

# "Iowa, the Garden of the World"

## From Prairie to Farmland

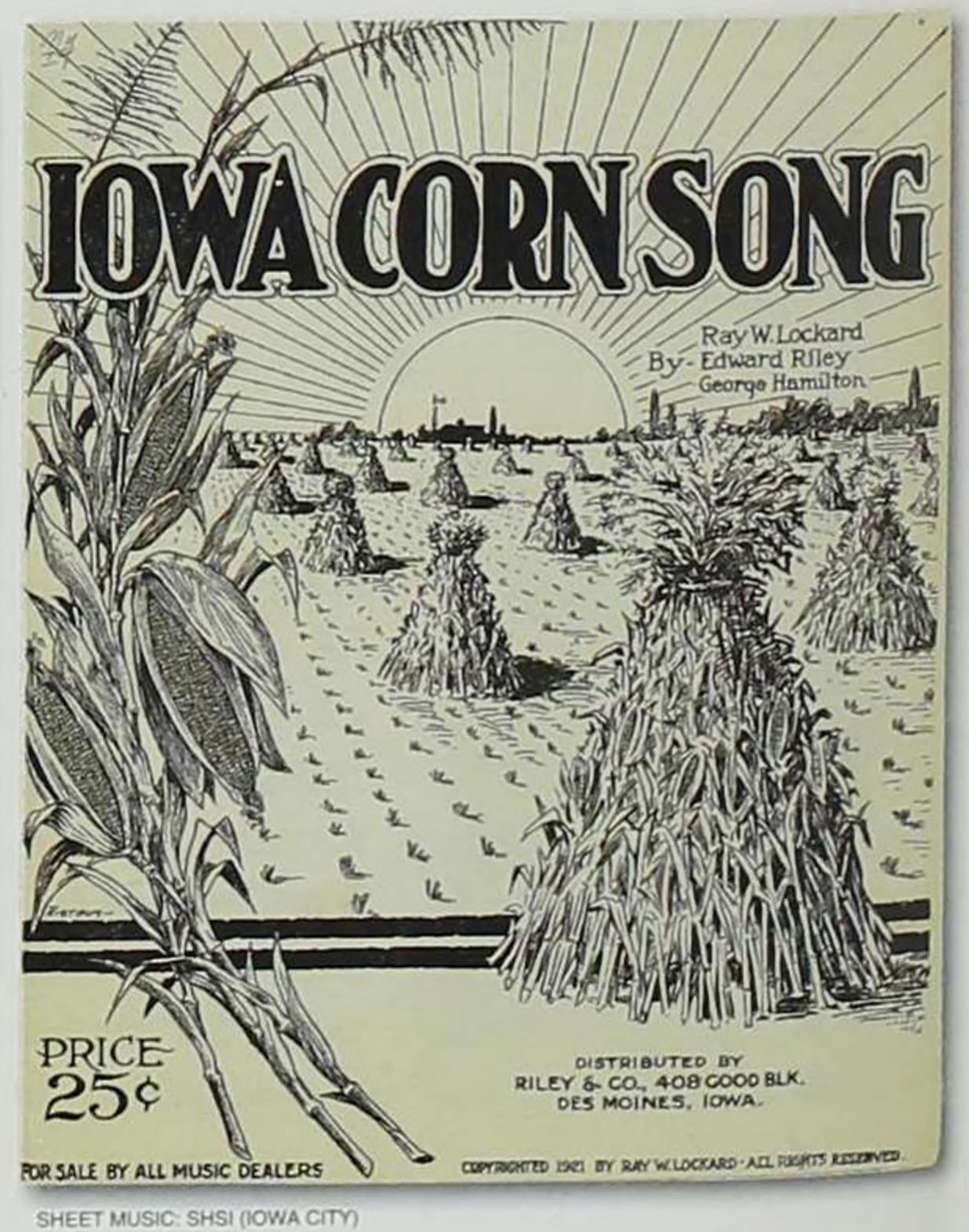
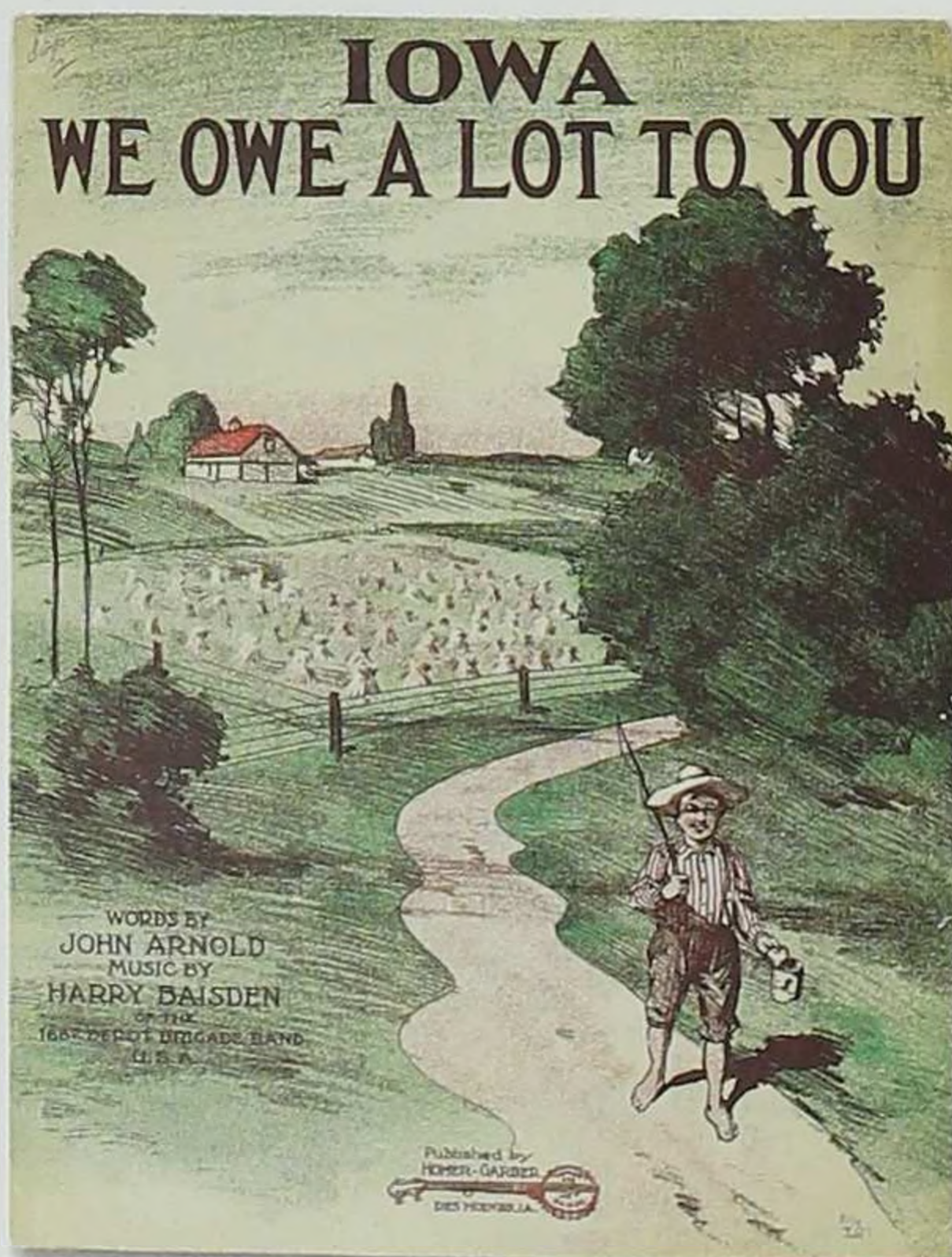
by C. Elizabeth Raymond

