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A Century of the ISEA

Irving H. Hart

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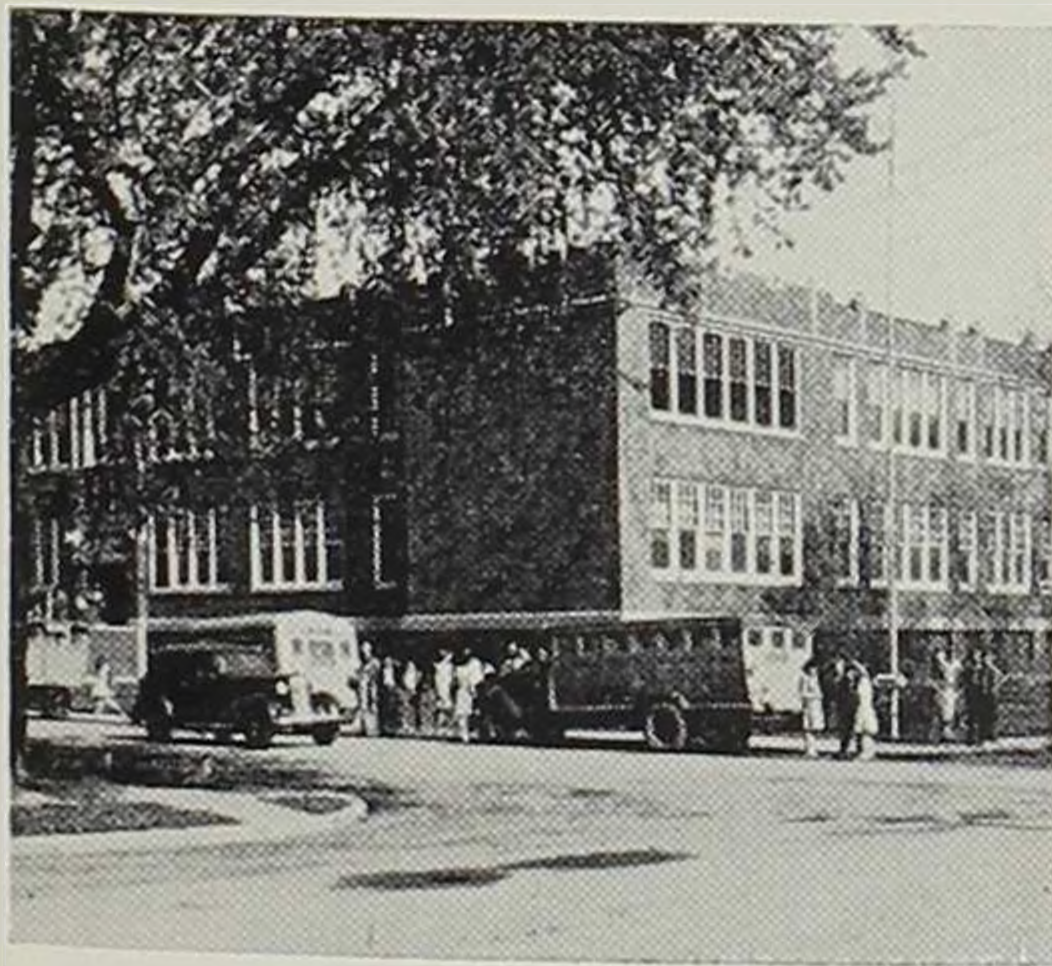
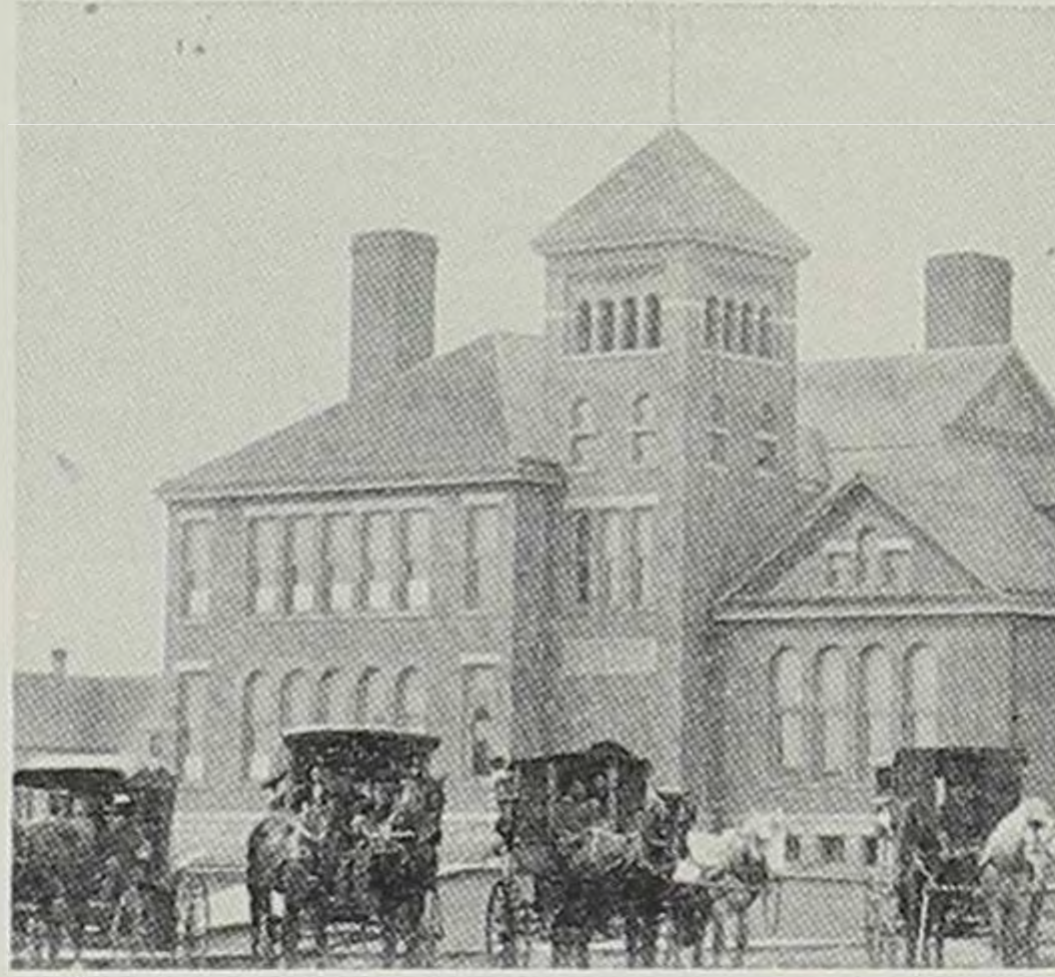
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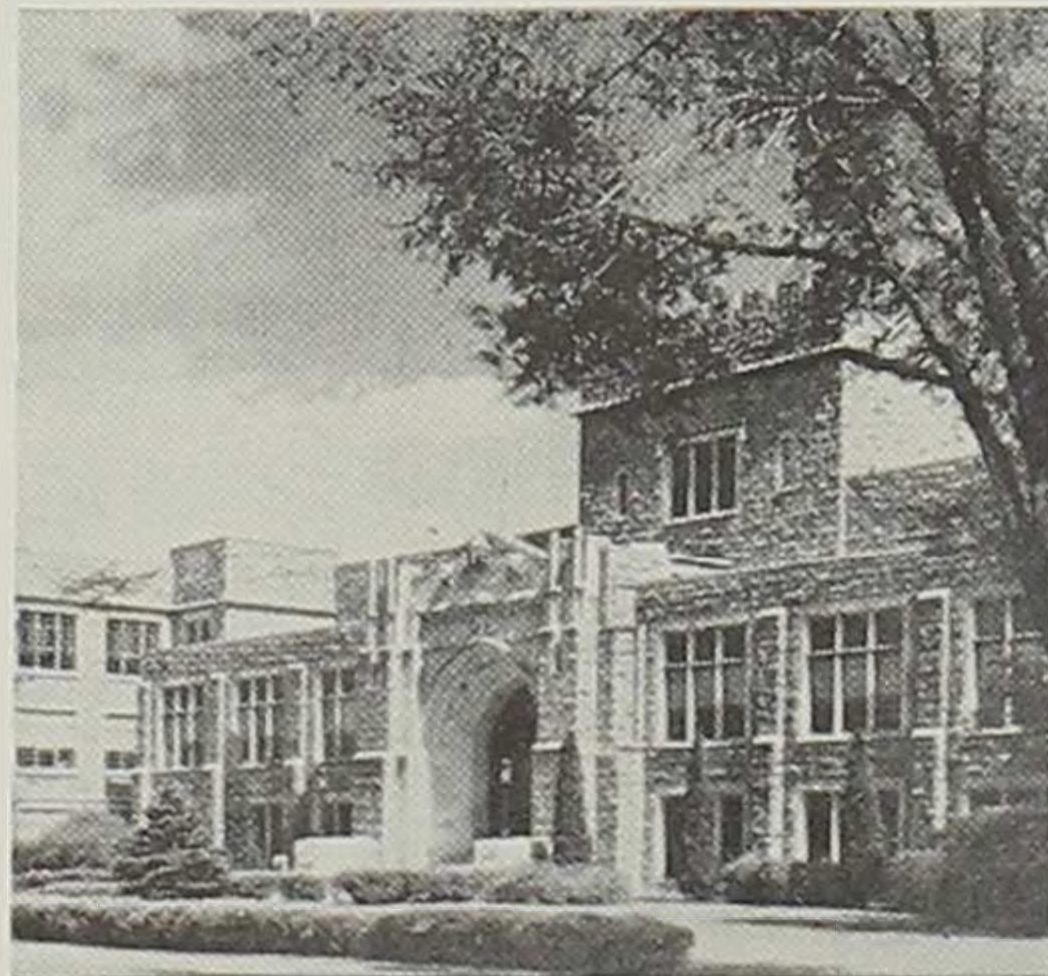
IOWA SCHOOLS

