I graduated from high school in 1966, during an era when Iowa education was on top of the heap. What has happened since? I believe a huge factor is a change in curriculum, to say nothing of discipline and expectations. Education in America is soft, period.

However, when one contemplates what has happened in Iowa over its history, there are many important aspects that should be included in a history course. Consider America’s westward expansion to the Mississippi River and when a bridge was put across it near Rock Island, Ill., how it triggered rapid growth, aided by the Homestead Act. Then consider the Indian tribes that existed and how they were impacted. Before long, it was recognized on the East Coast that Iowa possessed some fabulously rich farmland. Add the historic movement of the Mormons from Illinois to the West, via Iowa and Missouri. And what about those World War II prisoners-of-war that provided labor in the fields when local boys were far from home?

One can’t look at the future development of Iowa’s economy without giving credit to all the inventiveness in agriculture, transportation, aeronautics and general conviction of finding a better way of doing something. The list of firsts is impressive and accounts for much fabulous growth in economic activity that cannot be ignored — if only it were publicized through a history class.

In addition, so many people are astounded when the roots of famous people in many fields include Iowa. Similarly, when Iowa leads the state rankings in any discipline, the publicity is cause for celebration.

This is all a reflection of my experience over these 45 years when I had bailed out of Iowa without knowing so much that I have since learned. And this has spurred my interest in more discovery every chance I get when I return to visit. Iowa History Journal has certainly ignited my desire to visit more places and museums throughout the state that provide information on subjects with which I was unaware.