In the early decades of the 20th century, Iowans celebrated their state in an exuberant outburst of song. Sheet music of the time reveals an astonishing explosion of state fealty: "Carry Me Today, Away Back to Iowa," in 1923; "Iowa We Owe a Lot to You," in 1918; "Iowa I Love Best," in 1925; "Iowa Corn Song" in 1921. One undated song, titled simply "Iowa," summed up the impulse in a slogan on the cover: "It is easier to sing about Iowa than to keep from Singing." But what were they singing about? And why?

These songs and numerous others commemorate

an Iowa now familiar in the national imagination, a land of bountiful agriculture and neat farmyards, a state practically synonymous with its major crop, corn.

Even in the early 20th century, when most of these songs were published, this image of Iowa was too simple. It ignored Iowa's coal mines and its manufacturing, and entirely overlooked the post-World War I farm crisis. Ethnic tensions of the period are entirely absent from these songs. But realism wasn't the primary consideration for writers nostalgically enumerating the romantic attractions of their state. Consider, for instance,



another song titled "Iowa." With lyrics by Fannie R. Buchanan, it depicts a bucolic paradise:

*Iowa, the smiling prairie,  
With her miles of waving corn:  
With her wide-flung golden sunset,  
And her clover-scented morn.  
Iowa, the smiling prairie,  
With her rolling fields of wheat:  
Iowa, the garden of the world,  
Where earth and heaven meet.*

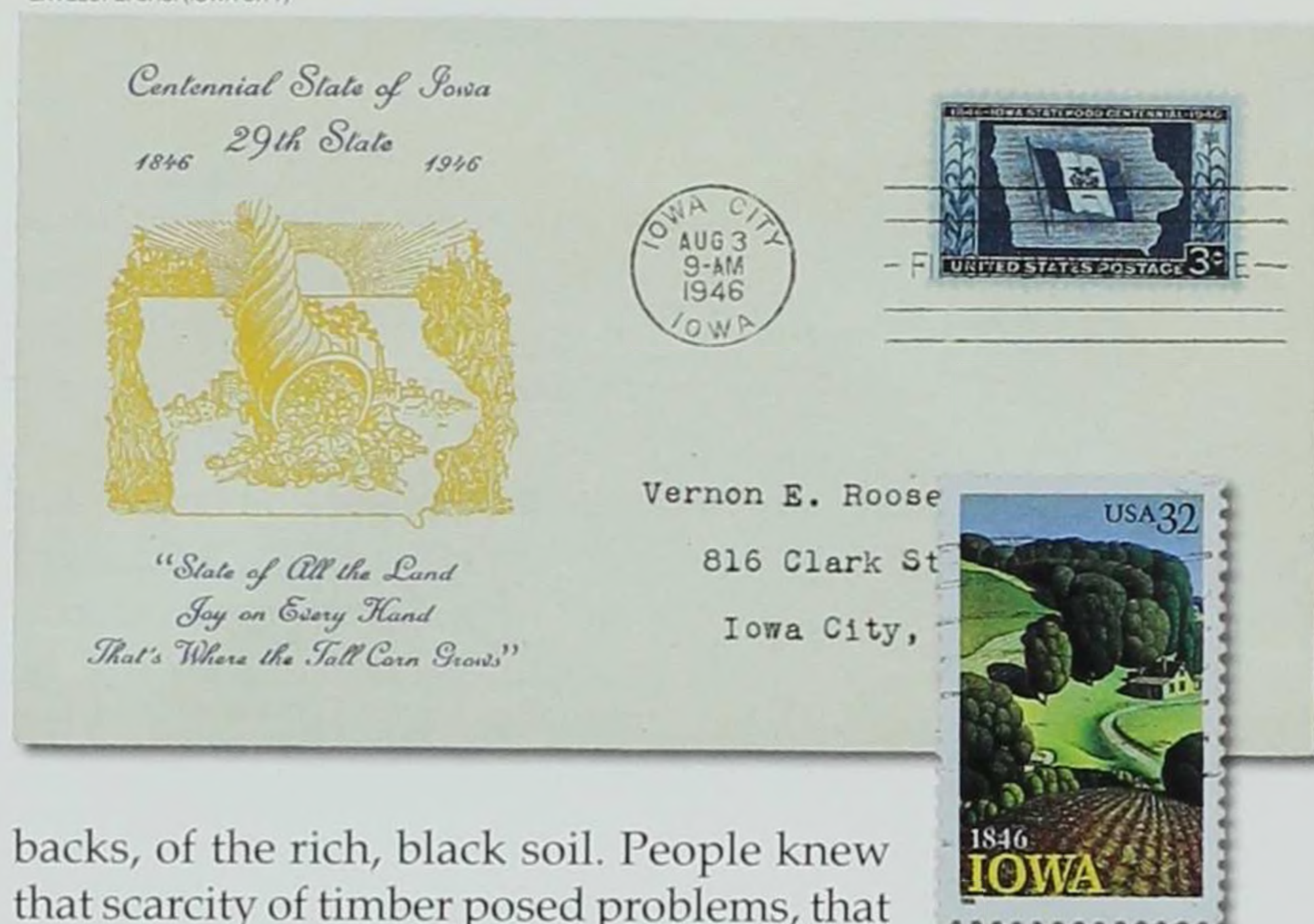
This is the Iowa of the Corn Belt, the quintessential agricultural landscape still acclaimed with something like wonder by eastern journalists who are assigned to cover state fairs in the Midwest. As historian Martin Ridge points out, when most Americans think of farms, "the visual image . . . is neither the cotton field nor the vineyard, but the corn and wheat fields of the Middle West." They think of a landscape that looks a lot like Iowa.

