attacking the foreign born. Opposition to foreign immigration to Iowa appeared at least five years before statehood was achieved. Thus, in 1841 the Burlington *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot* urged all parties to unite "in diminishing the growing foreign influence — the assimilation of foreign feelings — foreign policy — foreign principles — foreign habits — foreign character . . . or our separate character as Americans will be lost sight of — our Constitution will become a mere rope of sand. . . ."

In July, 1841, the same editor thought it was strange that some people could approve of Hibernian, Scotch and British Associations but "rise up and offer condemnation" when a Native American Association is proposed.

We have no objection when foreigners have once become attached to our institutions . . . and have complied with the requirements of our naturalization laws, that they should enjoy all the rights and immunities of citizens; but if there be any preference, it should most certainly be awarded to those whose ancestors fought and bled for the liberties of their native country. As long as they keep free from political broils, we go it strong for native American Associations.

Native Americanism is "our birth right," the Burlington *Hawk-Eye* declared. "We glory in



it." The editor charged that those who did not wish to suppress the "immense influx of foreigners continually landing on our shores" only wanted to swell the numbers in their political party and "secure their votes on the day of election."

A contrary view to this narrow and bigoted doctrine was expressed by the *Burlington Gazette*, which branded nativism's doctrines of intolerance unworthy of the "enlightened age in which we live." The *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot* angrily retorted that the *Gazette* seemed to be proud of belonging to a "foreign party," claiming that "the mean, dastardly clap trap demagoguery, put in requisition by the *Gazette* to gain a few votes in the foreign ranks is too contemptible for serious notice."

In the midst of this controversy the Democrats met in convention at Iowa City on June 7, 1841. Among the resolutions passed was one favoring the retention of the naturalization laws, without which "a large portion of the human family" would be cut off "from rights which the charter of our liberties declare are granted to all."

In 1846 the *Burlington Gazette* made a strong appeal to Iowans to oppose a proposed union of Whigs and nativists:

We ask, the particular attention of *that worthy part of our community* in Iowa who are made up of *emigrants* and the *descendants* of emigrants to this country, to this maneuver. If the Whigs can come into power, they will not



hesitate to deprive your brother who may not yet have come over to this country, of the possibility of obtaining the rights of citizenship; they will not hesitate to draw the lines between you and your descendants on the one part, and those whom they style native born on the other. They think that because you and your father were so unfortunate as not to have been born on the soil of freedom, that therefore you are unworthy of freedom.

Prior to the presidential campaign of 1848 it was understood that members of the Whig party in Iowa were compiling lists of naturalized voters. It was the intention of the Whig election judges, according to the *Burlington Gazette*, to let no naturalized citizen vote unless he had his papers with him. "We hope every voter will be prepared to stand the test; to be forewarned is to be forearmed." It should be noted that the Whigs won the election in 1848 and that the Iowa vote was: Lewis Cass (Democrat) 12,093; Zachary Taylor (Whig) 11,144; Martin Van Buren (Free Soil) 1,126.

Within a few years the Know Nothing Party was formed from the nativist elements throughout the United States. The movement spread into Iowa where the ranks were split on the question of the foreign born. In the election of 1854 the Know Nothings were among those opposing the Democrats. Made up chiefly of persons from the old Whig party, they campaigned for greater restrictions on conferring citizenship on aliens and their entire exclusion from office. That year they helped



to elect James W. Grimes as Governor and a majority in the Iowa House of Representatives.

The Council Bluffs *Semi-Weekly Bugle* bitterly opposed Know Nothingism. In April, 1855, the editor predicted Know Nothings had reached their zenith in Iowa.

No political organization can long hold together, that does not possess soundness, and Know Nothingness is utterly rotten and corrupt. Before the next August election in this State, it will stink in the nostrils of all right thinking men, and will be execrated and despised by its own deluded followers.

On what principle of reason the Irishman, the Hungarian, the German, the Swiss, or alien of any land should be denied citizenship rights after learning about American institutions we cannot conceive. The United States had been sought by many as a "refuge from tyranny and oppression."

Farmers were urged to come to Council Bluffs for a few days to become better acquainted with the maneuvers of the Know Nothing party. The readers of the *Bugle* were told to reflect on the fact that "in one of the most prosperous and flourishing States in the entire confederacy" there was a political party "whose principles are so base that the members dare not avow them, and are ashamed to own their membership."

