

The Spaulding plant at Fourth Avenue and Spring Street in the early 1900's

Grinnell Industrialist . . . .

# SPAULDING

Probably there are a lot of people living in the Grinnell of today to whom H. W. Spaulding is only a name. Some, perhaps, have never even heard of him.

At this centennial time it is only fitting that recognition should be given a man who built up in Grinnell, by his own thrift and energy, a business enterprise of national scope and importance. In the early nineteen hundreds Grinnell was widely known as the home of the Spaulding Manufacturing company, makers of buggies. In its time, the company was turning out 10,000 vehicles a year and employed 300 men; not bad for a little town such as Grinnell was then. A brief history of the life of a man who helped to put Grinnell in the lime-

light as a business center surely is not out of place here.

Henry W. Spaulding was born in Vermont June 29, 1846. He started his business career at the age of 19 when he built a shop in Chelsea, Vt., hired a good blacksmith and began to learn the blacksmith trade, occasionally building a buggy on the side. In a year or so he had two or three buggies on hand and when his creditors were pressing him for money he took two of these buggies, hitched one behind the other and trailed them through the countryside until he found buyers. This was the origin of the celebrated "trailing system" which he followed during his days of greatest business success.

After about two years in Chelsea Mr. Spaulding sold his business there and worked as a journeyman smith in various shops. About two years later he entered the employ of Jacob Estey & Co., organ manufacturers in Brattleboro, Vt., and at the end of three months was placed in charge of the firm's blacksmithing department. He remained there for about three years and then went on the road for the Wiley & Russell Manufacturing company of Greenfield, Mass., manufacturers of screw cutting machines. In the course of this work he traveled in Iowa and Canada.

Iowa appealed to him and he located in Grinnell on April 11, 1876, beginning as a blacksmith and a carriage manufacturer on

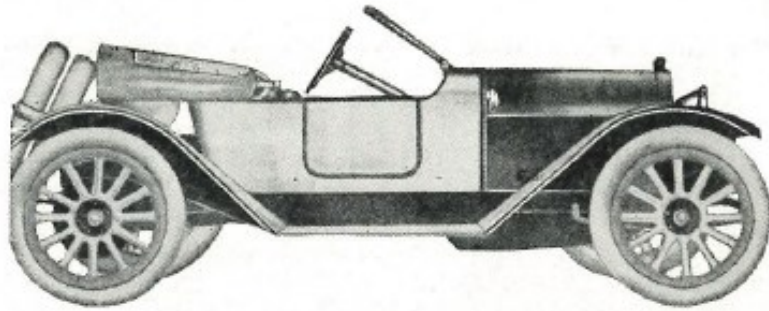
a small scale. During the first year he turned out 15 buggies and gradually increased production until by Jan. 1, 1883, he was making about 350 vehicles a year. He suffered heavy financial loss and severe personal injuries in the cyclone of 1882, but rallied and on Jan. 1, 1883, sold a half interest to A. P. Phillips & Son under the firm name of Spaulding, Phillips & Co. By Jan. 1, 1887, the firm was turning out 800 buggies a year. At that time Phillips & Son withdrew and M. Snyder held an interest for one year. The firm name at that time was Spaulding & Snyder.

On Jan. 1, 1888, Craver, Steele & Austin purchased Mr. Snyder's half interest and the business was continued under the firm name of Spaulding & Co. Production grew until in 1888 2000 vehicles were turned out.

Wishing to push their header business, Craver, Steele & Austin withdrew and after carrying on the business alone for a year Mr. Spaulding sold one fourth interests on Jan. 1, 1890, to Mr. Snyder, back again, and William Miles. The name was changed to the Spaulding Manufacturing company. At the end of the year Mr. Spaulding purchased Mr. Snyder's quarter interest and thus became owner of three fourths of the business.

In the decade from 1890 to 1900 the factory output was increased from 2,000 to 4,000 vehicles annually. On March 8, 1893, the firm sustained a loss of from \$55,000 to \$60,000 in a disastrous fire, collecting insurance of \$18,500.

On Jan. 1, 1900, Mr. Spaulding's sons, F. E. and E. H. Spaulding, bought the interest of Mr. Miles and became partners. This was the period of the firm's greatest prosperity. In



The Spaulding Car



1903 the firm manufactured and sold 6,001 vehicles and within the next few years the record mark of 10,000 vehicles was attained. The buggies were sold direct to customers by trailer and the company enjoyed an extensive business in the southern, western and northwestern states.

Then came the decline. The automobile was coming in. Buggies were going out. Recognizing the trend of the times, the Spauldings came on the market with the Spaulding automobile, an assembled car, which was made in the building at the corner of Fourth avenue and Spring street which was recently gutted by fire. The venture did not prosper. Business gradually fell off and in its latter years the company existed by manufacturing truck bodies and finally gave up the battle. It had enjoyed a meteoric career, largely through the faith, optimism and drive of one man.

No one who knew H. W. Spaulding back in those days will ever forget him. A small, wiry man, he crackled with energy. He was all over the sprawling plant which he had built up at Fourth and Spring. An expert blacksmith himself, he knew good work when he saw it and was as generous in his praise for a job well done as he was vigorous in his condemnation of a job sloppily performed.

Most of the old plant is now owned and occupied by the Sumner Brothers Seed Co. The

American Legion now owns the old Spaulding office building, and the newest building, erected originally as a wood working shop, is now occupied by the Grinnell shoe factory.

During the days of his great activity, Mr Spaulding was interested in more than his own business. He was a community minded man. For many years he was a trustee of Grinnell college and a generous contributor. He also served as mayor of Grinnell and as president of the Citizens National Bank and in the fall of 1910 he was elected to the state senate from the 12th Iowa district, including Poweshiek and Keokuk counties.

Mr. Spaulding was twice married. In October of 1872 he married Miss Miriam J. Lull. To them were born three sons, Harry E., who died at the age of 12 years, Fred L. and Ernest H. All the sons are now dead, E. H. Spaulding having passed away only a few months ago. Mrs. Spaulding died in 1888 and in 1903 Mr Spaulding married Miss Aimee M. Haight, who survives him. To them were born two daughters, Alice and Henryetta.

Senator H. W. Spaulding died on Jan. 20, 1937. He was a unique personality, representative of much that was best in his generation. He had the forward drive which pushes Americans to success and he had courage when things began to go wrong. To his dying day he was an optimist, forward looking and hopeful. In the best sense he was one of the builders of Grinnell.



The Spaulding Racer