This persistent image of the state as the agricultural heartland is celebrated in these early-20th-century songs, where flat, fertile, rectangular fields stretch out to the horizon on every side, punctuated at comfortable intervals by orderly farmsteads with a surrounding fringe of trees. Iowa's centennial stamp, issued in 1946, fostered this identification with agriculture as well. It featured an outline of the state flanked by stalks of corn. The 1996 sesquicentennial stamp repeated the theme, reproducing a painting by native Iowan Grant Wood. Even the Iowa Sesquicentennial Commission's summer 1995 newsletter came bearing "Greetings from the heartland," and announced proudly that "Iowa produces nearly 10% of the nation's food supply."

This productive landscape, pervasive in image and in song, remains a distinctive feature of contemporary Iowa. Yet it did not always exist. Both the physical contours of the current landscape and the accompanying elements of the Iowa image developed slowly, over decades of settlement by Euro-Americans. Iowa's prairies were not always America's bountiful heartland. Indeed, early settlers found them a challenge to clear, farm, and fence. Creation of the modern image took time, and its emergence is well worth tracing.

**F**rom the beginning, Iowa had been described positively. By the time Iowa Territory was created, in 1838, prairie land held few surprises. Settlers' experience with Illinois prairies had already taught the advantages, as well as the draw-

ENVELOPE: SHSI (IOWA CITY)



backs, of the rich, black soil. People knew that scarcity of timber posed problems, that low-lying prairies were too wet for successful cultivation, and that the vagaries of a changeable climate would have to be learned. Those in search of land to buy scrupulously avoided swampy areas where decaying vegetable matter was presumed to cause the familiar malarial chills of "ague." Despite these cautions, however, Iowa was considered a good prospect for prosperous settlement. Lt. Albert Lea's *Notes . . . on the Black Hawk Purchase*, published in 1836, painted a typical picture: "Taking this District all in all, for convenience of navigation, water, fuel, and timber; for richness of soil; for beauty of appearance; and for pleasantness of climate, it surpasses any portion of the United States with which I am acquainted."

As was the common practice, the publishing industry provided numerous settlement guides and emigrant maps to serve the new market. With titles like *Wells' Pocket Hand Book of Iowa* and *Iowa As It Is in 1856*, these guides were continuously updated to provide newcomers with the latest statistics on landownership, county organization, and agricultural production. Not surprisingly, they, too, painted a glowing picture of the new territory and state, as such guides were meant to do. Nathan Howe Parker waxed lyrical in *Iowa As It Is in 1856*, attempting to convey the general effect of the open countryside: "The novelty of the prairie country is striking, and never fails to cause an exclamation of surprise from those who have lived amid the forests of Ohio and Kentucky, or along the wooded shores of the Atlantic, or in sight of the rocky barriers of the Allegheny ridge. The extent of the prospect is exhilarating. The outline of the landscape is undulating and graceful. The verdure and the flowers are beautiful; and the absence of shade, and consequent appearance of a profusion of light, produces a gaiety which animates every beholder."

A broadside from Gowers' Land Agency in Iowa City emphasized the economic rather than the aesthetic advantages, but took up the same general theme of in-

cient abundance: "There is no place on earth like Iowa, and persons unacquainted with her advantages and prospects, little realize the opportunity now presented for profitable investment and for securing valuable lands."

Even Isaac Galland, whose 1840 *Iowa Emigrant* cautioned against too great an enthusiasm for what was still a new country with attendant hardships, was sanguine about prospects in Iowa. A generation earlier, he noted, when the Ohio Valley was settled, "most of the luxuries and many of the necessary comforts of life were only obtained by transportation across the mountains on packhorses, and at great expense." Now, however, transportation had improved. In Iowa, there were "great facilities afforded to emigrants, of carrying with them all the necessaries and most of the conveniences of life." Iowa offered its settlers not isolation, but "their entire security from danger, and the density and proximity of their settlements." It was, in short, a thoroughly modern frontier.

Galland himself had moved to Iowa in 1829, before Euro-American settlement was legal in Iowa and early enough to witness the displacement of the native tribes in order to accommodate the influx of settlers. Though he mourned the circumstances of the Indians' departure—"Thus it seems, that these ill fated people are first to be cheated out of all the *products* of their country by the traders; then to be robbed of the *country* itself by the Government"—he recognized that these "ill-gotten gains" meant land for ambitious white farmers. Settlers from the East, who left behind the delights of home and family "and the social enjoyments to which they have become attached by habit," received in compensation "the silent beauties of an undulating plain, ornamented with wild flowers of every tint."

