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Iowa Films, 1918–2002

MARTY S. KNEPPER AND JOHN S. LAWRENCE

LIKE MANY IOWANS, we were amazed when the Hollywood films *Field of Dreams* (1989) and *The Bridges of Madison County* (1995) remade Iowa tourism in the 1990s, drawing fans of the films to the sites associated with them in Dyersville and Madison County, Iowa. Both films offer appealing forms of sentimental magic, but we puzzled over the new magnetism of Iowa's rural landscape.

Believing that the Iowa film tradition itself could throw light on the phenomenon, we recalled the few Iowa-related films that we knew well. There was the colorful Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *State Fair* (1945), which linked Iowa with wholesome farm families and big pigs. Equally charming, *The Music Man* (1962, 2003)—by Mason City-born Meredith Willson—celebrated small-town life in early twentieth-century Iowa. *Crash Landing: The Rescue of Flight 232* (1992) dramatized the 1989 air disaster in Sioux City, and Stephen King's *Children of the Corn* (1984), filmed in Whiting, Hornick, and Sioux City, was a gruesome horror film. This was hardly a list to unlock the secret of the new film-based tourism in Dyersville and Madison County.

Nearly a decade of viewing, reading, researching, and talking about the Iowa film tradition has brought some enlightenment to our questions about the compelling experiences at Dyersville and Madison County. The history of films about Iowa and Iowans suggests that, while some films present a depressing view of life in the heartland, the prevailing, persistent image in the most popular Iowa films is of an old-fashioned,

rural landscape where people experience core American values such as patriotism, romance, family and community connections, and a love of the land. The continued popularity of the Winterset and Dyersville tourist sites and the 2001 opening of yet another tourist site based on a nostalgic Iowa film—Music Man Square in Mason City—suggest that pastoral nostalgia remains appealing to movie viewers. Yet one wonders—even considering the tourists who flock to Iowa’s three main film tourist sites—whether Iowa’s pastoral image in popular films has been more of an economic bane than a boon—and whether grimmer views of Iowa in films such as *What’s Eating Gilbert Grape* (1993) may be closer to the reality of life for Iowans who live in small towns and rural areas.

An unanticipated and more complex question lay in the sheer number of Iowa movies we have discovered to date—nearly 200 of them. Research in well-indexed filmographies suggested to us that no comparably scaled body of films exists for neighboring Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, or South Dakota. Why are there so many films with Iowa characters or settings—many of them produced within the state? Some plausible explanations arise from patterns apparent when surveying this cinematic territory. (1) Iowa’s literary talent has led to the creation of Iowa films. (2) Iowa has welcomed Hollywood and independent filmmakers. (3) Iowa is well suited to represent “the heart of the heartland,” an old-fashioned, rural place that allows filmmakers to dramatize rural-urban conflicts, nostalgic stories, real events from Iowa’s history, and comedies and tragedies about families and communities.

MANY TALENTED IOWA NATIVES used their literary and artistic abilities to depict some aspect of their Iowa experience. Phil Stong, for example, wrote the depression-era best-seller *State Fair* in 1932. Within a year he had an invitation to Hollywood to assist with the Fox Studio production of the popular, identically titled film based on his book. That experience became his ticket to provide scripts for additional Iowa-themed films. *The Stranger’s Return* (1933), directed by King Vidor, with a screenplay by Stong, appeared the same year as its novel and the *State Fair* film. Stong screenplays followed based on his

novels *Farmer in the Dell* (1935) and *Career* (1936). In a painfully honest essay of 1937 titled "Writer in Hollywood," Stong described his intense experience as a "contract writer" in Hollywood over five years. He complained that the work "gave me wretched troubles with a bad habit of over-visualization for weeks." Stong probably still felt the sting of Henry Seidel Canby's comment on the novel *Career*. In the review, titled "A Novel for the Movies," Canby remarked, "Here is a good novelist who forgets sometimes that he is writing a novel in his haste to get before the lens."¹

Another notable Iowan whose literary star shone during the World War II years was MacKinlay Kantor. His sense of patriotism led him to write the story and the script for *Happy Land* (1943), which the Office of War Information lauded as "the most effective portrayal of straight America to date."² The film was likely used to promote the sale of war bonds at theaters.³ Invited to write the screenplay for a drama about the problems of post-war adjustment for veterans, Kantor improbably wrote the long narrative poem *Glory for Me* (1945), which became the screenplay for the much honored *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946). Between 1936 and 1966, ten Hollywood films would be made from Kantor's novels or short stories.⁴

The phenomenon continued with W. P. Kinsella, a Canadian whose experience in Iowa led to the novel *Shoeless Joe* (1982), which became the startlingly successful movie *Field of Dreams*. Robert Waller, a onetime business professor at the University of Northern Iowa, lyrically portrayed an affair set in Iowa's Madi-

1. Phil Stong, "Writer in Hollywood," *Saturday Review of Literature*, 4/10/1937, 3-4, 14; Henry Seidel Canby, "A Novel for the Movies," *ibid.*, 1/18/1936, 36. See also Chris Rasmussen, "Mr. Stong's Dreamy Iowa," *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* 79 (1998), 146-55.

2. Quoted in Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (New York, 1987), 162.

3. For a description of film-related bond sales, see Lawrence R. Samuel, *Pledging Allegiance: American Identity and the Bond Drive of World War II* (Washington, DC, 1997), especially chap. 3, "The Biggest Selling Campaign in History," 45-73.

4. Additional films were *The Voice of Bugle Ann* (1936), *Mountain Music* (1937), *The Man from Dakota* (1940), *Gentle Annie* (1944), *The Romance of Rosy Ridge* (1947), *Deadly Is the Female* (1949), *Hannah Lee* (1953), and *Follow Me, Boys* (1966).

son County in his best-selling novel, *The Bridges of Madison County* (1992). Fans of the film starring Clint Eastwood and Meryl Streep flocked to the pastoral environs of Iowa. Jane Smiley's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *A Thousand Acres* (1991), published while she was on the Iowa State University faculty, became the identically titled film featuring Hollywood stars in 1998. Muscatine's multitalented and prolific Max Allan Collins—whose corpus includes crime fiction, comic books, graphic novels, biographical/critical books, and novelizations—has directed films with recognizable Iowa settings or themes and novelized the screenplay of the film *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). Literary connections of this kind are significant and scattered throughout our filmography. Additional names to look for are Bess Streeter Aldrich, Peter Hedges, and Charles Nordhoff.

OSCAR MICHEAUX, a novelist and the earliest known African American filmmaker, was a homesteader in South Dakota who turned his dismal experience into a novel titled *The Conquest: The Story of a Negro Pioneer* (1913), later rewritten as *The Homesteader* (1917). After his homestead failed in 1915, he moved to Sioux City, where he founded the Western Book and Supply Company. An offer from the Lincoln Film Company of Los Angeles to film *The Homesteader* gave him the confidence to found his own Oscar Micheaux Film and Book Company in Sioux City with a branch office in Chicago. He described his situation to George P. Johnson of the Lincoln Film Company.

Although Sioux City is mentioned as the office city, that is only because I expect to sell most of the stock to Sioux City people and in that vicinity and do not feel that they would appreciate the office being so far from where they live. But as soon as the subscribed stock is paid up, incorporation completed, etc. I expect to establish the main office in the business district of Chicago.⁵

Micheaux did just that, finding in Chicago the African American acting talent and other production resources he needed. There he created *Within Our Gates* (1919), the African American

5. Quoted in Pearl Bowser and Louise Spence, *Writing Himself into History: Oscar Micheaux, His Silent Films, and His Audiences* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2001), 9–10.

reply to D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*, the Ku Klux Klan film that President Woodrow Wilson extolled as "history written in lightning." Micheaux went on to make some 43 films, bridging the silent and sound eras.⁶

Iowa in recent years could have offered more assistance to an independent filmmaker like Micheaux. The Iowa Film Office, led for years by Wendol Jarvis, has an outstanding record of making Iowa a welcoming environment for film and television shooting.⁷ In addition to hosting *The Bridges of Madison County* and *Field of Dreams*, the office has helped hundreds of film and television producers select sites and locate resources.⁸ Films such as *Pennies from Heaven* (1981) and *Twister* (1996) have recognizable Iowa locations even when the fictional settings place the action of the film elsewhere.

Perhaps the most surprising of the Iowa-hosted film productions are those of the Italian director Pupi Avati. Initially pulled to Iowa by the legend of jazz great Bix Beiderbecke, he made his film *Bix: An Interpretation of a Legend* (1991). He was so pleased by Iowa's hospitality to filmmakers that he returned to make other films that have no Iowa themes, most of which have never been dubbed or screened in the United States.⁹

But the longest-running story of Iowa film production is that of Russell S. Doughten Jr., who formed Heartland Productions in Des Moines in 1965. Doughten was born in Iowa and lived in several small towns before entering military service in 1944. After studying drama at Drake University and teaching high school for several years, he attended Yale University's graduate school of drama. Then he began to fulfill his religious goals by working as a producer, director, editor, and writer with Good News Productions, Christian filmmakers in Pennsylvania. After creating both Christian and secular feature films and an assortment of other projects, including a children's gospel hour and a Salvation

6. See the filmography in Ronald J. Green, *Straight Lick: The Cinema of Oscar Micheaux* (Bloomington, IN, 2000).

7. See G. T. Melhus, "Iowa's Film Czar," *Des Moines Register*, 3/9/1999.

8. The Iowa Film Office maintains an extensive list of shooting locations at its web site: www.state.ia.us/film/html/fronthtml/onlocationsub.html.

9. Avati's films shot in the U.S. can be tracked at the International Movie Database: www.imdb.com.

Army recruiting film, Doughten moved on to Hollywood, hoping that he would learn how to make "quality Christian films" there. Eventually despairing about Hollywood as the right place to make explicitly Christian films, he returned to Des Moines, where he formed Heartland and successor companies that eventually produced dozens of feature-length films.¹⁰

The Iowa Development Commission, to whom Doughten first went for assistance in the mid-1960s, thought he was crazy to want to make films in Iowa. Later, of course, the Iowa Development Commission came around to Doughten's way of thinking and established the Iowa Film Office. Heartland's early films, *The Hostage* (1966) and *Fever Heat* (1968), were aimed at theatrical distribution and sought to convey Christian messages indirectly through parables. But, as time passed, Doughten began to make films that were explicitly Christian in message. Doughten notes that the name of the original company, Heartland, conveyed his aim to achieve conversions "one heart at a time." Doughten's film business has evolved through 35mm and 16mm film, VHS, and now DVD. The audiences are largely churches and individuals who order the films via print catalogs or Christian film web sites. Since the 1960s his films have rarely been shown theatrically in Iowa, but the sheer volume of films produced by Heartland, Mark IV Productions, and Russell Doughten Productions ranks him (with his partner, Donald W. Thompson) as the leading filmmaker in the history of the state. Viewing their most popular film, *A Thief in the Night* (1972), we imagine that Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye found a ready-made plot for their best-selling *Left Behind* series of books and films.¹¹

Because the Doughten-Thompson stories focus on Christian salvation through biblical inspiration, the Iowa settings are usu-

10. Russell S. Doughten Jr., interview by Marty S. Knepper, Des Moines, 10/11/2002.

11. Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America* (New York, 1993), 60, estimates viewings of *A Thief in the Night* in the tens of millions. At the time Balmer interviewed him, Doughten estimated that 4 million viewers had been converted during altar calls following screenings of the film (62). In a 2/28/2003 interview with Marty Knepper, Doughten estimated an audience of 300 million just for the 16mm format of the film. Additional viewers have seen it in VHS and DVD formats. Doughten's estimate of conversions now stands at 6 million.

ally incidental to the films. In Doughten's opinion, "Des Moines works as a universal place." Although Iowa culture is not emphasized in these films, there is no attempt to hide the fact that certain scenes are shot in the environs of central Iowa. We catch glimpses of the State Capitol, for example, or a character reading the *Des Moines Register*.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN IOWA HISTORY have inspired some filmmakers. The Mormons trekked through Iowa on the way to Utah, an experience reprised in the 1940 film, *Brigham Young—Frontiersman*. The laying of the transcontinental railroad was the theme of Cecil B. DeMille's epic, *Union Pacific* (1939), which includes scenes set in Council Bluffs. An incident in the Vietnam War led to C. D. B. Bryan's widely read book, *Friendly Fire* (1976), which became the identically titled movie of 1979 that focused on the antiwar efforts of Gene and Peg Mullen from La Porte City. In rock and roll history, the deaths of Buddy Holly and Ritchie Valens near Clear Lake in 1959 have been retold in *The Buddy Holly Story* (1978) and *La Bamba* (1987) and the documentary *The Surf Ballroom* (1999). Bix Beiderbecke and the Weaver family of Ruby Ridge fame had roots in Iowa, shown in Avati's *Bix: An Interpretation of a Legend* and the CBS docudrama *Ruby Ridge: An American Tragedy* (1996). The United 232 airplane crash in Sioux City generated not only a TV movie, *Crash Landing*, but also George Lindblade's widely distributed documentary training tapes for disaster planning.

Some documentary films about Iowa have explored famous people, as in *Dvorak in America* (1999) and *Freestyle: The Victories of Dan Gable* (1999). Others have treated less famous people who represent significant social or economic conditions. *Yidl in the Middle* (1999), for instance, portrays filmmaker Marlene Booth's years growing up in Des Moines as a Jew. *Troublesome Creek* (1996) shows the effects of the farm crisis on Iowans, in this case filmmaker Jeanne Jordan's parents.

BECAUSE IOWA has a strong tradition of agriculture and rural life, it has taken on an identity as the quintessential farm state. Throughout the history of film, Iowa has almost always been

portrayed as a collection of small towns and farms that appear to have been placed in a time capsule many decades earlier. Most Hollywood producers, even in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, have deliberately drawn the curtain on Iowa's factories, office buildings, franchise outlets, art museums, casinos, malls, suburbs, and large universities. Iowa's population has not been predominantly rural since the 1950s.¹² Yet Iowa repeatedly gets Hollywood's casting call for the archetypal small town or farmscape.

Why? Popular film apparently needs a limited repertoire of regional images that communicate quickly during a movie's brief screen time, a practice that we can also see in depictions of the South, Texas, New York, and California. Iowa's image is easy to push in the rural direction because so many of its acres are dedicated to the production of corn and soybeans. Because of the absence of mountains, deserts, oceans, and major urban attractions, the national mind associates Iowa primarily with fields of corn, livestock, pickup trucks, and small towns.

In addition to the limiting imperatives of popular communication, important literary and philosophical traditions lie behind the frequent images locked to the Iowa past. The literary genre of pastoral romance and the agrarian ideology of virtue induced by honest work can be traced all the way back to ancient Greek and Roman writers. And the United States, with its fast-growing cities such as Boston, New York, and Washington, has always been ripe for literature that explores contrasts between urban and rural ways of life. Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1800) expressed his profound distrust of urban culture and his faith in the yeoman culture as the foundation of American democratic life. Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) similarly idealized the simple life lived close to nature.

Because of these predisposing philosophical influences, it is not surprising to find some competition during our national history for a designation as the most representative rural state. Iowa's physical geography, farm economics, and its own re-

12. Leland Sage, *The History of Iowa* (Ames, 1974), 314, cites 1956 as the year in which urban population exceeded rural. Dorothy Schwieder, *Iowa: The Middle Land* (Ames, 1996), 288-95, elaborates on the shift toward urbanization and the industrialization of Iowa's economy

gionalist literature resulted in its selection during the 1920s and 1930s as the national farm place, the "heart of the heartland" as it has been so often proudly stated. James Shortridge's *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture* plausibly lays out the chronology and historical factors that made Iowa the archetypal rural state and the nostalgic repository of those agrarian virtues and limitations associated with farms and small towns.¹³

This cultural identity as representative heartland state gives rise to pervasive themes in Iowa films centered on the difference between the city and the country. Within this larger theme, films about Iowa embody several subthemes.

One group of films takes up the agrarian theme by emphasizing nation building through solid character and sacrifice. Examples include *Cheers for Miss Bishop* (1941), based on a Bess Streeter Aldrich story that casts golden light on educating immigrants of the prairie; *One Foot in Heaven* (1941), based on Hartzell Spence's biography of his father that extols building churches in the heartland; and *State Fair* (1933, 1945), which celebrates feeding the world through animal and crop production. These films reflect the agrarian sentiment that simple forms of life in small communities offer the best foundation for building the nation's vital institutions.

War films continued this theme, finding a source of martial virtue in heartland sacrifices. From the World War II years came *Happy Land* (1943), *The Fighting Sullivans* (1944), *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), *Johnny Comes Flying Home* (1946), and *High Barbaree* (1947). Reviving this tradition of Iowa sacrifice were the 1990s films *The Tuskegee Airmen* (1995) and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). Each of these films affirms Iowa's exemplary character in the face of the nation's military challenges.

Another group of films compels us to see Iowa's landscape as a source of psychological magic as conflicts are healed, safety is found, romance is discovered, and people re-establish their sense of values. In *The Music Man*, a charming con man from elsewhere changes a bickering community into a happy place. Although the band's training is a scam, the community's transformation is real. More recent versions of the magic idea are seen

13. James R. Shortridge, *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture* (Lawrence, KS, 1989).

in *Field of Dreams*, *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991), *The Bridges of Madison County*, and *Michael* (1997). In such tales of magic pastoralism, Iowa natives themselves seem unable to make miracles happen, requiring instead mediation by a more skilled, insightful outsider. Iowa's tourism boosters have tapped into the notion of a magic place, separated from contemporary urban stresses, where families can reaffirm their bonds and lovers can liberate themselves from whatever prevents them from indulging their passions.

No pastoral idol is ever safe from mockery. Several films poke fun at "Iowa traits." Exaggerated Iowa moralism is the target of Billy Wilder's *A Foreign Affair* (1948), in which a prudish Iowa congresswoman attempts to reform the morals of GIs and their girlfriends in post-World War II Berlin. *The Music Man* cheerfully presents a view of uncultured, pretentious small-town ways. *Cold Turkey* (1971) pictures a small town of petty hypocrites that accepts a bribe to stop smoking. *The Last Supper* (1995) satirizes Iowa's image as conservative and moral by showing liberal graduate students calmly murdering dinner guests whose political views are repugnant to their hosts. The campy suspense thrillers *Mommy* (1995) and *Mommy's Day* (1997), created by Max Allan Collins, poke fun at archetypal 1950s TV moms such as Donna Reed of Denison, Iowa. The killer Mommy looks and dresses like Donna but perpetrates multiple murders in the heartland. In *Mommy's Day*, Paul Petersen, who lived in Cherokee as a child and played the son in *The Donna Reed Show*, plays against type as an unscrupulous journalist. All of these films have taken a measure of the myth of rural virtue and punctured it with comic wit.

Like the larger world of literature, film often expresses urban skepticism about the material crudity and moral restrictions of life in the provinces. Sometimes it does so in a melodramatic rather than comic vein. Several films bemoan intolerance in Iowa's small-town culture. They invoke the spirit of Sinclair Lewis's novel *Main Street* (1920) and its indictment of Gopher Prairie's pinched thinking. The early pre-sound films *The Strange Woman* (1918) and *That French Lady* (1924) rejected Iowa morality. Many subsequent films focus on the penchant of the village to bring offending women back into line. In *The Tarnished Angels*

(1957), the adventurous bad girl must leave Iowa, but she is finally forced to return after too many complications develop in her life. *Terms of Endearment* (1983) gives us an Iowa that is emotionally and sexually repressed compared to Texas and New York. *The Bridges of Madison County* exposes the censorious watchfulness of an Iowa small town.

One of the constants in migratory history has been the movement from village to city. The traveler theme captures one of the most popular of all stories—an Iowan seeking fortune in a more urban setting. As Margy laments in her *State Fair* song "Traveling," "I keep wishing I was somewhere else." The plucky Iowans who leave encounter threats but often survive because of their integrity and quiet cleverness. In *Stardust* (1921) an Iowa girl succeeds at opera in New York after nearly dying there. *Midnight Daddies* (1930) shows us vacationing Iowans who are almost swindled out of their money, but are saved by the wife's wily insight into the scam. *Farmer in the Dell* displays a farm family making it in Hollywood when Pa becomes a film star. This sympathetic vision of Iowans escaping persists into more recent decades with, for example, *Out of Bounds* (1986), *Married to It* (1993), and *What's Eating Gilbert Grape* (1993).

But not all Iowans can make it in the outside world. Most often it is women who are rebuffed in their quest for something that's missing in Iowa. *The Major and the Minor* (1942) shows us a young woman trying to make it in New York business but surrendering after she has been pawed too many times by her clients. *Ice Castles* (1978) tells the story of a young ice skater who aims at a professional career but crashes physically and psychologically because she cannot deal with the pressure. *Lunatics: A Love Story* (1991) portrays a young woman from Iowa who becomes demented from the stress of coping with abusive men and gangs in urban California. The alienated teenaged rappers from Iowa in *Whiteboyz* (1999) discover violence, not a spiritual home, in Chicago's Cabrini Green, and they flee to the safety of the Iowa cornfields. The message of these films seems to be that life outside Iowa is more challenging and far less nurturing.

Some of these traveling Iowans are buffoons, giving us the laughable version of the escape story, one in which the Iowans' rural naiveté is comically converted into the means of survival.

Flying Deuces (1936), *Bud Abbott and Lou Costello in Hollywood* (1945), *What's Up, Doc?* (1972), *Fraternity Vacation* (1985), and *Joe's Apartment* (1996) all compliment Iowans in a backhanded way. Their ignorance, unworldliness, enthusiasm, and unfashionable principles lead them to success.

