

Davenport's Mary Louisa Putnam • William Savage's Birds • Christian Petersen's Sculpture

Summer 2000 • \$6

Iowa Heritage

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Meadow Lark
Bewick's Wren
Bobolink
Baltimore Oriole
Bay-winged Sparrow

Red-brown Tanager
Kinglet
Orchard Oriole

Front Porch

Dear Reader:

I remember the moment I connected with Mary Louisa Putnam, the subject of one of this issue's articles. She was describing a hectic week in December 1892. While arranging for the 25th anniversary of her favorite organization, the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences, she wrote "The weather is beastly, yet I have to go out in it for the last things." That afternoon she had a nasty fall from a streetcar. A few days later she confided: "When I thought I was killed the other day I was glad that the Academy had a new coat of paint on it."

You see, the academy had become Putnam's passion. Maybe you can relate to this. I can. I once stalled off pneumonia until after I'd gotten the floors refinished and the bay window repainted in time for Christmas. I once ignored labor contractions in order to meet a press deadline. (Of course, when I deposited the proofs in the express mail box, I got my arm wedged in the chute. Useful tip: Lamaze breathing helps in many physically trying situations.) I once strained a knee muscle (get this!) just *sitting* on the floor with legs outstretched for several hours while I organized years of files for my favorite nonprofit organization. Now when I get zealous about such projects, my husband warns: "Don't hurt yourself."

My guess is that many of you could confess to similar passions, causes that we pour our hearts into, often in the hours beyond the work day. We care less about our health than about getting the task done. We lose track of time and "get lost" in the work because we have found something deeply satisfying.

I believe such passions also motivated the Iowans you'll meet in this issue: Duncan Putnam, Mary's ailing son, was passionate about insects; he collected some 25,000. William Savage, of Van Buren County, was passionate about birds; he painted nearly every species he saw over 50 years. Christian Petersen, at Iowa State University, was passionate about sculpture; he created nearly 500 pieces of three-dimensional art. Years ago, some unnamed individual transcribed 33 years of William Savage's diaries into some 1,200 typewritten pages. Anyone who has labored over faded handwriting knows that only the passion to uncover a life story can drive that effort.

And today there's Tom Kent, the author of the article on William Savage, whose passion for observing and photographing birds led him to the Savage paintings—and a consuming, three-year project of his own making (read more about that inside).

Is your passion tracking down lost ancestors? Restoring old houses? Organizing family photos? Collecting rare tools? Volunteering at the local museum? The point is this—these passions that drive us today benefit the world tomorrow, but they also connect us to the people whose work preceded us. Like us, those individuals once found something that obsessed them beyond the work day and into the late night. They realized, as we do, that such passions gobble up our time—but they also feed our soul.

—The Editor

Farm children

More than one reader recognized farm children in the photographs of A. M. Wettach (Spring 2000 issue). Jan Moxley of Council Bluffs spotted her father, Robert Triska, as a young boy driving a wagon (pages 6-7). Pauline Payne (Avondale, Arizona) identified the foursome on pages 14-15 as her children and nephews: Beverly Payne Neill, Frank Marshall, Richard Payne, and Greg Hummell. She writes: "This whole issue sure brings back memories." Her son's letter (below) tells more.

—The Editor

The young boy on the fence second from the left with two toy guns on pages 14 and 15 is me! What a surprise! . . . Our maternal grandparents, Roy and Nellie Payne, owned a farm near Mt. Pleasant for many years and us "city kids" enjoyed spending part of the summer at "Grandpa's and Grandma's farm." My uncle and aunt John and Pauline Payne had a farm just down the road. . . . We all have very fond memories of our visits to the farm. It was a wonderful place for kids, full of adventure and interesting things to see and do. Again—thanks for such a fun article.

Frank Marshall, Pacific Grove, California

"Children on the Farm," although depicting a later era than when I grew up on a farm in Illinois in the 1920s, still was full of nostalgia for me. Actually, things didn't seem to have changed that much: we had horses to do farm work, we rode on the back of a tractor, a safety no-no today, I'm sure, but our tractor didn't have rubber tires. Girls wore dresses then instead of today's jeans. We didn't get electricity until the 1930s, so no ice cubes. Our ice came in a big chunk, brought out from town by my father. It went into an ice box, with its perpetually overflowing drip pan. Thank you for the trip back in time.

Jean Berry, Hendersonville, North Carolina

I noted something on pages 2 and 3 of the last issue that might interest your younger readers. That is, what is the young boy in the picture doing? He is collecting potato bugs! Though I haven't seen a potato bug in my potato patch in years, in the '30s and '40s they were very common and did a lot of damage. Though there was lead arsenate available to kill them, because of the cost (and the low cost of child labor!) a child in the family was usually recruited for the job. I see this child is holding a pail under the plant and knocking them off the plant and into the pail. Some of us who were a little more cold blooded just picked them off and squeezed them!

Bob Fagerland, Des Moines, Iowa

Share your thoughts with other readers here on the "Front Porch." Send letters to Ginalie Swaim, editor, *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*, 402 Iowa Ave., Iowa City, IA 52240. E-mail: gswaim@blue.weeg.uiowa.edu Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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PUTNAM MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND NATURAL SCIENCE, DAVENPORT, IOWA

"It is more than gold to me": Mary Louisa Duncan Putnam and the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences

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Despite devastating losses, a woman of boundless energies devotes herself to her children and to a local academy.

by Scott Roller

William Savage: Pioneer Iowa Bird Artist

66

Farmer, tailor, trapper, and hunter, William Savage also painted birds and kept a diary, giving us today a colorful record of Iowa birds and a detailed look at Iowa rural life.

by Thomas H. Kent



Two Ornithologists, a Century Apart

87

An expert on Iowa birds tells how he became intrigued by the paintings and diaries of an Iowa farmer of the 19th century.

by Thomas H. Kent



COURTESY OF IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION. JIM HEEMSTRA, PHOTOGRAPHER

Christian Petersen, Sculptor

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Decades after his death, Christian Petersen's sculpture at Iowa State University still gives form and expression to Iowa themes.

by Lea Rosson DeLong,
with an introduction by Charles C. Eldredge



On the Cover

William Savage painted birds throughout the five decades he farmed in southeastern Iowa. This one dates to 1902. Clockwise from bottom left: Eastern Meadowlark, Bobolink, Baltimore Oriole, Vesper Sparrow (Savage called this a "Bay winged Sparrow"), Orchard Oriole, Killdeer, Brown Thrasher, and Bewick's Wren. More of Savage's paintings are showcased inside and on the back cover. From the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa; photographed by Thomas H. Kent. (Discoloration in upper left corner electronically removed for cover presentation.)



Mary Louisa Putnam and infant (probably her firstborn, Duncan), circa 1856.

*“The little I have done for the scientific world
is to oil the wheels of this institution by getting money
to carry out the scientific thought of my beloved son
Duncan and his associates.”*

—Mary Louisa Putnam, October 1886

*“It is
more than gold
to me”*



Mary Louisa Duncan Putnam
and the
Davenport Academy
of Natural Sciences

by Scott Roller

On a cold February afternoon in 1903, citizens of Davenport, Iowa, filled the Davenport Academy of Sciences to pay their last respects to Mary Louisa Duncan Putnam. For more than 25 years she had devoted much of her energies to establishing the institution both as an educational center and as a memorial to her son Joseph Duncan Putnam. In the process she had walked the delicate line of 19th-century gender barriers, fulfilling her expected role as nurturer and educator of her children while also publicly raising funds, organizing events, and publishing the proceedings of the fledgling academy. In the end, she earned prominence in her community as a social leader while maintaining its re-

spect for her as a woman, as defined and dictated by the times.

Born in 1832 to Elizabeth Caldwell Smith Duncan and Joseph Duncan (a four-time congressman), Mary Louisa Duncan spent most of her childhood in Jacksonville, Illinois. There, in a community largely dominated by transplanted New Englanders, she was raised in a politically influential family with strong Presbyterian values. Following a single term as governor, her father left politics. Then, a poor business deal coupled with his early and unexpected death in 1844 left his invalid wife and their seven children with the family home but little else. As the eldest daughter, eleven-year-old Mary learned how to manage a large household, performing most of the chores herself.

During the mid-1840s, after a family friend had helped rebuild the family's financial base, Mary accompanied her mother on several trips to Washington. There, they rekindled old friendships made during her father's terms in the House of Representatives and dined at the White House. Later recounting her visits as a teenager to the home of former First Lady Dolley Madison, Mary wrote, "I was enraptured with Mrs. Madison,—lovely Mrs. Madison! It was a delight to us young people to pay our respects to her very often, when she received us in turbaned cap, with the dignity of a princess, and with the urbanity of a truly loyal American woman." These travels also allowed Mary to visit the new Smithsonian Institution and other museums,

where she developed a deep appreciation for history, science, and the arts. The trips also exposed her to a wide range of personalities, from those in high society to the common laborers she met on the

Two years later, on a family trip to the East, she met her future husband, Charles E. Putnam, and they became engaged. Mary convinced Charles to abandon his plans to move to New York City and instead to begin a law practice in the West. Following her wishes, he located in Davenport, Iowa, in the spring of 1854. The couple was married at a small ceremony that December at Jacksonville and settled in Davenport soon afterwards.

Mary gave birth to their first son, Joseph Duncan Putnam, in October 1855. While Charles spent long hours away from home building his practice, Mary Putnam fulfilled the role expected of a 19th-century wife. She expertly managed the family home, eventually bore eleven children (all were boys but one), and devoted herself to their upbringing. In a letter to her mother dated January 10, 1856, Mary wrote of her obligations to her children: "Our childhood joys cannot be taken from us & their impression is stamped on our character forever—blessed is the man or woman who has had a cheerful happy home once in their lives."

By 1863 Charles's growing law practice and prosperous business ventures permitted the family to move into a large home, known as "Woodlawn," on the west edge of Davenport. The estate's 18 acres of rolling grounds featured both pasture land and wooded areas, providing a fascinating natural learning environment for the children. Both parents steadfastly encouraged their chil-

PUTNAM MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND NATURAL SCIENCE, DAVENPORT, IOWA



Mary and Charles E. Putnam, circa 1855.

"I am to have a very small wedding & take the money that would thus be expended to furnish our room comfortably in Davenport."

journey. Such experiences helped Mary develop social graces in varied situations, which she would use to her advantage later in life.

Mary graduated from the Jacksonville Female Academy in 1851.



Putnam family members at Woodlawn, circa 1865-1870.

“A young lady visiting here said I had the most delightful home in Davenport. I felt it was indeed the truth.”

—Mary Putnam, January 1864

dren’s education by urging them to explore all aspects of life and by reading to them daily. In January 1863, for example, Mary wrote to her mother that she had read from the *New York Observer* “all that could interest the children.” She noted, “The red ants seem to take Duncan. Oh, mother! what a luxury to have boys old enough to appreciate what you read to them! I have so much pleasure in watch-

ing the development of Duncan’s mind. My whole days are spent in instructing, playing with, and keeping the children clean. I sew scarcely a stitch and fear my industry will flag; however, I never was so busy in my life—or more happy.”

