

## CHAPTER TWO

### COLLEGE, FARM, & BUREAU

*"The Entire Agricultural Interests of the State"*



The Seventh General Assembly, which convened on January 11, 1858, was the first to meet at the new capital and the first to act under the new state constitution. Its composition and achievements were worthy of the occasion. B. F. Gue, who wrote from long and intimate experience, characterized the Seventh as "The most important legislative body that ever convened in Iowa," and the no less experienced Edward H. Stiles concurred in this opinion. The roll in both houses contained names which were to become famous in both state and national leadership. Among the senators were Josiah B. Grinnell, Samuel J. Kirkwood, William Loughridge, William H. M. Pusey, Nicholas J. Rusch, Alvin Saunders, William G. Thompson, Henry H. Trimble, and David S. Wilson. The House membership included William W. Belknap, Cyrus C. Carpenter, Lincoln Clark, Benjamin F. Gue, George W. McCrary, Dennis A. Mahoney, Stephen B. Shelleday, William H. Seevers, James F. Wilson, and Ed Wright. The situation of the state called for the combined efforts of all available talent. The new constitution was to be established under the most critical conditions. The national depression had swept away all but a few strongly established business concerns, destroyed credit both public and private, and reduced living conditions to a subsistence basis.

#### IOWA IN 1858-59

Even that primitive security was to be threatened by a crop shortage resulting from a year of unprecedented rainfall. In

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reviewing this year of social and natural calamities in his Thanksgiving proclamation Governor Lowe found the chief of their mercies the realization of "the strange evanescence of riches that have wings—the folly of attempting to fare sumptuously every day, by vain schemes of speculation, instead of hardening the hand, and moistening the brow with honest toil." Climatic derangement could not by any sort of moralizing be accepted as a "mercy," and after a winter "of special trial and destitution to many of our people" the chief executive recommended that Friday, April 22, 1859, "be observed by all the people of this State as a day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer, that thereby we may propitiate a kindlier providence and be fed once more with the heritage of Jacob."

The legislature, overcoming narrow partisanship, except on the sectional issue, enacted a program that enabled the state to emerge from primitive disorder to modern stability. A banking system was founded, taxation was reorganized, the school laws were revised, and provision was made for utilization of the railroad land grants. And not the least of the achievements of this historic session was the creation of an agricultural college. The interest in technical education at a time when life had been reduced to the elementals of existence is evidence of the effectiveness of the appeal of the agricultural reformers.

### LOWE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Governor Lowe reflected the growing popular interest in his inaugural address. He repeated almost verbatim the proposals of the State Agricultural Society. After the rather superfluous reminder that "agriculture from the character of our soil and the nature of our geographical position, must be the great leading avocation of our people, and therefore the first interest to be considered and improved," he made recommendations to that end. The first step, after suitable encouragement to county and state societies, was the establishment

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of an agricultural bureau that "should hold the same relation to the people of the State, that a similar department in the Patent Office at Washington City does to the whole country." In cooperation with the federal bureau and "all the Agricultural Societies in the land, its great office would be to introduce new and valuable seeds, both of the cereals and vegetables; direct their culture; gather up agricultural statistics and information from the best farmers everywhere, and disseminate the same largely among the generation of free laborers who now or may hereafter occupy our plains." But in addition there was needed an application of science to the occupation, and this necessitated "at a proper time" the establishment of "Agricultural Schools, in connection with experimental farms, where the natural agencies bearing upon her domain may be taught and applied; such as geology—organic chemistry—botany—physiology—zoology—atmospheric properties and influences, etc." The Governor wisely refrained from further specifications. "To elaborate the connection between these sciences and the object of Agriculture, which has its outgoings in the infinite," was, he was convinced, "neither expected nor demanded in this communication." If rather indefinite, this was nevertheless a friendly gesture and no doubt went as far as the Governor felt he could commit himself in the hard times in which his term fell.

