

Iowa Measures the Centuries

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IOWA MEASURES THE CENTURIES

A RETROSPECT 2046 A. D.

Iowa folks are good celebrators. They were always that way. The holiday spirit is a morale builder. Speeches, songs, shouts and friendly hand clasps evince the joy of work and play, of life and love. That was why Iowa was stirred to a year of celebrations to mark the first centennial anniversary of statehood. The impetus of state pride felt by the pioneers in the formative years carries over and colors the advent of the third century. After all a century is only a tick of the clock in the workshop of the Master Builder of eternity. There are other long assembly lines that await our return for new lessons.

As the Iowans of the first century held their devotion to the undying principles of brotherhood in the noble work of home making, social advancement, cultural achievement, community building, and proper use of all the ingredients of modern world citizenship, so also will the coming generations take heed of the lessons of history and act wisely. The Iowa of the first century was a challenge to all that is best in the human race; the Iowa of the second century met the challenge with high spirit and forward face; the life of the future will be better for the life of the past.

History is an epitome of achievement. Iowa history was the theme of Iowa's first centennial celebration. Fortunate is it that there were watchers on the lookout towers, near the close of Iowa's first century of statehood, and as they rang the bells of rejoicing, the two and a half million people of the Hawkeye state responded happily with a year of events well calculated to accelerate history-mindedness and widen the civic horizon. What did they do in that 1946 centennial year? Record has been made and well kept.

Well in advance of the anniversary date, in fact in the early months of the year 1941, first step was taken by

passage of a resolution in the Forty-Ninth General Assembly, looking to timely preparation for a centennial celebration, by appointment of a committee to formulate a program, all of which was done. Out of this early step finally came organization of a Centennial committee, which ably and honorably directed various phases of the celebration. That committee organized just at the beginning of the centennial year functioned effectively in directing and assisting Iowa folks of 1946 to celebrate in ways well suited to the occasion.

Under the aegis of this Centennial committee every county of Iowa had some form of observance of the centennial year. County and local committees directed local events. Fairs and similar events were attuned to the centennial idea. Special celebrations were arranged by clubs and schools and churches. All avenues of publicity were opened for dissemination about the things of Iowa worth remembering. The newspapers were filled with stories of Iowa history. Many special historic editions were printed in which there was recounted the stories of heroism and good work of Iowa statemakers.

The radio and the cinema were utilized for publicity and to arouse interest in historic matters. The libraries made a valuable contribution. The educational system of the state joined in presenting to the young people a vast amount of material as to Iowa history. Women's clubs and other associations heard many speeches and lectures. National magazines became interested. The Iowa congressional delegation had a history day at the national capital. There were songs composed in honor of the anniversary. Colorful pageants featured many of the local celebrations. There were home comings and happy reunions. In almost every church there was some sort of recognition of the importance of Iowa history. The Centennial committee made record of 242 major celebrations and 386 minor events worthy of mention. Not least of these was a three-day revelry at the state capital,

and dedication of the annual State fair to commemorating the century of progress in industry and agriculture.

A commemorative postage stamp, bearing on its face an outline of the state and a picture of the Iowa banner, was issued and first placed on sale at the old territorial and first state capital, and of these there was issued one and a quarter millions.

A souvenir coin was minted authorized by an act of congress, a fifty-cent coin of which one-hundred thousand were sold by the committee. These went into the possession of Iowa people almost exclusively, and the profit in the transaction was dedicated to advancement of historical work and preservation by the state. Proceeds of a small part of this sum set aside to be a continuing fund, will give a proper start for the celebration of the second century of statehood.

Excerpts from the informative final report of the Iowa Centennial committee of 1946 reveal the spirit of Iowa people on that historic occasion :

An entire volume might be written and not do justice to our statewide centennial celebrations. Throughout the spring and summer and into the fall, Iowans celebrated the centennial from border to border with a joyous enthusiasm that knew no bounds. No single celebration could revive the Iowa of one hundred years ago. Only in hundreds of small celebrations could we do this. The committee initiated a wide publicity program designed to bring the centennial theme home to each community and arouse pride in its own beginnings, and in the men and women who founded it. Every community was urged to revive the memories of its founders who came by covered wagon, or on foot or on horseback, and create a celebration that would leave a deep imprint of its own local history upon its citizens.

By this plan thousands more were reached and made to feel they were a part of Iowa and its history than could possibly have been done by any central celebration or fair. The echoes of Iowa's rejoicing in its first century of progress have resounded across the land from ocean to ocean, and Iowa, through the pride of its own people has achieved new stature in the eyes of the world.

We Iowans have not one but a hundred motherlands. We came from far corners of the world to settle our broad rich prairies

and gentle purple hills. Our culture is a composite of freedom seeking people from the old world, shaped to the needs of the new world, and made strong and bold by fortunate environment. From river to river as the summer progressed, traditions of the old world and the new came to life and became community history in hundreds of celebrations as varied as the communities which planned them. . . .

The value of these celebrations cannot be stated in dollars and cents. They brought new appreciation of the state to its citizens, and instilled a depth and richness of community and state pride that no other program could have aroused. Iowa bought no glamorous central celebration for passersby to attend and forget, but reached down to the hearts of its people and turned an entire state, from border to border, into one vast celebration that retold the story of its origins and growth. For a single year, history became a part of our daily living. To the public spirited men and women of Iowa, the Committee bequeaths the rare privilege of nurturing and keeping strong and sound the pride in Iowa's past which came to life during the centennial year.

In retrospect, looking back from the year 2046 to the first centennial year 1946, a dreamer may well take just pride in what was done by Iowa people to commemorate the close of their first century of statehood. Iowa was then a glorious state, is now and will continue to be—first free state of the Louisiana purchase, a land devoted to liberty and progress, an empire of abundance.

EARLY STEAMBOAT EXPLOSION

At about 4 o'clock on the morning of Friday last, a flue on one of the boilers of the steamer Polosi collapsed just as she was leaving the wharf at Quincy on her upward trip, mortally wounding N. P. Perring, brother to the captain of the ill-fated Moselle. He died the next afternoon. He has left a wife and six children to mourn his loss. A deck hand by the name of Miller being missing is supposed to have blown overboard and lost. Fifteen or eighteen others were more or less injured, but none very seriously. We have not heard to whom the blame is to be attached. She was towed down on the next day for repair, and will soon resume her trade.—*Bloomington (Muscatine) Herald*, October 4, 1844.

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