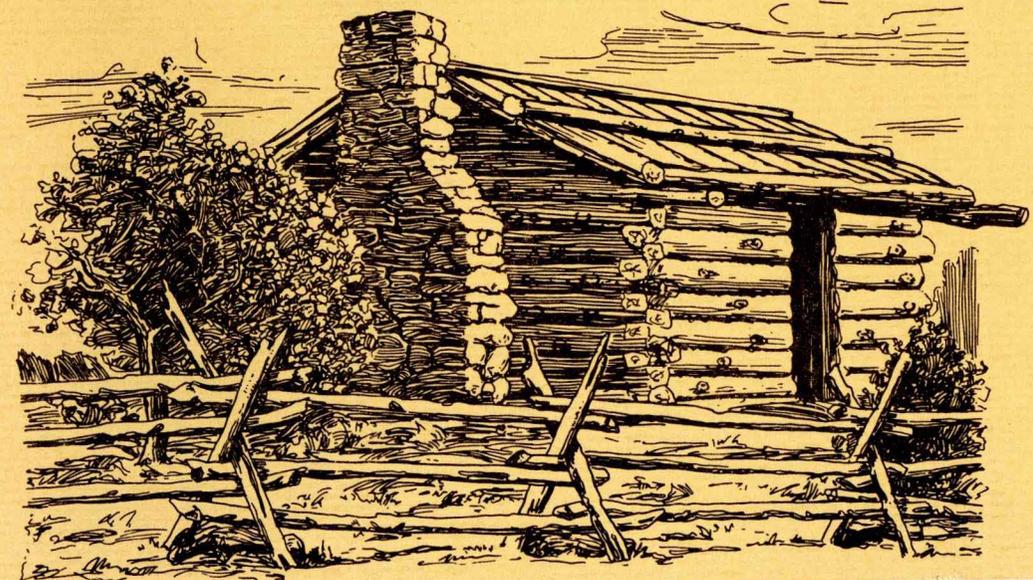


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# IOWA LOCAL HISTORY —A TEACHER'S GUIDE

by  
Margaret Atherton Bonney

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## Introduction

Local history is the study of everyday life within a limited geographic area. Learning about a community and its people brings a reality to history often missing in the general textbook. Local history provides a positive learning experience for students. Guided carefully, students will feel the excitement of working with a variety of historical sources, gathering and organizing information, and drawing conclusions. As historian Carl Becker (a native Iowan) pointed out, all of us use historical enquiry in our everyday lives.

This handbook is designed to assist teachers and students in the study of local history. Included are suggested study topics, locations of historical resources, activities, an historical overview, and a list of sources. As a teacher, your goal is to help students place local history in proper perspective—to relate local history to contemporary state, national, and world events—and to help students understand their world. Careful scheduling is important for a successful local history project. Enough time must be allotted for students to gather information. Students will probably do much of their work outside the classroom, sandwiching their research time between other activities. Replies to written requests for information may be delayed. Classroom time might be devoted to planning, weekly reports, and evaluation of information as it comes in. If you have a choice, begin the local history project in the Fall. This is the best time of year for out-of-doors field trips.

## Sources

Working as historians, you and your students will use a variety of historical sources; locating these sources will take some detective work. A preliminary survey of available sources will help you guide and assist your students during the project. Primary material is easier to find for *recent* history than for the nineteenth century. Many information-packed books and manuscripts may be found in the collections at the Division of the State Historical Society at Iowa City, the Division of Historical Museum and Archives at Des Moines, and at the universities and colleges in the state. For teachers who live nearby, these institutions are a gold mine of information. For most teachers in the

state, however, the search for local history must be made within the community and county.

Not all of the sources discussed in the following pages will be found in every community. By checking with your local library, city hall, or historical and genealogical societies you will discover which sources are available, and you may plan your local history study accordingly.

Students should know the basic differences between kinds of sources in order to weigh the authenticity of the evidence they find in the course of their study. Primary sources are materials written, printed, or recorded during the period of time being studied. Secondary sources are written by people who have studied primary sources and written down some generalizations.

Primary sources require special handling. If students visit libraries, city halls, or other repositories of such material, they should know the special procedures essential to using primary sources as well as the courteous behavior expected of any historical researcher. Only a pencil should be used for taking notes (ink of any kind leaves an unwanted permanent smudge on documents). Note paper should be placed on a desk or table, not on the document or record book from which information is being copied. Pages should be turned carefully. For large volumes, use two hands to prevent tearing the large pages; one hand to turn, the other to support the page.

A different kind of caution is exercised when using secondary sources. Students must realize that not everything in print is true or accurate. When a question arises about the authenticity of a secondary source, consider who wrote the material. Is this a person known to have good historical judgment? What primary sources did the author use? How long after the event was the material written? Historians have found stories full of error repeated over and over in print, one author after another copying the error from an earlier publication. No one bothered to check back to the primary materials.

Errors are bound to creep into your work. It happens to the most careful historians. The important point is to make students aware of the problem of accuracy and to be careful about what they accept as fact. It is often appropriate to use "probably" or "may have been" when writing history.

## Primary Sources

### *Personal Collections*

Students' families or older residents of the community may have diaries, letters, account books, business records, newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, or photo albums that will give much information about the past. Keepsakes and heirlooms can also tell about the way people lived in the past. When using old keepsakes, be certain to think about them within the context of their own time. Do more than just display these items as curiosities. Consider how history can be interpreted through their study. What do we learn from viewing a piece of handmade lace? Was it used to decorate homes or clothing? How difficult or expensive would it have been to purchase the item ready-made, if indeed it was available at all?

### *County Records*

Teachers who reside in a county seat are fortunate because county court houses are full of local history sources. However, most court house employees are busy with their everyday responsibilities. To obtain their assistance, it would be wise to call ahead, explain your project, and arrange for a convenient time to visit. Employees ordinarily will not do research for you but will help you find the records you need.

Among the many useful records at the court house are wills, probate records, court dockets, property records, birth, death and marriage records, professional and commercial licenses, as well as records of road and bridge construction. Old tax records are also sometimes available. Wills and probate records usually contain a detailed inventory of the deceased's possessions. Land sale records include names of the land owner and purchaser, a description of the land, and the price that was paid. Court records reveal the types of cases tried and the decisions made by the court.

There is no uniform method for keeping court house records, so a researcher will find much variation from one county seat to another. Beginning dates for record keeping also will vary, and some records will be missing entirely, perhaps destroyed by fire or discarded due to lack of storage space.

### *City Ordinances*

City ordinances can contribute much to the overall picture of com-

munity life. They give us clues to the things people thought important in another time, and they can show changing attitudes over a period of years. For example, the ordinances for the City of LeMars in 1898 show an interest in protecting and preserving ornamental and shade trees in the town, a concern about the bicycle craze (speed was limited to six miles per hour), and the fear of contagious diseases such as scarlet fever, diphtheria, small pox, and cholera.

#### *School records*

Records of the school district may be difficult to track down. They may be at the county court house or at the school district offices. Sometimes they have been lost. Board of Education records can provide early schoolhouse locations and dates of decisions for new buildings. Grades and subjects taught, size of the enrollment, and number of teachers and their salaries may also be included.

#### *Local Newspapers*

Newspapers may be found in attics, basements, libraries, newspaper offices, or local historical societies. Some newspapers have been recorded on microfilm, and your local library may have copies of these. If not, microfilm copies may be available from the Division of Historical Museums and Archives or the Division of the State Historical Society. Microfilm may be borrowed through inter-library loan. Check with your librarian about this.

Early in the history of the state, newspapers were the main source of public communication. Almost every town or village had a paper. In the papers published between 1830 and 1860 the arrangement of news was quite different from modern newspapers. Papers usually consisted of four to eight pages, with the two outside pages often being reprints from other newspapers or national ads. Local events and politics were reported inside along with the weather and prices for products in agricultural areas.

You may notice a distinct difference in the quality of the newsprint for old papers. Before 1880, newspapers were printed on paper with a high rag content. These remain in fine condition if they have been properly stored. Later, less expensive newsprint made of wood pulp was used, and the high acid content of this paper causes it to deteriorate

quickly. It becomes discolored, brittle, extremely fragile, and must be handled with extra caution.

Newspaper advertisements provide business, industrial, and economic information. What was available for people to buy? How much did a house or piece of land cost? What industries were located in the community? What sort of work was available? How much did it pay? In what sort of social activities did citizens take part? Look at the entertainment section for movie titles, and at the radio and TV logs. What did people do for entertainment before these electronic inventions appeared? Did people tend to stay at home instead of getting together in large groups? Some communities had special newspapers or magazines published in foreign languages. This may be a clue to the earlier background of a significant percentage of the population.