### FRAMING AND INTRODUCTION OF THE COLLEGE BILL

The college agitators, after having their measure so long ignored, were convinced that this session was the "proper time." They were supported by petitions from the directors of the State Agricultural Society and from citizens of various counties. The leading spirits were three young reformers—pioneer farmers living in log cabins—Benjamin F. Gue of Scott, Robert A. Richardson of Fayette, and Ed Wright of Cedar. They had come to the state in 1852, Richardson and

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Gue from New York and Wright from Ohio. They were ardent reformers—abolitionists, prohibitionists, religious liberals, as well as champions of industrial education. They were to render long and useful public service: Richardson as a leading farmer of his section and a member of the college board; Wright, after service in the Civil War that brought a brevet brigadier generalship, as a state employee in various capacities to his death; and Gue as a state senator, college board member, lieutenant governor, journalist, and the first important historian of the state. At this time they were over-conscious of their lack of educational opportunities and determined that the coming generation of country children should not be under this disability. In the legislature, according to Gue, they “sorely felt the meager equipments which poverty had entailed upon them as they attempted to meet in debate the educated professional gentlemen, lawyers skilled by long practice in public speaking, with all the advantages of a college education; and it raised the inquiry, why should land grants and money endowment be given to enable the wealthy who choose the so-called learned professions to get all the inestimable benefits of a university education while the sons and daughters of the mechanics, farmers and all grades of workers were deprived by virtue of scanty incomes from participation in the benefits of a higher education?” The extent of collegiate training among the legislators, even of that unusually talented session, was doubtless greatly over-rated, but the feeling of disparity between the pioneer farmers and the professions was real.

Gue has left a vivid narrative of the framing of the college bill. On the evening of February 4, 1858, in a rooming house on the east bank of the Des Moines River in the pioneer capital city amid a howling blizzard, the three young reformers prepared a revision of the bill introduced in the last session. The following day Richardson presented their draft under the cumbersome and double-purposed title, “A bill for an act to

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provide for the establishment of a State Agricultural College, with a State Board of Agriculture, which shall be connected with the entire Agricultural interests of the State of Iowa." The board proposal was evidently found to be a handicap; a month later, March 5, Richardson substituted "A bill for an act to provide for the establishment of a State Agricultural College and Farm with a Board of Trustees, which shall be connected with the entire agricultural interests of the State." The new bill emphasized the type of educational institution that would appeal to the farmer constituency and sought at the same time to include the essential functions of a board of agriculture. An initial appropriation of \$20,000 was to be provided. Richardson sought reference to the agricultural committee, but James F. Wilson, the aggressive young chairman of ways and means, insisted on the prior claim of his committee.

### COMMITTEE ACTION

Meanwhile there was an effort to establish an agricultural professorship at the State University. In the Senate, February 17, J. B. Grinnell reported from the committee on schools and state university a bill making appropriations for the University with the following amendment: "And the further sum of two thousand dollars to be expended in establishing an Agricultural Professorship in connection with said University, whose duties shall be defined by the Board of Trustees of said University; which board shall consult with the President of the State Agricultural Society, in the establishment of said Professorship, and in determining the duties thereof." The amendment was adopted, but on March 2, on recommendation of the committee on ways and means, this provision was dropped.

The action of the corresponding committee in the House proved no more favorable to the proposal for a separate agricultural college. On March 10 Wilson reported the bill with

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recommendation that further consideration be indefinitely postponed. The innocuous as well as ineffective recommendation was added, no doubt as a gesture to the rural voters, that the committee on agriculture be instructed to prepare and report a bill for the establishment of an agricultural bureau "in connection with one of the State offices at the Capital of the State." The explanation for rejecting the college proposal was that the state had no money to squander on such a visionary experiment. The bill's supporters, anticipating the opposition, had laid their plans for the legislative struggle. The three sponsors were joined by William Lundy of Muscatine, the chairman of the agricultural committee. General guidance was left to Wright, who was an unusually skillful parliamentarian. W. H. Seevers, the chairman of the judiciary committee, and John Edwards, the head of the committee on expenditures, united with Wilson in arguing against the expediency of such a use of state funds at this time.