John G. Wells's 1857 *Hand Book*, published during a period of poor crops and depressed land prices, echoed the theme. Iowa was a land of future plenty: "Her resources are inexhaustible, her advantages are beyond the scope of calculation, and her claims upon the attention of every class and sex of the energetic, the industrious, and the ambitious, are preemptory as they are vast." Like Galland before him, Wells cautioned against undue optimism. Responsibly, he quoted government surveyor Willard Barrows about the need for hard work: "A man cannot come here and grow rich in idleness: he must work. Our soil is prolific, but must have care and culture." Yet Wells was generally carried away by the enthusiastic rhetoric of boosterism: "It is true that man can live with less labor than in the older states; the soil is easier tilled," he wrote. "He can make himself a home much sooner, and far more easily, than those who pur-

chase land in northern New York, Ohio, and Indiana." Published accounts, at least, made Iowa seem almost too good to be true, a place predestined to become the garden of the world.

**F**or some of those who took the advice of the guides, or succumbed to the blandishments of the advertisements, Iowa lived up to its promise. When A. C. Sutliff wrote to his brother in 1838, he reported having suffered from "a billious complaint" for six or eight weeks, but was optimistic nonetheless about his new life near Iowa City. He anticipated hiring a team to break the prairie sod the next spring, and raising enough grain the first season to pay the entire expense of plowing and fencing 100 acres (an almost incredible amount for people accustomed to the exigencies of woodland clearing). His summary was entirely positive: "I will not brag to you any more only to say that Iowa Territory is in all respects so far as I have traveled superior to any country I ever saw. . . . Tell our friends all that are desirous to emigrate to the far west to come on early in the spring and I will insure them as good a farming situation on the new purchase as anybody ought to wish for."

Similarly, when the Reverend Era Hyde wrote home to his brother, William, in Maine, he was almost overcome by his own enthusiasm for "this glorious, broad, free soul kindling country." Educated at Andover and Yale, he had gone to Iowa in 1844 to pay a surprise visit to his married sister. "When I looked about on the substantial comfort of Sarah's present dwelling, I laughed at myself for picturing to myself such privation, & barbarian rudeness as I did," he wrote. "Albeit the huge rough stone chimney with its logs 4 feet long blazing up is not so elegant as the neat air tight or Franklin [stove], or marble fireplace of an Eastern mansion, yet I find myself quite as comfortable and warm before it."

Indeed, he was positively rhapsodic about Iowa as a field for both religious and economic endeavors. "Clayton County is going to be one of the finest and richest farming counties in the West; Oh those magnificent prairies; what irrepressible ineffable emotions they excite in me; seeing them for the first time [in November] without any of the advantage of summers colors & foliage & fragrance. I cannot describe it; you must look upon it yourself or you can get no idea. . . . I feel that my largest anticipation will lag behind providence & my broadest & warmest hopes of good things will 'limit the holy one of Israel.' For a faint and feeble effort to do good which would fall dead & ineffectual in the East; here will tell, must tell, does tell & tell powerfully & on



Clearing the woodlands and plowing under the prairie turned Iowa into an agricultural garden. Here, near Elgin, Iowa, Ole Thorson clears a field, helped by Osvald Ugland and Lars Reierson standing farther back.

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great materials." For the exultant Reverend Hyde, Iowa was both spiritual and temporal garden.

Less well educated, but no less enthusiastic, David Rich wrote to his brother in 1857, describing a journey across Iowa to Council Bluffs. His purpose was to look at land in Mills County that he had purchased sight unseen. Along the way, he reported his positive assessment of the country he passed through: "I confess without any hisitation that I never saw so much good crops in any Country as in this state. . . . I am led frequently to wonder who would stay in York state if they new what crops we have hear, compared with your thisels Mustard stinkroot & stones."

His land, when he found it, proved worthy of his ardor: 200 acres of rolling prairie, with a railroad planned to cross one corner of his land and, nearby, a new town and depot laid out as well. His own prosperity seemed inevitable.

Even fears of ill health proved unwarranted for these lucky newcomers. Sjoerd Aukes Sipma wrote home to

Holland from Pella, Iowa, in 1848 to report that "Mr. Beukema said that one had to lose flesh in America, but that does not have to happen here. The Hollanders are all thick and fat. All the people during this summer were very healthy."

Nine years later, in 1857, Henry Rickey reported similar good tidings to his wife's parents from Brighton Prairie in Washington County: "The people of Iowa certainley Eat more than the people of Any other State or country that I ever saw. it is not my own imaginations, but it is the opinion of a number of other citizens and the reason for it is that the health of the people is so good and it is attributed to a constant currant of air which Incresus our appetites and vigerates the System."

The pleasures of this early Iowa were simple, but enormously satisfying. When Kitturah Penton Belknap first came to Iowa from Ohio, in 1839, she was excited about seeing the prairies: "We had heard of the prairie land of Illinois but we had never seen anything but heavy timber land so we set our faces westward . . . was

four weeks on the way and saw prairie to our hearts content, and verily we thought the half had never been told." Although her journal of life in Iowa recounted a constant round of work, both on the farm and at her spinning wheel and loom, Belknap reported proudly that she and her husband "go to bed feeling that the sleep of the laboring man is sweet."

**F**or others, however, Iowa proved to be a more mixed blessing. For the Indian peoples who inhabited the region, the newcomers represented disaster: despite the protestations of the Sauk leader Keokuk that his people "were free, and wished to remain free as the air," they were ultimately removed from their lands so that it could be turned into farms.

And some of those Euro-Americans who succeeded them were unaccustomed to the rigors of prairie life, despite all the helpful advice of the emigrant guides. In 1838, Aristarchus Cone crossed into Iowa at Davenport and then traveled southwest in search of land, battling mosquitoes all the way. Without horses, he was often unable to find his oxen when they strayed into the tall grasses. As his first winter drew near, he ironically enumerated "the pleasures [of] settling in a new country." "We were on the extream Frontier not a solatary settler West of us to the Pacific Ocean and but few settlers here Our provisions were nearly gone the Missispi frozen up and no provisions scarsely in the country and we without a shelter except the Tent and on the edge of the Prairie with any amount of Hungry Indians and Wolves about us."

In the face of such challenges, one can appreciate the inquiry that Territorial Governor Robert Lucas received two years later. A former resident of West Virginia asked about grounds for divorce in Iowa, because his wife refused to accompany him to the state.