#### *Immigrant Guides*

When the state was first opened for settlement, pocket-sized handbooks were published to aid travelers planning to immigrate to Iowa. These books aimed to both inform and attract newcomers to the state. Descriptions and locations of towns, climate, soil, crops, minerals, and employment opportunities were included. Because the purpose of these guides was to promote the advantages of the state, they present only the finer points of life in Iowa. References to severe winters, for example, will not be found there. Reprints of four of these old guides may be available at your local or school library: Isaac Galland's *Galland's Iowa Emigrant* (1840), John B. Newhall's *A Glimpse of Iowa in 1856*, John Plumbe, Jr.'s *Sketches of Iowa and Wisconsin* (1839), and *Iowa: The Home for Immigrants* (1870).

#### *Gazetteers*

The local library may have old gazetteers with information about specific communities in the state. R.L. Polk and Co. began publishing the *Iowa Gazetteer* in 1879 and continued yearly editions through the mid-1920s. A glance at the 1914-15 volume reveals the names of state officials, representatives, and senators. A map of Iowa shows railroad lines (including electric train service) that provided transportation for metropolitan areas. Locations of communities, population statistics, business establishments, and photographs of buildings and industries

were included. There is often enough information about businesses to reconstruct a downtown business district. Each description of a community begins with a comment about location in relation to the nearest railroad route, an indication of the railroad's primary importance to the community. In the section on occupations, the long list of milliners shows the prevalence of hats as a part of women's costume. The milliner's names reveal that this business was dominated by women.

Another gazetteer, probably not easily available but worth looking for, the *Iowa State Gazetteer* compiled by James T. Hair in 1865, includes a brief history and description of Iowa, township census returns for 1865, and a brief history of each county with description of communities. A wide range of information about railroad service, climate, school board districts, student enrollment, and teachers' salaries helps build an overall picture of the local scene.

#### *Anniversary and Pioneer Day Speeches and Addresses*

At the turn of the century old settlers or pioneer day celebrations were in vogue, and more recently, many communities have celebrated fiftieth and one-hundredth anniversaries. All of these occasions gave impetus to pamphlets, newspaper features, and speeches about the history of the community. These stories and orations are usually laced with boosterism; however, they do tell about everyday life and the role a community played in the development of the state.

#### *Cemetery Inscriptions*

Before visiting a cemetery, check with the custodian or town officials. Some cemeteries limit visitors or require advance permission. Ask about hours and visit the cemetery yourself in advance of your students. When the time for the actual visit arrives, students may need a reminder that the cemetery is a place for quiet and respectful behavior.

Cemeteries in current use are easily found. Some of these have been used continuously since the community began. Older, discontinued cemeteries (especially those in rural areas) may be located by contacting your local historical or genealogical society. Members of these organizations throughout the state have spent many hours tracking down out-of-the-way plots and recording the inscriptions from the tombstones. Some of this research has been published in *Hawkeye Heritage*, the quarterly publication of the Iowa Genealogical Society. The index may

be purchased to determine if there is an issue that contains the sort of information you are looking for. Back issues may be ordered from the Society.

#### *Oral History*

Oral history is a valuable method of collecting historical information. Relatives, friends, and neighbors who have lived in the area for a long time can give a first-hand report on a wide range of experiences. People might recall the first automobile in town, when their first telephone or electric service was installed, or their early use of the phonograph and radio. They can tell about changes in their lives caused by wars, depressions, and natural disasters. Senior citizen organizations exist in most communities and are another valuable source for local oral history. A quick check in the phone book under "senior citizen" or "recreation center" and a phone call will put you in touch with a group of willing participants. Oral interviews need special advance planning and require an interviewer who is pleasant and polite. Appointments for interviews, advance preparation of questions, and a classroom rehearsal are advised. Good planning helps prevent the general reminiscence that covers too many broad topics and leaves the student without enough specific material on his or her topic. A tape recorder is a valuable tool for oral history, but it is wise to take careful notes during the interview in case the recorder malfunctions or runs out of tape.

A note of caution: even the best human memories are fallible. Although an oral history session may yield a first-hand account of an event, the longer the lapse of time from the actual happening, the less reliable the memory is apt to be. Students should be cautioned about unsupported oral testimony.

#### *Maps and Atlases*

Maps have many uses. Topographical maps help students understand how geography influenced the location of early community sites. Early towns were located where transportation was close-by so settlers could market their products. Maps covering a span of years will show how the physical boundaries of a community have changed. Students should look for reasons why changes occurred. Did the community grow? Why did more people come? Was there a new industry? Did a railroad

turn the community into a market town? With practice, students will learn to read maps “historically.” Soon they will learn to locate main highways, bridges, railroad lines, rivers, metropolitan areas and ask, “What influence do these have on the lives of the people in the community?”

County atlases contain large, clear plats of townships and communities. Land owners are recorded on the maps as are the railroad lines, schools, churches, homes, and industrial buildings of a community. A good state atlas is the *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa* by A.T. Andreas, first published in 1875. There were nine different editions, each published to emphasize one congressional district. All contain the same general information: maps of all the counties, portraits of prominent citizens, pictures and plats of cities and small towns, and pictures of buildings. The history of the state and counties is included along with a business directory. It is important to know that those whose names appear in the directory paid for that privilege. *The Andreas Historical Atlas of Iowa* was reprinted in 1970 in an edition including all the illustrations from the nine congressional district versions. The volume is reduced from the original size, so a magnifying glass is a useful tool when studying this edition.

Look for state, county, and local maps at the library, historical society, nearby college or university library, banks, real estate offices, or land title and abstract companies. Topographic maps are available from the U.S. Geological Survey. A free index to *Topographic Maps of Iowa* may be obtained by sending your request, including your name and address to Iowa Geological Survey, 123 N. Capitol Street, Trowbridge Hall, Iowa City, Iowa 52242. These excellent, colored maps show county, township, and section lines as well as altitude, land contours, streams, lakes, roads, houses, churches, school buildings, and railroad lines. Another fine source is *A Regional Guide to Iowa Landforms* by Jean Cutler Prior. Written for classroom use, it can be purchased from the Iowa Geological Survey. The booklet is well illustrated with photographs, drawings, and maps.

#### *City Directories*

Call the local library to see if it has a city directory and ask the date the collection begins. If the directory is 20 or more years old, it will

have information that helps to re-create a picture of your community and some of its changes. Directories contain residents’ names, addresses, and occupations. Religious groups are listed. The advertisements reveal much about the business and economic life of the community. Changes in transportation and communication can be found as well. Directories for older cities in Iowa date from the 1850s and 1860s.

#### *Illustrations*

Pictures add a visual dimension to local history study. Family albums, old newspapers, and county histories are all sources for illustrations. Many old calendars have drawings of buildings and artifacts. Look at clothing worn in photographs, study styling and fabrics from the time of the photos and compare them with modern styles. What caused the changes in the kinds of clothing over the years? Was it fashion alone?

#### *Local Museums*

A trip to the local museum is useful if careful preparations are made before the visit. Students should be prepared to analyse the artifacts they see in order to answer questions about the past. If the local museum has collected a broad range of household utensils and tools, students should focus on artifacts from the period under study. What do these things tell us about the way people used their time and how they did their work?

### Secondary Sources

#### *County and Family Histories*

County, local, and family history books are often available at local historical or genealogical societies and public libraries. Most county histories were written and published around the turn of the century and are useful for early history of an area. During recent years, many of these histories have been reprinted by historical and genealogical groups. In the 1930s, the WPA sponsored a Federal Writers’ Project which produced updated histories for some Iowa counties. County histories can provide information about early conditions, customs, and industrial development. Be cautious—county histories were often commercial enterprises; residents of communities paid for the recognition

they received. Usually these people were listed as prominent citizens, and often they were—but you must keep in mind that some prominent citizens chose not to pay to appear in such histories and remain unknown unless found in other sources.

Family histories vary in content. Some give only the listing of family members with dates for births, deaths, and marriages. Others are written to celebrate the family and may be less than objective or accurate.

