

## The Web of Life

After passing through one of the most devastating depressions, the people of Iowa must have been reminded in 1935 of Warren G. Harding's campaign in 1920 to get "back to normalcy". More new automobiles, tractors, and radios were being bought. More telephones were being installed. The movies enjoyed an increase of at least thirty per cent in attendance. Crowds flocked to parks, fairs, and athletic contests. While the CCC experimented with the face of nature, Iowa's twelve beauty schools sent out an army of 802 new beauticians to perform their magic on the faces of women. The steady upward climb in tax receipts from gasoline and cigarettes during 1935 was proof positive that the material welfare of Iowans was gradually returning to par.

It would be a mistake, however, to think only in terms of material prosperity, for Iowa has always been rich in spiritual values. In pioneer days the pantheism of Abner Kneeland fell upon sterile soil in Iowa. Most Iowans were therefore amazed to learn that Walcott in Scott County, a town of 400 inhabitants, no vacant houses, no movies, no persons on relief, and no municipal debt, was without

a church. "It is probably the only community of its size in the United States", wrote Marcus L. Bach, "without a church building, church services, or minister."

In Iowa, as in the nation, an appreciable gain was made in church membership, as well as contributions, during 1935. Nearly 10,000 persons attended the first Church and Bible School Day at Marshalltown. Twenty-five hundred marched in a parade that included thirty floats and several bands. At Shenandoah in October, over 1200 Sunday school pupils from seven churches marched through the down-town streets in the annual rally-day parade. Bibles were carried in observance of the 400th anniversary of its printing in England.

The many church conferences that met in Iowa in 1935 were confronted with the difficult problems of adjusting the services of the church to everyday life and the social order. Speaking before the meeting of the Iowa-Des Moines Conference of the Methodist Church in September, Dr. Merton S. Rice of Detroit condemned the "meaningless platitudes" that filled most sermons. "The church must do something about the problems of the day, not merely sit by in inactive complacency", he asserted. Bishop F. D. Leete defined effective evangelism as "getting the church to

know the good news of the gospel", and asserted there was "too much deadness" in most modern sermons. Dr. Forney Hutchinson of Tulsa, Oklahoma, before the Upper Iowa Methodist Conference at Cedar Rapids in September, gloomily branded the emotional life of the people as abnormal and was convinced the church could not return to spiritual ways until conditions were changed. "The modern church", Hutchinson declared, "cannot now have a revival because its prayer life is not such as to make a recovery possible." At Fairfield in December 300 Parsons College students conducted a two-day strike against compulsory chapel attendance.

The eternal quest for spiritual comfort was manifested in many ways. At Davenport H. J. Niebuhr enrolled in a correspondence course which promised to teach him how to establish a two-way communication with God. He studied hard on twenty lessons which cost him nineteen dollars. As the year 1935 came to a close he found the lessons had failed to establish a direct communication with the Deity. Greatly disturbed, he complained to the postal authorities, asking that an investigation be made to determine whether or not he had been defrauded through the mails.

Walcott may not have a church, but many of its people have doubtless sought divine guidance

in prayer. Not all Iowans, however, were successful in their supplications. Ralph Kemp, a twenty-seven-year-old Dubuquer, was stranded in Burlington. He was "hungry and cold" and wanted to return with his family to Dubuque. In his hour of tribulation Kemp invoked divine help in prayer. Almost immediately his prayer was answered when he came upon an automobile, unlocked and full of gas. When Kemp told his story to Judge James D. Smyth of Burlington, the judge was moved to admit the efficacy of prayer. He did not, however, lighten the ten-year sentence.

Great moral and political issues confronted the people. Reminiscent of the "red scare" of post-war America was Elmer A. Johnson's scathing indictment of socialism at the Upper Iowa Methodist Conference. Before the same conference spoke Dr. Clarence True Wilson of Washington, D. C., on the subject of temperance. "If we must live in a land flowing with intoxicants," he argued, "the least public schools can do is teach our boys and girls the difference between what is wholesome and what is poison. The Sunday School must put back the quarterly temperance lesson, so every three months our young people shall learn the word of God on the liquor problem. There must be a total abstinence campaign of education, persuasion and pledge-signing."

Iowans were deeply shocked to learn of the death of William A. Sunday on November 6, 1935, at Chicago. Born near Ames on November 19, 1863, "Billy" Sunday was internationally known as a great evangelist. Few men have caused more people "to hit the sawdust trail" and none was more relentless in attacking "the devil and rum".