As the boisterous family continued to grow—Putnam called them her “blue-eyed banditti”—Woodlawn developed into an ever

more enriching atmosphere for the children, with object lessons from nature (based on German educator Friedrich Froebel’s approaches), outdoor sports, gardening, an excellent library (Charles had assembled one of the finest west of the Mississippi), a stage for plays, a workshop, and even a printing press.

With such diverse opportunities for education, coupled with

the family's influential political heritage, much was expected from the Putnam children. As a mother, Mary Putnam knew that it was her responsibility to give them a strong cultural and moral upbringing so they would mature into leaders in society. Nevertheless, she often doubted her maternal abilities. In an 1866 letter to her brother she confided, "What a responsibility rests upon me, I feel it daily more & more yet pray God my life may be spared until these dear ones shall need my governing will no longer."

From early childhood, Duncan, the firstborn, rarely enjoyed good health. When he was only three years old, Mary wrote of her concerns for his health, saying that although he "plays out doors all day long—the body has occasional sick turns—would to God he could be well dear beautiful boy. I tremble when I think how much he loves me that he should be taken from me hence [through illness]." Duncan received much of his education at home due to his physical inability to attend school on a regular basis. Less suited for sports than his brothers, he took an early interest in catching and raising butterflies and moths at Woodlawn, and then in collecting, observing, drawing, and classifying all kinds of insects. As he entered adolescence, his mother realized she could serve but limited use to him as he developed his interests in the natural sciences, especially his strong affinity toward the



Six of the eleven Putnam children, April 1867 (clockwise from bottom): George Rockwell, H. St. Clair, Joseph Duncan, John Caldwell, Charles Morgan, and William Clement.

"My whole days are spent in instructing, playing with, and keeping the children clean."

—Mary Putnam, January 1863

study of insects. But she encouraged him wholeheartedly to pursue his scientific passions.

By 1869, W. H. Pratt, Duncan's penmanship instructor and a member of the year-old Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences, also noted the boy's interest in the natural sciences. Pratt allowed Duncan to accompany him on weekend collecting expeditions in

the area, introduced him to the work of the academy, and encouraged him to join this small group of amateur local scientists. When Duncan expressed his interest in the group to his mother, she immediately set about joining with her son and husband. By July of that year Mary, Duncan, and Charles Putnam had been elected as members.

The Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences was fairly typical of 19th-century midwestern academic societies. According to Daniel Goldstein, who has studied the history of such institutions, "Before scientists made a home for themselves in the universities toward the end of the nineteenth century, state and local societies were the principal scientific institutions throughout most of the country. In these voluntary associations, or academies as they were frequently called, men—and, more rarely, women—with national and international reputations as scientists interacted with other, less skilled and knowledgeable enthusiasts." Goldstein adds: "Wherever even a handful of 'scientific men' could be found, they were sure to form a society. Most of these organizations were ephemeral, attesting more to the enthusiasm of their founders than to the widespread existence of sustained local scientific activity."

As an enthusiastic new member whose interest would be far from ephemeral, 13-year-old Duncan Putnam carefully recorded in his pocket journal these notations: "July 9th, 1869, I attended for the first time to-night, having been

elected a member of the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences which holds its regular meetings the last Friday of each month. Father went with me. This was an adjourned meeting to discuss the methods to be used in raising the funds to take photographs of the great eclipse next August; and to hear the report of the committee appointed on the same subject, but no definite action could be taken, so the meeting adjourned til next Friday evening, at 7¹/₂ o'clock."

The election of Duncan, Mary, and Charles Putnam as members forever changed the course of the Davenport academy. Mary Putnam's membership represented the first time a woman had been elected into the group as a regular member. Initially, she remained largely inactive in the business of the academy, leaving Duncan's scientific education to Pratt and his associates. Her membership seems to have been based on her son's wish that she become a member and on her family's social position in the community.

In 1872, the Putnams' tenth child, Hamilton, still an infant, died of scarlet fever. While the loss of a child was not uncommon for 19th-century women, the death nonetheless devastated Mary Putnam and she redoubled her efforts in the education of her remaining children. Hamilton's death also increased her fears that frail Duncan would be taken from her, too.

By the early 1870s Duncan's health problems had become increasingly acute. "Death loves a shining mark, hence I feel his aim directed to my boy [Duncan]," wrote Mary Putnam to her brother in the fall of 1871. In the same letter she noted that her husband had taken Dun-

can out west, "I hope he [Charles] will try every thing before bringing him home to die—I shall have no hope to keep him with me in this climate." Believing that a more favorable climate might remedy Duncan's condition, his family sent him on several extended trips to California, Colorado, and other western locations, despite the expense. In 1872, he managed to incorporate his scientific pursuits into his convalescence by accompanying fellow academy member and nationally respected botanist C. C. Parry on his summer botanical excursion to Colorado. He also served as a meteorological assistant on an Army Corps of Engineers' Yellowstone expedition the following year.

By the start of 1874, however, it became evident that the western climate had not substantially improved Duncan's health. In fact, tuberculosis was now diagnosed, shattering plans for him to attend Harvard. On New Year's Day, Mary wrote: "Tomorrow night the children will go through their play of William Tell. Mr. Putnam insists on making the home lively and pleasant for Duncan as long as he is with us. . . . He had a hemorrhage in the street the day before yesterday, which alarmed us all very much."

On January 21, she noted: "I leave Duncan scarcely a moment night or day. His father sits with him sometimes while I do some errands. I don't know what to do with him. If he sits still he reads Huxley and Darwin and all the other brain-splitting books you ever heard of—says histories are almost as heavy and stupid as novels. He was actually relieved when we were through David Copperfield. I suppose while he lives he will work."

On January 30: "Duncan is

anxious to go with Dr. Parry to Utah next summer, as it is on the desert and near the mountains, so he can catch all kinds of bugs. Oh, that God would spare his life that he may fulfill his great promise."

On February 4: "Duncan has been very ill. I have had no heart to write. To-day he is back in his bug room which makes him and me more cheerful. This is the fourteenth hemorrhage in six days. I have not left Duncan a moment day or night; how long I can hold out I don't know."

The crisis passed, but Duncan's general health did not improve. By the fall of that year the 19-year-old weighed only 117 pounds. While visiting Duncan in Empire, Colorado, in August 1874, Mary sadly wrote her husband that "his cough sounds to me more hollow & deeper, his expectorations are dark yellow and a great deal—he stoops more." Yet even with his health in continual decline, Duncan remained focused and confident in his abilities. In October 1874 he wrote to his mother that "there are plenty of good positions to be had for a Naturalist properly qualified on the various surveys & in the colleges—I am tolerably well qualified for the former & think that very likely I can get some such position—even next year if I am well enough."

By the end of the year, however, Duncan finally began to accept that his health would not permit him to pursue his goals through traditional means. He now dedicated himself to building the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences into a respected institution beyond the Midwest and within the international scientific community. This was not a naive

goal during a time when the advancement of science depended on students of all levels. As historian Daniel Goldstein explains, "American scientists were not clearly defined as a professional group in the Nineteenth Century in the way that they are today. While there was a clear hierarchy within the scientific community, it was not possible to draw a firm line between scientists and non-scientists, between those who contributed to the field and those who did not. This was especially true for the natural sciences. The United States' most important botanists, geologists and zoologists, for example, communicated with and relied on the efforts of a large number of less skilled or less sophisticated part-time workers."

Duncan enlisted his mother's help, urging her to do something "to make the Academy popular." He also told her that he felt obligated to make his own way. "I have made up my mind to earn my own living after two years," he wrote to her in the fall of 1874, "even if I have to give up Nat[ural] History." As Mary watched Duncan's commitment to the academy heighten, she increased her own involvement in its functions and devoted herself to its success. She hoped that by strengthening the academy, she could help her son gain the training and experience needed to become a renowned scientist without leaving Davenport.

Shortly after hearing Duncan's plea to help the academy, Putnam suffered the loss of her infant son, Berthoud, on February 11, 1875. At the age of 43 years she would bear no more children. Without an infant to rear, life seemed empty. She concentrated her energies on educating her remaining children, and on the academy as a way to deal with her grief. So much time did

she begin to devote to the academy, in fact, that she sometimes called it her twelfth child.

Putnam saw her foremost role as one of raising funds to support the efforts of the academy's scientifically oriented members, especially the efforts of her son. To do so, she drew on her previous experience as secretary of Davenport's Soldiers Aid Society during the Civil War. She organized a group of women to furnish a room in her husband's law office where the academy could hold its meetings. Next she nominated eleven women for membership, hoping this would broaden community interest in the academy and, in turn, encourage donations for constructing a fireproof building to house its collections. She urged other academy members to join her. "Now while the enthusiasm is freshly awakened," she said, "we must not let it die." No doubt she had Duncan in mind when she remarked, "I like the plan of endowing the institution so as to secure some one to spend all of his time there."

In September 1875, Putnam began the next phase of her work for Duncan and the academy when she helped organize the initial meeting of Davenport's Ladies' Centennial Association. With the nation's Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia less than a year away, she asked the women to select a project to exhibit in the exposition's "Woman's Pavilion." Many women's organizations across the country were planning to send samples of their handiwork as their projects.

Meanwhile, Duncan introduced a resolution to the academy membership to publish the institution's proceedings and scientific

papers. He outlined the advantages of launching such a journal: to "preserve much material that might otherwise be lost," to "furnish a greater incentive to our members to make original investigations," to "increase the Library by means of exchange with other societies and publishers," and to "place us on a creditable footing with the other societies of the world." His mother followed up by suggesting that the Ladies' Centennial Association sponsor the publication as its project for the exposition, to show the world how much scientific work the growing city of Davenport was producing.

During the first half of 1876 Mary Putnam devoted almost all of her spare hours to the publication fund. She firmly believed that whenever Duncan's health declined, her fundraising and other work for the academy helped to prolong his life. As she told a friend, "Nothing but the publication keeps him alive."

In the process of publishing the volume, Putnam followed the traditional example of benevolent societies, in which women expanded their spheres of influence into public life through moral and educational pursuits. Despite a \$1,500 setback caused by a fire in a hall rented for a fundraising event in February, and the death of her mother in June, Putnam led the Ladies' Centennial Association to successful completion of the project. As a result of her organizational skills, Davenport's women proved their merit as fundraisers.

To reward their work, and to ensure their continued efforts for the academy, she had nominated 43 women for election into the academy in 1875, more than half of the new members for the year. Their election marked a move toward a more populist academy and

away from an exclusive circle of scientifically oriented men.

The centennial project—volume one of the academy proceedings—comprised nearly 300 pages and 35 illustrations. The material had been compiled and edited by the publications committee and included organizational information (such as bylaws, acquisitions and membership lists, speeches, and minutes), and members' research findings (on local geology, botany, archeology, and so forth). Duncan offered several of his lists and descriptions of insects collected in Iowa and out west, as well as a brief article on the maple bark louse.

The success of volume one of the academy's proceedings buoyed Mary Putnam's hopes that Duncan could remain in Davenport and still achieve respect as a scientist by making useful contributions to his field. Indeed, the initial volume did result in many American and European scientists offering their congratulations on the academy's efforts, and many sent their own publications in exchange, which greatly bolstered the academy's research library. As the publications committee reported, the proceedings had "brought us into active communication with nearly



Kettle drum festival, July 17, 1877.