Literature sometimes addresses the realities of work, and film occasionally joins in. A few productions offer a rare glimpse of factory and urban work in Iowa: *Pajama Game* (1957), based on a novel by Iowa native Richard Bissell; *Take This Job and Shove It* (1981); and Michael Moore's documentary on Iowa's downsized workers, benefits, and opportunities in *The Big One* (1998). All three films show the realities of hard work and low pay, though the first two, which are comedies, transplant some Iowa pastoral virtues to the city. Given the importance of a healthy yeomanry to the Jeffersonian mythos, the economic condition and morale of farms and villages are a concern. Such films as *Country* (1984) and *Miles from Home* (1988) tell of the agony of hard work, disappointing commodity prices, and farm foreclosures during the farm debt crisis of the 1980s.

Some films offer a tragic view of rural life. *A Thousand Acres*, based on Jane Smiley's novel, emphasizes sexual predation, environmental pollution, and death as realities in the contemporary Iowa farm community. *What's Eating Gilbert Grape* (1993), which used West Des Moines native Peter Hedges's novel as its text, shows us the economic and psychological burdens borne by young Gilbert, his family, and his dying small town. *Alkali, Iowa*, a short film that is part of *Boys Life 2* (1998), reveals the reality of rural gay culture and a violent anger directed against it. As a group, these films invoke the spirit of Hamlin Garland. In his preface to *Main-Travelled Roads*, the Iowa-born novelist wrote that the farm road "has a dull little town at one end and a home of toil at the other" and that "the poor and weary predominate."¹⁴ Contemporary writers and filmmakers add homophobia, incest, and violence to their portraits of rural Iowa.

IDENTIFYING THE THEMES of Iowa films raises important issues of popularity. Which images of Iowa sell best to film crit-

14. Hamlin Garland, *Main-Travelled Roads* (New York, 1891).

ics and audiences? Based on box-office receipts and tourism, *Field of Dreams* and *The Bridges of Madison Country* win hands down, while the grim *A Thousand Acres* loses miserably. Each of these three films is based on a text written by a longtime Iowa resident. Few Iowans (or non-Iowans, for that matter) liked *A Thousand Acres*, even though the movie had big-name stars and was based on a book that won a Pulitzer Prize in 1992. Reviews and interviews suggest that audiences did not want to see an Iowa farmer portrayed as a greedy capitalist, a perpetrator of incest, and an environmental polluter—or the miserable consequences for those affected. Although Iowa, like every other state, has social problems—gambling addiction, domestic violence, divorce, drugs, and racism—audiences seem to want to see an Iowa that is an old-fashioned haven from the problems of modern life. Traditionally, Americans have expressed a nostalgic “need for pastoral values” in the face of the deficiencies of urban life, alienation from war, environmental degradation, and threats from new technologies.¹⁵ Agrarian tragedy runs counter to this emotional need for the calming pastoral life.

Interestingly, in-state audiences seem to ignore the decidedly negative view of native Iowans in films such as *Field of Dreams* and *Bridges*. Instead, they seem to revel in the films’ romantic fantasies, leading them to accept Shoeless Joe’s quip that Iowa is indeed like heaven.

CULTURAL HISTORIES of the 1980s and 1990s—Susan Faludi’s book *Stiffed* (1999), to name just one—provide insight into America’s end-of-the-century obsession with an America that never was and its loathing of what it fears it has become. Some Iowa leaders seem increasingly aware that we are trapped by the nation’s, and Iowans’ own, preoccupations with nostalgia, a powerful emotional response to the alienation and despair many feel today. David Ostendorf, the director of PrairieFire Rural Action, puts it harshly: “The sheen is off Iowa; the virtue is gone. . . . Iowa’s identity is no longer tied to the land and its people, or to the small towns it still claims when it has to. It tries to maintain the fading image of the old rural Iowa, with its im-

15. See Shortridge, *The Middle West*, especially 67–74.

PLICIT values of neighborliness and trust, but the mythical message doesn't play well these days."¹⁶ Ostendorf may be wrong about the death of agrarian virtue in Iowa, but such verdicts make it especially timely to bring Iowa's film image into focus. We need to examine the truthfulness of the image and its effect on the state, its residents, and its economic viability. The portrayal of Iowa in film remains an issue of importance. Should the state market the old-fashioned, rural image of Iowa, at the risk of failing to progress or to deal with our real problems? It is a dilemma Iowa has not yet resolved, as the *Des Moines Register's* recent editorials repeatedly stress. Perhaps a study of popular films focused on Iowa can help reframe the issue by stimulating conversations about the impact of our state's popular image on Iowa's cultural identity, economy, and future.

For scholars, the following filmography may suggest some important topics for research: Iowa's role in World War II films, or the reception of Iowa films by entertainment writers for the state's newspapers, for example. We hope that scholars from adjacent states will study films related to their states in a way that adds nuance to the mosaic of the Midwest on screen.

In the more amusing task of entertaining ourselves, the annotated list of films can guide Iowans in their viewing of old favorites and help them find new films. It may well lead them to recall films that have escaped our attention. Cultural knowledge of this kind requires many eyes and hands. Readers who know of missing films should convey that information to the editor of this journal. If warranted, the list may be updated in the future. We look forward to those conversations and hope to make new contributions.

THE FOLLOWING LIST focuses primarily on "popular films"—feature-length films made for movie theaters or television. We have divided these films into several categories: (1) Iowa Settings, Fictional Films—fiction films set at least partially in Iowa; (2) Iowa Settings, Historical Films—including historic episodes in Iowa, ranging from the Mormon crossing in *Brigham*

16. David Ostendorf, "Iowa's Rural Crisis of the 1980s," in Thomas J. Morain, ed., *Family Reunion: Essays on Iowa* (Ames, 1995), 55-72.

Young—Frontiersman to the tragic 1989 air disaster at Sioux City portrayed by *Crash Landing: The Rescue of Flight 232*; (3) *Traveling Iowans*—films that feature at least one fictional Iowan as a significant character in a location outside the state; (4) *Iowa Documentaries*—films that present some aspect of Iowa in a factually informative style; and (5) *Made in Iowa*—films that are recognizably Iowa in physical setting, but whose fictional stories place them elsewhere or give them a generic, “anywhere” setting. The fact that films in this last category are shot in Iowa often fades into the recollection that they are “about” Iowa—particularly when communities remember the experience of filming. An example is *Children of the Corn*, filmed in the Iowa towns of Whiting, Hornick, and Sioux City but set in Nebraska. We should also note that many independent films have been shot in Iowa without reaching film festivals or any other kind of distribution. These are the “ghost films” of Iowa, a tribute to the hospitality of the Iowa Film Office and the communities that assist producers. Other films are shot by foreign companies, who later distribute their films in other languages; such films rarely migrate back to American screens. One significant exception is *Bix: The Interpretation of a Legend* (1991), by the Italian filmmaker Pupi Avati, who has also shot other films in Iowa.¹⁷

In the first section, we have included three films not obviously set in Iowa. *Cheers for Miss Bishop* and *The Pajama Game* are based on literary texts by Iowa authors that indicate an Iowa setting; the films themselves hint at Iowa as the locale. Both the film *The Best Years of Our Lives* and its source, *Glory for Me* by Iowan MacKinlay Kantor, have details pointing to Iowa as the scene. Most films listed below are so explicitly about Iowa or Iowans that they did not require this sort of discretionary judgment. If space had permitted, we would have included entries for a number of films whose plot or characters are defined through mentions of Iowa. These brief allusions both use and reinforce stereotypes that portray Iowa’s cultural identity. For example, in *Double Indemnity* (1944) femme fatale Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck), a native Californian, conspires with

17. As noted earlier, the Iowa Film Office maintains an updated list of all films and television programs shot in Iowa: www.state.ia.us/film/html/fronthtml/onlocationsub.html.

insurance agent Walter Neff (Fred MacMurray) to murder her husband. Early in the film Neff observes, "they say that all native Californians come from Iowa." This cynical remark evokes the film noir cliché that California is a tainted Garden of Eden that has lured good people from America's heartland with the promise of wealth and celebrity and led them into acts of betrayal, sexual decadence, and crime. In *The Bad News Bears* (1976), Morris Buttermaker (Walter Matthau) criticizes young Amanda Whurlitzer for wasting her time selling maps to the stars' homes to "ignorant hicks." A few lines later, Amanda mentions that "half the state of Iowa stopped by last week," reinforcing the idea of Iowa hicks dazzled by California's celebrity culture.¹⁸

The listings include literary sources, many by Iowa authors, and Academy Award wins and nominations. Dating films is tricky since the completion date, copyright date, preview date (for example, at a film festival), initial theatrical release date, video release date, TV debut date, and sometimes even re-release date may differ. We list the date of the initial release to the general public, generally relying on reviews in the *New York Times* and *Variety* and scholarly databases such as the *American Film Institute Catalog*. Because *The Music Man* is so important to the Iowa film tradition, we include the 2003 TV movie version, but list no other films beyond 2002.

Although most films from the 1920s and 1930s eluded our viewing, reliable historical materials allowed us to convey some sense of their narratives. We list all Iowa films for which we found accurate plot descriptions: we derive our summaries of unseen films primarily from the *American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films (1893–1970)*, supplemented by film reviews from the *New York Times* and *Variety*. When we have not personally viewed a film, we add the notation NS ("not screened") and indicate sources for our characterization. We have not based plot

18. Some additional films with prominent Iowa references include *The Covered Wagon* (1923), *A Harp in Hock* (1927), *Made for Each Other* (1939), *Lillian Russell* (1940), *Sioux City Sue* (1946), *Mister Roberts* (1955), *Sidelong Glances of a Pigeon Kicker* (1970), *Hardcore* (1979), *Airplane II: The Sequel* (1982), *Mass Appeal* (1984), *This Is Spinal Tap* (1984), *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* (1986), *Married to the Mob* (1988), *Quick Change* (1990), *Dave* (1993), *Tommy Boy* (1995), *Orgazmo* (1997), *Mercury Rising* (1998), *The Truman Show* (1998), *Galaxy Quest* (1999), *Bamboozled* (2000), *Running Mates* (2000), *I Spy* (2002), and *About Schmidt* (2002).

descriptions for unseen films on the literary texts from which they were derived.

Each section of the filmography is organized chronologically. For films of the sound era, the running time in minutes is listed. However, sources report different running times, depending on the film's evolution from first screening at a festival to a final version delivered to video/DVD markets. Silent films are characterized by reels, since movie projectors ran at different speeds.

For the entries that follow, the abbreviation *AFI* means that the film has an entry with a detailed plot description in the multi-volume *American Film Institute Catalog*. We also list reviews from *The New York Times* (abbreviated *NYT*) and *Variety* (abbreviated *V*). The reviews from these three sources rarely offer the most insightful comments, particularly from the standpoint of regional portrayal, but they accurately provide standard filmographic information back to the beginnings of the film industry.

Iowa Filmography, 1918–2002

I. Iowa Settings, Fictional Films

The Strange Woman. Dir. Edward J. Le Saint. Fox Films, 1918. 6 reels. Silent. Principals: Billy Arnst, Ada Beecher, Gladys Brockwell, Charles Clary, Margaret Cullington, Harry Depp, Lucy Donahue, Louis Fitzroy, Gerard Grasby, William Hutchinson, Ruby Lafayette, Eunice Moore, G. Raymond Nye, Grace Wood. Literary Source: William J. Hurlbut's play by the same name (1913) and the identically named novel Sidney McCall adapted from the play. (New York, 1914). The film begins in Paris, where the native Inez de Pierrefond is recovering from a forced and brutal marriage. She writes a book titled *Free Love*, shocking even for Paris. Then she meets John Hemingway of Delphi, Iowa, who is initially repulsed by her views but takes up living with her. After she goes to Hemingway's home in Delphi, the gossips learn of her book and call a meeting to spread the news of her decadence. Inez turns the tables by denouncing their hypocrisy, reconciling with her future mother-in-law, and consenting to marry John after all. NS. *AFI*. *V* 12/27/1918.

Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford. [Alternate title: *Wallingford*.] Dir. Franz Borge. Cosmopolitan Productions–Paramount Pictures, 1921. 7 reels. Silent. Principals: Diana Allen, Mac Barnes, William Carr, Patterson Dial, Billy Dove, Sam Hardy, William T. Hayes, Horace James, Eugene

Keith, Doris Kenyon, Norman Kerry, Edgar Nelson, William Robyns. Literary Source: George Randolph Chester, *Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford* (Indianapolis, 1908) and George M. Cohan's play of the same name (1910). The story begins with "Blackie" Daw arriving in Blacksburg, Iowa, to carry off an investor scam assisted by a supposedly wealthy capitalist, J. Rufus Wallingford. They pretend to set up a legitimate business, fleece the local investors, and are about to skip town. Through a remarkable turn of events, their business actually turns out to be profitable. So they marry local Blacksburg women, and all ends happily. NS. AFI. NYT 12/9/1921.

Watch Your Step. Dir. William Beaudine. Goldwyn Pictures, 1922. 5 reels. Silent. Principals: Cordelia Callahan, Raymond Cannon, John Cossar, Joel Day, L. H. King, Alberta Lee, Gus Leonard, Cullen Landis, Patsy Ruth Miller, L. J. O'Conner, Lillian Sylvester, Bert Woodruff. In this comic-romantic melodrama, Elmer Slocum, just out of jail for speeding, is pursued by police for speeding and has an accident that he believes caused a policeman's death. To escape the consequences, he boards a train and makes his way to Iowa, where he gets a job and meets Margaret Andrews, daughter of the town's richest man. A jealous rival and Margaret's father want to find damaging information about Slocum. The father hires a detective, but at the last minute word comes that the policeman is not dead, thus permitting the romantic pair to stay in Iowa together. NS. AFI. NYT 5/19/1922.

That French Lady. Dir. Edmund Mortimer. Fox Films, 1924. 6 reels. Silent. Principals: Charles Coleman, Theodore Von Eltz, Clarence Goodwyn, Shirley Mason. This is a remake of *The Strange Woman* (1918). See plot summary above. NS. AFI. V 10/8/1924.

State Fair. Dir. Henry King. Fox, 1933. 96 min. Principals: Lew Ayres, Frank Craven, Louise Dresser, Janet Gaynor, Victor Jory, Will Rogers. Literary Source: Phil Stong, *State Fair* (New York, 1932). Academy Award Nominations: Picture, Writing. This black-and-white depression-era film takes the farming Frake family to the Iowa State Fair, where Pop wins a grand prize for his pampered pig and Ma scores with pickles. Son Wayne and daughter Margy meet sophisticated partners who provide sexual temptations and a glimpse of the world outside rural Iowa. *State Fair* was remade twice, in 1945 as a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical with an Iowa setting and again in 1962 with a Texas setting. The original film is out of commercial circulation but is available for study through the Will Rogers Archive at Claremore, OK, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. AFI. NYT 1/27/1933; V 1/31/1933.

The Stranger's Return. Dir. King Vidor. MGM, 1933. 88 min. Principals: Lionel Barrymore, Beulah Bondi, Stuart Erwin, Miriam Hopkins, Franchot Tone. Literary Source: Phil Stong, *Stranger's Return* (New York, 1933). Made at the peak of Stong's Hollywood career, this film explores sexual temptation in the small town of Pittsville, a fictional place that was likely the counterpart of his hometown, Pittsburg, near Keosauqua. Louise, an easterner, comes to visit Grandpa Storr, is drawn into a relationship with a married Guy, and finds herself in the midst of a squabble about who gets Grandpa's farm. She ends up with the farm, but Guy moves away to avoid destroying his marriage. King Vidor reported that the sets were painted to look like Grant Wood's paintings. NS. AFI. NYT 7/28/1933; V 8/1/1933.

Career. Dir. Leigh Jason. RKO Radio Pictures, 1939. 79 min. World Premiere in Des Moines, 2 July 1939. Literary Source: Phil Stong, *Career* (New York, 1936). Principals: John Archer, Janice Beecher, Hobart Cavanaugh, Charles Drake, Edward Ellis, Leon Errol, Harrison Greene, Raymond Hatton, Samuel S. Hinds, Maurice Murphy. In this drama set in a small Iowa town, the leading citizen—known for many good deeds—is called on to save a failing bank. An angry mob confronts him when he initially declines to make a large deposit. A subplot involves the thwarted marriage aspirations of both the virtuous father, who had lost his hoped-for bride to the incompetent banker, and his son, whose belle also chooses another. NS. AFI. NYT 7/28/1939; V 7/12/1939.

Cheers for Miss Bishop. Dir. Tay Garnett. Richard A. Rowland Productions, 1941. 94 min. Principals: Mary Anderson, Sidney Blackmer, Donald Douglas, William Gargan, Martha Scott, Pierre Watkin. Literary Source: Bess Streeter Aldrich, *Miss Bishop* (New York, 1933). This is a testament to a spirited, idealistic unmarried woman who sacrificially devotes her life to college teaching. Although the film does not identify the state, Midwestern College—surrounded by a cornfield—is Iowa State Teachers College, now the University of Northern Iowa. Like the hero of *It's a Wonderful Life*, Ella Bishop yearns for romance and travel, but spends her adult life, from the mid-1880s to the late 1930s, serving her community. A fervent believer in the American Dream, Miss Bishop helps her immigrant students toward greatness, while struggling to feel that her limited life has been worthwhile. The film portrays the growth of the Midwest from prairie homesteads to settled, prosperous communities. Teaching students is compared to growing corn. The film was shot at the University of Nebraska and premiered in Lincoln. AFI. NYT 3/14/1941; V 1/15/1941.

One Foot in Heaven. Dir. Irving Rapper. Warner Bros., 1941. 108 min. Principals: Byron Barr (Gig Young), Hobart Bosworth, Jerome Cowan, Mary Field, Fredric March, Grant Mitchell, Moroni Olsen. Literary Source: Hartzell Spence, *One Foot in Heaven: The Life of a Practical Parson* (New York, 1940). Academy Award Nomination: Picture. The screenplay is based on a book, written by the subject's son, about a strict, articulate, and devoted Methodist minister who spends his career in Iowa and Colorado during the early twentieth century. In one episode, a ten-year-old in the family, contrary to church discipline at the time, attends a film. The minister investigates the forbidden attraction and finds it engaging. AFI. NYT 11/14/1941; V 10/1/1941.

Orchestra Wives. Dir. Archie Mayo. Twentieth Century Fox, 1942. 97 min. Principals: Lynn Bari, Virginia Gilmore, Mary Beth Hughes, Jackie Gleason, Carole Landis, Glenn Miller, George Montgomery, Cesar Romero, Ann Rutherford. Academy Award Nomination: Song ("I've Got a Gal in Kalamazoo"). Gene Morrison (played by real-life Big Band leader and Iowa native Glenn Miller) leads a band that has spent too much time on the road. Young fan Connie Ward comes to a concert, impulsively marries trumpet player George Abbot, and joins the tour. While much of the band and all of the wives are staying in Des Moines, the catty older wives decide to wreck the marriage. They set up Abbot to be discovered by his wife in an apparent infidelity in Iowa City. The band disintegrates in Iowa as a result of the domestic furor that erupts. In the end, all is properly understood, the band reassembles in New York, and the young couple reconciles. AFI. NYT 9/24/1942; V 11/10/1943.

Happy Land. Dir. Irving Pichel. Twentieth Century Fox, 1943. 75 min. Principals: Don Ameche, Harry Carey, Frances Dee, Ann Rutherford, Cara Williams. Literary Source: MacKinlay Kantor, *Happy Land* (New York, 1943). A pharmacist in Hartfield, Iowa, grieves over the battle death of his son in World War II. The film justifies the son's sacrifice to preserve the "happy land's" way of life. The idyllic reconstruction of the instinctively generous and caring boy's Iowa life features "playing Indians" in a cornfield, young love, and lots of ice cream cones. In 1956 the Twentieth Century Fox Hour broadcast a television adaptation titled *In Times Like These*. AFI. NYT 12/9/1943; V 8/12/1942.

Keep Your Powder Dry. Dir. Edward Buzzell. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1945. 93 min. Principals: Laraine Day, Agnes Moorhead, Susan Peters, Lana Turner. Three women enlist in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and end up at the Fort Des Moines training camp, where background shooting occurred. NS. AFI. NYT 3/12/1945; V 2/21/1945.

State Fair. Dir. Walter Lang. Twentieth Century Fox, 1945. 100 min. Principals: Dana Andrews, Fay Bainter, Vivian Blaine, Jeanne Crain, Dick Haymes, Donald Meek, Charles Winninger. Literary Source: Phil Stong, *State Fair* (New York, 1932). Academy Award: Song ("It Might As Well Be Spring"); Nomination: Scoring of a Musical. This colorful Richard Rodgers/Oscar Hammerstein musical version of the adventures of the fair-going Frake family presents a sunnier view of life than the 1930s version. The principal romantic plot retains the suave news reporter who lures Margy away from the farm, where she suffers from boredom and too much exposure to pigs and a boorish fiancé. The score includes the song "All I Owe Ioway." AFI. NYT 8/31/1945; V 8/22/1945.

The Best Years of Our Lives. Dir. William Wyler. Goldwyn Productions, 1946. 172 min. Principals: Dana Andrews, Hoagy Carmichael, Gladys George, Myrna Loy, Fredric March, Virginia Mayo, Harold Russell, Teresa Wright. Academy Awards: Picture, Actor, Supporting Actor, Film Editing, Screenplay, Musical Score, Director, Special Award (Harold Russell). Literary Source: MacKinlay Kantor, *Glory for Me* (New York, 1945). Based on the Iowa writer's narrative poem, this film portrays three servicemen returning to fictional Boone City after World War II. All three face difficult adjustments. The characters represent three social classes, as well as three branches of the military. The film does not specify Iowa precisely, but clues in book and film suggest that Boone City is Des Moines—and a symbol of the experiences of returning vets nationwide. AFI. NYT 11/22/1946; V 11/27/1946.

