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CEDAR RAPIDS--1920 TO 1935

The Cedar Rapids to which I came in May of 1919, fresh from a year on the high golden plains of central Montana, but weary from riding seventy-two hours in hard-backed coach seats on three different railroads was my second Iowa home. I had been born in Waterloo, fifty miles up the old Red Cedar River. Waterloo was the fifth largest city in Iowa, Cedar Rapids the fourth. Both were industrial towns with east and west sides centered on the river. Both had developed because of the water power in the river, because of good railroad transportation, because of a surplus rural population which produced a labor pool. But in the years to come, Cedar Rapids would become Iowa's second largest city, while Waterloo would drop to sixth.

Why? I think the 1920s offer a clue to the growth of the Parlor City as it liked to be called then. Of 363 city leaders interviewed by the Gazette in 1926 and 1927, two-thirds were Republicans but they were not standpat Republicans. Most admired President Coolidge, but, unlike Coolidge, they were not marching in place. Where else but in Cedar Rapids in the 1920s would a school system hire an uncertified teacher to train some of its students in the arts? Where else but in Cedar Rapids would a hard-headed Republican businessman act as patron to that same art teacher, Grant Wood, so that he might have time and

a place to paint? Where else but in Cedar Rapids was Jay Sigmund, an insurance company vice president, respected as much for his poetry as for his business acumen? Why was it that another Cedar Rapids business man, Luther Brewer, won fame both for the quality of the books he published and for his astuteness in building one of the world's great collections of materials about the English romantic period? And why did the Carnegie Corporation in March of 1929 chose the city of Cedar Rapids as a "typical midwest city" in which to subsidize a "little gallery" of art?

I came to Cedar Rapids just in time to hear the roar of the explosion which blew the Douglas Starch Works sky high on the night of May 22, killing 43 men, among them the man who had taken my father's place just fifteen minutes earlier. That fall I started school at the old Madison School; before I completed schooling in January of 1930, I attended almost every West Side school. My family moved a lot.

The Cedar Rapids schools in 1919 included one old east side four-year high school. Although it was officially Washington High School, the Gazette usually referred to it as the Cedar Rapids High School. There was a newer high school on the west side, built in 1915, but that was the Grant Vocational High School, intended to train west side students in the manual arts which led to factory jobs. Students who intended to enroll later at Coe College or at some University usually went to Washington.

But in the early 1920s, west side citizens rebelled against this discrimination. They demanded and got the same liberal arts program that Washington had.

In 1919, there were fifteen grade schools, nine of which were nineteenth-century two- and three-story redbrick buildings, two of which were wood framed, and three of which were new and modern in design. Several of these schools offered eight grades of instruction, plus kindergarten; the others only six grades and kindergarten. Each school had a principal teacher who was also the disciplinarian.

There were four Catholic schools, two on each side of the River, a Lutheran primary school, and a Catholic Academy.

The Cedar Rapids public schools were fortunate in having an able, progressive superintendent, Arthur Deamer, able teachers, and progressive-minded school board members.

In 1920, Deamer and his board proposed that Cedar Rapids mortgage its future and build one or two new grade schools to replace obsolete buildings, and several new Junior High Schools which would change the system from an 8-4 basis to a 6-3-3 basis, a relatively new concept at that time. One hope was that under this system, students who usually dropped out at the end of eighth grade, might be encouraged to complete ninth grade. For a time in the 1920s, Madison school was the site for classes for 14 to 19 year olds who had dropped out.

Bolstered by support from women voting legally for the

first time, the proposal carried by a landslide. Work on McKinley and a new Buchanan school building got under way at once; Roosevelt, Franklin and Wilson followed in turn. Wilson opened in the fall of 1925; I was in one of its first classes sixty years ago this fall.

In 1923, the Board ordered a program of "accelerated classes" which would allow some students to complete seventh and eighth grades in a year and a half. Students would be selected for the program on the basis of test scores and their grade point averages for fifth and sixth grades. I was one of six southwest siders selected. Others were Ruth Bartling, long-time secretary in the Linn County Attorney's office and John Kuba who became chief of detectives for the Cedar Rapids police force.

But Jennie Post, principal at Van Buren and later at Wilson, a woman with a mind of her own, would have none of this newfangled nonsense and refused to admit us. So for two weeks we traipsed across the river to McKinley where Frances Prescott, the principal who had hired Grant Wood, welcomed us. I lived out in Casper Schaefer Heights then, and it was a long traipse to McKinley and back. But two weeks later Miss Post relented and we were back in Van Buren.