From week to week in 1855 the *Bugle* continued its campaign against Know Nothingism. In August the editor asked:

Who can refrain from laughing to see the ludicrous



contortions made in the gasping struggles of expiring Know Nothingism? . . . How it rants, charges, squirms, groans, and tears!

The *Bugle's* predictions were far from being correct, as the Democrats lost heavily in seeking Federal, state, and local offices in Iowa. By 1859 the Democratic Party in Iowa was attempting to associate Know Nothings with the Republican Party.

In Massachusetts the Republican Party had passed legislation which deprived foreign-born citizens of the right of suffrage for two years after being naturalized. In Iowa the Democrats were claiming that the Republicans could not win without the vote of the foreign born and so had repudiated the Massachusetts groups. However, "the 'Thick-headed Dutch,' as he (James W. Grimes) used to call the Funks, Schrams, Kriechbaums and Bangers of Burlington, can see thro' them."

To emphasize the dislike of the Republicans for foreign citizens and to influence voters in favor of the Democrats, the Council Bluffs *Bugle* reprinted a purported speech by John Wilson, an 1856 Republican elector in Massachusetts.

*In the heart of the foreigner beats not a single noble throb of patriotism. He is so brutal and degraded that he has no sympathy for anything but cabbage and lager beer, potatoes and buttermilk or some other kind of outlandish dish, fit only for the hogs of the street or pen. . . . Look at the Dutchman smoking his pipe, and if you can see a ray of intelligence in that dirty, idiotic looking face of his,*



show it to me. . . . *These Foreigners . . . , they have no more right to vote than the Brutes of the Field, and Have not half the sense of a good Newfoundland dog.*

The stigma of the Know Nothings was still present in elections as late as 1868. The Davenport *Democrat* and the Burlington *Argus*, as well as other papers, were endeavoring to influence the "foreign element of the voting class" by charging that Schuyler Colfax, candidate for the Vice Presidency, was still a Know-Nothing.

The American Protective Association was created in 1887 and continued for about twenty-five years. This organization, which was anti-Catholic, anti-foreign born if they were Catholics, and anti-Irish in nature, was founded by Henry F. Bowers, himself the son of a German immigrant, of Clinton, Iowa.

In 1898 attempts were again being made to restrict immigration. According to a news item from Dubuque in the Cedar Rapids *Gazette*, the editor of the *Katholischer Westen* and the *Luxemburger Gazette* in Dubuque County had started a crusade against the anti-emigrant bill then in Congress. He had written David Henderson, one of the Iowa Congressmen, asking whether or not he was aware that pressure for the restrictions came largely from a foreign element in the United States and especially from the laboring class. He, therefore, was urging all Germans in Dubuque to join him in protesting vigorously.



The *Gazette* of Cedar Rapids added that, according to the provisions of the bill, "the father of Abraham Lincoln could not have been imported. He could neither read nor write, but there were beneficial things he could do."

At the same time there were others in Iowa petitioning for stronger restrictions. Among others, persons from Council Bluffs, Clinton, and Sioux City made known their wishes to their Congressmen. In successive Congresses, when proposed restrictive immigration legislation was being considered, there were usually a number of petitions from groups in Iowa urging its adoption.

World War I brought a number of manifestations of disapproval of foreigners in Iowa. In 1917 the General Assembly passed an act authorizing the Governor to require the registration of all aliens within Iowa. Every occupant of a private residence or manager of a hotel or rooming house was required to notify the public officials within twenty-four hours of the presence of any subject or citizen of a foreign country, who had registered as a guest.

The widespread antipathy to foreign cultures, as exemplified by foreign language newspapers, led to the passage in 1919 of an act prohibiting the publication of official municipal and other governmental notices and proceedings in any newspapers that were not printed entirely in English. The same year other legislations required that



English should be used in teaching all subjects in Iowa public and private schools.

Another bill was introduced to exclude aliens from employment in public schools and state educational institutions. Amended during consideration to apply only to those whose native land had been at war with the United States or her allied powers from 1914 to 1918, the bill failed in the House by one vote.