In similar spirits in 1858, Sarah Morse wrote home to her Aunt Eliza in Massachusetts, from Genoa Bluffs in Iowa County, Iowa. Newly arrived, she found herself the only Congregationalist in a neighborhood of Methodists. Western customs were different from those she knew, and somehow alienating. Three families were crowded together into a single house. Soap was difficult to come by because Iowans fed their fat scraps to the dogs. Her German neighbors didn't salt their butter but smoked their pork, giving both an odd taste. Fruit was nonexistent. The prairie landscape didn't seem to be at all invigorating and her sleep was not sweet.

A loyal wife to her husband, Francis, Sarah was nonetheless unsure of her bargain: "Were it not that I

hope it will be better for Francis on some accounts bye and bye I could wish I had never seen Iowa." Francis was equally uncertain about Iowa, confiding to Aunt Eliza in 1859 that the railroad was going to bypass them after all, and that many people were leaving as a consequence: "There is some prospect of the village turning into a farm but it is hard times now. I hope it will be more encouraging by and by." After five years of trying, it wasn't, and Sarah and Francis Morse returned to Rhode Island.

Even those who remained were discouraged by the enormity of the obstacles they faced. Over the winter of 1858/59, in their home near Homer, in Hamilton County, the Williams family debated steadily about whether to leave Iowa, perhaps to join their son in Georgia. The advantages they contemplated were milder winters and more congenial society, including regular religious meetings and schools for the children. To be sure, Iowa had its compensations. As Eleanor Williams wrote to her son, James, in May of 1859, "Though we often lament the want of society I could not help thinking it was much better for the children to be surrounded by the works of the divine hand than to be in the false and corrupt society of this day."

The Williams family were not alone in their misgivings. When Thomas K. Warner wrote home to his wife in Indiana in 1851, he summed up Iowa as "a good country for a poor hard working man who cares but little for society or schools. . . . It is the pasture of the world for cattle and sheap but who wants to be a cow or sheap and die a heathen." Though their in-laws settled in Iowa, the Warners remained in Indiana.

The litany of complaints in letters and reminiscences was daunting. Affordable land was isolated. Convenient locations were expensive, as was fencing. Clear, running, "lively" water was hard to come by on Iowa's flat prairies. Gardens didn't do well on newly broken sod. Winters were cold. Summers were hot. Growing seasons were unpredictable. Wheat yields were falling. Thunderstorms were deadly. Anticipated railroads were slow to arrive.

Even as late as the 1880s, as Frances Olsen Day recalled, northwestern Iowa was still a challenge to its recent settlers. In her memoir of Calhoun County she remembered plenty of hard times: "We lived through blizzards that piled the snow higher than the houses, through summer wind and hail storms, that flattened the crop as though a huge roller had gone over the fields, through invasions of grasshoppers and army worms—through epidemics of those once terrible scourges of diphtheria and scarlet fever—through spring floods that made it impossible to get anywhere . . . through drought

that gave us a year of no crop at all, and dust storms that swept the soil off the fields into drifts that buried the fences."

This, surely, was no natural garden. It took the hard, steady efforts of its inhabitants to make it into a home.

Yet, over time, Iowa's roughness wore off. As new generations were born and bred in the state, farms replaced open prairies, and the hardships of the settlement period receded in memory. By the late 19th century, in county atlases and histories, in published and manuscript reminiscences, Iowans began to recount—and to romanticize—the story of their encounter with the prairies. By then, the outcome of their collective labors was no longer in doubt. The 1883 *History of Hardin County* cheerfully and succinctly described the result of decades of residents' labors: "The broad prairies of our grand county, lovely in summer but cold and cheerless in winter, have been transformed into beautiful farms and settled by an enterprising people."

By their exertions to replace the pleasing but wild prairies with productive farms, the succeeding generations had made Iowa into "The Brightest Star in the American Constellation." No longer did they refer to their prospects of plenty, but to their actual achievements. In 1893, the Iowa Columbian Commission was explicit about these: "Sixty years ago, a space of time embraced in the life of men yet active in business, Iowa was devoid of the essentials of a civilized State. There was not a charitable institution, public building, post office, church, school, mill, bridge, orchard, farm, or scarcely a squatter's cabin or barn within its boundaries."