Something else afoot in the school system then was THRIFT--Ben Franklin's old axiom that "a penny saved is a penny earned" was a part of America's creed. (Of course, a penny then bought a stick of forbidden chewing gum, a

lead pencil, an all-day sucker, or, up to not too long ago, twelve minutes of parking time.) Five mornings a week every school had mandated opening exercises--the pledge to the flag (it had only forty-eight stars), the American's creed, one verse of "My country 'tis of thee," and--believe it or not--the Lord's Prayer and the 23rd Psalm. Never mind that some of our names were Kozberg or Leibsohn or Haddad, we all recited in unison. It was the "melting pot" principle at work.

On Tuesdays we also had Bank Day, the brainchild of Thrift, Incorporated, a Chicago firm. We were all encouraged--almost ordered-- to make a deposit every week, even if it was only a penny. If all of us made a deposit, we were allowed to parade through the halls singing the "Thrift Song," and we received a banner to stand beside the American flag all week. The class with the highest percentage at the end of the school year was awarded a painting by Thrift, Inc.

The school system had subject supervisors--Miss Beenk for penmanship (Austin N. Palmer, who invented the Palmer Method of Penmanship was a native of Cedar Rapids), Effie Burton to encourage us to raise gardens every year using seeds our Congressman sent her, other supervisors for reading and arithmetic. But because the system intended that we would receive a broader education than the Three R's alone permitted, we also had supervisors for our work in Art--Miss Grattan, and music--Alice Inskeep. How many of you remember the Rooster Song?

To insure that our tastes in music ranged beyond the then-popular "Barney Google with his goo-goo-googly eyes," and the ungrammatical "It ain't gonna rain no more," we had music memory classes. Every week we listened to phonograph records of such classics as the Turkish March or Haydn's Surprise Symphony, and we clipped stories about these compositions from the Gazette. Those of us who assembled neat scrapbooks of the clippings (I couldn't) or who could remember all of the records when they were played back at the end of the year, were awarded free tickets to symphony concerts by the visiting St. Louis Symphony or the Minneapolis Symphony. My life-long affection for classical music music began in classes conducted by Mrs. Stoflet at Taylor and Ruth Larson at Wilson. Larson even dug into her slender purse to pay for car fare for those of us who lived a long way from Coe College's Sinclair Memorial Chapel where the concerts took place each May.

Meanwhile, outside our classrooms, Cedar Rapids was literally bursting at its seams. (In 1926, it added 31 square miles to its previous 14 square miles.) Everywhere streets were being paved with brick or concrete, or else coated with oil or asphalt, to answer the complaints of residents who had just bought a shiny new black Ford, Buick, Hupmobile, Velie, air-cooled Franklin, or, like Mrs. John Adams or Mrs. Hans Boyson, Milburn Electrics, that their cars were bogging down in the mud. The old iron and wood First Avenue bridge had

burned in 1919 and that was being rebuilt as a six-lane concrete bridge. In 1920, the Penick and Ford Company of Louisiana bought out the Douglasses and began building a new and larger starch works--one, however, that still stunk up the town as much as the old one had. Veterans just home from the "war to end all wars" and veterans of the Spanish American and Civil Wars were petitioning the city to erect a building memorializing the men who had given their all in those conflicts. In 1919, Linn County residents (most of whom lived in Cedar Rapids) had voted to move the courthouse from Marion where it had always been to Cedar Rapids so plans were underway to move the police station and two old city buildings--a storage building and a bathhouse above the city's "bathing beach" at the south end of the island--elsewhere and build the new courthouse and jail south of Third Avenue. And no longer would carnivals and Indian medicine men be able to set up shop in the heart of the city.

I was witness to all this because of the Gazette. Cedar Rapids also had another good newspaper, The Republican. published by Luther Brewer, but although it had a very fine writer, MacKinlay Kantor, I never read it. I didn't read the Tribune either--it was a labor paper--or the Listy--it was printed in Bohemian and I knew only two words of that South Side idiom--"kolache," and the word for "bellybutton."

I began reading the Gazette when I was six years old, spreading it out on the floor because my arms were too short to hold it. I had discovered it used the same words that I was learning in school--and a few others, such as "alky runner," "hooch," and "white mule." Moreover, I had gone into business for myself--I had become one of Alex Fidler's "newsies," selling Gazettes on downtown street corners six nights a week. It was a good business--I bought the copies for one cent and sold them for two. One percent profit! (The Gazette's daily circulation then was about 16,000, and how it stayed in business on the hundred and sixty dollars that was its share is beyond me.) My chief competitors were the Kiebel brothers who sold newspapers and magazines from early morning until late at night on the old, old postoffice corner (where the Witwer Center is now) and Johnny Kinrade, the crippled newsie who was working his way through Grant selling papers on the old Cedar Rapids Savings Bank corner. On Sunday mornings, I sold Chicago Tribunes and Chicago Herald and Examiners for 15¢ on the Killian corner--I'd sell as many as a hundred of each, and I kept a nickel for each one sold. Die-hard Republicans bought the Tribune--it was indeed one of the world's great newspapers--and Democrats and Socialists bought the Examiner.