Johnny Comes Flying Home. Dir. Benjamin Stoloff. Twentieth Century Fox, 1946. 65 min. Principals: Richard Crane, Faye Marlowe, Henry Morgan, Charles Russell, Martha Stewart. Three army pilots, Johnny Martin, Miles Carey, and Joe Patillo, receive medical discharge. Johnny is diagnosed with nervous exhaustion and instructed not to fly again for at least a year. He returns with Miles to their hometown of Grantville, Iowa. Finding the work in Iowa tedious, the three return to the adventure of flying in an air freight business they start in California. NS. AFI. V 3/20/1946.

High Barbaree. Dir. Jack Conway. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1947. 91 min. Principals: June Allyson, Van Johnson, Cameron Mitchell, Thomas Mitchell. Literary Source: Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall, *High Barbaree* (Boston, 1945). In this drama set on World War II's Pacific front, navy pilot Alec Brooke and navy nurse Nancy Fraser, both from Westview, Iowa, meet in Hawaii and plan to marry after the war. Alec

and Lt. Moore are shot down and drift at sea for days before rescue. Much of the story is told as a flashback about idyllic life in Iowa while the pilots wait for rescue. Both Nancy and Alec are portrayed as dutiful Iowans with the character required for American victory. NS. AFI. NYT 6/6/1947; V 3/12/1947.

Hideout. [Alternate title: *Gentleman for a Day*.] Dir. Philip Ford. Republic Pictures, 1949. 61 min. Principals: Adrian Booth, Lloyd Bridges, Ray Collins, Sheila Ryan. Literary Source: William Porter, "Hideout," *Saturday Evening Post*, serialized 12/15/1945–1/5/1946. In Chicago, gang leader Arthur Burdette supervises the theft of a diamond necklace. Sending his operatives to New York—and then betraying them—Burdette takes his loot to Hilltop, Iowa, where he assumes the identity of a retired oil man and alumnus of Gideon College. He employs a local gem expert to cut down the diamonds and then murders him. Burdette is arrested just as he's receiving his honorary doctorate from Gideon College. NS. AFI. V 3/30/1949.

Go, Man, Go! Dir. James Wong Howe. Sirod Productions, 1954. 83 min. Principals: Pat Breslin, Dane Clark, Sidney Poitier, Edmon Ryan. The founder of the all-black Harlem Globetrotters basketball team finds a supporter in Zack Leader of Dubuque, where the team stops during its tour. NS. AFI. NYT 3/10/1954; V 1/20/1954.

The Pajama Game. Dir. George Abbott and Stanley Donen. Warner Bros., 1957. Principals: Doris Day, Eddie Foy Jr., Carol Haney, John Raitt, Reta Shaw. Literary Source: Richard P. Bissell, *7½ Cents* (Boston, 1953). Based on Bissell's experiences working in the family pajama factory in Dubuque, the film, like the 1954 hit Broadway musical, delighted audiences with cleverly staged and memorable songs ("Hey There," "Steam Heat," "Small Talk") and choreography by Bob Fosse. Reviewers identified the setting as Cedar Rapids, but only "Iowa Central" on a train car definitely points to an Iowa setting. The film features an insider-outsider romance between Sid Sorokin, the new factory superintendent from Chicago, and Babe Williams, a tomboyish blonde who heads the Grievance Committee. Unlike Iowa films that feature corn, pigs, and small towns, *The Pajama Game* captures the ambiance of Iowa's river cities with their factories and nightlife, as in the dusky café known by the song "Hernando's Hideaway." But there's also a picnic scene along the river; and the Williams house has flowered wallpaper, old-fashioned fixtures, and a porch swing. NYT 8/30/1957; V 8/7/1957.

The Music Man. Dir. Morton Da Costa. Warner Brothers, 1962. 151 min. Premiere in Mason City, 19 June 1962. Principals: Paul Ford, Hermione

Gingold, Buddy Hackett, Ronny Howard, Shirley Jones, Pert Kelton, Robert Preston. Literary Source: Meredith Willson, *The Music Man* (New York, 1958). Academy Award: Adapted Score; Nominations: Picture, Artistic Direction, Costume Design, Film Editing. Meredith Willson's musical tribute to his hometown, Mason City, gently satirizes the provincialism of Iowa at the time when the Model T Ford and the Wells Fargo wagon are beginning to break down the isolation of Iowa small towns. Salesman Harold Hill, the sophisticated, manipulative outsider, transforms River City into a place of camaraderie, music, and fun, while librarian Marian Paroo, modeled on Willson's own mother, transforms the unscrupulous con artist into a man who feels an obligation to others. AFI. NYT 8/24/1962; V 4/11/1962.

The Hostage. Dir. Russell S. Doughten Jr. Crown International/Heartland Productions, 1966. 84 min. Principals: John Carradine, Danny Martins, Don O'Kelly, Harry Dean Stanton. A boy gets locked in a moving van driven by murderers. Recognizably filmed in the Des Moines area, where it premiered. AFI.

Fever Heat. Dir. Russell S. Doughten Jr. Heartland Productions, 1968. 109 min. Principals: Nick Adams, Norman Alden, Robert Broyles, Jeannine Riley, Vaughn Taylor, Daxson Thomas. Literary Source: Angus Vicker, *Fever Heat* (New York, 1954). A stock car driver, Ace Jones, who has been forbidden to compete, is passing through Iowa when he stops for repairs at the garage run by another driver's widow. Ace decides to stick around and become a business partner. He helps out by forcing payments from delinquent race car drivers. The inevitable conflicts develop over his relationship with the widow before she accepts Ace permanently. Scenes were shot at Des Moines, Dexter, Oskaloosa, and Stuart. Henry Gregor Felsen, the Iowa author of *Hot Rod* and other teen auto stories, wrote the novel, as well as the screenplay, under the Angus Vicker pseudonym. AFI. V 5/15/1968.

The Trouble with Girls. [Alternate titles: *The Chautauqua*; *The Trouble with Girls (and How to Get Into It)*.] Dir. Peter Tewksbury. MGM, 1969. 97 min. Principals: Edward Andrews, John Carradine, Dabney Coleman, Nicole Jaffe, Marlyn Mason, Sheree North, Elvis Presley, Vincent Price, Joyce Van Patten. Literary Source: Day Keene and Dwight Vincent [Babcock], *Chatauqua* (New York, 1960). Chautauqua comes to Bradford Center, Iowa, in 1927, bringing lectures ("Cannibals and Culture"), spiritual uplift, and highlights from Shakespeare. With calm and showmanship, manager Walter Hale (played by Elvis Presley) handles the inevitable near-disasters: auditioning the mayor's untalented daughter,

labor disputes, and the murder of a philandering pharmacist. The 1920s have brought to Bradford Center the automobile, business prosperity, and loosening morality. The mayor explains that the town is broad-minded: "No Klan feeling here." There are several Catholic families, he remarks, and "even a Hebrew family." An African American boy and white girl perform song and dance numbers together without comment. Yet this is a town in which a woman with a bad reputation cannot get a fair trial for killing her attacker. Elvis engineers a dramatic confession at the chautauqua to get her the sympathy she would never get in a courtroom—and then provides money for her to get out of town fast. This slight film is part musical comedy, part backstage suspense, and part murder mystery. AFI. V 5/14/1969.

Cold Turkey. Dir. Norman Lear. Tandem-DFI, 1971. 96 min. Principals: Bob Elliott, Vincent Gardenia, Ray Gouling, Barnard Hughes, Edward Everett Horton, Bob Newhart, Tom Poston, Pippa Scott, Jean Stapleton, Dick Van Dyke. Literary Source: Mac Hammond, *Cold Turkey* (Chicago, 1969). Many familiar icons of the Iowa film appear in this satire that deflates the pretensions of small-town virtue. In desperation, Eagle Rock, Iowa, accepts a \$25 million bribe to stop smoking. The attempt brings out the residents' vanity, greed, and hypocrisy. The "savior figure," a minister played by Van Dyke, turns out to be a compulsive, abusive manipulator who's dying to move away to a more sophisticated, urban parish. NYT 3/18/1971; NYT 3/28/1971; V 2/3/1971.

A Thief in the Night. Dir. Donald W. Thompson. Mark IV Films, 1972. 69 min. Principals (for the series of four films): Duane Coller, Patty Dunning, Colleen Niday, Mike Niday, Maryann Rachford, Thom Rachford, Cathy Wellman, William W. Wellman Jr. This film, shot in central Iowa, was the first in the Mark IV Prophetic Film Series, four films that continue the same plot and characters through seven years of millennial experience. According to this Rapture scenario, the true Christians are taken up to heaven. This is followed by the time of Tribulation for sympathetically presented wavering Christians who struggle with the one-world government, UNITE. Sequels were *A Distant Thunder* (1978), *Image of the Beast* (1980), and *The Prodigal Planet* (1983). Without emphasizing Iowa culture or place names, all films show recognizable Iowa scenes in Carlisle, at the Iowa State Fair, and at Red Rock Dam near Pella. *The Prodigal Planet* moves to a post-nuclear-attack Omaha and concludes in the mountains near Colorado Springs. Russell S. Doughen Jr., co-author with Donald Thompson of all four screenplays, himself appears convincingly in all of the films as Rev. Matthew Turner, a good man who helps guide those who resist taking the mark from UNITE.

Sammy. Dir. Russell S. Doughten Jr. Heartland Productions, 1977. 68 min. Principals: Eric Buhr, Bill Cort, Peter Hedges, Carol Locatell, Tom MacDonald. A family feels the strain of paying bills and caring for sweet, exuberant Sammy, whose bad leg does not keep him from bringing home every animal imaginable. His father's worries have turned him from faith in God and estranged him from his wife and children. Older brother Matt, pressured by his impatient peers and angry father, finally snaps when caring for Sammy keeps him from an after-school job and an important baseball game. A pastor helps the family accept Christ when Sammy disappears, locked with his cat, Moses, in the trunk of an old car in an auto graveyard. Matt's friends are newspaper carriers for the *Des Moines Register and Tribune*.

Ice Castles. Dir. Donald Wrye. Columbia, 1978. 110 min. Principals: Robby Benson, Colleen Dewhurst, Lynn-Holly Johnson, Tom Skerritt. Academy Award Nomination: Best Song ("Theme from *Ice Castles*" ["Through the Eyes of Love"]). Lexie and Nick, earnest teenagers from Waverly, share skating ambitions: she to figure skate competitively and he to play professional ice hockey. Their dreams bring them together at first, then divide them when Lexie succeeds and Nick doesn't in the big world outside Waverly, and finally reunite them when Nick helps an injured Lexie learn to skate without her eyesight. The film combines teen romance, success-in-spite-of-handicap, and family conflict formulas in a feel-good tear-jerker. Iowa is presented as a handicap for the characters. While affirming the "Iowa values" of courage, hard work, and family, the film also shows it's too easy to never try, drop out, or live in loneliness and isolation in a small Iowa town. Waverly residents will not recognize the tiny, desolate place depicted in the film as their college town.

Dribble. [Alternate title: *Scoring*.] Dir. Michael de Gaetano. Intermedia Artists, 1980. 90 min. Principals: Freya Crane, Charles Fatone, Joseph Hardin, Peter Maravich, Gregg Perrie, Myra Taylor. This film, which never achieved theatrical distribution, was inspired by the Iowa Cornets of Des Moines, a women's professional basketball venture, 1978–1980. The film was financed by George Nissen, the Cornets' owner, as an attempt to popularize the sport. The story offers the Vixens, a losing, bankrupt women's basketball team located in Des Moines. They join forces with a broke florist and his enterprising son in an attempt to prevent the team's eviction from their premises. The rural landscape and dreary city—relieved only by a scene at the State Capitol and a glimpse of the fountain at Banker's Trust—reinforce the film's emphasis on Des Moines as a hicksville that dooms its team to underdog status. The movie ends with a game against a surprised army men's

team who expected male opponents, not female Vixens. Members of the Iowa Cornets women's basketball team, including Molly Bolin, perform in this quirky comedy. The film is available on video in the Iowa Women's Archives at the University of Iowa.

The Funhouse. [Alternate title: *Carnival of Terror*.] Dir. Tobe Hooper. Mace Neufeld/Universal, 1981. 96 min. Principals: Elizabeth Berridge, Shawn Carson, Miles Chapin, Kevin Conway, Wayne Doba, William Finley, Cooper Huckabee, Sylvia Miles, Largo Woodruff. References to Cedar Falls and Fairfield set this teen horror film in Iowa. Although her parents have forbidden it, Amy Harper goes to a carnival with her date and another couple. Younger brother Joey follows her. This film from the director of the earlier *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* films (1974, 1986) is both parody of the teen horror genre and a genuine horror film, as it moves from Joey recreating *Halloween* and *Psycho* in an opening prank directed at his sister to real murder and terror after the couples decide to spend the night in the carnival funhouse. This visually interesting creation does not present the usual Iowa filmscape or characters, emphasizing instead a colorful, menacing carnival setting. The Harpers are not moral crusaders: the whole family, including mom and dad, are horror fans. The teens have fun on the carnival rides, smoke some pot, and grope each other. They turn out to be ordinary kids—not the usual virgin, slut, jock, and nerd stereotypes. NYT 3/14/1981; V 3/18/1981.

Take This Job and Shove It. Dir. Gus Trikonis. Cinema Group, 1981. 100 min. Principals: Eddie Albert, Art Carney, Robert Hays, Barbara Hershey, David Keith, Penelope Milford, Martin Mull, Tim Thomerson. Accompanied by a country-western score, the film narrates the return of successful young Frank Macklin to his hometown, working-class Dubuque, where he takes charge of a brewery for his corporate boss and is reunited with his high school buddies and his old girlfriend. Torn between urban prosperity, with its corporate politics, and loyalty to his grim but spontaneous hometown, Macklin chooses Dubuque, where life is full of hard drinking, mud wrestling, rowdy football games, practical jokes, big wheel truck competitions, and lots of good fightin' and good lovin'. The usual Iowascape is here, but the emphasis falls on factory work, not farming. NYT 8/29/1981; V 5/6/1981.

Terms of Endearment. Dir. James L. Brooks. Paramount, 1983. 130 min. Principals: Jeff Daniels, Danny DeVito, John Lithgow, Jack Nicholson, Shirley MacLaine, Debra Winger. Literary Source: Larry McMurry, *Terms of Endearment* (New York, 1975). Academy Awards: Picture, Actress, Supporting Actor, Director, Adapted Screenplay; Nominations:

Actress, Supporting Actor, Art Director, Sound, Editing, Musical Score. This film has scenes set in Houston, Des Moines, Lincoln, and Manhattan. As free-spirited earth mother Emma moves from place to place, we see how the settings contrast. Iowa is represented by friendly, trusting, and sexually frustrated banker Sam Burns. The film works hard to contrast the frozen culture of Iowa with uninhibited, space-age Texas and coldly uncivil Manhattan. *NYT* 11/23/1983; *V* 11/23/1983.

Country. Dir. Richard Pearce. Touchstone, 1984. 109 min. Principals: Wilford Brimley, Levi L. Knebel, Jessica Lange, Sam Shepard. Academy Award Nomination: Actress. Gil and Jewel Ivy's family farm is threatened by mortgage foreclosure during the farm crisis of the 1980s. The film presents the harsh realities of farm life—debt, bad weather, farm accidents, hard times, alcohol, domestic violence—that can unravel the fabric of Iowa families and communities. The ending affirms the importance of family, but represents only a small victory for struggling farmers. *NYT* 9/28/1984; *NYT* 11/23/1984; *V* 9/26/1984.

All the King's Horses. Dir. Donald W. Thompson. Mark IV Pictures, 1986. 80 min. Principals: Grant Goodeve, Dee Wallace. Based on a true story, the film focuses on a young Christian woman, Sandy, who meets and marries Jack, a motocross racer who accepts Christ only superficially. From the start, their marriage is troubled, leading Sandy to abuse prescription drugs and Jack to drink too much. The "King" in the title is Christ, who puts the pieces of the broken marriage together again. The Des Moines setting is indicated in a radio broadcast that announces it as the location of a Christian lecture.

Heaven's Heroes. Dir. Donald W. Thompson. Mark IV Pictures, 1986. 72 min. Principals: James O'Hagen, David Ralphe, Heidi Vaughn. The film is based on the true story of a Des Moines police officer killed in the line of duty. His wife learns of the shooting as the film opens; she struggles with grief, even though belief in salvation helps sustain her. The movie flashes back to scenes from their marriage and family life. This ordinary hero and his partner discuss the Bible and God's plan for salvation as they answer calls throughout the Des Moines area, culminating with the call that leads to the fatal shooting. Des Moines is clearly not a safe place, but Christian faith can help police officers deal with the stress of their jobs and help friends and family cope with the inevitable deaths that happen without warning.

Nite Song. Dir. Russell S. Doughten Jr. Heartland Productions, 1986. 65 min. Principals: Tom Hoffman, Vicki Nuzum, Bobby Smith. Filmed in Des Moines, this film focuses on two teens, Joe and Pete, who love bas-

ketball, Jesus, and their families and neighborhood. The two boys climb out their windows at night to sit on the roof, talk, and look at the city lights. Joe's dad drinks, his mom nurses a black eye, and his sister shoots up. Pushers threaten both boys, and the pastor at the local youth center urges Joe to report them. It takes Joe's murder by the pushers, however, for his sister to seek help, his parents to reconcile, and Joe and his teammates to share their faith and courageously take action to clean up their neighborhood. The film's credits, and recognizable Des Moines footage, locate the setting for Iowans.

The Healing. Dir. Russell S. Doughten Jr. Heartland Productions, 1987. 71 min. Principals: James Andelin, Erin Blunt, Brian Collins, Jon Lormer, Kirk Martin, J. R. Walker, Jan Zembles-Bean. A rising young doctor about to enter a lucrative practice ignores his pregnant wife's pleas that they work for Christ rather than for material gain. When she dies in an accident, in his guilt and grief Dr. Lucas turns to alcohol. One night, in a bar on Center Street, "the most violent street in the city," John Lucas begins a series of steps that lead him, at first a reluctant Christian, to a medical practice at Bethel Mission. There he heals the bodies, and later the souls as well, of drunken derelicts, welfare children, thieves, and drug addicts. This moving drama is set in Des Moines, where, as a last frame shows, the downtown skyscrapers serve as a backdrop for Center Street, with its poverty and violence.

Life Flight. Dir. Donald W. Thompson. International Cinema Artists, 1987. 83 min. Principals: Lynda Beattie, Michael Cornelison, Pat Delany, Patty Dunning, Jerry Jackson, Jim McMullan. Des Moines area and Forest City rescue squads assisted in making this film about the early days of Iowa Methodist Medical Center's helicopter rescue squad. A Vietnam veteran afraid of flying, a Life Flight nurse fighting the hospital bureaucracy, a born-again Christian turning to the Bible when a friend, a religious skeptic, asks questions he can't answer—all these rescue workers explore the meaning of God's will in their lives. As the film creates suspense in its portrayal of accidents and rescue, it portrays Iowa medical and rescue professionals, many of them Christians, working together to help their neighbors. The Christian message is more subtle than in other Thompson/Doughten films, but it is the heart of the story.

Whitcomb's War. Dir. Russell S. Doughten Jr. Heartland Productions, 1987. 67 min. Principals: Leon Charles, Robert Denison, Bill Morey, Patrick Pankhurst, Garnett Smith. The video jacket describes this Christian movie, shot in Jefferson, as a "warm and witty satire with a serious twist." A young, principled minister, David Whitcomb, comes to a

church in fictional Hurrah, Iowa, while three of the devil's minions, in red, occupy the church basement. The town is upset when local businessman and professed atheist Phil Esteem (Philistine) forces his employees to work on Sunday. With humor, faith, compassion, Bible knowledge, and expert help, young David teaches his congregation to love each other, solves the town's power and light problems, and saves Esteem, who has hated God since his father died in an auto accident. Despite the earnest Christian message, the satire of small-town life, especially congregational behavior, shows wit and authenticity.

Wisdom. Dir. Emilio Estevez. Gladden Entertainments, 1987. 109 min. Principals: Veronica Cartwright, Emilio Estevez, Demi Moore, Tom Skerritt, William Allen Young. This story spins out of a long dream sequence in a bathtub. Youthful John Wisdom dreams of responding to society's economic stresses: farm foreclosures, off-shore manufacturing, joblessness, delinquent mortgages. Perpetually out of work because of a graduation night prank that resulted in a felony conviction, the dream-Wisdom decides to "become a criminal for the people." Looking back to *Bonnie and Clyde* while anticipating *Natural Born Killers* and *Miles from Home*, Wisdom and his girlfriend, Karen, set off on a spree of raiding banks where they burn mortgages. As they work their way from Los Angeles toward the Midwest, they earn the adulation of common people. Their crimes become lethal at the Roseville Market in Black Hawk County. When a sheriff becomes suspicious, Karen panics and shoots him. They move on to Minnesota for a spectacular car chase and final shootout in St. Paul. Then the real Wisdom wakes up and shaves. V 1/7/1987.