"The expectations of all were more than realized in the real enjoyment of the hundreds who were privileged to be present at Woodlawn. . . . Strasser's orchestra rendered the programme . . . and the first few hours were whiled away by the merry dancers on the lawn."

—Davenport Daily Democrat, July 18, 1877

all similar societies throughout the world. By means of exchanges, our Library has been greatly increased, already 121 complete volumes and 351 pamphlets and parts of volumes have been received. . . . Scarcely a day passes but some new book is received." And as the year's retiring president reminded members, "No [academic] society can work independently of others. Without their aid we may be toiling and plodding on problems which they solved years ago. . . . [Exchanging publications enables] us

Mrs. Sanders, to procure "subscriptions" (pledges or donations) for construction. When Sanders could not fulfill her duties, however, Putnam raised the funds single-handedly.

Putnam supplemented this fundraising with an informal reception called a "kettle drum" at the family's Woodlawn estate on July 17, 1877. Perfect weather, orchestra music, abundant food, "gypsy" fortune-

to compare our best work with others—to do honest, permanent work." Upon Mary Putnam's urging, the academy almost immediately began planning volume two of the proceedings, which Duncan volunteered to undertake as his own responsibility.

Meanwhile Mary Putnam began to campaign for a new, fireproof building for the exclusive use of the academy. By February of 1877 she had convinced her longtime friend Patience Veile Newcomb to donate a lot near downtown Davenport as the building site. Out of respect for previous successes, and because most of the male members had little interest in fundraising, the academy appointed Putnam and another woman member, a

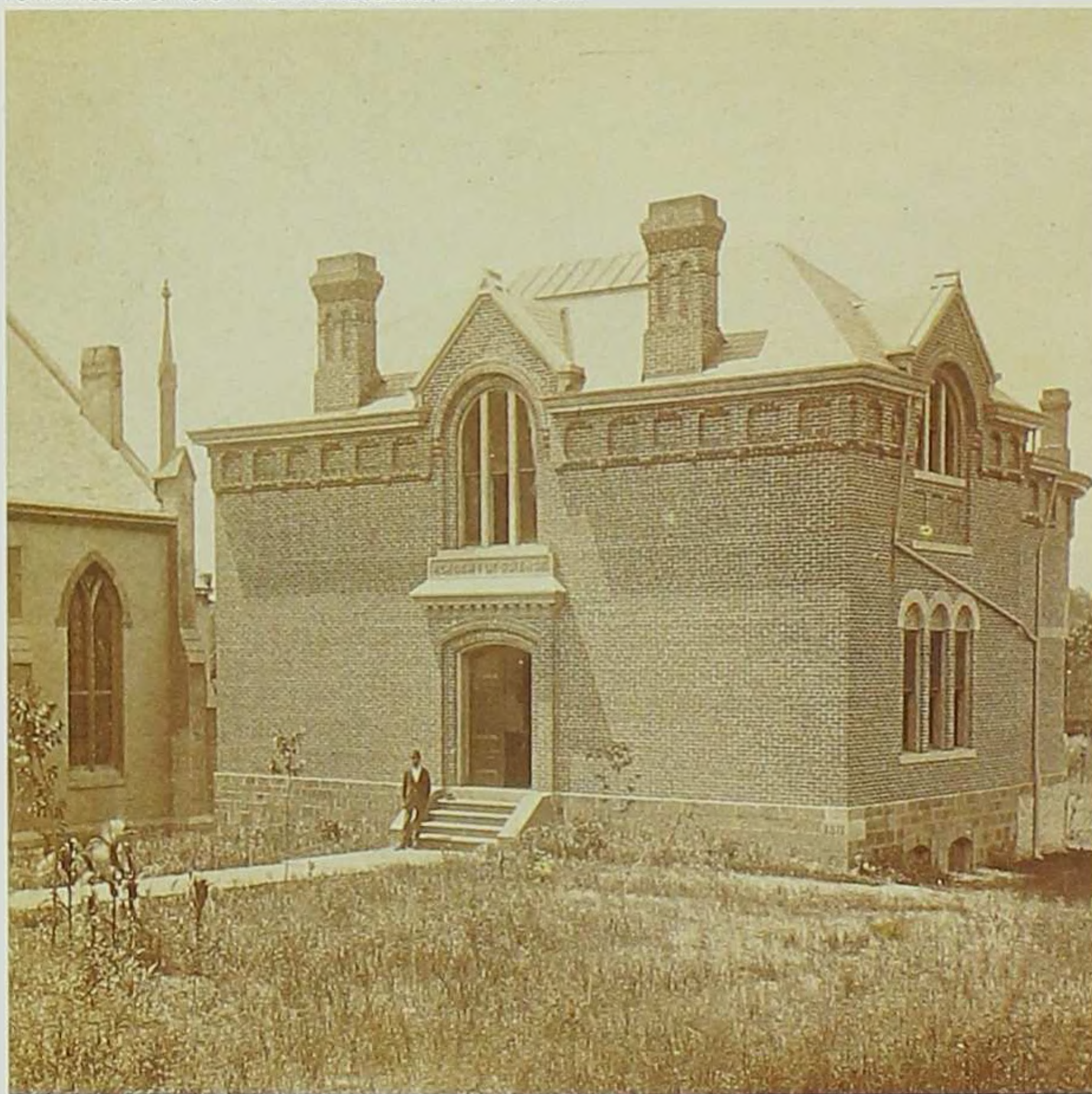
PUTNAM MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND NATURAL SCIENCE, DAVENPORT, IOWA

tellers, and other assorted attractions drew a crowd of more than 700 and raised \$800 of the building's total cost of \$4,500 in a single day. The festival was so successful in fact, that just two days later the building committee reported in favor of construction. On February 22, 1878, only a year after the donation of the land, the new Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences building opened to the public.

Over the next year Putnam and her corps of women fundraisers furnished the interior of the building by acquiring donations of materials and money through additional community events. Duncan's wish for his mother to do something "to make the Academy popular" had been realized—so much so, in fact, that its scientific functions had taken on a secondary importance to all but a few of the academy's dedicated amateur scientists. Mary Putnam had made it fashionable to attend academy events. As Duncan wrote to a colleague, the academy had become "the most 'popular' institution in the city—of whatever nature & that is saying a good deal for a town like Davenport."

Putnam's fundraising and organizational efforts resulted in her election as president of the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences in 1879. She was the first woman elected to that position. An extremely rare appointment for any woman at the time, this marked the academy's public acknowledg-

PUTNAM MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND NATURAL SCIENCE, DAVENPORT, IOWA



Davenport Academy of Sciences, circa 1895.

"This is to be a house of industry, a school of the sciences, a garden for culture, a home for all virtues."

—Academy President Rev. S. S. Hunting

ment of respect for its women members and their efforts. In his nomination speech for Putnam, C. C. Parry noted their contributions: "It is quite unnecessary to explain to any here present that the actual success and present prosperity of the Academy has been coincident with the interest taken in it by woman. It was a Woman's Centennial Association that first inaugurated and successfully carried out the publication of Proceedings, on which, more than any other one thing, the scientific character and standing of the Academy abroad has been firmly established. The very ground beneath our feet is the spontaneous gift of a generous woman, and this commodious building, which affords us a permanent home, from lowest foundation

stone to highest roof-crest, if not the direct work of woman's hand, has been wrought out and completed under the inspiring influence of a woman's heart. It has been proposed, and I doubt not will meet the spontaneous approval of all present, to recognize this obligation in a very appropriate way as well as adding a crowning glory to the institution, by electing MRS. C. E. PUTNAM President of the Academy for the ensuing year."

Putnam appreciated the honor, but she also understood the kind of tedious detail and exhausting leg-work that fundraising and promotion required. While promoting a musical benefit by a touring pianist in

May 1879, she listed some of the tasks: "From day to day I haunted the editorial chairs, buttonholed the local editors, made journeys [across the Mississippi] to Rock Island and back again, had tickets printed at one office, placards at another, and the programmes at a third. These tickets I was very judicious with, giving some fifty to the editors, and about as many more to music teachers and those promising to interest their pupils. The placards I took to Rock Island, left them with a friend who saw four of them put in the street cars. (We sold four tickets in Rock Island). . . . The other placards I took in my buggy and put in front of windows, and sent John to street car lines to have others put in cards. This was no small part of the work, for the next

morning after leaving them they did not appear; so I had to see first one driver and then another about it."

Even as Putnam's successes mounted at the academy, however, Duncan remained in poor health, and the family in poor finances. By February 1879, the Putnams had mortgaged Woodlawn and Mary performed her own housework in an effort to economize. Then came the unexpected death of their third-born son, John.

John had been plagued by poor eyesight throughout his life, and his mother had devoted long hours during his childhood schooling to read his lessons to him, hoping that he could go east to college where, she believed, "he is going to make a splendid scholar." With Duncan too ill to lead the family into the next generation, John no doubt felt added pressure to succeed. Yet when he began his studies at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1877, he no longer had his mother to help him with his reading. Feeling ostracized at school and unable to meet what he perceived as his family's expectations, he gradually became depressed. Finally the pressures became too great. He committed suicide on May 27, 1879, at the age of 20.

The death of a third son, this time as an adult whom she believed had been on his way to success, no doubt shook Mary Putnam's confidence in her abilities as a mother. After a period of mourning, she again devoted herself to the academy, but she accomplished less that year than she had hoped for. She regretted that she did not better represent the women members of the academy,

and in her end-of-the-year presidential address she apologized: "In gratefully accepting the position [as president] as a tribute to my sex, I had hoped and expected to make up for any lack of scientific qualifications by zeal and enthusiasm in behalf of your great work, and if the performance has fallen short of the promise, you will, I am sure, attribute my shortcomings to the dark experiences through whose shadows I have been passing."

Still, Putnam's year as president did mark the beginning of the academy's work as a local educational institution in the natural sciences for public schools. Convincing C. C. Parry to serve as its instructor, she arranged a botany class for schoolchildren. She also arranged several popular lectures and informal discussions, hoping to expand the academy's role in the community.

Meanwhile, Duncan "insisted upon paying his board" by working in his father's law office, "feeling such an example would be better for his brothers," his mother explained. Unfortunately, his duties as office clerk proved too much for his fragile physical condition, and his health declined even further. In a letter to her brother in late December 1879, Mary wrote, "Duncan has not seemed as well of late . . . for the last month the change for the worse has been very perceptible."

Yet he continued to work on publishing the academy's proceedings. He completed the work on volume two virtually singlehandedly, setting most of the type himself on the family's printing press in the basement of Woodlawn. Still, his mother chastised the academy in her 1880 presidential address: "The enlarged scope given to this volume has exposed

its editor, Mr. J. D. Putnam, to much extra labor and expense, which it is no more than simple justice should be reasonably shared by other members of the Academy who are equally interested in an enterprise which has given character and reputation to the Academy abroad, as well as adding to the library in the way of exchanges, what in a pecuniary point of view is worth at least double its actual cost."

Mary Putnam could not forestall the inevitable. By November 1881 Duncan could rarely leave Woodlawn. He worked on volume three from his bed. On November 20, Mary wrote to her brother that Duncan "has been very anxious this year to get out a 3rd vol of the Proceedings of the Academy," but she admitted that "he is utterly helpless—I have to do every thing for him . . . the last time he attempted to go upstairs it [his pulse] rose to 140—he is very feeble & greatly bloated & has suffered every thing, the last was an attack of shingles." Doctors soon gave up any chance of recovery, but she rejected their judgment. Another letter to her brother, on December 9, stated that Duncan "revived his interest in his publication last week & has employed a type setter & hopes to get out Vol. 3 1st part soon. . . . Altho the Drs. give him up I won't." The following day, Duncan died.