#### *Books, Articles, and Other Published Sources*

This is not a comprehensive list of printed sources, but the following books and articles should be considered basic to the study of local history. They contain information on more than one topic of local history. The three publications of the Department of Public Instruction, probably in your school library, are good bibliographic guides. The best source book for beginning a local history study is *Discovering Historic Iowa* by LeRoy G. Pratt. This 313-page volume is arranged according to location. Included are lists of local historical societies, museums, parks, and historic sites. *Iowa History, A Guide to Resource Material* lists available materials according to the source. The guide includes titles of articles in *The Iowan* from 1952 through 1972. Sources are not arranged by subject, but a careful search may reveal an article related to your local area. *Iowa and Some Iowans* will provide a list of useful books and films. If your school does not have these publications they may be ordered from the Department of Public Instruction, Information and Publications Service, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. *The Pageant of the Press* by William J. Petersen contains pages from selected newspapers of 38 communities spanning the years from 1836 to 1961. Approximately three-fourths of the selections are from papers published before the turn of the century. The following communities are included: Albia, Belle Plaine, Bloomfield, Bloomington (Muscatine), Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Clarinda, Clinton, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, Eddyville, Fairfield, Keosauqua, Lansing, Marshalltown, Mason City, Mitchellville, Muscatine, Ottumwa, Panora, Prairie City, Rock Rapids, Sidney, Sioux City, Storm Lake, Wapello, Waterloo, Webster City, and West Union. *Abandoned Towns, Villages and Post Offices of Iowa* by David C. Mott is a reprint from the *Annals of Iowa*, volumes

17 and 18. Towns are arranged in alphabetical order by county, and location is given. Every two years the State of Iowa publishes the *Iowa Official Register*. It contains a wide range of information useful for local history study. Either your school or local library will have copies. The *Register* includes a brief history of the state with reference to some local areas such as locations of forts, early French settlements, and names of local Iowa heroes. Histories of the state educational institutions, operating budgets, and enrollments will be found. Population is given by county for the most recent United States census and the population of incorporated cities for the two preceding censuses. Election results by county, popular votes for President for the past 30 years, and Iowans who have served in the President's Cabinet are also included.

#### Topics for Study

After discovering what sources are available, you can decide which topics to study. If you have a full semester to devote to local history, a complete study from prehistoric time to the present may be possible. If time is limited, however, consider one of the two following approaches.

1. Choose a limited period of time and learn as much as possible about that period. In the past, much classroom time has been devoted to the pioneer period. It is a fascinating time in Iowa history and one that captures the interest of young students. There are, however, other equally interesting periods. For example, a Depression period study could include gathering information about every phase of community life from 1929 through 1941. Students might use oral history techniques to learn about social activities, methods of transportation and communication, and how people dealt with economic problems. Federal projects in the community could be described. Compiling as much information as possible, students could then answer such questions as: How did the government projects help? How did families deal with little or no income? What businesses in the community failed? Piecing information together, life in the community during the Depression could be reconstructed.
2. Another approach is to choose one or more topics and research each one thoroughly from the pioneer settlement period to the present. This gives an excellent opportunity to observe changes and make comparisons. Help students think about the impact of change on the community.

How did change affect the way people lived? How did it affect the entire community?

When the time comes to present study topics to the class, explain the possibilities for research in each area. A mimeographed list (or a list on the chalk board) from which to make a choice is, by itself, uninspiring to the average student. An enthusiastic discussion about the subject areas and their potentials can make topics come alive as well as assist students in making choices that fit their interests. Your enthusiasm and motivation will be the key to a good start.

The following list of suggestions for time periods and research topics is not meant to be all inclusive. In your preliminary search for sources a subject not mentioned here may become an obvious choice for study and should be included in your local history project.

#### *Geography - Topography - Natural Environment*

Every student should have some understanding of the relationship between people and their environment before proceeding with any topic on local history. Throughout history, the community's geography, topography, and natural environment have influenced community growth and development and the lives of the inhabitants. Students should know how geographic conditions and natural resources determined where a community was established and the manner in which it grew.

Students should make maps showing topographic features such as streams and wooded areas, streets, residential areas, business centers, and manufacturing plants. Perhaps a stream divided the town or a high bluff created transportation problems. Discuss the influence of topography on the physical development of the town. Save the map for later reference.

Climate has influenced the way people live. For example, before the development of air conditioning, porches were considered an important architectural feature of a home, a place people could cool off on hot Iowa days. The porch also provided an opportunity for people to socialize with neighbors, a sharp contrast to the modern habit of remaining indoors in cool, air-conditioned homes. With the students, make a list of the influences climate has had on people in their town. As you do this ask students to think about where people lived and worked in all seasons of the year.

Perhaps the natural environment around your community has changed. What plants and animals were originally there? If you are near a river or stream, what has happened to that waterway through the years? Communities in mining areas have witnessed drastic changes in the environment. How have these changes affected those who live there?

#### *Demography*

Population statistics tell much about a community. Census records include information about former place of residence, race, and nationality.

One way to indicate where early residents lived before settling in your community is to make a map of the United States and stretch yarn or draw lines from your town to the state or country from which the earlier inhabitants came. Do the same for your present students' families and compare the maps. What are the differences in the patterns of mobility between the two? Is there a high percentage of people from one state, region, or country? If so, why? What effect did their presence have in the community? Did the group make special contributions? Have any industries been established due to the special skills brought by these people? How many Iowa natives appear on each map? What tentative conclusions might be drawn from this information?

For another activity, use census information to make a graph showing population variations. Students can use the graph to ask questions. What caused the fluctuations? Early upward trends might represent a great rush for new farm land. Later, a railroad line or new industry may have had an influence. If there is a population decline, look for causes and effects.

#### *Transportation*

Newer and better modes of transportation markedly changed the day-to-day existence of Iowans. Transportation determined which goods were produced and marketed, where people lived, and the frequency of social contact. Early Iowa communities depended on water and horse-drawn transportation for moving people and goods. Elaborate plans to improve Iowa's river navigation ended with the arrival of the railroads. In Iowa, railroad construction began in 1855; by 1867, the first railroad was completed across the state, and three more lines were completed

within three years. Railroads soon crisscrossed the state so that no community was farther than 15 miles from a railroad line. Railroads reduced the time and cost of transporting both goods and people and provided a reliable means of year-round transportation. With access to more distant markets, agricultural production increased, and a wider variety of merchandise for purchase was made available. Because of these advantages towns competed with one another for the privileges of having a railroad depot. Occasionally, a town that lost out virtually disappeared.

Check to see if there is a railroad depot in your town. Is it still in use? How long has the railroad line operated in your community? What sort of change did this make in the lives of the people? When did freight service begin? What goods were shipped? What products were brought to the town by rail? What replaced the railroad and when?

A local form of transportation on rails was the trolley. Some trolley lines were limited to in-town transportation, others were inter-urban trains connecting two or more cities. Find out if your community had a trolley. How did this form of transportation influence and change people's lives and therefore the community?

Automobiles and airplanes caused even more changes. With the advent of the auto, good roads were necessary, but they were expensive. Who did the people in the community think should pay the construction costs for better roads for automobiles? Was there any controversy about the routing of roads and highways?

Many Iowans were involved in the early development of aviation. Perhaps one of these people was from your community. Did this person help the rest of the citizens appreciate the importance of air transportation?

As a project, make a chart showing the different types of transportation used in your community. Choose a specified number of miles and record how long it would take to travel the distance by different forms of transportation.

Sources for transportation information include city ordinances, city directories, old newspapers, timetables, schedules, and oral histories. Maps will show routes for highways and railroads. City and county histories also will have information on transportation.

#### *Communication*

During the early years of Iowa's history the primary means of spread-

ing information was through newspapers. Papers were the sources of local, state, and national news. Early newspapers were usually very politically oriented, often begun and supported by a political party. Newspapers acted as chambers of commerce, enthusiastically supporting local community growth and development. Local social events, tragedies, births, deaths, and marriages made up an important part of the news. The telegraph greatly speeded the rate at which news was brought to what were once isolated towns. After 1900, the telephone came into use. By the 1920s, radios could be found in most homes and, by the 1950s, television sets. Mail service, too, changed over the years. In 1924, the first transcontinental air mail service across Iowa was begun.

How did the development of better communication affect your locality? What changes occurred in daily life and business? Did your community have more than one newspaper? How many are there now? What caused the change? Does your community have a radio station? When was it established? How has it influenced the lives of people in the community? Has there been a specialized magazine or newspaper published in your community? If it was discontinued, try to find out why.

As an in-depth study, the technical refinements in different areas of communication will have great interest for some students. Go beyond just looking at the equipment; learn how it was used. For example, the mechanics of placing a phone call have changed considerably since the first days of telephone service. There was probably a central switchboard first, followed later by direct dialing.

Sources for communication history include newspaper publishers, the local telephone office, and postmaster. The public library may have editions of old newspapers. Recollections of old-time residents, particularly if they worked in communication areas, are also useful.