In 1922, the Des Moines Register began circulating its Sunday edition in Cedar Rapids, and my brother and I got a route that began at E Avenue and Ellis boulevard and worked its

way out to Ed Sheftic's boathouse. There we dug the corks out of Coca-Cola bottle caps, looking for the magic word "Free" printed inside the cap.

My enterprise led to my first brush with the law. Children had to be fourteen years of age to sell papers or to work at any job. "Newsies" had to buy a badge for six cents from A. L. Bailey, the truant officer for the public schools, but he wouldn't sell me one because I wasn't even half that age. So one morning I found myself (with my "boss," Alex Fidler) in the Municipal Courtroom of Judge Thomas B. Powell, looking up into the stern face of a man accustomed to dealing with such hardened criminals as I. He lectured me and Alex on our errant ways, then turned us loose with a final word to Alex--"Keep that kid off the streets." We went out the door and as we parted, Alex looked down at me with his infectious smile. "See you tonight, kid. And keep hustling, will you?" "Hustling" was a respectable word in the 1920s.

As a newsie I looked every night for great news stories that would sell papers to business men coming out of their offices and heading for the yellow trolleys that circled the loop. The biggest news story of the 1920s was the non-stop flight of Charles A. "Lucky Lindbergh" from New York to Paris in May, 1927. Other stories that sold papers were the daily reports of Floyd Collins trapped in the Kentucky

cave where he died, any of several notorious murders, the disappearance of Aimee Semple McPherson, any World's Series or Jack Dempsey boxing match. Newspapers "milked" those stories for all they were worth.

Locally, the big stories were the murder of Patroman Francis Wilson in the old public library in July 1921, the murder of six-year-old Kathleen Forrest by fifteen year old Lyle Messner in September, 1927, the arrival of the Harding funeral train on August 7, 1923, and the beginning of the Herbert Hoover Presidential campaign in Cedar Rapids and West Branch in August 1928.

Rivalling all of these as news were the football successes of the Washington High School Tigers in the early 1920s under the coaching of Leo Novak with the ubiqitous Alex Fidler (he also promoted boxing and wrestling matches and even refereed them) as trainer. Modern Cedar Rapidians, accustomed to intra-city rivalry, may find it hard to believe that the School Board would not allow Grant and Washington to play each other, while at the same time permitting Washington to schedule Sioux Falls, SD, Lincoln, NE, and high schools in Chicago, Toledo OH or Harrisburg, PA, and to allow scheduling of post-season games (two one year) for the so-called "national championship." (Grant won the "Iowa state championship" in 1929 by beating a Sioux City high school on old Coe field in a blinding snow-storm.. I took part as a cheerleader but there was no one in the bleachers.

For World Series games, boxing matches and major football games, the Gazette erected "playographs," and "gridgraphs" outside the old building on the river bank at First Avenue E, and later on the Fifth Street side of the present building. An announcer would megaphone the details of contests as plays were diagrammed on the big green and white boards. There were no radio broadcasts in those days.

The city grew with new additions--Rompot and Worthing Acres, Fruitland Heights, Belmont, East Highland, Northwood, Ridgewood. Out the old Lincoln Highway west, there was a service station and restaurant just beyond the city limits. When beer became legal in 1933, the owner wanted the area taken into the city so that he could sell beer. Residents, fearing higher taxes, objected. A quarrel resulted and one man was shot to death. If you drive out B Avenue West, you can still see the building; you will know it by its odd architecture.

In addition to new houses and new shops, larger buildings sprouted up all over the city. The Court House and Jail were followed on the Island by the Memorial Building in 1927-1929 with its famous Grant Wood window. At first the building had been planned for the east side, then for the center of the island between Second and Third avenues.

Other 1920s buildings were the Merchants National Bank building, at that time Cedar Rapids' tallest "skyscraper;" a new Dows building; the Iowa and Capitol (later Paramount) theater buildings finished within ninety days of each other

in 1928; major additions to the Quaker Oats and National Oats plants; a new Churchill Drug warehouse; the Harper-McIntyre warehouse (announced by the fattest edition of the Gazette ever published); the Consistory and El Kahir Shrine Temple buildings in late 1929--the Shrine Temple immediately became a major Cedar Rapids entertainment center; the Roosevelt Hotel about 1925; the Ausadie and Commonwealth apartment buildings, several new churches. The last of this building program was the "new" downtown postoffice and Federal building in the early 1930s.

