

June 26, 2022 Op/Ed by Emily Schmitt

Opinion: It is Time to Reignite Iowa's Pride in Herbert Hoover

Iowa nice.

You ready to find yours?

It is time to reignite Iowa's pride in Herbert Hoover.

The 31st president of the United States has, over time, become known as the commander in chief everybody loves to blame.

But how is that? We are Iowa nice! Humble. Private. Proud. Maybe it's that we don't share our stories enough. In this case, maybe we haven't shared enough of the Herbert Hoover stories. The ones that changed the world. For the better. We can relate to that, right? We are Iowans. We know how to get the job done.

Iowa is a state known for agriculture. However, when it comes to the largest industry, manufacturing surpasses ag in gross domestic product! (I'm fortunate to be in BOTH industries!)

The president who served during the dark days of the Great Depression was an intelligent engineer with a resourceful mind. A man who didn't lack ideas or ways to improve a process. Raised as an Iowa farm boy and orphaned at a young age, grit and determination enveloped Hoover early in life.

But somewhere between his humble Quaker beginnings and his time in the Oval Office, the American people appear to have disconnected from all Hoover successfully did to make life better.

I ask that you let the humble Hoover in and I hope to convince you to find a newfound respect for a man who served a country he loved.

For a manufacturer, standardization is not just a glorified trendy word. It's an approach to every process, project and initiative to bring about efficiencies to not only increase productivity but we all know the value of an efficient process on budgets, families and intrinsic health.

Known as "The Great Engineer," Hoover helped standardize construction materials such as lumber, brick and doors, and much more. He spearheaded initiatives to use red and green lights to regulate traffic flow and increase road safety. He fought unnecessary wastes of public funds by creating uniform specifications in industries.

To Hoover's understanding, standardization of screws and bricks was not about efficiency for its own sake. Standardization was a means to several ends. It lowered costs for manufacturers, which meant less-expensive goods for the consumers, and that opened doors for progress and human expression.



Hoover worked with the American Institute of Architects to produce plans for standardized houses made of standardized building materials. This type of vision extends beyond Hoover's time and could be instrumental in addressing Iowa's housing crisis.

Herbert Hoover spearheaded ways to benchmark normal and natural child development. His time in Belgium and as head of the European Children's Fund allowed him to witness how hunger and destitution stunted the growth of young bodies. Hoover wanted to advise parents and health officers on minimum standards of health and well-being for children so they could reach their potential. Taking the seat of president of the American Child Health Association helped him further this initiative.

His surprisingly elegant vision of America can be observed close to the surface of every project Hoover undertook at Commerce.

Today we are witnessing the loss of face-to-face connections and the stories that make us who we are. Ironically enough, we also are experiencing upward trends in mental health and supply chain issues.

We all should come together and own the triumphs and use them to inspire the next generation and the next solutions.

Let's reclaim Herbert Hoover as Iowa's champion.

One of the most effective ways we can show support for the president is by supporting the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library. As our state's only presidential library, there is now an ongoing capital campaign to bring transformational work in telling his story. Donating can help bring educational opportunities to students across the state. Let's not allow Iowa to remain silent about Herbert Hoover.

Both Iowa and Hoover's narratives should embody these impressive, important and influential achievements.



Emily Schmitt is a member of the Hoover Presidential Foundation board of trustees, and she is Sukup Manufacturing Co. chief administrative officer and general counsel.