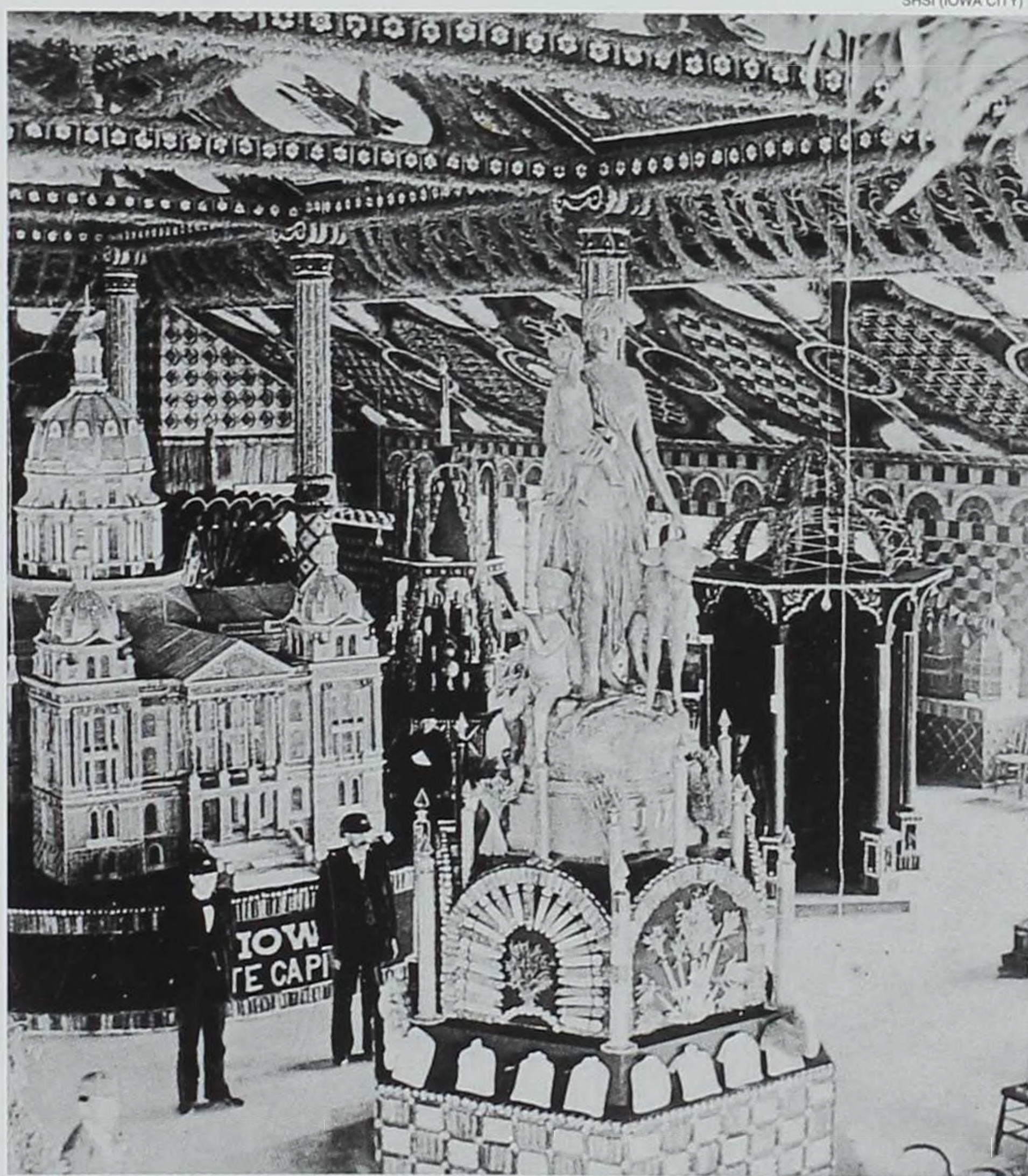
In 1893, on the other hand, there were all these and more, including 215,000 "grand farms," with attendant outbuildings. The commission commemorated this progress by decorating the Iowa Building at the Chicago World's Fair with "the simple grains and grasses gathered from our fields." Significantly, however, these were cultivated plants, not the native grasses and wildflowers of the original prairie landscape. Not nature's promise, but rather the triumphant displacement of nature by Euro-American civilization was now being celebrated by Iowans.

Of course, conditions in the state had changed substantially in the intervening years. The advent of rail-

roads and the discovery of coal deposits meant that Iowans were no longer so dependent on limited native timber for fencing and fuel. Windmills provided access to good water where creeks and streams were lacking. An increasingly integrated national economy meant that it was profitable for Iowans to grow corn and raise hogs, and purchase other necessities with the profits.

The Columbian Commissioners confidently looked forward to what they took to be the next phase in Iowa's development, the "establishment of great and profitable manufacturing enterprises." Hardin County's historian, by contrast,

looked backward across 50 years and marveled: "One can hardly conceive how great a change has taken place in so short a time. The clothing, the dwellings, the diet, the social customs, have undergone a total revolution, as though a new race had taken possession of the land." Iowa was seen to be an impressive feat. A 1904 Iowa atlas simply gloried in the prosperous present: "[The farmer] lives on the fat of the land and produces it himself."



The interior of the Iowa Building at the Chicago World's Fair was elaborately decorated with grains and other natural materials.

In doing so, Iowa farmers had physically remade the land they encountered. The survivors chronicled the changes with pride, in enumerations like those of the Iowa Columbian Commission, and also in the farmstead engravings that prosperous farmers paid to have inserted into the county and state atlases of the period. These idyllic engravings invariably depicted imposing farmhouses on well-maintained roads, with majestic barns next to neatly fenced fields. The owners' pride in their handiwork, and in the artists' often exalted depictions, was palpable in these views, but those Iowans who lived through the transition period knew well that such a landscape didn't just happen overnight.

Indeed, Nehemias Tjernagel, when he chronicled the lives of the Norwegian settlers who arrived in Story County before the Civil War, deplored the general messiness of the farms they created: "Too many . . . showed a rather haphazard grouping of facilities, together with more or less of neglect, a somewhat disorderly array not exactly calculated to brighten the mood of the pass-

erby." Tjernagel understood the historical reasons: "The early fields were irregular in pattern on account of more or less of wet and marshy areas, and clung to the contours of the hills and uplands in consequence. And the fences were usually required to turn and twist in deference thereto."