Face in the Mirror. Dir. Russell S. Doughten Jr. Heartland Productions, 1988. 65 min. Principals: Michael Mitchell, Marlene O'Malley, Brian Park, Tom Vanderwell, Scott Wier. The film opens with outcast Danny DeMarco, suffering from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, being rushed to a Des Moines hospital. Flashbacks show that his violent cry for help is the culmination of a series of cynical and despairing remarks that his family and friends have brushed off. While some express anger at Danny, others realize that they have not acted as Christians. One friend sneaks into intensive care and witnesses to Danny, in a coma, which leads not only to Danny's recovery but also to his conversion.

Miles from Home. Dir. Gary Sinise. Cinecom Entertainment, 1988. 112 min. Principals: Kevin Anderson, Brian Dennehy, Richard Gere, Moira Harris, Helen Hunt, Judith Ivey, John Malkovich, Laurie Metcalf, Penelope Ann Miller. Two sons of an award-winning farmer lose the family

farm to the local bank. They burn the farm, hit the road, and become celebrity outlaws. Frank becomes angry, impulsive, and violent; Terry's despair is mitigated by his love for the daughter of a Cedar Rapids lawyer. Their spiteful actions are aimed at the system that leaves them helpless against predatory creditors. *NYT* 9/16/1988; *V* 5/28/1988.

Ride the Wind. Dir. Russell S. Doughten Jr. Heartland Productions, 1988. 60 min. Principals: Marty Baldwin, Maribeth Murray, Kent Petersen. The sign "Grimes Hardware" on a local store seems to set this film in Grimes, northwest of Des Moines. Eric, who has just become a Christian after foolishly trying to parachute jump from a tree, gets off to a rocky start with the neighbor boy, Alan, and they challenge each other to build and race planes with wheels. Eric and his friends build the plane from materials they beg, borrow, and do odd jobs to purchase. Alan's father, who wants to win at any cost, takes over the plane's building, leaving his son embarrassed and ashamed among his friends. In fantasy scenes, real planes fly over the Des Moines area. After Alan's plane crashes, due to his own sabotage, he blurts out that he hates his dad, who realizes he has been wrong. Father and son both turn to their Christian neighbors for guidance, and the two gangs of kids reconcile.

The Shepherd. Dir. Donald W. Thompson. Mark IV Pictures, 1988. 79 min. Principals: Nicholas Ashford Ayers, Robert Ayers, Pepper Martin, Christopher Stone, Dee Wallace. In this action movie filmed and set in Des Moines, a hotshot pilot, Lyle, after years of bitterness and dangerous risk-taking, becomes a Christian after his best friend dies due to his carelessness. His friend's wife and son struggle to forgive him, while the friend's father, Lyle's commanding officer, grapples with his own resentment of Lyle, based on a misunderstood bombing raid during the Vietnam War. The film portrays an Iowa home in which the family reads the Bible, prays, and tries to live according to the Bible's teachings.

Field of Dreams. Dir. Phil Alden Robinson. Universal, 1989. 106 min. Principals: Kevin Costner, James Earl Jones, Burt Lancaster, Ray Liotta, Amy Madigan. Literary Source: W. P. Kinsella, *Shoeless Joe* (New York, 1982). Academy Award Nominations: Picture, Adapted Screenplay, Musical Score. Originally from Brooklyn, educated at Berkeley, Ray Kinsella finds himself living in boredom and self-doubt with his Iowa-born wife and daughter on an Iowa farm. Voices from the cornfield instruct Ray to build a baseball field. Shoeless Joe Jackson, writer Terence Mann, Doc Graham, Kinsella's own father, and lines of cars from everywhere eventually come to Ray's "field of dreams." The marriage is strengthened through the magic of a shared visionary faith, and

Ray is finally reconciled with his father. The repeated exchange—"Is this heaven? No, it's Iowa"—between the dead and the living became a popular bumper sticker still seen in Iowa. The baseball field at Dyersville is now one of Iowa's most visited tourist destinations. NYT 4/21/1989; V 4/19/1989.

Zadar: Cow from Hell. Dir. Robert C. Hughes. Stone Peach Films, 1989. 87 min. Principals: Bill Allard, Dan Coffey, Merle Kessler, Leon Martell, Jim Turner. "There's something in the cornfield—an evil that has no name." This deadpan introduction to *Zadar* suggests a mere satire on the 1983 *Children of the Corn*. As this amusing tale develops, we learn that its explicit theme is making films in Iowa about Iowa. Charlie "Sleepless" Walker is a Hollywood filmmaker with family roots in Howdy, Iowa—population 3,237. *Zadar* becomes an exploitative project for the entire community. The film is filled with Hollywood stereotypes of Iowa, each one deftly undercut. *Zadar*, executed by Duck's Breath Mystery Theatre of Iowa City, failed commercially and is not currently available for purchase. V 2/8/1989.

Sleeping With the Enemy. Dir. Joseph Ruben. Fox, 1991. 98 min. Principals: Kevin Anderson, Patrick Bergin, Julia Roberts. Literary Source: Nancy Price, *Sleeping with the Enemy* (New York, 1987). Laura flees a jealous, violent husband, and their expensive Cape Cod summer home and hides out in safe, rustic Cedar Falls, where she develops a tender relationship with the drama teacher next door. Her vengeful husband threatens the peace and safety of her Iowa refuge, but with the help of her gentle friend from Iowa, she repels his murderous invasion. This film is loaded with an array of Iowa icons that carry messages of safety and wholesomeness. NYT 2/8/1991; V 2/11/1991.

Ed and His Dead Mother. [Alternate title: *Bon Appetit, Mama.*] Dir. Jonathan Wacks. Fox, 1992. 93 min. Principals: Ned Beatty, Steve Buscemi, John Glover, Dawn Hudson, Miriam Margolyes. Shy hardware store owner Ed Chilton lives with his Uncle Benny in a big white house in Manning. Ed misses his dead mother, so he pays a representative of "The Happy People Corporation" of Webster City to reanimate her. Unfortunately, Mom, who used to bake pies and clean house, now eats bugs and takes after the locals with a chainsaw, while wearing a dress made from an American flag. She is not happy that the girl next door (not a native) is putting the moves on her son. This bizarre film creates laughs by reversing the expectations of Iowa women: the girl next door is a sexpot; mom is not June Cleaver—she wields a cleaver. Ed wants a dead-again mother and has to kill her himself. V 6/14/1993.

Noises Off. Dir. Peter Bogdanovich. Amblin, 1992. 104 min. Principals: Carol Burnett, Michael Caine, Denholm Elliott, Julie Hagerty, Marilu Henner, Mark Linn-Baker, Christopher Reeve, John Ritter, Nicollette Sheridan. Literary Source: Michael Frayn, *Noises Off* (London, 1982). This comedy depicts an inept touring stage company whose British director is rapidly deteriorating. The "star" is an aging Dotty Otley, who has financed the show with her own money. Trying to pull itself up toward a Broadway quality performance, the group begins its road tour at the "Des Moines Theater." Despite a stumbling performance, the Iowa audience applauds and sends the troupe on for debacles in other provincial venues. *NYT* 12/31/1992; *V* 3/23/1992.

Shimmer. Dir. John Hanson. American Theatrical Playhouse Films, 1993. 95 min. Principals: Tom Bower, Jake Busey, Mary Beth Hurt, Marcus Klemp, Patrick Labrecque, Elijah Shepard, Clem Tucker Jr. Based on an unpublished play with the same title by John Hanson, the plot focuses on teenager John Callahan, who has been removed from his abusive home. He has spent much of his life in an Iowa youth detention facility, where he is called "Spacy" because of his fantasies. He befriends a new inmate, Gary Finch, who was convicted of car theft. Together they create a code language called "shimmer" that helps them envision all the other places they would like to be. NS. *V* 10/11/1993.

What's Eating Gilbert Grape. Dir. Lasse Hallstrom. Paramount, 1993. 117 min. Principals: Darlene Cates, Johnny Depp, Leonardo DiCaprio, Juliette Lewis, Mary Steenburgen. Literary Source: Peter Hedges, *What's Eating Gilbert Grape* (New York, 1991). Academy Award Nomination: Supporting Actor. This quirky, symbolic film depicts the death of a small Iowa town. It highlights the disappearance of locally controlled retail enterprises through the coming of a franchised burger stand and a grocery store chain. The son of a farmer who committed suicide, Gilbert feels trapped by the burdens of helping his family, friends, and corpulent mother survive in Endora, Iowa. After burning his house, a funeral pyre for his immovable mother, he leaves his futureless town with Becky, a more adventurous young woman journeying across the country in an Airstream trailer with her grandmother. *NYT* 12/17/1993; *V* 12/13/1993.

The Woman Who Loved Elvis. Dir. Bill Bixby. Grossbart/Barnette Productions in Association with Wapello County Productions, 1993. 104 min. Literary Source: Laura Kalpakian, *Graced Land* (New York, 1992). Principals: Tom Arnold, Roseanne Barr, Cynthia Gibb, Joe Guzaldo, Danielle Harris, Sally Kirkland, Kimberly Dal Santo. Joyce Jackson has an

Elvis shrine on her porch. Will a welfare caseworker deny her benefits or get her back into the work force? Will her alienated husband return to her? Set and filmed in Ottumwa, the film seems to be a kind of homage to the Elvis cult; Joyce's good works for others in his name prove that she is a caring person, not just a nut. *V* 4/19/1993.

Dumb and Dumber. Dir. Peter Farrelly. New Line/Motion Picture Corporation of America, 1994. 110 min. Principals: Jim Carrey, Jeff Daniels, Lauren Holly. Friends Lloyd and Harry flee the East Coast in a van covered with a brown shag carpet. Following them are thugs who want the briefcase of money they plan to return to Mary Swanson in Aspen. In Illinois they pick up a thug posing as a hitchhiker with car troubles heading for a luncheon in Davenport. They drive him crazy with their bad singing and antics and kill him with rat poison at a truck stop located 30 miles east of the Mississippi. The police report that the duo is heading west on I-80 through Iowa, but we see them on a two-lane Iowa road, passing a slow-moving tractor. A sign announces that they are 43 miles east of Omaha. This comedy is full of dumb remarks, crude physical farce, and some higher wit. *NYT* 12/16/1994; *V* 12/19/1994.

The Puppet Masters. Dir. Stuart Orme. Hollywood Pictures, released by Buena Vista Pictures, 1994. 108 min. Principals: Richard Belzer, Keith David, Yaphet Kotto, Will Patton, Donald Sutherland, Eric Thal, Julie Warner. Literary Source: Robert A. Heinlein, *The Puppet Masters* (Garden City, NY, 1951). Strongly resembling *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956, 1978), the principal actions of this sci-fi film are set in fictional Ambrose, Iowa (population 10,001), and at the real Des Moines City Hall. An alien craft lands in Ambrose and releases a vicious super parasite—"slugs that are using us like puppets"—that rapidly converts the entire population into wickedly obedient zombies. The parasites quickly neutralize the Iowa National Guard. Soon thousands of Des Moines residents march into the hive in the basement of City Hall. The parasites have exceptionally large, powerful brains compared to the dim-witted Iowans who offer a generous launch point for the aliens' plans to take over the earth. After killing dozens of Iowans, slick urban outsiders from Washington finally plan a strategy to kill the parasites before they have conquered the entire Midwest. *NYT* 10/22/1994; *V* 10/24/1994.

Sioux City. Dir. Lou Diamond Phillips. IRS Releasing, 1994. 100 min. Principals: Bill Allen, Apesanahkwat, Lise Cutter, Gary Farmer, Melinda Dillon, Lou Diamond Phillips, Salli Richardson, Adam Roarke, Ralph Waite. Only one scene of this geographically mistitled film is set in Sioux City. Born on a reservation near South Sioux City, Nebraska,

physician Jesse Goldman was later adopted and raised by an affluent Los Angeles Jewish family. He returns to the Midwest to discover his true parentage, his Native American roots, and his mother's murderer. The film reveals that the myth of midwestern neighborliness hides the reality of racism that can poison romance and family life. *V* 4/25/1994.

The Bridges of Madison County. Dir. Clint Eastwood. Time Warner, 1995. 135 min. Principals: Clint Eastwood, Meryl Streep. Academy Award Nomination: Actress. Literary Source: Robert Waller, *The Bridges of Madison County* (New York, 1992). This romantic drama portrays the four-day love affair between a worldly *National Geographic* photographer and an Italian-born Iowa farm wife. He awakens erotic passions in her that had died on the Iowa farm. Although she feels stifled by rural Iowa culture, Francesca Johnson chooses to end the affair and stay with her family. However, she and Robert Kincaid remain faithful in their memory of one another until death. The posthumously revealed story of their affair at the farmhouse ultimately transforms the lives of Francesca's children. *NYT* 6/2/1995; *V* 5/22/1995.

The Last Supper. Dir. Stacy Title. The Vault, 1995. 92 min. Principals: Cameron Diaz, Nora Dunn, Ron Eldard, Annabeth Gish, Jonathan Penner, Courtney B. Vance. Several references in this film establish a setting in an Iowa town with graduate university programs. Five liberal graduate students—Jude, Marc, Luke, Pete, and Paulie (get it?)—invite a belligerent marine vet from Desert Storm to dinner and end up killing him after exchanging insults and threats. While still recovering from the shock of making their first kill, the students invite a series of vocal right-wingers to dinner with the plan to kill them and plant them in their garden—if the guests resist their leftist attitudes. The film is a parable about extremism, freedom, and intolerance. The message seems to be that extremism can happen anywhere, even in Iowa. Although the film accurately presents contemporary Iowa with conservatives and liberals living as neighbors, it does not indicate that Iowa culture itself promotes the vicious killings. *NYT* 4/15/1996; *V* 10/2/1995.

Mommy. Dir. Max Allan Collins. M.A.C. Productions, 1995. 89 min. Literary Source: Max Allan Collins, "Mommy," in Jeff Gelb, ed., *Fear Itself* (New York, 1995). Principals: Majel Barrett, Michael Cornelison, Rachel Lemieux, Patty McCormack, Jason Miller, Brinke Stevens. "Mommy," a beautiful, stylishly dressed Muscatine woman, is suspected of murdering her previous husbands for their money. She also murders her beloved daughter's teacher for daring to give an outstanding student award to a Mexican-American child. She murders her boyfriend when

he is revealed to be an insurance investigator and nearly strangles her own daughter. The film has the mood of a campy horror film, achieved in part by inside jokes about that tradition and its stars. The real Muscatine and the surrounding area provide the setting. Max Allan Collins subsequently expanded the original short story into a novel with the same title (New York, 1997).

Harvest of Fire. Dir. Arthur Allan Seidelman. Hallmark Hall of Fame, 1996. 111 min. Principals: Tom Aldredge, Lolita Davidovich, Patty Duke, Jean Louisa Kelly, J. A. Preston, James Read, Craig Wasson. When four barns burn in the Amish community in Palmersfield, Iowa, a glamorous and culturally naive FBI agent, Sally Russell, is sent to investigate. The local African American sheriff guides her to the family of Annie Beiler, who experienced the first barn fire during a wedding celebration. The Amish of this film are pious, stiffly protective of their customs, and distrustful of outsiders. Through Annie, the initially insensitive and patronizing agent learns to respect the Amish, while Annie reciprocates by cooperating with an outsider who wants to apprehend the arsonist. The film becomes a dialogue between the values of contemporary urban, national culture and those of the Iowa Amish. Each gives something to the other. *NYT* 4/19/1996.

Michael. Dir. Nora Ephron. Turner Pictures, 1996. 105 min. Principals: Teri Garr, Bob Hoskins, William Hurt, Andie MacDowell, Robert Pastorelli, Jean Stapleton, John Travolta. With a setting in mythical Stubbs, Iowa, this film merges romance, the pilgrimage/road formula, and the story of a miracle from on high. A supermarket tabloid sends an improbably joined quartet of investigators to "the middle of nowhere" to report on an angel. Landing in rural Iowa's Milk Bottle Motel, advertised by a giant bottle, they discover that the charming but rather disheveled fallen Archangel Michael is living with the motel's owner, an elderly woman. As the group journeys across the barren heartland, we see a familiar Hollywood Iowascape, with rolling hills of corn stubble, churches, flags, small cafés, high-cal foods, and dumpy interiors. This rural countryside is a place of faith, miracles, and love; significantly, Michael collapses and sheds his feathers as the group enters Chicago. The region's cultural tastes are represented by The World's Largest Ball of Twine, not invented for this film, but likely located in Darwin, MN, or Cawker, KS, whose cities both make the claim. And just a tad across the state line in the film's version of Illinois is The World's Largest Teflon Frying Pan, which is actually in Maine. *NYT* 12/24/1996; *V* 12/23/1996.

I'll Be Home for Christmas. Dir. Jerry London. Jaffe/Braunstein Films, 1997. 100 mins. Principals: Robert Hays, Ann Jillian, Jack Palance. This Christmas romance, filmed in Canada, is set in St. Nicholas, Iowa, where a sign advertises "The World's Largest Hay Bale." The town's aging doctor has died and the hospital is being managed by the local veterinarian, Sarah. She also heads the town council, who lament that we are "too remote—we need more people," while one member adds that "people don't know paradise when they see it." The romantic and medical solution arrives when a former resident, Michael, now a big city doctor, experiences disabling anxiety attacks because of lingering sorrow over the death of his wife several years earlier. Visiting his father in St. Nicholas for Christmas, he reluctantly falls in love with the vet—his high school sweetheart—while his daughter falls in love with the pregnant family pig and her formerly feared grandfather. After more stress in the city as his career fizzles out there, Michael returns to St. Nicholas and rescues the hospital.

Mommy 2: Mommy's Day. Dir. Max Allan Collins. M.A.C. Productions, 1997. 88 min. Principals: Michael Cornelison, Rachel Lemieux, Patty McCormack, Paul Petersen, Gary Sandy, Mickey Spillane, Brinke Stevens. This continuation of *Mommy* begins with an unsuccessful attempt to execute "Mommy" by lethal injection. After an improbable rehabilitation, Mommy attempts to communicate with her daughter. A series of additional murders and plot twists follows. Although this film was shot entirely on location in Iowa City, Coralville, Muscatine, and other eastern Iowa locations, explicit references to place in the script are muted. Paul Petersen, who grew up in Iowa and played Donna Reed's son in the television series, appears as an overzealous true crime writer married to Mommy's sister. Max Allan Collins wrote a novel with the same title based on the film (New York, 1998).

Boy's Life 2. Strand Releasing, 1998. With a 17-minute segment "Alkali, Iowa." Dir. Mark Christopher. Wildwood Productions, 1995. Principals: J. D. Cerna, Mary Beth Hurt. "Alkali, Iowa" is a coming-out story with an Iowa setting. A young farmer, Jack Gudmanson, unearths a lunchbox full of male erotica buried in a cornfield. He gradually deduces that his father had a gay identity hidden from Jack and his sister. In painful conversations with Jack's mother and grandfather, they attempt to "bury the secret." As Jack explores his father's past and begins to acknowledge his own attraction to men, we get glimpses of a rural gay culture, including the familiar seed corn caps and pickups. *NYT* 3/7/1997.

A Thousand Acres. Dir. Jocelyn Moorhouse. Propaganda Films/Buena Vista Pictures, 1997. 104 min. Principals: Kevin Anderson, Keith Carradine, Colin Firth, Pat Hingle, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Jessica Lange, Michelle Pfeiffer, Jason Robards. Literary Source: Jane Smiley, *A Thousand Acres* (New York, 1991). Based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, the film is squarely set in Iowa farm culture—a set of legal and agricultural practices as well as a way of life. When a proud, rich, aging patriarch divides his land among his daughters, a tragedy, rooted in greedy farm and family practices of the past, begins its spiral of destruction, paralleled by the tragedy of a neighboring farm patriarch and his two sons. Unlike Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the film focuses on the younger generation as victims and ends without significant achievements of self-knowledge or reconciliation. *NYT* 9/19/1997; *V* 9/15/1997.

Touch. Dir. Paul Schrader. MGM, 1997. 96 min. Principals: Tom Arnold, Conchata Ferrell, Bridget Fonda, Gina Gershon, Skeet Ulrich, Christopher Walken. Literary Source: Elmore Leonard, *Touch* (New York, 1987). In this film, as in *Hardcore*, Schrader depicts southern California's moral corruption, but here he uses satire. Juvenal, an ex-priest with stigmata who may or may not have healing powers, becomes a celebrity thanks to the media machinations of Bill Hill. A zealous crusader leads a group called OUTRAGE, determined to restore traditional Roman Catholicism, including Latin masses. Juvenal and girlfriend Lynn Marie Faulkner flee Los Angeles at film's end, and we see them crossing over from Nebraska into Iowa. Earlier, Juvenal had suggested that they go to "Denver, Detroit, or Des Moines." Sick of the celebrity/money/media culture of California, they yearn for a saner place. *NYT* 2/14/1997; *V* 2/10/1997.

Overnight Delivery. Dir. Jason Bloom. Motion Picture Corporation of America, 1998. 88 min. Principals: Larry Drake, Paul Rudd, Christine Taylor, Reese Witherspoon. Minnesota college student Wyatt Trips, egged on by a college student/stripper, Ivy, he meets during a drinking bout, sends an insulting overnight mail letter to his longtime girlfriend, Kimberly, thinking she has been unfaithful to him. When Kim tells him he is mistaken, he and Ivy take a road trip to Memphis to stop the overnight delivery. The couple—and the delivery truck driver—have a series of farcical mishaps during the trip, but all arrive at the University of Memphis in time. Filmed entirely in Minnesota, the film has fun with state stereotypes. In Minnesota, a restaurant is named "Shorty and Swede's." A cheesy cowgirl welcomes visitors to Tennessee, and we see a giant Elvis balloon at the University of Memphis dorm. A sign with huge ears of corn announces the Iowa state line. After failing to catch a plane at the Des Moines airport, the couple stops at a hotdog stand

shaped like a pig. On the way out of the state, they see a big billboard with cutout figures of a farmer and his wife, perhaps an allusion to Grant Wood's *American Gothic*.