### DEBATE AND ENACTMENT

In presenting and defending the bill Gue delivered his maiden speech and, after overcoming a temporary embarrassment, made a telling plea and sounded a defiant challenge. To the objection that the proposed institution was far in advance of the time and that all the present status and needs of the occupation warranted was an agricultural bureau to distribute seeds, he replied shortly that the supporters of the measure, who were all practical farmers, knew best what was needed and demanded by their great constituency. That need and demand was nothing less than an opportunity for agricultural education equal to the training for the other professions. The lack of such opportunity was causing ambitious country boys to seek other occupations and rural leadership was fast being depleted. They proposed to train leaders in business and public affairs as well as expert technicians. "We want the young men so trained and educated, that it will not

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be necessary for them to forsake their chosen avocation, to become qualified to occupy any station, or hold any office in the country. We want them to be able to stand on this floor, and in our national councils on terms of equality with the best legal men of the times and there be able with equal talent, education, ability and eloquence, to urge there our claims, advocate our principles, and defend our interests."

The bill as now presented was the result of long and careful consideration of all proposed plans and of consultation with representative farmers by the committees of both houses. The "legal gentlemen" he recognized might not be ready for such a forward step but he served notice that the "Working, producing classes," which included "not the farmers alone . . . but all the laboring classes, the mechanic, the day laborer, the inventor and the manufacturer," were all ready and urgent.

The issue, the young reformer concluded, would be clearly drawn in the recorded vote between the supporters of higher education for the privileged few and the advocates of educational opportunity for all. If this measure were defeated the great constituency would understand where the responsibility rested, and the popular will would not be thwarted for long.

Such a threat brought action. Beginning with Cyrus Carpenter of Webster the opposition capitulated. The opposing chairmen disclaimed any hostility to the aims of the bill and hastened to express full agreement with the claim that all classes should receive equal privileges from the legislature. But, they explained, the proposition was a new one; they were "not aware that a similar college had been established in any state." For the present they proposed a compromise on the appropriation, and Lundy's amendment cutting the amount in half brought ready acceptance. After some delay in selecting the trustees, the bill was passed in the House, March 17, by a vote of forty-nine to five. In the Senate the following day,

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after three substitutions had been made in the membership of the board and the action reconsidered, the bill passed twenty-four to five. Charles Foster of Washington was the leading supporter in the upper house. The act was approved by Governor Lowe on March 22—which thus became the true founding day of the College.

### ANALYSIS OF THE ACT

The organic law was an extreme example of the social crusaders' distrust of administrative discretion and their confidence in their own ability to provide complete and minute specification in subject matter and method as well as in organization. Consequently the act furnishes a prospectus of the standard agricultural college as sought by the ardent champions of industrial education. The blanket enacting clause providing for a "State Agricultural College and Model Farm, to be connected with the entire Agricultural Interests of the State" was sufficiently inclusive and elastic to make possible the type and functions of agricultural education and organization desired.

The governing body was a board of eleven trustees chosen by the legislature from nominations made by county agricultural societies and apportioned by judicial districts. The governor and the president of the state agricultural society were given *ex officio* membership, and the president of the College was to be the chairman. The board was authorized to purchase at least a quarter section of land, after considering rival proposals and weighing their advantages. The proceeds of the five sections granted for capital buildings were, with the consent of Congress, to be added to the college fund. Strict requirements were made for keeping financial accounts and farm records, even to a "register of the weather," by a competent bookkeeper chosen from the faculty or from the advanced students.

Tuition was to be "forever free to pupils from this State



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over fourteen years of age and who have been resident of the State six months previous to their admission." Popular appeal was sought in the reduction of the entrance requirements to the rudiments of learning and a flexibility of standard that left much to the examiner's discretion: applicants "must be of good moral character, able to read and write the English language with ease and correctness, and also to pass a satisfactory examination in the fundamental rules of arithmetic."

