

# The Citizen

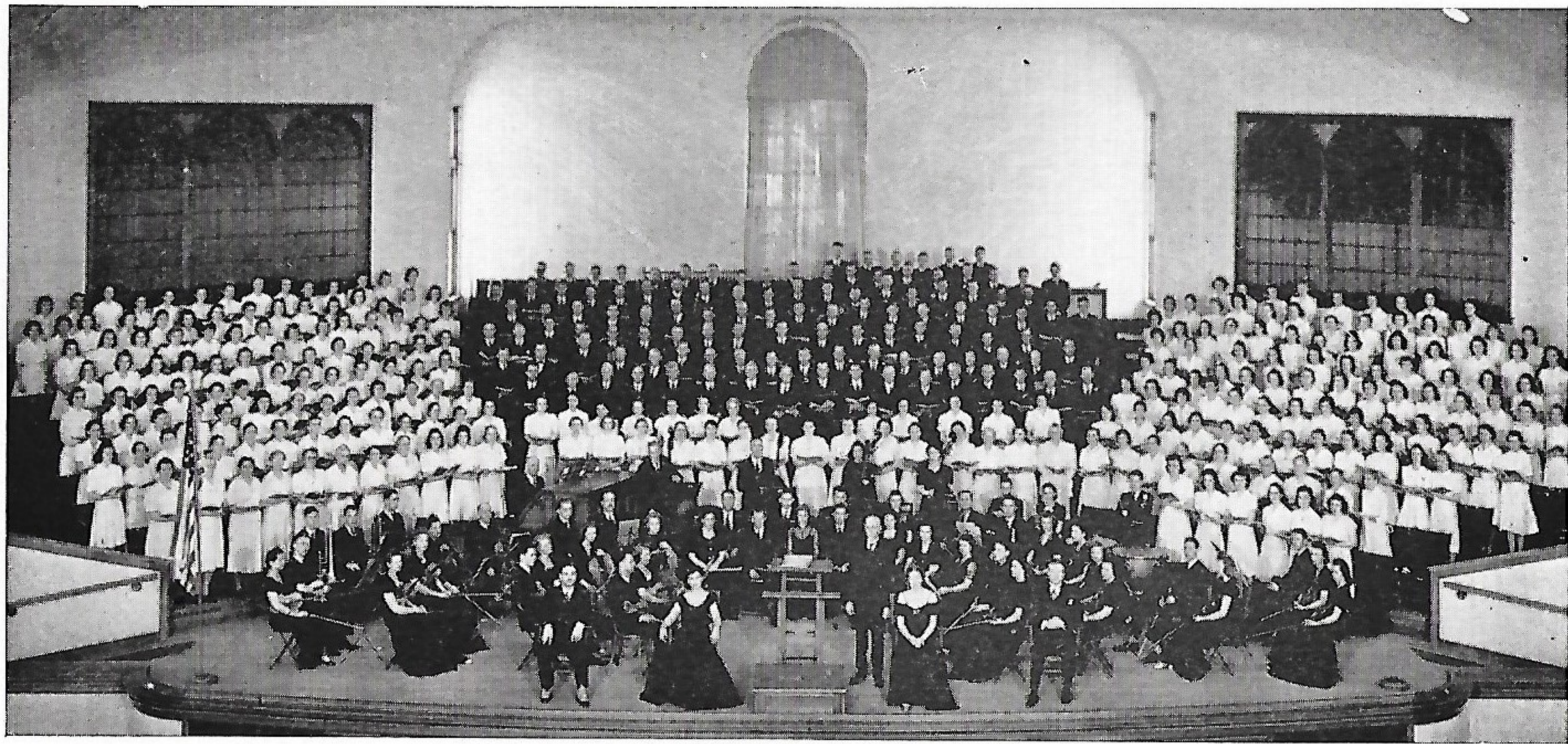
In the passing of Ernst Pihlblad the State of Kansas has lost a scholar, educator, statesman and Christian leader. It has become a trite thing to say that there is no one indispensable, and no matter how high a position one may hold that life goes on without any noticeable halting and the places once filled so well and ably by an individual of importance is taken over by his successor. In a realistic sense that is true, and yet we know that there are some figures in public life whose places are never adequately filled. Life does go on and the places that knew them know them no more, but the community and state which they have served misses the guiding hand, the word of wise admonition and the inspiration of a life nobly lived. The poet has expressed this when he likens such to the tall tree upon a hilltop which, stricken in the blast, 'leaves a lonely spot against the sky'.

