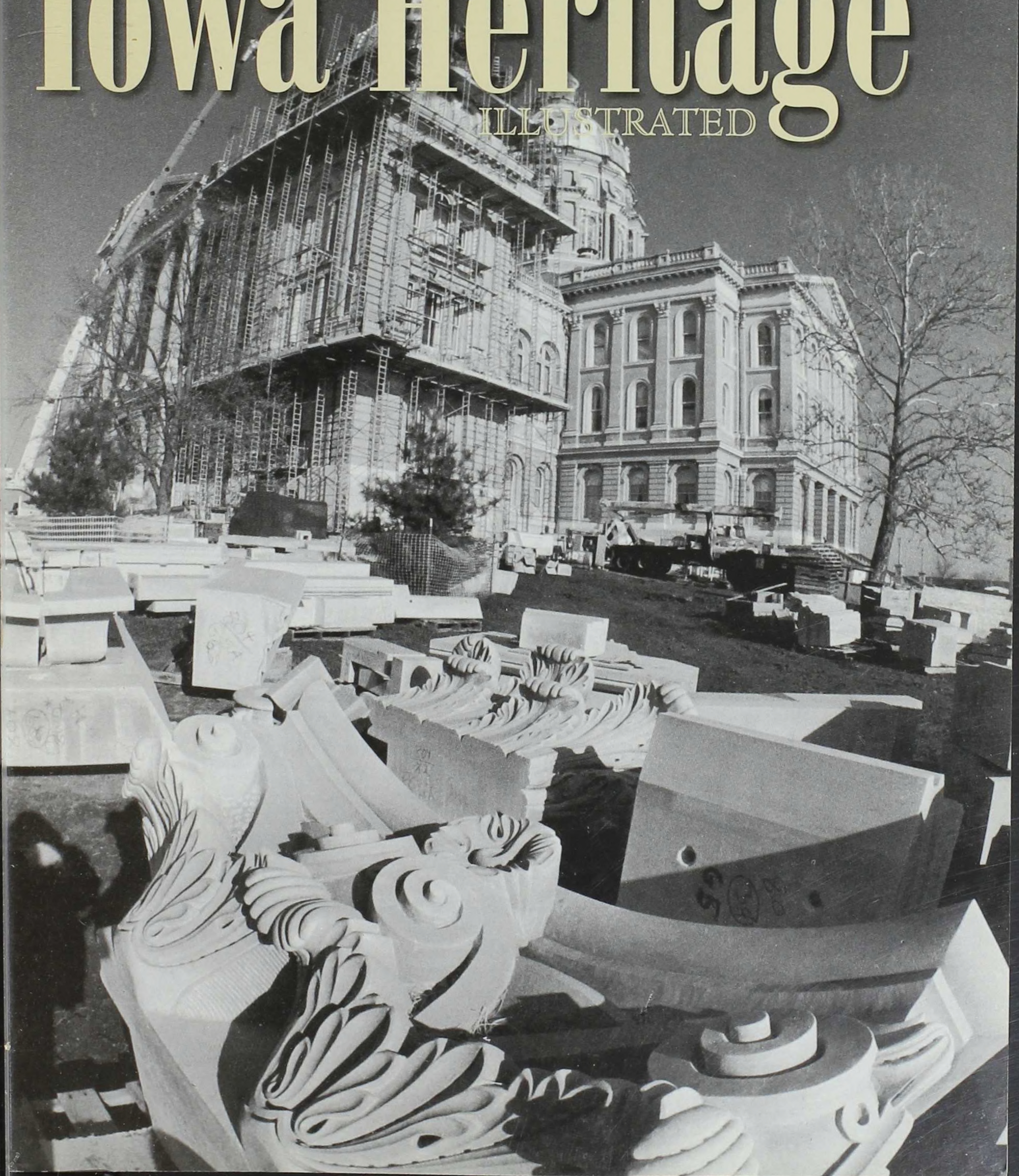


Woolly Mammoths • Fort Des Moines No. 2 & Early Des Moines • Insider's View of the Capitol

Spring 2005 • \$6

Iowa Heritage

ILLUSTRATED



Front Porch

Dear Readers:

The golden-domed Capitol in Des Moines is a state icon, representing the voice of the people today as well as a certain stage of development in the state's history—when the population had reached far enough westward to shift the capital there from eastern Iowa.

But behind that development was the U.S. government's relocation in the 1840s of Native Americans from Iowa to west of the Missouri River—representing two more huge shifts of population. As native inhabitants were moved out, Euro-American migrants poured in, gradually turning the prairie into farms and towns.

These shifts, however, are dwarfed by a shift thousands of years ago—the arrival of the last glacier of the Ice Age, called the Des Moines Lobe. It halted at the present-day city of Des Moines, and over the next few thousand years, as the glacier thawed, its swift-flowing meltwaters created the Des Moines River, down the axis of the lobe, and the present course of the Raccoon River, wrapped around the southwestern edge of the lobe.

The juncture of the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers became a propitious location for prehistoric people, Native Americans, and an 1840s fort, which evolved into a town and then grew into a state capital.

Shifting forces, of ice and water and people, are behind the changes that have made Iowa. Evidence of these forces is presented in the articles in this issue. One delves deep, literally, into the past, 55 feet down to bedrock. Two other articles probe closer to the surface, where archaeologists have unearthed prehistoric tools, remains of military barracks, and everyday objects from a frontier town.

Our final article fast-forwards to *very* recent history. Candid photos taken in the Capitol show the everyday life of legislators, state workers, and the public they serve. The images document the use of late 20th-century technologies and the debate of late 20th-century issues, in a building constructed as a showcase of late 19th-century architecture, built on a hill east of the confluence of these two rivers.

The distance in time spanning these events? Fifteen thousand years, give or take. The distance in space? Little more than two miles, bringing a deeper meaning to the phrase "a sense of place."

—Ginalie Swaim, editor

Iowa Heritage Illustrated

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Back Issues

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Memberships

This magazine is a benefit to members of the State Historical Society of Iowa. One-year membership of \$50 includes additional benefits. Contact Margi Weiss (515-281-8823), Margi.Weiss@iowa.gov, State Historical Society of Iowa, 600 East Locust, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.

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Our two locations for collections and programs are in Des Moines (515-281-8741) and Iowa City (319-335-3916), with historic sites throughout Iowa.

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Iowa Heritage

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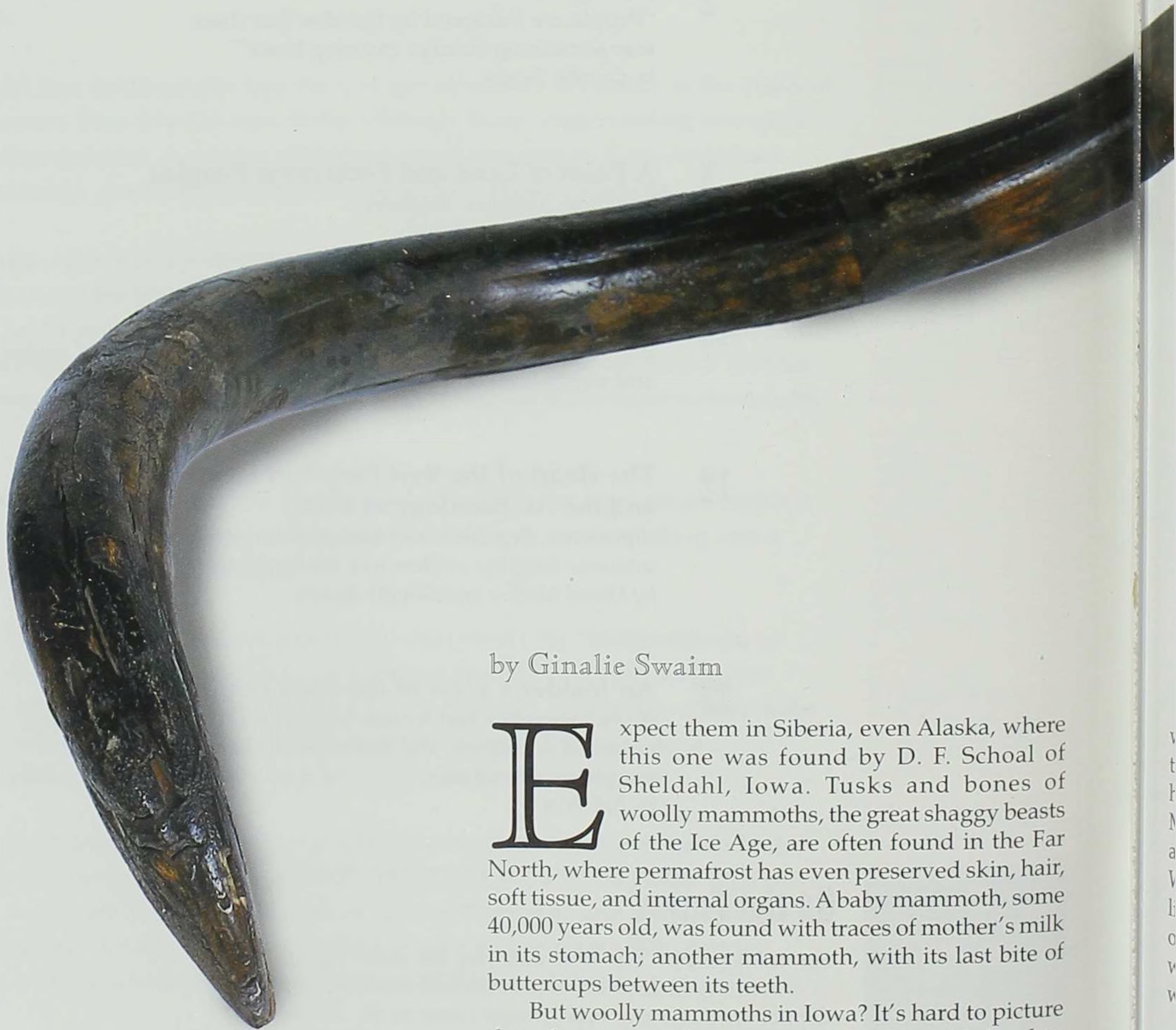


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On the Cover

Former legislator Bill Witt describes his cover photo: "Cost-cutting in 1883 led to monumental headaches for Capitol architects and maintenance crews in the 1980s, as corroded, crumbling lintels, capitals, and brackets threatened people and vehicles below. Here, replacement stonework, carved from the hard Indiana limestone that 1880s legislators had rejected as too costly, lies ready to be hoisted and set into place (February 1998)."

Ice Age Iowa




by Ginalie Swaim

Expect them in Siberia, even Alaska, where this one was found by D. F. Schoal of Sheldahl, Iowa. Tusks and bones of woolly mammoths, the great shaggy beasts of the Ice Age, are often found in the Far North, where permafrost has even preserved skin, hair, soft tissue, and internal organs. A baby mammoth, some 40,000 years old, was found with traces of mother's milk in its stomach; another mammoth, with its last bite of buttercups between its teeth.

But woolly mammoths in Iowa? It's hard to picture these beasts roaming our state—but then it's hard to picture glaciers pushing their way into Iowa more than two million years ago.

The Ice Age wasn't all ice, but rather long cycles of freezing and thawing, as the climate cooled and



Iowa at a time long before them, and by the fact that we're still finding evidence of woolly mammoths, that we find discoveries quite regularly. In the river valleys, the gravel pits, in farm fields, every few months there seems to be a discovery of a tooth or a tusk, a limb bone, all fragments of the animals that lived during the Pleistocene. Regularly here at the museum we get individuals who bring in bison skulls, mammoth teeth, and other assorted bones. Recently there's been a giant ground sloth found in the southwestern part of the state. Gravel pits, which were the backwaters and eddies of early rivers, produce numbers of mammoth teeth. This is especially true south of Des Moines. North of Des Moines, everything was covered over by recent deposits."

"Recent," of course, is relative. For geologists, recent can mean 15,000 years ago, when the last glacier of the Ice Age, called the Des Moines Lobe, shoved its way down into central Iowa like a giant thumb. For the next few thousand years, the lobe surged forward, then stagnated as the temperatures warmed enough for some of it to melt, then advanced again. Driving north on I-35, you'll see moraines marking the pauses in the glacier's advances and retreats, potholes created as isolated blocks of ice melted, gravel deposits dropped from churning meltwaters. Edged by the Raccoon River, the lobe's southern-most point was present-day Des Moines.

In August 2001, Allied Insurance in downtown Des Moines began excavation for the foundation of a new parking garage. From 55 feet below the surface, huge augers brought up a slurry of Pennsylvania shale (a sign they had hit bedrock)—and bone. Wisely, Allied called staff at the State Historical Society of Iowa, including Bill Johnson, who knew right away that bones that size could only have come from a mammoth or mastodon. A neck vertebra, scapula, ribs, and a portion of the front leg were all carefully removed from the construction site and donated to the museum by Allied Insurance.

"One of our archaeologists on staff, Dan Higginbottom, contacted David Overstreet, a noted archaeologist who had done mammoth work up in Wisconsin," Johnson says. "He came down and took a look at the specimens and arranged for us to have carbon-14 dates taken. The Allied bones are still so fresh that they could get the organic information out of them. They almost feel oily when you work with them. Because they were rapidly covered and preserved by tens of feet of sediment, the decaying process is very slow.

"The carbon-14 tests came back at 15,000 years," Johnson says. "Those dates fall very close to what U.S. Geological Survey excavations had already determined to be the age of the Des Moines Lobe north of here at Saylorville. Saylorville is along the Des Moines River,

warmed, and the glaciers advanced and retreated. When trying to imagine the terrain of Ice Age Iowa, natural history curator Bill Johnson says to "think of northern Minnesota and on up into Canada, where you have open areas and then conifer forests and then open areas again. We did have some ice and snow, but also some tundra-like vegetation, low shrubs, and spotty woodland areas on the margins of the glaciers." Living in this landscape was a host of mammals now extinct, including the woolly mammoth.

It's been a year now since the State Historical Society of Iowa opened its museum exhibit "Mammoth: Witness to Change," curated by Johnson and designed by Jerry Brown. "We are still getting tremendous interest from the public," Johnson says. "People are intrigued by the idea that there was something strange roaming

Ice Age Iowa



by Ginalie Swaim

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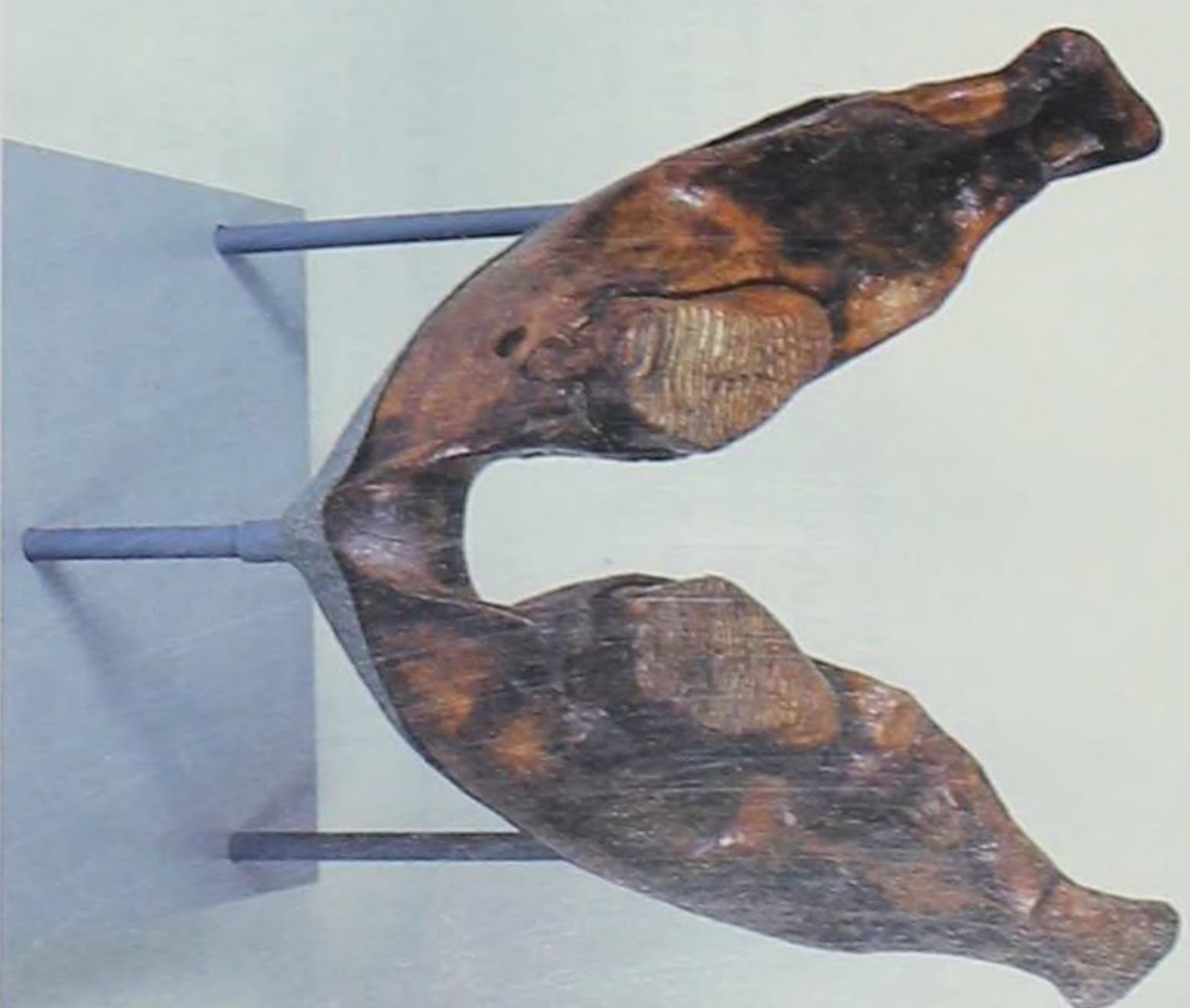
which was carved out as the meltwaters of the glacier subsided." Johnson calls the Allied bones "a grand find."