To insure a sound industrial program the required studies were specified. The list marked a considerable extension of Governor Lowe's suggestions and indicated, according to existing classifications, the emphasis desired: "Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Botany, Horticulture, Fruit Growing, Forestry, Animal and Vegetable Anatomy, Geology, Mineralogy, Meteorology, Entymology [sic], Zoology, the Veterinary Art, plain Mensuration, Levelling, Surveying, Bookkeeping, and such mechanic arts as are directly connected with Agriculture." After these requirements were provided for, there might be added "such other studies as the trustees may from time to time prescribe, not inconsistent with the purposes of this act." Evidently instruction in mathematics and English was assumed. The failure to mention agronomy, animal husbandry, and dairying indicated the undeveloped state of agricultural science. Even such confident legislators hesitated to make a faculty assignment of these subjects and left to the board the creation of "such Professorships as they may deem best to carry into effect the provisions of this act."

The bureau function was embodied in the office of the secretary. That official was to be selected by the board from its own membership. He was to maintain an office in the capitol for the performance of a great variety of duties: to be the recorder, correspondent, and custodian of the board; to encourage the organization of agricultural societies; to collect and distribute for trial new seeds, plants, and trees; to encourage the importation of improved breeds, the invention of

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agricultural machinery, and the establishment of domestic manufactures; to publish agricultural information in newspapers; to collect and file the agricultural statistics of each county; and to report annually to the legislature or governor on his activities, and the receipts and expenditures of his office and of those of the College and farm. He was given a salary of \$1,000 and allowed an equal amount for the purchase and distribution of seeds and for the expense of his office. The dignity and responsibility of the office were emphasized by the fixing of the bond at \$30,000.

The trustees' only compensation was mileage at the same rate as members of the General Assembly for attendance upon not more than three meetings annually, but the office was regarded from the first as one of dignity and honor. The initial selection of trustees named in the act, although subject to the inevitable regional and political expediency, was highly creditable. The members and their counties as given in the law were: M. W. Robinson, Des Moines; Timothy Day, Van Buren; John D. Wright, Union; G. W. F. Sherwin, Woodbury; Wm. Duane Wilson, Polk; Richard Gaines, Jefferson; Suel Foster, Muscatine; J. W. Henderson, Linn; Clement Coffin, Delaware; E. H. Williams, Clayton; and E. G. Day, Story. Williams and Coffin declined to serve, and John Pattee of Bremer, then auditor of state, and Peter Melendy of Black Hawk, were chosen to fill the vacancies. The membership included some of the outstanding leaders in agricultural improvement in the state. Foster and Wilson have already been noted; Timothy Day was the state's first importer of Short-horns; and Peter Melendy, who was to render the College a unique service, was a leading stock raiser. Most of the others were prominent in the state and local agricultural societies.

### ORGANIZATION OF THE BOARD

The Board held its first meeting January 10, 1859, and was organized by the election of Wilson as secretary and Richard

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Gaines as treasurer. Since the president of the College was to be the presiding officer of the board, the selection of that official was considered. A letter was read from Hugh D. Downey, a prominent lawyer and banker of Iowa City, to Governor Lowe strongly recommending Dr. Jesse Bowen, the retiring president of the State Agricultural Society, as "an intelligent, practical, talented, and experienced western leader whose appointment to the Presidency of the College would give very general satisfaction." The selection was postponed until the June meeting. Meanwhile Messrs. Sherwin, Foster, and Wilson were named as a committee to correspond with and report on candidates for the presidency and faculty. So few propositions for location were presented that the Board voted to extend the time for making offers to May 1.

If at this preliminary meeting little was achieved in the way of organization, the spirit and aim of the proposed institution was not left in doubt. Upon motion of John Pattee it was resolved "that although the legal name of this Institution is fixed by Statute, we deem it expedient to designate a shorter name: Therefore, we would recommend that in general use (but not in legal instruments) the 'Iowa Farmers' College' be the designation." The members further pledged themselves to make known to the people of their districts in every possible way "the objects of the Farmers' College." The agricultural papers readily adopted the popular name.