Some plans never materialized; on June 18, 1924 the Killian Store owners announced plans for a twelve-story department store--office building complex where three years later the Capitol theater was built.

It was not all work in Cedar Rapids in the 1920s. We motored to Iowa City to watch the airmail planes land or to watch Iowa play football in the new west side stadium. On sunny summer days we trolleyed out to Ellis Park to watch the ducks in the duck pond, or, after 1924, to swim at the new beach there; or we trolleyed out to Bever Park to picnic near the zoo or the new water reservoir which stored all our drinking water. Both the Cedar Rapids Country Club and the Cedar View Country Club had built new clubhouses and the east side club had a dandy new outdoor pool as well. Ben Douglas was the caddy master out there, and, since I lived next door to him on 12th avenue SW, he

took me on as a caddy. My favorite golfer was Fred Poyneer, later a Cedar Rapids postmaster. One memorable day I caddied for Congressman Cyrenus Cole whose weekly letters from Washington were a Gazette feature. He drove the other members of the foursome batty because he was wearing a sun visor whose oversize price tag was still attached and it kept fluttering and snapping in the breeze.

At night in the early 1920s we might watch Ethel Barrymore or George Arliss in a stage play at Greene's Opera House, or topflight vaudeville at the Majestic, or first-run movies at the Lyric, the Crystal, the Palace, the Isis, the Strand. The Olympic on the South side and the Colonial or "Clink" on the west side showed second run films at lower prices. In those days theaters showed two or three films a week--no manager showed a film on both Saturdays and Sundays because on both of those days we all went to the movies. Really big films--Broken Blossoms with Lillian Gish, or The Kid or The Gold Rush with Charlie Chaplin--might be kept for a solid week but no longer. We didn't want to see the same film over and over in those days--we wanted to see the same actors in a new film. Hollywood in those years produced more films in a month than are produced nowadays in a year or more, and there were "more stars than there were in Heaven"--from Fatty Arbuckle to Zasu Pitts.

When they [illegible] at the Auditorium, the [illegible] Cedar

Up until early 1928, the films were silent (dialogue was printed in subtitles), although there was anything from a player piano to a full-blown orchestra in the pit below the screen. Then on March 7, Al Jolson came to the Strand in The Jazz Singer, and suddenly out of the accustomed silence came the marvelous voice of "the world's greatest entertainer." The movies would never be the same again.

When they wanted more action, Cedar Rapidians danced at the Auditorium, the Armory, the Green Parrot, Frank Brookhiser's Dreamland (later Danceland), and, after 1929 at the Memorial Building. In summer they danced at Cedar Park or Chain Lakes, or else they canoed from Sheftic's Boat House up to Manahttan. After the ball was over, they floated back down river to a mandolin playing "Whispering," or "Just a Song at Twilight" or "Juanita."

If they stayed at home, there was the victrola or the grafonola or the player piano, other songs--"Im Always Chasing Rainbows," "There's a ong, long trail a-winding," or "Smiles."

In 1925, Frontier Park (now Hawkeye Downs) opened with a full- rodeo--boy and girl bull and bronc riders, calf ropers, steer wrestlers, and the Roman races with riders of both sexes standing on pairs of horses galloping side by side.

On Memorial Days and Labor Days the track was taken over by auto racers, chief among them our own local favorite, Gus Schrader, who on week days repaired autos at his garage on Ellis Boulevard.

And there were the Bunnies. The Post-War decade was a great sporting era, and watching sports became a national craze--whether it was golf, tennis, horse racing, football, track meets, marathon dancing (marathon dancing?) or baseball. When the Bunnies were in town and playing out at Belden Hill Park (where the old Alamo Amusement Park had been) we went out there in the afternoon (no night games) the adults to sit in the shade of the grandstand to watch the likes of Bill Speas, fleetfooted Cletus Dixon, or ex-Coe athlete Midge Makeever, the kids to get in free to the sunny bleachers by shagging balls fouled out of the park. Sitting in those bleachers many of us got our first taste of another 1920s sensation--an Eskimo pie.

If the Chicago White Sox were at home on a weekend playing against the Yankees with the immortal Babe Ruth, or the Detroit Tigers with Cedar Rapids own Earl Whitehill, we caught the weekend special Northwestern trains to the Windy City--four dollars and forty cents for the round trip train ride.

Trains were "in" in those days--they were the only practical way to travel any distance. From Cedar Rapids we had direct routes to St. Louis, Minneapolis, Sioux Falls, Omaha, Denver, the Iowa Great Lakes, Kansas City. When Cedar Rapids booster groups, promoting Cedar Rapids business or the Rodeo, toured through eastern Iowa, trains took them to every town worth stopping at.