The centerpiece of the museum exhibit is the 12-foot-high mammoth skeleton (left). A gift of Dickson Industries of Des Moines, the skeleton is a fiberglass and resin replica of an actual mammoth skeleton uncovered in 1994 when farmer John Hebior was digging a drainage ditch across an old pond in southeastern Wisconsin. The find astounded archaeologists: nearly 90 percent of the bones were still there, making the Hebior mammoth the most complete mammoth skeleton ever found in North America.

Scientists could tell that the Hebior mammoth was between 25 and 28 years old (by how many bones had fused) and that it was male (by the size of skull, tusks, and pelvis opening), but they couldn't determine how it had died (by disease, starvation, or predators). But more significant was the presence of stone tools and of butchering marks on some of the bones—making this one of the earliest butchering sites found in North America. Archaeologist David Overstreet, who oversaw the excavation of the Hebior mammoth, told visitors at the Des Moines exhibit opening a year ago, "Frankly, in my line of work, it doesn't get any better."

Mastering the technology of making stone tools and weapons allowed Paleo-Indians to hunt and butcher the big game (megafauna) of the Ice Age: giant bison, musk oxen, deer, elk, ground sloth, mastodon, and mammoth. With great skill and precision, they chipped and flaked chert and obsidian into long, narrow projectile points, as sharp as a surgeon's knife. Johnson has great admiration for the Paleo-Indian technology: "All you have to do," he explains, "is think about how sharp a piece of glass is, to figure out how sharp the edges of a stone tool are. Then put that on a shaft, whether it be a throwing shaft from an atlatl or a spear shaft, and you end up being able to project a lot of force," enough to penetrate the thick hide of a mammoth.

As the last ice sheet retreated, roughly



A mammoth that lived a full life of 80 years would have gone through six sets of molars, four to each set. Each ten-pound molar was the size of a shoebox, with vertical ridges designed to tear, grind, and chew some 300 pounds of shrubs, leaves, pinecones, grasses, and willow and spruce twigs every day. As the abrasive silica in the plants wore down the ridged, corrugated surface of the molars, new molars emerged, moved forward as if on a conveyor belt, and pushed the old ones out. Because each progressive set had larger molars with more ridges, scientists can estimate the age of a mammoth at time of death. Mammoth teeth and jaw fragments have been found in many Iowa counties. Perhaps the museum's finest example is this lower jaw with two molars, found in Dallas County in 1919 by Fred White.

Below: This neck vertebra the size of a dinner plate was one of the mammoth bones uncovered at the Allied Insurance building site in 2001.



PHOTO BY CHUCK GREINER



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12,000 years ago, humans entered the Upper Mississippi River Valley. This intersection, in time and place, of human and mammoth is what most excites Bill Johnson. Megafauna were on the path to extinction; humans, to dominance. Both were witnesses to great change.

Exhibit designer Jerry Brown became well acquainted with the form of a mammoth while constructing a one-quarter scale model. "He really did a phenomenal job," Johnson says. "And he did it as a forensic scientist would have, by reading up on elephants, the cousins of mammoths, and figuring out the height and thickness of each area of the body. He carved the tusks from fiberglass. And then the hair was just a beautiful addition, and a masterful idea to use musk ox hair."

Brown's shaggy model is a popular feature of the exhibit for the thousands of schoolchildren who tour the museum each year. Museum educator Sarah Macht relates how the students are "just amazed that mammoths were in Iowa." Macht developed lesson plans on the Society's Web site (*see box*) so that teachers can use the mammoth exhibit to teach science, mathematics, social studies, and art, and meet national academic standards.

How do you convey the idea of the Ice Age to children? "Again, we look at the idea of change," Johnson explains. "This is the one thing that ties everything together. We talk first about the idea that there are changes

in seasons from year to year. Was this winter like last winter? Do you remember how much snow there was? Students notice that there are differences in winters. Then we go back to Grandpa's time, and then his grandfather's time, and you begin adding time back hundreds, then thousands of years. When you say 'years' to 7-year-olds, they understand that amount of time. They've already established the idea of a year as a certain amount of time. So when you say 15,000, even though that's a really long time, they can begin to understand that."

Still, it's a stretch of the imagination, for adults as well as children, to think of Iowa as a mosaic of conifer forests and tundra-like vegetation. And it's a stretch to imagine the great woolly mammoths plodding along, using their nine-foot tusks to scrape bark off trees, to plow through snow, to battle each other. But it's a valuable exercise in imagination, Johnson believes. "This is a beast that was here 15,000 years ago. We're only part of that continuum of time, and a very small part. A hundred years of that continuum will be a human life. And yet things were going on long before us, and will continue long after us. It puts life in perspective." ❖

Right: Exhibit designer Jerry Brown created this quarter-size model of a woolly mammoth. Mammoths weighed up to 12,000 pounds; the skull and tusks alone, perhaps 300 pounds. A thick layer of inner hair covered by long outer hairs insulated against the cold. Small ears limited heat loss.

More on Mammoths

- Visit "Mammoth: Witness to Change" and other exhibits at the State Historical Society of Iowa museum, 600 E. Locust, Monday–Saturday, 9-4:30; Sundays, noon to 4:30.
- To arrange school tours, contact museum educator Sarah Macht, at 515-242-5193, or by e-mail at sarah.macht@iowa.gov.
- Find online lesson plans at www.iowahistory.org/museum/exhibits/mammoth, then click on "Learn."
- The Society's Museum Store offers a variety of books and toys on mammoths. 515-283-1757, www.iowahistory.org, click on "Museum Store."

For further reading:

- *Mammoth: The Resurrection of an Ice Age Giant*, by Richard Stone
- *Mammoths: Ice-Age Giants*, by Dr. Larry D. Agenbroad and Lisa Nelson
- *Landforms of Iowa*, by Jean C. Prior, especially pages 36–47, on the Des Moines Lobe in Iowa

Special thanks to Allied Insurance and Dickson Industries for helping to fund the exhibit and educational programs. Additional thanks to Allied Insurance for preserving the mammoth bones for the people of Iowa.

A Point of Land
and Prehistoric Peoples



A Point of Land and Prehistoric Peoples

Prehistoric artifacts found near the confluence of the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers, in central Iowa, remind us that Euro-Americans—explorers, traders, trappers, soldiers, and settlers—were not the first to find this point an advantageous location.

by Christopher M. Schoen



This T-shaped drill (about twice actual size) was found amidst chipped flakes of stone.

ARTIFACT PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY LOUIS BERGER GROUP, INC.

How long and how frequently prehistoric peoples had visited this location—where the Raccoon River flows into the Des Moines—is unknown, but sometime between 8500 and 800 B.C., during the Archaic Period, a small group of people came to this point of land for a short period. On the highest spot of the point one individual looked out over the river valleys while he chipped flakes off a cobble of flint-like rock, used to make and sharpen tools such as projectile points to hunt game, knives to skin and cut up game or shape wood and bone, and drills (*see left*) to bore holes in wood, bone, and shell. The cobble of Winterset chert was collected from the riverbed or perhaps from a bedrock outcrop in the region. He left behind a pile of the chipped material, which eventually became buried by soil accumulating over the spot.

About 1100 A.D., near the end of the Late Woodland Period, large groups of prehistoric people began to settle in the central Des Moines

valley (in present-day Marion, Polk, and Warren counties). These people, who were part of a widespread culture archaeologists have called Oneota, have been attributed to the Moingona phase based on patterns of pottery decoration and other characteristics.

One group of related families selected the point of land at the two rivers as the site to stay for an undetermined period around 1300 A.D. Because the point was at the interface of a woodland along the rivers and prairie, the resourceful Moingona community could take advantage of the varied wildlife and materials each vegetal and topographical niche offered. The site was protected from spring flooding and away from mosquitoes. The point was high enough that breezes brought temporary relief from the heat of the warm season and gnats and flies. The group erected small to moderate-sized structures of poles covered with mats or bark, and dug a few pits to store foodstuffs and other materials. From the bottomlands,



they collected wood for fuel and for building materials, as well as clay and mussel shell to make their pottery (*above*). The group may have been there over much of the year. They hunted deer and bison nearby and butchered them on site. The teeth, feet, and anklebones were disposed of in a trash midden. Ducks, soft-shelled turtles, fish, muskrats, and beaver were captured in the rivers or at nearby wetlands. The bones of the larger mammals were broken to get at the marrow. The Moingona group harvested corn, sunflower seeds, little barley, and goosefoot from cultivated fields located on the floodplain. Wild goosefoot and dock, both seed plants, were gathered for food. Acorns, hickory nuts, mulberries, grapes, wild strawberries, edible mushrooms, and other wild foods undoubtedly were collected as well.

Archaeologists are still trying to clarify the relationships of late prehistoric groups and the Native American tribes who occupied the prairie lands that eventually became Iowa. The Ioway, Otoe, and Missouri were the first tribes documented by explorers, traders, colonizers, and soldiers in the region. The Ioway, Otoe, and Missouri were gradually displaced by the closely allied Sauk and Meskwaki in southeastern and central Iowa during the 1700s. In 1735, members of the latter two tribes established a village for a few years on an island in the Des Moines River a few miles north of the confluence with the Raccoon River. The Sauk and Meskwaki continued to traverse the Des Moines area to hunt, fish, trap for furs, and raid the Dakota until 1845. They established villages a few miles from the point in 1842. ❖

Above: Sherds from the rim and body of clay vessels, with typical Oneota decorative patterns of crossed lines and concentric circles. Below: The projectile point was probably attached to an arrow shaft and used by people of the Oneota culture.

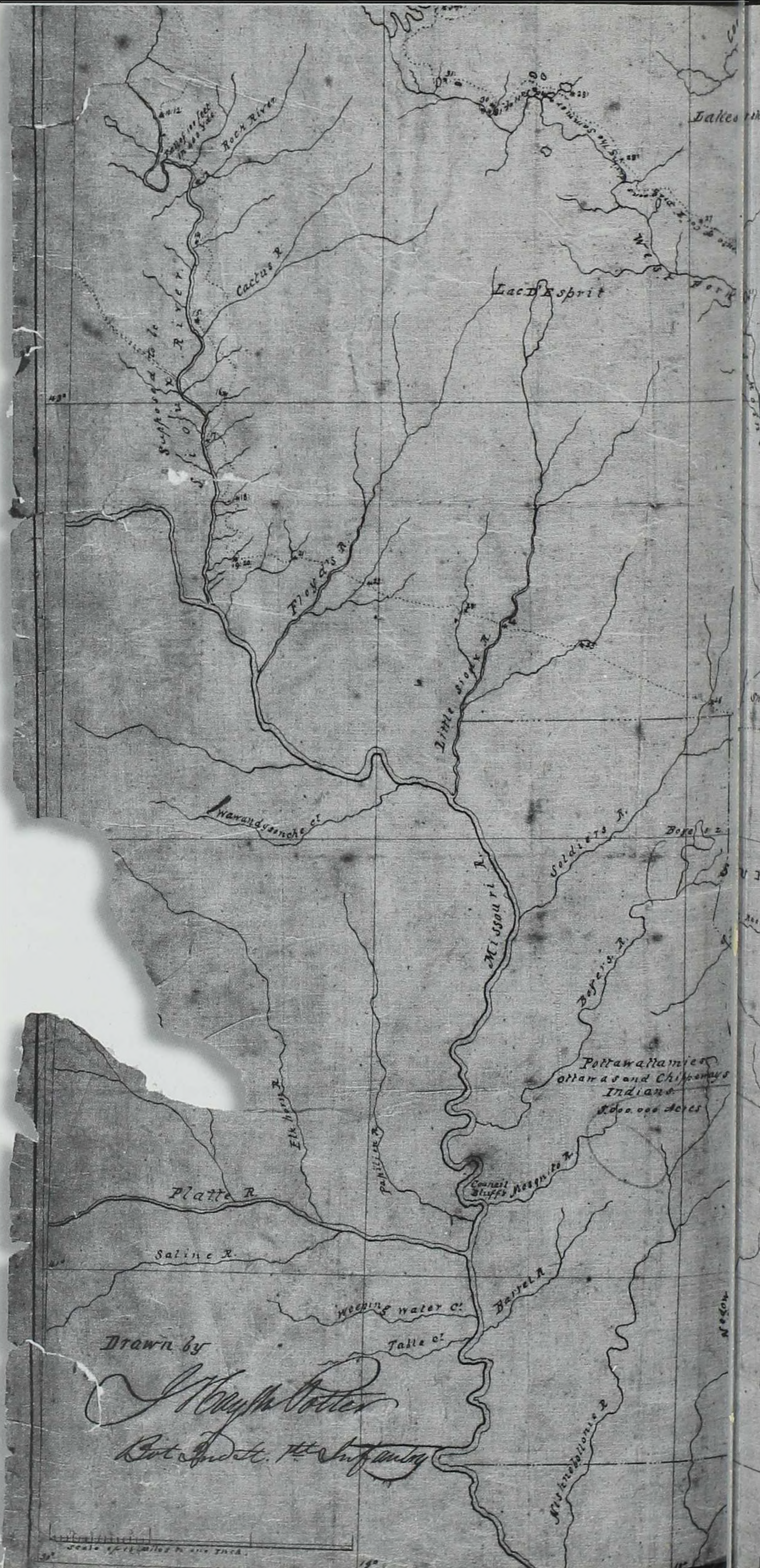


Adapted from introduction by Christopher M. Schoen to "Archaeological Date Recovery for the SW 2nd to SW 7th Streets Segment of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway, Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa" (May 2003), prepared for the City of Des Moines by the Louis Berger Group, Inc.

Dragoons' Map of Iowa Territory in 1844

Portion of "Map of the Route passed over by Company I 1st Dragoons in the Indian country, in the Northwestern part of Iowa Territory during the Summer and Fall of 1844." The map includes the boundaries between tribes, trails, camps, forts, rapids, and Indian villages, including the four villages east of the confluence of the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers, where the Sauk and Meskwaki (Sac and Fox) lived during part of their forced relocation out of Iowa Territory. The map was drawn by Joseph Haydn Potter in 1844.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES; COURTESY KATHRYN GOURLEY





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Chapan I.

Trail I.

Root R.

Upper Iowa R.

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Fort Des Moines

Great Plains

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New boundary line

Parlette C.

Fox R.

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MISSOURI

WYOMING

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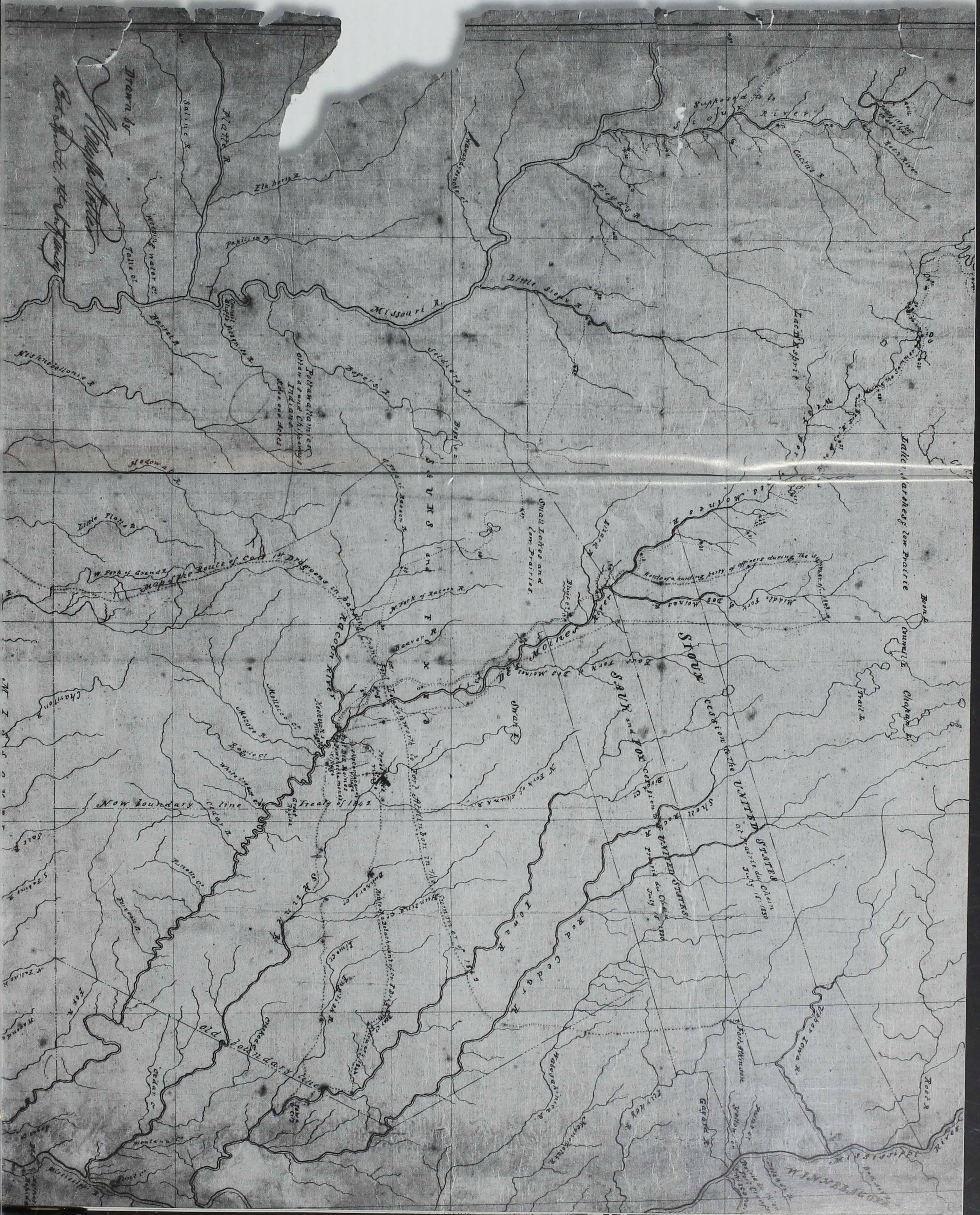
Wagender

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NATIONAL ARCHIVES, COURTESY KATHRYN GOURELY



The Heart of the Best Part

Fort Des Moines No. 2 and the Archaeology of a City

by David Mather and Ginalie Swaim

Picturing the waves of people and events that created Iowa and its capital city requires a shift in the modern mind, and the realization that their legacy remains with us under the buildings and roads we've built. It's a challenge to strip away the layer of our world that moves at 65 miles per hour. Highways are such convenient landmarks that they have quickly become ingrained in our geographic sense of place, whether in finding ourselves on a map or navigating to the next stop. The stretches of I-35 and I-80 neatly divide Iowa into four quadrants, within which the centrality of Des Moines is not a coincidence. The two interstates hug the city of Des Moines, and drop the tentacle of I-235 inside. The gold dome of the Capitol welcomes visitors by this cross-town route, but the highway swiftly passes over the Des Moines River, near the site of the original heart of the city—Fort Des Moines No. 2.