At the June meeting, presided over by Governor Lowe, appreciable progress was made both in organization and in location. Suel Foster, John Pattee, and E. G. Day were constituted an executive committee, and Foster was elected "president pro tem of the Board, with power to take charge of the Farm." In this position Foster was legally the acting president of the College, and he was so designated by the press of the state. He was annually re-elected during the next five years. In 1865 William H. Holmes of Polk became his successor, and at the organization of a new board the next

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year Benjamin F. Gue, then of Webster, was chosen to head the corporation and was continued until the selection of the first regular president of the College in 1868.

At the same meeting, upon recommendation of the organizing committee, four professorships with specified subjects were agreed upon—physics: natural philosophy, chemistry, geology, mineralogy, meteorology; mathematics: arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, conic sections, astronomy, surveying, civil engineering, bookkeeping; zoology: entomology, ornithology, ichthyology, animal anatomy, veterinary art; botany: fruit growing, horticulture, forestry, vegetable anatomy, and botany. Sherwin, Foster, and Wilson were continued as a committee to receive and investigate applications for these positions as well as for that of the presidency. Obviously, before a faculty was secured and its work organized, the College must be located and developed through the formative stage. In response to the prospectus asking for bids for the sale of land for a college farm, offers were made by the counties of Hardin, Jefferson, Marshall, Polk, Story, and Tama—all but one near the center of the state. A committee of three, Sherwin, Pattee, and Gaines, was instructed to examine the different proposed sites and report at an adjourned meeting.

### SELECTION OF A COLLEGE SITE

Story—just entering its fifth year of organized existence, sparsely settled, and reputed to be unusually swampy—had shown a marked interest in the inchoate college. During and following the bill's consideration the legislature had been petitioned to make the location there. E. G. Day of that county as a member of the first Board sought to arouse local interest. In September, 1858, he published in the *Nevada Advocate* a request for county products—grains, seeds, minerals, building stone—as an exhibit of the region's resources with which to impress his fellow board members. On Christ-

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mas Day a mass meeting was held at the court house in Nevada to consider means of securing the prize. The meeting had been announced in the local paper two weeks previously with an exhortation for everybody "to rouse up and turn out." George M. Maxwell was chairman, and a committee on resolutions from each township was formed. Colonel John Scott proposed the calling of a special election by the county judge to consider the appropriation of 12,000 acres of the county's swamp lands, but after heated discussion a \$10,000 bond issue was substituted. In anticipation of popular approval of the aid, a committee headed by W. G. Allen, a pioneer surveyor, was chosen to represent the county's interest before the Board. After further meetings the election, on February 7, 1859, endorsed the issue by the overwhelming vote of 402 to 48. In addition to this county aid, individual notes totaling about \$5,500 and nearly 1,000 acres of land in Story and Boone counties were offered. The total value of the Story-Boone offer was estimated at \$21,355.

With the prevailing hard times, ruinously low agricultural prices, and inaccessibility to markets involving a subsistence or barter economy, the subscriptions involved heroic devotion to the cause. Many confessed later that they made their pledges without knowing how they could be met. Land for those who possessed it beyond their immediate needs was often easier to give than a comparatively small subscription. Henry McCarthy, from whom the largest purchase was made for the original farm, reduced the price one dollar per acre as his contribution. Such sacrifices were not in vain; the combined inducement was to prove decisive in the location.

On June 21, 1859, after considerable balloting, the Story County site was selected. In the securing of this decision the efforts of pioneer settlers of the county, exerted in various ways, were most influential if not determining. Most prominent among these supporters were John L. Dana, the county's first representative in the General Assembly, Colonel John Scott,

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George M. Maxwell, T. C. McCall, E. G. Day of the first Board, and W. J. Graham, his successor. The county's first historian comments on the triumph with restraint: "Take it all in all, when it is remembered that Story was then almost a frontier county; that her territory was contemptuously styled a frogpond; that her people were poor and the times were those of great depression, and that the Board was strongly disposed to be influenced by the amount of donations promised, the securing of the location was a great triumph. Had the subsequent action of Congress been anticipated it would doubtless have gone to a more wealthy county."