## Life in Their New Homes

Every nationality group is faced with problems of assimilation upon migrating to a new land. One group of foreigners may become quickly absorbed, while another may retain its distinct culture for a long time. Perhaps the most successful situation is one in which new cultural patterns are evolved while certain national customs or traditions are retained. Consideration of some aspects of the life of the immigrants in Iowa will reveal how different groups lived together and at the same time kept alive some phases of their culture.

The language barrier was a deterrent to assimilation for many. At Stacyville the 1870 census enumerator found some new residents from Luxemburg. "This family just from Germany," he reported, "are to [sic] Dutch to talk." As a result he was unable even to record their names.

The tendency was for people of the same nationality to band together where their own language could be heard. This was often evident in the hotels. In a hotel operated by Theodore Stemming, a German, in Dubuque, of twenty-six residents registered at one time, nineteen were from Germany (Hanover, Saxony, Bavaria, Prussia,



Oldenburg, Hesse Cassel), two from Switzerland, one from France, one from Holland, one from Luxemburg and two from Tyrol.

Even among the English speaking people there was the trend toward looking for others from the homeland. Such was the case in Falls Township, Cerro Gordo County, where there was a community of English farmers from such diverse places as Dorsetshire, Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Devonshire and Sommersetshire.

The above situation was not always true. In 1839 "a Wolverine among the Hawkeyes" reported on his trip through Eastern Iowa. At Dubuque he "was forcibly struck with the mixed mass of Germans, French, English, Irish, American, ect [sic], intermingling with each other in that cheerful manner, which is the true indication of happy hearts and smiling prospects."

Political parties in Iowa, as elsewhere in the United States, were always aware that the thousands of foreign born were potential voters. Consequently, steps were often taken in an attempt to show that a given party was the champion of the immigrant. At the Democratic County Convention at Council Bluffs held in June 1855, one of the resolutions read:

That every one who makes our country the home of his choice, and loves the Constitution, the Laws, the liberty of the Union, is in its largest sense, a true American. Our birth place is not of our own selection. Our religion is



between ourselves and God, and should be left to our own judgement, conscience and responsibility.

The State Convention of the Democratic party in Des Moines that year resolved that there should be "no bigotry or pride of caste or distinction of birth among American citizens." The 1867 Democratic state platform stated that they favored granting "the elective franchise to foreigners who have resided in the State one year and declared their intention to become citizens."

Iowa politicians began early to consider the right of suffrage for the foreign born. During the Constitutional Convention in 1844 Michael O'Brien of Dubuque County offered an amendment "that all foreigners who have resided in the State for three years, and who have declared their intentions to become citizens of the United States, shall be permitted to vote for Representatives and County officers." The proposal aroused a great deal of discussion among members of the Convention but failed to be accepted by a vote of 29 to 39.

Two years later, Sylvester G. Matson, delegate to the Constitutional Convention from Jones County, took the floor in an attempt to extend the franchise to foreigners.

It matters not to me where a man was born, provided he has the heart and feelings of an American. . . . I will give him welcome to all that I ask for myself — the right of a citizen of Iowa. . . . They know *better* how to appreciate the inestimable blessings of liberty than we do.



But again support for the provision failed to materialize.

Although many Europeans left home to avoid military conscription, they did not refuse military duty in the United States. As early as December, 1839, a regiment of Irish, Germans, Dutch, Scots, French and others was being formed in Dubuque. "Such a heterogeneous mixed multitude of all nations, tongues, languages and people is to be found no where on this earth except in the Du Buque Lead Mines."

In 1850 Fort Dodge was established under the command of Major Samuel Woods. The rolls of the army garrison that year listed thirty-four Irish, seven Germans, two from England and one each from Hanover, Scotland, Gibraltar, and Russia, while twenty-one soldiers were native born Americans.

With the outbreak of the Civil War many foreigners participated in the Northern army. Recruitment was carried on among all — whether native or foreign born. For instance, in Iowa City a call was issued for "a general rally of all citizens of this county who formerly served in European armies." The invitation was directed to "all those of our countrymen who fought the hirelings of tyrants in the eventful struggle of 1848 and 1849, to come forward to the rescue of our adopted country. . . . Our wives and children will be taken care of by the government for the defense of



whose stars and stripes we are so eager to meet freedom's foe once more. . . . Rally, ye sons of Germany, Bohemia, and France."