The fort's number raises an obvious question. Here

Above, from left: Artifacts uncovered at the site of Fort Des Moines No. 2 and the early town site include a fragment of a decorative scroll liquor flask; a brass Company F insignia and canteen stopper; and an 1851 coin.

again we have to turn the modern mind inside out. Fort Des Moines No. 1 (1834–1837) was located on the Mississippi River at a spot called the Des Moines Rapids (the Des Moines River blasted into the Mississippi with enough force that it created rapids, bearing its name, about eleven miles upstream on the Mississippi). Fort Des Moines No. 2, in central Iowa, wasn't named after the city; it didn't exist yet. Both forts, like Fort Atkinson in northeast Iowa, preceded the westward flow of Euro-American settlement. (Fort Des Moines No. 3 was established in 1901 in the southern part of the city.)

Amidst ongoing urban development in Des Moines, archaeologists and historians in the past quarter-century have continued to research Fort Des Moines No. 2. It was constructed in 1843 to temporarily hold back the "official" frontier and maintain order during a three-year interval in the forced relocation of the Sauk and Meskwaki, two tribes culturally and linguistically related. By the 1840s, they had been pushed westward from the Great Lakes for over a century, first by the French, and later by the U.S. government and emigrants flooding into the ever-expanding United States. As part of an October 11, 1842, treaty, the Sauk and Meskwaki ceded their remaining land in Iowa for lands west of

the Missouri River and \$40,000 per year in perpetuity.

The Sauk and Meskwaki "were allowed to remain at their villages along the lower reaches of the Des Moines, Skunk, and Iowa rivers [in the eastern half of Iowa Territory] until May 1, 1843, at which time they were to move west of the 'Red Rocks,' a line running north and south near White Breast Creek in what is now Marion County. The treaty stipulated that they could stay in Iowa Territory until midnight on October 11, 1845," writes historian and archaeologist Kathryn Gourley. "Although the Sauk and Mesquakie had exploited central and western Iowa as a hunting area for many years, they had never established permanent villages so far west."

A federal military post was to be built in this western tract, and in late October 1842, Captain James Allen of the U.S. 1st Dragoons traveled 90 miles up the Des Moines River from Fort Sanford, a cluster of rude log cabins on the left bank of the Des Moines River (in present-day Wapello County), to select a location. With him were Indian agent John Beach, the Sauk leader Keokuk and his son, three hunters, and a detachment of "dragoons" (mounted troops).

Rivers were the best way to move people and materials quickly across the Iowa landscape until widespread use of railroads and automobiles. Rivers were sheltered lanes flowing between barriers of hills, creeks, rocks, sloughs, mudholes, swamps, and other obstacles. The water brought respite from prairie fires, and allowed floodplain forests to flourish, which in turn housed a supermarket of food and medicine for those who knew what to look for. Elk, bison, deer, and other game congregated here.

The centrality of the confluence of the Raccoon River with the Des Moines River was a major factor in Allen's choice of location for Fort Des Moines No. 2. In December 1842, he described the location in a letter to the War Department: "The soil is rich, and wood, stone, water and grass at hand. It will be high enough up the river to protect these Indians against the Sioux, and is the heart of the best part of their new country, where the greatest effort will be made by the squatters to get in. It is about equidistant from the Missouri and the Mississippi passing around the heads of many ugly branches of Grand River."

Because the fort would be only temporary, Allen stressed economy and assured officials that he "would build but common log cabins, or huts, for both men and

officers, giving them good floors, windows and doors, stables, very common, but close and roomy, Pickets, Blockhouses and such like, not at all."

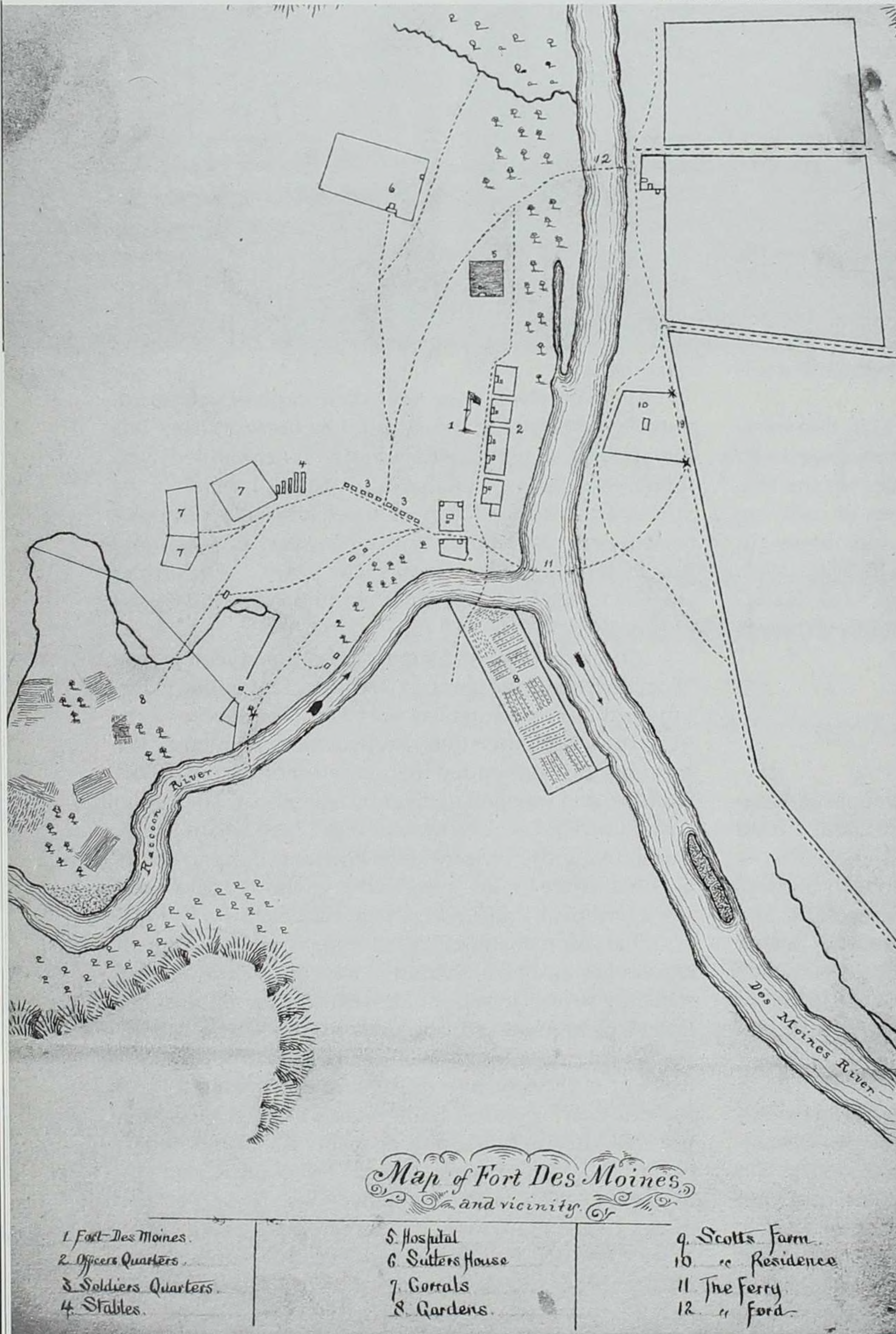
In January Allen estimated needed supplies for the army quartermaster in St. Louis: "perhaps 60,000 feet of lumber from pineries in St. Croix, Wisconsin, and rafted down to Burlington and Fort Madison," as well as blacksmith and carpenter tools, 24 axes, 200 pounds of sheet iron, 1,200 pounds of assorted cut nails, horse medicine, 500 horse shoes, ploughs, pitchforks, turpentine, linseed oil, 50 window sashes, 10 boxes of 8x10 window glass, letter paper, foolscap, sealing wax, and ink powder.

Again the rivers were key. Allen emphasized the importance of shipping the supplies before summer: "It is the opinion of persons who are well acquainted with this [Des Moines] river, that if advantage is taken of the Spring freshet, boats cannot meet with any difficulty (so far as regards the quantity of water) in [reaching] the site recommended for this new post. . . . The proper stage of water, seldom, if ever, continues beyond the 1st of June."

Although Allen had suggested calling the new post "Fort Raccoon," the name lacked sufficient military dignity and so it was named Fort Des Moines No. 2. In May 1843, Captain Allen, 4 officers and 48 men of the 1st U.S. Dragoons ended their seven-month stay at Fort Sanford, and traveled upriver by steamboat. They were soon joined at Fort Des Moines No. 2 by Captain J. R. B. Gardenier with 2 officers and 44 men of Company F, 1st U.S. Infantry, who marched overland from Fort Crawford near Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.

That summer and fall Allen supervised five dragoon carpenters and two civilian brick contractors in constructing several log structures with brick chimneys and limestone foundations. Situated on a high terrace on the northwest side of the confluence, the fort comprised two rows of buildings: five officers barracks, called "Des Moines Row" because it aligned north to south along the Des Moines River; and probably seven to ten barracks for enlisted men, called "Raccoon Row" and aligned westerly with the smaller river. There was also a hospital, commissary, adjutant's office, guardhouse, at least one blacksmith's shop, a corral and stables, parade ground, flagstaff, a public well, a garden, and a sutler's store and residence. There was no stockade.

About two miles east of the fort, across the Des Moines River, stood the new Raccoon River Indian Agency (about one mile east of the present-day Capitol.) The agency administered over some 2,300 Sauk and Meskwaki living in four villages to the east (one 15 miles away, another by North River, and the other two closer



This U.S. Army map (circa 1844) shows fort structures, corrals, and gardens, as well as a ferry and ford across the Des Moines River. Dotted lines are trails. Using georeferencing, archaeologist Christopher M. Schoen and the Office of the State Archaeologist have recently determined that the map is “surprisingly accurate” and was probably based on “careful survey measurements.” This may well be the only map created before the fort was closed.

to the agency). The agency granted licenses to at least three trading posts, where the Indians bought on credit a variety of goods, probably kettles, gunpowder, and lead; saddles and bridles; and calico, beads, blankets, ribbons, and vermilion. Nearby were the cabins and fields of several individuals who had contracted with Fort Des Moines to cultivate land, provide forage and produce, and build saw and grist mills.

Finding any physical traces of Fort Des Moines No. 2 has been an ongoing detective story. In archaeology, as in other fields of study, today’s questions build upon previous findings. In looking for the old fort, archaeologists had to first go back to basics, the written records. But as noted by archaeologist Christopher Schoen (of the Louis Berger Group, Inc.), “The historical maps for Fort Des Moines No. 2 do not all provide the same information about the locations of the structures and features of the compounds. Artistic illustrations and reconstructions of the fort’s layout, while capturing the essence of the fort, may contribute additional errors.” Only one map of Fort Des Moines No. 2 appears to have been created before it was abandoned.

Urban archaeology presents its own challenges. Suppose that Fort Des Moines hadn’t begat the City of Des Moines—suppose, like Fort Atkinson in northeast Iowa, the fort had been built in an area that never became urban, and had been built of limestone rather than logs. Then we might find Fort Des Moines No. 2 with a hand trowel or shovel. We might even still see ruins.

Searching in a city, *under a city*,

requires a far different kind of archaeology. As the work begins, heavy machinery is the first tool of choice, and the evolution of the city unfolds in reverse: cement and asphalt, then brick pavement, boardwalks, and privy pits. As opposed to a wide-open search in which anything might be found, searching for the buried traces of three years (when the fort was garrisoned) out of ten thousand years (of human occupation) is no small task. Some spots—the site of a barracks, for example—might contain a dense concentration of artifacts. Other parts, such as the parade ground, might contain only a scattering.

The historical sources all agree on the general location of the fort at the confluence of the two rivers. Although that may seem straightforward, correlating that information with the realities of a modern city is daunting. Many landmarks that we take for granted today—bridges, parks, and buildings—simply did not exist in the 1840s, and even natural landmarks must be considered with caution. Indeed the Raccoon still flows into the Des Moines—but not exactly where it used to. Because of frequent flooding, the confluence of the rivers was moved about a quarter-mile to the south in about 1914. The old confluence was filled in, leveled over, and eventually covered by the growing city.

To locate the original confluence, and therefore the site of the fort, archaeologists first needed to figure out the 1840s topography of the river systems: where were the river banks and terraces, the slopes and the floodplains? This required digging trenches with backhoes and driving geologic cores down through the layers of fill and into the pre-settlement soil.

A breakthrough occurred in 1985. Archaeologists from Brice, Petrides and Associates started digging a small test trench under the current-day pavement near the corner of West Market and SW 1st streets. Within the first few inches, they encountered railroad ties (likely from

In the foreground, rooftops peek above floodwaters in this illustration of the 1851 flood. At the confluence of the Des Moines and Raccoon, a few structures occupy the point of land where Fort Des Moines No. 2 was located.

the first track laid there, in 1866) and fragments of cedar blocks and brick (both used as early street paving). The next layer was about three feet of unsorted fill (soil and cinders). Below this layer were several inches of gravel. Experts knew that only the fast-moving waters of a great flood could have deposited that much gravel, so the gravel layer probably dated to 1851, the year of the first major flood historically recorded in the eastern half of Iowa. Below the gravel, archaeologists found the remains of a brick and limestone fireplace and a layer of ash that extended beyond the hearth. Amidst the ash were several significant artifacts, including clay pipes, buttons from a dragoon uniform, and two pennies, one dated to 1830 and the other 1840.

In archaeology, the object itself is not the focus. After all, we can go to a coin shop and buy an 1840 cent if we want one so badly—that's not the point. Rather, it is the object's context and association that are important. If removed from its context without proper documentation, it becomes a single curiosity, cheapened to whatever a collector might feel like paying for it.

Set within their context—three feet under the surface and amidst other artifacts in the fireplace ash—the 1830 and 1840 coins are goldmines of information, because, simply, they could not have appeared there before 1830. We know that Native Americans living in the area before the fort was built in 1843 lacked the technology of making bricks. By association, then, the coins



date the ash layer (and its artifacts) to the fort era, just as the flood-deposited gravel dates that layer to 1851, and the railroad ties to 1866 or later.

With the coins and ash were fireplace bricks—another simple yet significant advance, because they helped identify other fort structures. From a lucky glimpse at a single fireplace—one small feature of the fort—we can start to fill in the big picture. In archaeology, the most mundane objects, within their context, are often the most important.

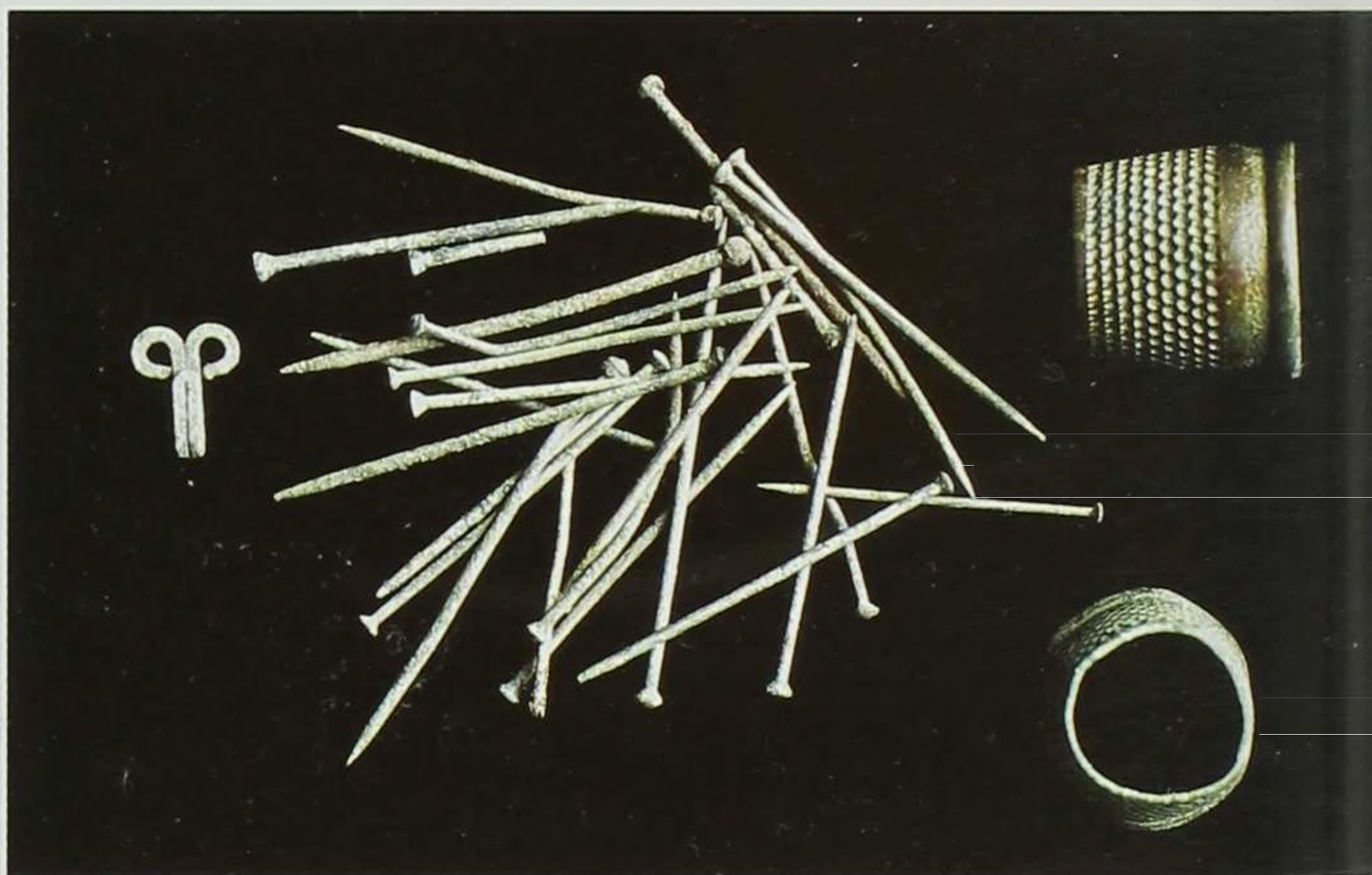
Archaeologists have concluded that the fireplace was part of one of the officers' quarters in the "Des Moines Row." In 2000–2001, about 600 feet diagonally from this fireplace, excavation exposed the remains of two more fireplaces, made of bricks identical to the earlier one. These two fireplaces are believed to be on the ends of Barracks No. 1 and No. 2 in Raccoon Row.