#### *Business and Industry*

The first small businesses in Iowa communities usually were related to the needs of the newly-established agricultural settlement. A general store, hotel, blacksmith shop, or flour and lumber mills were usually among the first businesses established. Lawyers and surveyors also were among the first to offer services. As a town grew, tailors, shoemakers, coopers, and other artisans set up shops. Most towns were basically self-sufficient.

After the Civil War, changes in transportation and manufacturing caused a gradual shift from self-sufficiency to dependence on outside sources. Brand-name products, low in cost and manufactured elsewhere,

replaced those of home-town industries. Ready-made clothing was available either at a local store or through a mail-order house. Because of outside competition many local industries eventually were forced out of business.

Find out which businesses and industries were a part of your community's history. No doubt some of them have disappeared. Why? There may have been many door-to-door services provided by the ice man, bakery wagon, vegetable vendor, or knife sharpener. If so, when? Why were they discontinued?

Iowa has always been an agricultural state. Agriculture may have greatly influenced the history of your community. What technological and scientific advances caused changes in agricultural methods? You will find that different crops were grown at different times. What factors influenced the choice of crops produced?

Farms, businesses, and industries provided jobs for many people. Find out about these working men, women, and children, what sort of work they did and what they were paid. Were working conditions an issue at one time?

#### *Community and Neighborhood Development*

To help form students' conception of the community at different times in history, post a map of the city or town in the classroom on which changes in the community can be shown. A large map marked with only the city limits and streets is best. Information can be placed on the map as study progresses, including changes in city boundaries, industrial, commercial, and residential areas.

Every community has a development pattern. Usually, cities grow out and away from the original reason for existence. This might be a market place, industrial site, crossroads, or government center. A good way to find out about community growth is to walk around and look at the town. Take paper, pencil, and clipboard to record information. Begin in what you think to be the oldest part of town. First, look for clues to the reason the town was established. Then, look up at the old buildings to get above first floor remodeling. There may be dates at the top, over the door, or on a cornerstone. Remains of old painted signs on the sides of buildings may tell how that building was used in an earlier time. Make notes and sketches of architectural details that might help date buildings. Look down. Are there any dates in contractor's imprints on the sidewalk? You may want to make a rubbing of the mark left in

the cement. Are there clues that at one time trolley tracks were in the streets? Find out when and why they were paved over. If there are excavations going on you will be able to determine the street surfacings of the past. Locate railroad tracks, industrial and residential areas. Record street names. They may give clues to either their use, location, or the people who originally lived there, for example, Market, Park, Center, Church, Mill, Division, Wilson, and Thomas. Abandoned buildings, too, are clues to the past. It would be unwise to suggest that students enter such structures, but often there are clues on or around the building that tell its past use. Is there an old smoke stack standing alone somewhere in the town? What sort of industry was there? Ask long time residents about it.

Architecture can give clues to age and character of the neighborhood. Home size might be a clue to the size of families or to economic conditions at the time the house was built. Not everyone lived in a grand old Victorian home similar to the ones being saved and preserved today. Look for moderate-size homes of the same period. They too have a special charm and are good examples of housing for the average family. Try to find out who designed homes: the builder, the owner, an architect? What building materials were used? What features once were standard on earlier homes that have now disappeared? There are few good source books for midwestern architecture, especially for the twentieth century. Three helpful sources are *Styles and Designs in Wisconsin Housing*, available from the University of Wisconsin Extension service, Marcus Whiffen's *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to Styles*, and "From Porch to Patio" by Richard Thomas in the July/August 1975 edition of *The Palimpsest*.

#### *Cultural Development - Entertainment*

Inhabitants of young towns developed cultural activities to enhance the lives of citizens. In the late nineteenth century, literary societies were a favorite cultural activity often bringing professional lecturers to the community. Libraries sometimes operated as private associations until city fathers could be convinced to finance a free public library. In 1881, Andrew Carnegie offered to donate funds for public library buildings and many communities then found it possible to provide library services.

Music has played a prominent role in the cultural history of most Iowa communities. Bands, orchestras, and choral societies provided both artistic expression and entertainment for local citizens. Home town theatricals and pageants also were part of cultural activity. The pride of many a community was the opera house that provided a stage for local and professional performances. Vaudeville, minstrel shows, lectures, opera, Chautauqua, the circus, and later, motion pictures, were all part of town life.

Try to find out who took part in or supported cultural endeavors. When was each activity popular? Was there a relationship to the educational opportunities or transportation and communication facilities of the time? Perhaps your community was home for an artist, writer or musician of local, state, or national renown. Was the environment of your community an influence on the artist's work?

Soon after settlement, county or agricultural fairs became a yearly occurrence. Fairs were held in Iowa as early as 1841 and were mainly educational in purpose. The fairs also took on a social aspect in a time when there were few opportunities for large gatherings of people. Following the Civil War, fairs continued their educational roles, but added a large dose of amusement and entertainment. After 1910, special fair grounds and well-organized programs were considered necessary, and entertainment became an important and permanent part of the county fair.

Special customs developed around the celebration of holidays. Find out what happened in the community or schools to celebrate Valentine's Day, April Fool's Day, Arbor Day, May Day, Memorial (Decoration) Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, and Veteran's (Armistice) Day.

#### *Education*

Education has always had high priority in Iowa, and schools often were established when a community was still young. Not all children attended, and universal education was slow to develop; but support for the establishment of schools was available in every Iowa township thanks to the Northwest Ordinance of 1785. Under the provisions of this law, 640 acres of land in every township were set aside to provide funds for the support of public schools. These "school lands" were generally sold or rented and the proceeds used for the stated purpose.

Public school board records may have information about the date

each school in your town was built and how education was financed. Before the advent of public schools there were many private academies in Iowa. Private academies kept separate records which may be difficult to locate. In regard to the daily conduct of school, try to learn how teachers were trained, selected, and paid; how classrooms were furnished and arranged; what educational materials were provided and from what source; who attended school; and how long students attended classes. Look at school buildings for overall size, number of classrooms, and manner of heating and cooling. Were there facilities for other activities, a cafeteria, gymnasium, library, or music room? Some communities had religious schools. You may want to learn why these schools were established, who paid for them, and how they differed from public schools.

#### *Recreation, Leisure, Social*

During the early period of settlement social life often grew out of community gatherings such as church or school activities. In rural areas social diversion often had useful aspects. People created social events out of group work such as corn huskings and house-raising. Certainly this must have made the work seem less tiresome. As time passed, recreational activities took on a more leisurely guise.

Baseball was an early sport on both the amateur and professional level. Following the Civil War, teams existed in many towns all over the state. As rail transportation became available, intercity rivalries arose. Rules and equipment changed through the years. Find out if your community had a team. Were the players home town boys? Who went to the games?

Bicycling was a popular recreation and form of transportation for men and women in the 1890s. Wheel clubs were formed and often the members campaigned for good roads and bike paths. Look for other activities that have been a part of everyday life in your community. Try to find out how much time people devoted to these activities.

Many organizations, serving every segment of the population, appeared over the years including service clubs, P.T.A., Granges, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, and 4-H. When did these organizations begin? Was there a special need or purpose for the group? If the group still exists today, how has it changed? Did it have an influence on the community?

### *Government - Politics*

Citizens of new communities most often established town governments based on past experiences in former communities with modifications to meet the demands of the new situation. Find out how your city government was organized and how officials were chosen. What kinds of services have citizens expected the city to provide? When did these services begin and how were they financed? Did city services increase or decrease?

The selection of the county seat location was often hotly disputed. To be chosen county seat was considered a guarantee of prosperity for any town. For example, the presence of the court house insured that people would come to town for legal business, and they were likely to shop while there. If you live in the county seat find out how your town won this much sought-after position. What influence did it have on the growth of the town? Perhaps you live in a community that lost. How did this happen? Did it affect the growth of the community?

National political party affiliation had little importance during the early settlement years of Iowa. Candidates were chosen on the basis of personal characteristics and local issues. But after the national election of 1840, voters increasingly identified with political parties and chose candidates on a party basis. Look for the earliest influence of political parties in your community. Perhaps a member of your community was active in state or national politics. Did his or her political activity have a direct influence on the community?

### *The Family*

As a basic unit of the community, the family is one of the most important topics of study in town life. There are many areas of family life to pursue. Consider how marriages were arranged. Perhaps in very early days it was more a matter of mutual support than romance. Some marriages may have been arranged by parents. Look for changes in attitudes towards marriage and reasons for these changes.

Family size has varied over the years and census statistics may be used to document the fluctuations. The city or county may also have pertinent records. Look for reasons for variations. Help students understand the impact population changes may have on housing, schooling, and other services provided by the community.