Few organizational units were made up of any one nationality. The efforts to organize German or Irish regiments in Iowa never materialized. The company known as the "Burlington Rifles," which was largely German, was organized in 1857 under Capt. Carl L. Mathies, who had been an officer in the Prussian militia before he immigrated to Iowa in 1849. On January 14, 1861, Governor Samuel Kirkwood accepted their services, and they eventually became Co. D of the First Iowa Volunteers.

Companies B, G, and K of the 16th Iowa Infantry were half German while two-thirds of Company F of the 5th Iowa Cavalry were Germans from Dubuque and Burlington. The 2nd Iowa Regiment was approximately half German.

Among the Iowans who volunteered for Federal service were 995 British Americans, 1,015 Englishmen, 1,436 Irish, 2,850 Germans and 1,618 from various other foreign countries.

Many of the foreign born in Iowa found ways to perpetuate national customs and traditions. Sometimes this was in the form of schools that used native languages for instruction. The foreign language newspapers was another means. Finally, societies were frequently formed for promotional and social purposes. During the Civil



War, for example, various nationalities had organizations which helped with relief measures for soldiers' families. There was the Bohemian Relief Society of Iowa City which gave a ball for the benefit of the poor and needy while the German Supporting Society of Iowa City staged a masquerade ball.

Among the Germans many societies were formed. There were the Turner groups in Davenport, Dubuque, Des Moines, Muscatine, Burlington and other cities. These societies encouraged gymnastics and other physical educational programs.

Frequently there were musical organizations such as the German Maennecher Society and Strasser's Band in Des Moines and the German Band of Dubuque who participated in parades and gave concerts. There were also worker's groups, such as the German Mechanics' Aid Society of Muscatine. Another society was the German Rifle Association who had semi-annual target practice with contests at which prizes were given. Included among the prizes in 1860 were a bureau worth \$25, a dictionary worth \$15, whist tables, a silk hat, bitters and beer glasses. German shooting societies were located in many of the larger towns.

Among the French in Dubuque a Societe Francaise was formed. During the 1860's and 1870's a Bal Francaise was held under the auspices of



the sons of France. The Bal was "not exclusive, but open to all nationalities." The hall was usually decorated with the national colors of the United States and France. The Bal of 1870 was declared a big success — \$317.00 had been taken in.

There was also a Scottish organization in Dubuque at this time. In 1869 the St. Andrews Society met at the Tremont House to commemorate the birth of Robert Burns. One hundred and fifty couples attended. Among the toasts that night were the following:

*The President Elect*

*America* — The land of our adoption. She invites the overcrowded millions of the Old World to come and, by untrammelled industry and honest labor, develop her boundless resources and build themselves a happy home under her free and benign institutions.

*Scotland*

*The Complete Union of all our States*

*Robert Burns*

*Our Sister Societies* — We greet them and shall ever maintain and cherish a reciprocal spirit of friendship.

The Danes organized the Denmark's Minde in Emmett County in 1895. This group was formed to promote "harmony and sociality among the Danes living here, to keep fresh the memories of our native land, to preserve the Danish language and to give aid in case of sickness." They held frequent picnics and social gatherings and main-



tained a library of several hundred volumes, mostly in the Danish language.

Of course there have also been the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick and the Ancient Order of Hibernians in many Iowa cities. Each year we still have celebrations, such as the Tulip Festival at Pella and Orange City, which present some of the cultural practices of Iowa's nationalities.

In 1868 the Germans of Des Moines made known their intentions to establish a German school. The Des Moines *State Register* gave its whole-hearted support to the movement. "We rejoice to see so much spirit manifested in their educational affairs," the editor wrote, "and hope to see this institution grow under patient, skillful management until some day it will be called a college."

In December, 1868, a successful fair was held by the Germans as a benefit for the school. Profits were \$929 with which they planned to purchase a lot. The following March "The German American Independent School" was established under the supervision of Prof. Conrad Beck. English was taught in the forenoon and German in the afternoon. In June the cornerstone for a new building was laid, and the school was hailed as the first proof of the organized existence of a German population in Des Moines.