Tributes to Duncan poured in. He was repeatedly described as accurate, deliberate, earnest, thorough, systematic—certainly all compliments for a scientific mind—but also modest, gentle, resignedly cheerful, and unflaggingly determined. His old teacher, W. H. Pratt, said, "He labored to build up the Academy not as an end, but as

a means to the great end, 'the increase and diffusion of knowledge.'" Another colleague wrote, "His talents at first fostered by the Academy, his only alma mater, and by the affectionate solicitude of its leading spirits, he soon so far outstripped his fellows that on his shoulders alone rested most of the burden and responsibility of the growing institution."

Although Duncan's scientific publications were considered "not voluminous," he had collected some 25,000 specimens of insects, had focused on a particular order intermediate between scorpions and spiders (*Solpugidae*), and had amassed detailed notes and an extensive bibliography on the group. As Pratt said, "He was, up to the time of his death, the only person in this country who had made much progress in the study of the family of *Solpugidae*."

Mary Putnam had devoted much of the previous 26 years to nurturing her frail, eldest son. Now she was desolate. She fell into a deep depression and stayed with relatives in New Orleans for three months. During her absence the academy appointed her to succeed Duncan as chair of the publications committee.

Throughout the next five years, Putnam tirelessly pursued her assignment. She began by finishing volume three as a memorial to Duncan. With little aid from other members, and with no training as a scientist or editor, she seemed surprised by the huge undertaking publishing required and found that the "weight and responsibility" of putting out a quality volume to represent the academy and her son was "almost crushing." Nonetheless, she persevered. In late October 1882 she

wrote proudly to her sister, "I sent you sheets of the Memorial Volume for my gift. It is more than gold to me, the perpetuating the memory of such a boy. . . . I wonder if any one ever did so honor and love a boy. God bless his precious memory!"

Putnam then began raising funds for a fourth volume. Funding did not come easily. "There are plenty of men here who could pay that amount & not feel it," she lamented, "but I have asked so repeatedly for help I'm ashamed to do so again." She again dreamed of a benefactor to endow the academy and ensure its survival.

Mary's husband, Charles, became much more active in the academy when he was elected president in 1885. His interest grew mostly from what the Putnams now considered their duty—to defend the academy in light of allegations of fraudulent prehistoric tablets and other artifacts in its collection. Despite assertions by the Smithsonian Institution and several prominent archeologists that the tablets were fakes, Charles used all of his influence as a community leader and skill as a lawyer to defend their authenticity. The Putnam family felt that a fraud would tarnish the academy's reputation and, by association, their son's legacy. (Ironically, Putnam's insistent defense of the objects effectively ended the academy's existence as a research institution by causing it to lose a good deal of respect in scientific circles.)

In January 1886 Charles Putnam again accepted the office of president despite Mary's worries over his health. She was tired too. As she reflected that July, "It will be about nine years since my last 'Kettledrum' [fundraiser]. . . . When I think of all I have lost in these nine years my heart shrinks

from the effort, but it must be done. I must work to live; the Academy must have money, and who will give it to us?"

The fight over the tablets and the initiation of a \$500 salary for a curator had taken much of the money she had raised in 1885. Therefore, when she finally presented the finished volume four of the proceedings in October 1886, she did so with an outstanding debt of \$250. With most of its original members having died or moved away from Davenport, the academy faced its biggest crisis yet to survive. The next month Putnam announced a new subscription plan to raise \$400 a year for five years, in order to "obviate repeated appeals to the public," she explained. As expected, the board approved the plan and placed her in charge of the campaign. "Oh, that I could know some of the mysterious joys of a true scientist and a true artist," she wrote to her husband, "but I don't believe it was meant I should classify or arrange anything unless maybe a subscription paper."

Her subscription effort progressed well. In a letter to her sister-in-law, Mary Putnam Bull, she wrote that "\$350 a year has been subscribed without much effort. I shall hope to get at least \$400 before another week, but I have been too busy sewing to attend much to other matters." But she continued to wish for an endowment: "I often wish I were rich. I would never see that boy's [Duncan's] institution suffer for the want of so little; but it will be endowed some day; and his name will live as it ought to live when marble monuments have perished and monumental fortunes have crumbled away. . . . It is five years since we laid him away, but oh! how his presence haunts my dreams."

Putnam soon fulfilled the \$400 subscription commitment for the year. Pleased by the support of the community, she seemed assured that the academy was back on the right path. Then her calm was shattered on the morning of June 3, 1887, when Woodlawn burned to the ground. The fire claimed most of the Putnams' belongings, their cherished library, and nearly all of Duncan's correspondence, writings, and drawings.

Only six weeks later, Charles died, following a short illness. Left alone with her seven remaining children and stunned by the loss of home and husband, she wrote to her sister-in-law: "At times all my interest in life seems to have died within me & this world looks so dark & unsatisfactory. I really have lost all ambition for any thing & have to rouse every energy to rise in the morning."

Putnam attempted to occupy herself with work. Without a spouse, she felt even more responsible for her children's education and growth, and she resolutely determined that "the work of life must go on; these dear children must be helped to maturity."

Still, her energies were gradually depleted. From 1888 to 1891 she spent most of her time away from Davenport, first to stay with her sick sister in Jacksonville, Illinois, and then to take some time for herself to travel overseas and recuperate.

In her absence the academy

faltered. Fewer and fewer supporters remained to fund it. Longtime member and academy curator W. H. Pratt became increasingly discouraged and, after the death of yet another life member, he sadly wrote to Putnam in Jacksonville:

PUTNAM MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND NATURAL SCIENCE, DAVENPORT, IOWA



Joseph Duncan Putnam (circa 1875-1880).

"Putnam united . . . the simplicity of the child, with the maturity of the man. Thus, while in ordinary business transactions he knew little and cared less for what is known as sharp-dealing . . . no one was more exact in the minutiae of accounts especially relating to scientific operations."

—C. C. Parry

"Our circle is growing very small, however, as long as any remain we must do what we can." Pratt added that the remaining members had considered "stopping the expenses, though the little work we are doing would stop, and the growth of the library, &c. yet the Society could continue its exist-

ence, & perhaps might sometime revive."

Putnam's travels in Europe reinvigorated her. As she viewed the great museums and libraries of Europe, she was pleased to find the academy's proceedings on the shelves of many. On her return home to Davenport in 1891, she began a new five-year subscription paper to fund the academy's work. In her absence the curator's salary had not been entirely met, so she immediately raised the funds to cover it and then initiated plans to produce a cumulative index for the proceedings.

In December 1892 she reluctantly began arrangements for the academy's anniversary. "I'm so sorry I undertook the Academy entertainment just now," she remarked, "but a twenty-fifth anniversary does not often occur. The weather is beastly, yet I have to go out in it for the last things." A fall from a streetcar that afternoon meant that she missed the event, but she confessed a few days later that "I love the Academy better today than when my dying boy almost breathed its name with 'Mother'

from his parting breath—it was his legacy to me. When I thought I was killed [from the fall] the other day I was glad that the Academy had a new coat of paint on it."

When her sister-in-law, Mary Putnam Bull, bequeathed \$10,000 to her "as a memorial to my brother, Charles E. Putnam, and nephew, J.

Duncan Putnam," Mary Putnam used the money to establish the Putnam Memorial Fund to carry on the publication of the proceedings. No longer would she have to raise thousands of dollars in \$3 and \$5 subscriptions, canvassing her increasingly uninterested neighbors and acquaintances for donations. Now it could survive off the endowment.

Nevertheless, as the 19th century drew to a close, the academy seemed to many to have outlasted its usefulness. It no longer held much respect as a research institution, and its scientific leadership had largely disappeared. Few of the pioneering members who had contributed to its early research survived. The Bull endowment now ensured funding for the proceedings, but few members besides Mary Putnam were enthusiastic. The proceedings no longer functioned as a vehicle for academy members to share their research findings with the larger scientific community. Once filled with articles written almost exclusively by local academy members, the newer volumes now included articles solicited from professional scientists who had no connection to the academy.

Without the resources of a large university nearby to tie it to the broader scientific community, the academy could not hope to survive—much less flourish—as a research institution. But this was

not unique to Davenport's academy. As Daniel Goldstein points out, "The dominant role of the university [in America] for both training and employing scientists by the end of the century weakened the scientists' ties to the local academies which had once been their principal professional affiliation."

Still, the Davenport academy's collections of natural history, archeological, and local history artifacts continued to expand and fill the already limited space in the academy building. Putnam, of course, had a solution in mind. As

Science Hall on December 14, 1900. That same year Putnam was again elected president.

Although the academy no longer provided original research, it had greatly expanded its role of sponsoring cultural events and educational programming for the public. More than ever before, its scientific lectures attracted a respectable number of people and also turned a small profit (even though it relied on outside lecturers and served

mainly as a sponsor). Putnam devoted most of her time to fundraising, attempting to reinvigorate a science program for children, refurbishing old exhibits, and arranging for new ones. On February 19, 1903, for example, an exhibit on Indian basketry that she had planned and managed opened to the public.

The next evening, after spending the day at the academy, Mary Putnam died quietly at her home. She was 71.

Members of the academy members draped the entrance to their building in black in honor of their president and leader. A friend remembered her as a "noble and beautiful mother" who found time "to magnetize a careless western community and inspire them to rear an institution devoted to pure science." As her daughter, Elizabeth, recalled, "What

PUTNAM MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND NATURAL SCIENCE, DAVENPORT, IOWA



Ruins of Woodlawn, June 1887.

"Nothing further could be done but watch the building swiftly succumb to the fierce flames. . . . The destruction was complete."

—Davenport Daily Gazette, June 4, 1887

early as 1893, when the Presbyterian church next door to the academy began planning to move, Putnam had set her sights on acquiring the building for the academy. After years of negotiation, she finally secured possession. The old church was connected to the original academy building by a new passageway and dedicated as



Mary Louisa Duncan Putnam (photo taken circa 1887-1891).

“At times all my interest in life seems to have died within me & this world looks so dark & unsatisfactory. I really have lost all ambition for any thing & have to rouse every energy to rise in the morning.”

—Mary Putnam to her sister-in-law, August 1887

PUTNAM MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND NATURAL SCIENCE, DAVENPORT, IOWA



PUTNAM MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND NATURAL SCIENCE, DAVENPORT, IOWA



Historical and natural history exhibits, 1900-1910.

“The people of this city should be proud of the Academy. . . . We have the old building, we have the new building and we have the museum—one of the best, according to its size, to be found in the whole country.”

—Frederick Starr, at dedication of Science Hall, December 14, 1900

people might think of her simply never occurred to her. What they thought of her children or of the Academy was another matter."

With her seven remaining children already provided for, Putnam's will left the academy practically all of her property in trust and designated that most of the income from her bequest be used in the preservation of entomological specimens and, more importantly, "for the publication and distribution of the papers and transactions of the Academy" and, in honor of Duncan, that "at least one paper in each volume published be upon some entomological subject."