What was the role of each family member? For what work was each member responsible? What work was shared? Who worked away from home? How much education did family members have? Did the family adhere strictly to a religious faith? What did members do for recreation at home; away from home? Who was the authority figure: the father, mother, both? For recent times, oral history is a good way to obtain this information.

A good way to organize information about the family is to re-create a day in the life of the family for a given year. Information from other study topics will help to reconstruct the activities of each family member. As individual family members move through the day, give careful thought to the amount of time a given activity would take. How long did it take to walk several miles? Was doing the family laundry an all day affair? Some students might re-create a home in miniature, showing the appropriate household equipment and furniture for the time.

### *Health*

Diseases were a serious problem to early Iowa communities. Cholera epidemics in the 1850s gave rise to laws intended to control spread of the disease. Communities took responsibility to protect the health of citizens. Find other laws passed that were concerned with the health of the people. What remedies for illness were used in the home? How were illnesses and injuries treated by professionals? How did the progress of medicine change life in the family and the community? Were these changes taking place in other parts of Iowa and the nation? The City Hall will have records of health ordinances. One source on local epidemics is the local cemetery. Many deaths within a relatively short time may indicate an epidemic.

### *Religion*

Most Iowa communities have several religious denominations. What denominations are found in your town? Was there ever a religious group that was dominant in your locality? Perhaps your community is one that was founded by people seeking refuge from religious intolerance elsewhere or creating a religious experiment. Finally, ask what part religion has played in the history of the community.

When your local history project is completed, consider sharing your experiences and information. A receptive audience awaits beyond the classroom, within your own school, school district, and community. Local historical societies, women's clubs, and service organizations are particularly interested in the activities of young people and will welcome a well-prepared program based on your final results and methodology. For your students, such a presentation serves to underscore the importance and worth of their work.

## Time Periods: An Overview of Iowa History

This overview provides the context of state and national history necessary to the interpretation of local history. It also divides Iowa history into time periods which may be used for abbreviated studies. The overview is not a comprehensive history of Iowa, but is intended to give the teacher a broad, general knowledge of events that influenced the community and lives of the inhabitants.

- I. Prehistory, Native Inhabitants
- II. Early Land Ownership: Indian, Spanish, French, American
- III. Pioneer Settlement
- IV. Pre Civil War - Civil War
- V. Post War Reorientation 1865-1896
- VI. Reform - Prosperity - World War I: 1897-1918
- VII. Post War - Depression: 1919-1940

### I. *Prehistory - Native Inhabitants*

Not everyone will be able to study prehistory. However, if your community is located near an ancient site you may want to include this period of time as part of your local history project.

Scientists currently believe the early inhabitants who once lived in Iowa are descended from a race of people who came from Asia across the Bering Sea. Migration began about 30,000 years ago. Early inhabitants who settled in what is today the State of Iowa are divided into five cultural groups. Members of these ancient cultures used the land differently from the settlers who arrived in the 1830s. Compare the way the early inhabitants used the land as they found it to that of the early settlers.

There are several sources for information about the known prehistoric sites. Leland Sage's *A History of Iowa* discusses the prehistoric inhabitants and contains an excellent map locating sites. *Western Iowa Prehistory* by Duane Anderson locates and discusses ancient cultures in the western half of the state. An excellent overview of the prehistoric period is available in the Educational Series published by the Office of the State Archaeologist. Other secondary sources, including films, are listed in *Iowa and Some Iowans*.

A note of caution: archaeologists are concerned today about the pres-

ervation of prehistoric sites. Under no circumstances should teachers or students undertake any sort of digging or remove any materials at such a site. Arrangements to visit areas of interest should be made with the authorities in charge.

## II. *Early Land Ownership: Indian, Spanish, French, American*

Owned by France, Spain, and again briefly by France, the land that is now Iowa came to the U.S. through the Louisiana Purchase. When American settlers arrived at the Mississippi River, the Sauk Indians were living on the east side of the river. On the west, in what is now Iowa, resided the Fox, the name given to the Mesquakie tribe by early white explorers and used by the Federal government. The Ioways were located along the Des Moines River, and the Sioux from Minnesota hunted in north and north central Iowa.

As white settlers, ever eager for land, moved westward, the Federal government devised a policy of removal and relocation of native inhabitants. By treaty, land was acquired from the Indians, and the tribes relocated to a place specified by the government. Once Indian removal was complete, the land was surveyed and sold.

The first major purchase of land in Iowa was a result of the Black Hawk War. As a consequence of Black Hawk's unsuccessful resistance to the appropriation of his tribe's Illinois lands, the Sauk and Fox were required to sell land west of the Mississippi River. This land was open for settlement June 1, 1833. A series of cessions followed involving by 1842 the eastern two-thirds of the state. In 1851, the final purchase of land that is now part of Iowa was made. Most of Iowa's Indians were transported to Kansas.

One group of Indians, however, returned to Iowa. The Mesquakies, unhappy where they had been relocated in Kansas, drifted back, joined several small lingering bands, purchased land, and once again became residents of Iowa. The Mesquakie Settlement that began in 1856 as an 80-acre tract of land along the Iowa River in Tama County today contains over 3,300 acres of tribally-owned land.

## III. *Pioneer Settlement*

The settlement of Iowa was a climax to the nation's agricultural expansion. Opened during the great westward migration, Iowa became the

goal for many land hungry settlers. Population rose from a few dozen people (mostly miners) in 1832 to 102,338 by the time of statehood in 1846. In the following 14 years, population mushroomed to 674,913. Most of these people were involved with agriculture.

Settlement was controlled by the well-established procedures of the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, laws that provided for the transition from territorial status to statehood. The 1785 law determined how land should be purchased from the Indians, surveyed, divided, and sold. The 1787 law set down a pattern of government for territories and a plan for eventual statehood.

A combination of factors contributed to Iowa's growth. Not only was the territory opened during a time of enormous national prosperity, but technical advances had made travel faster and easier. Ohio and Mississippi River steam boats already ran on a regular schedule three years before Iowa was officially open for settlement. By 1840, there were 400 boats on the Mississippi and its tributaries, their routes extending to the Iowa ports at Keokuk, Bloomington (Muscatine), Burlington, Davenport, Lyons, and Dubuque. Improved roads and the new railroads led to increased overland travel. By 1854, the first railroad reached the Mississippi River at Rock Island, directly across from the city of Davenport. Improved communication helped promote interest among both Easterners and European emigrants. Newspapers, personal letters, and guidebooks all extolled the beauty, rich soil, and future promise of Iowa.

National migrations in the later 1840s also played a part in Iowa's settlement. In 1846, the first of many Mormon migrations began across the state. In 1849, the California gold rush brought yet another surge of people traveling westward through the state. These migrations contributed a certain amount of population through fall-out default as well as providing a market for Iowa's food as supplies for the migrants. Natural disasters in the East and Europe brought others to Iowa. In 1854, drought in the Ohio Valley and a widespread cholera epidemic prompted people to seek a better and healthier place to live.

Newcomers came by several routes. Some chose the waterway, down the Ohio River to the Mississippi, then up the great river to the port cities of Keokuk, Burlington, Davenport, Muscatine, Lyons, and Du-

buque. Overlanders followed the National Road through Illinois or traveled south from the ports of the Great Lakes, Milwaukee, and Chicago. At the Mississippi, ferry boats did a brisk business transporting immigrants, their wagons, livestock, and belongings to the shores of Iowa.

The early settlers chose land in the Iowa river valleys where wood and water were plentiful. By 1850, most of this land was occupied and settlement began to move away from the rivers. Last to be settled were the lands in the northwest, isolated until the railroad reached the area. Newcomers were still arriving as late as the 1880s.

The new arrivals brought more than their belongings and hopes for a new start. They also brought their past experiences and attitudes about law and government, politics, economics, and society. With a few exceptions the civilization they wanted to establish was based on old forms, modified by the demands of the new environment.

When Iowa Territory was established in 1838 the appointed governor, Robert Lucas, selected Burlington as the first territorial capital. As population continued to move west the capital was relocated in 1841 at Iowa City. The first formal attempt to gain statehood came in 1844 when a Constitutional Convention was called. The effort failed, however, defeated by a dispute with Congress over state boundaries. In 1846, a second Constitutional Convention was called. A few minor changes in the old 1844 Constitution were made and proposed boundaries defined. This time, Congress accepted both Constitution and boundaries, and on December 28, 1846, Iowa became the twenty-ninth state. The state continued to grow as rapidly as had the territory. By 1855, population had moved so far into the western part of the state that the capital again was moved, this time to Des Moines to keep state government near the center of population.