Iowa place names frequently commemorate the nationalities that live in a particular area, or that

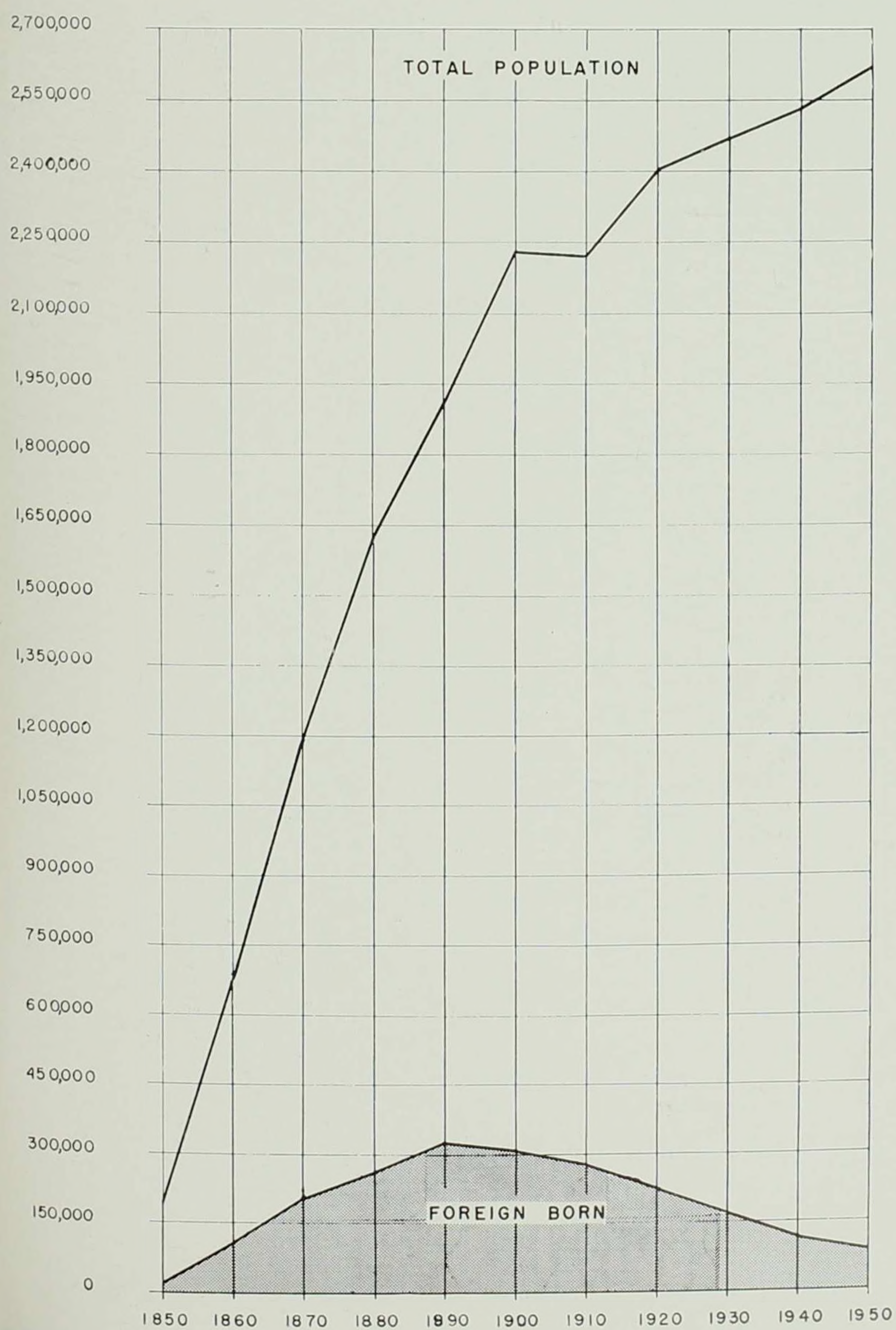


honor a certain personality or nationality. The community of Scotch Ridge in Warren County and Wales in Lincoln Township, Montgomery County, are obvious in the derivation of their names. Bremer County was named after Fredricka Bremer, the Swedish novelist. Among German names are Guttenberg, Luxembourg, Holstein, Schleswig, and Westphalia Township in Shelby County. Bonaparte and Dubuque are French names; Birmingham and Cambridge were named after towns of the same name in England. Among the counties named after Irishmen are Emmet, O'Brien, and Mitchell.