However that may be, the people of Story County, as well as their supporters in Boone, felt no sense of inferiority and were highly elated at their triumph. They gave expression to their feelings in a characteristic pioneer celebration—a Fourth of July picnic on the college farm in a grove north of the present college armory. The main addresses were delivered by John A. Hull of Boone and Colonel John Scott of Story, and were followed by the reading of the Declaration by a young Nevada attorney. The dinner was worthy of the event and appropriate to the aspirations of an agricultural college—the recorded menu included turkey, chicken, roast pig, ham, mutton, fish, cheese, vegetables, fruits, honey, and pies. The usual toasts to the day, the flag, the Revolution and Washington, President Buchanan, the army and navy, and our mothers and sisters were interspersed by those to the farmers of Iowa, to the new college, the locating commissioners, and as a climax one by a professor of Boonsboro to "The Rising Generation, the Hope of the World and a Mighty Sure Crop in the Hawkeye State."

## THE PRAIRIE PRIMEVAL

The site of these triumphant if premature festivities was a farm of 648 acres in the western portion of the county secured from five different owners at a cost of \$5,379.12. In the choice

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of location the sectional divisions that had previously determined county politics were ignored. The Nevada interests were led to support the trans-Skunk location by considerations of soil and topography, the insistence of the Boone supporters upon proximity to their county, and the confidence that no effective rival to the county seat would develop to the west. The only settlement in the region was the little hamlet of New Philadelphia, now the southern part of Ontario. With the only direct line of travel the stage road from Nevada to Boonesboro, the situation was one of extreme isolation. Ten years later at the inauguration ceremony, B. F. Gue graphically described the primeval wildness of the future campus:

"During these dark days, when the future of our projected Institution seemed shrouded in gloom, when the most sanguine of its friends could see little hope of success, when we had realized the full magnitude of the undertaking, utterly destitute of resources necessary to carry out our plans, with nothing but a great prairie farm, wild, but beautiful in its wildness, remote from railroad, river, cities or towns, it seemed far better adapted for the quiet retreat of some pioneer farmer and backwoods hunter, than for a site upon which to erect a College for the children of the farmers and mechanics of a great State. I remember well my first visit to this spot, years ago, long before the North Western Railroad was projected. Striking out north from Des Moines, on to the great sea of prairie that then stretched, in almost unbroken wildness, to the Minnesota line, the great monotonous plain of waving grass only broken here and there by scattered groves, and meandering through it the sluggish river of fragrant name, that, skirted with timber, seemed like a long line of straggling sentinels, guarding the great plain from the approaching civilization that had just begun to encroach upon its boundless domain. A few log cabins of the early pioneers contained the entire population that then inhabited the country between the capital and the College Farm. Arriving upon the ground designated by that classic name, it seemed to me that it must have been selected as a place of exile, where students would some day be banished, remote from civilization and its attendant temptations, to study nature in its native wildness. Standing on the eminence where the College now looms up, we could only see one of the most beautiful landscapes in the west, but almost as wild as when Noah's Ark floated over a world of water. *When and how* a great State College was to be built up here, was a problem too difficult for any of us then to solve. But we

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had got the idea, the land, and an endorsement of the Legislature, and we must work it out."

The "land," all things considered, was well adapted as a site for working out the great idea. The editor of the *Boone County News* after participating in the Fourth of July festivities, reported that everyone who had seen it "pronounced the site of the Agricultural College and Farm an admirable one." The joint legislative committee, of which Gue was a member, appointed to report on the farm in January, 1864, after giving a detailed description of location, topography, and resources, expressed the opinion "that it would have been difficult for the trustees to have made a selection more fully complying with the requirements of the law, than the one purchased. It has upon it at least six different varieties of soil, representing the prevailing kinds in the State; it has more than 50 varieties of timber, bushes, and shrubs, and running water, spring and well water in abundance; a plenty of gravel, sand stone, and material for brick; high dry land, level dry land, rolling clay, second bottom, sloughs, flat wet bottom, and timber bottom, besides the genuine prairie land." The committee was convinced that the farm fulfilled the intent of the law "as completely as any selection that could have been made." In view of the unfavorable judgments made on the quality and adaptability of the college farm in the early days this conclusion by the accredited investigators of the General Assembly was highly significant. It remained to transform the open prairie into a "model" farmstead.