Bleeding Iowa. Dir. Stephen Goetsch. Spur of the Moment Pictures, 1999. 97 min. Principals: Kelley Johnson, Justin Lauer, Gretchen Morgan, Barbara Roberts, David Schultz, Heather Waters. Son of a farmer and respected state legislator, Iowa Jackson took money to kill a banker's son, ran away, and ended up in prison for life. Now an FBI agent has allowed him to escape for two days to find a stash of money hidden in a creek near the old family farm. Ellie, daughter of a workaholic farmer, chooses to join forces with Iowa, even knowing the dangers, rather than stay home, safe but bored. Blending pastoral and antipastoral views of Iowa, the film's state of Iowa has dirt roads, trucks, farmsteads, farmers with guns, and acres of corn. Iowa's closest friend in his hometown of Jackson Junction is an African American woman, Mama Joe, whose café full of antiques has the slogan "Eat and Reminisce"—fitting for a film that associates Iowa squarely with the farming past. "Bleeding Iowa" may refer to the film's violence, to the damaged hearts of the romantic pair on the lam, or to the state's economic anemia. "I will not allow the bleeding of Iowa to continue," Iowa Senator Brice repeats as his campaign slogan, but he is interested in winning election, not in saving his beautiful, tragic state.

Jesus' Son. Dir. Alison Maclean. Alliance Atlantis Communications, Blue Sky Studios, and Evenstar Productions, 1999. 107 min. Principals: Jack Black, Billy Crudup, Holly Hunter, Denis Leary, Samantha Morton. Literary Source: title story in the collection by Denis Johnson, *Jesus' Son* (New York, 1993). A film festival favorite, the surreal, episodic narrative follows a nameless drug addict who has landed in Iowa City during the counter-cultural 1970s. With a soundtrack of early '70s music in his head and religious iconography in his fantasies, he tries, and fails, to find love, help others, and discover life's meaning. He and his friends are too messed up to prevent death and disasters or to make sense of anything. Most of the film takes place in Iowa City, but was shot elsewhere. The Iowa City hospital looks like a local doctor's office, not University Hospitals. After eventually straightening out at a rehab hospital, the young man ends up in Phoenix, where he works in a nursing home and begins to find a kind of peace through learning to touch the patients gently, NA meetings, a friendship with an oft-widowed character, and watching a Mennonite couple live their daily lives. Very few Iowa films acknowledge that drug use occurs here in the heartland, as elsewhere. *NYT* 4/7/1999; *V* 9/20/1999.

Whiteboyz. [Alternate title: *Whiteboys*.] Dir. Marc Levin. Fox Searchlight, 1999. 89 min. Principals: Eugene Byrd, Danny Hoch, Dash Mihok, Piper Perabo, Mark Webber. White boys in rural Holyoke, Iowa, wearing hip-hop fashion and rappin' about ghetto life, are surrounded by the usual pickup trucks, corn, abandoned barns, and gravel roads, making audiences think that they are in for a comedy, but *this* film takes us to a real Iowa with telemarketing, factory layoffs, families on food stamps, malls, kids making college plans and dealing drugs, and a mix of social classes represented by various styles of homes. The trio of white rappers—trying to escape from poverty, middle-class pampering, and a demeaning job at a fast food place—are out of place in Iowa but dangerously so after arriving at Chicago's Cabrini Green with an affluent black friend. They want to make a big dope deal with \$160. More subtle and complex than it first appears, this film comments shrewdly on race and class and reveals the alienation from mainstream culture that converts so many young white boys into fans of rap music, even as it makes fun of the affectation of underclass consciousness. "Even though I live in Iowa, I've still got the ghetto in my heart," one of the boys declares. *NYT* 10/8/1999; *V* 9/27/1999.

Cora Unashamed. Dir. Deborah M. Pratt. WGBH Boston and ALT Films, 2000. 95 min. Principals: Michael Gaston, Molly Graham, Cherry Jones, Ellen Muth, Arlen Dean Snyder, Kohl Sudduth, Regina Taylor. Literary Source: Langston Hughes's story, "Cora Unashamed" in *The Ways of White Folks* (New York, 1934). This first work in PBS Masterpiece Theatre's American Collection series was produced by Iowa native Marian Rees and filmed in Cambridge and State Center. Housekeeper Cora Jenkins is from the only African American family in fictional Melton, Iowa. Cora's belief in love and her refusal to feel shame for having an illegitimate child with a white man contrast with the character of the wife and mother, Lizbeth Studevant, for whom Cora works. Lizbeth's self-centeredness, social climbing, and class prejudices lead to a tragedy for the Studevant family that Cora tries to, but cannot, prevent. The film portrays the growth of small towns in Iowa in the 1930s—with the coming of autos, washing machines, gas ranges, dairies, and immigrants. The film exposes the same stifling sense of rigid respectability and moral cowardice beneath the surface cordiality of midwestern small towns that Sinclair Lewis described in *Main Street*. A rare wisdom about human complexity underlies the film. Cora is no saint and Lizbeth no monster: one chooses to live unashamed on her own terms; the other lives as a prisoner of her shame. *V* 10/23/2000.

Mr. Deeds. Dir. Steven Brill. Columbia/New Line Cinema, 2002. 91 min. Principals: Conchata Ferrell, Peter Gallagher, Winona Ryder, Adam Sandler, John Turturro. Based loosely on the 1936 classic, *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, this movie contrasts the Big Apple with the small towns of Mandrake Falls, NH, Deeds's hometown, and Winchestertonfieldville, Iowa, where TV tabloid reporter Babe Bennett claims to have grown up. Really a Long Island native, Babe concocts a description of Winchestertonfieldville that, to her surprise, turns out to be partially true. There are a corner drugstore and a white house with a red door, blue shutters, and a tire swing. Deeds and Babe's Iowa alter ego, "Pam Dawson," fit the small-town model: he hugs, writes corny greeting cards, punches out muggers and snobs, and is kind and tolerant. The film shows small-town people as uncultured. In contrast, the New Yorkers are shown as greedy, slick, scornful, snobby, and sleazy. As in the more inspired original, small-town values prevail. *NYT* 6/28/2002; *V* 6/17/2002.

Real Time: Siege at Lucas Street Market. Dir. Max Allan Collins. Troma DVD, 2002. 72 min. Principals: Michael Cornelison, Larry Coven, Tom Keane, Rachel Lemieux, Brinke Stevens. Literary Source: Max Allan Collins's story "Inconvenience Store" in *Deadly Allies II: Private Eye Writers of America and Sisters in Crime Collaborative Anthology* (New York, 1994). This film is set in a Davenport convenience store and shot through security videos and police cameras that provide multiple views of the scenes. It depicts a cash register robbery by two dumb punks that turns bad when a sick cop stumbles into the scene. Suddenly several customers are hostages, and the drama focuses on negotiation and escape. A pregnant off-duty police detective calmly out-smarts the punks. This direct-to-DVD production offers angle-button perspective switches throughout the film.

The Music Man. Dir. Jeff Bleckner. Touchstone Television/Walt Disney Pictures, 2003. Principals: Clyde Alves, David Aaron Baker, Matthew Broderick, Kristin Chenoweth, Victor Garber, Cameron Monaghan. 150 min. Literary Source: Meredith Willson, *The Music Man* (New York, 1958). This Disney edition of Willson's popular musical was filmed in Canada, but the producers developed the River City setting through study of photographs from early twentieth-century Mason City. The dancing and singing are graceful and energetic; production values reflect the \$15 million investment. The film retains Iowa's stiff-necked provincialism and gullibility that let the outsider con man work redeeming magic on the natives, while, at the same time, undergoing a transformation himself.

II. Iowa Settings, Historical Films

The Law Commands. Dir. William Nigh. Crescent Pictures, 1937. 58 min. Principals: Matthew Betz, Budd Buster, Robert Fiske, Lorraine Hayes (Randall), Tom Keene, John Merton, David Sharpe, Marie Stoddard, Carl Stockdale, Charlotte Treadway. The story line of this western set in Johnson City, Iowa, after passage of the Homestead Act in 1862, turns on battles between new settlers and owners who held the territory before the Homestead Act. NS. AFI. V 8/17/1938.

Union Pacific. Dir. Cecil B. DeMille. Paramount, 1939. 135 min. Principals: Brian Donlevy, Joel McCrea, Lynne Overman, Robert Preston, Barbara Stanwyck, Akim Tamiroff. Literary Source: Ernest Haycox, "Union Pacific" (short story). Academy Award Nomination: Special Effects. DeMille's splendid movie combines adventure and romance in depicting the efforts to push the transcontinental railroad across the frontier from Omaha to California, while financial schemers attempt to delay the project. Two former Civil War buddies are rivals for the engineer's daughter, Molly Monahan. Part of the filming took place in Council Bluffs, which commemorated the world premiere in Omaha with a 56-foot golden concrete spike that is still on display at South 16th Street and Ninth Avenue. AFI. NYT 5/11/1939; V 5/3/1939.

Brigham Young—Frontiersman. [Alternate title: *Brigham Young*.] Dir. Henry Hathaway. Twentieth Century-Fox, 1940. 114 min. Principals: Mary Astor, John Carradine, Linda Darnell, Jane Darwell, Brian Donlevy, Dean Jagger, Tyrone Power, Vincent Price, Jean Rogers. When the Mormons move to Nauvoo, Illinois, to escape persecution, they are attacked again. Joseph Smith urges them to take up arms. He is accused of treason, imprisoned, and killed before he can be tried. Brigham Young leads the Mormons west, crossing the Mississippi River into Iowa. From there, the group treks on to Council Bluffs, where some choose to stay, and others cross the Missouri and head toward Utah. AFI. NYT 9/17/1940; V 8/28/1940.

The Fighting Sullivans. [Alternate titles: *The Sullivans*; *The Five Sullivans*.] Dir. Lloyd Bacon. Realart, 1944. 111 min. Principals: Anne Baxter, Ward Bond, Bobby Driscoll, Thomas Mitchell, Addison Richards, Selena Royle. Academy Award Nomination: Writing (Original Story). This amusing and touching film begins with the christening of the Sullivan boys, one by one, and ends with the christening of the navy destroyer *The U.S.S. Sullivans*, named in honor of the five brothers who died together on a cruiser ship near Guadalcanal in World War II. The film shows their rough and tumble Irish Catholic boyhood in Waterloo. The boys are

no saints, but they are devoted to church, nation, and especially family. The wife of the youngest knows he would be miserable separated from his brothers, so she urges him to enlist, even though they have a baby. As the ship sinks, four refuse to leave without their injured brother. This Iowa family celebrates duty and self-sacrifice. When Mr. Sullivan learns of the death of his sons, he goes to his job as a freight conductor for the Illinois Central because he hasn't missed a day in 33 years. AFI. NYT 2/10/1944; V 2/9/1944.

Bonnie and Clyde. Dir. Arthur Penn. Warner Brothers, 1967. 111 min. Principals: Warren Beatty, Faye Dunaway, Gene Hackman, Estelle Parsons, Michael J. Pollard. Academy Awards: Supporting Actress, Cinematography; Nominations: Picture, Director, Actor, Actress, Supporting Actor (2), Original Screenplay, Costume Design. This violent film presents the strange romance and bank-robbing adventures of Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker. The pair was ambushed in a shootout at Dexter, Iowa, but escaped to Louisiana, where they were later killed. AFI. NYT 8/14/1967; V 8/9/1967.

The Buddy Holly Story. Dir. Steve Rash. RCA/Columbia, 1978. 113 min. Principals: Gary Busey, Conrad Janis, William Jordan, Maria Richwine, Charles Martin Smith, Don Stroud. Academy Award: Score; Nomination: Actor, Sound. This highly acclaimed film biography of Buddy Holly's rock 'n' roll career closes with his last concert in Clear Lake, Iowa, sponsored by "WIOA Radio." Later that night Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J. P. Robertson (the Big Bopper) died when their small charter plane crashed. The Iowa teens in the audience that night are presented as typical kids of the era who wave their arms, clap, sing along, and cheer as Buddy sings his trademark songs, some of which ("That'll Be the Day," "Fade Away") eerily foreshadow his death. NYT 7/21/1978; V 5/17/1978.

Friendly Fire. Dir. David Greene. Marble Arch Productions, 1979. 146 min. Principals: Ned Beatty, Carol Burnett, Timothy Hutton, Sam Waterston. Literary Source: C. D. B. Bryan, *Friendly Fire* (New York, 1976). La Porte City farmers Gene and Peg Mullen lose a son to a "friendly fire" incident in Vietnam. Anger over the Pentagon's explanations and treatment of them leads them to publish a full-page protest ad in the *Des Moines Register*. Eventually, they become national icons representing ordinary citizens who leave Nixon's Silent Majority and turn to activism. The film is set in the Iowa farmscape. The narrative emphasizes the Mullens' connection with the earth and their quickly lost innocence as they encounter the world outside Iowa.

Bill. Dir. Anthony Page. CBS, 1981. 100 min. Principals: Dennis Quaid, Mickey Rooney, Largo Woodruff. This is a docudrama about a man with a mental disability, Bill Sackter, who was institutionalized at the Faribault State Hospital in Minnesota from the age of seven into his fifties. Working as a dishwasher in Minnesota, Bill meets a struggling young filmmaker, Barry Morrow, who takes an interest in filming his life. Morrow eventually brings Bill to the University of Iowa after accepting a teaching post. There "Wild Bill" operates a coffee kiosk at the School of Social Work. The full story of his acceptance and flowering has been told in a book by University of Iowa social work professor Thomas Walz, *The Unlikely Celebrity: Bill Sackter's Triumph Over Disability* (1998). This video and *Bill: On His Own* (1983) are sold by Wild Bill's Coffeeshop, 321 North Hall, Iowa City, IA 52242. Rooney earned Emmy and Golden Globe awards for his performance as Bill. Clips of the real Bill Sackter appear in both films. NYT 12/22/1981.

Bill: On His Own. Dir. Anthony Page. CBS, 1983. 100 min. Principals: Helen Hunt, Dennis Quaid, Mickey Rooney, Largo Woodruff, Teresa Wright. In this sequel to *Bill* (1981), we see Bill's struggles in Iowa City when his mentor and protector, Barry Morrow, leaves for Los Angeles. A tenacious but impatient social work student, Jenny Wells, watches over Bill during his transition. He works toward celebrating his bar mitzvah after discovering his Jewish heritage. The film explores departmental and university politics at the University of Iowa as they affect Bill and his advocates. NYT 11/9/1983; V 11/16/1983.

Who Will Love My Children? Dir. John Erman. ABC Films, 1983. 100 min. Principals: Ann-Margret, Cathryn Damon, Frederic Forrest, Donald Moffat. This TV docudrama tells the story of Lucile Fray, a 1950s Iowa mother who seeks loving homes for her ten children after discovering that she has terminal cancer. NS. NYT 2/14/1983.

La Bamba. Dir. Luis Valdez. Columbia, 1987. 103 min. Principals: Rosana De Soto, Esai Morales, Joe Pantoliano, Elizabeth Pena, Lou Diamond Phillips, Danielle von Zerneck. The film is based on the true story of Mexican-American rock 'n' roll singer Ritchie Valens, who died with Buddy Holly and the Big Bopper in an airplane crash after a concert at Clear Lake, Iowa. Only 17 at his death, Ritchie, formerly a farm laborer, was enjoying the beginnings of success, having recorded a handful of hits and appeared on *American Bandstand*. The film focuses on his relationships with his Anglo girlfriend, Donna, and his troubled, alcoholic brother, Bob. Just prior to winning the coin toss to take the "Clear Lake Charter Service" plane rather than the bus, the sick and very cold

Ritchie had reconciled over the phone with his brother. Before he left California for the tour, he and Donna had declared their love for each other and spoken of marriage. The concert scene provides only a brief glimpse of Iowa teens on their feet swaying and cheering to the music. NYT 8/2/1987; V 5/20/1987.

Bix: An Interpretation of a Legend. Dir. Pupi Avati. Duea Film-Union, 1991. 100 min. Principals: Mark Collver, Julia Ewing, Emile Levisetti, Romano Orzari, Bryant Weeks. Filmed in Chicago and Davenport, this fictionalized life of jazz legend Bix Beiderbecke presents the troubled relationship with his loving but conventional Iowa family as explanation for his drinking and early death. The story clearly shows his mid-western roots, including a large family home and nearby Mississippi River. Mom and Dad want Bix to "settle down" with a steady job and a nice girl; brother and sister regret the effect of his drinking and irresponsible behavior on the family. Although all forgive and take him back repeatedly, these unimaginative, pious midwesterners cannot understand, nurture, and appreciate a musical genius. Their disapproval torments Bix. Other common Iowa themes develop in the film. In Chicago, young Bix's friends say they will "teach this Iowa boy what modern women are like." Later, friends remark on how remote and hard to find Davenport is. Bix tells his sister of trouble with a piano composition because in Iowa there is "too much silence." V 5/13/1991.

In the Best Interest of the Children. Dir. Michael Ray Rhodes. NBC Productions, 1992. 96 min. Principals: Elizabeth Ashley, John Dennis Johnston, Sarah Jessica Parker, Lexi Randall, Sally Struthers. Estherville was the scene of a late 1980s custody battle. NBC's docudrama, filmed in Iowa, fictionalizes the family names and tells the story of Callie Cain, a depressed and financially struggling mother of five who lives with a succession of abusive boyfriends. Her neglect of the children brings the attention of social services, who reassign her children to foster parents Patty Pepper and her husband. Unable to bear children, Patty is determined to win the love of the confused children, torn between two mothers. After Callie loses her children, she undergoes treatment at a state psychiatric unit and then decides that she wants to get her children back. The children, happy on the Peppers' farm and caught up in Patty's crusade to keep them, do not want to return to Callie. A legal battle ensues. NYT 2/14/1992; V 2/17/1992.

Taking Back My Life: The Nancy Ziegenmeyer Story. Dir. Harry Winer. Lyttle-Heshty Prod., 1992. 97 min. Principals: Eileen Brennan, Ellen Burstyn, Joanna Cassidy, Shelley Hack, Gina Hecht, Stephen Lang, Patricia Wettig.

In this reality-based TV movie, Nancy Ziegenmeyer of Grinnell is kidnapped and raped. Frustrated by the slow workings of the legal system and supported by her stoical ex-husband, Steve, and *Des Moines Register* editor Geneva Overholser, Nancy goes public with her story and wins admiration for her courage. The film focuses on Nancy's strained relationship with Steve, and it makes the point that Iowa is not a safe place. *NYT* 3/13/1992; *V* 3/23/1992.

Crash Landing: The Rescue of Flight 232. Dir. Lamont Johnson. Paradigm Entertainment, 1992. A TV movie, released as a videocassette in 1994 as *A Thousand Heroes*. Principals: James Coburn, Charlton Heston, Richard Thomas. 95 min. This docudrama recreates the crash landing of United Flight 232 in Sioux City in 1989. The rescue operation reflects a heroic community of ordinary people who performed miracles of logistics and medical care to save many passengers. The film manufactures a bit of conflict between rescue leaders for dramatic purpose. The extras in the film were recruited from among the people of Siouxland—the tri-state area of Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota. Some rescue workers played roles in the film. *NYT* 2/24/1992; *V* 2/24/1992.

Whose Child Is This? The War for Baby Jessica. Dir. John Kent Harrison. Sofronoski Productions, with ABC Productions, 1993. 120 min. Principals: Susan Dey, David Keith, Michael Ontkean, Amanda Plummer. Literary Source: Lucinda Franks, "The War for Baby Clausen," *New Yorker*, 3/22/1993. This made-for-TV film drew on the story of Iowans Cara Clausen and Dan Schmidt, the unmarried birth parents of baby Jessica. Clausen agreed to give up Jessica to a middle-class couple, Robby and Jan DeBoer. Schmidt had not agreed to the arrangement and sued to get Jessica back. The battle was ugly. Since the producers acquired story rights from the more stable DeBoers, they come off as admirable, while the Iowans appear as repulsive trailer folk whose legal rights are nonetheless vindicated by Iowa courts. NS. *NYT* 9/25/1993.

Wyatt Earp. Dir. Lawrence Kasdan. Tig Productions and Kasdan Pictures, 1994. 189 min. Principals: Linden Ashby, Kevin Costner, Jeff Fahey, Joanna Going, Gene Hackman, Michael Madsen, Dennis Quaid, Catherine O'Hara, Isabella Rossellini. This saga of Wyatt Earp includes all of the usual shootings. The film correctly places Earp's birth and first years in Pella (where his home is now a tourist attraction). *V* 6/20/1994.

The Tuskegee Airmen. Dir. Robert Markowitz. HBO, 1995. 106 min. Principals: Andre Braugher, Laurence Fishburne, Cuba Gooding Jr., John Lithgow, Christopher McDonald, Rosemary Murphy, Allen Payne, Courtney B. Vance, Malcolm Jamal Warner. Based on the true story of

the training and combat missions of the U.S. Army Air Corps' first squadron of African American pilots, the "Fighting 99th" of the 332d Fighter Group, the film focuses on Hannibal Lee Jr. (called "Iowa"), of Ottumwa. We see Lee leave his family's loving home to follow his dream to become a pilot. During training in Tuskegee and later while serving overseas, Lee writes to his family daily. The Tuskegee Airmen, including Lee, repeatedly face prejudice and discouragement, within and outside the Army Air Corps. Lee's Iowa character traits—self-respect, professionalism, patriotism, good sense, and compassion—contribute to his success in training and his survival as a combat pilot. (Most of his original pals don't make it.) Lee and the Airmen eventually win praise for their skill in the skies, never losing a single bomber they escorted. NYT 8/21/1995; V 8/21/1995.