First consolidated school in Iowa, erected at a cost of \$15,000 in Buffalo Center in 1896. The popularity of the school was quickly attested by its growth. In 1896 there were 70 pupils in attendance in the rural schools of the township. In 1898, after the adoption of the central plan, there were 110 pupils. The next year this number had increased to 133. There were 424 consolidated school districts in Iowa in 1951.

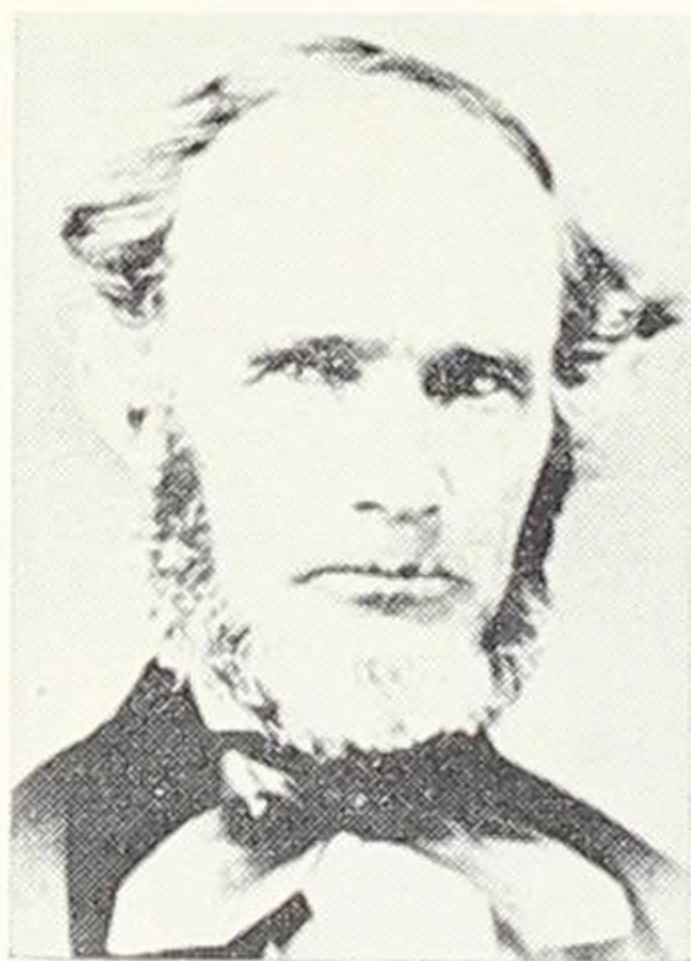


The first consolidated school in Iowa stands in striking contrast to the modern Buffalo Center High School. In 1951 there were 3,430 busses such as shown in this picture in use by the public schools, and 141,576 pupils were transported to school in this way.

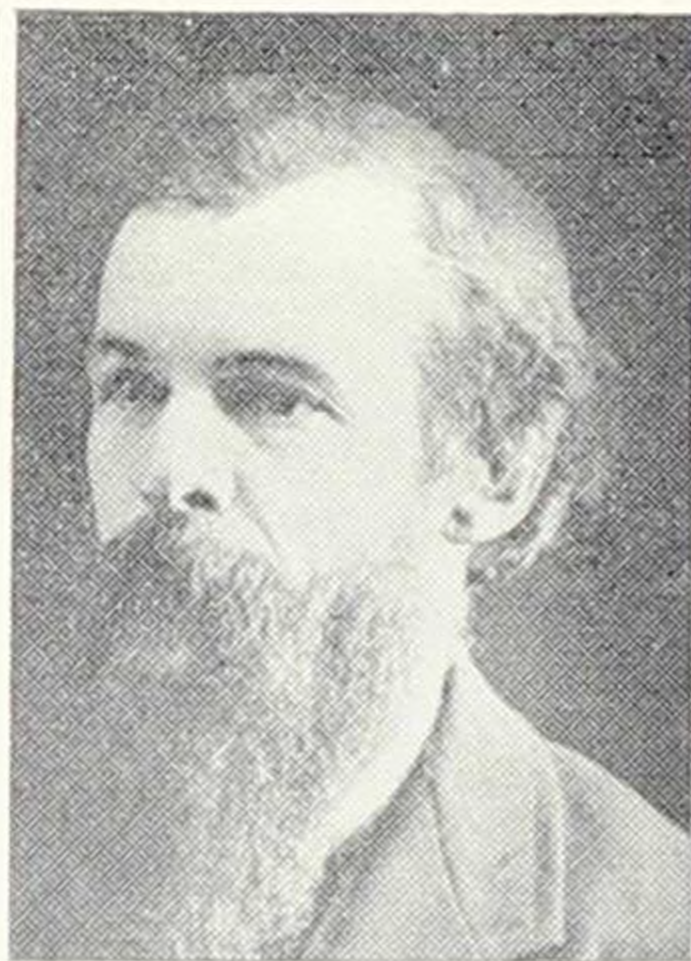
Dubuque High School. Tipton started a public high school in 1856 and the idea took root in such towns as Dubuque, Muscatine, Burlington, Iowa City, and Mount Pleasant before the Civil War. In 1911 a new State law gave the privilege of free high school training to all Iowa children. There were 905 junior and senior high schools in Iowa in 1951.



