

Henry A. Wallace

1888 - 1965

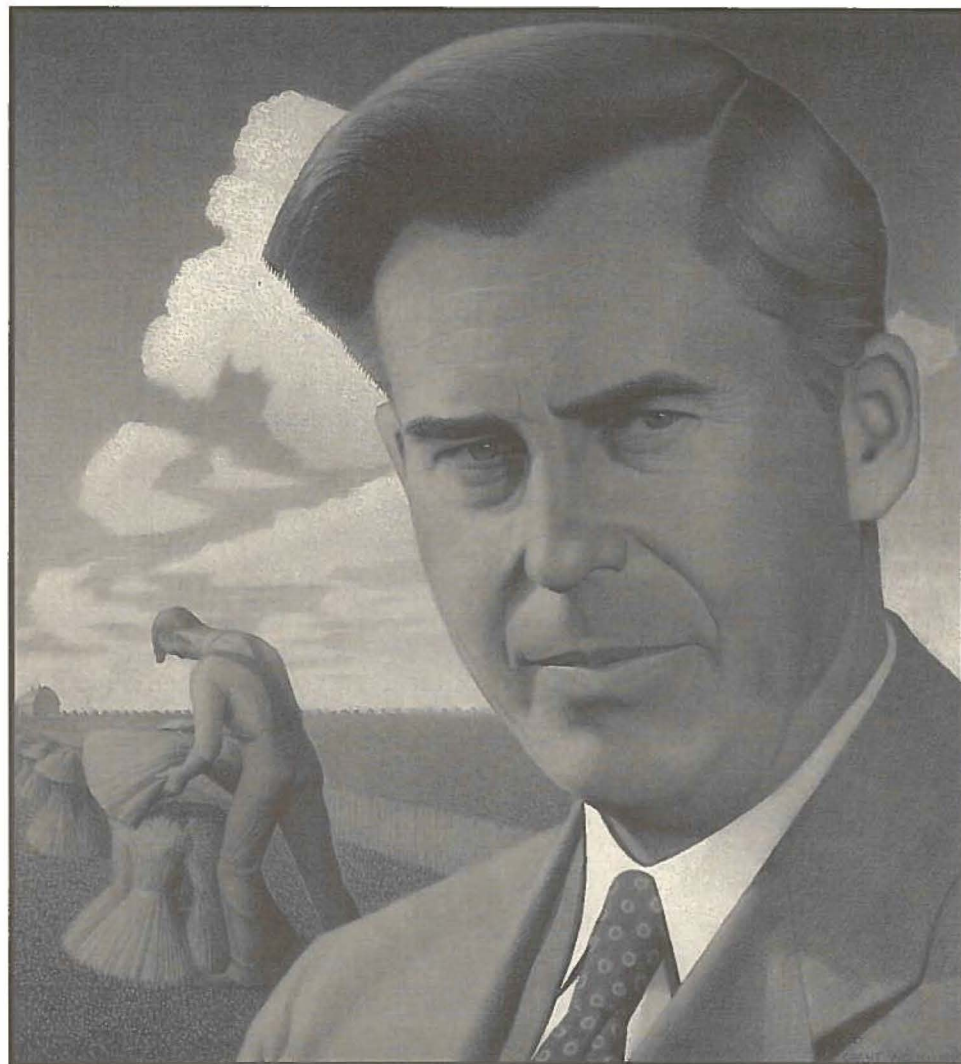
The Henry A. Wallace Centennial Project

The centennial year of Henry A. Wallace will be noted by his family and others who have formed a project to honor his achievements as "A Man of Service and Vision," the working title of a documentary to be produced by Hodding Carter's MainStreet Productions, Inc. Other anticipated events include a two-day symposium in October at Iowa State University in Ames and a panel discussion in Washington, D.C., on "Henry Wallace and The End of the Cold War."

The project will seek recognition of the Wallace family as the first family of American agriculture. It will encourage a view of Henry A. Wallace as a practical scientist, progressive reformer and humanitarian. And, as a man ahead of his time.

The project will also produce a periodic newsletter to keep friends and the media informed of its activities which will include informative pieces about Henry A. Wallace.

For further information about the Henry A. Wallace Centennial Project, write: Wallace Project, 426 C St. N.E., Lower Level, Washington, D.C. 20002.