Ruby Ridge: An American Tragedy. [Alternate title: *The Siege at Ruby Ridge.*] Dir. Roger Young. Victor Television Productions/CBS, 1996. 192 min. Principals: G. W. Bailey, Laura Dern, Kirsten Dunst, Dianne Ladd, Bradley Pierce, Randy Quaid. This reality-based TV movie depicts a Cedar Falls-area family, the Weavers, who, at first, embody stereotypical "Iowa qualities": fervent religious faith, strong family ties, cheerful neighborliness. The early Iowa scenes show Randy and Vicki adopting apocalyptic religious views derived from an interpretation of Old Testament prophecy. Their fears of a "Zionist One World Conspiracy" lead them to northern Idaho, where the family adopts Aryan Nation views, the children wear swastikas, and Randy gets involved in gun trafficking. Confusion among overzealous federal agents leads to a siege in which Vicki and son Samuel are killed. A jury trial eventually exposes the government's errors as well as the family's hatred of non-whites and the government. The loyalty and love of Vicki's Iowa family, who do not share her views, is a strong theme. Randy and the remaining children return to Iowa after the siege.

The Straight Story. Dir. David Lynch. Disney Films, 1999. 111 min. Principals: Richard Farnsworth, Sissy Spacek, Harry Dean Stanton. Academy Award Nomination: Actor. Based on the true story of Alvin Straight, a 73-year-old resident of Laurens, who resolves to visit his stroke-afflicted brother Lyle in Mt. Zion, Wisconsin. Unable to drive a car and unwilling to ride the bus, he makes the long journey on a John Deere riding mower. The purpose of the slow trip is to outgrow a ten-year-old alienating anger against his brother. Along the way he offers laconic revelations from his hard-earned wisdom to the depressed, the overwrought, some touring bicyclists, a World War II veteran, bickering brothers, and a Catholic priest. A magical Iowa landscape is a prominent feature.

Waves of golden cornstalks, the lush pastures of the hills, the brilliant stars of an unpolluted rural sky are healing agents for this spiritual pilgrim. Alvin's mentally disabled daughter is a constant in the film—courageous, competent, and caring about her father. While not stylish or skilled as conversationalists, the Iowans portrayed have good hearts. *NYT* 10/15/1999; *NYT* 5/5/2000; *V* 5/24/1999.

III. Traveling Iowans

Bill Henry. Dir. Jerome Storm. Thomas H. Ince Productions, 1919. 5 reels. Silent. Principals: William Carroll, Charles Ray, Edith Roberts, Bert Woodruff. Into the life of Bill Henry Jenkins, an Alabama hotel clerk, comes a lovely lady from Iowa, Lela Mason. She has come to Alabama to claim a farm that she has inherited. After attempted swindles and seductions by predatory locals, she turns the tables and claims the money realized by the sale of her property—which is discovered to have oil. NS. AFI. *NYT* 8/18/1919; *V* 8/22/1919.

Crooked Straight. Dir. Jerome Storm. Thomas H. Ince Productions-Famous Players-Lasky Corp.-Paramount Artcraft Pictures, 1919. 5 reels. Silent. Principals: Wade Boteler, Otto Hoffman, Gordon Mullen, Charles Ray, Margery Wilson. When Iowa boy Ben Trimble arrives in Chicago, he is immediately flim-flammed out of his life savings of \$1,000 and coerced into a life of crime to survive. He eventually moves to the country to raise the children of a dead partner in crime. Despite many complications arising from his criminal past, he gets to marry the woman next door. This is the earliest film with a naive-Iowan-in-the-big-city theme. NS. AFI. *V* 10/24/1919.

Stardust. Dir. Hobart Henley. Associated First National Pictures, 1921. 6 reels. Silent. Principals: Mary Foy, Hope Hampton, George Humbert, Charles Mussett, Vivian Ogden, James Rennie, Edna Ross, Noel Tearle, Charles Wellesley, Gladys Wilson. Literary Source: Fannie Hurst, *Stardust* (New York, 1919). Lily Becker has been raised in an Iowa home by a tyrannical mother who refuses to nurture her musical aspirations. Lily is compelled to marry a wealthy tyrant, Albert Penny, who makes her miserable. Pregnant, she flees to New York, almost starves, and has a baby who dies. She meets up with a musical fellow who believes in her singing and leads her to an operatic career. The brutal husband back in Iowa dies in a railway accident, leaving her free to pursue a life with her fellow musician in the big city. At film's end she attains the pinnacle of sophistication and personal fulfillment, singing the role of Thais at the opera. NS. AFI. *NYT* 2/6/1922.

Night Life of New York. Dir. Allan Dwan. Famous Players-Lasky, 1925. 8 reels. Silent. Principals: Dorothy Gish, George Hackathorne, Riley Hatch, Arthur Housman, Rod La Rocque, Ernest Torrence, Helen Lee Worthing. John Bentley, a father living in New York, hates it, while his Iowa son, Ronald Bentley, is bored with Iowa and wants to come to New York. Dad invites him to come but contrives so much trouble that he expects his son to go running back to Iowa. Things go awry, and the son is charged with a crime. He is saved by telephone operator Meg, who eventually becomes his bride. Dad's plan works out, since Ronald does take Meg back to Iowa. NS. AFI. NYT 7/14/1925; V 7/15/1925.

A Slave of Fashion. Dir. Hobart Henley. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1925. 6 reels. Silent. Principals: Sidney Bracey, Mary Carr, Estelle Clark, Lew Cody, James Corrigan, Miss DuPont, William Haines, Vivia Ogden, Norma Shearer. Katherine Emerson, a restless young woman from Iowa, wants to experience big city life. As she travels to New York, she takes the purse of a woman killed in an accident. In it she finds an invitation to spend time in a New York apartment. After she moves in, her Iowa parents and Aunt Sophie arrive at the Park Avenue apartment and want to know what she's doing there. The daughter fabricates a yarn about being married to a man who has left for Europe. The mother is alarmed about his desertion of her and writes to the apartment's owner in Europe, urging him to come home. When he does, the daughter is exposed. However, he finds her charming enough to marry anyway. NS. AFI. NYT 7/21/1925; V 7/15/1925.

High Society Blues. Dir. David Butler. Fox Films, 1930. 10 reels. Silent. Principals: William Collier Sr., Joyce Compton, Charles Farrell, Louise Fazenda, Gregory Gaye, Janet Gaynor, Hedda Hopper, Brandon Hurst, Lucien Littlefield. Literary Source: Dana Burnett, "Those High Society Blues," *Saturday Evening Post*, 5/23/1925. The Grangers, a wealthy family in Iowa, sell their business and move to Scarsdale, NY. The son meets the daughter of the rich Divine family next door. Her family scorns the newcomers. While her mother schemes for her to marry European royalty and the fathers feud on Wall Street, the two young people fall in love and eventually reconcile their families. NS. AFI. NYT 4/10/1930; V 4/23/1930.

Midnight Daddies. Dir. Mack Sennett. Mack Sennett Productions, 1930. 6 reels. Silent. Principals: Alma Bennett, Andy Clyde, Jack Cooper, Harry Gribbon, Addie McPhail, Rosemary Theby, Katherine Ward. Charlie Mason, owner of a nearly bankrupt, big-city fashion shop, takes some of his models to the beach. There, the ex-Iowan meets his

hometown cousin Wilbur Louder, who is vacationing in the city with his wife and mother-in-law. Mason senses that Louder is a little dopey about the pretty girls and plots to use them to get his money. The wife figures out what is happening, gets Mason drunk, and exposes the plot. Wilbur almost kills himself, but his wife forgives, and things go back to normal. NS. AFI. V 10/16/1929.

As Husbands Go. Dir. Hamilton MacFadden. Jesse L. Lasky Productions, 1933. 78 min. Principals: Warner Baxter, Catherine Doucet, G. P. Huntley Jr., Warner Oland, Helen Vinson. A pair of women from Dubuque, the married Lucille Lingard and widow Emmy Sykes, travel to Paris. Meeting a pair of men much to their liking, they are especially irritated by their return to boring Iowa and Lucille's artless husband, Charles. When the Continental sophisticates Ronald Derbyshire and Hippolitus Lomi show up to visit in Dubuque, Ronald befriends Charles and confesses his selfish and unfriendly designs. He disappears the next day, Lucille regains her love for the dull husband, and Emmy solidifies her relationship with Hippolitus, overcoming the initial objections of her daughter. NS. AFI. NYT 1/26/1934; V 1/30/1934.

Men of the Night. Dir. Lambert Hillyer. Columbia Pictures, 1934. 58 min. Principals: Judith Abbot, Judith Allen, Lucille Ball, Ward Bond, Matthew Betz, John Kelly, Walter McGrail, Arthur Rankin, Maidel Turner, Charles C. Wilson. Iowan Mary Higgins goes to Hollywood hoping for a chance for movie stardom but has to take a job at a sandwich stand. A detective who has been watching the sandwich stand for criminals accuses her of being allied with criminals who come there, and she goes undercover for the police to prove that she's on their side. Her participation leads to her abduction by the gang. After the police retrieve her, the detective sends her back to Iowa and then relents and fetches her back to Hollywood. NS. AFI. V 12/4/1934.

Times Square Lady. Dir. George B. Seitz. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1935. Principals: Virginia Bruce, Robert Elliott, Raymond Hatton, Isabel Jewell, Fred Kohler, Henry Kolker, Jack LaRue, Nat Pendleton, Paul Stanton, Robert Taylor, Helen Twelvetrees. A 22-year-old Iowan inherits several New York businesses from her father. When she arrives to investigate the enterprises—a nightclub, a hockey team, gambling, a dog track—everyone assumes she's a patsy who can be bilked out of her assets. One of the swindlers, assigned to frighten her into a panic sale, falls in love with her and helps her turn a caper against the crooks who are trying to cheat her. Eventually the plucky Iowan leaves New York with her fortune and the criminal she has converted. NS. AFI. NYT 3/15/1935; V 3/20/1935.

The Farmer in the Dell. Dir. Ben Holmes. RKO-Radio, 1936. 67 min. Principals: Frank Albertson, Lucille Ball, Rafael Corio, Esther Dale, Maxine Jennings, Ray Mayer, Moroni Olsen, Jean Parker, Fred Stone. Literary Source: Phil Stong, *The Farmer in the Dell* (New York, 1935), also serialized in *The Saturday Evening Post*, 1/26-2/15/1935. An Iowa farmer retires to the Los Angeles area. His daughter craves to be in the film industry, but he, improbably, becomes a famous character actor himself. NS. AFI. NYT 3/7/1936; V 3/11/1936.

We Have Our Moments. Dir. Alfred L. Werker. Universal Pictures, 1937. 65 min. Principals: Mischa Auer, James Dunn, Sally Eilers, Thurston Hall, David Niven, Grady Sutton. Clem Porter and Mary Smith live in the small town of Brattelburo. When Clem's commitment to bowling requires them to spend their honeymoon in nearby Sioux City, Mary books passage on a ship to Europe, telling Clem that she will return after learning something about the larger world. NS. AFI. NYT 4/3/1937; V 5/5/1937.

Keep Smiling. Dir. Herbert I. Leeds. Twentieth Century-Fox Film, 1938. 77 min. Principals: Robert Allen, Jed Prouty, Gloria Stuart, Helen Westley, Henry Wilcoxon, Jane Withers. Jane Rand, an orphan, arrives unannounced at the home of Uncle Jonathan, a famous Hollywood film director. She finds him drunk and losing all his possessions. Jane is befriended by Uncle Jonathan's secretary, Carol Walters, a woman from Iowa whose fiancé, Stanley Harper, is pressuring her to come back and marry him. With the help of Carol and Jane, Jonathan manages to get work again. Stanley telegrams that he's coming to take Carol back to Iowa and threatens to go straight back if she doesn't meet him at the train station. Meanwhile, Jonathan proposes marriage to her. NS. AFI. NYT 8/10/1938; V 8/17/1938.

The Flying Deuces. Dir. A. Edward Sutherland. Borris Morros Productions, 1939. 65 min. Principals: Oliver Hardy, Stan Laurel, Jean Parker. Ollie, a fishmonger from Des Moines, goes to Paris and meets the lovely Georgette. When she turns against him, he contemplates suicide in the River Seine, but a legionnaire comes by and suggests enlistment in the Foreign Legion. With Stan, he joins for life, but the service quickly becomes boring. When they discover that Georgette is actually the wife of their superior, they decide to desert and are captured and sentenced to death. Hiding in a plane, they accidentally start and eventually crash it. Stan survives, but Ollie ascends to heaven and then returns as a horse. AFI. NYT 11/24/1939; V 10/11/1939.

Melody Lane. Dir. Charles Lamont. Universal Pictures, 1941. 60 min. Principals: Mary Lou Cook, Don Douglas, Leon Errol, Anne Gwynne, Joe McMichael, Judd McMichael, Ted McMichael, Robert Paige. J. Roy Thomas represents a client, McKenzie, who advertises Kornies Breakfast Food on the radio. McKenzie wrecks every attempt to develop an ad. Thomas sends his aide to Yuba City, Iowa, to recruit The Gabe Morgan Rythmeers. Frustrated with McKenzie, they threaten to go back to Iowa. But romances develop, creating an incentive to battle the difficult sponsor. McKenzie is maneuvered out of the ad production, the Rhythmeers stay, and the predictable engagements are announced. NS. AFI. V 12/10/1941.

Don't Get Personal. [Alternate title: *Nobody's Fool*.] Dir. Charles Lamont. Universal Pictures, 1942. 60 min. Principals: Mischa Auer, Jane Frazee, Anne Gwynne, Hugh Herbert, Robert Paige. A pickle millionaire, Oscar Whippet, dies in an airplane accident, and his Iowa cousin, Elmer Whippet, inherits the profitable business. A pair of Oscar's associates first attempt (unsuccessfully) to buy the company and then try various swindles that presuppose Elmer's stupidity. Elmer sees through the schemes and fires the scheming executives. NS. AFI. V 12/31/1942.

The Major and the Minor. Dir. Billy Wilder. Paramount, 1942. 100 min. Principals: Robert Benchley, Rita Johnson, Diana Lynn, Ginger Rogers, Ray Milland. Literary Source: Edward Child Carpenter's play *Connie Goes Home* (1923) and Fannie Kilbourne's story "Sunny Goes Home," in *Saturday Evening Post*, 5/7/1921. In Wilder's witty comedy, Iowa-bred Susan Applegate poses as a child ("Sue-Sue") to get half-price train fare to return to Iowa from morally unwholesome New York City, where she has been groped and propositioned once too often. Waiting in Iowa are her jam-and-jelly-making mom and her "plain, honest, slow-witted" boyfriend, who runs a feed and grain store. En route to Iowa, Susan becomes embroiled in funny situations with a major, his fiancée, and hundreds of military school cadets attracted to Sue-Sue like moths to a flame. The screenplay positions Iowa as the safe, dull, patriotic breadbasket. As an Iowa woman, Susan is a breath of fresh air. While objecting to sexual harassment, she is no hick and no prude. Her charm, sophistication, and risk-taking spirit—as well as her kindness to the major and a teenage girl—ultimately lead to her marriage to the nice, dim, naive major, soon to begin active military service. AFI. NYT 9/17/1942; V 9/2/1942.

Double Exposure. Dir. William Berke. Pine-Thomas Productions, 1944. 63 min. Principals: Jane Farrar, Nancy Kelly, Chester Morris, Phillip Terry.

Pat Marvin is a female photographer in Iowa, whose work has attracted the attention of *Flick Magazine* in New York City. Editor Larry Burke is ordered to hire Pat, who must leave her boyfriend Ben Scribner back in Iowa. Complicated adventures and romantic liaisons follow. NS. AFI. V 12/20/1944.

Blonde from Brooklyn. Dir. Del Lord. Columbia Pictures, 1945. 64 min. Principals: Thurston Hall, Lynn Merrick, Robert Stanton, Mary Treen, Gwen Verdon. Dixon Harper, from Dubuque, has been released from the army and would like to resume his career as a singer and dancer. He meets Susan Parker, who would also like to perform, and they persuade an orchestra leader to let them try something for an audience. Successful, they fall into the hands of "Southern Colonel" Hubert Farnsworth, who plans to develop their southern accents and mannerisms so that they can appear on the "Plantation Coffee Time" radio series. The colonel also has a scheme to misrepresent Susan as the missing heir of a large estate. In the ensuing confusion, Dixon and Susan are alienated from one another, but reunited in the end as radio performers. NS. AFI. V 6/27/1945.

Bud Abbott and Lou Costello in Hollywood. [Alternate title: *Abbott and Costello in Hollywood*.] Dir. S. Sylvan Simon. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1945. 83 min. Principals: Warner Anderson, Bud Abbott, Lou Costello, Frances Rafferty, Jean Porter, Robert Stanton. Buzz Curtis and Abercrombie (Abbott and Costello) work a "barbershop service to the stars" in Hollywood. As they give a shave to successful agent Norman Royce at his office, a naive, charming crooner from Des Moines, Jeff Parker, comes in seeking help from Royce, an old family friend from Des Moines, to get into the movies. Royce gets him a contract but then suddenly betrays him. When Parker's contract is revoked, he is so discouraged that he wants to take the bus back to Des Moines. Buzz and Abercrombie, inspired by the prospect of becoming agents themselves, persuade Parker to be their first client. They scheme to disable the star who took Parker's role and cause the usual ruckus. Parker eventually triumphs as a Hollywood star despite the clumsy assistance. AFI. NYT 11/23/1945; V 8/22/1945.

A Foreign Affair. Dir. Billy Wilder. Paramount, 1948. 115 min. Principals: Jean Arthur, Marlene Dietrich, John Lund, Millard Mitchell. Academy Award Nominations: Screenplay, Cinematography. This comic romance explores moral customs in post-World War II Germany. Congresswoman Phoebe Frost from Iowa investigates the lives of the U.S. occupation forces and is shocked by the practices she finds. Her sexual con-

servatism is juxtaposed against the overt eroticism of war-weary Erika von Schluetow. Before the film is over, Frost learns the limits of her own self-control when she pairs up with an Iowa constituent. A memorable moment is when Phoebe sings "We Are from Iowa" in a German club. AFI. NYT 7/1/1948; V 6/16/1948.

Sealed Verdict. Dir. Lewis Allen. Paramount Pictures, 1948. 82 min. Principals: Broderick Crawford, Charles Evans, John Hoyt, June Jeffery, Paul Lees, Florence Marly, Ray Milland, John Ridgely. Literary Source: Lionel Shapiro, *The Sealed Verdict* (Garden City, NY, 1947). Major Robert Lawson heads the Judge Advocate's Office in Reschweiler, Germany. It seeks to prosecute General Otto Steigman for war crimes. The assistant to Major Lawson, Private Clay Hockland from Iowa, has a pregnant German girlfriend. Private Hockland is shot in the street and lies near death in the hospital. General Kirkwood decides to exploit the incident for publicity and flies the private's parents from Iowa to Germany along with a gossip reporter. The young man dies and his girlfriend is in labor before they arrive. Mrs. Hockland wants to save the baby and take it back to Iowa to promote kindness in the world. NS. AFI. NYT 11/3/1948; V 9/8/1948.

Go for Broke! Dir. Robert Pirosh. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1951. 92 min. Academy Award Nominations: Writing, Story, Screenplay. Principals: Warner Anderson, Gianna Canale, Akira Fukunaga, Don Haggerty, Harry Hamada, Van Johnson, Ken K. Okamoto, George Miki, Henry Nakamura, Lane Nakano, Henry Oyasato. This is a story of the Nisei of World War II's 442d Regimental Combat Team. The American-born Japanese, who were otherwise destined for internment, were allowed to fight on the European front, where they earned thousands of citations for valor. Led by the bigoted Texan Lt. Michael Grayson, the Japanese must prove their loyalty and fighting prowess. The film follows the familiar World War II convention of depicting America's harmonious diversity under stress. One of the Japanese-American soldiers worked at an egg operation in Iowa. AFI. NYT 5/25/1951; V 3/28/1951.

The Tarnished Angels. Dir. Douglas Sirk. Universal, 1957. 91 min. Principals: Jack Carson, Troy Donahue, Rock Hudson, Dorothy Malone, Robert Middleton, Robert Stack. Literary Source: William Faulkner adapted the screenplay from his novel *Pylon* (New York, 1935). Sixteen-year-old La Verne leaves Iowa to follow Roger Shuman, a former World War I flying ace now doing air stunts and racing at carnivals. She becomes pregnant, and Roger reluctantly marries her. With their son, they do the carnival circuit during the depression, La Verne contributing a

parachute act that highlights her sexy 1950s-style body. Burke Devlin, a paternalistic reporter in New Orleans who falls for La Verne, watches the obsessive Roger destroy himself in a risky race. Devlin compels La Verne to return with her son to Iowa. La Verne, a "bad girl" who craved romantic adventure, will give her son a more normal life by returning to Iowa. *NYT* 1/7/1958; *V* 11/20/1957.

All of Me. Dir. Jay Martin. Joseph Brenner Associates Release, 1963. 73 min. Principal: Brenda DeNaut. Dany, a young woman from Iowa, wins a beauty contest. When she goes to New York to model, a photographer named Terrell gets her to pose for cheesecake-style photography, and eventually to remove all her clothes. Then he begins molesting her. When she flees, a TV producer, Bill, happens by and listens to her sad story. Bill convinces her to go to a nudist camp, where she learns to become more comfortable with herself and with Bill. NS. AFI.