Even more was found: pieces of ceramics and pipestems, bottle and window glass, leather and lead, bone and eggshell, coins from the 1830s and 1840s, harmonica reeds and a marble, nails and pencils, percussion caps and a canteen stopper, and a small brass "F" unit insignia (meaning that Company F probably quartered in this barracks). A solid brass disc, probably a watch case, was stamped with Order of the Oddfellows icons on one side and the face of William Henry Harrison and the words "9TH ELECTED PRESIDENT" on the reverse. (Harrison was in office one month in 1841.) Most telling was a variety of artifacts used in sewing.

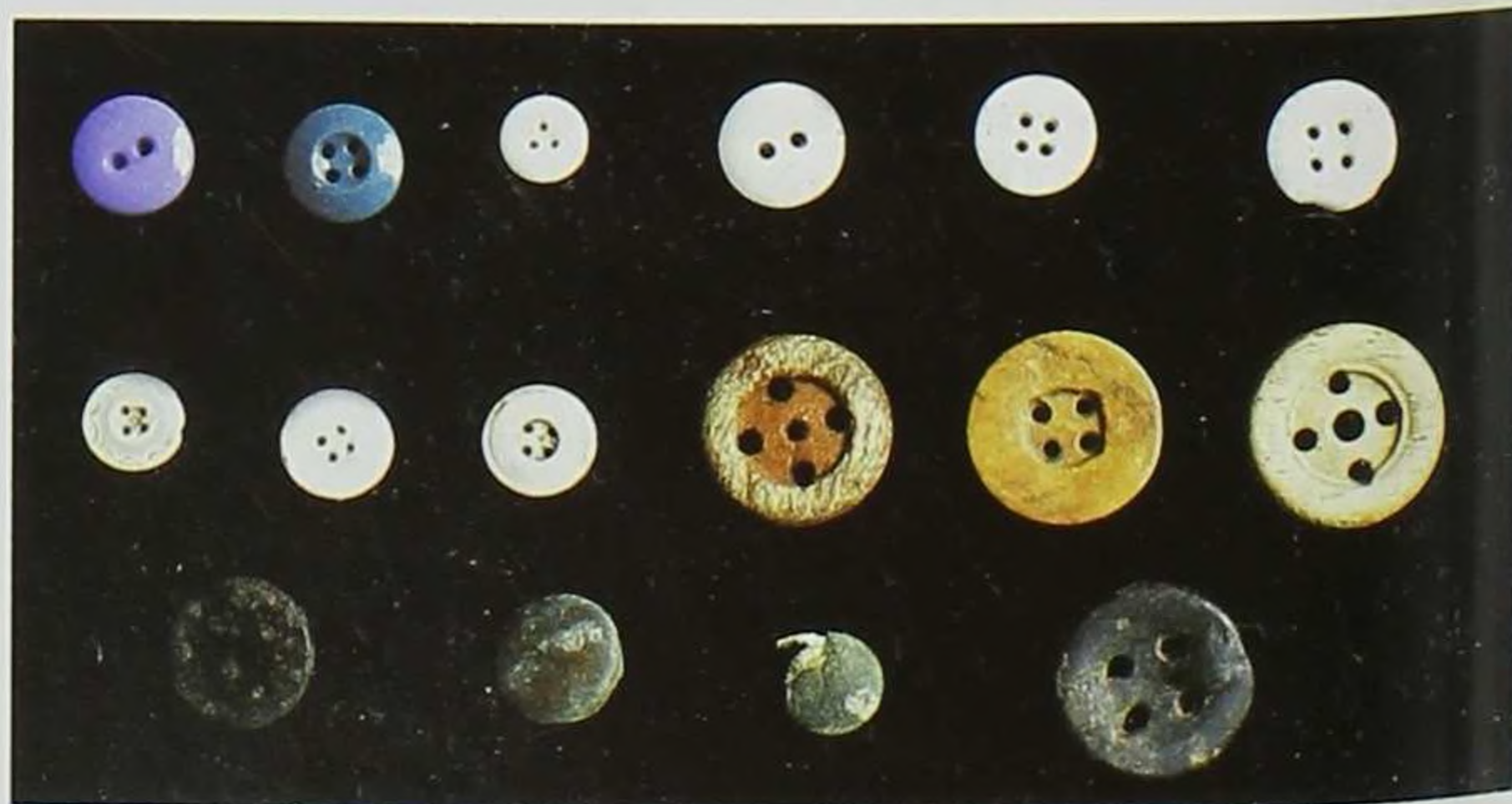
One of Schoen's favorite successes was connecting a thimble, 41 straight pins, a hook and eye, and 30 or so buttons made of glass, shell, bone, wood, and metal with an individual who shows up in fort documents, Josiah Moffit Thrift.

Thrift was the garrison tailor from 1843 to 1844. These sewing artifacts suggest, as Schoen writes, that Thrift probably "operated his shop in the west half of Barracks No. 1," which "appears to have been the easternmost barracks and its placement would have made it conveniently located for officers as well as enlisted men. It is likely that Thrift was quartered in the west half of the barracks building during 1843 and at least the first half of 1844."

Schoen continues, "The other domestic items, such



Sewing artifacts (above) suggest that garrison tailor Josiah Thrift occupied Barracks No. 1. The brass F insignia (see page 12) was also found in Barracks No. 1. Thrift was the tailor for Company F of the U.S. Infantry, which may have occupied the eastern barracks, with the dragoons (cavalrymen) in the western barracks, nearer the corral and stables. The exact location and orientation of the barracks had long puzzled archaeologists, so clues from artifacts like these are leading to answers. Below: A commemorative Order of the Oddfellows watch case, with William Henry Harrison's likeness, and more buttons, made of glass, shell, wood, bone, brass, and pewter.



as the dishes, spoons and utensil handles, the two rings, the marble, the harmonica reeds, the suspender clip, the pipe fragments, etc., probably are from items he had in his space while they doubled as his quarters and objects found in pockets of the clothes he repaired for the garrison."

Schoen pieced together more of Thrift's story from other historical documents: in November 1843, Thrift married Eunice Ann Jewett. The couple may have lived in Thrift's quarters until, with Captain Allen's permission, they built a cabin on the east side of the Des Moines River (in present-day Union Park). There, the Thrifts' daughter was born in 1845, and a son in 1847.

Fort-related artifacts and historical documents begin to flesh out the daily life of the soldiers as they fulfilled their functions, as Schoen details, of "keeping the Sauk and Meskwaki away from settlement east of [the Red Rock line], deterring incursions by the Dakota, and exploring and recording the resources and inhabitants of this territory. . . . Patrols and expeditions were conducted, usually by detachments of the dragoons. Thus, it fell largely to the infantry to guard and maintain the fort compound, collect some forage for the animals, wood for fuel, and wild edible plants, fish, and game to supplement their rations."

The animal bones uncovered at the site suggest to Schoen that "the soldiers were consuming both domestic and wild species. . . . The bones appeared to be professionally butchered off-site. . . . The meat was probably supplied by John Scott or one of the [other] civilian contractors or traders in the area. It was common practice of the U.S. Army to supply each company with a shotgun for the purpose of hunting game birds and mammals when off duty. The faunal remains indicate that the men were hunting ducks and turkeys and fishing to supplement their diet."

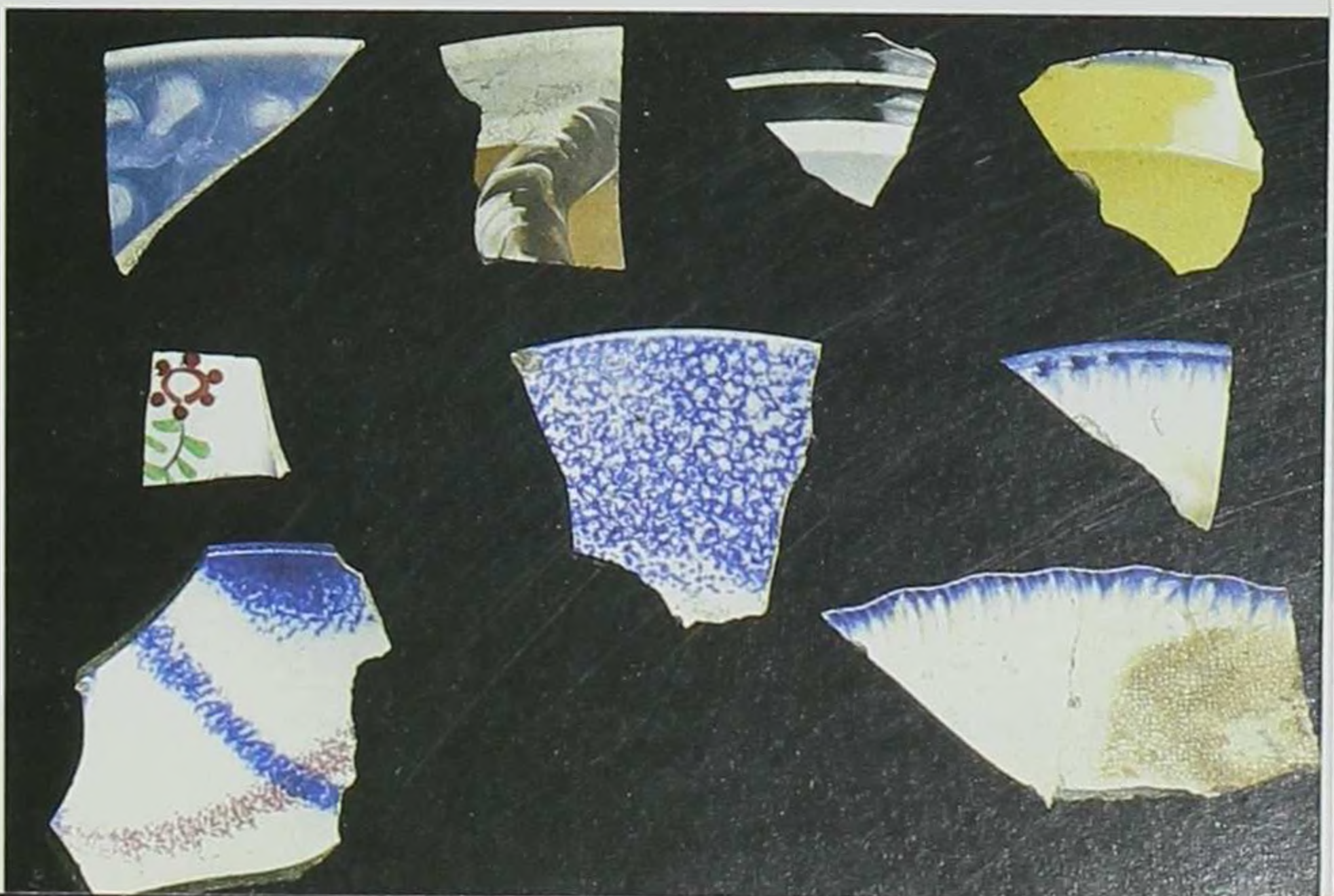
The soldiers certainly had time off duty—consider the harmonica reeds and marble—although drills and inspections occupied some of their time. In July 1845, Inspector General George Croghan visited Fort Des Moines No. 2, later reporting: "The steps and movements generally of the company are not so precise as I could wish, showing instantly that further schooling is necessary to better instruction in the drill. The men properly understand how every movement should be made but from want of practice perhaps, have either lost or never acquired the proper timing and precision of step necessary to their exact performances."



Tobacco pipe fragments made of white ball clay: portion of ribbed bowl, and two pieces of pipestem, decorated with dot and ring pattern (center), and oak leaf and ring. Soldiers often shared these inexpensive, long-stemmed pipes, breaking off sections (for sanitary reasons) as the pipe was passed. Off-duty soldiers were allowed to smoke in the evenings.



Fragments of ceramic bowls, plates, cups, saucers, and a teapot, typical for the 1830s and 1840s. The low number of glass vessels found at the fort site, according to archaeologist Christopher Schoen, may be because of "the short duration of the fort, the limited access to goods on the frontier post and low pay with which to buy them, . . . and the tendency of the military commissary and civilian traders to ship foodstuffs and beverages in bulk."



Croghan continued: "About two months since Lieut. Granger arrived to take charge of the company and immediately upon assuming the command of it, he recommended the drills which had been for some time virtually suspended owing to the ill health of the subalterns whom he succeeded and continued them daily until the air became so heavy and the weather so hot as to render it unsafe to act on his command to their influence."

Archaeologists had puzzled over the exact orientation of Raccoon Row, and Schoen believes that the remains of the fireplaces have answered that question. Historic accounts give some details on construction and activities, but the relatively few fort-related artifacts found to date tell us only a little about fort activities. "This was a frontier post," Schoen notes, "and a soldier would have had only a small number of personal items, and thus fewer items to be lost and left behind." Because the barracks had floors, dropped items were likely to be retrieved by the soldiers, thereby reducing "the number of artifacts that could potentially be recovered. In addition, the military had a policy of discarding waste in specific areas and collecting debris from the grounds, thus concentrating artifacts in trash deposits away from activity areas." Despite the limited scope of archaeological work on Fort Des Moines No. 2, he concludes that "the variety of artifacts recovered . . . suggests that the fort garrison had access to most of the kinds of products available to an individual or household of modest means in any community in Iowa Territory at that time."

As darkness descended on October 11, 1845, Euro-American settlers waited until midnight to cross the Red Rock Line and enter the area. In one of the four abandoned Indian villages east of the Raccoon River Indian Agency, settler Jeremiah Church set fire to wickiups as a light to mark his claims.

Most of the soldiers had left Fort Des Moines No. 2 in September, as the Sauk and Meskwaki began the slow process of moving towards Kansas. Fifty-two soldiers remained until March, and three stayed until May 1, 1846, when the fort was officially closed, materials auctioned off, and the fort property turned over to the newly formed government of Polk County. Now began the evolution from fort to town.

That same year, the town of Fort Des Moines (population, 127) was platted, five blocks north from Elm (now today's Martin Luther King Parkway) to Locust and seven blocks west from the Des Moines River to SW 8th. The town encompassed the former fort, and the

fort's log structures were now used for housing and businesses by the residents of the new community, including Josiah Thrift, who set up his own tailor's shop. According to Gourley, the town's first two newspapers, post office, and school may have occupied former Raccoon Row barracks. Early entrepreneurs Hoyt and Lampson Sherman both lived or worked in former fort buildings, and the first city or county treasurer and the first recorder used them as homes.

The community was formally organized as a town in 1851, with Rev. Thompson Bird the first "president" (mayor). The town of Fort Des Moines lay west of the Des Moines River. A rival community, the town of Demoin, was platted on the east bank of the river in 1847, encompassing the area where the civilian contractors and the Raccoon River Agency personnel had resided. In 1857, the two rival towns joined together and were incorporated as the city of Des Moines. That same year it became the capital city. By 1860, the population was 4,000.

"As the city developed," Gourley notes, "the commercial center moved north to Court, Walnut, and Locust streets. The former fort area became a warehousing and industrial area. The Des Moines Valley Railroad crossed the Des Moines River along Market Street in 1866, and the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad tracks were built a little farther to the south by 1880. Because the area was low and subject to flooding, fill had been brought in earlier to raise the elevation, so the mid-19th-century surface lay underneath a protective layer of fill.

"Most of the individuals who lived on these blocks in the 1860s were laborers," probably Irish railroad workers, Gourley continues. Few of their houses had cellars. By 1884, a large lumberyard was established in the area and continued to operate until the 1990s. Like the laying of the rail lines and the construction of the laborers' houses, the lumberyard did not disturb the soil much. This is fortunate for archaeologists working in this area in recent years; they have uncovered probable traces (or "features") of the very early history of Des Moines as a town (1846-1870). Most of these town-related features were used for refuse disposal. "The lack of a trash collection service," Schoen writes, "was solved by depositing food waste and spoiled or broken items in pits, gutters, gullies, over the terrace edge, or along lot perimeters." The remains of a large latrine (probably for a hotel or boardinghouse) yielded several artifacts. Make all the jokes you want, but latrines are incredible sources of information about the past. Besides their intended use, these contained areas were also often used as garbage pits. Latrines are the best archaeo-



This page: Tangible clues about daily life after the fort had officially closed and the area had been platted as a town.

- Above: Some of the glass bottles found at the townsite once contained medicine, including Dr. Hoofland's Bitters (far left).
- Top right: Kerosene lamp and lamp chimney.
- Right: Astonishingly, wooden spools, matchsticks, clothespins, and other biodegradable items like eggshell were well preserved, seldom allowed by Iowa's acidic soils.
- Lower right: Two pepper sauce bottles, club sauce bottle, conical perfume bottle, and shoofly flask.
- Below: Ironstone cup, yellowware bowl, and two chamberpots.