SOME ISEA PRESIDENTS, 1854-1928



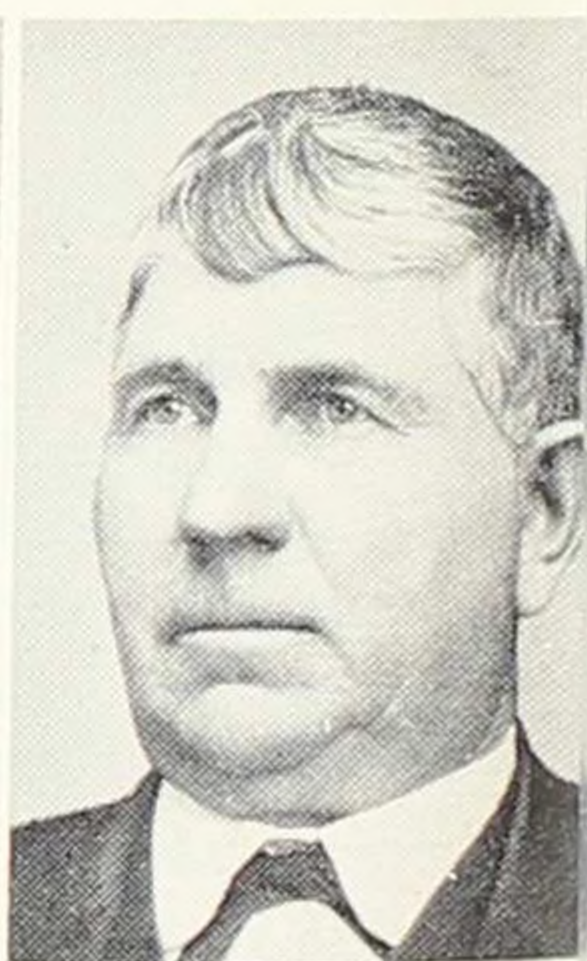
J. A. PARVIN



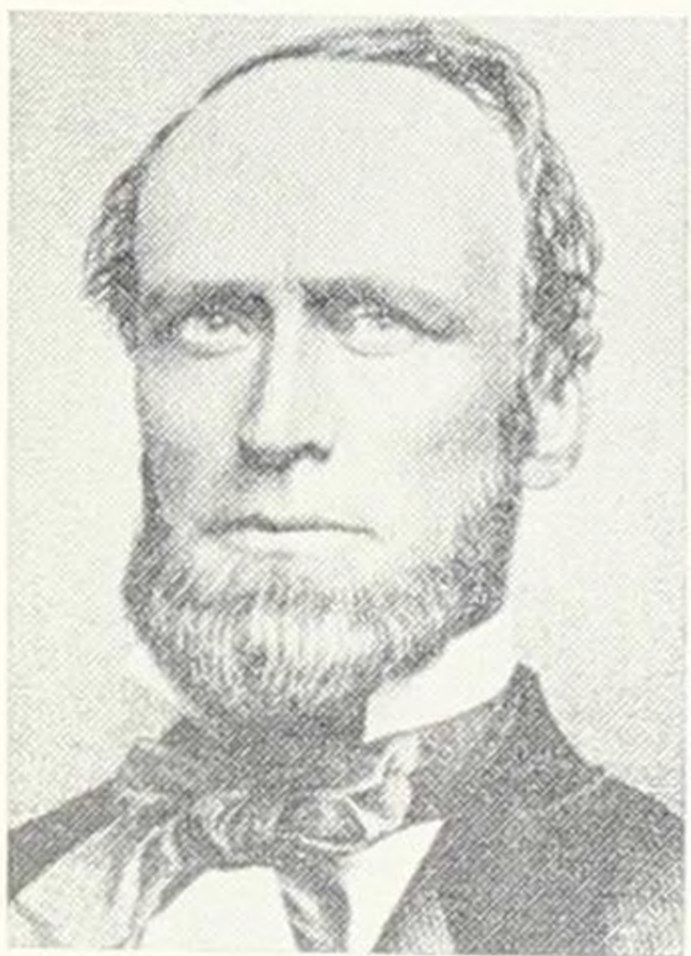
J. L. ENOS



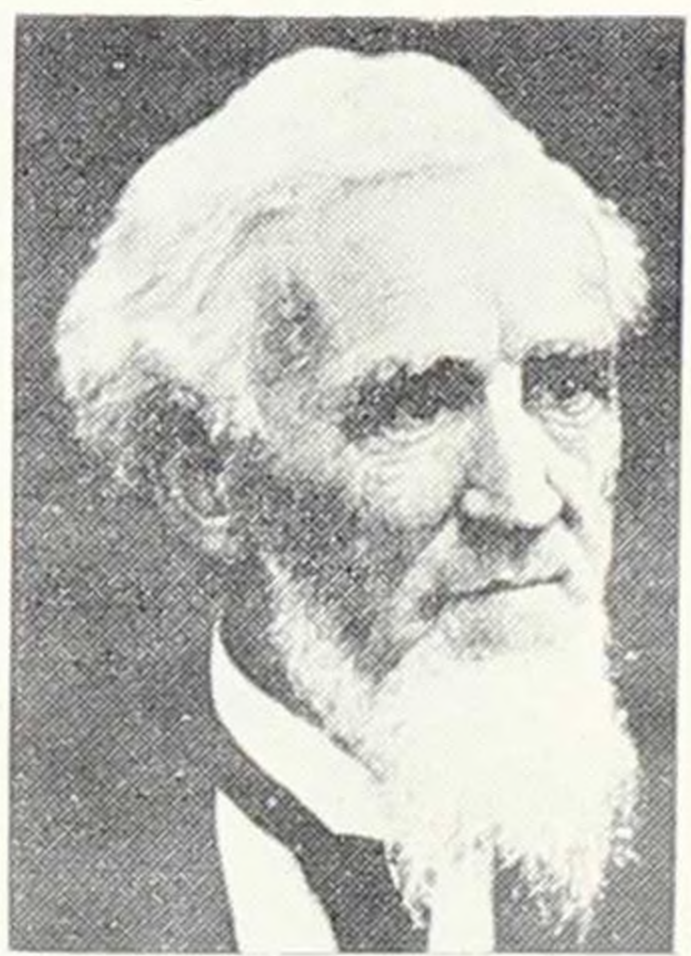
D. FRANKLIN WELLS



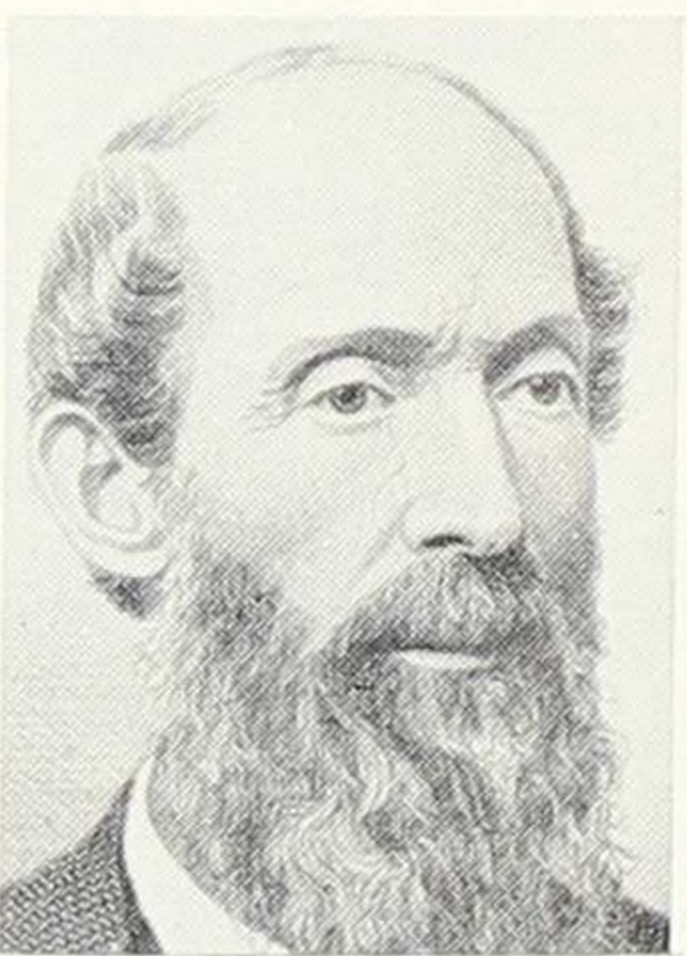
C. C. NESTLEROD



ORAN FAVILLE



L. F. PARKER



T. S. PARVIN



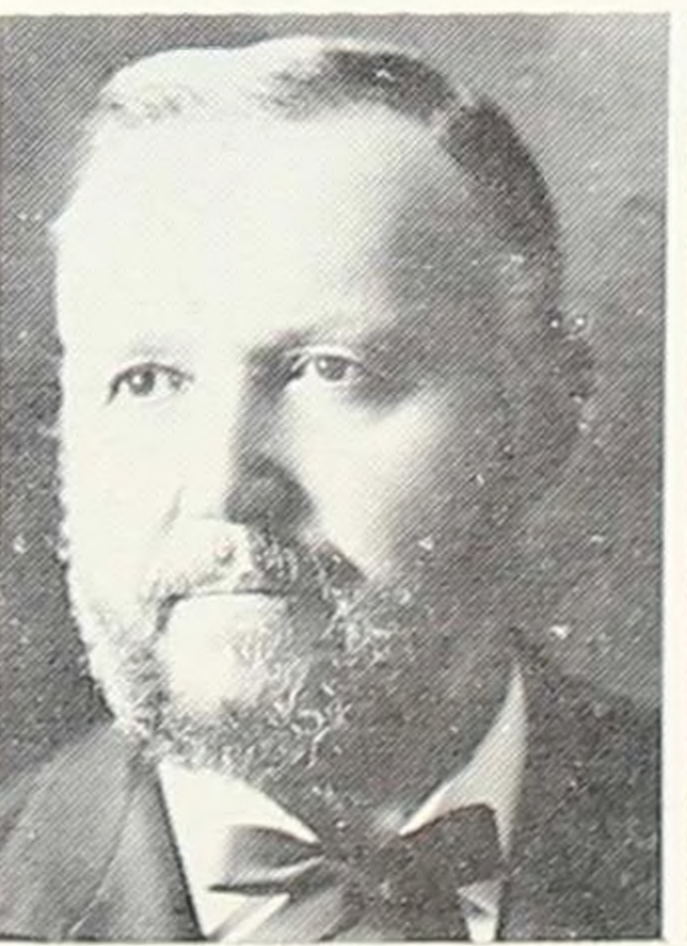
PHOEBE W. SUDLO



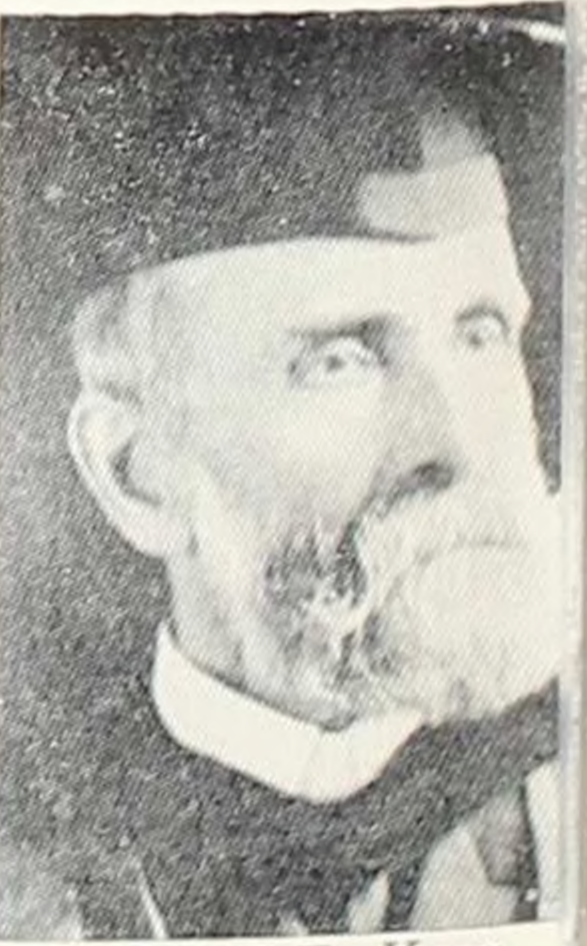
HENRY SABIN



S. CALVIN



H. H. SEERLEY



WM. F. KING



J. H. T. MAIN



F. C. ENSIGN



FRED D. CRAM

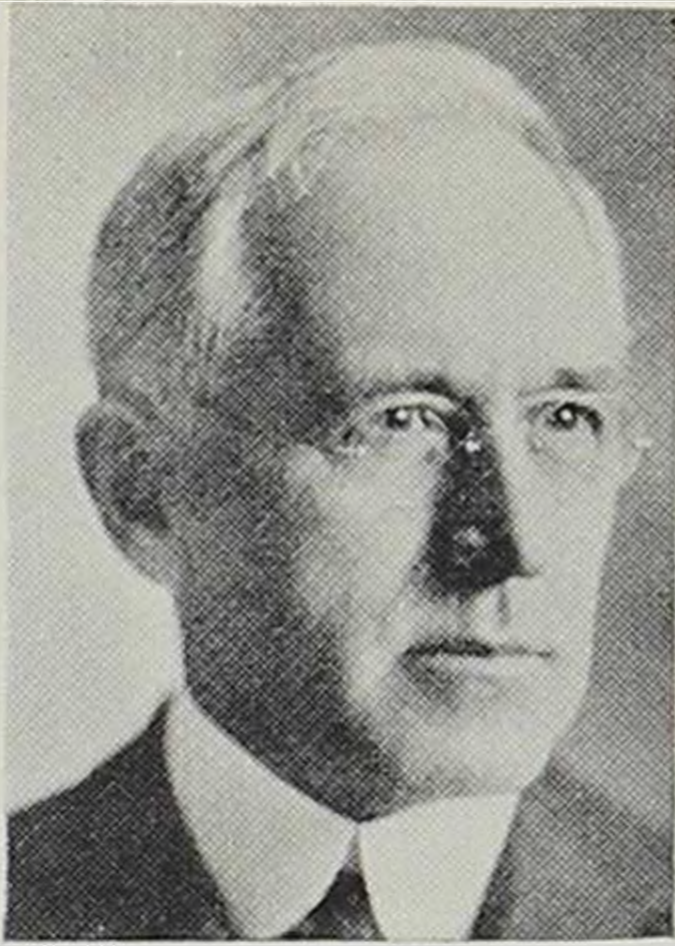


JOHN E. FOSTER

