

Time Periods: An Overview of Iowa History

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

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I. Prehistory—Native Inhabitants

Not everyone will be able to study prehistory. However, if your community is located near an ancient site you may want to include this period of time as part of your local history project. Scientists currently believe the early inhabitants who once lived in Iowa are descended from a race of people who came from Asia across the Bering Sea. Migration began about 30,000 years ago. Early inhabitants who settled in what is today the State of Iowa are divided into five cultural groups. Members of these ancient cultures used the land differently from the settlers who arrived in the 1830s. Compare the way the early inhabitants used the land as they found it to that of the early settlers.

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

A note of caution: archaeologists are concerned today about the preservation of prehistoric sites. Under no circumstances should teachers or students undertake any sort of digging or remove any materials at such a site. Arrangements to visit areas of interest should be made with the authorities in charge.

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

Owned by France, Spain, and again briefly by France, the land that is now Iowa came to the U.S. through the Louisiana Purchase. When American settlers arrived at the Mississippi River, the Sauk Indians were living on the east side of the river.

On the west, in what is now Iowa, resided the Fox, the name given to the Mesquakie tribe by early white explorers and used by the

Federal government. The loways were located along the Des Moines River, and the Sioux from Minnesota hunted in north and north central Iowa.

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

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

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

III. Pioneer Settlement

The settlement of Iowa was a climax to the nation's agricultural expansion. Opened during the great westward migration, Iowa became the goal for many land hungry settlers. Population rose from a few dozen people (mostly miners) in 1832 to 102,338 by the time of statehood in 1846. In the following 14 years, population mushroomed to 674,913. Most of these people were involved with agriculture.

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

A combination of factors contributed to Iowa's growth. Not only was the territory opened during a time of enormous national prosperity, but technical advances had made travel faster and easier. Ohio and Mississippi River steam boats already ran on a regular schedule three years before Iowa was officially open for settlement. By 1840, there were 400 boats on the Mississippi and its tributaries, their routes extending to the Iowa ports at Keokuk, Bloomington (Muscatine), Burlington, Davenport, Lyons, and Dubuque.

Improved roads and the new railroads led to increased overland travel. By 1854, the first railroad reached the Mississippi River at Rock Island, directly across from the city of Davenport. Improved communication helped promote interest among both Easterners and European

emigrants. Newspapers, personal letters, and guidebooks all extolled the beauty, rich soil, and future promise of Iowa.

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

Newcomers came by several routes. Some chose the waterway, down the Ohio River to the Mississippi, then up the great river to the port cities of Keokuk, Burlington, Davenport, Muscatine, Lyons, and Dubuque. Overlanders followed the National Road through Illinois or traveled south from the ports of the Great Lakes, Milwaukee, and Chicago. At the Mississippi, ferry boats did a brisk business transporting immigrants, their wagons, livestock, and belongings to the shores of Iowa.

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

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

When Iowa Territory was established in 1838 the appointed governor, Robert Lucas, selected Burlington as the first territorial capital as population continued to move west the capital was relocated in 1841 at Iowa City. The first formal attempt to gain statehood came in 1844 when a Constitutional Convention was called. The effort failed, however, defeated by a dispute with Congress over state boundaries. In 1846, a second Constitutional Convention was called. A few minor changes in the old 1844 Constitution were made and proposed boundaries defined. This time, congress accepted both Constitution and boundaries, and on December 28, 1846, Iowa became the twenty-ninth state.

The state continued to grow as rapidly as had the territory. By 1855, population had moved so far into the western part of the state that the capital again was moved, this time to Des Moines to keep state government near the center of population.

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

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

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

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

As Iowa grew commercially, businesses needed banks and money for everyday transactions. In Iowa, there were no banks, and except for gold and silver coins the available money was of questionable value. Sound money was a national problem, as well, since there was no uniform currency. More than 1,000 banks had placed different paper notes in circulation, some sound, others questionable or worthless.

This created a distrust of banks and bankers in Iowa. The first state constitution prohibited both banks and local issuance of money. By 1857, it was evident that business in the state could not continue to develop and expand without a regulated bank with the authority to issue currency.

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

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

IV. Pre Civil War—Civil War

In the years immediately before the Civil War, the boundaries of Iowa encompassed all phases of the settlement cycle. In the west, frontier families continued to settle on new land breaking the sod, planting and harvesting first crops, and establishing new homes. In the earlier settled eastern and southern areas new technology and mechanization slowly changed rural and town life. Agricultural production increased as farmers acquired improved plows and

mechanical planting and harvesting equipment. As railroad lines extended inland from the Mississippi, the increased amount of produce from the interior was shipped to an expanding market in eastern states.