Domestic artifacts discovered at the early town site (1846–1870): ribbed and plain bowls from ceramic pipes, a toy pitcher and teapot, hand-painted porcelain doll head, clay marbles, a wooden game piece, and a cylindrical brass case.

logical time capsules—just don't think too much about where you're digging.

This particular privy pit, for example, contained cloth, leather, matchsticks, clothespins, and spools. Given Iowa's acidic soil, items were remarkably well preserved. There was an 1865 Indian head penny, children's playthings, bottles and jars, tin cans, and broken bowls and dishes.

The privy pit also contained cherry, peach, and plum pits, corn cobs, pumpkin seeds, acorns, peanuts, walnuts, eggshells, fish scales, steak bones, and other cuts of beef, veal, ham, mutton, rabbit, chicken, duck, goose, catfish, and perch—all valuable information to an archaeologist. According to Schoen, such faunal remains "indicated that people of the town consumed high to moderate value cuts of beef, pork, and mutton, usually prepared by professional butchers." Rat bones were found, too, vermin that came with soldiers and settlers from the east, and before that, from Europe.

Excavations also yielded "both inexpensive kaolin and glazed ceramic pipes. . . . bone, shell, glass, ferrous, and brass buttons, brass suspender clips, a rubber overshoe, and leather shoes and boots," plus "rings, brooch pins, beads, and combs," all representing "types of objects characteristic of a frontier community of the pe-

riod," Schoen says. "Des Moines grew rapidly between 1846 and 1870 and the residents of this community appear to have had access to the products manufactured and distributed in commercial centers to the east."

By 1856, the Iowa legislature—still operating in Iowa City—passed a law permitting the Meskwaki to live and buy land in Iowa. Builders were finishing the masonry of the new temporary state capitol in Des Moines, west of the old Raccoon River Agency. Still in his mid-twenties, entrepreneur B. F. Allen (nephew of dragoon captain James Allen) moved his bank and real estate office to the corner of 4th and Court; he was already on his way to becoming Iowa's first millionaire and first resident of the magnificent Terrace Hill in 1869.

And what of our garrison tailor, Josiah Moffit Thrift? By 1856, tailor Thrift had spent two years in the California goldfields (1850–1852), resumed his tailor business in the early town of Des Moines, and decided to leave the new community. Moving north to Boone County, he tried his hand at farming, took another stab at gold-

mining (this time at Pike's Peak, Colorado) and then moved into Boonesboro, the county seat of Boone County. He was severely wounded at Shiloh and held prisoner until April 1863. After his discharge, he returned to Boonesboro and was elected mayor. In 1873 he moved to California, leaving Iowa behind.

Thrift probably thought little about what else he may have left behind: a few dozen straight pins, an assortment of buttons, a watch case, a tiny brass letter F—all gradually covered over by the growth of a city that had evolved from a modest military fort on the banks of the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers. ❖

David Mather is an archaeologist and writer working in the Mille Lacs area of Minnesota. He writes a newspaper column on local archaeology for the Mille Lacs Messenger, and his work has appeared in The Rake. Ginalie Swaim is editor of this magazine.

NOTE ON SOURCES

This article was compiled from interviews with Christopher M. Schoen and Randy Withrow of Louis Berger Group, Inc., and Kathryn Gourley of the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI), and from "Archaeological Date Recovery for the SW 2nd to SW 7th Streets Segment of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway," prepared by Christopher M. Schoen (principal investigator, Louis Berger Group, Inc.), for the City of Des Moines (May 2003).

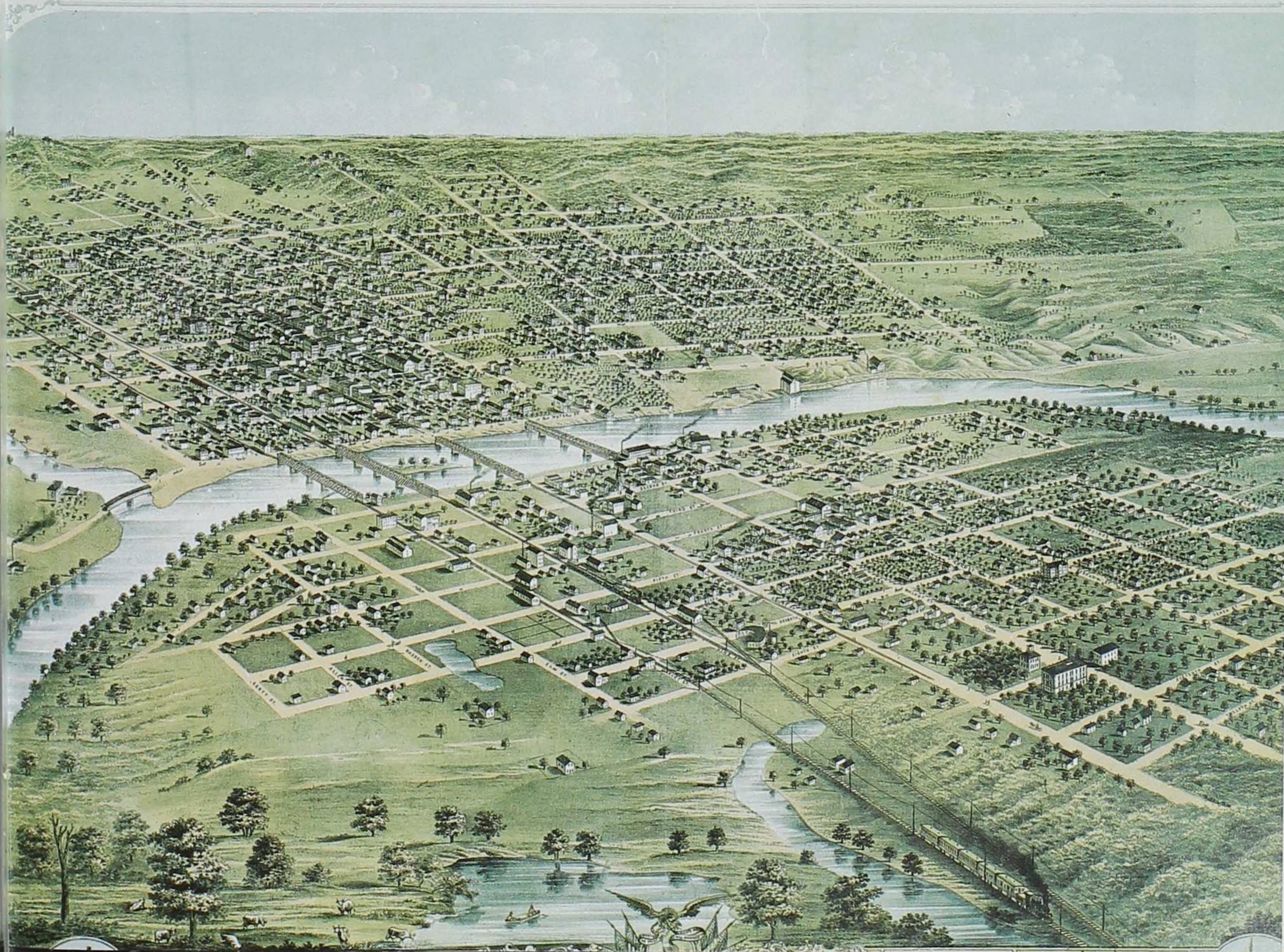
Also useful were Gourley's "The Raccoon River Indian Agency Predicted Site Locations" (1985; prepared for the State Historic Preservation Office), and her "Locations of Sauk, Mesquakie, and associated Euro-American sites, 1832 to 1845: an ethnohistorical approach" (M.A. thesis, Iowa State University, 1990). Information on 1985 excavations is from Brice, Petrides and Associates, "Cultural Resources of the CBD Loop Arterial Project Area Phase II Investigations: Project No. M-2787(1)-81-77, prepared for the City of Des Moines.

SHSI archivist Sharon Avery discovered copies of Captain James Allen's detailed estimates of supplies needed for building the fort in files of the Adjutant General and Quartermaster (SHSI-Des Moines), and Kathryn Gourley transcribed them. The originals are in the National Archives.

Thanks to SHSI staff members Dan Higginbottom, Doug Jones, Jerome Thompson, and John Zeller for their comments.

By 1868, Des Moines had expanded far north of the confluence of the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers (on left), where the fort had been located. Across the river, in this view, the present-day Capitol is yet to be built. The two-story structure in the right foreground is probably the temporary Capitol.

SHSI (IOWA CITY)





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An Insider's View of the Iowa Capitol

by *Bill Witt*

My love of writing with light—photography—began with fascination at the beauty of light itself: my first clear memory is of lying on a polished oak floor, arranging and rearranging clear plastic toy blocks and an empty water glass to fashion patterns of early morning sunlight and send them flashing and arcing across the golden expanse of the wood. I had just turned two.

A decade later, I discovered in an old, folding roll-film camera a highly serviceable tool for satisfying my growing curiosity about my surroundings and the people I encountered. With a camera in hand, I could ask friends and strangers alike to share some of their time with me, while I asked questions and recorded them and their doings on film.

When at 23 I went to Afghanistan with the Peace Corps, my two cameras became keys that opened the gates to a new world of faces, labors, customs, language, and landscapes to me. Photography changed from an interest to a passion as I sought to explore, experience, record, and understand all I could of the Afghans.

I returned home to Iowa in

late spring of 1975, and there was nothing for me to do but become a professional social explorer, communicator, and meaning-seeker: I began working as writer and photographer on a small newspaper and soon added freelance magazine work to my portfolio. A 12-year stint in public relations at the University of Northern Iowa commenced in the fall of 1980, and I continued magazine freelance work.

I also became a citizen-advocate, a volunteer for such causes as environmental protection and the rights of the elderly, disabled, and mentally ill.

In June 1992 I discovered that I could approach strangers without a camera and ask to talk with them: I launched my first campaign as a candidate for the Iowa House of Representatives. Over the course of five months, I knocked on almost 8,000 doors and filled a succession of pocket-size books with notes and comments from the people I hoped to work for in Des Moines. At some point, I began carrying a pocket-size camera, too, an Olympus XA4, loaded with black-and-white film. As always, sooner or later I gave my photo subjects copies of the images I had made of them.

In that 1992 race, every vote

counted. Nearly 14,000 votes were cast that election day—and three weeks later, just before Thanksgiving, the final count showed I had won by 17.

As I had discovered myself in a new world in Afghanistan, so too did I find I'd entered a new world as a member of the Iowa legislature, and it wasn't long before I began shooting low-key images of new surroundings, faces, and customs. During the first few years, I made relatively few pictures, but as my colleagues got more used to me and my propensity to pull a camera from my desk drawer, and as I understood more about them and the ways of legislative culture, I took more and more frames.


My medium was black and white, my favorite "dialect" of the photographic language. On request, I would also record special events for my colleagues with color film.

In time, I expanded my photo explorations, photographing the Capitol itself, showing quiet, recondite places the public never sees, or the work of janitors and maintenance people whom the public sees, but seldom notices. And I photographed the citizens themselves, who came as visitors or lobbyists, or whom I encoun-

**Right: Light and shadow play off
statuary in the Iowa Capitol.**



Hammering out a budget deal late at night in the Speaker's Conference Room, April 1994, are (left to right) Rep. Pat Murphy, Ranking Member on the House Appropriations Committee; Rep. Ron Corbett, House Appropriations chair; Senator Larry Murphy (back to camera), Senate Appropriations chair; and an unidentified staff member.



tered on my annual walks around Cedar Falls and Hudson.

My legislative career ended with “the fall of the gavel” adjourning the session on a warm spring evening in 2002. The last images I made were of huge cumulus clouds, lit by the setting sun, rising beyond the Capitol.

Several weeks later, I filed the last batch of negatives and contact sheets and counted them. In ten years, I had put nearly 200 rolls of Tri-X film through my cameras—more than 6,000 frames. This is therefore a very small selection of those images, and I hope at some point to be able to publish a more representative one. I will always be grateful for the patience and generosity of the hundreds of people who allowed me to record and interpret the life and the work we shared.



The Legislative Mail Room is little changed in 122 years. Mail is sorted by each member’s “seat number.” The slots numbered above 100 on the right side of the photo recall the pre-1960s era, when state representatives were elected by county, and the most populous counties had two or more.

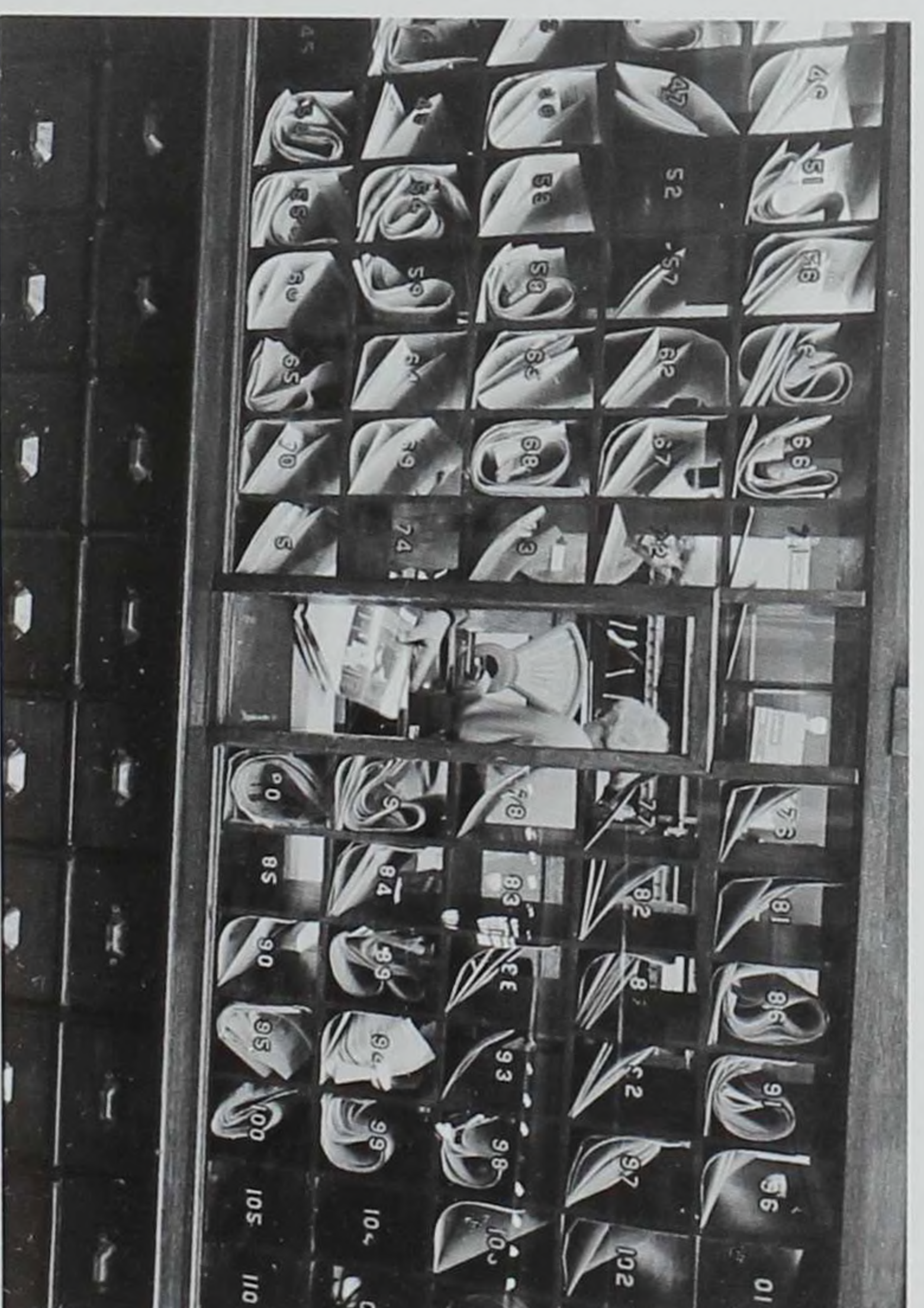


Hammering out a budget deal late at night in the Speaker's Conference Room, April 1994, are (left to right) Rep. Pat Murphy, Ranking Member on the House Appropriations Committee; Rep. Ron Corbett, House Appropriations chair; Senator Larry Murphy (back to camera), Senate Appropriations chair; and an unidentified staff member.