SOME ISEA PRESIDENTS, 1929-1954



ESTHER HELBIG



FRANK L. SMART



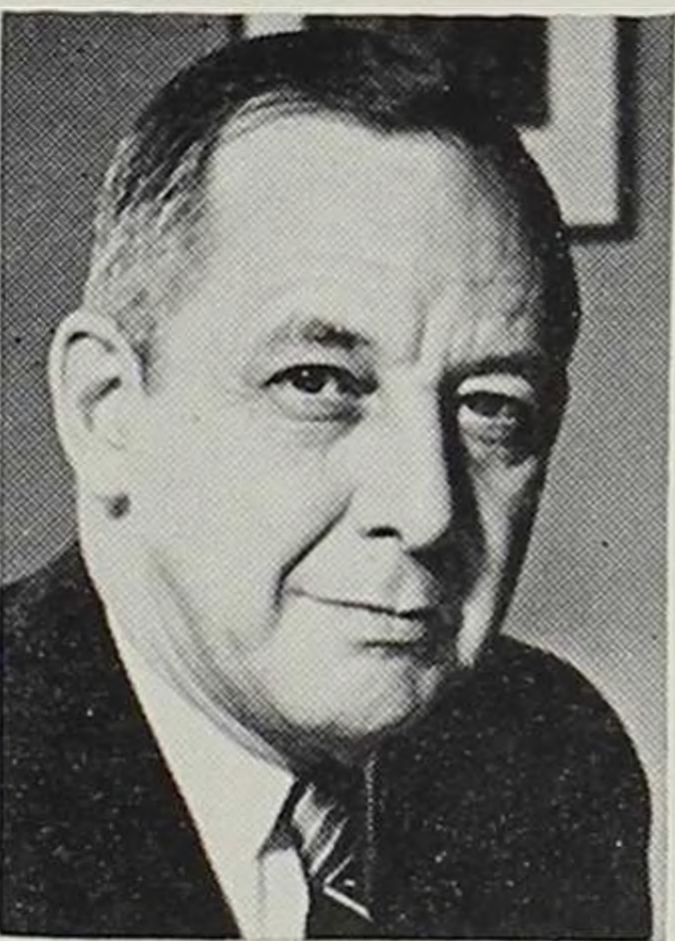
I. H. HART



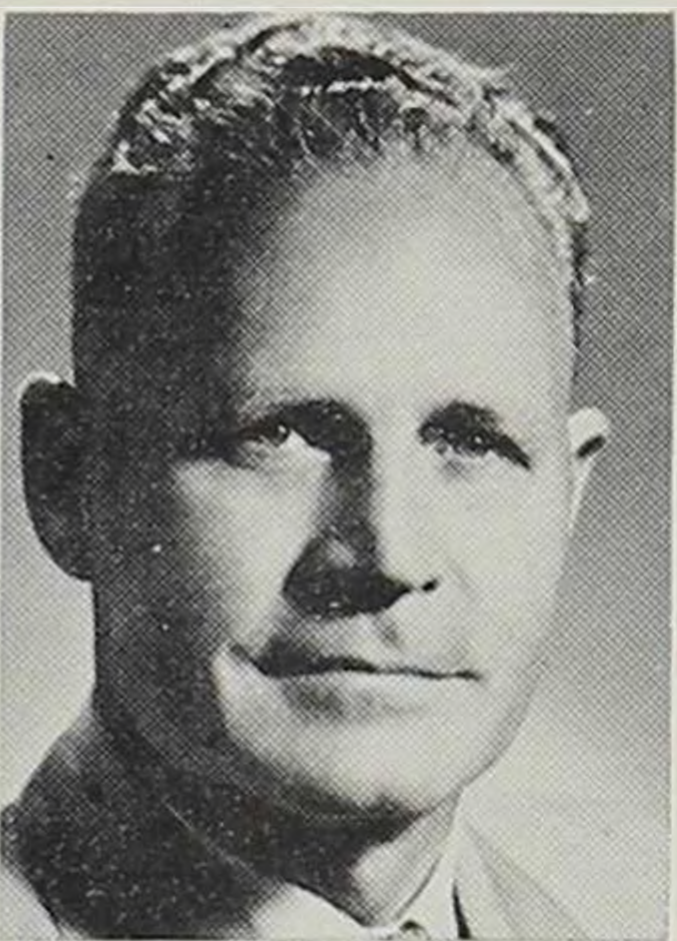
ANNA LYNAM



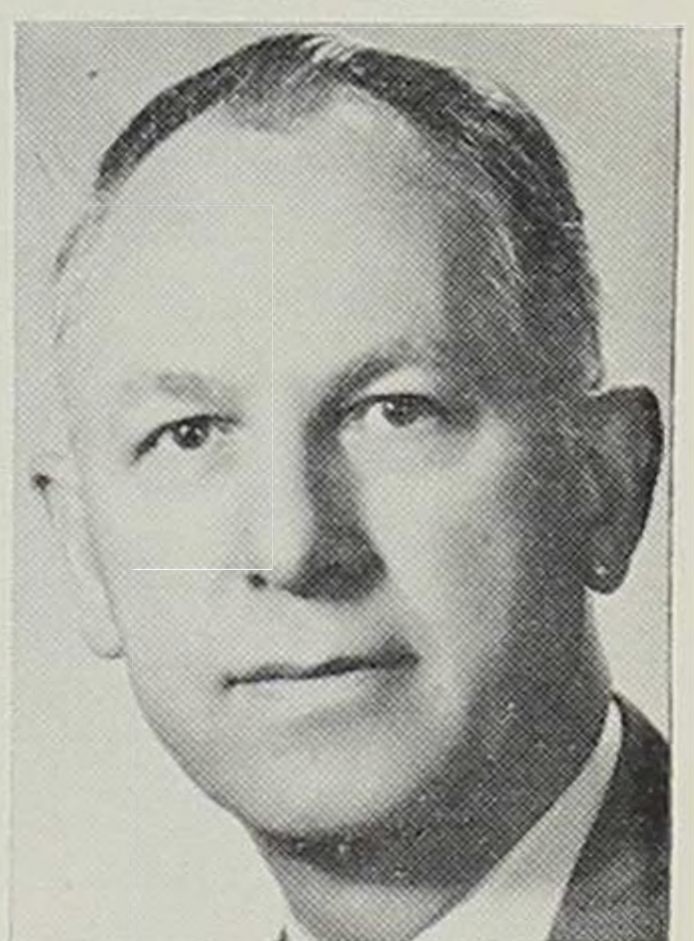
ARTHUR DEAMER



P. C. PACKER



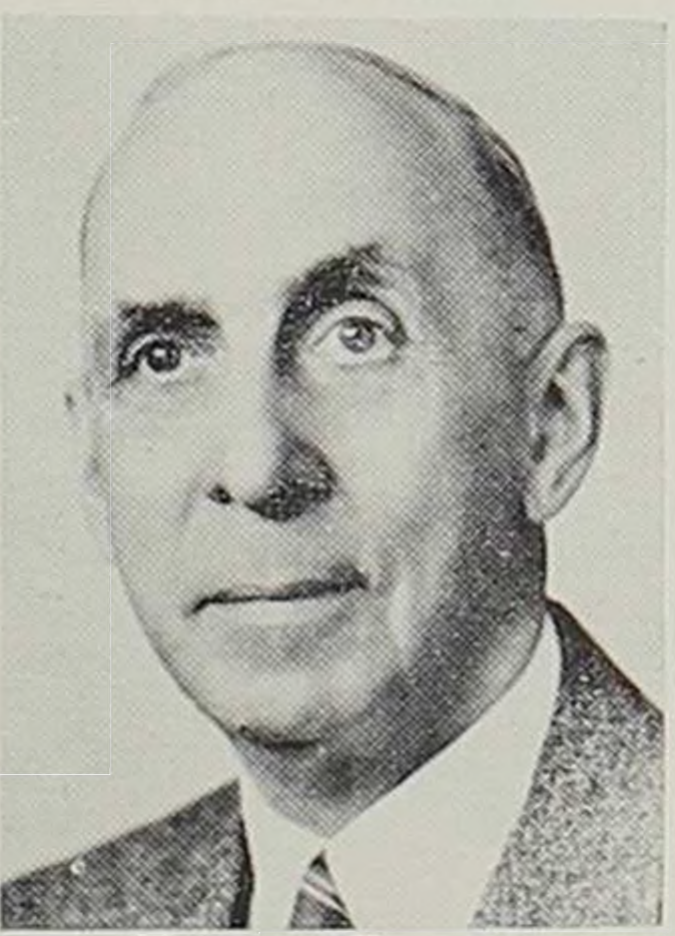
C. F. MARTIN



CARL T. FEELHAVER



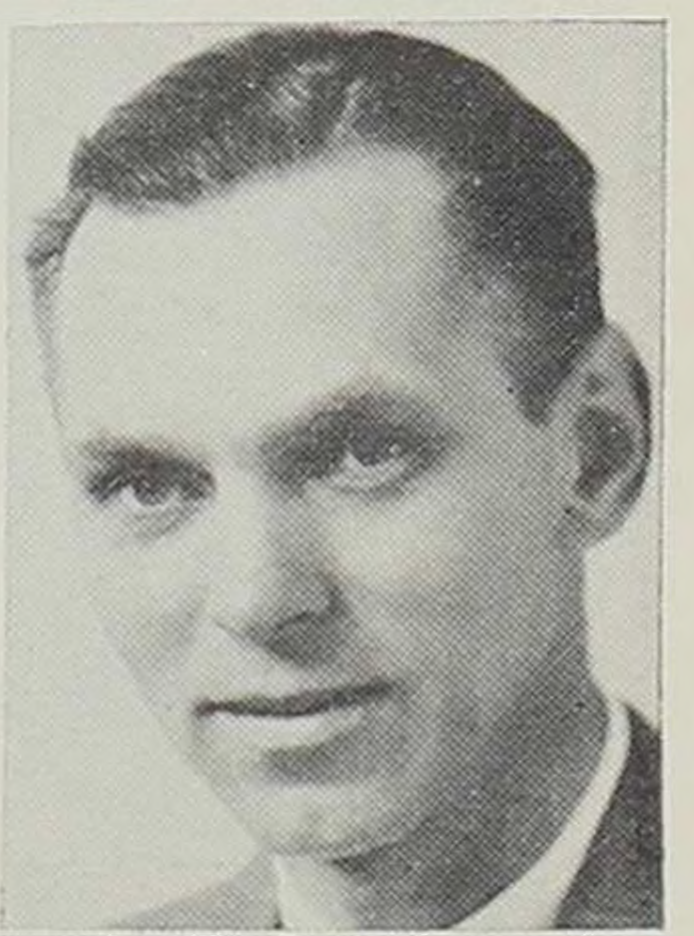
FRED K. SCHMIDT



ELMER RITTER



HARVEY HILL



A. E. LAURITZEN



W. A. ERBE



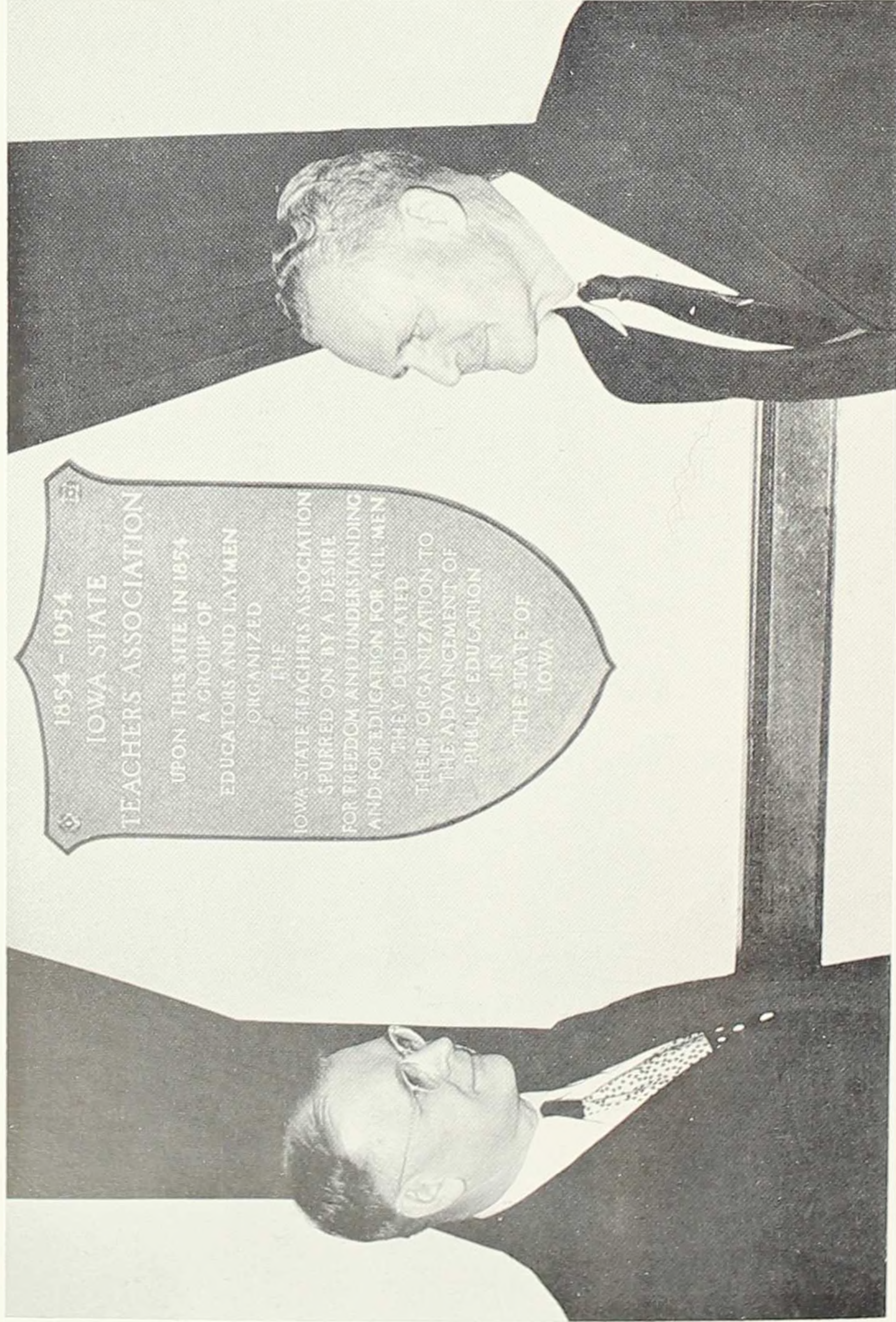
W. F. JOHNSON



J. L. DAVIES



FRANK L. HILDRETH



1854 - 1954
IOWA STATE
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION
UPON THIS SITE IN 1854
A GROUP OF
EDUCATORS AND LAYMEN
ORGANIZED
THE
IOWA STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
SPURRED ON BY A DESIRE
FOR FREEDOM AND UNDERSTANDING
AND FOR EDUCATION FOR ALL MEN
THEY DEDICATED
THEIR ORGANIZATION TO
THE ADVANCEMENT OF
PUBLIC EDUCATION
IN
THE STATE OF
IOWA

Plaque dedicated by the ISEA in Muscatine County courthouse on May 10, 1954. William J. Petersen (left), Superintendent of the State Historical Society, and Charles F. Martin, Executive Secretary of the ISEA, inspect the plaque.

A Century of the ISEA

The Iowa State Education Association had its origin as the Iowa State Teachers Association in a meeting of a group of teachers and friends of education held in the court house at Muscatine on May 10, 1854. The objects of the organization as stated in the constitution were "to promote the educational interests of the state, improve teachers, and elevate the profession of teaching." A second session of the Association convened at Iowa City in December, 1854. There was no meeting in 1855, but two were held in 1856, again at Iowa City and Muscatine. Since this date the Association has met only once each year.