In a very real sense this is true in regard to Dr. Pihlblad. His activities were so wide-spread and his influence so positive. As an ordained Lutheran minister he served in the pastorate of that great church, served in the educational field as professor of Latin at Bethany College, and later as an administrator served both as vice-president and president, which period of administration covered a span of forty-one years. Fellow communicants of the Lutheran church know full well that his going has left a real vacancy, as through the years they have come to look to him for counsel and inspiration. His influence was spread far beyond the bounds of churchly activity since he took a most active interest in the government of his state and nation. He served his state as a member of the Kansas Text Book Commission, the Kansas State Board of Education, the Kansas State Civil Service Commission, and in the Kansas State Senate. On all of these boards and in the Senate he was an acknowledged leader, for his breadth of understanding and his academic background and scholarship naturally made him a leader to whom men listened with respect and confidence. He was a staunch Republican in politics and his interest was always that of making the party stronger that it might better serve the nation.

His interests too, were cultural, and he did much to promote esthetic values in our prairie state of Kansas in his leadership of the fine institution of Bethany College, which is a recognized center for music and art in the middle west. It is not an exaggeration to say that the annual rendition of the "Messiah" at Bethany College is known through the nation as one of the great music events of the year. He built strongly and surely upon a fine foundation a great educational institution that will long feel the influence of his wise and kindly leadership.

He was one of the ablest representatives of that fine Swedish group which has, from the earliest days of American history, made an impact upon American life and culture. He did what many fine leaders in America, removed from some land across the sea have done,





Bethany College Oratorio Society.



brought all the fine traditions and heritage of a freedom loving ancestry into the American setting, thus strengthening our own American Structure. He was first and foremost a great American, but he could not forget, nor would we have had him done so, the land of his grandsires which has always stood in the foreground of progressive democracy.

It is only natural, however, that I should think of him primarily in connection with his great service to the State of Kansas. He was unstinted in the use of his great talents for the benefit of his state, and he was constantly identified with every movement for its betterment, spiritually, educationally, and politically. He died in the fullness of his powers and as he would have wanted to go, in harness; for he was stricken while serving in a session of the State Civil Service Board, where he was so valued a leader.

With the State of Kansas I salute a noble spirit whose sacrificial services to this State have become a part of its historical record and which will pervade its atmosphere for years to come.

Again I repeat his going 'leaves a lonely place against the sky'.

ANDREW F. SCHOEPPPEL.

(Governor of Kansas.)



It often is difficult to appraise the value of a life until time has mellowed those influences and activities which gave it position and rank in this world, but the life of Dr. Ernst F. Pihlblad was so forthright and consistent in its activities and influences for a better nation, state and community that his leadership in many spheres was unchallenged even during his life time.

Seldom does any man attain success and esteem in so many and varied endeavors as did this man.

In his church he was revered and esteemed alike by the clergy and by the laity. He was constant in his devotion to his church and the application of homely religious principles to his everyday life. Neither success, public acclaim, nor indispositions prevented him from active participation in his church as the spiritual leader of his people. He ministered to them daily in their spiritual needs and in so doing remained humble and lowly. No person feared or dreaded to consult with him and all who did had his blessings.

In his schools he attained leadership in the college maintained in Kansas by his church and for a generation served as president of Bethany College. Here he applied and extended the principles of a broader education and its practical betterment to civilization. His associations with students and faculty were intimate, and left traces of guidance that made a closer bond between education, religion and the home.