Agnes Samuelson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, was elected President of the National Education Association. Her State report showed that during the year 1934-1935, 422,052 of the 461,934 children in Iowa between the ages of seven and sixteen were enrolled in school. At the same time 541,095 of the 722,185 between the ages of five and twenty-one were enrolled in elementary and high schools. Forty thousand completed the eighth grade in June and another 25,000 graduated from high school. Rising farm income, improved business conditions, and Federal aid boosted college enrollment. In July friends and supporters of old Tabor College met on the campus to listen to plans for reopening as a non-denominational self-help junior college.

Early in May some 50,000 pupils took one or more of the standard examinations in high school subjects. About 1100 of the best then trooped to Iowa City to compete for individual scholarship

honors under the auspices of the State University. Fourteen-year-old Lois Jeanne Mayhew, a freshman in Red Oak High School, won first honors in academic achievement which gave her the title of "smartest high school pupil in Iowa". It was the fourth straight year that Red Oak has carried off highest honors, Florence Green of Red Oak having won the three previous contests.

In November Comptroller C. B. Murtagh presented figures to show that one-half of every tax dollar in Iowa is spent for education. Nor is the value of schooling discounted by the average Iowa student. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Becker and their daughter, Renetta, of Nashua, were visiting some neighbors when their house caught on fire. By the time they arrived, neighbors and firemen had removed most of the furniture. Suddenly Renetta remembered her high school diploma. Disregarding horrified warnings, she darted into the blazing house and emerged unharmed a few seconds later, carrying the prized certificate. "I've got it", she cried triumphantly. The next moment the upper floor crashed down.

At Boone, on the other hand, a farmer was hailed into criminal court, to explain why he had been keeping his son out of school. Testimony was presented to show that thirteen-year-old Laverne Craven had missed as many as 103 days.

How much does it cost to send a boy to college? Robert E. Rienow, Dean of Men at the State University, estimated that a student could live in the Quadrangle two semesters for \$365.50, not including spending money and clothes. Students in coöperative dormitories have managed on as little as \$255 a year, while fraternity men can go through the year for \$582. But Lee Kann, University personnel director, warned students that working their way through is not all it is "cracked up" to be. According to him, students "go hungry, fail to get enough sleep, and flunk their courses" just because they try to earn a living and go to school at the same time.

A great boon to students and colleges was the grant of \$174,135.77 by the Federal government for Student Relief Employment. Based on a quota not exceeding twelve per cent of their enrollment in October, 1934, over sixty colleges and junior colleges were able to assign part-time work paying an average of fifteen dollars a month to students who otherwise would not have been able to go to school.

The eighty-first annual session of the Iowa State Teachers Association opened at Des Moines on October 31st. Rabbi Abba H. Silver of Cleveland, Ohio, warned the 8000 teachers attending that "national disaster is in the offing unless the people

of the nation can produce intelligent and moral political leaders." The children of the nation must be "educated for a new day" and prepared for active participation in political life.

E. W. Goetch, director of the Iowa State Teachers College placement bureau, pleaded for contracts awarded on the basis of merit. "And merit", he pointed out, "eliminates political affiliations, personal friendships, blood relationships and the successes and failures of a teacher's matrimonial status." In one school a teacher failed to be reelected because of the ire of the relatives of a pupil on whom she had inflicted corporal punishment. In another school two teachers were dismissed because they gave low grades to dilatory students. Opposition to unpopular dismissals of teachers was reflected in student strikes at Muscatine, Mount Vernon, and Perry.

Meanwhile salaries remained far below the pre-depression level. During the fiscal year ending on June 30, 1935, expenses at the State University of Iowa increased \$432,739.82 despite the fact that instruction costs decreased \$31,805.83. Apparently college teachers were expected to look for more stately mansions in another world!

The tenth annual high school music festival served as a magnet for almost 5300 youthful musicians. Mason City again carried off honors

with eight superior and eight excellent ratings. Abraham Lincoln of Council Bluffs ranked second and Iowa City third. Two Des Moines schools, North and Roosevelt, trailed close behind in fourth and fifth places. The festival included thirty-three events in which a total of 285 superiors and excellents were awarded.

At the National School Orchestra Contest at Madison, Wisconsin, highest orchestral honors for Class B schools were won by Iowa City. Abraham Lincoln, Roosevelt, East Waterloo, and Mason City received superior ratings in Class A. The Sigourney High School orchestra tied for first place in Class C. It is doubtful if any State could show greater progress in musical education than has Iowa during the past decade.

The sixty-piece Cedar Falls Municipal Band again brought honor to Iowa when it was declared champion at the annual music festival at Chicago in August. Thirty-two bands competed. The Cedar Falls band won first place in 1930. It did not compete again until 1934 when it again won highest honors.