### MAKING THE FARM

During the first year seventy acres of prairie were broken, 640 rods of fence were constructed, and contracts were let for the excavation and materials for the farm buildings. A considerable proportion of the subscriptions was paid in labor and materials. The Board was optimistic regarding donations for the equipment of the farm. Manufacturers from all sections



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of the country were offering their implements to be tried; breeders east and west would supply foundation stock, and a Polk County nurseryman had already promised fruit trees to the value of a hundred dollars. "Numerous will be the donations," the report concluded, "embracing the above named classes of husbandry, as well as all the others . . . whenever we are prepared to receive them, by parties in and out of our borders, who feel a lively interest in the prosperity of an Institution which is destined, at no distant period to wield an immense influence for good in developing our Agricultural resources, and without which we would lose them." The sites for the first buildings for college and farm were selected with care, and tentative estimates of their costs were made; but a building program awaited the further aid of the General Assembly, and before that could be secured there impended a desperate legislative battle for existence as well as the uncertain issues of national civil strife. At the fair of the Cedar Valley Agricultural and Mechanical Association in September, 1859, J. B. Grinnell urged that the Farmers' College should be kept "without the arena of political strife" and provided adequate initial support. "It is your own, which in infancy asks the fostering care of generous parents, whose neglect will be as the embrace of death." The admonition was timely, as the infant was in imminent danger of perishing from exposure and neglect.

### STRUGGLE FOR LEGAL EXISTENCE

In view of other pressing demands upon the taxpayers, the members of the executive committee in their first report refrained from urging an appropriation at this session. They hoped with the means at their disposal to be able to erect the necessary farm buildings and to put at least a part of the farm in good working condition. They were confident that by the meeting of the next session the members would know more fully the desires of the people regarding the institution.

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Though they expected no appropriation, they hastened to add that they esteemed "our Institution one demanded by the imperative necessities of agriculture in the State, and one which is heartily endorsed by those who bear the burden of taxation." Meanwhile they asked the legislature, in addition to filling the vacancies on the Board, to provide for granting deeds of the donated land when sold and for legalizing the Story County bonds whose regularity had been called in question.

In his outgoing message in 1860, Governor Lowe merely reported what had been done in locating the farm and in preliminary organization. Governor Kirkwood, who a few weeks later signed the first report as a member of the executive committee, in his inaugural address gave a very general endorsement and suggestion of legislative action: "Agriculture will be for many years to come, as it has been in times past, that interest which underlies and supports all other interests in our State; and any aid that can legitimately be given to it, should be given generously and not grudgingly. I have not sufficient information touching this institution, to enable me to make any specific suggestions in regard to it, and can only recommend the whole matter to your careful and friendly consideration."

The consideration, whether careful or not, was anything but friendly from a majority in the House who felt that a state-supported college at this time was an unnecessary burden. The active opponents sought to capitalize this sentiment for the repeal of the founding act. A resolution was adopted directing the committee on agriculture to inquire into the expediency of such action. The committee made rival reports. The two minority members advocated repeal and offered a bill for that purpose. They made four allegations in support of their proposal: (1) the institution had not been and was not then demanded by a majority of the tax-payers; (2) the cost would be entirely disproportionate to the benefit to be derived

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from the institution; (3) admitting that the College would be of practical value to the agricultural interests, they believed it unwise to undertake so costly an enterprise at a time of such general financial distress; (4) the state was young, one-half of her territory was unsettled, and it was consequently unjust to impose such an unnecessary burden upon the pioneer taxpayers.