Early local government was organized at the county level. The county seat was the locus of government and political activity. County courts decided boundary disputes, property damage claims, and criminal cases (which generally concerned livestock stealing, assault, and gambling). Most importantly, the county court system gave citizens access to a convenient source of justice where it was not essential to hire a lawyer.

Most political interest during the first decade of settlement was di-

rected toward local matters. Selection of officials and representatives more often was based on the candidates' personal qualities or achievements than on party affiliation. The 1840 presidential campaign created enough interest in national issues to encourage partisan political alignment. From then on, Iowa politics were increasingly integrated with the national political scene.

As pioneers moved across the land there reappeared a cycle of settlement that had begun with the first colonists of America. Iowans moved from the subsistence level, to commercial crop production, and to concentration on towns as marketing centers. Early settlers, by necessity, were self-sufficient. The family units worked hard hunting, farming, and making their own tools and clothing. There was seldom anything left over to be sold. Within a few years, as transportation improved and production increased, settlers could send surplus products to market, and in turn could afford to buy some of the things they formerly made at home. At this point the agriculturalist became a part of the national economy and found himself vulnerable to the fluctuations of national or even international markets.

Linked to the growing commercialism of the farmer was the rise of the merchant and growth of small towns as marketing centers. Merchants accepted farm produce in exchange for manufactured products purchased by farmers and conducted a variety of enterprises related to their trade with farmers including general store keeping, meat packing, small manufacturing, real estate, law, and banking. The growing towns attracted skilled craftsmen, artisans, and professionals. The landscape was dotted with small marketing centers located so that a trip from farm to town and back could be accomplished in one day.

As Iowa grew commercially, businesses needed banks and money for everyday transactions. In Iowa, there were no banks, and except for gold and silver coins the available money was of questionable value. Sound money was a national problem, as well, since there was no uniform currency. More than 1,000 banks had placed different paper notes in circulation, some sound, others questionable or worthless. This created a distrust of banks and bankers in Iowa. The first state constitution prohibited both banks and local issuance of money. By 1857, it was evident that business in the state could not continue to develop and ex-

pand without a regulated bank with the authority to issue currency.

During the early pioneer period, much social activity centered around the church. Often an interdenominational organization served a whole community. As population increased, denominational churches appeared. Some Eastern denominations sent missionaries to help establish churches, concerned that without assistance the Iowa inhabitants might fail to found proper religious institutions. By the 1840s most older settlements had established permanent churches. Disputes over theology within and between congregations were not uncommon. Generally, there was much social pressure upon Iowans to take part in religious organization.

Education was important to early Iowans, and they provided for schools as best they could. Sometimes, tuition was paid by parents who contracted with an itinerant teacher, or a teacher might move to a community and seek students. Most often tuition was paid in kind; cash was an exception. In 1858, common schools free to the public were established. There were also mechanics institutes for trades. The emphasis in these schools was on the practical. Moral instruction and preservation of democracy were considered primary education functions.

#### *IV. Pre Civil War - Civil War*

In the years immediately before the Civil War, the boundaries of Iowa encompassed all phases of the settlement cycle. In the west, frontier families continued to settle on new land breaking the sod, planting and harvesting first crops, and establishing new homes. In the earlier settled eastern and southern areas new technology and mechanization slowly changed rural and town life. Agricultural production increased as farmers acquired improved plows and mechanical planting and harvesting equipment. As railroad lines extended inland from the Mississippi, the increased amount of produce from the interior was shipped to an expanding market in eastern states.

Small local industries developed in cities and towns, among them flour milling, meat packing, lumber milling, plow manufacturing, woolen milling, glove making, founding, and even glass and pottery making establishments. Steam provided the power for many of these industries.

Growth of business and agriculture was aided by a rapid increase in population. Between 1850 and 1860 the number of people in Iowa tripled from 192,214 to 674,913. Among the newcomers streaming into the state

were Europeans from Germany, Ireland, England, Scandinavia, and the Netherlands, joined by Yankees from New England, New York, and Pennsylvania. This new migration changed the character of Iowa's population. People from New England, the Old Northwest, and Europe had different attitudes and customs from those of the earlier Southern oriented population. This change was strongly evident as the nationwide issue of slavery became more divisive. Some Iowans supported states' rights and believed slavery should be abolished. Other Iowans actively aided fugitive slaves, and private homes became stops on the Underground Railroad.

By 1854, Iowans had aligned politically in response to the slavery issue. Anti-slavery advocates were elected as State Governor and United States Senator. When the war began, Iowa's commitment to the Union was clear. Thousands volunteered immediately. Two-thirds of Iowa men of military age served, some 78,000 in all.

Those who stayed at home maintained farms and businesses. With many of the adult males absent, this work often was left to women and young boys. In some towns, volunteers organized to help improve the conditions in military camps and hospitals. Government provisions were far from adequate, and Soldier's Aid Societies provided food and clothing, called sanitary stores. Aid Societies also assisted families that fell on hard times while the breadwinner was away at war.

A few Iowans—influenced, perhaps, by the many Iowa immigrants from the South—clung to their belief in states' rights and openly opposed the war. For a time there were rumors and reports of secret societies dedicated to resisting the Union cause, including the Knights of the Golden Circle; however, recent research has produced no strong evidence of Knights' activity in Iowa. When the Union began to gain the upper hand in the war, the voices of opposition gradually fell silent.

Throughout this period social life in communities remained strongly centered in the church. There were, however, activities of a secular nature to broaden the social scene. Fairs, circuses, and literary societies were popular. A growing sense of social responsibility found expression in state-supported institutions for the blind, deaf and dumb, mentally retarded, and mentally ill. Institutions of higher learning, both public and private also were established. This sense of social concern

and responsibility was heightened by the many problems created by the Civil War.

By the end of the Civil War Iowa had emerged from a self-sufficient pioneer state into an agricultural and commercial member of the nation. Those who survived the calamities of the war joined the increasingly technological post-war world.

#### V. *Post-War Reorientation 1865-1896*

Although many regional and cultural differences remained, the Civil War experience had encouraged a sense of national unity and identity. The nation was further united as the expanding railroad network linked one sea coast with the other. By 1870, seven railroad lines crossed Iowa with branch lines extending into almost every portion of the state.

Between 1850 and 1860, Iowa's population tripled, and it continued to expand as people migrated to the remaining unsettled parts of the state. By 1890, the frontier had passed, not only in Iowa, but in the nation as well. Population in towns and cities was on the increase and community success was measured in terms of growth and expansion.

In the East, great industrial and marketing centers began to develop. Although Iowa remained strongly agricultural, the state joined in the nationwide industrial trend with the establishment of large agriculture-related industries. Natural resources, including coal and gypsum, also were exploited. The industrial labor force grew, organized, and gained power. Strikes occurred as early as 1877 in the Iowa coal industry. By 1890, approximately 15 percent of the population was employed in manufacturing or mining, while agriculture occupied a little over 50 percent of the Iowa working force.

As farming developed into a strong commercial business during the war, the future seemed promising. High production—stimulated by new technology—continued following the war, but consumption declined. Prices for agricultural products fell and remained low for the rest of the century causing extreme financial difficulties for farmers. Lack of currency also was a problem. Unable to pay gold for costs of the war, the United States government had issued unsecured paper money, called greenbacks, to pay wartime wages and purchase goods. When the war ended, greenbacks in circulation totaled \$450,000,000. The government stopped issuing this currency and began to withdraw it from circulation,

creating a money shortage. Farmers, who seldom had much cash in hand, favored continued circulation of paper money and viewed currency withdrawal as another cause of economic problems.

Natural disasters added to already existing economic problems. Beginning in 1867, and continuing annually for ten years, swarms of locusts stripped the fields. On the heels of this loss came the chinch bug, a voracious air-borne insect that devoured everything in sight. Southern counties were devastated in 1877 and 1879. Yet agricultural prices remained low, and what little was left for market sold at an unprofitable price. Farmers who specialized in a single cash crop such as wheat were particularly vulnerable to the onslaughts of insects.

Changes in farming techniques, including diversification, remedied the problem of insect attacks. Although most farmers were slow to accept "book farming" the increased use of scientific agricultural methods and the new inexpensive fencing material, barbed wire, gradually brought changes to the Iowa farm scene. Cattle ranges in western Iowa were converted to fenced pastures and fields. Farmers switched from wheat production to corn that was fed to cattle or hogs in feed lots. In some areas dairy industries developed accompanied by creameries and cheese factories. The dissemination of new farming techniques was aided by the Patrons of Husbandry. Organized in rural areas for social and educational purposes, the men and women members of the Grange (as the local units were called) met to exchange information and improve the rural standard of living.