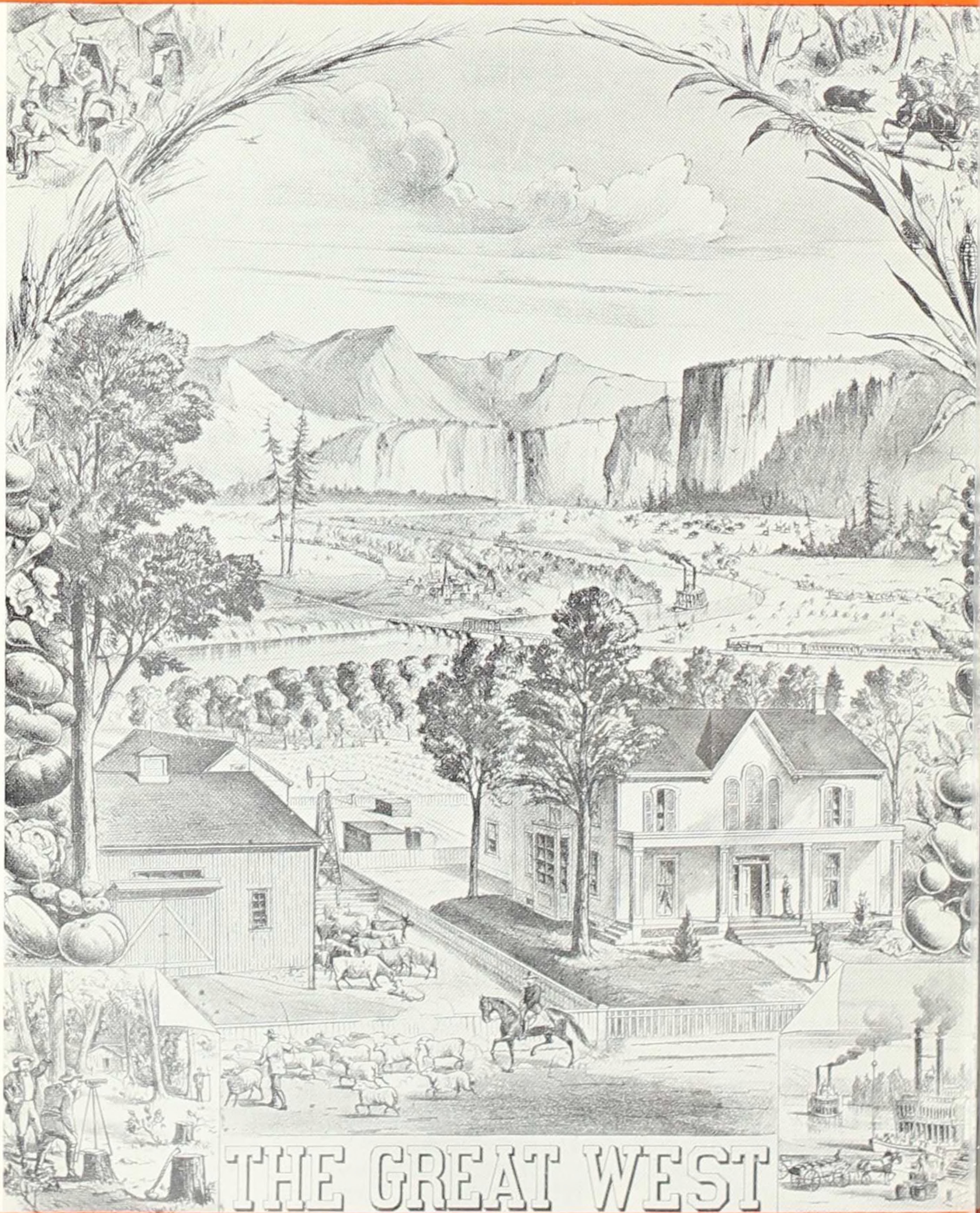
Truly, the comments of I. Hendershott about the citizens of Burlington in 1840 still apply to all Iowans since then, even in 1962. To paraphrase his letter to the editor of the *Burlington Gazette and Advertiser*, "Although the habits of Iowa's citizens have been *migratory*, yet before long they became *assimilated*, upon a high and elevated standard."



# RATIO OF FOREIGN BORN TO TOTAL IOWA POPULATION 1850 - 1950







## THE GREAT WEST

A symbol of the fruitfulness of the United States is depicted — steamboats and railroads lending easy access to the "Great West." In addition to rich, cheap, and abundant farm land, the artist delineates surveying, mining, and hunting.