HENRY A. WALLACE
American Visionary
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Part of the ‘Regional Greats’ series created by Russ Gifford © 2018
REGIONAL GREATS

• Does where you are born and raised have an impact?

• If you think it does have an impact... is it a positive one?

• Has regionalism declined? If so, does where you are born still matter today?

• At the end of the session, can you point out a place where you see the regional roots showing through?
HENRY A. WALLACE

Things to Consider:

1 - Did Wallace have achievements that outlived him?

2 - If yes, why don’t people know about him?

3 - Did Wallace have a lasting influence on our country?

4 - Were his failure real, or interpretations sold to the public?
WHO WAS HENRY A. WALLACE?
WHO WAS HENRY A. WALLACE?

Short Answer:
• One of Iowa’s two Most notable sons.

Longer Answer:
• author
• editor
• businessman
• public servant
• scientist
• humanitarian
WHO WAS HENRY A. WALLACE?

His grandfather Henry had been a Pennsylvania minister that seemed to be dying in the pulpit.

Doctor’s orders moved him to Winterset to be a farmer - at 40.

Grandad’s health flourished - and the elder Henry would be a landowner, and a force in the community.
WHO WAS HENRY A. WALLACE?

His son Henry C. Wallace, would attend Iowa State for a time, but left, saying, “They really were not teaching much agriculture.”

He took on a tenant farmer position on his father’s acres - and saw prices fall dramatically, and had to start teaching at the same college.
Uncle Henry had little use for the Progressive party, but understood it was monopoly practices that kept Farmers down.

He organized -

• The Farmers' Protective Association,
• the Agricultural Editors Association,
• and the Iowa Improved Stock Association
• They beat the Barbed wire monopoly, and built their name.
WHO WAS HENRY A. WALLACE?

In about 1888, at 50, the elder Henry was suddenly deep in debt, having sold all the prize stock, and everything else. He had to start over.

And he did, taking an editorship in a newspaper that he transformed with his anti-monopoly editorials, and notes from ‘Uncle Henry’ where he mixed good farm stewardship with religious philosophy.

He would have to start yet again in 1895 - when his partner cheated him on the ownership.
WHO WAS HENRY A. WALLACE?

This time his son Henry C. Wallace would be his partner, using a small newspaper he had taken ownership of.

They called it Wallaces’ Farmer – and the elder Wallace worked his magic again while the son managed the business.
Wallaces' Farmer
Iowa Homestead
Good Farming - Clear Thinking - Right Living

John P. Wallace
President & Publisher
Henry A. Wallace
Vice President & Editor

James W. Wallace
Treasurer
Ross Wallace
Secretary

Wallace Publishing Company
Des Moines, Iowa
WHO WAS HENRY A. WALLACE?

Henry A. Wallace’s Dad would follow his father’s instructions, and would also be editor, farmer, businessman, and a professor at the land grant college (now Iowa State.)

He would also become Secretary of Agriculture under Harding, 1921-1924.
UNCLE HENRY AND HC

- HC would establish science as a farming issue
- HC would establish 4-H clubs
- Iowa Farm Bureau

But more importantly, educated H. A. in science and critical thought.
WHO WAS HENRY A. WALLACE?

“Uncle Henry” became the most beloved man in Iowa over his next 35 years. He influenced the mighty - he would die not long after a meeting with Woodrow Wilson advising him to be the force for peace in the coming war.

Uncle Henry, loved by millions, left a remarkable will:

“The Wallaces have prospered because we never thought of wealth as an end... but only as a means to enlarge our usefulness to the community.”
WHO WAS HENRY WALLACE?

Born Henry A. Wallace, in Adair County, Iowa, October 7, 1888.

He was born at home, after his mother had worked a full day on the farm.

He would not have a birth certificate until he was nominated for VP.
Henry, or ‘H.A.’ began his farming life young.

He learned to cross-breed flowers at 6, and created numerous new species.

He moved on to strawberries, breeding for taste and size.
Henry had extra help.

George Washington Carver was Iowa State’s first black student, could not stay in the dorms.

He stayed with the Wallace family, and discussed botany with young Henry.
HENRY A. WALLACE

Corn in 1902 was king in Iowa - but the experts valued good looking ears, rather than yields.

A young H.A. would challenge the leading expert, college lecturer, and friend of the family that farmers should be picking differently.
There was never a doubt in Henry’s mind he would win - but in the 20 years that followed, farmers did not change their practices.

But Henry amassed more and more data.
HENRY A. WALLACE

Henry attended Iowa State, and graduated in 1910, and began work at the paper.

By 1914, he had married Ilo Browne, and they would have three children.

By 1920, Henry achieved his Masters. In 1921, his father was Sec. of Ag, and H.A. was editor the paper.

The family
By 1920, farmers were suffering from over production and failures.

The Wallaces had an idea - and convinced Iowa’s congressional team to treat farm issues as a non-partisan issue and vote as a unified bloc. Norris, LaFollette, others joined.
THE FIRST SEC. WALLACE

Having campaigned for the farmer, Henry’s father is asked to become Sec of Agriculture - and accepts.

He immediately runs into trouble with Hoover. “Sec of Commerce - and under secretary of everything else!”
HENRY A. WALLACE

- His father slowly made headway on changing farm problems (overproduction) - but would not survive the experience.

- H.A. Father died in 1924.
HENRY A. WALLACE

In 1926, he achieved his breakout dream - he began creating successful hybrid corn.

It would make the family wealthy.
HENRY WALLACE

- He would continue to make the effort to improve yields - and in doing so revolutionized the farming industry, using as he had 20 years before - ‘book learning.’
No fan of Hoover for his fights with his father, Henry A. Wallace, still editor, still influential, joins the Democrats in 1928.