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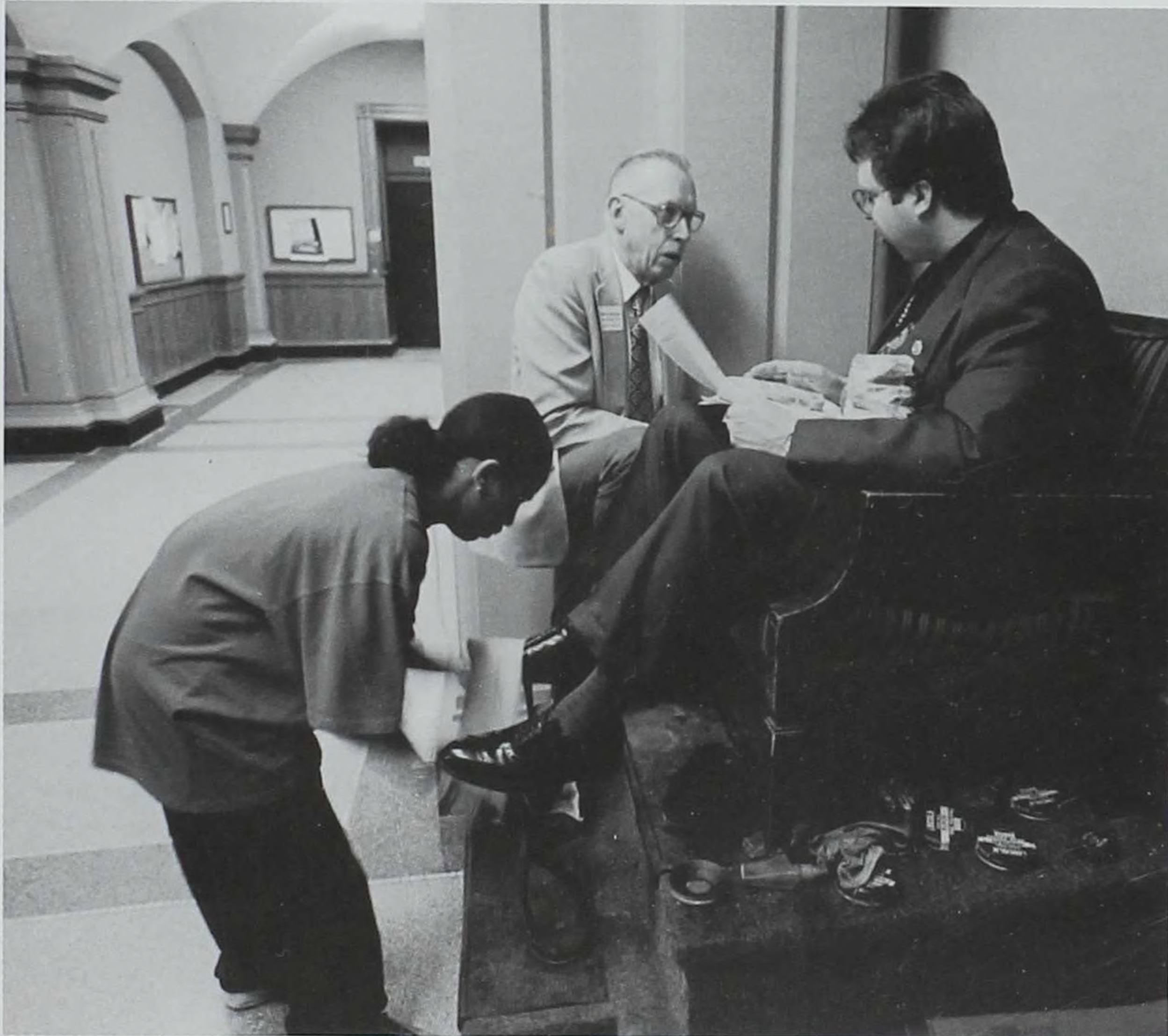
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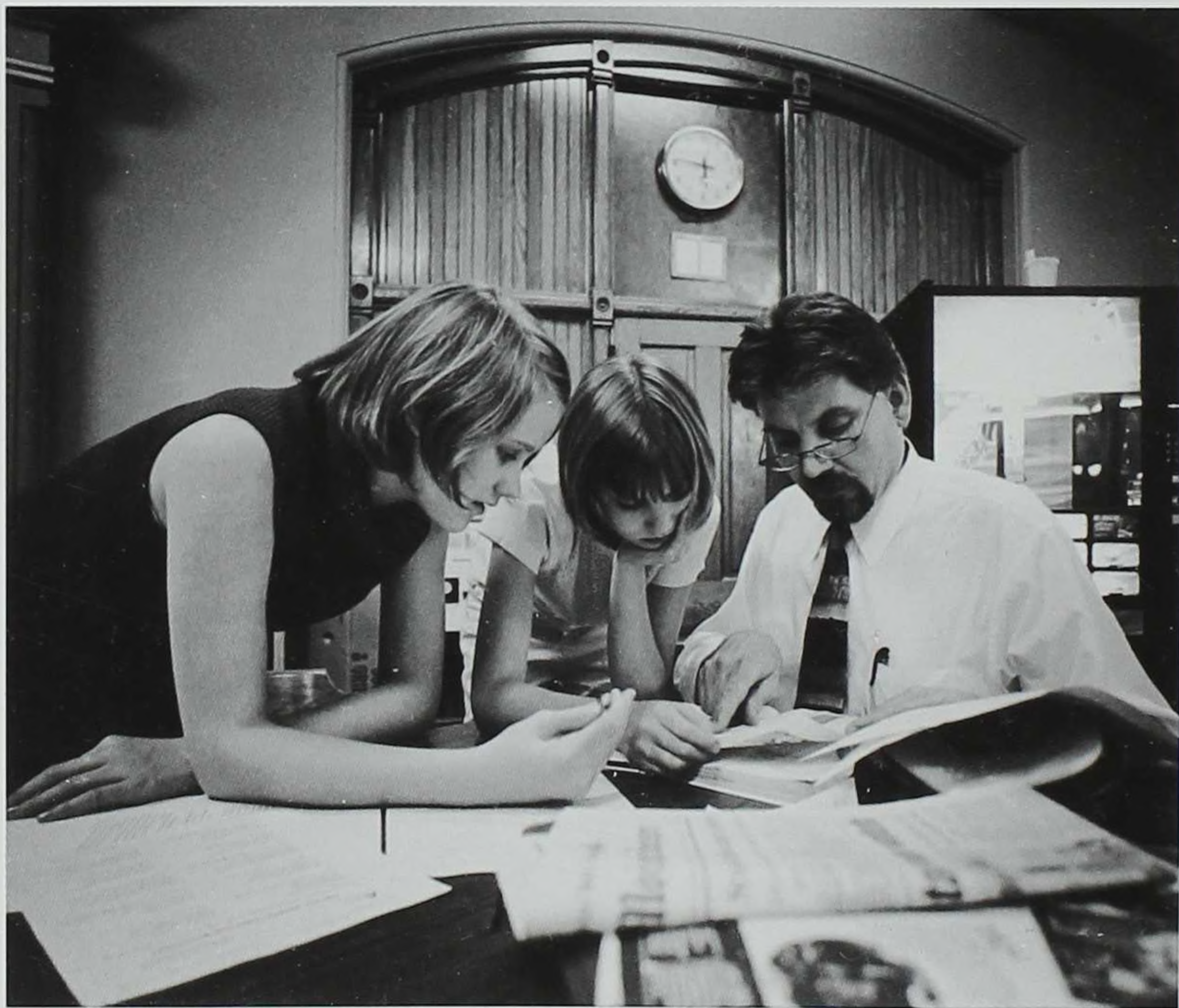
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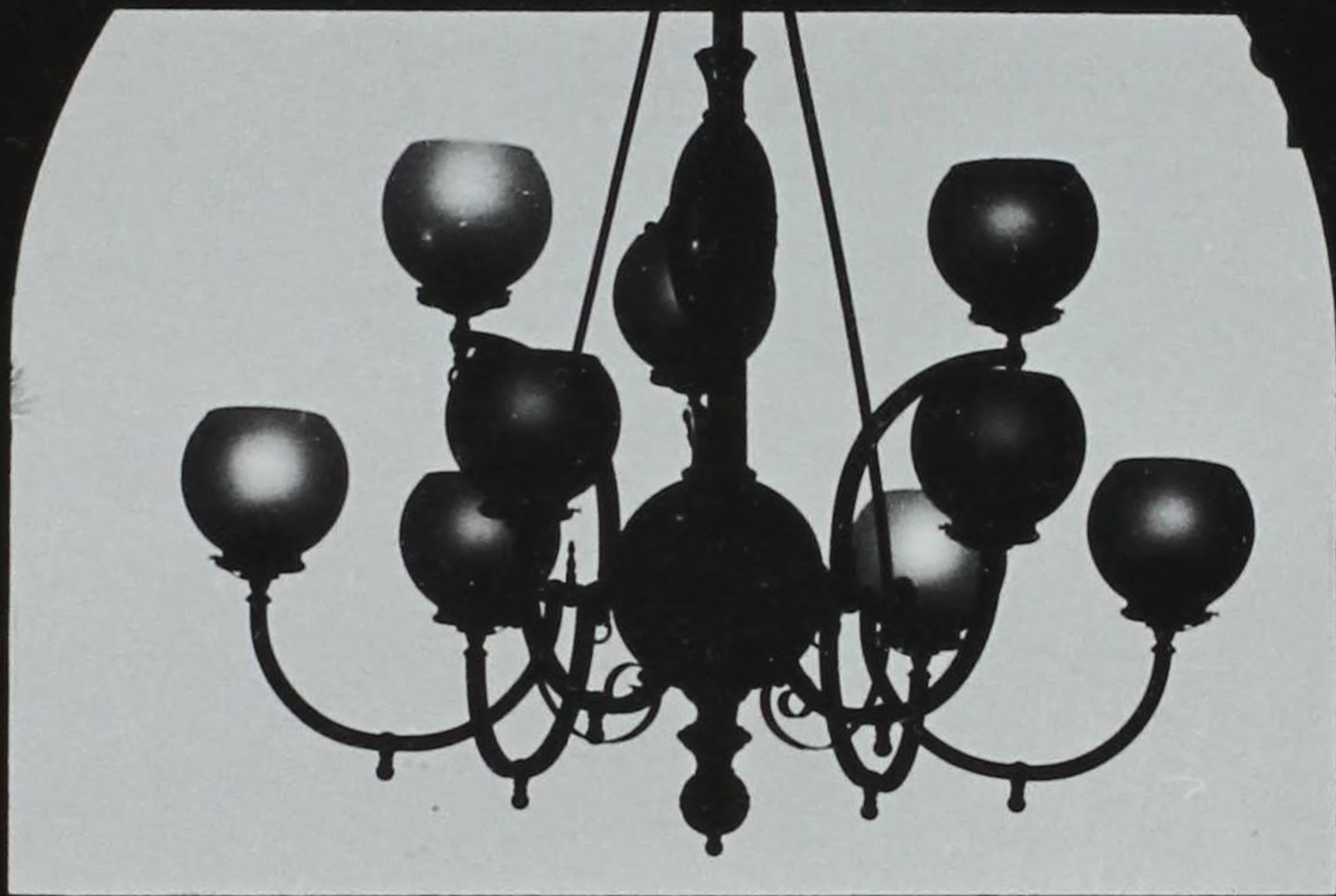
“Multi-tasking” ability is a must for legislators. Here, in March 2001, Rep. Todd Taylor gets a shoeshine while grabbing a bite of lunch, studying a briefing paper, and listening to a visiting constituent in the Capitol’s lower level.

Rep. Pam Jochum’s daughter, Sarah, was born with a rare chromosomal defect, Ring 22 Syndrome, which led to mental retardation and other developmental disabilities. Jochum, as a divorced single parent, has continued caring for Sarah at home, bringing her to live in Des Moines during the legislative sessions. Here, in April 1996, Sarah, seated at her mother’s desk in the House chamber, gets an affectionate nuzzle. Jochum reports that “Sarah’s now a working woman” employed in a sheltered workshop and that she still visits the Capitol from time to time.



Here in the Capitol's basement cafeteria, during a supertime lull in floor debate, John Pederson helps his daughters with homework assignments. He was then the Attorney General's legislative liaison for the Department of Natural Resources.

Opposite: Ten full-time workers met the Capitol's day-to-day maintenance and custodial needs.



WED APRIL 4 2001

HOUSE RECONVENES IN SESSION 845

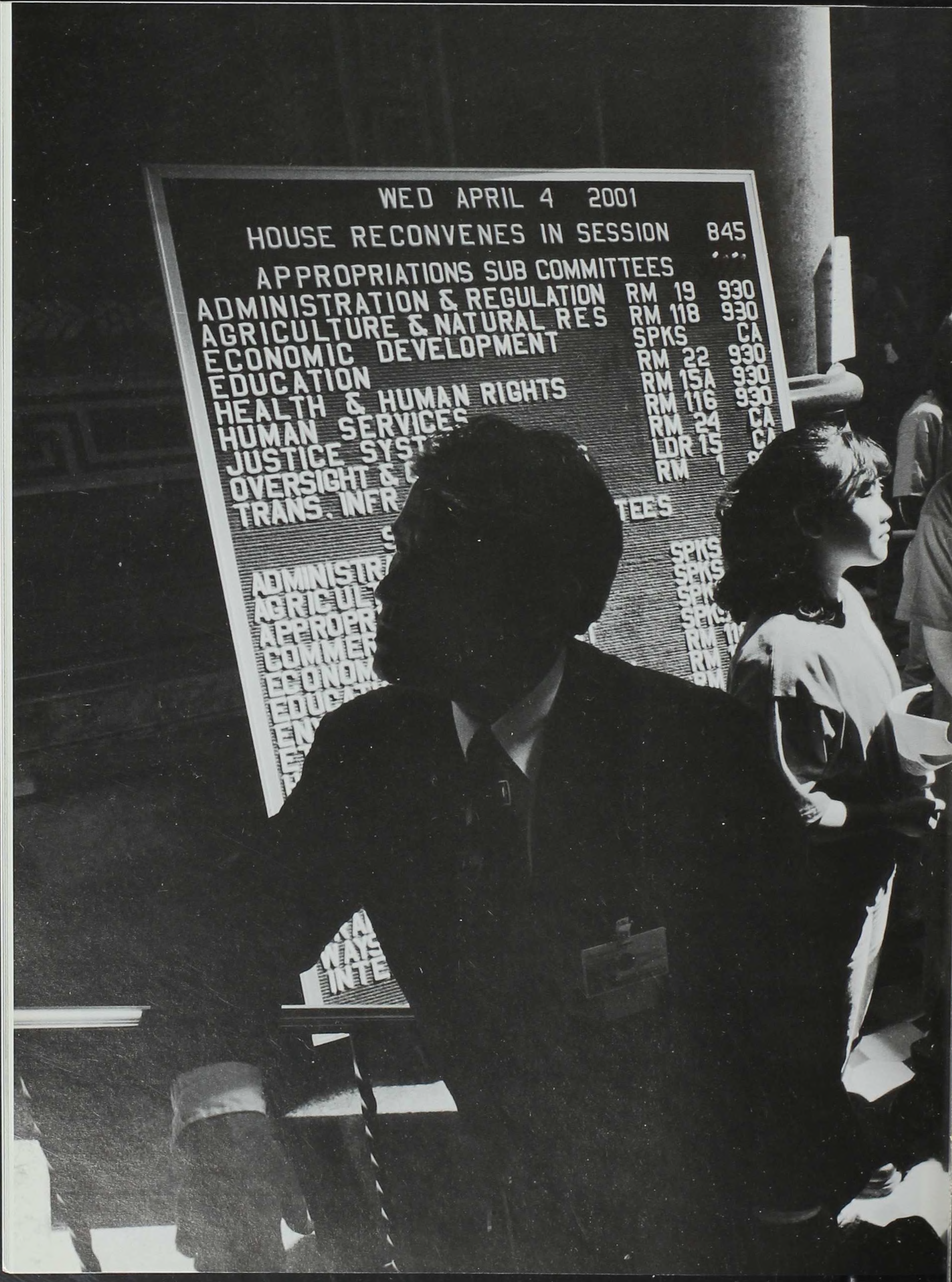
APPROPRIATIONS SUB COMMITTEES

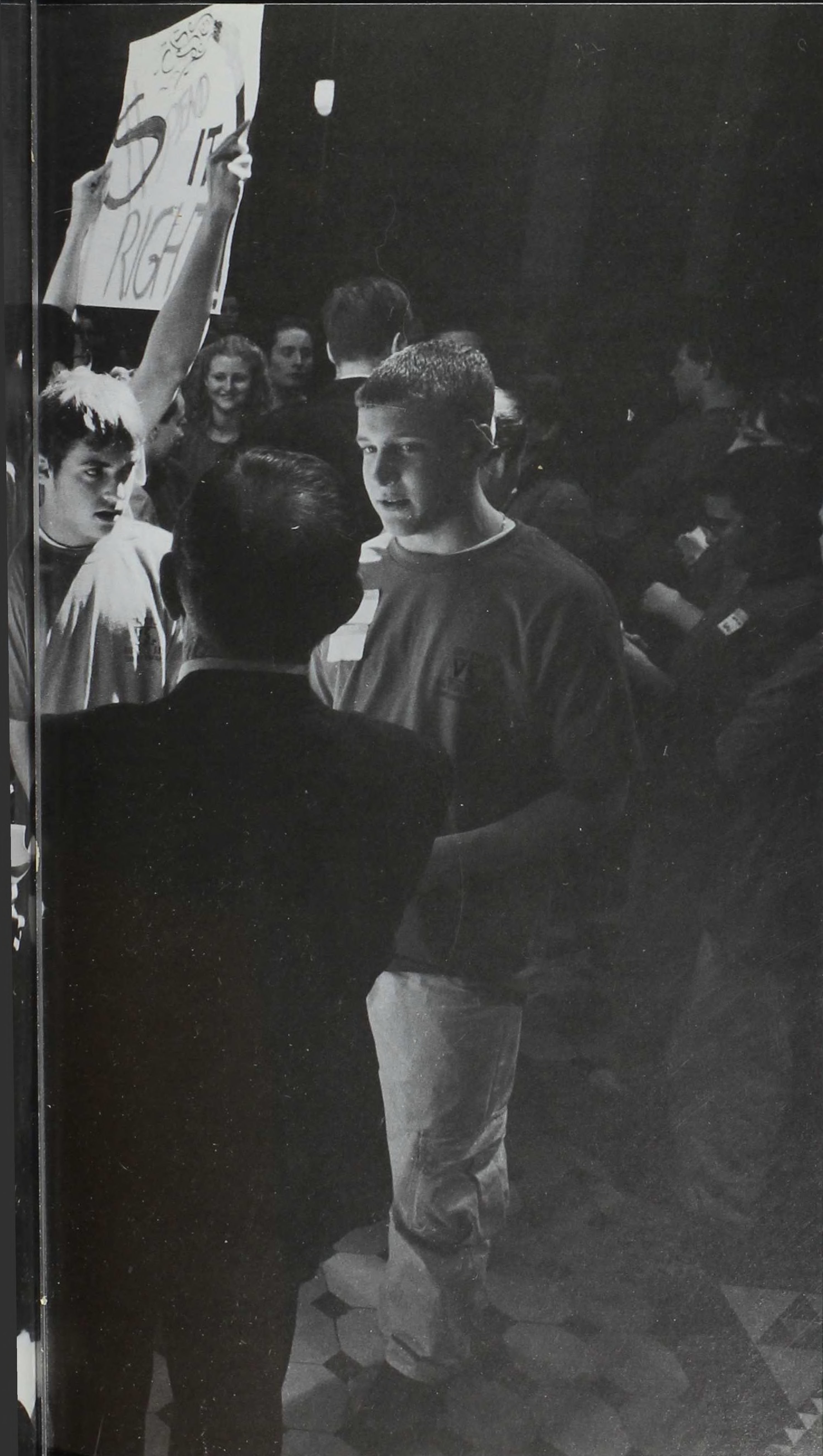
ADMINISTRATION & REGULATION	RM 19	930
AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RES	RM 118	930
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	SPKS	CA
EDUCATION	RM 22	930
HEALTH & HUMAN RIGHTS	RM 15A	930
HUMAN SERVICES	RM 116	930
JUSTICE SYSTEM	RM 24	CA
OVERSIGHT & COMPLIANCE	LDR 15	CA
TRANS. INFRASTRUCTURE	RM 1	CA