The annual conventions in the first thirty years were held in the following places: Muscatine, (1854, 1856, 1861), Iowa City (1854, 1856, 1873), Dubuque (1857, 1864), Davenport (1858, 1872), Washington (1859), Tipton (1860), Mount Pleasant (1862), Grinnell (1863, 1876), Oskaloosa (1865, 1881), Cedar Rapids (1866, 1877), Des Moines (1867, 1874, 1880), Keokuk (1868), Marshalltown (1869, 1878), Waterloo (1870), Council Bluffs (1871), Burlington (1875), Independence (1879), and Cedar Falls (1882). Since 1882, with the exception of 1887

when the convention was held in Cedar Rapids, all annual meetings have been held in Des Moines.

Statistical data on membership are lacking for eight of the first twenty years of Association history, but the annual average for the other twelve years is 127. Membership at this time, and until 1917, was based upon attendance at the annual conventions; hence there were radical fluctuations from year to year, due in part to distances and difficulties of transportation. From 1875 on, the number of members increased steadily decade by decade as is shown by the approximate ten-year averages down to 1904: 250, 600, 1,100.

The time of year selected for these meetings had an undoubted effect upon attendance and membership. In the first twenty years, the customary date was during the summer vacation, usually in August. In 1875, the dates were set in December, following the Christmas holidays, and this custom was confirmed by the Constitution in 1883. The holiday dates were continued until 1909, when the annual convention was called in the first week of November. These dates have been adhered to ever since with two exceptions. An epidemic of influenza in 1918 caused the cancellation of the regular convention program and the substitution of an executive session held late in December. War time restrictions on transportation caused the postponement of the 1945 convention to January 31 and February 1 and 2, 1946.

The change to the November dates resulted in an immediate and striking increase in membership to an annual average of over 5,000. By a radically revised constitution in 1917, an effective plan of federation of the state with the district associations was adopted, membership ceased to be based solely upon attendance at the annual state convention, and active recruitment campaigns were initiated. As the result, the annual membership in the Association rose by successive stages to 15,000 by 1920, to 17,000 by 1930, to 21,000 by 1940, and by the close of the first century to 23,800.

More significant, however, than the increase in actual numbers has been the increase in the proportionate number of Iowa teachers who have become members of the Association. Comparison of the whole number of teachers in Iowa with that of the membership in the ISTA shows that in general in its first thirty years at no time were more than two per cent of Iowa teachers members of the Association. By the end of its first half-century, this figure had risen to four per cent. At no time in the first sixty years of the Association were more than 30 per cent of the teachers in Iowa members of the Association. By 1922, this proportion had risen to almost 70 per cent, and in the interval between 1938 and 1954 it has increased to 85 per cent and finally to 95 per cent. At the present time, the ISEA may validly assume to speak and act in the name and by the authority of Iowa's teachers.

The Iowa State Teachers Association was at first a man's organization, as a natural consequence of the predominance of men in the teaching profession. The Civil War called many men teachers to the colors and their places in the schools were taken by women. In the convention of 1862, for the first time, the women (they called them "ladies" then) found themselves in the majority. By the constitution of that date, "ladies" were admitted to nominal membership, but were specifically exempted from the payment of dues. To the business session of 1862, a request was submitted on behalf of the feminine members for the privileges of paying dues and of being granted full equality in membership. The question was referred to a "committee of ladies," of which Phoebe W. Sudlow of Davenport was chairman. This committee reported in the following year demanding the right to become "equal sharers of the burdens of pecuniary support" of the Association. An amendment to the constitution to this effect was adopted. It was only gradually, however, that women came to be recognized on the programs and among the officials of the Association. Phoebe W. Sudlow was elected President of the ISTA in 1877, and since that date eight other women have served in this capacity. Throughout these years, also, women have been members of the Executive Committee and of other important committees of the Association.

Through force of circumstances rather than by specific intent, the government of the Iowa State Teachers Association during its first six decades was oligarchic in character. The custom of selecting Christmas holiday dates for the annual conventions, followed down to 1909, called for a degree of professional interest on the part of the attendants found in only a very small number of members other than school administrators. In the absence of any system of representation, direct participation in the government of the Association could be attained only by presence at the business sessions. Here naturally the proceedings were dominated by a relatively small group, composed chiefly of city and county superintendents and principals.

The adoption of the early November dates for the convention served, as has already been noted, tremendously to increase attendance and membership; but this was accompanied in 1910 by a change of the time for the annual business session from the daytime to an hour after the conclusion of the Friday evening program. This change served as a further deterrent upon widespread membership participation in Association government. The business of an organization, now with from 5,000 to 8,000 members, continued to be conducted by only a handful of the administrative "old guard."

The obvious inequity of this situation led in

1915 to a movement for the reorganization of the Association on more democratic lines and in a more effective form, culminating in 1917 in a constitutional revision which paved the way for democratization. Direct responsibility for the government of the state Association was lodged in an Electorate, the members of which were to be chosen by the divisions on a proportionate membership basis. Permanence and continuity of policy, were assured by provision for the appointment of a full-time secretary, whose duties were to include the editing of a monthly bulletin (later the *Midland Schools*). Four years later, in 1921, local affiliated associations were given the right to choose electors.

These changes, however, provided only potentially a representative basis upon which the membership as a whole might control the organization. The goal of having an organization "reaching down to and up from every teacher" had not yet been reached. Electors chosen by the districts in their sparsely attended business sessions were still usually school administrators. The granting to affiliated associations of the right to choose electors, while ostensibly a step toward democracy, failed in many cases to be such a guarantee. Administrators still continued to comprise the majority of the Electorate.

The problem of finding a time for the meetings of the Electorate, and later of the Delegate As-

sembly, which would not conflict with other sessions of the convention, and which would enable the delegates to devote their full attention to the business of the Association led finally in 1947 to the selection of entirely separate dates in February. This policy was confirmed by the Constitution of 1949 and at the same time the dates of both the official and the fiscal years of the Association were fixed as beginning on July 1.

The most significant step toward making what had come to be called the Delegate Assembly really a body representative of the Association came in 1941 with the creation of the County Councils. Proportional representation came to be characteristic of the organization in whole and in part; and the classroom teachers, who constituted an overwhelming majority of the membership, began to receive a recognition never before accorded to them. By the most recent constitutional revision, the County Education Associations consisting of all the ISEA members in each county have become the means through which the membership may make sure that the ISEA is a truly representative democracy. Through elections sponsored by the County Councils delegates are chosen to the state Assembly and distributed proportionately among the various electoral groups. The Iowa State Education Association has thus become as effective an agent of democracy as its members choose to make it.

District, county and local teachers organizations in Iowa are historically almost as old as the state Association, although functionally they have been parts of the larger unit only in comparatively recent years. Credit for priority should be assigned to Cedar County, in which a county association has been in existence since 1857; and to the Southwest District, which was organized as early as 1879. At the instance of State Superintendent Henry Sabin, four district associations, one for each of the four quarters of the state, were organized in 1894; since which date three others, Central, North Central and South Central, have been formed.

The district associations tended steadily to increase in importance and authority between 1917 and 1940, and certain of them came in the 1930's definitely to challenge the leadership of the state organization. In 1934, a recommendation of the Northeast District that the ISTA meet biennially, alternating with district meetings, was tabled by the Delegate Assembly; in 1939, a resolution of the Northwest District proposing the discontinuance of the state convention and its replacement by district conventions was submitted by referendum to the membership. The response "was too negligible to be considered a consensus," and a recommendation that there be no change in the time or place of the annual state convention was approved by the Delegate Assembly.

The President of each district is *ex officio* a member of the Delegate Assembly, and, with him as district delegates, are all the representatives elected by the county associations of his district. Each district has also the right to choose a member of the Executive Board. Districts remain basic and functional parts of the organization.