In government and its administration he was elected and appointed to positions of responsibility and honor in the legislative and executive branches. His common sense interpretation and analysis of laws and conditions created respect and admiration in his colleagues.

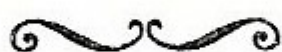
Seldom has one person achieved such a place of leadership and distinction among his own people as did Dr. Pihlblad. His right to be termed and classed the recognized leader of Kansans of Swedish extraction was never challenged. Many persons sought his opinions in ascertaining the thoughts, opinions and ideals of this group of Kansans, and always was he loyal to his own people. He never betrayed them, and in his leadership never caused them uneasiness or regret.

In the immediate past generation there are few persons who have given so much to American democracy and its administration and betterment as Dr. Pihlblad. The church, the school and the home are bulwarks of our form of living. In each of these spheres Dr. Pihlblad was an active director. His talents were great and he chose to bestow them upon the public rather than labor for riches, and as a consequence ours is the reward in a better nation, state and community.

We are justified in exhibiting pride over his many great works.

CLARENCE V. BECK.

*(Emporia, Kansas, Former Attorney General of Kansas.)*



I met the late Dr. Ernst F. Pihlblad while he was a member of the faculty of Bethany College. As I was a frequent visitor at Bethany through the years I had occasion to know his steady progress in the educational work of Bethany, and finally his advancement to the presidency to succeed Dr. Swensson upon the death of that outstanding educator.

Dr. Pihlblad's presidency of Bethany College marks an era of important progress. I had some association with him when he was raising funds for the construction of the new building in connection with the Presser gift. I grew to appreciate how effectively there was blended in him first rate business acumen with educational leadership. Therefore, I was not surprised at the splendid record he made as a member of the State Senate from the McPherson district.

He was sane, courageous, and established a definite leadership amongst the leaders of both houses of the Kansas Legislature. He was fortunate on many occasions to leave the stamp of his outstanding ability upon the legislation and political administration of the period in which he served.

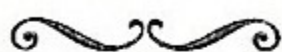
Therefore, Kansas, which he served so faithfully, and Lindsborg, to which he made a lifelong contribution, will place him in the annals



of the real contributors to the political, cultural and educational life of the state. His name stood for all the high qualities which make for dignity and accomplishment.

HENRY J. ALLEN.

(Wichita, Kansas, Former Governor of Kansas, and U. S. Senator.)



All Kansas lost a good neighbor last week when Dr. Ernst F. Pihlblad, former president of Bethany college, Lindsborg, passed to his eternal reward. For in every respect Dr. Pihlblad was a builder, and he never tore down things that did not merit destruction.

Here in central Kansas the loss will be great, for he was a tower of strength in the promotion of those movements that were for the good of the state, and of the community of which he was a vital part. A few days before his death he was in Salina attending a meeting of the Knife and Fork club, in which he was greatly interested, for in spite of his 70 years, his mind was active, and he continued to look forward, and to plan for the future.

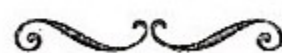
Since the death of his wife, which followed an accident in which both were injured, those who knew him best realized that life had lost some of the charm it always had held before the separation. They made many trips together, and his conversation often was of their last visit to Sweden and the experiences they had enjoyed there.

Probably no member of the race has contributed more to the high regard in which Swedes are held in Kansas than Dr. Pihlblad. Political, scholastic and religious honors were his, and he was knighted by King Gustave V of Sweden in 1920. He possessed good humor and common sense, and his friends were limited only by those who were so fortunate as to know him. Bethany college is what it is because of the years of unflagging devotion which he gave it.

It is his monument—one of which his family and friends can be proud always.

ROY BAILEY.

(Editorial in *The Salina Journal*, December 13, 1943.)