But the automobile would change all that. Although it was proving fatal to small towns, it brought farmers and

small town residents to the city for shopping or entertainment. In 1920, a Cedar Rapidian could buy any one of over fifty makes of automobiles from any one of 250 dealers within a thirty-mile radius. Ninety percent of these were black "touring cars" with side-curtains to attach in case of rain, or robbing a bank. Seven years later there were fewer makes and fewer dealers, but Americans owned three times as many automobiles, most of them "closed," and a few even in bright colors.

A siginificant part of the 1920s business boom in Cedar Rapids came from the sale or service of cars--one Ford Salesman sold a car a day in 1923--and the development of "automobile rows"--car dealers and service shops--along Second and Third Avenue East and along First Street West.

The automobile produced many changes. Soon, Cedar Rapids policemen would no longer walk eleven-hour beats six days a week, but would patrol in cars--or, like Virgil Powell, Cedar Rapids' first black policeman, ride a motorcycle, marking the rear tires of parked cars.

Many of the calls the police now got had to do with stolen cars--or even car parts. One Cedar Rapidian stole a car, then used it to haul stolen goods to his house. But the car bogged down in the mud in front of his house, and he was arrested by police responding to neighbors'

calls that a car was blocking the road.

Autos began producing significant changes in our social patterns. Young lovers who once conducted their courtships under the watchful eyes of parents, grandparents and siblings, now retired to side-curtained cars parked in dark places. Young ladies who had once written to the Dear Abbys of that time asking how they could put a stop to their swains forever "pestering for a kiss," were now climbing willingly into back seats to smoke forbidden cigarettes, sip illicit "hooch" from a flask, and "pet," "smooch," "neck" or "spoon"--whatever those words meant.

Complaints against these "spooners" from possibly jealous senior citizens gave the police more work--and once even tragedy. One rainy fall night in the late 1920s, police, patrolling for spooners in remote Shaver Park, came upon a parked side-curtained car. The police car stopped alongside and the driver rolled down the squad car window to give the usual admonition to "move on." But at that moment a shot was fired from within the parked car. The policeman immediately pulled down a "Tommy gun" clamped to the underside of the squad car roof and sprayed the inside of the parked car with bullets. It turned out that the several young men in the parked car, not all of whom survived the lethal spray, had "pulled" several grocery store robberies in Cedar Rapids, in one of which a panicking young boy had been shot and wounded. The living in the car received long prison sentences.

Justice was swift and harsh in Cedar Rapids in the 1920s. One citizen, shot in the back in an attempted break-in, was on his way to prison seven hours later. Three young Cedar Rapidians who "stuck up" banks in Palo and Swisher were arrested at midnight and sentenced the next morning, two to life imprisonment, one to twenty-five years because he was a teen-ager.

Undesirables were ordered to get out of town or go to jail. One lady who tried to get off a train at the Union station was told to stay on the train or else she would go to jail. One man was arrested for "night walking." A young couple was hauled in and charged with disorderly conduct because they were living together without benefit of a marriage ceremony.

Although all of this and much more was reported with relish by the Gazette, none of it ever got on the radio until late in the decade. In 1920 radio was primarily a device by which ships at sea could warn each other of derelict icebergs or floating mines left over from World War I. Then boys began making crystal sets out of old Quaker Oats boxes, a few strands of wire, and a "crystal" bought from "Tex" Perham's electrical shop at 322 Third Avenue West.

Here and there, in the larger cities, radio stations began broadcasting music occasionally, and some people began trading in their player pianos and victrolas for radio sets--a couple of boxes of wires, vacuum tubes, and knobs, an oversized black horn like the one on the late victrola, and several boxes of "A" and "B" batteries. People, meet-

ing in the mornings, would brag about their receptions the night before. "I kept twisting wires until I got Galli-Curci in Baltimore." Second person: "I opened my window for better reception and got chilly."

But radio had caught the public's attention. Soon, "Tex" Perham cleaned out his electrical goods and set up his own radio station, WJAM. He fabricated his own transmitter (later called a microphone) and covered the walls with heavy drapes to eliminate echoes.

WJAM was a one-man station. Tex would look up local talent--perhaps Helen Kacena Stark or George Cervenka--and invite them in to play or sing for a time. When that performance was over, he would go searching for more talent.

On August 4, 1923, "Tex" rigged up a telephone hookup to the Strand Theater's orchestra pit and broadcast "live" music three times a week. The next year he rigged a hookup to Frank Brookhiser's new Danceland and broadcast three hours of dance music twice a week. Radio was reaching out for new horizons.