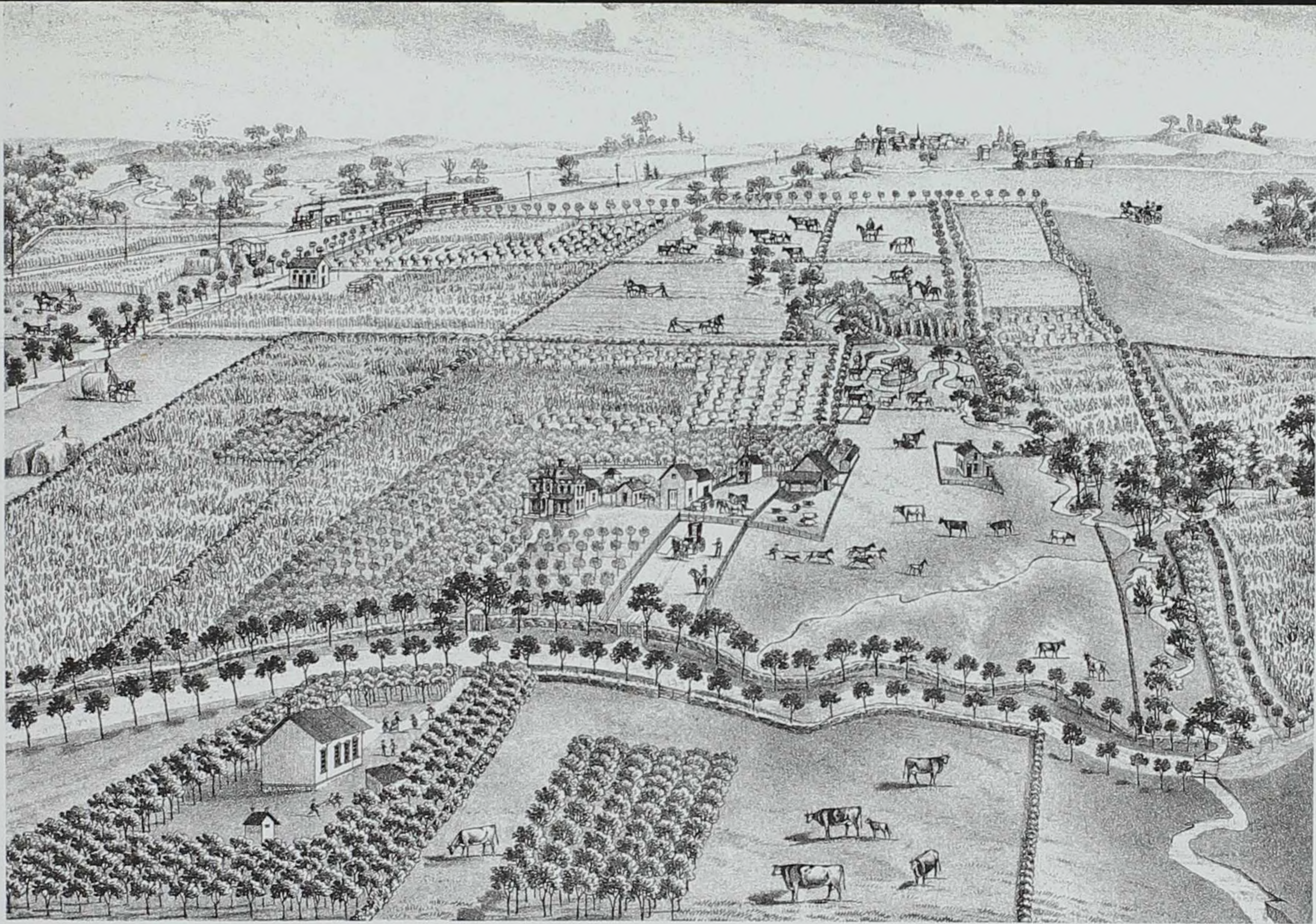
This awkward transitional stage, as Iowa moved from prairie promise to garden of the world, was described disapprovingly by native Iowan Hortense Butler Heywood. Writing in 1910, she looked back on a state "in the first phases of its settlement" when it "had lost much of its natural beauty without a corresponding gain from the improvements which had been made."

Iowa, in Heywood's mind, "had exchanged the grandeur of the untouched prairie for that aspect of sordid poverty and struggle so often seen in a newly settled country. . . . The houses were small and unattractive, the outbuildings equally small and uncared for, the newly planted trees stood in slim unhealthy rows; where the breaking plow had run the prairie flowers had vanished and in their stead had sprung up the ugliest of weeds."

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In north-central and northwestern Iowa, where the land was particularly flat, tile was laid to drain sloughs and other wetlands.



An idealized 1875 depiction of J.T. Rankin's Page County farm shows a fenced and cultivated landscape, orderly and productive.

It took time to transform the prairie into the 20th-century iconographic landscape of emerald fields and red barns that was glorified in state songs. The transformation also required expert advice. One source was the State Horticultural Society, founded in 1866. This group of nursery operators and orchard keepers issued a steady stream of annual reports, many of which registered concerns about aesthetic lapses in the Iowa landscape. The problems were similar to the ones Nehemias Tjernagel reported. In 1867, for example, the State Horticultural Society advised a new farmer to put first things first. In order to insure harmony and order in his new home, "before drawing a furrow or locating a house," the farmer should "sit down and draw a plan . . . where every building is to be, the site for garden, orchard, wind-breaks, screens, groves, barn-yard . . . where his fields are to be divided, and if he cannot do this, better employ some one with taste to do it for him."

For a generation, from the 1870s until the early 20th century, the State Horticultural Society tirelessly advised Iowans about how to achieve true beauty in their landscape. They cautioned against undue formality in planting trees, specifying variable heights and curving lines rather than straight rows reminiscent of the fields. Evergreens were particularly recommended, "those beautiful and gracious friends that so tenderly remind us of

the old home among the hills; and in the white and dead winter, of the fact that things are not dead though they seem so." The natural garden of the prairie in fact required extensive tending, and alien species as well, to meet more modern standards of beauty.

Beauty was not the only goal. The Horticultural Society warned that nothing less than the future of Iowa society was at stake. If farms were not made sufficiently comfortable and cozy, then farm children would inevitably seek out a more attractive life in town, where there were gardens and shaded parks for them to enjoy, and less back-breaking work. In another version of the concerns that haunted the Williams and Warner families in the 1850s, Iowans of the 1880s and 1890s and early in the next century worried that agricultural productivity alone was not enough to sustain farm life.

The Horticultural Society's concerns were echoed by commentators like Tjernagel, who advised farmers to make their land more pleasant to look at. In addition to paying attention to farm layout, he exhorted them to tend the fencerows so as not "to obstruct the way-farer's view of the fields, or the general vista beyond."

Thus instructed, Iowans remade their landscape. Earlier they had struggled simply to plow the prairie and build houses. It hadn't mattered so much if the fields were disordered or weedy. In the late 19th and early





20th centuries, responding to the aesthetic prescriptions of the horticulturists, and later to the scientific advice of the new agricultural extension service, they created a self-consciously progressive terrain. They planted orchards and flowers, and regularized the layout of their farms. They drained low-lying land, graded roads, and

planted windbreaks. According to the dictates of the experts, they enlarged their fields and built silos. The result, after just a few generations, was a state characterized by orderly farms, the now-familiar landscape and imagery of the agricultural heartland.

