

place as a likely location. Arriving here in the twilight of a March day, he was out early the next morning before most people had greeted the new day and rented from the late Cyrus Adams the old wooden structure that occupied a portion of the ground which is now covered by Mr. Bear's magnificent store building, and there he opened a clothing store. This act was thoroughly characteristic of the man. The following year the building was destroyed by fire but, not daunted by this disaster, Mr. Bear immediately occupied the Asseln building, now used as the Morrison furniture store, but when Mr. Adams rebuilt on his lot Mr. Bear moved back to his original location, and has continued to occupy it since that time. Several years ago he purchased the property and lots adjoining and as his business grew he enlarged his quarters, making his store one of the largest and best of its kind in Iowa. In the direction of this large establishment with its many departments he displays that management which only comes from a master mind. The organization is considered one of the most efficient and thorough, and Mr. Bear's methods serve as an example to others. The sales force of the establishment is discriminately selected by Mr. Bear, who has fomented a spirit of cooperation among his employes and the management, which is seldom to be found in such large institutions.

In 1884 Mr. Bear was married to Miss Antonia Homberger, of New York, and his family life is ideal in its happiness. Three children were born to them: Gertrude, the wife of D. S. Benjamin, of Springfield, Illinois; Dot, who married S. G. Heller, of Chicago; and Alexander, who makes his home in New York. In his household warm hospitality is bestowed upon friend and guest and kindness and consideration for those upon whom fortune has not smiled is a precept that is practiced in its best and most helpful sense.

Public-spirited and progressive, Mr. Bear's record in regard to growth and improvement is one of which any good citizen might be proud. He has been identified with every movement that has tended to upbuild the city and, liberal in the expenditure of time and money, has taken the initiative along many lines. He was president of Decorah's first electric light company, was active in promoting the building of the Winneshiek county courthouse and was an important factor in making possible the erection of the Grand Opera House of which he is associate manager. He was one of the leading spirits in the building of the Winneshiek Hotel and is president of the company that operates this first-class house. When the question of a federal building for Decorah came up it was he who materially helped in securing the desired location now occupied. For several years Mr. Bear was president of the Winneshiek County Fair and under his direction it was an unqualified success. At present he is treasurer of the Decorah Commercial Club and in fact anything that is undertaken for the good of Decorah and Winneshiek county finds a willing spirit in Mr. Bear.

In his affairs he is prompt, straightforward and businesslike, and in, no way is this more clearly evidenced than in the conduct of his business. Beginning in a small way he has applied incessant industry, keen foresight and fair and square methods to his transactions and by his honorable course has built up a business that is accorded first place in northeastern Iowa and is favorably known throughout this state, Minnesota, the Dakotas and even Montana. In another two years Mr. Bear will celebrate his fortieth anniversary of active business life in Decorah, an occasion not only of significance to him but to the city at large,