On March 3, 1925, Cedar Rapids school children assembled in their buildings heard President Coolidge promise us less government and greater prosperity in the first Presidential inaugural ever broadcast. By this time the Gazette had a radio column with listings of national broadcasts, and people were wondering how soon "radio movies" would come along. Two years later we had the first national hookups, the predecessors of the first networks. The pattern for

radio and TV broadcasting was set for all time. All we needed were the commercials to foot the bill--and we got those soon enough.

"Radio was good for the American family," a judge said. "It keeps families home together and thwarts divorce." He ignored the fact that Colorado judge Ben B. Lindsey's notion of "companionate marriage" had already moved past the fad stage.

Cedar Rapids biggest contribution to the radio scene --other than Harry Paar and his rattlesnakes at KWCR-- was Arthur Collins, who also began with a crystal set. But Arthur took it much further. In the early 1920s, he was almost the only radio operator in the nation to keep in touch with the MacMillan-Byrd expedition to the North Pole--the first such expedition to use airplanes. Soon people were calling and writing to Cedar Rapids, asking where they could buy a set like the one the teen-aged Collins was using. So Art began manufacturing radio sets--and the rest is history. Surely, the Collins operation is the industrial standout in all of Cedar Rapids history--or at least equal to the Quaker Oats.

Cedar Rapids was slow to catch on to the potential of the airplane. Our aviation equivalent of "Tex" Perham was Dan Hunter who, right after World War I had shown that the plane was somewhat more than a toy, established

the city's first airport four miles south of town. But that was too far out for people to come on Sundays to take a three-minute airplane ride for five dollars, so he moved to town--right at the top of the Third Avenue West hill at 14th street.

Commenting on this move, Verne Marshall noted that "the horse will be with us for a long time." So Iowa City got the first Iowa airmail stop, and on dark nights, Cedar Rapidians could look up and see the reflection of the Iowa City beacon in the sky.

In 1921 the Gazette airmailed a reporter from New York to San Francisco--2536 miles, 14 days elapsed time, 33 hours actual flying time.

Still Cedar Rapids merchants were negative. So Iowa City got the first cross-country passenger planes--twelve-passenger planes flying only in daylight with a nurse to bail out airsick passengers.

But little by little, even though Paul Shaw crash-landed in a west sider's frontlawn, and even though an air mail pilot crashed in an eastern Iowa pasture (the pilot was unhurt but a cow the plane fell on was killed) the airplane was here to stay and Cedar Rapidians accepted that fact. So far no one has named the local airport for Dan Hunter--but they ought to.

The Cedar Rapids "boom" came to a halt on my seventeenth birthday, "Black Tuesday," October 24, 1929. Although in the early 1920s I had been able to make as much

as twenty-five dollars a week with all my entrepreneurial activities, after my graduation in 1930 on the second coldest night in Cedar Rapids history, I was lucky to get a job working eighty hours a week for ten dollars. Although in 1929, Cedar Rapids had bragged that it had never had a bank failure, by 1933 all but two or three Cedar Rapids banks had closed for good or reorganized, and all of us who had thriftily deposited our pennies each Tuesday throughout our school years lost all our savings. By then I was getting only eight dollars a week for the same eighty hours of service. In 1934 when my employer gave me a promotion and thirteen dollars a week, a Coe College graduate thankfully took over my job as a bicycle messenger. In all fairness I note that he eventually took over the business and now is probably several times a millionaire.