Dr. Pihlblad's death came to me as a distinct shock. My immediate comment was that truly one of God's chosen had been called to his reward. I realize that in his passing the State has lost one of its most outstanding men and I have lost a sincere and devoted friend. Our ancestral background was such that we had many things in common. It had been my good fortune to know Dr. Pihlblad personally for many years and we discussed very freely the civic



affairs affecting our state and nation. On many occasions I sought his personal advice on matters that pertained to my own future. His background of experience gave him an insight into the affairs of our State that made his advice most valuable. With his sterling character Dr. Pihlblad's words and expressions carried much weight. His contacts with people seemed to radiate confidence. His contacts with men in all walks of life gave him a broad perspective that greatly enriched our State.

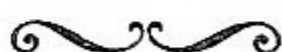
A few years ago when Kansas was shocked at some of the irregularities in the office of State Treasurer we began looking about for an individual for that place who would instill confidence in that particular office. As Republican State Chairman at the time it was my privilege, with others in control of the Government of the State, to offer this appointment to our late friend, Dr. Pihlblad. This, to me, was a mark of the respect and honor in which he was held in our State. His connections with Bethany and his religious works were such that he felt it his duty to refuse acceptance. This offer on the part of the Governor of our State met with most generous and heartily approval in every section. It was positive proof of the quality of character and the integrity with which he was held by his fellow citizens.

We mourn Dr. Pihlblad's loss. Kansas mourns his loss. He has gone from our presence but his goodness and greatness still linger with us. No more will we see his form and face on earth but the light of his life and his influence will remain with us. The world is better because he has lived in it and his memory will be cherished for years and years. The heritage he left is immeasurable.

*There is no death, the stars go down,  
To rise upon some fairer shore  
And there in Heaven's eternal crown  
To shine forever more.*

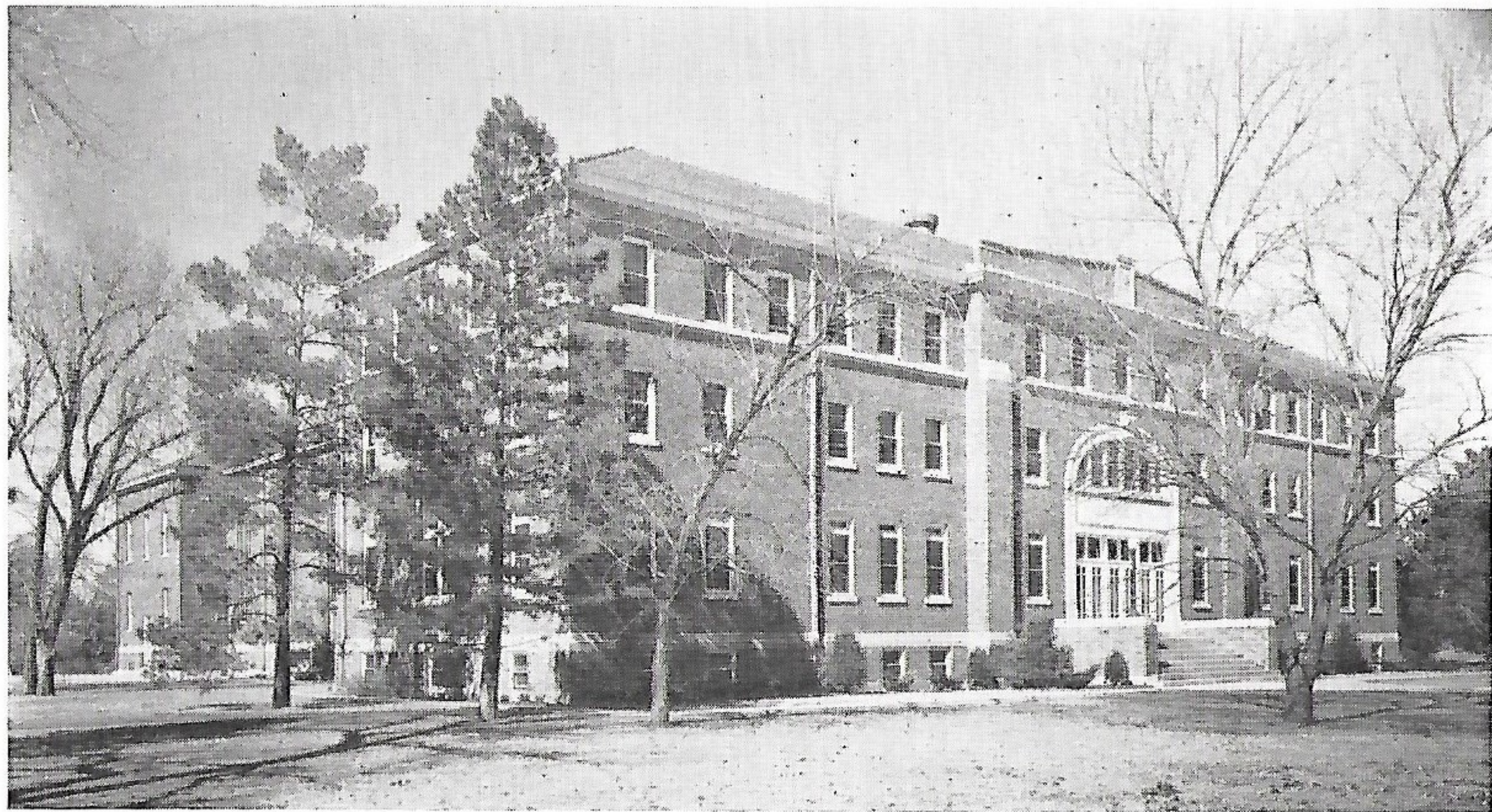
CONGRESSMAN FRANK CARLSON.

