

Great Journeys from Little Homes

[Address at 74th Birthday celebration at West Branch on August 10, 1948.]

All mankind is given to hero worship. The birthplace of a great man, or a new idea, has been cherished by nations everywhere. Christians speak with reverence of Bethlehem; Moslems with equal fervor make their pilgrimage to Mecca. Shakespeare devotees stream to Stratford-on-Avon, while admirers of Goethe journey to his birthplace at Frankfurt-am-Main, Jamestown, Independence Hall, Fort Sumter, and Pearl Harbor are landmarks in American history. Mount Vernon, Monticello, The Hermitage, New Salem, and Hyde Park are significant names to this Nation because of the men associated with them.

Homer's fame expanded so enormously after his death that seven cities have claimed him as their own. The Republican party became so powerful after the Civil War that Jackson, Michigan, and Ripon, Wisconsin, vie for the honor of being the birthplace of the G. O. P. Happily, West Branch in Iowa can lay undisputed claim to Herbert Hoover as its native-born son.

The utter simplicity of the Hoover birthplace has endeared it to all Iowans, for many of the

commonwealth's greatest men were born amidst humble surroundings. Governor Henry Dodge and Senator A. C. Dodge were both log cabin pioneers. Samuel J. Kirkwood was born in a two-story log cabin, and James Harlan has described his boyhood days in log cabins in Illinois and Indiana. Today, statues of Kirkwood and Harlan represent Iowa in the Nation's Hall of Fame.

Students of American history, lovers of the Iowa scene, followers of the Quaker faith, advocates of rugged individualism, engineers, politicians, statesmen, the young and the old, the rich and the poor, people of every race, creed, and color will draw from the Herbert Hoover birthplace at West Branch an inspiring lesson in democracy — that from the humblest home can spring the Nation's leaders, even the President of the United States. It was in 1828 that Andrew Jackson, born in a log cabin and reared in the west, became President of the United States. Jackson was the first American living west of the Alleghenies to be elected Chief Executive of the Nation. A century later, in 1928, Herbert Hoover, born in a simple two-room frame house in Iowa, orphaned at the age of ten and reared amidst adversity, demonstrated it was still possible for men to journey from log cabin to White House.

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