Gue argued for the five majority members that repeal would be inexpedient and unjust as the institution, established after long agitation, had not had a chance to show its value, and there was no evidence that any considerable group desired such summary action. During the financial stringency the supporters would ask no further appropriations but instead would "solicit such subscriptions from friendly sources as may enable them, when times are more propitious with some assistance from the State, to erect such buildings as the wants of the Institution may require; thus relieving the people from any apprehensions that this Institution should add to their already heavy burthen of taxation." Gue stressed as the tangible evidence of the law's benefits the activities of the "Agricultural Bureau," particularly in the distribution of seeds. "Through this department of the College, we are already reaping the benefit of the law to some extent, while the Board is engaged in making preparations for carrying its provisions fully into effect, as fast as the means at their disposal will justify." In conclusion Gue made an impassioned appeal to the farmer-worker interest. Such a backward step would "be evidence to our citizens and to the world, that after having once determined to educate our working men, to elevate labor and make it honorable and enobling; that after having decided to provide an Institution in which the sons of our farmers and mechanics may be educated for their chosen profession, we have repented of our noble purpose, and have concluded that ignorance is preferable to knowledge, and have chosen darkness rather than light."

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In spite of the peril of falling to this benighted condition, it was evident that a majority of the members were committed to the economy move and that the only hope for preserving the aspiring enterprise was in securing delay. Gue accordingly moved that the bill be laid on the table for the present, as the opposition was not prepared to act upon it, and the concession was made—fatal to the hostile design, for a two-thirds vote could not at any time in the future be secured to call up the bill. Meanwhile the measures regarding lands and bonds were enacted, and the supporters were glad to let the matter rest until more favorable times. "For one," wrote Governor Kirkwood, to Suel Foster, "I will not consent to have standing on the farm a pile of unfinished buildings as a monument of my folly and business capacity."

In the report for the year Secretary Wilson made a strong class-conscious appeal for the adequate support of their College designed "*to educate the youth of the State in enlightened practical Agriculture.*" The friends of the "Farmers' College" should present to the legislature the evidence of the popular desire and at the same time make known to the farmers themselves the opportunity for effective training at a minimum cost. Representative leaders of the Industrial Movement in different sections were quoted on the national benefits of an educated rural population.

### THE COLLEGE SECRETARY AND HIS BUREAU

Wilson's own work as secretary of the Board, and as such the head of the "bureau," was the most effective result of the college act in the preliminary years. In the opinion of the editor of the *Northwestern Farmer*, this was a "very important office, and should be filled by the right kind of a man; capable, industrious, systematic in all his arrangements and one who possesses public confidence in the highest degree. He possesses the power to limit or extend the influence and usefulness of the Institution to a greater degree than any other member of the

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Board. . . . General Wilson met all these requirements admirably."

Upon assuming the office he had severed his connection with his agricultural paper to devote his entire attention to the work. He at once invited correspondence with farmers and mechanics, and during his term from 1859 to 1864, when the office was abolished, rendered a service far in advance of the time and one that anticipated a later state department. The reports from the second to the fifth inclusive contained general surveys of the state's agriculture, discussions of the cereals, sorghum, flax, sheep, cattle, and hog production, and the progress of domestic industries. There were carefully selected statistics and reports of the distribution of seeds and plants—secured by purchase and from gifts of the Patent Office—and of the experiments with them. *The State Register* found his final report "a valuable collection of facts for general circulation, prepared with great labor and care," and was confident that "if it could be put into the hands of the industrial classes of the Eastern States it would be a valuable stimulus to immigration to the cheap yet fertile lands of Iowa." There was the logical suggestion in some quarters that this position be joined with that of the secretary of the State Agricultural Society, and it was unfortunate that such a combination was not made. Following the termination of his service with the college Board, Wilson secured employment for the next five years with the new federal Department, which was established as a companion measure to the act providing aid to state agricultural colleges. It was to this latter act that the embryo Iowa institution now turned in its desperate struggle for perpetuation.