*(House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.)*



I can but mourn the loss of my good friend, Dr. Pihlblad. His passing took something fine out of the lives of all who were blessed with his friendship; but it also left with them a feeling of peace and pride at having been privileged to work with and enjoy the fellowship of such a great man. I never, in all the years of close personal friendship, ceased to marvel at the courage of the man. He walked in paths of devotion to the beautiful things of life—music—art—the ministry—and was completely dedicated to education, particularly among the Swedish people. However, these major faculties which resulted in his being Knighted by the King of Sweden and made this





Presser Hall on the Campus of Bethany College.



native the midwest the best known and loved of Swedish Americans, were but a few of the expressions of the inner force of this distinguished Kansas educator.

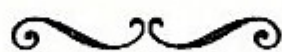
This path of life he loved so well held no danger of criticism for him. But the greatness of the man, the courage of the man, his devotion to his citizenship, would not let him stop with these great honors alone. He threw himself fearlessly and actively into the controversial phases of governmental progress. He was a stalwart leader in public affairs in Kansas and was found in almost every progressive fight for bettering the conditions of his state. He belonged to the Republican Party, the majority party of his home state. His courage would not let him mince words about that. That left him in a position where he could seldom act as a critic but had to accept dominate leadership on the constructive side of measures. He did it without hesitancy or fear.

When the state had passed a merit law in which he believed sincerely, even though it required expending energy he needed in his declining years, he accepted the chairmanship of the commission and started the new system he hoped would end the evils of everchanging patronage for a system of permanency for efficient employees. In this he had a terrific task. Public sentiment was with him. Political leaders were critical. Dr. Pihlblad knew the value of both and he was working to bring the two forces together and had accomplished much toward that end, when he passed away.

The Swedish citizens of our country have lost a great guiding spirit; the Nation, a man of broad vision; and Kansas, a devoted and most valued citizen.

LACY HAYNES.

*(Kansas City Star, Kansas City, Missouri.)*



Before I met Ernst F. Pihlblad personally I knew him by reputation as a man of good repute.

After I met him personally, he grew ever constantly in my estimation. I admired him for his wisdom, his courage, his ability and his sterling sense of true consciousness. Therefore I sought his services as State Treasurer. But his sense of duty to his college in those trying times prevented his acceptance in face of the protest of his faculty and trustees.

Dr. Pihlblad's sense of humor, his broad tolerance and sympathy, his loftly patriotism, endeared him to all who knew him.

ALF. M. LANDON.

