

Man Who Died in '32 Buys Drake Its Flags

Drake university owes its continuing supply of American flags and its 85-foot flagpole to a man who died 19 years ago.

He was Alexander G. Downing, a pioneer Iowan, civil war veteran and philanthropist who died in 1932 at the age of 89.

But as early as 1918 Downing made sure the university always would have a clean, bright flag in front of the Administration building on University avenue.

Gave \$3,000.

On Apr. 29, 1918, Downing gave Drake \$3,000 to be invested in government bonds so that income from the fund in future years would provide flags for the university; maintenance, and, if necessary, replacement of the flagpole; and establishment of an A. G. Downing Liberty scholarship for worthy students.

Drake officials estimate the fund has paid for about 130 flags, at the rate of four a year, in the 33 years since the fund was set up. The flagpole also has been replaced once.

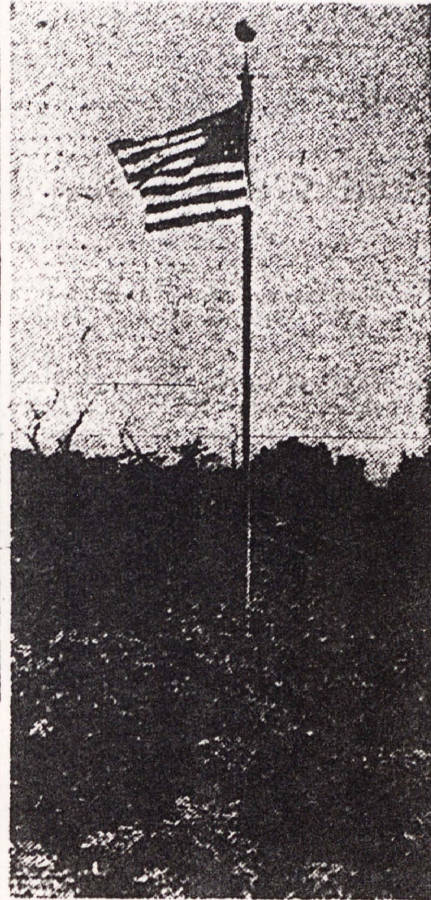
One of those flags—5 by 8 feet, made of nylon and costing \$18—swung from the flagpole Thursday as the nation celebrated Flag day.

Bargain.

The university was remembering its end of the bargain—that "Old Glory be kept flying every day that the weather will permit." That was the only string Downing attached to the gift.

The flagpole and flag are the only outward signs of Downing's \$40,000 in gifts to Drake.

Largest of the gifts were \$25,000 for a medical chair and \$5,000 for a medical library. When the school of medicine was discontinued at Drake in 1913, the



Flag flies above trees in front of Drake university Administration building.

money was transferred to the school's general endowment fund.

In 38 Battles.

Downing, who took part in 38 civil war battles and skirmishes, and his wife also were active supporters of University Church of Christ.

A farmer most of his early life, Downing moved to Des Moines from Colfax in 1887. He also owned a general store at one time and had farmed near Bennett.