What's Up, Doc? Dir. Peter Bogdanovich. Warner Brothers, 1972. 74 min. Principals: Madeline Kahn, Ryan O'Neal, Randy Quaid, Barbra Streisand. This screwball romance features a quirky love triangle: befuddled Professor Howard Bannister from the Music Conservatory at Ames; his conventional and boring Iowa fiancée, Eunice Burns; and the fast-talking, street-smart Judy Maxwell. The pedantic, priggish professor and his whiny, frumpish partner have come to San Francisco for a meeting of the American Conference of Musicologists. He is contending for a \$20,000 fellowship to study "early man's musical exploitation of igneous rock formations." Judy's urban California sophistication and intellectual brilliance (the result of being kicked out of a series of fine colleges) lead Howard away from the repulsive Eunice. After chaotic mishaps and confusions, Howard and Judy find true love and fly back to Ames together, while Eunice remains in San Francisco with an eccentric young philanthropist. *NYT* 3/10/1972; *V* 3/8/1972.

Hearts of the West. [Alternate title: *Hollywood Cowboy*.] Dir. Howard Zieff. MGM, 1975. 102 min. Principals: Alan Arkin, Jeff Bridges, Blythe Danner, Andy Griffith, Donald Pleasance. Iowa farmboy Lewis Tater dreams of being a published writer of westerns and takes a course from a phony correspondence school in Nevada. He heads to Nevada and then on to Hollywood, where he gets caught up in the movie industry. Miss Trout advises the big, good-looking, naive kid and becomes the romantic interest, though the single-minded Tater is obsessed with writing—not acting or romance. Tater first tells Trout he is from Nevada, but then admits his Iowa origins. The humor comes mainly from the contrast between farm boy Tater and the more sophisticated Hollywood crowd

in the early days of talkies. (Trout asks Tater at one point if they dance in Iowa.) Did the Hollywood scriptwriters think Iowa was the state with potatoes? *NYT* 10/4/1975; *V* 10/1/1975.

For Ladies Only. Dir. Mel Damski. Catalina Production Group/Viacom, 1981. 94 min. Principals: Patricia Davis, Lee Grant, Gregory Harrison, Steven Keats, Louise Lasser, Viveca Lindfors, Dinah Manoff, Mark Singer. This is the quintessential traveling Iowan fable, remade for the age of sexual liberation. John Lawrence Phillips, a University of Iowa theater graduate, aspires to a Broadway acting career, but it's soon apparent that he is too poor, too naive, and too honest to make it in the Big Apple. (A secretary in a casting agency dubs him "Mr. Just-in-from-Iowa.") As his acting aspirations and finances slide, he reluctantly takes a job as a waiter at a male stripper club. He gradually becomes the club's most elegant star. For a while he behaves as a gigolo, sleeping with wealthy women and performing at private parties. The suicide of a fellow stripper reinforces the message of the good young women in his life who want him to return to the dream he brought from Iowa. Pleasing them in the end, he acts in a role as a Western Union delivery boy at a community theater.

Heat and Dust. Dir. James Ivory. Universal, 1982. 130 min. Principals: Christopher Cazenove, Julie Christie, Nickolas Grace, Zakir Hussain, Shashi Kapoor, Charles McCaughan, Greta Scacchi. Literary Source: Ruth Praver Jhabvala, *Heat and Dust* (London, 1975). BBC announcer Anne travels to India in the 1980s to investigate the life of her great-aunt, Olivia Rivers, the bored wife of a British official who left her husband for the local Indian prince in 1923. Anne encounters Chid, a spiritual seeker with roots in Iowa who has renounced his previous identity. He seeks spiritual power through yoga. Pathetically, he tries to seduce Anne, who sleeps instead with her Indian landlord. Because Indian food has allegedly destroyed his liver, Chid eventually has to return to his aunt's place in Washington, Iowa. Is this a cultural comment on Iowa's bland food? He also raves about his aunt's clean bathroom and kitchen. Chid's sole function in the film is to represent misguided spiritual pilgrims to modern India. He also establishes clean, green Iowa as an antithesis to dusty, exotic India. *NYT* 9/15/1983; *V* 1/19/1983.

Fraternity Vacation. Dir. James Frawley. New World Pictures, 1985. 93 min. Principals: Cameron Dye, Stephen Geoffreys, Leigh McCloskey, Tim Robbins, Sheree J. Wilson. Two sets of rival fraternity members from Iowa State University leave an Iowa blizzard to vacation in Palm Beach, where bikini-clad young women, eager to party, line the streets

and beaches. Joe and Mother are saddled with Wendell Tvedt (pun on vet), the ultimate nerd, whose parents own "one of the largest pig farms in central Iowa." Wendell represents Iowa clumsiness, lack of sophistication, sexual naiveté, and niceness. While Joe and Mother compete with rivals Charles and J. C. to see who can first bed blonde beauty Ashley, Wendell's honesty and sweetness win over a local girl, two prostitutes, and, ultimately, the coveted Ashley. All the boys return to Iowa reunited through partying and with a new respect for Iowa "niceness" as a ploy to score with girls. *NYT* 4/12/1985; *V* 2/27/1985.

Out of Bounds. Dir. Richard Tuggle. RCA/Columbia Pictures, 1986. 93 min. Principals: Raymond J. Barry, Anthony Michael Hall, Jeff Kober, Meat Loaf, Glynn Turman, Jenny Wright. This film highlights the cultural contrasts between rural De Witt, Iowa, and central Los Angeles. A naive and depressed Daryl Cage leaves his parents, who are separating because of pressures on the farm, to visit his successful brother in Los Angeles. A bag mixup at the airport leaves Daryl holding a supply of heroin. After his brother's murder, he links up with a street-smart punk waitress to thwart both hostile police and drug dealers. Initially calling him "Iowa" and "Farm Boy," the waitress transforms Daryl's look, and he instantly picks up lethal urban skills. In the final showdown, he hurls a knife into the heart of the drug dealer, using a skill honed on the side of an Iowa barn. Like so many departing Iowans, he settles in Los Angeles. Iowa niceness wins romance, and his toughness and integrity allow him to survive. *NYT* 7/25/1986; *V* 7/23/1986.

Fort Figueroa. Dir. Luis Valdez. Warner Bros. Television, 1988. 60 min. Principals: Anne E. Curry, Charles Haid, Anne Haney, Holly Fields. In this pilot for a proposed television series, the Perrys, a family from Iowa who have just lost their farm, inherit a multicultural apartment complex in Los Angeles. Because of the large number of Mexican immigrants, the complex is named Fort Figueroa. NS. *NYT* 8/2/1988; *V* 8/24/1988.

Lunatics: A Love Story. Dir. Josh Becker. Sam Raimi-Robert Tapert, 1991. 87 min. Principals: George Aguilar, Bruce Campbell, Deborah Foreman, Brian McCree, Theodore Raimi. This offbeat romance, set in Los Angeles, highlights big-city dangers that bring together Nancy from Iowa and Hank from Michigan. He had come west after more than three years of hospitalization for delusions and suicidal threats back home. Fear of the streets has kept him barricaded behind foil-covered walls for more than six months. Nancy, who shares with Hank an impulse for poetry, came west with an exploitative man who steals from her and abandons her. She fears a gang that stalks her, threatening to rape and kill her.

Learning of her grandmother's death, she develops the guilty delusion that her departure from Iowa killed Grandma. Yet she remains resolute: "I'm not going back to Iowa. I'm gone." The two depressed, delusional refugees from the Midwest eventually defend and console one another and take a trip back to his Michigan home. *V* 9/16/1991.

Soapdish. Dir. Michael Hoffman. Paramount, 1991. 97 min. Principals: Robert Downey Jr., Sally Field, Carrie Fisher, Whoopi Goldberg, Teri Hatcher, Kevin Kline, Cathy Moriarty, Kathy Najimy, Elisabeth Shue. This very funny burlesque of soap operas satirizes the soaps' outrageous plots and exposes the ratings game and competition among actors for prominent story lines. Aging actress Celeste Talbert has been beloved by fans since she took the part of Maggie—"America's Sweetheart," "the queen of misery"—soon after leaving Des Moines at age 16. She is reunited with her daughter (raised by "grandma" in Des Moines as Celeste's "niece") and the girl's father, ham actor Jeffery Anderson. Celeste's Iowa background is marked by her references to God, her objection to swearing, her "niceness," and her guilt over being a bad mother. Like many Iowa youth in film and life, Celeste had dreams of big-city fame. She discovers, in the end, that family matters most—but playing out her crazy family drama on the air also leads to more awards and terrific ratings. At the end she achieves both family and success, while her scheming nemesis is doing dinner theater in the sticks. *NYT* 5/31/1991; *V* 6/3/1991.

Married to It. Dir. Arthur Hiller. Three Pair/Orion, 1993. (Release of this 1991 film was delayed for two years.) 110 min. Principals: Beau Bridges, Stockard Channing, Robert Sean Leonard, Mary Stuart Masterson, Cybill Shepherd, Ron Silver. In Manhattan, three couples—one pair from Iowa—become friends. Childhood sweethearts who met through 4-H, Nina and Chuck are now young professionals who discover that their Iowa naiveté, trust, and optimism do not serve them well in the Big Apple. They must recommit to one another after absorbing their bruising experiences. The film highlights the Iowa couple's embarrassment when they try to describe for urban skeptics the featureless Iowa culture that they have sought to escape. *V* 9/23/1991.

Operation Dumbo Drop. [Alternate titles: *The Dumbo Drop*; *Dumbo Drop*.] Dir. Simon Wincer. Walt Disney Pictures, 1995. 108 min. Principals: Doug E. Doug, Danny Glover, Dinh Thienh Le, Dennis Leary, Ray Liotta, Corin Nemec. In this comic caper, a secret Green Beret operation during the Vietnam War in 1968 moves an adult elephant over hundreds of miles of canyons, rivers, and mountains. The destination is a friendly

Montagnard village near the Ho Chi Minh Trail that needs the elephant for labor and religious ritual. Thus the project is an act of cultural reconciliation. Led by feuding Captain Cahill and Doyle, the small task group includes Iowan Lawrence Harley, who is supposed to handle the elephant because of his background on a dairy farm, though he claims that animals don't like him. His characterization as an Iowan is thin and afflicted by a Deep South accent. The project succeeds despite squabbling, danger, and higher authorities' official decision to terminate the operation. *NYT* 7/28/1995; *V* 7/31/1995.

Joe's Apartment. Dir. John Payson. Geffen Pictures and MTV/Warner Bros., 1996. 80 min. Principals: Don Ho, Jerry O'Connell, Robert Vaughn, Megan Ward. Based on a popular MTV short film, the plot turns on a naive, uncool Iowan's adventures in filthy, crime-infested New York City. When he arrives by bus, Joe, wearing Iowa Hawkeye duds, is mugged three times in rapid succession and ends up in a roach-controlled apartment. Thrilled by his slobbish habits, the hip roaches harmonize as they dance through dirty clothes and rotting food. At first, the roaches sabotage Joe's menial jobs and his budding romance with idealistic Lily, daughter of a mob-connected U.S. senator. Joe is ready to return to Iowa after a string of misadventures. He finds himself out of work with a fellow Iowan whose urinal cake company has just suffered a hostile takeover. The roaches rally to help Joe, creating a garden for Lily where her father had planned a federal penitentiary. They also bring the lovers together in her sanitary apartment. Full of toilet humor and funky roach music, this film suggests that roaches, allied with a decent Iowan, would rule the world more benevolently than native New Yorkers. *NYT* 7/27/1996; *V* 7/29/1996.

The Man Who Knew Too Little. Dir. Jon Amiel. Warner Bros., 1997. 94 min. Principals: Peter Gallagher, Geraldine James, Alfred Molina, Bill Murray, Joanne Whalley, Richard Wilson. Wallace Ritchie travels to London from his hometown of Des Moines, where he works for Blockbuster Video. His brother in London, a successful international banker, buys a ticket for Wally to participate in an interactive theater experience. Naive Wally bumbles his way into a Russian and British conspiracy. The agents of both countries are planning a bombing that will revive the Cold War—and their funding. Wally is an Iowa version of Inspector Clouseau—clumsy, likeable, trusting, naively enthusiastic about everything. He is also fearless because he thinks it's all theater, impressing the inevitable sexy female spy and the worldwide espionage community. In the end he is recruited by the CIA. *NYT* 11/14/1997; *V* 11/10/1997.

Murder at 1600. Dir. Dwight H. Little. Regency Enterprises, 1997. 107 min. Principals: Alan Alda, Daniel Benzali, Diane Lane, Dennis Miller, Wesley Snipes. This action-adventure film features the murder of a young woman in the White House. The City of Washington's Detective Harlan Regis refuses to collaborate with the presidential staff's desire to suppress a thorough investigation. He creates an alliance of integrity with Secret Service Agent Nina Chance, a sharp shooter from Iowa with Olympic gold medal credentials and too much of a straight arrow for romance. They eventually sneak into the White House through a tunnel and overcome obstacles to reach the residence and unveil the truth about the crime. *NYT* 4/8/1997; *V* 4/14/1997.

Titanic. Dir. James Cameron. Lightstorm Entertainment/Paramount, 1997. 194 min. Principals: Kathy Bates, Leonardo DiCaprio, Frances Fisher, Bill Paxton, Kate Winslet, Billy Zane. Academy Awards: Picture, Director, Cinematography, Art Direction, Song, Film Editing, Original Dramatic Score, Visual Effects, Sound Effects Editing, Sound, Costume Design; Nominations: Actress, Supporting Actress, Makeup. The disaster tale is told through the eyes of elderly Rose Dawson of Cedar Rapids. Because she tells a credible story of the missing Heart of the Ocean diamond, she finally gets the attention of fortune hunters who are dismissive because of her age and Iowa residence. Rose DeWitt Bukater is a young woman whose mother, Ruth, would like to marry her into wealth; but she is restless with its conventions and restraints and with an obnoxious fiancé. On board the *Titanic*, she meets the poor boy Jack Dawson, who gives her new reasons to live and to rebel. After his death at sea, she adopts his name, renounces the pretentious lifestyle to which she is entitled, and lives out a quiet life in Cedar Rapids. *NYT* 12/19/1997; *V* 11/3/1997.

Saving Private Ryan. Dir. Steven Spielberg. Dreamworks Pictures and Paramount Pictures, 1998. 160 min. Principals: Edward Burns, Matt Damon, Tom Hanks, Tom Sizemore. Academy Awards: Director, Cinematography, Film Editing, Sound, Sound Effects Editing; Nominations: Picture, Actor, Original Screenplay, Original Dramatic Score, Art Direction, Makeup. This film about the D-Day invasion and its aftermath consciously evokes the memory of Iowa's Sullivan brothers. A squad is assigned to retrieve a Private Ryan, whose home is in fictional Peyton, Iowa. His brothers have all been killed in the war. Once found in contested German territory, he refuses to be saved. In the spirit of self-sacrifice, he has come to recognize as brothers those who fight as warrior comrades. Iowa scenes include a reminiscence of seducing a girl in a barn and another at the farm when the mother receives word of the death of one of her sons. *NYT* 7/24/1998; *V* 7/20/1998.

Happy Accidents. Dir. Brad Anderson. Accidental Productions, 2000. 110 min. Principals: Nadia Dajani, Tovah Feldshuh, Sean Gullette, Vincent D'Onofrio, Holland Taylor, Marisa Tomei. This romantic comedy features two odd characters, Ruby and Sam, in a screwball relationship. At the time they meet, she is in distress and in psychiatric therapy about her codependent relationships with men. Sam claims to be a "back-traveler" from "the Dubuque of the future"—2470 to be precise—and a descendant from an "anachronist" family that asserted "nostalgia rights" to traditional methods of human reproduction. Despite the weirdness of it all—and a call to Sam's living father in Dubuque that confirms Ruby's doubts about Sam's outlandish claims—Sam and Ruby bond forever. V 2/7/2000.

IV. Iowa Documentaries

The Mormon Battalion. Edward Finney Productions, 1950. 6 reels. Narrator: Edward Finney. The visuals of this film depict the Mormon Battalion's wagon party making its way from Council Bluffs to California in 1846. Another strand shows a contemporary bus-based re-enactment of the trip. The Mormon Battalion was recruited to invade northern Mexico. After the trek and the service, the Mormons returned to their homes in Iowa and Utah. The film was never copyrighted; we know of no intact copy currently available. NS. AFI.

Small Town, USA. U.S. Information Service/Pathescope Company of America/Eurovision, 1957. 30 min. This documentary, intended for foreign audiences during the Cold War and housed at the Iowa State University archives, presents a pastoral view of a small town in the heartland of America—Anamosa, Iowa—dependent on agriculture for its existence. The film is pure *Our Town*, Iowa-style. We meet boys fishing, a storekeeper, the dedicated doctor, the newspaper editor, the county agricultural agent, farm families passing on a way of life from one generation to the next, a congregation with voices lifted in song, and residents celebrating the Fourth of July with a parade and fireworks. Though rooted in reality, the film idealizes a rural Iowa way of life shown in numerous fictional films, even those made in much later decades when agriculture dominated the Iowa experience to a lesser degree.

The Last American Hobo. [Alternate title: *The Last of the American Hoboes*.] Dir. Titus Moede. Titus Moody Productions, 1967. 80 min. In this documentary, with a soundtrack of songs about hobo life ("Christmas in Hoboville," "Big Rock Candy Mountain"), a young man whose grand-

father told him hobo stories hits the road to film interviews with hoboes who talk about living as transients during the Great Depression and since—riding in boxcars, following symbols left by other 'bos, and making money by temporary labor or collecting recyclable trash. Their stories link with the songs to show both the romance and realism of hobo life. The film mentions historical events such as the 1929 stock market crash, a march by the homeless on Washington, DC, and the death of a famous hobo who was a leader of the International Workers of the World. The film ends in Britt, Iowa, which has, since 1900, hosted an annual hobo convention, where thousands of hoboes and tourists congregate to watch a parade, eat Mulligan Stew, crown a hobo king and queen, and pay tribute to the lives and culture of hoboes. This video is available for viewing at the Hobo Museum and Gift Shop in Britt.

Bix: Ain't None of Them Play Like Him Yet. Dir. Brigitte Berman. Bridge Films, 1981. 112 min. Narrator: Richard Basehart. This documentary on the life and influence of Davenport native Bix Beiderbecke features his best recorded music, photos, news clippings, handwritten letters, interviews with musicians and Davenport friends and family, and beautiful midwestern landscapes. Obviously an influence on Pupi Avati's *Bix: An Interpretation of a Legend* (1991), this film, while noting his family's disapproval of his career and life, posits other explanations for Bix's early death. The grueling pace of touring and the relentless demands of fans who wouldn't let the celebrity stop playing or drinking broke down Bix's health. Bix has the typical Iowa traits of quietness and generosity, but the film stresses his natural musical genius and influence on other musicians who admired his unique style that no one could imitate. As with other celebrities who died young, his legend lives on, particularly in the Bix Beiderbecke Jazz Festival, which Davenport hosts every summer along the Mississippi River and which attracts thousands of Quad Cities residents and jazz enthusiasts.

Incident at Oglala. Dir. Michael Apted. Spanish Fork Motion Picture Company, 1992. Narrator Robert Redford. This documentary tells the story of the deaths of two FBI agents on June 26, 1975, at the poverty-stricken Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota—and of the trials that followed. The first trial of two American Indian Movement members in Cedar Rapids resulted in acquittal, even though the defense feared that a white, working-class jury from Iowa would be prejudiced against militant Indians with long hair. The second trial, held in North Dakota, led to Leonard Peltier's conviction for both murders. The film argues that the government was determined to avenge the FBI agents in court, even if it meant legal chicanery, intimidation of wit-

nesses, and evidence tampering. The film concludes that Peltier is one more victim in a long series of injustices perpetrated by the U.S. government against Native Americans. *NYT* 5/8/1992; *V* 2/3/1992. Available at www.buyindies.com.

Troublesome Creek: A Midwestern. Dir. Jeanne Jordan and Steve Ascher. West City Films, 1995. 88 min. Academy Award Nomination: Documentary; Audience Award and Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival. This is the story of Russel and Mary Jane Jordan, a farm couple from Wiota, Iowa, who suffer an economic crisis when bankers aggressively force the payback of delinquent loans. In creating a "Midwestern" (contrasted with the adventure-filled Western movies the Jordans watch on TV), daughter Jeanne Jordan and her husband have scripted and shot a film with the eyes of loving insiders. The story presents with poignancy and humor the familiar pastoral images of Iowa landscape as well as interiorscapes of working farmplaces and the gritty realities of a farm liquidation sale. These physical images all acquire symbolic depth and complexity as the family is shown teetering on the brink of disaster, but pulling through (temporarily) with luck and timing, aided by sensible risk-taking and cooperation. *NYT* 1/24/1997; *NYT* 4/14/1997. Available at www.buyindies.com.

Iowa: An American Portrait. Dir. Tom Hedges. Iowa Public Television-Stamats Production, 1996. 60 min. Writer: Hugh Sidey. Narrator: Tom Brokaw. Readers: Simon Estes, Cloris Leachman, Sada Thompson. Funded by corporations and foundations for Iowa's Sesquicentennial in 1996 and repeatedly broadcast on Iowa Public Television, this film is bucolic, with fewer than a half-dozen images taken in the larger cities. Commentary within the documentary suggests that small-town Iowa life is a model for democracy. Available at www.buyindies.com.