Although the academy ceased publication of the proceedings only eleven years later, the generous trusts left by Putnam, and by her son William Clement Putnam, who died in 1906, placed the academy on a firmer financial base. Another son, Edward K. Putnam, car-

ried on as director of the academy from 1906 until 1938, during which time it was renamed the Davenport Public Museum. In 1974, the museum's board again renamed the institution, as the Putnam Museum, and it continues to flourish today as one of the largest regional museums in the Midwest.

In the long history of the Putnam Museum of History and Natural Science, no one has expended more effort or given the institution more love than Mary Louisa Duncan Putnam. At a time when society still valued women primarily as mothers and keepers of the home, Putnam was among those elite women who expanded her role to direct the course of moral and cultural events in the public realm. Deeply devoted to the rearing and development of her children, especially Duncan, she went outside the home to meet her responsibilities as a mother. ❖

Scott Roller is the collections manager in the museum division of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Formerly he was collections manager/registrars of the Putnam Museum of History and Natural Science.

NOTE ON SOURCES

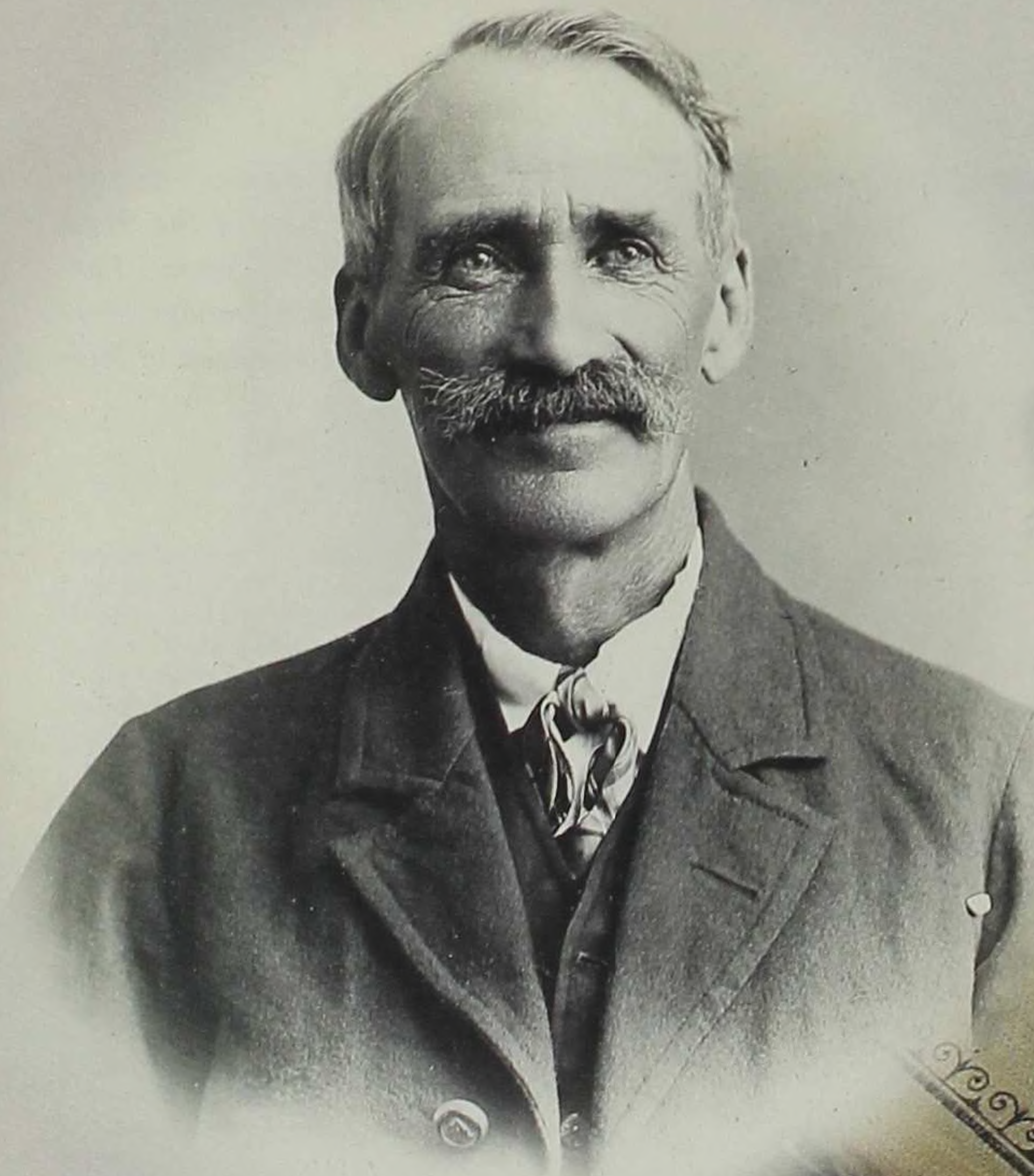
Research for this article was supported by a Sesquicentennial Grant from the State Historical Society of Iowa and the Iowa Sesquicentennial Commission. Major sources were correspondence and other material from the Mary Louisa Duncan Putnam Manuscript Collection (Putnam Museum of History and Natural Science, Davenport, Iowa), and *Proceedings of the Davenport Academy of Sciences*, especially volumes 1-3, 8, and 10. (Vol. 3 includes a memoir of Duncan Putnam; vol. 10, of Mary Putnam.) Additional sources include articles in Davenport newspapers and the *New York Star*; Julie McDonald, *The Odyssey of a Museum: A Short History of the Putnam Museum of History and Natural Science, 1867-1992* (Davenport: Putnam Museum of History and Natural Science, 1992); Daniel Goldstein, "Midwestern Naturalists: Academies of Science in the Mississippi Valley, 1850-1900" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1989); and Keith Melder, "Ladies Bountiful: Organized Women's Benevolence in Early Nineteenth-Century America," in Esther Katz and Anita Rapone, *Women's Experience in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1980), 101-23. Complete annotations to this article are held in the *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* production files (SHSI-Iowa City).



Putnam's funeral service at the Davenport Academy of Science, February 1903.

"For the last quarter of a century [Mary Louisa Putnam] has planned, canvassed, toiled and often has literally lived for this magnificent institution."

—Eulogy for Putnam



June 1863

Musket a new tube, 20 ct small gun tumblers books 50.00
by James Steadman, 14 Sun Wm Stanley & I took mares to Sch
Punahama & I hunted for Bird Cow with a calf, found one
calf but it ran away & I could not find it. 15 Mon S. King
& I hunted said calf found it & brought them home
5 doz Eggs 25. made bell collar & put bell on Slip & turned
her out. Sun & I cut out our lines & divided our salt
saw on my tail for water. 16 Tue went to Salem to Plank
at Dr. Siveter mowing grass. 17 Wed AM raking hay
PM hauling hay 18 Thu fix the hog shed & fence. 19 Fri
finish floor gate & chopped & haul I saw log to mill
I quit then pick a basket of cherries 20 Sat. came home
got my gun at Mr Childs he brought it from Mr. Dean
I went to creek. A. washing. then to spring rain a
little, made grass windes. 21 Sun home all day 22
Mon hauled 1 of my boots & plow in my corn 23 Tue plow
corn 24 Wed plow corn & went to Courtye 25 Thu plow

June & July 1863

corn 26 Fri plow corn 27 Sat went to Salem took 9 lbs
butter then home at night. 28 Sun. AM. Well here. here
nearly all day. Samuel Siveter here we had a swim
Lester... shell corn took it to mill & got it
ground. then... on C.P. flag for Saml
Roberts rec. 25 ct took it down to mill. 30 Tue. went to
took Eggs & stay & help Dr. Siveter paper
for painting... to paint. July 1... painting
Sun painting 3... wash paper... wagon
shed then home. July... alter & I hunted
& fished we shew 3... pipes... 3 think 19
day & 30 small cut fish... out of fix early
in the day at night we hunted for... catch them
1 Lossom S. Knight Bob Louie John Watson S. 5 Sun shovell
had a swim then home all day & sleep 6 Mon to Dan
I Buzgare borrow a cow horn & dug in spring it dry

DIARIES PHOTOGRAPHED BY THOMAS H. KENT

William Savage


Pioneer Iowa Bird Artist

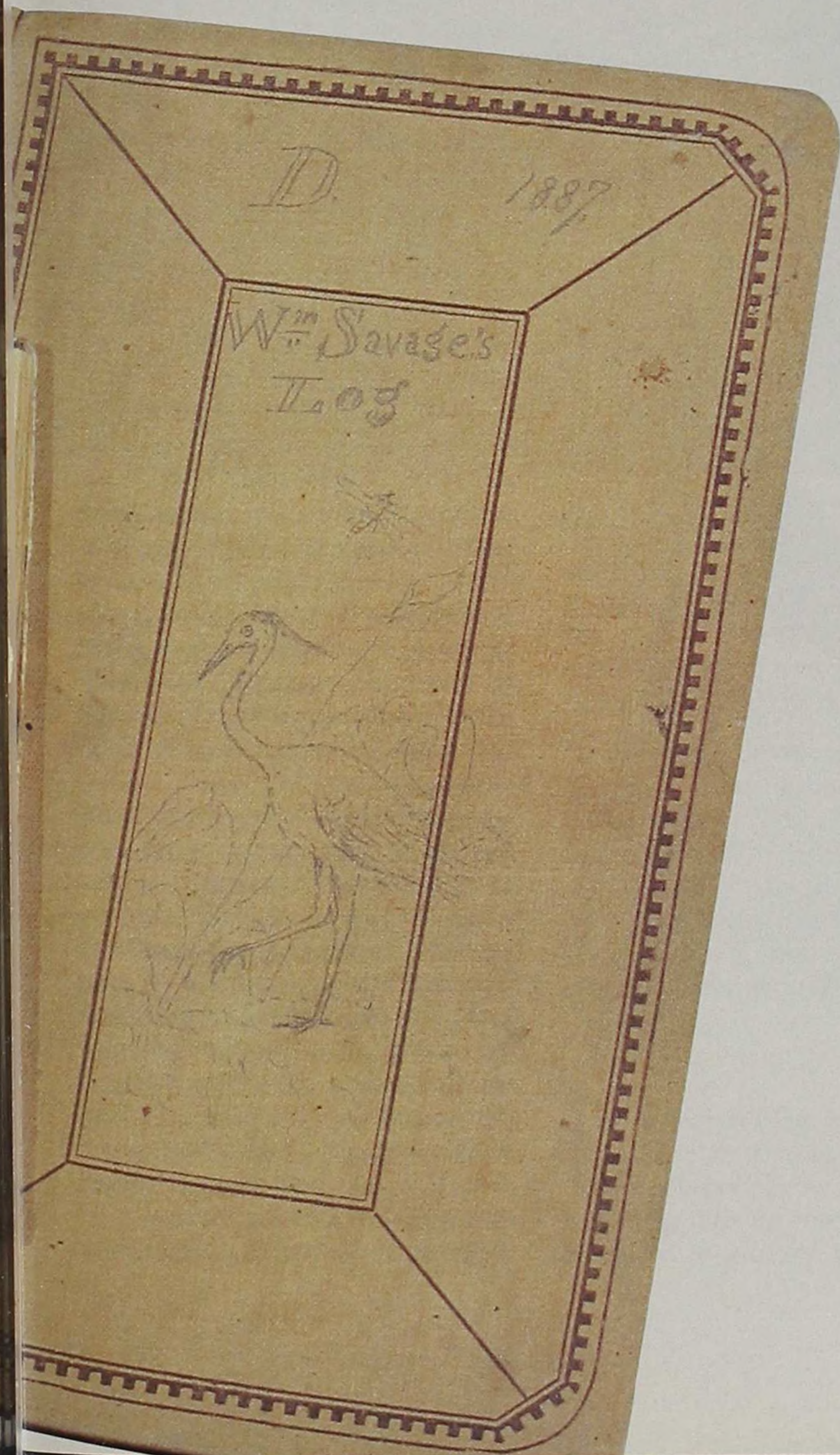


by Thomas H. Kent

William Savage, of rural Van Buren County, drew and painted birds from the time of his arrival in Iowa in 1855 until his death in 1908, making him perhaps the first resident of Iowa who both recorded and portrayed the birds he saw. He created this extensive and colorful record without training in art or ornithology, and often in spare moments on rainy days and Sundays.