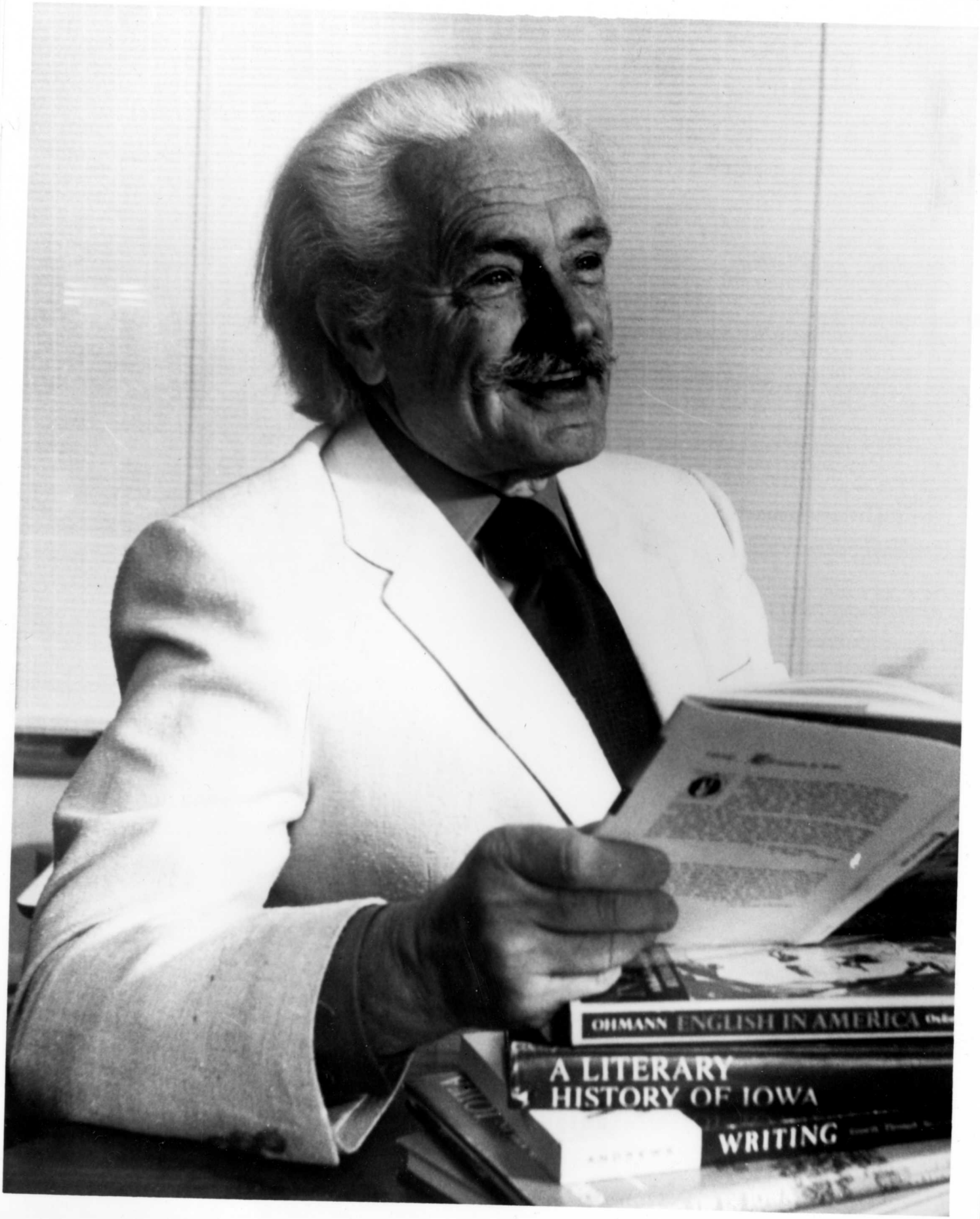
Those were difficult years from 1930 to 1935. Many of us lived on meager rations and wore our clothes until they fell off us. A lot of Cedar Rapids girls learned it was wise to "go Dutch" if they wanted a young man's company. The once-prosperous movie houses turned to "bank nights" and dish giveaways--despite the fact that the 1930s was Hollywood's greatest decade for great movies--from Scarface to Scarlett O'Hara. Television has never come close to equalling the output of the films in those years.

In the early 1920s Greene's opera house had closed, and its once-magnificent quarters had become an overnight storage garage for Roosevelt Hotel guests. The Majestic began playing such stock companies as the Sherman Troupe, Don and Maisie Dixon and the Boyd B. Trousdale Company, but then had to close. J. Doug Morgan's four tent shows went out of business. The Isis closed.

But still we looked to a better future in the 1930s. We took the word DEPRESSION which applied to that era, and we drew lines through the D, I and E. We took the "DIE" out of "Depression" and that left us with "Press On."

And Cedar Rapids did--with a solid industrial base,with 60,000 great people, with a fine school system, with capable, imaginative, hard working leaders, Cedar Rapids hung in there and became the city of over a hundred thousand people it is today. And, with a few more announcements such as the Collins announcement of a day or so ago, with this fine new library, with the proposed new art gallery, with a flourishing Coe College and Kirkwood community College--and, I offer none too humbly, with my adopted city of Iowa City and its great University close at hand --Cedar Rapids has only to forget the word DIE--and PRESS ON.

Thank you.


OHMANN ENGLISH IN AMERICA
A LITERARY
HISTORY OF IOWA
WRITING

The Windy City is a literary city

"Chicago In Story" by Clarence Andrews. Midwest Heritage Publishing. 414 pages.

Clarence Andrews, a lifelong Iowa resident who grew up in Cedar Rapids, is the state's unofficial literary historian.

Author of "A Literary History of Iowa" and editor of the anthologies "Christmas In Iowa," "Growing Up In Iowa," "Growing Up In the Midwest," and most recently, "This Is Iowa," Andrews is a treasure trove of anecdotal information about Iowa wordsmiths.