ADMINISTRATIVE
AGRICULTURE
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COMMERCE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
EDUCATION
ENVIRONMENT
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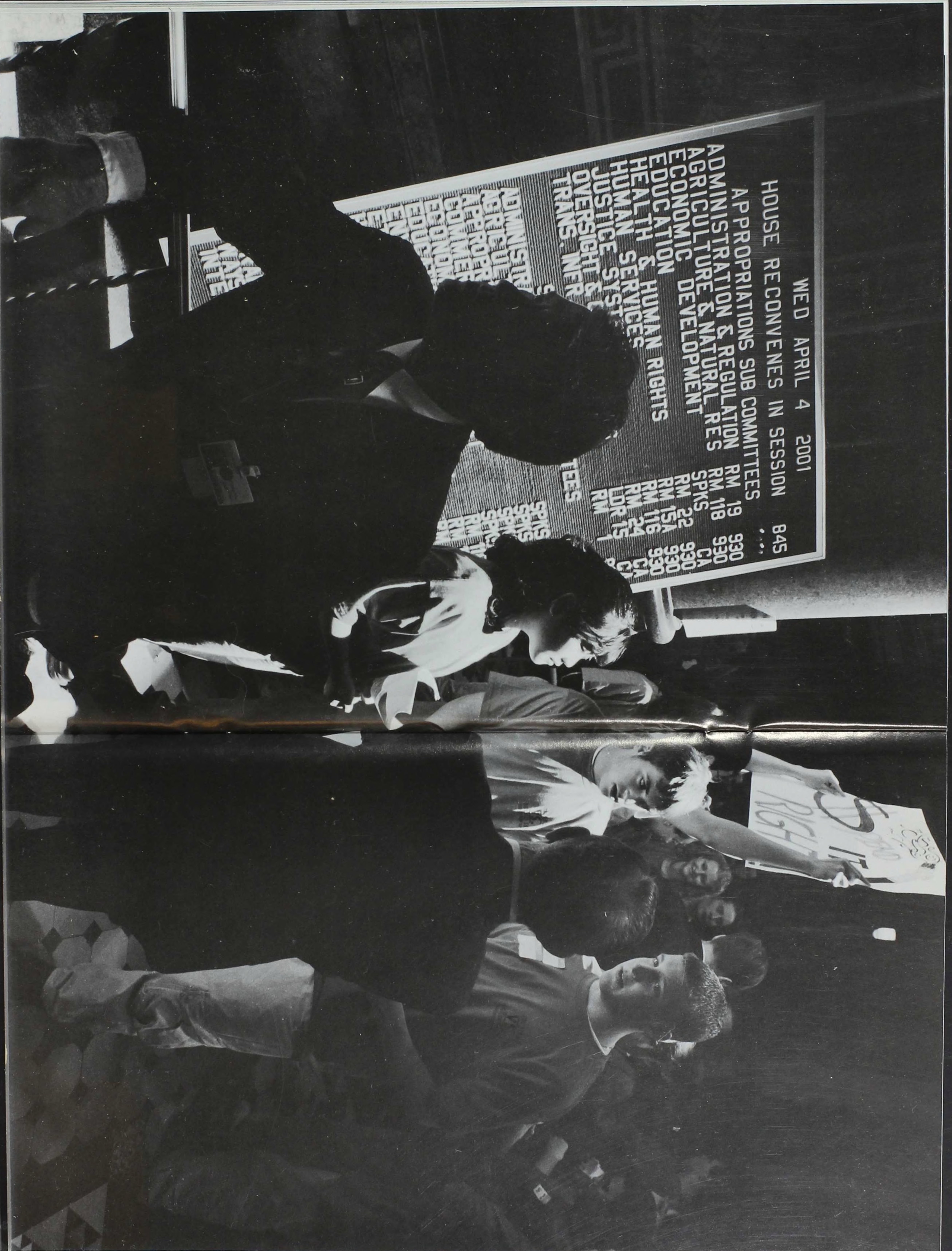
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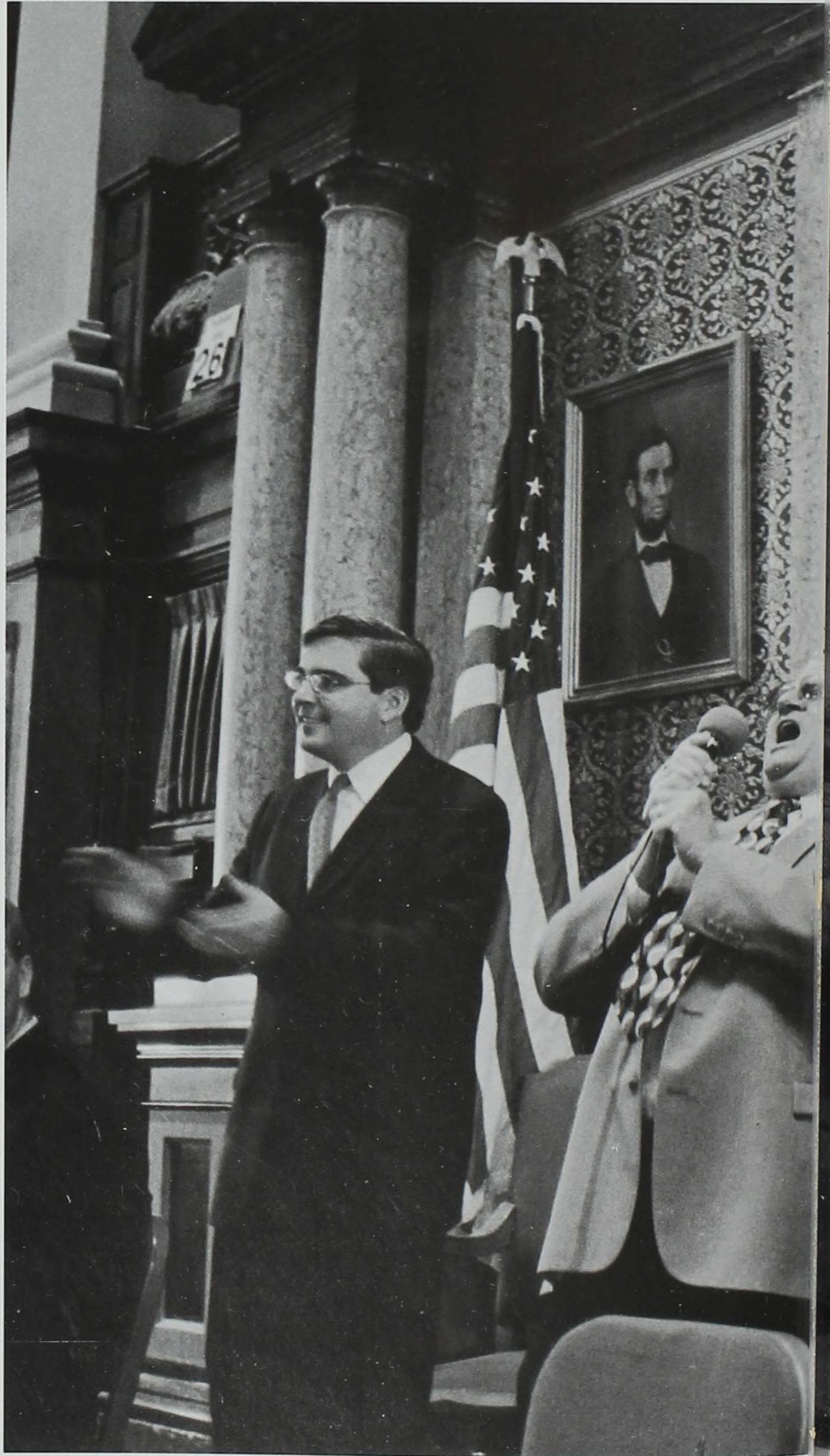


Following U.S. tobacco companies' multibillion-dollar settlement with Iowa and other states, high school students from all over Iowa lobbied legislators in April 2001 to "Spend It Right" and target dollars toward smoking prevention and cessation programs.



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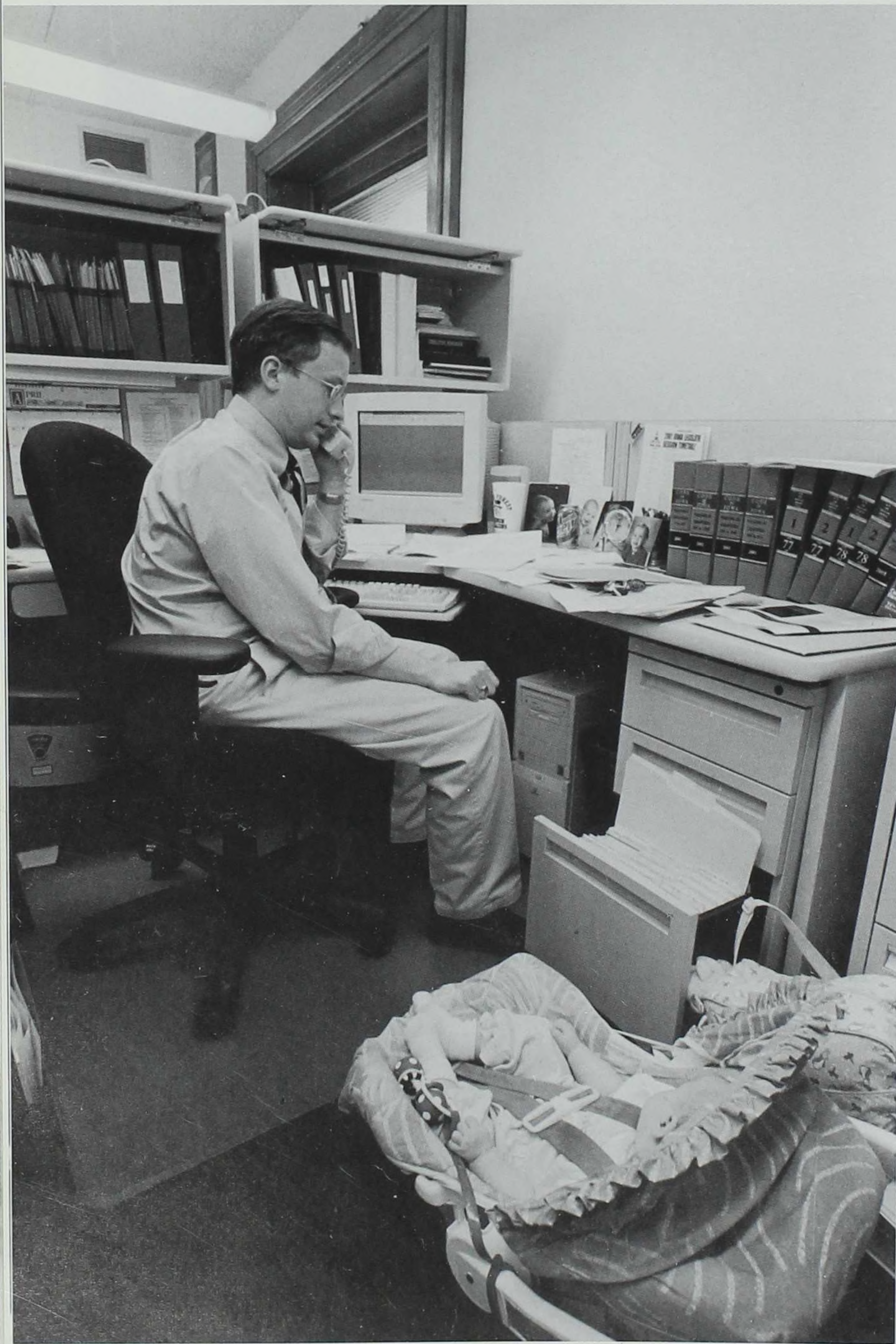
Each working day of the session, legislators have the opportunity to invite pastors from their home districts to offer the opening prayer as **Minister of the Day**. The prayers are usually earnest and brief. But once a year the Rev. Robert Connors, brother of Rep. John Connors, would rouse the chamber with a rollicking set of gospel songs. Here in March 2001 are (left to right) Senator Matt McCoy, Rev. Connors, Rep. John Connors, and House Speaker Brent Siegrist.







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Legislative Service Bureau (LSB) staff members specialize in drafting bills and amendments for senators and representatives. Each is an expert in a particular area of state law and policy. During the closing weeks of each legislative session—as floor debate intensifies, deals are struck, and hundreds of amendments and dozens of amended bills fly back and forth between the two chambers—LSB staffers are on call almost 24 hours a day. Here, while his daughter Courtney sleeps, Tim McDermott talks with a bill's floor manager (2000 or 2001).



School and church choir traditions are one of the minor glories of Iowa culture. A large, skilled, and well-rehearsed choir—comprising legislators, their clerks, staff members, and lobbyists—is featured at a memorial service held every other year to commemorate former legislators and staff who have died in the preceding two years. The candlelit service is held on a spring evening in the House chamber, and the singers practice for weeks in advance. Here, in March 2001, Senator Mark Shearer rehearses the choir.