*(Topeka, Kansas, Former Governor of Kansas.)*



I am indeed glad to have the opportunity to join in any tribute to Dr. Pihlblad.

We were associated in many matters of public interest. An instance of his feeling and character was the service he gave to the Finnish Relief Fund. He undertook it because he believed it expressed the real heart of America towards a gallant people struggling for their independence..

I have always been proud to be associated with Dr. Pihlblad.

HERBERT HOOVER.

*(Former President of the United States.)*



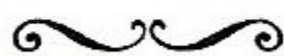
I am more than pleased to make a small contribution to the memory of an outstanding citizen of Kansas. I did not have the privilege of knowing Dr. Pihlblad intimately, for a long period of time. Of course, no one could live in Kansas very long without having general knowledge of the career of such an outstanding man.

Not only was he an educator of the first class, but he took a healthy interest in the affairs of the state. He served in the State Senate with distinction to himself and to his district. He was State Senator during the time that I occupied the Governor's Office and during those two years I had occasion to come in contact with him and observe his work. He was always interested in good government and in the welfare of the state.

He has made a reputation for himself which is outstanding and has left a lasting impression not only upon the institution with which he was associated for so many years, but also upon the state of Kansas.

W. A. HUXMAN.

*(Former Governor of Kansas, and United States Judge, Topeka, Kansas.)*



I am glad to record concerning the late Dr. Ernst F. Pihlblad, my high appreciation of his qualities as a great citizen; of his services as an educational leader, a college administrator, and a distinguished member of the Kansas member of the Kansas Senate..

There was never any uncertainty about the position he would take upon any public question. His honor was as standardized as the golden rule. He had the courage and self-confidence that go with honest leadership, and his memory in Kansas will always be associated with good works..

He occupied a peculiar place of leadership amongst a people who have contributed to Kansas an outstanding record in the cultural arts.

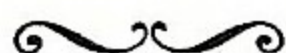


He has helped to make Bethany College widely known in music, painting and academic training.

Located in a potential mid-section of the state, surrounded by a high class people known for their earnest loyalty to the higher purposes of civilization, Lindsborg became a mecca for the young Americans of Scandinavian extraction. They made the section which they dominated a peculiar domain widely respected. Into that center President Pihlblad projected a leadership which was reach in every direction.

CLYDE M. REED.

(Former Governor and at present United States Senator, Washington, D. C.)



Through many years, as neighbors and co-workers, the friendship of Dr. and Mrs. Pihlblad was deeply cherished by Mr. West and me. To have intimately known such interesting, hospitable persons was an inspiration. From them we learned to show greater courage; to accept no defeat as final; to constantly strive for higher attainments in mind, body and soul.

Dr. Pihlblad possessed a keen sense of the general need for unbiased knowledge and a better understanding of government. He intelligently presented political issues before the public. He gave valuable assistance towards social advancement. Through personal contributions, in an advisory capacity, with untiring research for truth, he labored among youths and mature citizens for the development of his beloved America.

*"This patriot has served his state  
In humble way as well as great;  
And leaves it richer than before,  
When service ends and calls no more."*

May his soul rest in peace, but his spirit continue to call for educational progress and sincere faith in all good undertakings.

MRS. WILL G. WEST.  
(McPherson, Kansas.)



The very highest and best contributions in welding an important immigrant minority into a valuable, integral, and yet splendidly distinctive part of the American nation, were those of Dr. Ernst F. Pihlblad, who died at Topeka Thursday.

The son of Swedish immigrant parents, he began life in Kansas City, but his entire mature career was devoted to his people. He was the long-time president of Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas, and perhaps there is no person of Swedish blood who has had as great or



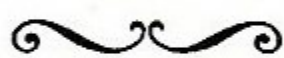
as lasting influence on that people in this country. It was Dr. Pihlblad's lifelong belief that everyone residing in America should, first of all, become a good American in every sense of that word; and, second, that it was his duty to make what contributions he could to the general enrichment and betterment of American life.