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

Growth of business and agriculture was aided by a rapid increase in population. Between 1850 and 1860 the number of people in Iowa tripled from 192,214 to 674,913. Among the newcomers streaming into the state were Europeans from Germany, Ireland, Scandinavia, and the Netherlands, joined by Yankees from New England, New York, and Pennsylvania. This new migration changed the character of Iowa's population. People from New England, the Old Northwest, and Europe had different attitudes and customs from those of the earlier Southern oriented population.

This change was strongly evident as the nationwide issue of slavery became more divisive. Some Iowans supported states' rights and believed slavery should be abolished. Other Iowans actively aided fugitive slaves, and private homes became stops on the Underground Railroad.

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

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

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

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

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

V. Post-War Reorientation 1865-1896

Although many regional and cultural differences remained, the Civil War experience had encouraged a sense of national unity and

identity. The nation was further united as the expanding railroad network linked one sea coast with the other. By 1870, seven railroad lines crossed Iowa with branch lines extending into almost every portion of the state.

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

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

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

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

Changes in farming techniques, including diversifications, remedied the problem of insect attacks. Although most farmers were slow to accept "book farming" the increased use of scientific agricultural methods and the new inexpensive fencing material, barbed wire, gradually brought changes to the Iowa farm scene. Cattle ranges in western Iowa were converted to fenced pastures and fields. Farmers switched from wheat production to corn that was fed to cattle or hogs in feed lots. In some area dairy industries developed accompanied by creameries and cheese factories. The dissemination of new farming techniques was aided by the Patrons of Husbandry.

Organized in rural areas for social and educational purposes, the men and women members of the Grange (as the local units were called) met to exchange information and improve the rural standard of living.

A post-war panic that began in 1873 threw the entire nation into economic distress. In the cities, thousands were unemployed. People in the agricultural areas, already in financial trouble, cast about for causes and solutions to their economic problems. The

railroads were a major target for criticism. Earlier, railroads had been considered essential to the success of a community, now they were blamed as a major contributor to agrarian difficulties. Railroads had solved the problem of transporting large quantities of bulk farm products over long distances, and lowans had expected an improvement in the economy. Reality, however, did not live up to expectations. The railroads were built for profit, not for good will. As smaller, locally-owned lines were absorbed by larger ones, local control was lost to eastern-based owners. Even through agricultural prices fell, railroad rates remained high. After paying transportation costs, farmers had little or no profit. Moreover, where competition might have kept rates down competing railroad lines joined together to fix rates at a high level. Long haul rates to Chicago were often lower per mile than short haul rates to in-state destinations. Railroads virtually controlled the economic fate of agriculture.

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

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

Most of the concerns of the time were eventually reflected in political action. The issues of sound currency, railroad rates, and moral and civil rights were all dealt with by legislative action either on the state or national basis. Throughout this period, new political factions came and went: the Antimonopoly Party in 1873-1874 protested oppressive control by railroads and other powerful corporations; the Greenbackers merged with organized labor in 1878 and succeeded in electing two Congressmen from Iowa to join 12 other Greenback-Labor representatives in Washington; the Populist Party, formed in 1891, advocated more paper money and government ownership of railroads, telephone, and telegraph facilities.

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

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

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

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

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

Pure food laws protected consumers. Political reforms placed limits on corporate contributions to political candidates, and established primary elections for selection of United States Senate candidates (previously chosen by political caucus). Woman suffrage was strongly promoted, and although full suffrage was not realized, women were granted the vote in local elections.

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

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

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

Enjoying the security and success of the times lowans, along with most other Americans, were disinclined to become entangled in the great European war that exploded in 1914. Neutrality, however, did not include non-support. The United States sold both arms and food to the allied nations. With increased foreign sales, industrial and agricultural production remained high and profitable as the United States moved toward the time when neutrality would no longer be possible. The moment came in April of 1917 with Germany's decision to commence unrestricted submarine warfare in sea areas surrounding Great Britain and France.

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

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

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

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

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

VII. Post-War-Depression: 1919-1938

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

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

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

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

Population in Iowa increased slightly in the 1920s and 1930s. Of main importance was the continuing shift of population within the state, from rural areas to towns and cities. Black population in cities also increased during the early 1920s after several coal mine closures.

Two federal constitutional amendments passed in the period after the war signaled a return to national housekeeping. The eighteenth amendment, passed in 1919, extended prohibition to all of the states. (Iowa had already experienced four years of statewide prohibition.) In the following years, women were granted suffrage. Women's rights in Iowa were further increased in 1926 when a bill passed allowing women to be elected to the General Assembly. Another law forbade local school boards to deny employment to women because of marriage.