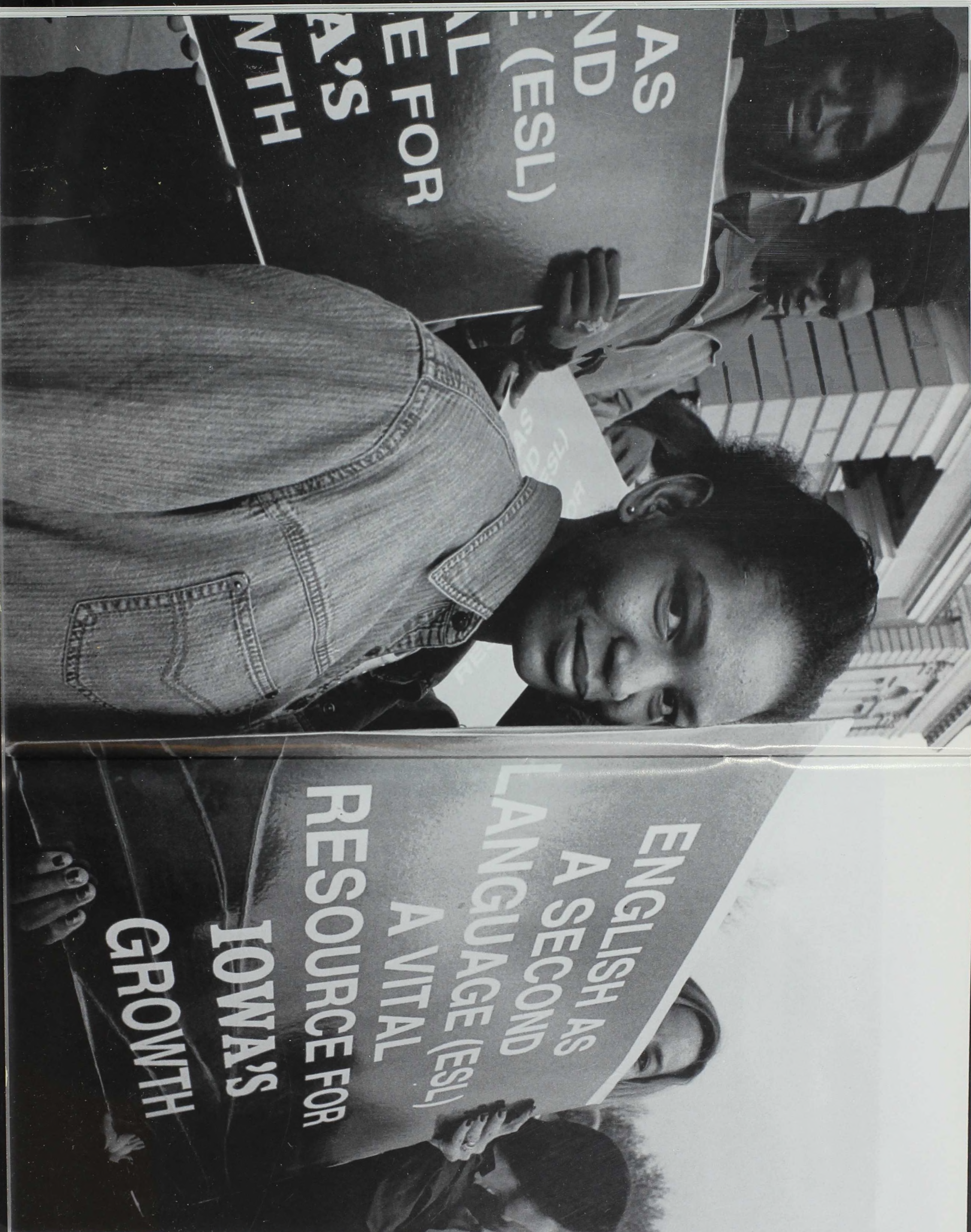




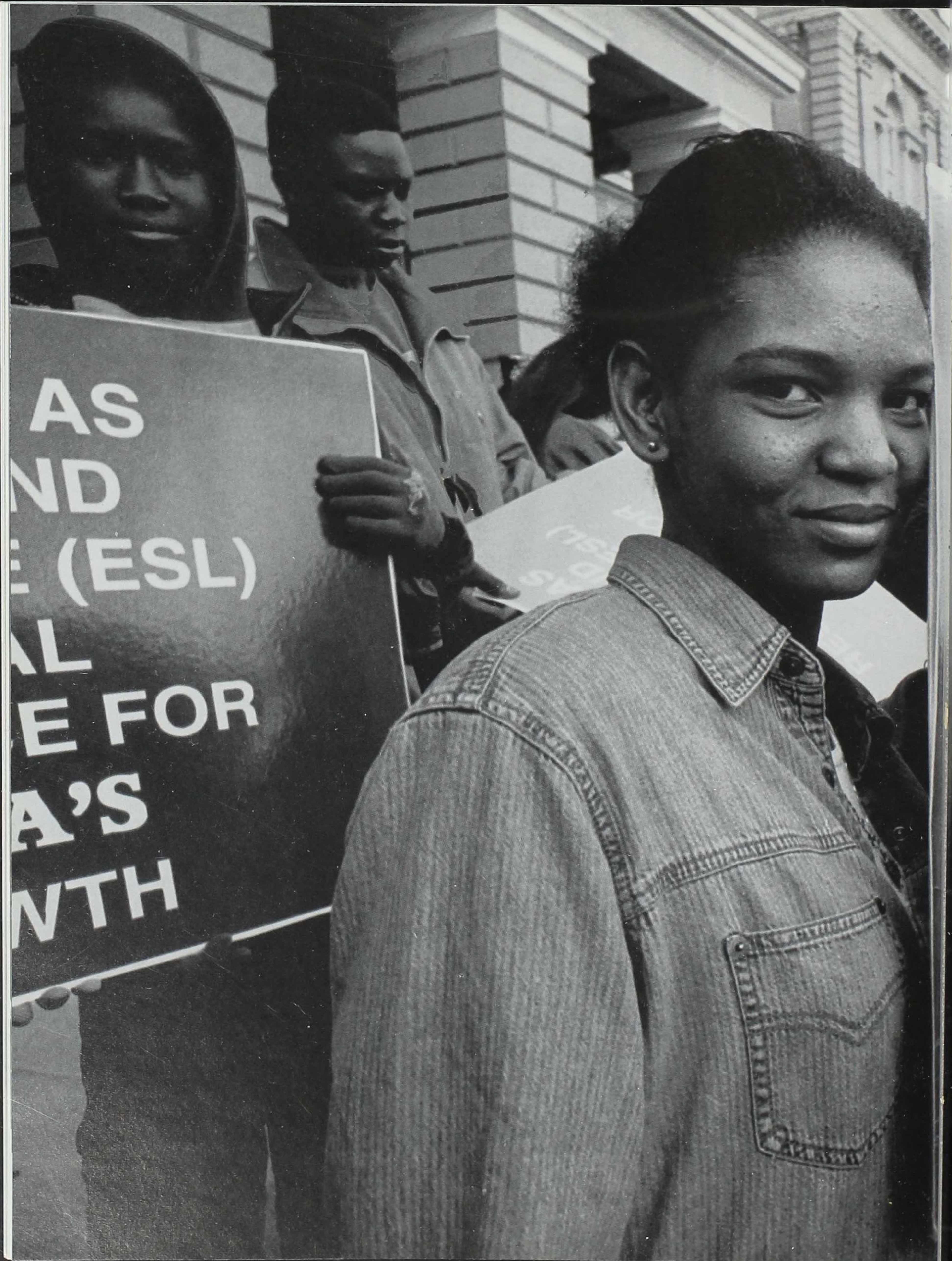
Passage of the Personal Assistance Services Bill was a landmark for Iowans with disabilities, not only because it established the state of Iowa as a national leader in this area. It was also the first time that disabled Iowans actually witnessed debate from the House floor. Previously, citizens in wheelchairs could only listen to debate by way of the public address system in the House lounge; the galleries were not accessible to those in wheelchairs. Here, in 1995, advocates from the Iowa Systems Change Congress, led by Nancy Witt and Carl Gobb, leave the chamber following the historic 96-0 vote.

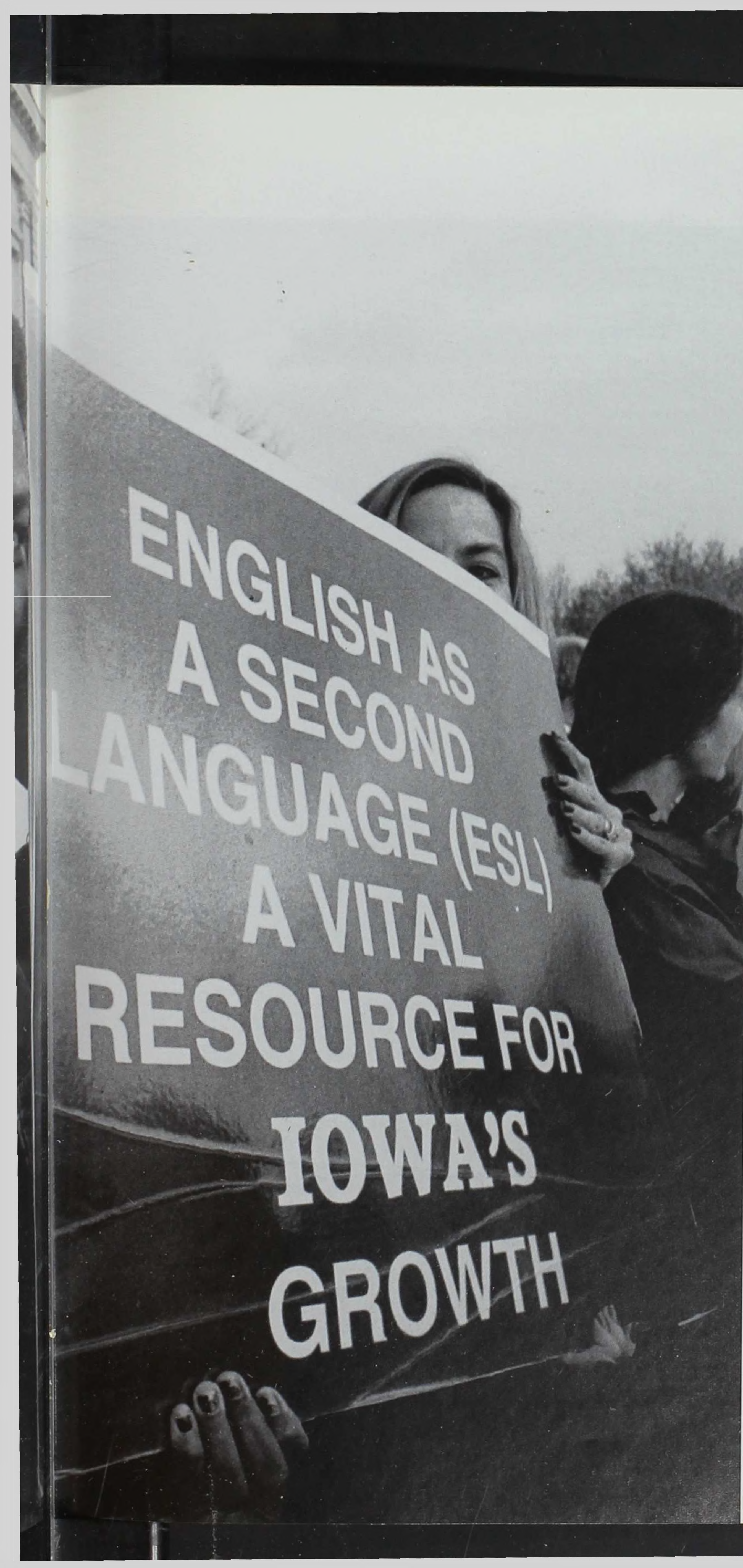


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The divisive "English as Official Language" debate recurred for several sessions. Here, Iowans rally on the Capitol's west steps. The bill failed, was passed and vetoed, and was finally passed in a more limited form and signed by Governor Tom Vilsack.

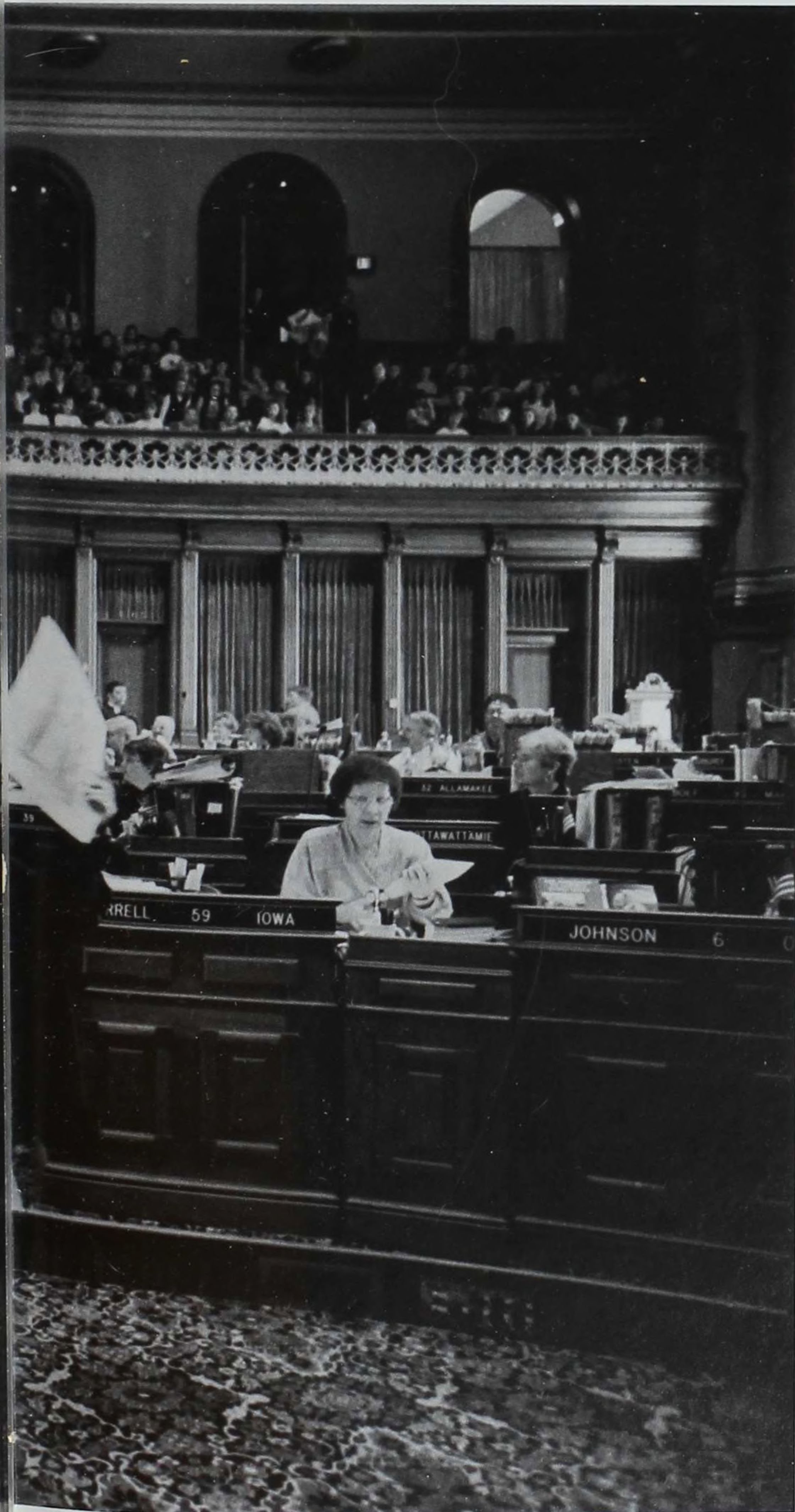




ENGLISH AS
A SECOND
LANGUAGE (ESL)
A VITAL
RESOURCE FOR
IOWA'S
GROWTH

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Late in the 2002 session, independent pork producers held their convention in Ames. When rumors began circulating that the so-called 12 Apostles, a bipartisan group of legislators who had worked for months behind the scenes on CAFO (concentrated animal feeding operation) issues, were about to release their long-awaited bill, hundreds of farmers drove to the Capitol and jammed the second-floor rotunda.



Lobbying can be hard work, and after a long session of helping her mom advocate for more support for the arts in February 2001, this young lobbyist was ready for some comfort and reassurance.





Iowa's "Bottle Bill" is once again under pressure from opponents who want it repealed. Photographed during the 2000 session, this retired farmer leaves no doubt where he stands on the issue.

Left: The Dove Hunting Bill was emotionally trying. Legislators were swamped with letters, calls, and e-mails pro and con. The "Dove Dancers" from Fairfield took a different approach. They spent an afternoon performing "dances of peace and compassion" outside Governor Tom Vilsack's office, in hopes that he would veto the bill, which had passed narrowly. The dancers were onto something: Vilsack shot the measure down—with his veto pen.





Highly controversial bills are frequently presented for public comment. Hearings are scheduled after the legislature adjourns for the day, and they can go on for hours. Here, six members of the Iowa Brotherhood of Electrical Workers listen intently to debate on a worker's compensation bill.

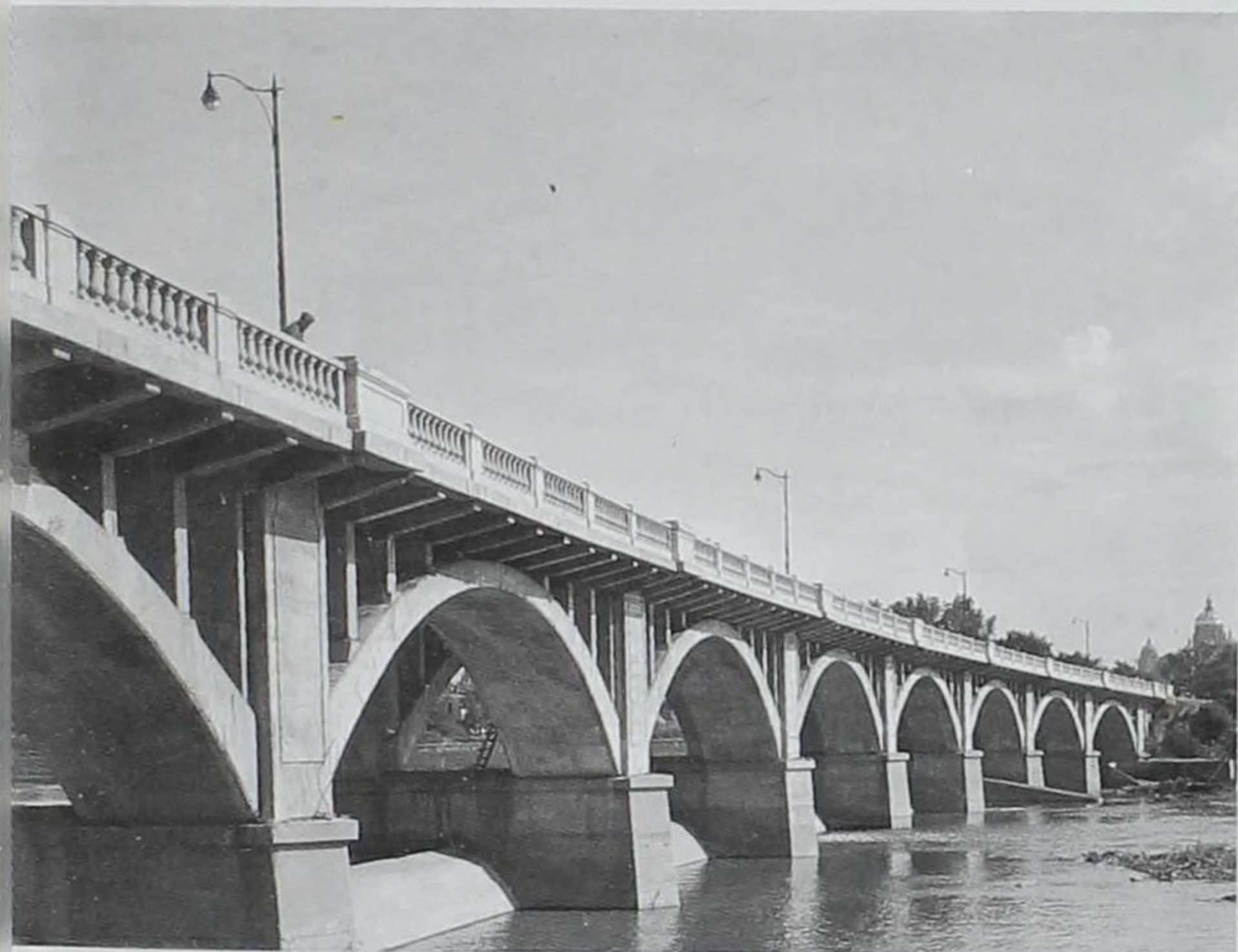


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After a late-running debate in January 1993, we legislators came out of the Capitol to find freezing mist shellacking our cars. Partisanship was forgotten as we helped one another chip and scrape the ice off windshields. Before I turned on the ignition, I braced my camera on my car's luggage rack to make this image.

Author and photographer Bill Witt served five terms in the Iowa House of Representatives, representing Cedar Falls and Hudson in Black Hawk County. Following his retirement in 2002, he returned to full-time employment at the University of Northern Iowa, where he is the Special Projects Assistant in the Division of Business and Community Services. He has worked as a freelance magazine writer and photographer since 1978. Witt has recently donated many of his photographs to the State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City).



One in a Million

Among the millions of items in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa are several thousand photographs of WPA projects during the 1930s and early 1940s. In Des Moines, the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers were the focus of WPA bridge construction and riverfront improvements. *Right:* Workers in 1936. *Above:* August 1939, the Scott Street bridge, just below the confluence; the Capitol is just visible in the distance. *Below:* Aerial view, June 1941.



ALL THREE: SHSI (IOWA CITY) WPA PHOTOS, POLK COUNTY