The Centennial of a Man of Vision

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Henry A. Wallace was born on October 7, 1888, in Adair County, Iowa. His life accomplishments establish him as a great American agriculturist and reformer, a serious political thinker, and a humanitarian of strong moral convictions. In 1926, Wallace founded the Hi-Bred Corn Company (now Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc.). In 1933, he was appointed Secretary of Agriculture by Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 1940, he was elected Vice-President of the United States. In 1945, he became Secretary of Commerce. And in 1948, Wallace sought the nomination for President. When Wallace died in 1965, then Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman said:

“Henry A. Wallace, one of the giants of our times, has died, and we shall all mourn him. He never feared controversy, for his constant purpose was to do things which make life more worthwhile. He was foremost an innovator. As a scientist, he will be remembered for his pioneering work in the development of hybrid corn and other plants. As a public servant, he will be remembered as the father of modern agricultural policy. As an author and journalist, he will be remembered for his efforts to show the inter-dependency of the farm and the city . . . History cannot ignore him, and we shall not forget him. No single individual has contributed more to the abundance we all enjoy today than Henry Wallace.”

Henry A. Wallace was named after his father and his grandfather, both major figures in American agriculture. Henry A.’s grandfather, who called himself “Uncle Henry,” founded the influential farm journal, *Wallace’s Farmer*, and used it as a forum for the needs of farmers and the ethics of rural life. Henry A.’s father, Henry C., who was also an editor of *Wallace’s Farmer*, was appointed Secretary of Agriculture by President Harding. Wallace himself wrote for the family journal starting while in college at Iowa State and became editor when his father left for Washington.

Henry A.’s early contributions to the journal concerned his interest in corn. At the age of 16, he made his first corn yield test, planting five acres to prove his thesis that what an ear of corn looks like has no relationship to its yield. His first contribution to *Wallace’s Farmer* reviewed the results of the yield test, which proved his thesis, “What’s looks to a hog?” he wrote. He began to study corn seriously.

In 1919, Wallace produced a single-cross hybrid corn that he was certain was superior to open-pollinated seed. During the 20’s he continued his experiments on a larger scale and in 1923 his famous “Copper Cross” won a gold medal in a yield test. His enthusiasm for producing hybrid seed corn led him to offer 15 bushels of Copper Cross for sale and to write in *Wallace’s Farmer*: “No seed company, farmer, or experiment station has any inbred seed or cross of inbred seed for sale today. The revolution has not come yet, but I am certain that it will come within ten or

fifteen years.” With the founding of the Hi-Bred Corn Company, Wallace had a significant hand in that revolution and fifteen years later, 90 percent of the corn planted in the Corn Belt was hybrid.

Wallace revealed his extraordinary foresight in other ways throughout his career. He predicted the Depression ten years before it happened because he saw that when the profit is taken out of agriculture, the nation suffers. He recognized the value of farm exports to the economy, but it took four decades for others to see it. He raised the problem of the military-industrial complex 20 years before Eisenhower called the nation’s attention to it and 40 years before the current Pentagon scandal. He decried the resulting waste and expenditure that took away from domestic social programs for the relief of poverty and the conservation of land, for education and health care and social security. Wallace talked about the necessity of improving race relations during the 40’s, years before the civil rights movement took hold.

In international affairs, Wallace anticipated the future role of the Soviet Union in world affairs and lobbied for international cooperation and relationships that encouraged dependency rather than antagonism. He traveled to China in the mid-40’s—long before President Nixon—and noted its importance to world affairs. He was appalled by the prospect of a nuclear arms race and advocated civilian control over the atomic energy program to foster the beneficial aspects of nuclear power. Wallace traveled extensively in Latin America speaking to audiences in Spanish and he warned of a potentially explosive situation unless conditions were improved for its citizens.

From the vantage point of his centennial year, a look at the life of Henry A. Wallace reveals a man reared in the American agrarian tradition who used his heritage to improve the lot of others. In spite of his demanding job in Washington, Wallace never lost interest in corn and the possibilities of hybridization to meet the world’s food needs, nor in the progress of the Pioneer Company. Just three months before his death, he wrote:

“Your 3306 (a hybrid seed corn code) has me all excited. So glad you have 2,000 acres of it . . . I was feeling rather blue when I got up this morning, thinking the end of the road was not far off. But when I got to thinking about 3306, I felt I just had to live to see how (it) would adapt to the tropical program, the Argentine program and the South Georgia program. Yes, this is about the most exciting letter I ever received from you.”

This same spirit infused all that Wallace did. He persevered, through good times and bad, pursuing his mission—to protect and preserve “the voiceless land” and to increase the bounty of the earth.