The 19th century was a period of tremendous growth and development in the study of birds in America. Modern ornithology dawned in 1758 with the publication of Carl Linnaeus's tenth edition of *Systema Naturae*, which provided the first official list of birds using genus and species names. By the 1830s, Americans had access to voluminous illustrated publications on birds by naturalists Alexander Wilson, Thomas Nuttall, and John James Audubon. By mid-century, most of the world's species had been collected and described, and Spencer Fullerton Baird, as Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, along with his colleagues and trainees, began making the description and classification of birds a science, such that general agreement on the nam-

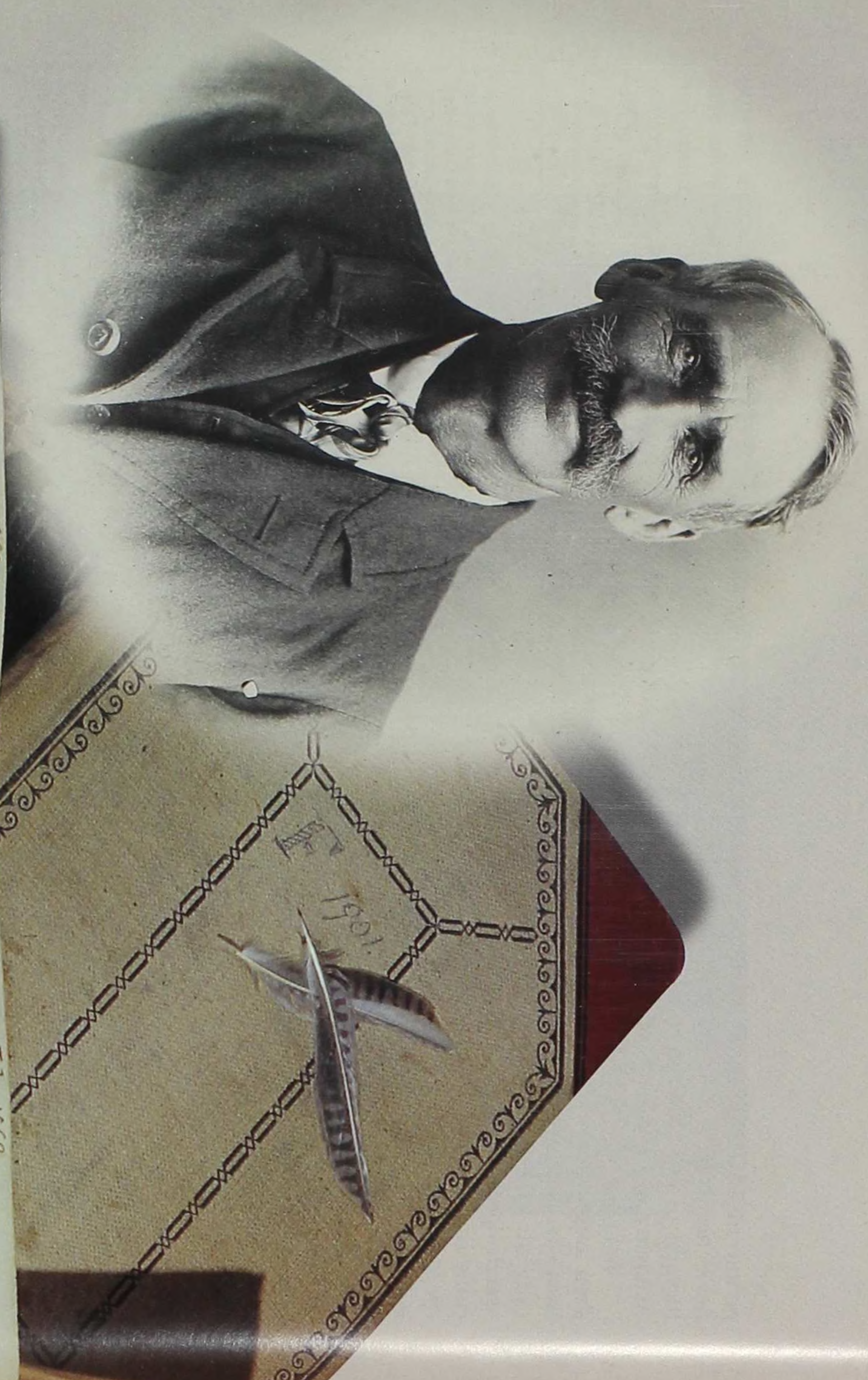
 **Yellow-breasted Chat**
William Savage's representation (above) of this rare, elusive, and colorful songbird of southeast Iowa is a bit elongated, but otherwise beautiful. Left: His diaries reveal a man who found time during his life as a farmer, tailor, trapper, and hunter to draw and paint hundreds of birds. Top left: Savage, about 1892.



William Savage

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DIARIES PHOTOGRAPHED BY THOMAS H. KENT



↑ **Great Horned Owl**
Savage painted his birds life-size, so the Great Horned Owl required two pieces of paper. This painting shows exquisite feather detail, as do many of the owls, sparrows, hawks, and woodpeckers that he painted. Diary entries in both spring 1872 and winter 1881/82 refer to “large Horned Owl” or “Great Owl.”

ing of birds was reached in 1886. By the late 19th century, ornithological associations, bird protection laws, and birding activities were gathering momentum across the nation. Meanwhile, for half a century on the same corner of Iowa farmland, William Savage observed and painted most of the birds that occurred there.

About the time that Audubon was publishing his paintings, William Savage was born at Greens Norton, Northhamptonshire, England, on September 2, 1832. His father died when he was 18 months old, and he lived with his grandmother. When he was 7, his uncle (also named William Savage) became his guardian and eventually taught him the trade of tailoring. At age 14 he immigrated with his uncle to Cayuga County, New York, in 1846. There he completed his basic schooling, worked as a farm hand, and tailored.

Although he was not formally trained in art as a youth, he later recorded that he had “rec’d some encouragement from a gentleman named Lancelot Turk in N.Y. drawing birds off . . . life size. he saw my work and advised me to get some drafting tools & take the correct measurements of my subjects. That was about 1850. that was when I first began to be exact in measurement of Birds.”

Apparently Savage was picturing more than birds; in January 1854, he drew a figure of a model grass and grain harvester for a farmer he worked for, and was paid \$1.50—equal to his wages for a day and a half of haying or threshing, and a bit more than what he earned sewing a vest and a pair of pants. Although drawing and painting would be his lifelong passion, it would never be an important source of income for him.

In 1853, he married Anna Sav-



age, who was nine years his senior and an adopted daughter of his great uncle Samuel Savage (also a tailor). Their first son, Walter Giles Savage, was born in July 1854. The family of three left New York in October 1855, arriving in the Quaker community of Salem in Henry County, Iowa, where his Uncle William had moved earlier that year. Immediately upon his arrival in Iowa, Savage began to portray the birds he saw. "October 1855 had been in Iowa about 3 days," he later wrote, "saw a Chewink, shot it & at first opportunity took bird and tools to an empty log cabin near by my Uncle William's dwelling & pictured the Chewink." (Today, the Chewink is named Eastern Towhee.)

Savage easily found work that winter as a tailor. He also bought

↑ **Henslow's Sparrow**

Savage called this a Baird's Bunting. Although Henslow's and Baird's Sparrows are quite similar in appearance, Baird's is not known to occur in Iowa. In Savage's painting, the subtle differences in markings of the feathers over the ear, the shape of the head, and the coloration fit Henslow's rather than Baird's Sparrow. Henslow's Sparrow became scarce as Iowa's prairies were plowed, but the species is now making a comeback.

80 acres of undeveloped land from Thomas Siveter, a pioneer surgeon and a Quaker. The new farm was located north of Hillsboro on Cedar Creek in Van Buren County, just across the line from Henry County. Here, the Savages' five other children would be born.

From March 1856, when William built a first house on the 80 acres where he was to live the rest of his life, he entered his daily activities in a diary, thus creating

another kind of record of his life besides his pictures of birds—a record that reveals a great variety of activities and a close involvement with his rural community. The diary entries are short phrases of one to a few lines that describe daily tasks including farming the land, raising livestock, painting houses, and sharing work and visits with neighbors and relatives. Although sparingly written, the diary shows Savage constantly busy, clearing brush, chasing cattle, stacking oats, rendering skunk oil, and laboring at dozens of other



↑ Pileated Woodpecker
 In his diary, Savage called this a **Great Crested Wood Cock, or Indian hen.** The Pileated Woodpecker is about the size of a crow and makes a loud call and noisy drumming. It is rare for northeastern Van Buren County, even today.

From the diary

Savage's daily diary entries over five decades reveal a man working through changing seasons, trading jobs with neighbors, and always observing the natural world around him. Here is one of the longest entries, about an event that obviously impressed him.

7 [August 1869]. Sat. to Salem to Monthly Meeting then P.M. saw a TOTAL Eclipse of the sun the grandest sight I ever saw as the shadow drew over the face of the sun. The shadow of the trees appeared curdelling and a strange darkness of a Yellow hue (it appeared to me to last for 10 minutes. The birds & chickens ran about in confusion and actually went to roost) came over the face of Nature & the air became very cool. and a murkey looking cloud hung in the N.W. soon the shade began to pass off & the Roosters began to crow (in some of the stores in Salem lamps were lighted) but soon the sunshine & warmth beamed upon us as lovely as ever.

chores associated with rural 19th-century life.

Although he did not discuss religion in the diary, he was active in church-related meetings and volunteered to help the sick and elderly. He helped build a school, which was located on the edge of his property, and he was a director until someone pointed out that he was not qualified because he was not a citizen. In fact, he did not become a citizen until 1888—earlier attempts having been aborted by lack of proper papers. He attended occasional political meetings and trials. He wrote letters for neighbors and corresponded with relatives.

His diary is also a record of money earned and paid for goods and services. He continued his trade of tailoring for his family, for Thomas Siveter (perhaps in payment on the farm mortgage), and for others. He hunted, trapped, and fished, alone and with relatives and friends, for both pleasure and food. He also earned money by selling game, furs, eggs, and feathers.