The programs of the annual conventions have been interesting and influential, but they have been far less significant than the Association's programs of action. Viewed in perspective, both of history and of educational philosophy, the record of the ISEA is one which elicits only credit for its aims and accomplishments. The Association has exerted an effective influence on the reorganization of the curriculum so as better to foster the processes of childhood education; it has stood steadfastly for the elevation of the standards of teacher education; it has learned to evaluate all school policies and procedures in terms of the joint needs of society and of the child; and it has consistently striven to articulate its program with that of the National Education Association. The changes of attitude and policy necessary in order to bring about these results have been reflected in the topics selected for the convention programs and in those set up for study and research.

While there is some evidence of the use of the research method before 1883, it was not until that year that attack upon educational problems

through detailed study and research became a permanent point of Association policy with the creation of the Educational Council. This body consisted, from 1883 to 1910, of some thirty members elected for three-year terms. Its membership list during this period constitutes virtually a "Who's Who" in Iowa education. Committees were appointed by the Council annually, each to continue for three years the study of a selected topic and to prepare a report for the Association as a whole.

The high character of the membership of the Council and its continuity of organization and procedure led inevitably to its becoming a highly influential factor in Association politics. This resulted in opposition which culminated in 1910 in action by which the Council lost its separate character. From 1910 to 1925, it was composed of all persons who had had continuous membership in the Association for three years.

The composition of the Council was again changed in 1925 to six members appointed for three-year terms, and it was confirmed in its research function. The Educational Council was finally abolished in 1933; but in its final period of service it organized and carried to a successful conclusion a study of the teaching personnel of Iowa which ranks as an outstanding piece of research and was basic to the passage of a new teachers certification law in 1933. For a time after the abolition of the Educational Council, research

became a sporadic rather than a continuous Association activity. In several instances, as for example in the case of opposition to the attack upon public education through the Beatty-Bennett Act of 1933, special committees were appointed to secure and organize pertinent information and make appropriate recommendations. Later, research was resumed as one of the special services of the expanded organization.

So long as the organization numbered only a few hundred members, its influence was necessarily limited. The Association stood consistently for measures looking toward the betterment of schools, but it would be presumptuous to assume that it may claim credit for educational legislative gains down to 1905. During its last half-century, however, by the cumulative force of increase in membership and by consistent and forward-looking leadership, the Association has attained a position where it may be credited with having exerted an important and in many instances a controlling influence upon such legislation. In particular, credit may be claimed for certain acts of the 35th General Assembly (1913), following the report of the Better Iowa Schools Commission. These acts included (1) the reorganization and strengthening of the Department of Public Instruction and the removal of the office of state superintendent from partisan politics, (2) the election of county superintendents by conventions of school officers, (3)

the payment of high school tuition for pupils from districts not maintaining a public high school, (4) normal training in high schools, (5) twelve weeks of normal training as a condition of admission to examination for county certificates, and (6) a minimum wage law.

Since 1940, when the "Six-Point Program" was initiated by the Association, a continuous and measurably successful campaign has been waged for (1) increase in the amount of state support for schools, (2) reorganization of school districts, (3) advancement of teacher welfare — tenure and retirement, (4) further advance in standards for certification, (5) provision for new educational needs — child welfare, youth service, and recreation, and (6) reorganization and strengthening of school administration on both state and county levels. The work of two school code commissions (1942 and 1944) and the efforts of the Department of Public Instruction have been supplemented and implemented by the ISEA. In each of the last five legislative sessions, educational gains have been made, for which the Association may justly claim a significant share of credit.

For two-thirds of its first century, the ISTA was supported by the proceeds of the payment of an annual fee of \$1 by each member. This usually sufficed to meet the needs of a budget limited to program expense and an occasional allocation for research. The flocking of more than 8,000 teach-

ers to Des Moines in 1910 to see and hear "Teddy" Roosevelt gave the Association its first surplus, which was used to finance the Better Iowa Schools Commission. The establishment of a permanent secretariat in 1917 involved a marked increase in expense, and although the membership came to be more than doubled, the sharing of the proceeds with the districts left the state organization with little more than a working balance, and sometimes with even less than this. The dues were raised to \$1.50 in 1921, and the increase was made available for the support of the state Association. A registration fee of 50 cents for the annual state meeting was added in 1929, but this increase was offset by the new policy of paying transportation expense of the electors.

Midland Schools was taken over as the official Association bulletin in 1918, and until the early 1930's this magazine for the most part paid its own way; but the effects of the depression were so serious as to produce a deficit of almost \$9,000 by 1932. Other obligations increased the Association's indebtedness to \$15,800. This critical condition was met by rigid economies and by the sale of bonds accumulated as a permanent fund in past years. So effective were these measures that by 1936 the Association became once more solvent.

This negative experience and plans for the expansion of the services of the organization led in 1939 to the adoption of a policy of the payment of

dues in proportion to the salaries received by members. The first increase was a very modest one, the new scale ranging from \$1.50 to \$3.00. In 1947, however, the dues were again increased, this time by 300 per cent.

The increased revenue accruing from the changes in dues made possible the reorganization and expansion of the services of the Association into many fields hitherto entered only casually. The administrative staff was expanded from a secretary and one assistant in 1917 to thirteen administrative officers and a corps of clerical helpers in 1954. The major administrative officers are, in 1954: an Executive Secretary, an Assistant Secretary and Director of Publications, Directors of Public Relations and Convention Management, of Field Service and Professional Relations, of Research, and of the ISEA Library Service, a Public Relations Counselor, a Manager for Iowa of the Horace Mann Mutual Insurance Companies, a Secretary of the Employment Information Service, a Research Analyst, and a Supervising Accountant. The descriptive titles above indicate the nature and scope of the special services through which the ISEA extends to its members, to the public school pupils and patrons, and to the state of Iowa information and assistance essential for the constant improvement of public education.

The Iowa State Education Association is a human institution, the creation of individual men and

women united in a great cause, the embodiment of their ideals, and the product of their endeavors. It would be impossible to name all of these to whom credit is due for what the Association has been and is. From the long list of leaders down through the years, the following have been selected; although there are doubtless many others equally deserving of such recognition.

Executive Secretaries

Charles F. Pye, (1918-1939), organizer of the Association on a new basis of continuity of policy, and director of its activities through twenty-one critical years;

Agnes Samuelson, (1939-1945), efficient and inspiring leader of the Association in the years of its great expansion;

Charles F. Martin, (since 1946), conservator of the best traditions of the ISEA and effective director of the activities of a great organization as it enters upon its second century of service.

Association Pioneers

Jerome Allen, Maquoketa, framer of the call for the organization of the ISTA in 1854;

John A. Parvin, Muscatine, first President of the ISTA, 1854;

D. Franklin Wells, Muscatine, President, 1857, 1860; Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1867-1868;

C. C. Nestlerode, Tipton, President, 1858,

1862; Superintendent of the first union (graded) school in Iowa, 1856;

Henry K. Edson, Denmark, President, 1864; Principal of Denmark Academy, one of the first secondary schools in Iowa, 1852-1878;

T. S. Parvin, Iowa City, President, 1868; pioneer educational historian of Iowa;

Phoebe W. Sudlow, Davenport, President, 1877; first woman public school principal and first woman city superintendent of schools in the United States;

Henry Sabin, Clinton, President, 1878; Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1888-1892, 1894-1898; Iowa's foremost educational statesman;

Homer H. Seerley, Oskaloosa, President, 1884; President, Iowa State Normal School, 1886-1909, Iowa State Teachers College, 1909-1928; member of and attendant at the ISTA annual conventions for 56 successive years, 1872-1928.

IRVING H. HART