A post-war panic that began in 1873 threw the entire nation into economic distress. In the cities, thousands were unemployed. People in the agricultural areas, already in financial trouble, cast about for causes and solutions to their economic problems. The railroads were a major target for criticism. Earlier, railroads had been considered essential to the success of a community, now they were blamed as a major contributor to agrarian difficulties. Railroads had solved the problem of transporting large quantities of bulk farm products over long distances, and Iowans had expected an improvement in the economy. Reality, however, did not live up to expectations. The railroads were built for profit, not for good will. As smaller, locally-owned lines were absorbed by larger ones, local control was lost to eastern-based owners.

Even though agricultural prices fell, railroad rates remained high. After paying transportation costs, farmers had little or no profit. Moreover, where competition might have kept rates down competing railroad lines joined together to fix rates at a high level. Long haul rates to Chicago were often lower per mile than short haul rates to instate destinations. Railroads virtually controlled the economic fate of agriculture.

Suffrage rights commanded much attention during the post-war years. The question arose concerning two groups: the recently-freed blacks and women. Some favored all civil rights for black people, others, in favor of emancipation, opposed equal citizenship rights and social equality. Black suffrage was approved by constitutional amendment in 1868 when the word "white" was stricken from suffrage qualifications in the Iowa state constitution, but the qualifying word "male" remained. Following this exclusion of females, an organized effort for woman suffrage began. Over the next 50 years the question was presented at every session of the Iowa Legislature, without success.

Iowans also focused on the problem of prohibition. Except for those who had emigrated from countries where alcoholic beverages were a part of the culture, the issue was a moral one. Before the war, prohibition was on a local basis, and laws varied widely throughout the state. Desiring uniformity, citizens organized to completely halt the manufacture, sale, and use of alcoholic beverages. In 1882, a state-wide prohibition amendment was ratified by the voters 155,436 to 125,677 only to be declared void on a technicality. Nevertheless, voters had made their position clear, and similar prohibition laws were passed in 1884. On the whole, the 1884 law was effective, and although liquor was sold in some places, liquor manufacture in the state was practically abolished.

Most of the concerns of the time were eventually reflected in political action. The issues of sound currency, railroad rates, and moral and civil rights were all dealt with by legislative action either on the state or national basis. Throughout this period, new political factions came and went: the Antimonopoly Party in 1873-1874 protested oppressive control by railroads and other powerful corporations; the Greenbackers merged with organized labor in 1878 and succeeded in electing two Con-

gressmen from Iowa to join 12 other Greenback-Labor representatives in Washington; the Populist Party, formed in 1891, advocated more paper money and government ownership of railroads, telephone, and telegraph facilities.

Although the smaller factions never developed into major political parties, they had considerable effect. The two major parties were forced to face current problems and create legislation to deal with those important concerns of the people.

#### VI. *Reform - Prosperity - World War I: 1897-1918*

The period between 1897 and 1920 is often called the Golden Age of Agriculture. Farmers enjoyed high production and good prices for their products. Improved machinery, including the gasoline-powered engine, helped agriculture become a profitable business. Cash crops made possible the purchase of household items that would have been manufactured at home in less prosperous times.

With increased use of tractors and automobiles rural population growth began to decline. Conversely, urban population increased to fill the need for an industrial force in the cities. State population growth lost momentum with the only decrease on record (close to one percent) between 1900 and 1905. Ethnic and racial population balance changed also as the number of foreign immigrants slowed. Black population increased, especially in river towns and coal mining areas of south-central Iowa.

Problems accompanied industrial expansion. Few industries demonstrated concern for the welfare of laborers, and moreover, many corporations used financial power to the detriment of the general public. After the turn of the century, desperately needed reforms were achieved under the banner of the Progressive political movement. Although some controls earlier had been placed on railroads, several serious problems remained for the Progressives to solve, for example, the practice of issuing passes to legislators and other politically-influential persons. Railroad rates remained unreasonably high. Worse, farmers were never assured that rail cars would be available to transport produce at the appropriate time. Progressives sponsored legislation to reduce influence on legislators, regulate both passenger and freight rates, and require railroads to provide cars to transport farm products at the ap-

appropriate time. Other regulations were created to benefit both workers and consumers, to provide for workman's compensation, and to control working conditions, hours, and employer liability. Pure food laws protected consumers. Political reforms placed limits on corporate contributions to political candidates, and established primary elections for selection of United States Senate candidates (previously chosen by political caucus). Woman suffrage was strongly promoted, and although full suffrage was not realized, women were granted the vote in local elections.

Public support for education grew stronger. In 1909, administrative reorganization upgraded the educational quality at the three state institutions of higher learning. Reorganization at the state Agricultural College brought about a new program of research, instruction, demonstration, and eventually, an extension service—a program that would directly serve the agriculturalists of the state.

Through legislation, the state initiated many other projects for public benefit. Funds were allocated for a public park system and road construction. The state assumed responsibility for public health and safety through laws providing such services as free community water analysis. In response to growing desire for prohibition law reform, liquor laws were strengthened to outlaw statewide all manufacture, sale, or consumption of alcoholic beverages.

During this period of change and improvement creative talents of Iowans were cultivated and recognized. In 1895, Charles Atherton Cumming established an academic art school in Des Moines. Fifteen years later, he went to Iowa City to establish the Department of Graphic and Plastic Art at the University of Iowa. Writers, drawing on their life experiences as Iowans, wrote and published novels, short stories, and poetry with a definite regional flavor.

Enjoying the security and success of the times Iowans, along with most other Americans, were disinclined to become entangled in the great European war that exploded in 1914. Neutrality, however, did not include non-support. The United States sold both arms and food to the allied nations. With increased foreign sales, industrial and agricultural production remained high and profitable as the United States moved toward the time when neutrality would no longer be possible. The moment

came in April of 1917 with Germany's decision to commence unrestricted submarine warfare in sea areas surrounding Great Britain and France.

The nation quickly set about gearing for war. The Selective Service Act provided for a draft system to ensure an adequate armed force. In all, 114,224 Iowans served in the military. Army posts were established at Camp Dodge and Fort Des Moines. Fort Des Moines was the location of the only training camp for black officers in the then segregated army. Eight months after the declaration of war, Iowans were in France as part of the American Expeditionary Force.

On the home front there was much patriotic activity. Volunteers organized groups to make game boxes, conduct book drives, knit socks, and raise funds in support of the men overseas. Conservation of fuel, energy, and food was promoted. Home victory gardens were planted in yards and vacant lots. Loyalty and good citizenship were emphasized in the public schools.

To help finance the war, bonds were sold to citizens of the country through Liberty Loan drives. Financial goals were set for every state. Embarrassed by a poor showing in the first drive, Iowa organized on a county level in order to meet the assigned goal for the succeeding Liberty Loan efforts. County Councils of National Defense were formed to assign individual allotments. Much pressure was placed on citizens to purchase bonds and to do their "fair share."

Iowa was among several states with a large percentage of citizens of German birth or heritage, and many suffered because of their Germanic ties. The slightest hint of German sympathy might bring accusations of treason. Neighbors were encouraged to report those whose loyalty was suspect. Worse, a Governor's order excluded all languages except English from schools and public places, including churches and telephone conversation. This placed a special burden on the nearly 180,000 foreign-born residents of Iowa. Following the Armistice, anti-German sentiment began to recede.

By the end of the war, Iowa had become an integral part of the nation, with a special contribution to make to the success of the country. Within the borders of the state new situations, created by the changing forces of industrialization, were met and solutions to problems found. There was great optimism about the post-war future.

## VII. *Post-War - Depression: 1919-1938*

Life in the United States became increasingly standardized following the war. Continued improvements in the technology of transportation, communication, and industry created a society that shared the same manufactured goods, experiences, and goals.

Patriotism and nationalism, generated by the war, lingered on following the Armistice. Iowa legislators passed a number of laws intended to encourage loyalty and patriotism. Public and private schools, for example, were required to teach American citizenship.

The post-war Ku Klux Klan, a group of zealous nativists, enjoyed a brief period of influence in Iowa and the Mid-West. Anti-Catholic, anti-foreign, anti-black, pro-native American and pro-Protestant, the Klan influenced school board and other local elections. Never strong in more than a few cities, Klan activity began to decline following anti-Klan demonstrations and losses at the polls in 1926.

Returning Iowa veterans became beneficiaries of patriotic sentiment, but some returned to find their old jobs filled by others. Military pay had been low, and veterans believed they deserved assistance as they re-entered civilian life. In 1921, the Iowa State Legislature voted a bonus to the Iowa men and women who had served in the military. Later, in 1924, the Federal government also approved a bonus to veterans.