In his diary, the first, brief mention of his lifelong passion appears on July 30, 1856: "Rain, paint a bird." From 1856 to 1871 he mentions painting only about two birds per year, including an elegant Pileated Woodpecker (which he called Great Crested Wood Cock or Indian hen), a bird still rarely sighted today. Certainly as he went about his day's work, he took notice of birds, especially the spring arrivals. "Saw first wild geese," he wrote on February 18, 1859. "Went to Salem with Dr.'s vest. Heard blue birds. Stayed all night."

William made his pictures from actual specimens that he trapped or shot or that were given to him. As his friend Edgar Rubey Harlan later explained: "His method of drawing was to place the dead



bird on his table, lay its body in as nearly as possible the shape it would assume in life, and in combining his remarkable visual memory with the object before him, create the 'figure' as he called it, which he outlined in pencil on the paper. He then drew the outline of each feather, line and mass."

Next, Savage "measured each dimension by an ordinary carpenter's rule or other scale, or by the point of his pencil, indicating by his right thumbnail the extreme dimensions on the object, then transferring the same to paper." By this process, which Savage called "drawing off," he captured the edges of each feather, which makes the depictions so detailed and accurate.

Finally he added color, using ordinary school watercolor paints and, as Harlan described, "he moistened the brush with his tongue, but more usually in a cup

↑ Red-bellied Woodpecker
This pair of woodpeckers is well proportioned and nicely colored. The large fly is inappropriate as a food source for this species.

of water at his elbow, then rubbed the paint lozenge he believed to be the color of the object, after testing the color on waste paper, then compared it with the object." Early on he made brushes from the fur of animals he trapped; later he bought camel-hair brushes.

The steps were often interspersed among his daily work and stretched over several days, as this series of diary entries from 1860 illustrates:

July. 4. Wed. Rufus Wells & I celebrated this day hunting & swimming. I shot an Orchard Oriole, a C Partridge & redheaded woodpecker.

5 Thu. work on rail fence. E. &

From the diary

9 [February 1872] Fri Elliott Syphers here. I cut out an over coat for him then W. & I hunt I shot a Golden Winged Woodpecker.

10 Sat. to Salem to Q. meeting. Then to Ed. Simkins. stay all night.

11 Sun. to Salem to meeting. & then home in eve. to prayer meeting. at stone school house.

12 Mon portraying a hawk Walter shot. (not finished) in eve Anna & I went to Berrys.

13 Tue very cold & high wind. cap 1 of John W. Shelmans boots 20 cts. knit some. & chore some.

14 Wed painting said hawk with a chickadee in his tallons.

15 Thu. sew some on my coat & hunt some. 3 f s. & 1 red eyed woodpecker. Then to West Grove meeting. at night Ason [?] & Anna K. Simons preached. Then home.

16 Fri we open the potatoe hole. & took out 6 Boilerfulls. paid the Litton Thrashers \$3.50 then sew on E. Sypher's coat. & cut the trimmings out. shot 1. Rab

17 Sat. help Virg. Knowles set up a new stove in school house. cost \$14.00. then E. Syphers & O. Bailey look at my pictures & I sew on E.s coat.

18 Sun home & write in Book. & to pray meet. in eve.

19 Mon Wild Ducks fly over. Walter & I to John H. Watsons camp. & chop wood. I have rented said camp.

20 Tue to said camp & began a shantee.

21 Wed to Salem to Meet. trade some & to U Wm stay all night.

22 Thu to Ed Simkins' & trade David Colt to him for his old wagon. providing he is as good as I represent. then I walk home. BLUE BIRDS. appear.



↑ **Broad-winged Hawk (with snake) and Sharp-shinned Hawk**

Savage called the hawk on the left a "Gray Star Buzzard," which was a name for Gray Hawk. It was once accepted to the state list based on this painting, but later determined to be an immature Broad-winged Hawk.

→ **Yellow-headed Blackbird, House Sparrow, Least Flycatcher**

Savage represented these three birds well, although he called them Yellow headed Troopial, Old World Sparrow, and Small fly catcher. Whether all three were painted at the same time is unclear.

The House (or English) Sparrow was introduced from Europe in the 1800s for insect control, but rapidly spread across the country and became a pest. By 1869 the species had reached Iowa. Savage wrote in his diary on March 10, 1882: "to Salem and to Sanford Lewis' borrowed his gun & ammunition & I shot an English Sparrow. The first in U.S," meaning the first that Savage had seen.

Anna & I went on N. side creek goose-berrying.

6 Fri. Drew O. Oriole & work on said fence. & cutting out the brush.

7 Sat. on said fence & cut a pair of pants for Mack Davis.

8 Sun painted said Oriole & went on N. side creek.

Savage's paintings vary in quality. Some seem thick and muddy whereas others have exquisite feather detail and subtle coloring. The higher quality is not limited to his later paintings, and overall, many provide excellent portrayals of the birds. His images of birds are accurate, but he was isolated as an artist and lacked sufficient training to portray three dimensions, especially when compared to Louis Agassiz Fuertes (1874-1927). Yet

compared with the work of America's pioneer bird artists Alexander Wilson and John James Audubon, the details and poses of William Savage's watercolors are in some instances equal or better. With few exceptions the species of birds represented are easily identifiable from the paintings, although some of the names attached are inaccurate or misleading.

Most of the Iowa birds that Savage painted were of species common to southeast Iowa, where he lived. He painted a greater variety of Iowa warblers, sparrows, and other woodland birds, than of Iowa waterfowl, shorebirds, and gulls, probably because there were few lakes and marshes where he lived. Among the rarer species depicted were Bohemian Waxwing, Worm-eating Warbler, and what he called Sharp-tailed Finch and Painted Lark Bunting (today these are known as Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow and Smith's Longspur, respectively).

Not every mention of birds in Savage's diary refers to representations on paper. In fact, most of the birds mentioned in the first 25 years of the diary are game birds that he hunted, including quail, ducks, and geese, as well as common partridge (Ruffed Grouse), prairie chicken (Greater Prairie-Chicken), Wild Turkey, and Passenger Pigeon. His last mention of Passenger Pigeons was on February 10, 1882: "saw Wild Pigeons & Wild Ducks fly over." Unfortunately, there is a gap in the diary from June 1883 to January 1887, a time when Ruffed Grouse and Greater Prairie-Chicken were disappearing from southeast Iowa, and Wild Turkey and Passenger Pigeon from the entire state.

Savage hunted animals as well as birds. But by the time of his arrival in Iowa in the 1850s, large mammals were already scarce. Only occasionally did settlers still sight bear and wolf, and form hunting parties to exterminate them. Savage shot a deer on November 23, 1857, but none were mentioned after that. Judging from their frequent mention in the diary, squirrels were his favorite target.

Savage did not dwell in his diary on the disappearance of wildlife. As a provider for his family, he trapped and hunted game for food and for the fur and feathers he sold. Hunting was an integral part of early pioneer life in Iowa, and Savage's habits did not change, even when game was no longer needed for the table and even as bird protection came into vogue in the later part of the 19th century.

Like other students of birds, Savage trapped and killed birds, and sometimes skinned and stuffed them. Collecting bird specimens and eggs was done with zeal and dedication by amateur and professional ornithologists alike,



and the collections held by museums and other institutions formed the basis for study and description.

As William Savage grew older, his passion for painting birds intensified, and as his growing sons provided more help on the farm, his spare time for painting increased. He probably painted most of the birds in the last 20 years of his life. Occasionally he sold paintings to visitors or gave them to friends and relatives as gifts. One such painting is of a rabbit with this accompanying note: "For Willie R When this you see, remember me, And when you see a rabbit, Be sure to grab it. Your friend, William Savage, Hickory Grove, Dec 31, 1889." Yet he was protective of his paintings, as noted by his second cousin David L. Savage, who took a friend to see them on June 14, 1893. William was not home that day and his

door was unlocked, David later noted in his own diary, but unfortunately they could not view the paintings that day "as they were in his office under lock and key."

Savage achieved considerable notoriety from his paintings, especially in his later years. In his diary, he records 76 occasions in which a total of 209 people visited his home to view them. (These visits were first noted in 1870, but were most common after 1894.) Beginning in 1873, he also exhibited his paintings on 19 occasions, mostly at local fairs, where he often won first premium. "Anna & the girls & I went to Cedar Township FAIR," he noted on September 23, 1882. "I got first premium on my pictures had a very pleasant time there." In 1907, he sent 153 paintings to be exhibited at the Iowa State Fair.

In 1894, an anonymous correspondent writing for the "Iowa News-Letter" visited Savage and described his knowledge of birds in glowing terms. "Go with him into

the woods," the reporter wrote, "and from a far-away note of some shy warbler, he will tell you size, color, time of coming and going, place of nesting, color of eggs, in fact a single bird note is sufficient in his well trained ear to raise the whole life of its possessor. . . . He will give you more of natural history in a half day's jaunt than you can get from books in a week."

Occasionally, speeches and presentations also revealed his bird-watching skills. For a speech to be given at the Congregational Church in Salem, on November 12, 1897, he had filled four small sheets with his advice. "The most successful way to learn the habits of & watch the very interesting process of nest-building & finally the feeding of the young is a persistent watching, also paying close attention to their songs of pleasure, their notes of alarm, & also their notes of warning. for I am fully convinced that the birds have a language whereby they per-



COPY PHOTO BY CHUCK GREINER

← Greater Prairie-Chicken
This is a fine rendition of a female prairie chicken, a species that decreased rapidly in the late 19th century, but nested in Iowa in small numbers into the 1950s. Its decline can be attributed to hunting and reduced grasslands. It has now been re-introduced. (This painting can be seen in the State Historical Society's museum exhibit *The Delicate Balance*.)



From the diary

Mar 1 [1881] Tue. shot an Oregon snow-bird. They associate with the common snowbirds. & about the same size. but are differently marked. P.M. portray said bird.

2 Wed. went to Wilsonville store took 3 ⁹/₁₆ lb butter & trade it all out. Then home & Seth & I chop wood. & drag it up with Nip trap 2 birds

3 Thu. Mend Mats shoe. very stormy I went to Vega P.O. & to Wood Haleys & from there to David Colletts. to pray meeting. stay there all night.

4 Fri storming yet. we had Joes team & sled. & haul 2 load wood 1 of hay & 1 of fodder. & Sam went to mill & got our grist.