From 1922 on, Wallace is striving to get farmers to take 10% of their land - and plant clover instead!

When the Depression occurs, Wallace is still preaching that overproduction is the problem.
However, she remained true to herself. She continued to drive, remained active in the Girl Scouts, rode horses – while still fulfilling expected functions of the First Lady.
But there were troubled times ahead.
But there were troubled times ahead.
• Eventually, he too, would become Sec. of Agriculture.
H. A. would hold the job for the next 8 years — and become the heart and soul of the New Deal.
• Solidly Built, at 2 inches under 6 feet tall, with gray-blue eyes that might wander, or might smile.
1933

His themes?

• Improvement of Agricultural Productivity
• Better Utilization of the Land,
• Leveling out the Agricultural Surplus.
The Farm Credit Administration to help farmers refinance their mortgages is created.

Wallace drafted the Agricultural Adjustment Act. Administered by the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), the government paid farmers not to raise certain livestock, not to grow certain crops, and not to produce dairy products.
CONFRONTING OVERPRODUCTION

• His methods of combating overproduction seem very harsh - but they work.
Yet for all the outcry, the policies work.

But Wallace is the best known of the men that came to help FDR—and that, too, means something to farmers.

Still, the Supreme Court fires back.
And when the Courts take aim, it is a blow to all parts of the New Deal
Following the 1936 election, at the urging of Rex Tugwell, Wallace travels 10,000 miles of “Tobacco Road” talking to the mostly black sharecroppers, asking about their crops, their prospects, their equipment.

The result - the Farm Security Act in 1936-37.

And he will absorb Tugwell’s operation completely.
• It is Wallace that provides the spark in the Cabinet.

• He is the push, the call to action. And he is the dreamer that wants to do more.

• One dream is the Ever Normal Granary. A case where the Government buys the excess grain in the big harvests, and has it available in the lean years.
THE POWERHOUSE USE

- The Ever Normal Granary will pass in the 1938 Farm Bill.
- It will be a blessing in the war years. And every year.
Wallace remains popular in the Farm Belt - but fights insider fights 'for the common man.'

He stands against FDR's effort to purge right wing Democrats - and is proven right.

And later, he will do all he can for blacks and civil rights in the South. It will cost him.
Wallace remains popular in the Farm Belt - but fights insider fights ‘for the common man.’

He stands against FDR’s effort to purge right wing Democrats - and is proven right.
Recruited for VP -

It is not a given that they will win - but FDR wanted Wallace for the Farm vote.
THE VICTORY
Wallace will expand the office beyond any previous VP.
But in 1943, the conservatives are fed up with Wallace. While Wallace is defending labor, Southern Dems want him gone, worried he is too far to the left.

Wallace out - Truman in.
• Following Roosevelt's death, Wallace watches with alarm as the anti-communist fever takes control.

• He pushes Truman from the other side for 2 years.

• Finally Wallace draws too much fire. Truman disavows him, and Wallace resigns.
• First back to Print media - Editor of the New Republic

• But finally Wallace will break with the Democrats, and start a 3rd party effort to take back the future from the war hawks.
1948

Truman
Dewey
Wallace

Winning Candidate
Truman

Final Gallup Survey: 44.5%
Election Result: 49.9%

1948

STAND UP FOR
AMERICA
WALLACE
FOR
PRESIDENT

REALITY
MUCH MORE TO DO
BACK TO THE FARM
THE UN-COMMON MAN

The ‘48 campaign would be brutal for him. His pro Soviet Union stance would see him painted as a commie.

His refusal to write off blacks marked him as unacceptable to much of the country.

The ‘guru’ letters would pain him as a nut case.
But like in many things, he was ahead of his time.

His work increased the yields of corn and soybeans, making global changes.

His push for a granary system was eventually adopted.
Has any American politician done as much for the world?
• At the end of the session, can you point out a place where you see Wallace’s regional roots showing through?

• Did his Iowa background matter?
Do you know more about Henry Wallace than you did when you started?

Do you know more about the causes and the relationship to events in the efforts of the New Deal, and the changes after WWII that led to the Cold War?

Can you name something that stood out to you in this class?

Feel free to email me your answers! russgifford@russgifford.net
Henry Wallace was a public servant. His interest was in the advancement of science, of knowledge, and of people.

Reading of his experiences also informs you of a vital but overlooked time in American history.

A great book on Wallace:
American Dreamer
Lifelong Learning Instructor,
Western Iowa Tech Community College,
Sioux City, Iowa 2004 – Present

IOWA AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR
Keeping the Home Fires Burning: The Impact of the Civil War in Iowa
Presented by Russ Gifford
Thursday, April 29; 7 p.m.
Cargill Auditorium No charge

BOOMER CLASSICS: Words that Changed the World
Third Week:
Monday, 10/22 6:30 PM
J.R.R. TOLKIEN
Revisit the landmark literature and a handful of pivotal writers that influenced the 1960's. Are they still relevant? Join us as we search for clues of their continued value 50 years on.

As always, these seminars feature video and audio clips, with the sights and sounds of the 1960's.
Outstanding Instructor Award
(Western Iowa Tech CC), 2011, Iowa

All Star Award
(Institute for Lifelong Learning), 2013, Iowa

Gateway Spotlight Award
(Gateway), 2004, South Dakota

Outstanding member, Rural Enterprise Program
(Center for Rural Affairs), 2003, Nebraska

American Hometown Leadership Award
(National Center for Small Communities), 2000

Business Leadership Award
(Chamber of Commerce), 1997, Nebraska
HENRY WALLACE

Monday, May 22
WITCampus - Lifelong Learning

Noon to 2 PM, Room L416-417

Join the discussion about the life and times of this exceptional Iowan who was almost President!

No Admission Fee!

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