

gregational in 1890 and the Norwegian Lutheran in 1892. Furthermore, he spearheaded a drive in 1893 to help the financially troubled North Dakota college system, which at the time included the University of North Dakota, North Dakota State University and Mayville and Valley City Normal Schools. To raise money, he persuaded friends in Minneapolis (bankers, railroad men and elevator operators) to make donations. He also staged benefit concerts, providing, according to one account, "the best musical talent available."

And Reeve made a name for himself in North Dakota politics, too. In 1898, he ran for Congress as an independent candidate. The fact that he ran as an independent shows that he may have stirred the waters a little too much for the liking of some. For in a speech in 1894 at the Democratic State Convention, he had said, "I am nothing but a weazened-up shrimp, but what there is of me now and always has been a straight out and out Democrat."

Furthermore, he had been nominated at the 1898 convention (a combination of Democrats and Populists) but was persuaded to decline by other influential delegates. In declining, though, Reeve had demanded that the eventual candidate not have Populist inclinations.

Much to Reeve's displeasure, however, W.C. Leistikon, a Grafton banker and Democratic national committeeman, nominated Knudt Nomland, who did favor the Populists. When Nomland was nominated, Reeve was furious and had himself nominated by petition. He then launched his campaign and went in search of what he called the "lost party, the lost sheep," the North Dakota Democrats. As one might expect, his campaign was not ordinary.

For one thing, his "platform" consisted of a stuffed eagle draped with an American flag. The eagle was flanked on one side by a copy of the Constitution and on the other by a copy of the New Testament. If nothing else, his platform reflected his intense honesty and patriotism, qualities which others evidently recognized. During his campaign, the *Fargo Record*, a now defunct newspaper, wrote of Reeve, "... doing good in his way, standing always for clean politics and for integrity in state and national affairs."

He also had an unusual means of transportation: not a railroad train caboose, like many whistle-stopping politicians of the past, but a log cabin on wheels, drawn by a bay horse. With this cabin, his platform, and his old dog Shep, he set out from Buxton, amidst a general town celebration, to campaign for Congress. But he eventually lost the election.

These eccentric twists to his character, however, are only some of the things that make Reeve interesting. For his political platform wasn't the only quirk that may have raised the public's eyebrows.

Reeve evidently was aware of this.

On September 16, 1907, he gave a dedication address in his room at the Hotel Dakotah in Grand Forks. He made the address before members of the Supreme Court of North Dakota, the mayor of the city, and other notables. Yet he said he never offered the address for publication because "...the work looked to those not ac-

quainted with the unseen like something imaginary, or possibly a little crazy."

The work he was referring to was a flag he had designed, which he called the Flag of the Earth. The flag and the idea behind it centered around Reeve's concept of "home building," which called for a world organization of nations.

Reeve described the flag in one of his books *Jerome or J.J. Hill as a Bible Character*, copyrighted in 1907. He said he designed the flag through impressions he received from the works of Moses.

The flag featured, among other things, six colors, a star and sixteen triangles. Reeve wrote that one of the colors, black, honored "Mother Earth" and recognized "the fact that from darkness we came and to darkness we

must return." Another color, white, was in recognition "of a universal groundwork. Without whiteness ... especially in mankind, there would be human darkness." And the star, as Reeve wrote, represented all nations, since the Flag of the Earth was common to all.

A replica of the flag floated at Buxton for a year but was torn to shreds by the wind and not replaced. Reeve, however, retained the original flag raised at the dedication service. It was reportedly a magnificent 12 by 16-foot.

Amidst this mysticism and seeming eccentricity, though, Reeve repeatedly did things that helped Buxton and North Dakota. Even though he disliked the Populists, who wanted better prices for grain and lower rail charges for having it hauled, he consistently made the farmer's lot better.

In 1886, for example, he opened a cooperative store, in which he handled goods on commission only. He also called the first Interstate Grain Growers' Convention in North Dakota, held in Fargo in March of 1899. The convention was endorsed by the head of the School of Agriculture at the University of Minnesota and was intended to get grain growers interested in better ways of farming.

With all his public service and seeming influence, though, Reeve came to a point in life when he needed help too. In his later years, he saw his wife, Harriet, and daughter, Daisy, precede him in death. He was confined to a wheel chair. His income also dwindled in the 1920's, until the bank foreclosed on his land and once rather elegant home. Reeve, though, was allowed to stay on his homestead until his death, by a man he did not identify in his writings.

Thus, the "Sage of Buxton," the weazened-up shrimp, came to an end that, at least financially, much mirrored his beginnings in LaPorte County, Indiana.

That fact may not have bothered him as much as it would others, though. For in one of his earlier writings, Reeve had stated: "Some people might be ashamed or afraid to own a pedigree like mine. They would be afraid it would knock all the greatness out of them. But I take a different view of it, for the reason that it takes a wonderfully smart man to live on nothing."

So pedigree or not, Reeve made a name for himself in North Dakota.

The little man did a lot.

*It takes a
wonderfully
smart man to
live on nothing.*