Despite the depression Iowans have not forgotten how to laugh. Sixteen-year-old Caroline Groves of Webster City won the humorous division of the National Declamatory Contest at Kent, Ohio, in May.

Genevieve Ries, twelve-year-old Alden, Iowa, girl, won the tenth annual State Spelling Bee sponsored by the Des Moines *Register*, when she correctly spelled "excoriation". The diminutive Iowa champion was nonplussed in Washington, D. C., however, when she failed to comprehend the eastern pronunciation of the word "khaki" and could finish no better than fourth in the National Spelling Bee.

Iowans could again view with pride the number of their native sons and daughters whose names were recorded in *Who's Who in America* for 1934-1935. Among the States, Iowa ranked sixty per cent better than average as the birthplace of Americans listed in this notable book. "On the basis of population", Dr. S. B. Laughlin of Wilamette University pointed out, "Iowa would be entitled to only 626 of the 31,081 names in the volume." Only five states — Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, and Delaware — ranked higher than Iowa. Dr. Laughlin believed that eugenists might view with alarm the fact that the 1010 Iowa-born persons have only 1319 children. The fact that more than half of those listed were born on farms while only two are now on farms should cause sociologists even more alarm.

Iowa journalists have always ranked high in the profession. The Des Moines *Register and Trib-*

une was awarded five first and five second places in the annual newspaper advertising contest conducted by *Editor and Publisher*. No award was made to H. W. (Willy) Brueckel, however, who besides publishing and editing three newspapers — *The Jerico Community Echo*, the *Creamery Journal*, and the *Waucoma Sentinel* — keeps well-informed about things in his community by serving as Waucoma's barber on Saturday afternoons.

Two veteran newspaper men who knew the smell of printer's ink and who had "worked hard, lived honorably, thought soundly, and influenced unselfishly" were honored with the title of Master Editor-Publisher at the annual meeting of the Iowa Press Association in April, 1935. This high distinction was accorded to John C. Hartman of the *Waterloo Courier* and M. A. Aasgaard of the *Lake Mills Graphic*.

MacKinlay Kantor, whose best selling story, *The Voice of Bugle Ann*, was described by William Lyon Phelps as a "model" among "caninical works", has not forgotten his Iowa origins. But in Hollywood Claire Dodd claimed she had forgotten where she was born in Iowa. With commendable solicitude the county clerk of Jasper County furnished both the place and date: Baxter, December 29, 1911.

Fairs and Indian pow wows, centennials, pag-

eants, and rodeos attracted record-breaking crowds in 1935. The 54,805 paid attendance at the Mississippi Valley Fair and Exposition at Davenport in August was the largest in five years. The Clay County Fair at Spencer set a new record of 156,050 persons visiting the six-day exposition. A total of 342,150 attended the ten-day Iowa State Fair: this was 80,000 more than in 1934, but 33,000 under the record set in 1930. A profit of over \$30,000 was a welcome result. Virtually all records were broken at the twenty-sixth annual Dairy Cattle Congress at Waterloo. A capacity crowd of over 40,000 in a single day caused the board of directors to lay plans for constructing a new and larger hippodrome in 1936.

The first of a contemplated series of Tulip Time Celebrations was inaugurated at Pella in May with three thousand persons in attendance. The twenty-second annual pow wow of the Meskwakie Indians was held in Tama in August. At La Porte City the following month a colorful parade featured the annual Jiggs day celebration. Thousands attended to draw their free rations of corned beef and cabbage. Hoboes from the Atlantic to the Pacific gathered in Britt on August 22nd for their national convention. Dirty politics is said to have played no small part in the *coup d'etat* whereby "Scoopshovel Scottie" supplanted "Hair-

breadth Harry" as King of the Hoboes. A crowd of more than 25,000 was estimated to have witnessed the Webster County Centennial Celebration in August. Two hundred children with pets, ponies, decorated doll buggies, and clowns paraded in the Shenandoah Fall Festival.

Gardner Cowles, Jr. purchased the body and soul of Fort Dodge's most widely renowned citizen, the Cardiff Giant, for approximately \$1500. At Newton a crowd of five thousand attended the dedication ceremonies for the swimming pool at Fred Maytag Park. Late in December it was announced that the Federal government was transferring about 500 acres of scenic land south of McGregor to Iowa for a State park.

