



# DES MOINES and POLK COUNTY Flag on the Prairie

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Des Moines, the county seat of Polk County began as an Indian Agency and Army post in 1843. In the succeeding years Polk County, named to honor James Knox Polk the 11th president of the United States, shed its military origins and became the leading county in Iowa, so begin the authors in *Des Moines and Polk County: Flag on the Prairie*.

In 1843 a treaty with the Sauk and Mesquakie Indians made way for settlement west of the Red Rock Line. Settlers scrambled to stake claims on the fertile, rolling prairie. From that point, Iowa experienced tremendous development.

As the county seat and, beginning in 1857, the state capital, Des Moines soon became the center for Iowa politics, population, and commerce. A network of roads and rail line made it a hub for travel, and a stopping point for pioneers heading west. However, the pioneers who planted the "flag on the prairie" 160 years ago could not have anticipated an area that today would top 375,000 people living and working in one of the most metropolitan counties in the Midwest. Today Polk County is growing and expanding at an accelerated rate.

Page after page of engrossing illustrations, many from the collection of the authors, bring rare images of Des Moines' past to life, while a portfolio of brilliant color photographs focuses on contemporary views of this handsome city, making *Des Moines and Polk County: Flag on the Prairie* a book not only to inform but to delight readers for generations to come.

A special chapter, "Chronicles of Leadership," provides individual histories of

area businesses and organizations and details their contributions to Des Moines. Finally, an illustrated chronology of significant events enhances the main text and puts it all in perspective.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Barbara Beving Long Henning's** family has lived in Polk County since the 1850s. Henning earned her undergraduate and master's degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She then embarked on a career in historic preservation. She has completed more than 150 nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and dozens of historical studies for properties in Iowa, Minnesota, the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Illinois. Henning owns her own consulting business, Rivercrest Associates, Inc., and now lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

**Patrice K. Beam** received her masters' degree in history from Iowa State University in Ames in 1988. She has spent much of her career in arts management as the assistant director of the Davenport Museum of Art and the Director/Curator of the Octagon Center for the Arts in Ames. Currently a public historian and an adjunct professor of history at Upper Iowa University, Des Moines Center, Beam also authors a weekly column entitled "Iowa Collects," for the *Des Moines Register*. An active preservationist, Beam is restoring a 100-year-old house, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.