

Our own opinion

# 100 years of service

In its advertising and public relations, the West Plains Bank rightfully makes much of its being an independent, home-owned bank. We know that aspect of its character makes today's observance of its 100th birthday a little sweeter.

From its beginning in 1883, *the West Plains Bank* has been a West Plains bank. That is, it has catered to special local needs in a special way, a way in which a bank somewhere else might not. And its standing as an institution has grown, but not changed, as its assets have grown from \$15,000 in capital stock in 1883 to assets of more than \$53 million last year.

A favorite story that illustrates the bank's character involves a letter written by the bank's president during World War I. The State Banking Commission had told the bank its past-due loans and overdrafts were excessive. President R.S. Hogan replied, tartly, "We are doing the best we can with past-due loans. People down this way are pretty short on funds right now as we have had poor crops the past five years and the taxes are pretty high. This has just about cleaned anybody out of any surplus money. All we can do is keep after them. I don't anticipate we will lose much money in the end and it is exasperating to keep dunning people for money they don't have."

Well, Mr. Hogan was right. The bank survived and helped the community do so.

Today there aren't so many home-owned banks, or home-owned daily newspapers for that matter, around. The financial requirements of modernization have led many closely-held businesses in both industries to affiliate with groups. Thus, it is refreshing to note the 100th birthday of a bank that still is independent and home-owned, and still serving the community in that spirit.

We think Mr. Hogan would have been amazed if he could have attended today's birthday celebration, to see the bank's new building with its distinctive mural and its state-of-the-art computerization. We don't think he would be surprised, though, to see the bank is still serving the community in a manner that befits "people down this way." And he would have approved.

So, to the bank, its board, employees and patrons, and especially to Dan and David Gohn, here is a birthday greeting from one home-owned, independent institution to another. We hope you are celebrating today's birthday not only as an observance of the end of a first century of service to the community but also as the beginning of a second.