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**Many Iowa farmsteads were as utilitarian as the Olund family farm (above) in northwestern Iowa in the 1890s. At the same time, another image of Iowa was taking hold, as horticulturists pushed for harmonious and aesthetic plantings of windbreaks, screens, and orchards, and engravers and illustrators depicted grandiose farmhouses and outbuildings.**



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which are the peculiar glory of the prairie," as landscape architect Wilhelm Miller described them. Once considered wild and symbolically "empty" by Euro-Americans, the Iowa prairie by 1915 was fully populated and cultivated and had finally emerged as the garden of the world. The state inspired in Miller visions "of a united and prosperous humanity." Iowa had at last fulfilled the hopeful predictions of its promoters of 75 years earlier.

In 1899, according to the cover page of "Iowa—'Beautiful Land,'" the state had grown "old enough to have a song of her own." Lyricist Tacitus Hussey, however, seemed uncertain just what that song should say. After enumerating the usual charms of "a land kissed by sunshine and show'rs; Of corn lands, wild roses and flow'rs," he depicted an Iowa poised between its bountiful past and a future of unknown contours:

*Her tale of the past has been told,  
in Iowa Beautiful Land,  
The future is not yet unrolled,  
of Iowa Beautiful Land.*

By the mid-20th century, however, no such uncertainty prevailed. Rural imagery still reigned supreme in songs about Iowa. In 1944, Eugene Chenette of Wa-

terloo wrote music and lyrics for "A New Song of Iowa":

*If you ask me which land I love the best  
'Tis the state in the middle of the West  
Where the soil is so rich and the rain is so free  
That the lands are all laden with grain like gold.*

*It's a fairy land, prairie land, merry land, IOWAY  
Fairest state of all in this fair land,  
Glory land, story land, wonder land, IOWAY  
Lovely homes and farms on ev'ry hand . . .  
Garden of Eden in the U.S.A.*

Carrie Dean Pruyn summarized the matter more sedately in her 1938 essay for the Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs, but she reached a similar conclusion about Iowa's significance: "The great prairie still casts its spell over Iowa, but today the wind ripples over vast acres of oats and wheat and tasseling corn."

In the course of a century, the invigorating, open prairie of the emigrant guidebooks had been consigned to the past. Its denizens had entirely refashioned it and now happily proclaimed its new identity as the perpetual "Garden of the World." It was, indeed, something for Iowans to sing about. ❖

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As Iowa grew "old enough to have a song of her own," to quote this 1899 sheet music, bottle gentian (left) and other native wildflowers gave way to cultivated crops like corn, and prairies yielded to farms (opposite page: western Iowa, near Denison).



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#### NOTE ON SOURCES

Sheet music at the State Historical Society of Iowa (in both Iowa City and Des Moines centers) includes many Iowa songs; those mentioned in this article were drawn from those collections. Among early descriptions and emigrant guides are these: Albert M. Lea, *Notes on The Wisconsin Territory, Particularly with Reference to the Iowa District, or Black Hawk Purchase* (Philadelphia: H. S. Tanner, 1836); Nathan Howe Parker, *Iowa As It Is in 1855, Iowa As It Is in 1856, and Iowa As It Is in 1857* (Chicago: Keen & Lee, 1855, 1856, 1857); Broadside, Gowers' Land Agency, Iowa City, Iowa [1852?], SHSI-Iowa City; [Isaac Galland], *Galland's Iowa Emigrant, Containing a Map and General Description of Iowa Territory* (Chillicothe: William C. Jones, 1840); [John G. Wells], *Wells' Pocket Hand Book of Iowa* (New York: John G. Wells, 1857).

Letters and reminiscences yielded particularly rich descriptions. Those quoted in this article are all from Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City): A. C. Sutliff to Flavel Sutliff, Esq., Nov. 23, 1838, typescript; Rev. Era Hyde to William L. Hyde, Nov. 10, 1844; David Rich to "Dear Brother," July 28, 1857; Sjoerd Aukes Sipma to "My Family," Sept. 26, 1848, typescript, translated by G. A. Sipma; Kitturah Penton Belknap, "Reminiscences," typescript; S. Atkinson to Robert Lucas, March 20, 1840, Robert Lucas Papers; Sarah Morse to Aunt Eliza, Sept. 6, 1858, and Francis Morse to Aunt Eliza Sept. 7, 1858, Feb. 28, 1859, Morse Family Letters; Henry Rickey to Jacob and Mary Dick, Dec. 1, 1857; T. K. Warner to Hester Ann Warner, Oct. 5, 1851, Thomas K. Warner Family Letters; Frances Olsen Day, "Pioneering"; Nehemias Tjernagel, "The

Passing of the Prairie," typescript; Hortense Butler Heywood, "Country Roads and Motor-Cars," c. 1910; and Carrie Dean Pruyn, "Seeing Iowa First—Iowa Beautiful Land," manuscript, 1938. The Eleanor Williams letter to James Williams, May 1859, appears in John Kent Folmar, ed., *"This State of Wonders": The Letters of an Iowa Frontier Family, 1858-1861* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986).

Keokuk is quoted in James G. Edwards, "Indian Affairs," *Palimpsest* 10 (May 1929); "The Brightest Star in the American Constellation" appears on the cover of *A Hand Book of Iowa . . .*, by Charles Ashton, James O. Crosby, and J. W. Jarnagan (Iowa City: Iowa Columbian Commission, 1893). Published sources include these: Mildred Thorne, ed., "The Memories of Aristarchus Cone," *Journal of Iowa History* 49 (1951); *History of Hardin County, Iowa* (Springfield, IL: Union Publishing Co., 1883); *Atlas of the State of Iowa* (Davenport: Iowa Publishing Co., 1904); Dr. Thomas Wardall, "Raising Groves and Timber-Belts in Northern Iowa," *Report of the Iowa State Horticultural Society for the Year 1867* (Des Moines: Mills & Co., 1868); "Secretary's Report," *Annual Report of the Iowa State Horticultural Society for the Year 1872* (Des Moines: Dudley W. Adams, 1873); Wilhelm Miller, *The Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1915; Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002); Mather-Bush Papers, typescript memoirs, Box 3, Special Collections, SHSI-Iowa City.

Annotations to the original manuscript are held in the *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* production files (State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City center).