To that end he continuously fostered Swedish musical, artistic and literary talent, preserved Swedish folklore, and made of his community a mecca for lovers of the beautiful during the annual Messiah festival which made Lindsborg so famous.

Yet he preached the duties and honors of citizenship and set the example himself. He died in the harness attending a meeting of the state merit system board, discharging his duties to his commonwealth. It was a high and fitting honor when, some years ago, he was decorated with knighthood by the Swedish government for his educational services for his people.

But it can and should be said here that Dr. Pihlblad was, as he taught, an American first, a Kansan second, and a personage of Swedish blood, third, in the category of importance.

*(Editorial in The Kansas City Star, December 10, 1943.)*



Kansas occasionally develops a man who becomes so intimately identified with the progress of an activity, an institution, or a community that the individual personality takes on attributes inseparably bound to the material and spiritual interests of many.

Such a man was Dr. Ernst Frederick Pihlblad, of Lindsborg, who died Thursday in Topeka, and whose passing leaves "a lonesome place against the sky" of this state which for so many years has felt the beneficial influence of his labors and his leadership.

As an educator, he was best known for his work as an instructor and as president of Bethany College at Lindsborg. For thirty-seven years he served Bethany with a devotion which was the mainstay of the school. But he also found time to aid Kansas education in general as a member of the State Textbook Commission and as a member of the State Board of Education.

As one interested in the governmental problems of Kansas, he was active in many Republican campaigns. At a sacrifice, he served as State Senator but he refused paying jobs, as evidenced when he declined an appointment as State Treasurer proffered him by Governor Landon in 1933 when a vacancy had to be filled. He became a member and chairman of the State Civil Service Board when it was organized, but only because he believed this service would advance the cause of better government.



Educated for the ministry, Doctor Pihlblad was pastor of two New Jersey churches before joining the Bethany faculty, and thruout his lifetime his deeply religious nature was expressed in all he said and did. He was regarded as one of the outstanding church leaders of Kansas, and was well known in other parts of the nation for his religious activities.

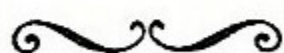
Personal honors came to him in abundance, but always he subordinated his own interests for the good of others. When he was knighted by King Gustave V of Sweden, it was in recognition of Dr. Pihlblad's service to the Swedish people both in this country and abroad.

He was American-born, but the blood of his Swedish ancestors coursed strongly in the veins of Doctor Pihlblad, and he rightly considered it the part of American patriotism to assist in bringing to Kansas and to the United States much of the culture and many of the fine qualities of the Swedish people.

The community of Lindsborg and the surrounding section today typify the best of Swedish influences in America. Under the leadership of such men as Doctor Pihlblad, the American-born and the Swedish-born people of that area have given to Kansas and to the United States priceless treasures of music and art and culture in many forms. No group in this country is more patriotic. No better citizens can be found anywhere. All that is fine and good in American life is represented, and in addition "the best of Sweden" has been superimposed upon the daily activities of these people.

The death of Doctor Pihlblad is more than the departure of an outstanding, individual personality. He was as much a part of his community and of his state as most men can ever hope to be. And altho the impress of his deeds is deep and lasting, and altho his influence will continue to be felt in the years ahead, Lindsborg and Kansas are conscious of an irreparable loss.

*(Editorial in the Topeka Daily Capital, December 11, 1943.)*



We are saddened by the death of Dr. Ernst F. Pihlblad, president emeritus of Bethany college, Lindsborg.

His long and useful life, full of credit and honor to himself and benefit to his fellowmen, has ended; and practically all over the world men and women will mourn his passing.

A gentleman, a scholar, a high-minded practical man, he served where he might. His love of country led him to take an active interest in governmental affairs and a creditable part in the politics of his com-



munity and state. In his home he was a true host; and as a friend he was steadfast and loyal.

At Governor Ratner's urging, he became chairman of the state civil service board, feeling that he could be of service to his state in that capacity; and was presiding at a meeting of that board when stricken. He died as he had lived—serving his fellowmen.

*(The Manhattan, Kansas Republic, December 16, 1943.)*