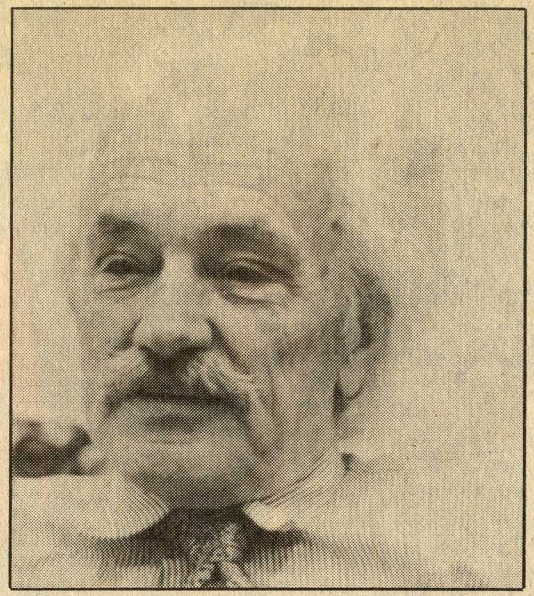
Now the energetic, retired University of Iowa professor has expanded his geographical interests. His "Chicago In Story" is a stunning achievement. It is at once a literary chronicle, a social study, a catalog of well-known and obscure writers and a personal commentary on nearly 1,500 novels, films, plays, poetry and short story collections. Andrews may be forging a new genre with this narrative study of America's "Second City."

He begins with two rare histories, the 1850 "Hardscrabble" and the 1856 "Wau-bun." Both examine the early settlers, Indian skirmishes and the Fort Dearborn massacre.

From there he follows the literary scene chronologically. He debunks the tales about the great fire. He analyzes Chicago's literary Renaissance. He traces the effects on the creative community of the gangland era, the Depression and the world wars. And he follows Chicago's unique literature right up to Steve "Breaking Away" Tesich's 1983 novel "Summer Crossing."

What becomes apparent midway through the book is that Chicago exerted a magical allure over heartland authors. Any writer from Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan or rural Illinois worth his typewriter and paper eventually joined the pilgrimage: William Dean Howells, Ring Lardner, Hamlin Garland, Edna Ferber, Carl Sandburg, Theodore Dreiser, Edgar Lee Masters, Vachel Lindsay, Sherwood Anderson — all arrived before 1925.

Others came and left, attracted to the meccas of the East Coast, or like Hemingway, to Europe.



Clarence Andrews

Chicago spawned a diverse literature, reflective of the ethnic mix best found in the Greek stories of Harry Mark Petrakis, the evocative poems of Gwendolyn Brooks, James T. Farrell's Studs Lonigan novels and the blue-collar world of Nelson Algren. Chicago also boasts our only living American-born Nobel laureate, Saul Bellow.

But what makes Andrew's book more than just an academic treatise is the breezy, conversational style of the book and the cornucopia of trivia.

Among the questions he answers are: What Chicago poet ordered 5,000 copies of her poem about a world's fair and then used them to heat her house the following winter? Who were the "Katzenjammer Kids" of the theater? What plays with Chicago characters and incidents were produced in New York City but banned in Chicago?

Which Chicago mayor was an author of fiction? Which Chicago spectator sport has been written about most in Chicago fiction — baseball, football or gang battles in the streets?

New York may claim the largest gathering of literati and publishers, but no less than H.L. Mencken dubbed Chicago the "literary capitol of the United States." He was referring to the golden age just before the First World War when a youthful exuberance coalesced into three developments: The Friday Literary Review; Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, and Maurice Browne's Little Theater.

When Harriet Monroe founded Poetry in 1912 she established the purely Midwestern flavor of the region in a national magazine which still flourishes today. In her March, 1914 issue she printed the poems of a brash, young journalist from Galesburg, one of which began: "Hog Butcher for the World,/ Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,/ Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler/ Stormy, husky, brawling/ City of the Big Shoulders."

Sandburg's "Chicago" symbolized a new strength in American *belles lettres.* Instead of effete dilettantism or the European-influenced novels of sensibility in vogue in New York circles, here was a muscular and zestful poetry and prose.

This new writing, as Andrews quotes John K. Hutchens, "roared with vulgarity and romance. It lived. The aspiring writers who came to it, usually from small towns, also had lived. Some of them had ridden the rails, worked with their hands, acquired a rough-and-ready socialism in hobo jungles. By the time they reached Chicago, they had something to sing, say, or shout about."

Numerous legendary figures parade through the book, some nearly forgotten: John Kinzie, the Armour family, Al Capone, Clarence Darrow, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Ice Pick Slim, mayors Cermak, Daley and Byrne.

The rich ethnic gumbo that gave life to Hyde Park, Old Town, Southside, the Gold Coast, the Loop, and the pantheon of writers who transformed 150 years of Chicago life into a striking body of literature, make this book a fitting tribute to the city.

Michael Bor