Back in the nineties the famous quartet of Iowa farm girls, the Cherry sisters, rose to bizarre fame under nightly barrages of cabbages, tomatoes, and eggs from paying customers. In 1935 Addie and Effie Cherry came out of retirement in Cedar Rapids to appear at a night club in a "gay ninety" act. Blase New Yorkers are prone to look upon most Iowans as provincial dirt farmers. And yet, while Boston closed its doors on the production of *Valley Forge*, the State University of Iowa had the effrontery to produce the play. Again, immediately after Mayor Edward Kelly of Chicago barred *Tobacco Road* on grounds of immorality,

the show enjoyed a "five thousand dollar gate" at its first performance in Des Moines. To Iowa also came the Monte Carlo Ballet Russe, the San Carlo Opera, the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and a host of other feature performances. The spirit of the play was so infectious that even A. T. Greenwood, of Charles City, relented and saw his first movie.

Iowans by the tens of thousands attended the various athletic contests. Nor was the matter of amateur or professional standing an index to interest. High school contests were supported as enthusiastically as college games. Cresco High School won the State wrestling championship from Fort Dodge. Cornell College matmen went through the season undefeated.

Iowa State College won its first basketball championship of the Big Six Conference in 1935. Fort Dodge won the junior college basketball title. Mason City defeated Grinnell 28 to 17 to win the State boys' high school basketball championship. Centerville High School won the State girls' basketball championship by beating Hillsboro 25 to 16.

The University of Iowa won the State indoor track meet, with Drake University in second place. North Des Moines High School nosed out Clinton and Davenport to win the fourteenth annual indoor track and field meet at Iowa City, but Daven-

port had sweet revenge when it won the thirtieth annual State high school track meet at Ames in May. Drake won the Missouri Valley track championship and Iowa State Teachers College won her eighth consecutive Iowa Conference track title.

The track season was made memorable by a number of brilliant performances by Iowa athletes. At the Kansas Relays the University team set a national collegiate record in the 440 yard relay with a time of :40.5 — lower than the accepted world record — and the 880 yard relay team tied the world record in the same meet with a time of 1:25.8. Mark Panther set a new Big Ten record at Ann Arbor when he hurled the javelin 219 feet  $7\frac{3}{8}$  inches. Linn Philson of Drake won the high jump at the Kansas Relays with a leap of 6 feet  $6\frac{1}{4}$  inches.

A fourteen-year-old Dubuque girl, Edith Estabrooks, was the sensation of the 1935 Iowa golf season. She won the State championship at Davenport on July 20th, thereby becoming the youngest women's champion in Iowa golf history.

A new sport was introduced at Dubuque in October when Carl "Butch" Walker became the self-styled "best beer drinker in Iowa". "Butch" fairly overwhelmed spectators as he downed two quarts of beer in forty-seven seconds. Only two

contestants could finish their beer: the others "gagged, staggered and fell by the wayside".

More laudable and far more spectacular was Elmer Carlson's brilliant victory in the annual State corn husking contest. The twenty-six-year-old Iowa farmer not only won the 1935 "Nubbin Derby" but his load of 2598.28 pounds or 37.1 bushels broke all records for the Iowa State contest and bettered the best record ever made in a national contest.

A week later near Newtown, Indiana, Carlson competed with eighteen crack huskers of the nation and won the national corn husking championship with a world's record of 41.52 bushels in eighty minutes. A crowd of between 75,000 and 100,000 watched the contest.

More laurels were won by Iowa when Cleo E. Yoder, nineteen-year-old farm boy residing near Wellman, won the grand championship with his Aberdeen Angus baby beef at the International Livestock Exposition in Chicago. The award was estimated to be worth \$5000. Yoder had bought the grand champion at an auction for \$75, fifteen months before the show. Feeding costs were approximately \$70. How did Yoder know a good Angus type? He learned that in 4-H work.

Lest the passing generation lose faith in the courage and unselfishness of youth, let the heroic

deed of a thirteen-year-old Oelwein boy, Clarence Steffen, be recounted. At the risk of his life, he pulled Rose Marie Boyle away from death beneath the wheels of a freight train.

In a humble dwelling at Anita benevolent Frederick A. Kauer lives frugally but gives generously to churches, charity, and the needy. Kauer gathers up discarded food from stores for his own use but buys fresh fruit, meat, and bread for the poor. In 1935, at the age of eighty-two, Anita's altruist said: "The government of the United States gave me a chance to earn my living here, so what I have is theirs when I am gone."

In 1834 Caroline Brady gave the "widow's mite" to help erect the first church in Iowa. In the lives of such characters as Frederick Kauer, Clarence Steffen, Cleo Yoder, and Elmer Carlson are portrayed the deeds and virtues that have made Iowa great in the past. It was largely through the labors of men of their character that Iowa in 1935 could boast of her schools and colleges, her hospitals and sanitariums, her libraries and old people's homes. These reflect the benevolent spirit of a people not yet far removed from their pioneer origins. While the fortunes of the Commonwealth depend upon such citizens, the good name of Iowa will remain unblemished.

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