Trekkies. Dir. Roger Nygard. NEO Motion Pictures/Paramount, 1997. 87 min. Denise Crosby (Tasha Yar in *Star Trek: The New Generation*) interviews enthusiastic fans about their costumes, collectibles, fan groups, convention experiences, favorite stars, and lives. We see a dentist's office, Starbase Dental in Orlando, decorated with memorabilia and staffed by professionals in *Star Trek* uniforms; a Klingon language school in Minnesota; and the Little Rock copy shop where the *Star Trek*-costumed juror at the Whitewater trial, Barbara Adams, works. Several minutes of the film focus on Riverside, Iowa, which has a sign announcing the "FUTURE BIRTHPLACE OF CAPTAIN KIRK: 2287 A.D.!" Riverside has hosted regular *Star Trek* celebrations. *NYT* 5/21/99; *V* 10/27/1997.

The Big One. Dir. Michael Moore. Miramax, 1998. 96 min. This humorous and heartbreaking documentary by Michael Moore tells the story of his 47-city book promotion tour for *Downsize This*. In his journey across America, Moore meets workers underpaid or fired by companies making record profits. Moore stops at a café in Iowa to talk with a woman who has to work two jobs to provide her family with food—and, as a result, seldom sees them. In West Des Moines, Moore attends a secret meeting of Borders employees upset that they are required to pay for an HMO plan that has no Des Moines doctors listed. When Moore revisits Borders at the film's end, the employees have unionized. An example of realism about Iowa, Moore's film shows that some Iowans can't afford food in a state that produces so much of it. In a typical Moore polemic, he also suggests that Iowans, like other Americans, suffer from the effects of U.S. corporate greed. *NYT* 10/9/1998.

Dreamfield. Dir. Kris Ostrowski and Tim Crescenti. Crescenti Moon Productions, 1998. 45 min. Host: James Earl Jones. This made-for-ESPN documentary explores the fan culture and popular religion that have grown up around the *Field of Dreams* movie and the tourist sites at Dyersville. We see interviews with persons who have come to Iowa, a heaven on earth, to renew marriage vows, restore neglected family relations, and celebrate baseball as it used to be played, just for the love of it. We also see a Sunday sermon from a minister extolling the child-like faith of the film's mantras—"If you build it, he will come" and "If you build it, they will come." On-screen presences include notable baseball players Lou Brock and Maury Wills, as well as W. P. Kinsella, author of *Shoeless Joe*, the novel that was the basis for the screenplay. Available at www.monumentvideo.com.

Streetcars of Omaha and Council Bluffs. Dir. Richard Orr. Orr, 1998. 107 min. This documentary, available at the Omaha Public Library, traces the history and routes of streetcars, mainly in Omaha, but with footage of the intercity streetcar line that ran from Omaha through Council Bluffs and back. The color and black-and-white film footage was shot between 1947 and 1955, when the last streetcar ran. Following various streetcar routes allows viewers to see stores, schools, billboard advertisements, fashions, and city landmarks of the post-World War II era.

Alert 3: The Crash of UA 232, Sioux City Iowa, July 19, 1989. G. R. Lindblade and Co., 1999 (revised version of 1989 video). 58 min. Actual footage of the United 232 DC-9 plane crash in Sioux City and the rescue/response operation is combined with interviews of city leaders to show how advance planning and cooperation saved 184 lives. This video has been

used worldwide to train communities to handle disasters. Available from Lindblade Co., P.O. Box 1342, Sioux City, IA 51102.

Alert 3: Lessons Learned from the Crash of UA 232, Sioux City, Iowa, July 19, 1989. G. R. Lindblade and Co., 1999. 58 min. Responding to questions about the aftermath of the United 232 DC-9 crash in Sioux City, this video focuses on how the community handled post-traumatic stress, communicated with families of victims, housed unexpected visitors, and learned from the experience to create an even better system of disaster preparedness. It has also been used for training purposes in many communities in the U.S. and abroad. Available from Lindblade Co., P.O. Box 1342, Sioux City, IA 51102.

Dvorák in America. Dir. Lucille Carra. Travelfilm Company, Czech Television, and AVRO, 1999. 56 mins. This documentary film tells of the period in the 1890s when composer and conductor Antonin Dvorák traveled to the United States. He taught at the National Conservatory of Music in New York City but also spent a summer in Spillville, Iowa, a Czech colony that reminded him of his home in rural Bohemia. The film notes that Dvorák appreciated the beauty of Iowa's hills and woods but also recognized the hard lives of the Czechs who settled in this "huge, lonely land" with its harsh winters. Available at the Humanities Iowa Office, 100 Oakdale Campus, Northlawn, Iowa City, IA 52242.

Freestyle: The Victories of Dan Gable. [Alternate title: *Gable.*] Dir. Kevin Kelley. University of Iowa/Shadow Bird Productions, 1999. 105 min. This HBO documentary, produced by the University of Iowa Video Center, suggests that Waterloo native Dan Gable is to wrestling what Babe Ruth was to baseball and Michael Jordan has been to basketball. Gable wracked up 182 consecutive victories in high school and college competition, narrowly losing a championship match his senior year. In 1972 he won an Olympic gold medal; his six opponents failed to earn a single point. As coach at the University of Iowa, his Hawkeyes dominated college wrestling for 20 years until he retired in 1997, with a .932 winning record. An image that opens and ends the film is the older Gable sweating as he does pull-ups in an empty gym, creating the illusion that he has been working out throughout the film. This is the message: Gable is the personification of the Iowa work ethic and stubborn, single-minded, successful pursuit of a goal. Available from the Dan Gable Web store <www.DanGable.com>.

It's Yesterday Once More! Dir. Jon Chambdidis. Mason City Foundations, 1999. 80 min. This documentary begins and ends with Iowa movie references. Hartzell Spence's description of Mason City from his filmed

book *One Foot in Heaven* starts the video, and it ends with Meredith Willson, the creator of *The Music Man*. The video traces Mason City's development from first settlement in the 1850s to the early 1960s, including famous residents such as Bill Baird, Carrie Chapman Catt, and Willson. The video also discusses Iowa's settlement and famous residents—and puts the growth of Mason City within the context of Iowa's growth. The videotape shows the challenges the first European settlers faced as they moved into the land of the Sioux and the Winnebago Indians. It also shows the impact of the Homestead Act, trains, immigration, agriculture, industrialization, wars, and the growth of banking and business. Finally, it shows features of cultural life in Iowa: schools and libraries, opera houses and vaudeville, arts and architecture. Available for sale at Music Man Square in Mason City and from www.themusicmansquare.org/videos.htm.

The Surf Ballroom. Produced by Nelson Breen, Debra Lass, and Iowa Public Television, 1999. 57 min. This documentary tells the saga of a notable ballroom in Clear Lake, Iowa, long a source of regional enjoyment and pride. It shows a mix of urban and rural Iowans in settings where they share common tastes. Most famous as the last venue for Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J. P. Robertson in 1957 before their fatal plane crash, it had earlier hosted leading groups from the Big Band era, including Count Basie, Cab Calloway, Woody Herman, Tommy Dorsey, and Glenn Miller. The Surf's history also illustrates a valiant struggle to maintain live, local music in the age of mega-shows by superstars—despite bankruptcies, fires, and wrecking balls.

The True Story of the Fighting Sullivans. Dir. Arthur Drodker. A&E Television Networks, 2000. 50 min. This military-focused documentary, which appeared in the "History's Mysteries" format of A&E's History Channel, reconstructs the circumstances under which the Sullivan brothers died in 1942 during their service on the *USS Juneau*. It is based on interviews with Frank Holmgren (a rescued *Juneau* crew member), surviving family members, and authors Dan Kurzman (*Left to Die*, 1994) and Jack Satterfield (*We Band of Brothers*, 1995). It includes scenes from Waterloo and footage of the Sullivan brothers' parents in press conferences and other public settings. Available from www.ihffilm.com.

Yidl in the Middle: Growing Up Jewish in Iowa. Dir. Marlene Booth. New Day Films, 1999. 57 min. While residing in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Marlene Booth found herself irritated when explaining to skeptical acquaintances that—no kidding—she was actually a Jewish Iowan. She also wanted to better understand her roots in Des Moines during the

1950s and 1960s. She compiled snapshots, home movies, and interviews that reflect her happy childhood in Iowa but also her family's status as cultural outsiders in homogenous Iowa. She tells no tales of horror, but sadly recounts tales of slights, exclusions, and unwelcome ham served to Jewish women at a luncheon. Controversies arose in Des Moines about whether the film was fair and whether particular groups should host it. Available for rental at www.newday.com.

"Thirty Year Cold Turkey Reunion in Greenfield." *Living in Iowa*. Iowa Public Television. Broadcast 1/16/2000. 30 min. Produced by Nancy Heather, hosted by Morgan Halgren, and narrated by Mike Cornelison. Greenfield, one of three shooting sites for *Cold Turkey*, had the imagination to stage a reunion featuring the cast and the extras. Director Norman Lear and actors Mike Cornelison, Dick Van Dyke, and Jean Stapleton all appear. The narrative thread of the documentary has important similarities to the plot of *The Music Man*. The local Iowans—whom Norman Lear characterized as "self-deprecating" people who "think that they're hicks"—get excited by the reappearance of Hollywood celebrities. They feel inspired once again to go "cold turkey" and finish the festival with a bonfire of cigarette packages.

Hybrid. Dir. Monteith McCollum. Hybrid Films, 2001. 53 min. *Hybrid* is a beautifully made biographical presentation of the filmmaker's grandfather, Milford Beeghly, an Iowa farmer who devoted his life to developing hybrid seed corn. At age 99 during most of the filming, Beeghly makes the sex life of corn fascinating, pointing out that corn on the cob is "a mouthful of ripened ovaries." The documentary intersperses film footage of the very old Beeghly in overalls and seed corn cap with interviews of relatives. We also see Beeghly Best Seed Corn television ads from the 1950s, and artistic shots of corn and the rural Iowa landscape. The film is full of quirky details: Beeghly's mother dressed him as a girl and called him "Mildred" until he started school; in his 90s he and his second wife, Alice, read Shakespeare together outdoors; he demonstrates his prowess with a toothpick that saved his own teeth. The film reminds us that during and after World War II the Corn Belt was praised for growing "seeds of peace" by relieving world hunger. Perhaps the images remain longest: Beeghly's hand closing and unclosing on seeds of corn, kittens lapping up milk from cows fed with corn, tassels floating over an ear of corn, engaging in conjugal relations. Available from www.buyindies.com.

V. Films Made in Iowa without Iowa Fictional Settings

Note: This section is not comprehensive but lists a few films that have achieved distribution, critical review, and circulation through video.

Huckleberry Finn. Dir. Robert Totten. ABC Circle Films, 1975. 78 min. Principals: Royal Dano, Jack Elam, Antonio Fargas, Merle Haggard, Ron Howard, Don Most. This bland version of the Twain classic was filmed along the Mississippi River in Iowa. The story takes place in Missouri and Arkansas.

F.I.S.T. Dir. Norman Jewison. United Artists, 1978. 145 min. Principals: Peter Boyle, Melinda Dillon, Tony Lo Bianco, Sylvester Stallone, Rod Steiger. Stallone portrays a Jimmy Hoffa-type labor leader. The action portrayed is in Cleveland and Washington, DC, but the filming took place in Dubuque. *NYT* 4/26/1978; *V* 4/19/1978.

Pennies from Heaven. Dir. Herbert Ross. 1981. 107 min. Principals: Jessica Harper, Steve Martin, Bernadette Peters, Christopher Walken. Literary Source: Dennis Potter, *Pennies from Heaven* (New York, 1981). Academy Award Nominations: Costume, Sound, Adapted Screenplay. This musical about a sheet music salesman in Chicago during the Great Depression was filmed in Dubuque. *NYT* 12/11/1981; *V* 12/9/1981.

Children of the Corn. Dir. Fritz Kiersch. New World Pictures, 1984. 93 min. Principals: R. G. Armstrong, John Franklin, Courtney Gains, Linda Hamilton, Peter Horton, Robby Kiger. Based on a Stephen King short story, this film is about cult killings by spirit-possessed teens in fictional Gatlin, Nebraska. Filmed near Whiting, the film gave extra roles to residents of Woodbury County. *NYT* 3/16/1984; *V* 3/14/1984.

Brother Enemy. Dir. Russell S. Doughten Jr. Heartland Productions, 1987. 76 min. Principals: Marv Emery, Debbie LePorte, Paul Schwink, Robert Shook, William Wellman Jr., and Dan Wood. David Wiemer, a puppeteer with a popular children's program, returns to his hometown to work on a puppet show to raise money for a community center. Angry that basketball practice will be suspended for two months, several teens demolish Wiemer's workshop and are caught. Wiemer convinces the judge to sentence them to work with him to create a puppet show, based on a Bible story. The film's credits establish that the film was made in central Iowa.

Home Safe. Dir. Donald W. Thompson. Mark IV Pictures, 1987. 74 min. Principals: Newell Alexander, Anita Jesse, Howard Culver, Michael Hornaday. Three generations of men have lived their lives without

Christ. Thus they fail to learn discipline and responsibility, create an unsafe home, and jeopardize an ultimate "safe home" in Heaven. With their pastor, the mother and older son, both Christians, bring the three men to accept Christ and the Bible's authority. The opening credits thank the Des Moines Police Department, the City of West Des Moines, the Iowa Highway Patrol, and the Urbandale Little League—but references in the film are to East Aurora and Springfield, Illinois.

The Indian Runner. Dir. Sean Penn. Mount Film Group in Association with MICO/NHK Enterprises, 1991. 126 min. Principals: Patricia Arquette, Charles Bronson, Sandy Dennis, Valeria Golino, Dennis Hopper, David Morse, Viggo Mortensen. Penn's film presents a contemporary non-pastoral Midwest as the setting for a series of family tragedies. Council Bluffs was the shooting location. Penn credits a song ("Highway Patrolman") from Bruce Springsteen's album *Nebraska* as inspiration for a tale of two estranged brothers. Joe is a dispossessed farmer married to a Mexican immigrant. The farm crisis forces him to accept an unwelcome job in law enforcement in Cass County (between Lincoln and Omaha, Nebraska). His brother Frank is a sociopathic Vietnam War veteran, a physically and emotionally violent abuser of alcohol and of the people close to him. NYT 9/20/1991.

Citizen Ruth. Dir. Alexander Payne. Independent Pictures/Miramax, 1996. 104 min. Principals: Laura Dern, Swoosie Kurtz, Mary Kay Place, Kelly Preston, Burt Reynolds, Kurtwood Smith. This satiric movie, filmed in Omaha and Council Bluffs, puts in the middle of a fierce abortion struggle an indigent, drug-addicted, pregnant woman, Ruth, whose interests get lost in the ideological struggle over the fate of the fetus. The bleak setting is not identified as Iowa-Nebraska, but there are strong Midwest signifiers. Ruth's pro-life mentor, Gail, serves corn, potato salad, and steak. Her husband, a reformed sinner, works at a hardware store and wears an orange vest and a button that says, "Ask me!" NYT 12/13/1996.

Twister. Dir. Jan De Bont. Warner Bros. and Universal Pictures, 1996. 114 min. Principals: Cary Elwes, Jami Gertz, Helen Hunt, Bill Paxton, Lois Smith. This blockbuster film of spectacle and disaster was made in Iowa with a staging area and farmhouse near Eldora. It looks like Iowa, but its fictional setting is actually Oklahoma. NYT 9/27/1996; V 5/13/1996.

The Road to Perdition. Dir. Sam Mendes. Twentieth Century Fox/Dream Works, 2002. Principals: Tom Hanks, Tyler Hoechlin, Jude Law, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Paul Newman, Stanley Tucci. Literary Source: Max Allan Collins, Robert Lappan, and Richard Rayner, *The Road to Perdition* (New

York, 2002). The narrative derives from a midwestern, fact-based story by Iowa creator Max Allan Collins of Muscatine. Set in Chicago and a generic Midwest, including the Quad Cities area, where some filming occurred, the 12-year-old son of a depression-era hit man witnesses a murder his father commits for his boss. The morally agonizing fallout of the son's unwelcome knowledge drives the film. *NYT* 7/12/2002; V 7/1/2002.

A Final Word on Finding and Preserving Iowa Films

IN SPEAKING to audiences about Iowa films, we have often encountered curiosity about how we compiled our list. We found no single reliable method or source. We began with recollections of films about Iowa and Iowans and told others of our interest. Personal recollections were occasionally misleading. For example, *Twister* (1996) was filmed partly in Iowa and covered extensively by the *Des Moines Register*. Iowans who attended the film saw plenty of familiar cornfields. The setting, however, was in Oklahoma, and the dialogue never even hinted that Iowa was part of the picture.

Some false memories about Iowa film content can be traced to associations with the place of birth for a real life character. We were told a few times, for example, that several Glenn Miller movies had Iowa settings. Miller was born in Clarinda in 1904, remaining there until his family moved to Nebraska in 1907. On the basis of that brief association as infant and toddler, there is a Glenn Miller Birthplace Society in Clarinda. *The Glenn Miller Story*, starring Jimmy Stewart as Miller, locates the Miller family in Colorado. The Glenn Miller film *Orchestra Wives* (1942) does contain a scene in an Iowa City hotel.

A final tendency toward misidentification results from Iowa's understandable association with films that are generically rural, small-town, or midwestern. We were sometimes told that the Bedford Falls of Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* is an Iowa town. But there is no identifiable state marker within the film; part of its genius was creating a universal small-town icon.

Over the years, we picked up leads from several listserv groups: H-PCAACA (Popular Culture and American Culture Associations), H-Film, and the more recently created H-Iowa. World Wide Web resources, the most comprehensive being the

International Movie Database <www.imdb.com>, offer production information, including shooting locations, plot summaries, and linked reviews.

Colleagues at Morningside College, members of the Humanities Iowa staff and board, and the Iowa Film Office generously provided information and suggestions. Video catalogs such as *Critics Choice* led to "finds," as did articles on Iowa films in the *Des Moines Register*. A *Register* article led us to Bob Ford, who runs an Iowa Film Festival in southern California.¹⁹ His list led us to a group of films with references to Iowa. Some films we unearthed through communication with Iowa tourist sites such as the *Field of Dreams* site in Dyersville, Music Man Square in Mason City, and the Knoxville Sprint Car Museum.

From the standpoint of scholarly accuracy, the most reliable assistance comes from the American Film Institute's *Catalog of Feature Films* (1893–1970) in both its paper and electronic form. However, it offers no guarantee that a film with strong Iowa content will be identified as such by a reviewer.

It is impossible to imagine doing a thorough film project of this sort 25 years ago. Renting a color film for three days cost between \$200 and \$300. At that time, the commercial videocassette market did not yet exist. As late as the early 1980s Universal City Studios, Inc., and Walt Disney, Inc., were still suing the Sony Corporation to squelch the spread of VCR technology. They eventually wised up and were profitably selling their own videocassettes by the time the U.S. Supreme Court finally ruled against them in 1984. The rest is video history.

Never before has there been such an abundance of films available in video (and now DVD) format for rental or purchase. With the proliferation of cable channels specializing in classic films or made-for-TV movies, it has become possible to see many films that cannot be purchased. Some films in our collection, such as *Happy Land*, could only be seen in this way.

One other source has helped us a great deal. The online auction phenomenon has brought millions of rare, collectible items into the marketplace. We have found out-of-print videocassettes as well as now rare books and magazines connected with the

19. Ford has held an annual Iowa Film Festival in San Diego for many years. See John Carlson's column in the *Des Moines Register*, 10/10/1999.

Iowa film tradition on eBay. Other useful online venues were Amazon.com, Auctions.com, Buyindies.com, Christianfilms.com, Go.com, and Reel.com. This particular market is evolving so rapidly that we hesitate to write these names. But they, or their successors, will continue to be worth exploring. Print video catalogs such as *Critics Choice* also provided some gems. In some cases, film directors, such as Max Allan Collins of Muscatine, were able to point us toward copies available for purchase.

Yet some films still remain elusive. Few of the silent movies are available. As a group, made-for-TV movies are especially hard to purchase, although they are sometimes shown on Lifetime and other cable channels. From the standpoint of exploring the influences of films on a national audience, this is frustrating. Made-for-TV movies sometimes reach millions of viewers in a single broadcast, surpassing the audience size for many successful theatrical releases. Unless they are recorded during their broadcast, they may not surface again for years, and then perhaps at 3 a.m. Fortunately, the Hallmark Hall of Fame series sells many of its films at its stores. It was there that we found *Harvest of Fire*. Documentaries can also be a challenge. Our ties with Humanities Iowa helped us find films in this category since the board has funded several of them.

We have collected an impressive, but incomplete, group of Iowa-related films over an eight-year period. When we began our search for Iowa films several years ago, we naively imagined that we could see them all. We eventually discovered far more films than we had ever suspected—many of which had seemed lost forever. Large numbers of films have disappeared because their original nitrate-based negatives disintegrated. We hope that our scholarship on regional film will prompt the preservation and screening of titles that reflect Iowa's cultural identity. The difficulty of identifying and then finding copies of these films is one more argument for an archive of Iowa films of all types in the state, available to citizens.²⁰

20. Wendol Jarvis, former director of the Iowa Film Office, is working with a foundation to create a museum focused on Iowa's film and entertainment industry. He has donated "autographed photos, movie posters, props and other memorabilia" to the project. See *Des Moines Register*, 1/1/2003. This idea does not necessarily entail an archive of films about Iowa and Iowans.

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