Population in Iowa increased slightly in the 1920s and 1930s. Of main importance was the continuing shift of population within the state, from rural areas to towns and cities. Black population in cities also increased during the early 1920s after several coal mine closures. Two federal constitutional amendments passed in the period after the war signaled a return to national housekeeping. The eighteenth amendment, passed in 1919, extended prohibition to all of the states. (Iowa had already experienced four years of statewide prohibition.) In the following years, women were granted suffrage. Women's rights in Iowa were further increased in 1926 when a bill passed allowing women to be elected to the General Assembly. Another law forbade local school boards to deny employment to women because of marriage.

The war seemed a catalyst for further technological developments. Airplanes, automobiles (and the roads on which they ran), telephones, radios, and motion pictures became necessities instead of luxuries.

Municipal airports became important symbols of growth in larger cities, and coast-to-coast air mail routes were set up on an experimental basis with stops in Iowa. By the end of the 1930s, Iowa's two airports had scheduled plane service. On the ground, Iowans were rapidly deserting the horse. State officials devoted much time to plans for grading and surfacing roads for automobile users. By 1930, 18,000 miles of highways had been surfaced, more than any state west of the Mississippi except Texas and California. Iowa automobile registrations in that year totaled 784,450.

The telephone relieved isolation in rural areas, and by 1920, 86 percent of the rural homes had telephone service. In 1940, 40 percent of the state's rural homes enjoyed the benefits brought by electrical power. Radio programs became standard fare, bringing news and entertainment. By 1939, 11 commercial stations were operating in the state. Motion pictures, too, added a new dimension to life as sources of entertainment and news.

Despite the Depression, literature and art flourished in Iowa. An art colony was founded at Stone City in 1932, and many books were published by Iowa authors. Music enjoyed strong support in the public schools.

The largest budget item of the 1920 legislature was for education. The success of this emphasis on public education was reflected in a 99.54 percent literacy rate in 1925. Education goals broadened to include vocational rehabilitation and physical education programs. In rural areas consolidated school districts began to replace one-room schools as good roads and transportation developed.

Against this background of patriotism, education success, and cultural growth is set a story of agricultural depression such as the state and nation had never known. For most farmers, there were no roaring twenties. During the war, agricultural production had expanded, and farmers had borrowed money to purchase machinery and more land to meet the wartime demand for agricultural products. High production continued after the war as the government maintained wartime price supports for agricultural products. When government supports were withdrawn, however, prices for farm products collapsed. By 1921, the price received for the corn produced on an acre of Iowa soil was 20 percent below pre-war values and well below production costs. Wages

for farm labor, the cost of farm implements, and freight rates rose. Worse, prices and wages in other parts of the economy remained at high wartime levels.

For a while, farmers hoped the set-back was temporary. Bankers were willing to loan money to see farmers through a time considered to be a brief economic reversal. This practice resulted in some 400 bank failures in six years. Added to the farmers' burden were continuing high land values, resulting in high property taxes. These were necessary to support the improved roads and consolidated schools which increased markedly in the early twenties. Loans negotiated during the prosperous war years fell due, and each year an increasing number of farmers were forced to declare bankruptcy.

Meanwhile, in the rest of the nation, consumers increased their purchases of manufactured goods. With agricultural prices low, less of the family budget was spent on food and clothing and more for items such as autos, radios, furniture, and services.

As agricultural conditions worsened, farmers sought assistance from the Federal government. Already, many forms of indirect aid were provided to both big business and organized labor through tariffs, subsidies, and work laws. There was no similar help for agricultural producers. Farmers believed they should have equal consideration when it came to government assistance.

Several organizations worked to improve the agricultural situation. For example, Grange activity revived, and two new organizations were formed, the Farmer's Union and the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation. As more state federations were formed, a national organization, the American Farm Bureau Federation was created with business-oriented goals. When agricultural prices fell in late 1920, the American Farm Bureau acted swiftly. Western and southern Senators formed a non-partisan coalition to favor bills beneficial to agriculture and to help agriculture gain an equal place with other businesses in relation to governmental aid. Between 1921 and 1923 this "farm bloc" realized some success, including federal regulation of packing house rates and government control over the grain exchanges.

A continuing effort was made throughout the twenties to gain government aid to deal with the large agricultural surplus. Twice, Congress

passed a bill that included government purchase of the surplus, only to have the bill vetoed. In Iowa, a State Department of Agriculture was created to function as an inspector, regulator, and investigator, but this department did not help solve the major problem of the moment, disposal of the large farm product surplus at a price to cover the production costs.

Late in 1929, the rest of the nation joined the farmers in the worst depression the nation had experienced. The nation turned to government for economic relief.

In Iowa, government responded to do what was possible on a state level. An income tax was instituted to help shift the tax burden from farmers, still suffering from high property taxes. Despite well intentioned efforts, the farmer's economic situation remained desperate. Many had been reduced to such poverty that it did not take much to set off the smoldering frustration and anger built up over 11 years. When Federal inspectors began a general program to test cattle for tuberculosis, farmers were hostile, even violent, over the enforced procedure. Animals found to be diseased were destroyed, but compensation for animals killed was considered inadequate. Some farmers also believed that the test was inaccurate and that healthy cattle were sometimes destroyed. Resistance was especially violent in Cedar County where the National Guard was called in to control the situation. This incident, known as the "Cow War," led to the founding of an organization of militant farmers, the Farmers Holiday Association, created in 1932 to coordinate militant protest. Holiday leader Milo Reno planned to promote an all-out farm strike that included withholding farm products from market, but coordination of the effort was not successful. Sporadic picketing and milk dumping were the extent of such activities.

Finally, a massive, but quiet protest took place. In the election of 1932, the people in both Iowa and the nation asked a different political party to provide answers to the nation's economic problems. The newly-elected governor of Iowa reorganized state government. Banks in financial trouble were closed and temporarily taken over by the state to protect the interests of all concerned. The federal government took similar action later that same year and suspended operation of all banks.

No bank reopened until authorized to do so. Other state efforts included another change in taxation. Sales, income, and corporate taxes were instituted to further shift the burden from property owners. The overall situation of the farmers did not immediately improve, in fact farm mortgage foreclosures increased in 1933. Once again, the Farmers Holiday Association acted, and all over the state bidders at foreclosure sales were intimidated. Worse, a judge was mobbed and beaten after he had signed legal papers of foreclosure.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt requested voluntary cessation of foreclosures. At the same time, he signed a farm bill designed to limit production. This Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) provided for a voluntary agreement between farmers and the Federal government to reduce corn acreage and number of pigs farrowed. Government cash payments were to be made at a rate per head on hog reduction and rental of land left unproductive.

Although the AAA plan helped farmers through a drastic economic period, the years of depression continued and were filled with hardship and uncertainty. A scorching drought that stretched on from 1934 through 1936 devastated both crops and livestock. Added to that calamity was a long and severe winter in 1936.

In proportion to their relation to agriculture, Iowa businesses and industries were affected by the agricultural depression. Small town business people suffered from a decline of farmer buying power. Yet, food manufacturers, comprising about 37 percent of all manufacturing in Iowa, prospered during the period of high agricultural surplus and low prices. Except for periods of labor difficulties, the mining industries also maintained solid economic footing. But following the crash in 1929, people in urban industrial areas suffered as did agriculturalists. Unemployment was high, and savings were depleted to meet every day living expenses. Workers were forced to turn to welfare in order to prevent their families starving. Just as agricultural programs had been provided for economic relief in rural areas, the government instituted programs to relieve economic disaster in urban areas. These "New Deal" programs provided something for everyone. The Public Work Act (PWA) made available funds for and materials to build schools, roads, bridges, and to improve public buildings. Under super-

vision of the Works Project Administration (WPA) jobs for people with a wide range of training and skills were created. More than 30,000 Iowans took advantage of WPA work opportunities. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) for young unmarried men from ages 18 to 25 employed 7,500 Iowans in 1933, 9,000 in 1935, and 4,500 in 1939. Most earnings were sent home for family support. The Corps developed soil conservation projects and made improvements in 17 state parks.

Government programs did not end the Depression, but the "New Deal" effort did eliminate much suffering. The beginning of World War II in Europe created an enormous demand for agricultural and industrial products, and the years of economic struggle faded into the past. But the Depression experience left a legacy of change in the role of government and its responsibility to the economy and welfare of the nation.

The years following the Depression were full of rapid political, economic, social, demographic, and technological changes that altered and standardized the American way of life. Perhaps the best information concerning Iowa's recent past comes from those who have lived it. Many people of the last two generations have experienced and can relate the changing character of the community as Iowa adjusted to its new role in an increasingly homogeneous America.

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