The war seemed a catalyst for further technological developments. Airplanes, automobiles (and the roads on which they ran), telephones, radios, and motion pictures became necessities instead of luxuries. Municipal airports became important symbols of growth in larger cities, and coast-to-coast air mail routes were set up on an experimental basis with stops in Iowa. By the end of the 1930s, Iowa's two airports had scheduled plane service. On the ground, Iowans were rapidly deserting the horse. State officials devoted much time to plans for grading and surfacing roads for automobile users. By 1930, 18,000 miles of highways had been surfaced, more than any state west of the Mississippi except Texas and California. Iowa automobile registrations in that year totaled 784,450.

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

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

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

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

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

For a while, farmers hoped the set-back was temporary. Bankers were willing to loan money to see farmers through a time considered to be a brief economic reversal. This practice resulted in some 400 bank failures in six years. Added to the farmers' burden were continuing high land values, resulting in high property taxes. These

were necessary to support the improved roads and consolidated schools which increased markedly in the early twenties. Loans negotiated during the prosperous war years fell due, and each year an increasing number of farmers were forced to declare bankruptcy.

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

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

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

A continuing effort was made throughout the twenties to gain government aid to deal with the large agricultural surplus. Twice Congress passed a bill that included government purchase of the surplus, only to have the bill vetoed. In Iowa, a State Department of Agriculture was created to function as an inspector, regulator, and investigator, but this department did not help solve the major problem of the moment, disposal of the large farm product surplus at a price to cover the production costs.

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

In Iowa, government responded to do what was possible on a state level. An income tax was instituted to help shift the tax burden from farmers, still suffering from high property taxes. Despite well intentioned efforts, the farmer's economic situation remained desperate.

Many had been reduced to such poverty that it did not take much to set off the smoldering frustration and anger built up over 11 years. When Federal inspectors began a general pro-gram to test cattle for tuberculosis, farmers were hostile, even violent, over the enforced procedure. animals found to be diseased were destroyed, but compensation for animals killed was considered inadequate. Some farmers also believed that the test was inaccurate and that healthy cattle were sometimes destroyed. Resistance was especially violent in Cedar County where the National Guard was called in to control the situation. This incident, known as the " Cow War," led to the founding of an organization of militant farmers, the Farmers Holiday Association, created in 1932 to coordinate militant protest. Holiday leader Milo Reno planned to promote an all out farm strike that included withholding farm products from market, but coordination of the effort was not successful. Sporadic picketing and milk dumping were the extent of such activities.

Finally, a massive, but quiet protest took place. In the election

of 1932, the people in both Iowa and the nation asked a different political party to provide answers to the nation's economic problems. The newly-elected governor of Iowa reorganized state government. Banks in financial trouble were closed and temporarily taken over by the state to protect the interests of all concerned. The federal government took similar action later that same year and suspended operation of all banks. No bank reopened until authorized to do so. Other state efforts included another change in taxation. Sales, income, and corporate taxes were instituted to further shift the burden from property owners. The overall situation of the farmers did not immediately improve, in fact farm mortgage foreclosures increased in 1933. Once again, the farmers Holiday Association acted, and all over the state bidders at foreclosure sales were intimidated. Worse, a judge was mobbed and beaten after he had signed legal papers of foreclosure.

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

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

In proportion to their relation to agriculture, Iowa businesses and industries were affected by the agricultural depression. Small town business people suffered from a decline of farmer buying power. Yet, food manufacturers, comprising about 37 percent of all manufacturing in Iowa, prospered during the period of high agricultural surplus and low prices.

Except for periods of labor difficulties, the mining industries also maintained solid economic footing. But following the crash in 1929, people in urban industrial areas suffered as did agriculturists. Unemployment was high, and savings were depleted to meet every day living expenses. Workers were forced to turn to welfare in order to prevent their families starving. Just as agricultural programs had been provided for economic relief in rural areas, the government instituted programs to relieve economic disaster in urban areas. These "New Deal" programs provided something for everyone. The Public Work Act (PWA) made available funds for and materials to build schools, roads, bridges, and to improve public buildings. Under supervision of the Works Project Administration (WPA) jobs for people with a wide range of training and skills were created. More than 30,000 Iowans took advantage of WPA work opportunities. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) for young unmarried men from ages 18 to 25 employed 7,500 Iowans in 1933, 9,000 in 1935, and 4,500 in 1939. Most earnings were sent home for family support. The Corps developed soil conservation projects and made improvements in 17 state parks.

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

The years following the Depression were full of rapid political, economic, social, demographic, and technological changes that altered and standardized the American way of life. Perhaps the

best information concerning Iowa's recent past comes from those who have lived it. Many people of the last two generations have experienced and can relate the changing character of the community as Iowa adjusted to its new role in an increasingly homogeneous America.

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