5 Sat. paint some in Ellens Album. & wrote

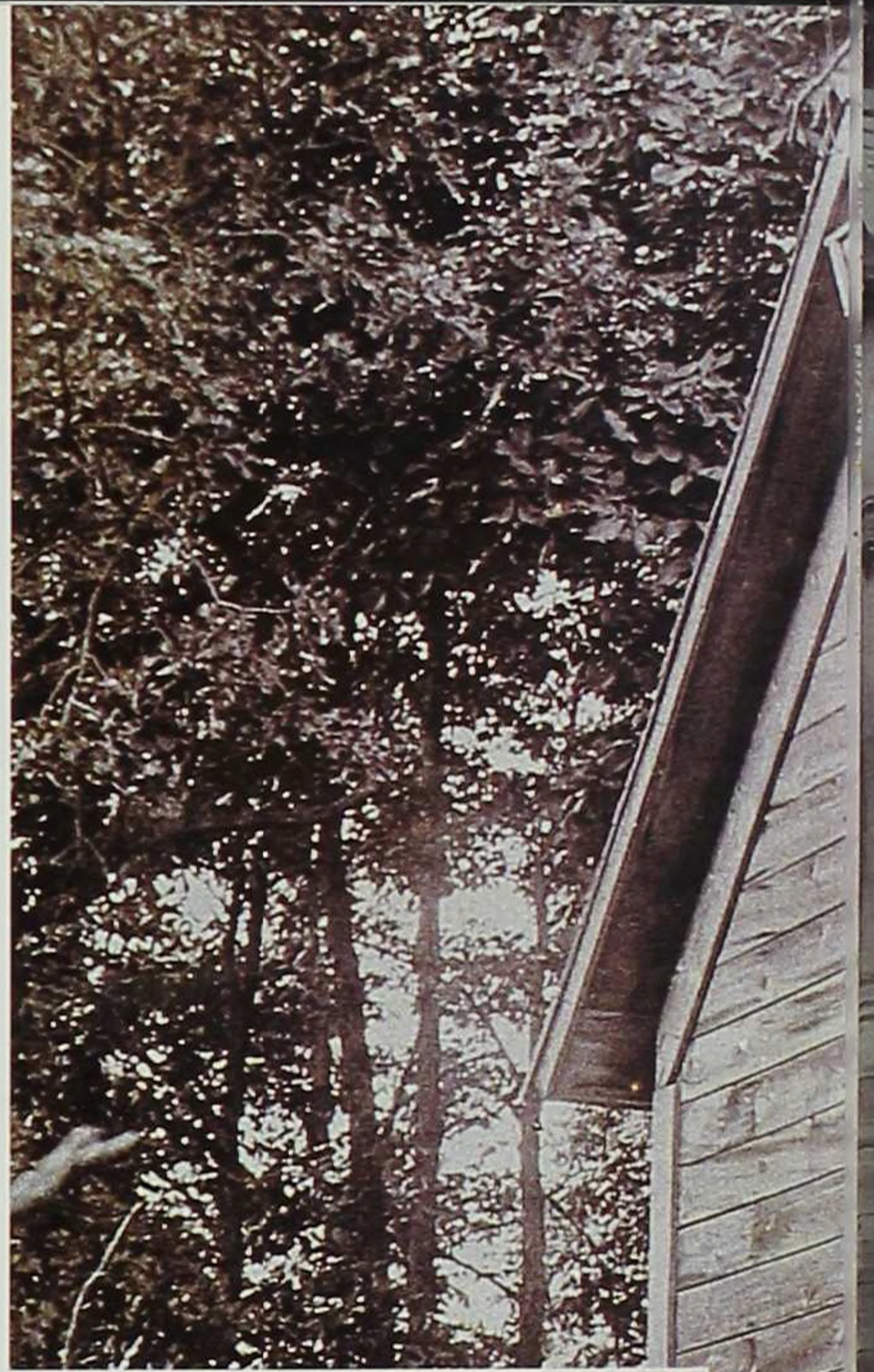
a piece of a letter to Walter. hunt rab. & trap 1 rab. & hunt for a small woodpecker.

6 Sun to West Grove Meeting & to John Cooks & then rode to the fingerboard [road sign] with Theodore Spray & then home (a very warm thawing day & the snow has melted very fast. Trap 1 rab.

7 Mon went to Salem with Joe. Runyon. bot some tincture of Arnica to put on Lucys foot. trade some in Salem & home. & stop at our school Meeting. Virg Knowles Elected subdirector. snow 5 in deep. trap 4 birds

8 Tue. hunt for Downey Woodpecker. shot 1 & began to portray it under a Hawk. thawing today.

↑ **Passenger Pigeon**
Savage labeled this painting "Wild Pigeon." Passenger Pigeons, once the most abundant bird in North America, migrated in large flocks and were killed by the barrelful. They rapidly declined in the late 1800s. According to his diary, Savage shot many Passenger Pigeons. The first is noted in 1860; the last on February 10, 1882.





OFFICE EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR, SHSI (DES MOINES); ORIGINALS COURTESY OF LEWIS D. SAVAGE

↑ Savage with his gun outside his “office,” where he painted and stored specimens. Note the birdhouse under the roof gable, and the painting of squirrels tacked to the right of the door (the same painting that appears here).

↖ Although Savage hunted and painted more squirrels than any other mammals, there are relatively few diary entries about painting them. This grouping of three may have been done in the fall and winter of 1896, when eight entries refer to portraying squirrels.

↖ Inside his office, with a box of specimens propped against the wall and a desk covered with papers and books.



➔ Savage with his gun outside his "office," where he painted and stored specimens. Note the birdhouse under the roof gable, and the painting of squirrels tacked to the right of the door (the same painting that appears here).

➔ Although Savage hunted and painted more squirrels than any other mammals, there are relatively few diary entries about painting them. This grouping of three may have been done in the fall and winter of 1896, when eight entries refer to portraying squirrels.

➔ Inside his office, with a box of specimens propped against the wall and a desk covered with papers and books.

OFFICE EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR: SHIRI (DEB) MONESI; ORIGINALS COURTESY OF LEWIS D. SAVAGE



← **Worm-eating Warbler**

Rare and secretive, the Worm-eating Warbler makes a buzzing sound and lives in the deep woods. An account of this difficult-to-find songbird was published in *The Oologist* by David L. Savage, William's second cousin.

↓ **Smith's Longspur**

On March 19, 1893, Savage wrote in his diary: "I skin a Painted Lark Bunting I shot in wheat stubble yesterday eve." Savage correctly identified this rare songbird as a Painted Lark Bunting, according to earlier bird books. Birds of this species migrate through Iowa in March and April on their way to the Arctic, and are often seen in stubble or grassy fields. Few historical records of this bird are known, perhaps because they are so difficult to see—they hide in the grass and fly up quickly.



fectly understand each others expressions."

Of William and Anna Savage's six children, only the eldest, Walter, apparently showed an interest in painting and documenting birds. But in David Lewis Savage, a second cousin, William found a kindred spirit. Born in 1877 to William's cousin John, David developed a keen interest in ornithology and drew inspiration from William. David lived about five miles east of "Cousin William" (as he was known), separated by Cedar Creek. In late March 1897, William wrote in his diary:

27 Fri. to trap catch 1 skunk. & met John & David Savage at Coltrane Bridge then visit & look at the birds all day. John went home in eve. David stay all night.

28 Sat. to trap. then I mend 2 pair shoes for Millard Watson. chd. 40. Davids horse broke loose & went home. then I went part way home with David shot a Meadow Lark. & showed D. how to skin it. . . .

David's account in his diary for the same two days shows he had found a mentor in his 58-year-old cousin, William. David wrote:

Mch. 27th. Friday. Father and I went to Cousin Wm.'s to see his paintings, I had not seen them since I could remember. They are fine. I do not expect any other man in Iowa has paintings near as fine as Cousin Wm.

Mch. 28th. Saturday. Still at C.W. he showed me how to skin a bird, he shot and skinned a meadow lark, this is the first time I ever saw any one skin a bird. . . . He gave me the following directions for a preser-

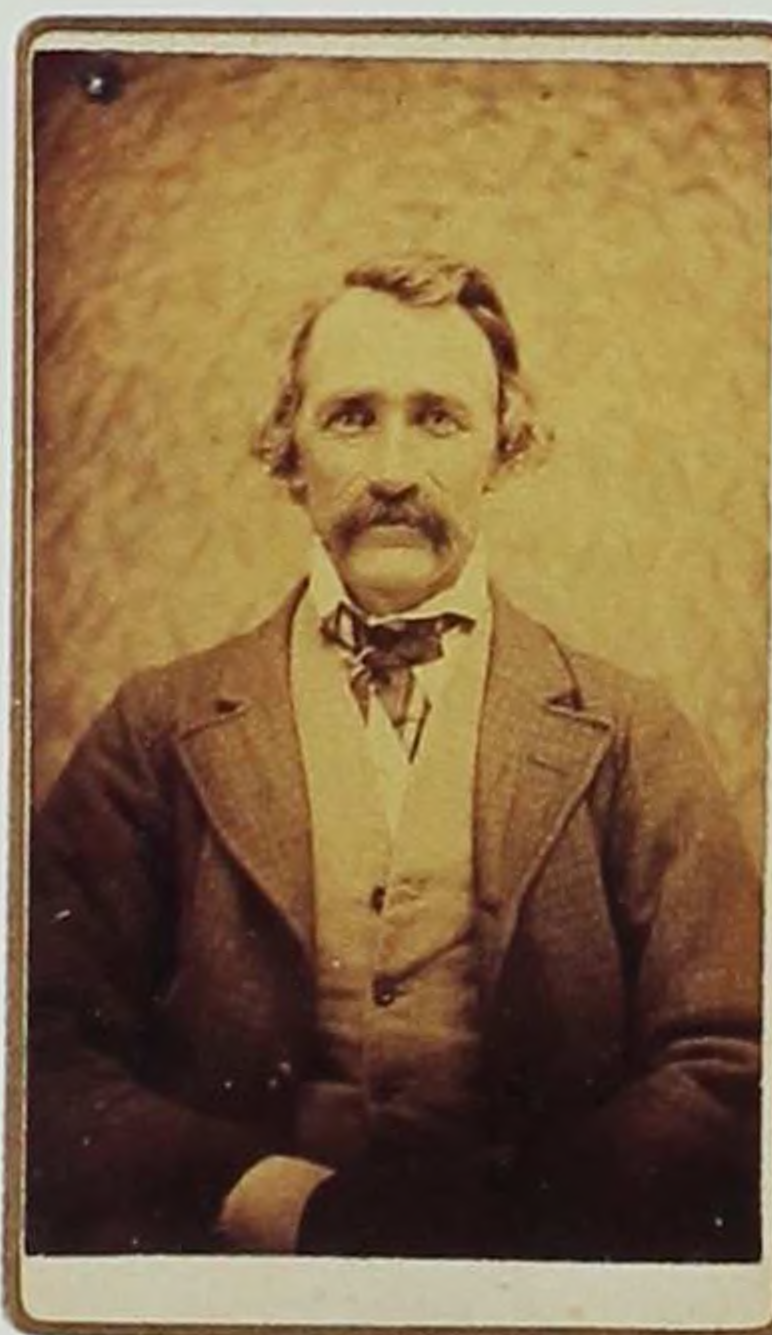
vative; 1 oz. Corrosive Sublimate. 1 oz Alcohol. ¼ oz. Camphor. Today we might say I first received the determination to become a bird student, it was here that I first felt the desire to learn of the feathered friends.

Already, the quality of the younger Savage's education and his attention to detail were quite evident at the age of 14. Three years later in 1894, at age 17, David would become the editor of Iowa's first bird journal, *The Iowa Ornithologist*, and secretary of the first birding organization in the state, the Iowa Ornithological Association.

David and William continued to share their interest. The second issue of *The Iowa Ornithologist* contained William Savage's only publication, a well-written one-page description titled "The American Woodcock," which was much more expansive than any of the material in his diary and likely exhibits a touch of David's editorial talent.

In August 1895, at the first meeting of the Iowa Ornithological Association in Iowa City, David exhibited William's painting of a Ruffed Grouse, which had been specifically made for that occasion. In 1896, they both described in their diaries a long trip by horse and buggy to exhibit the paintings at the second annual meeting of the association in Mount Vernon, which was attended by nine members besides the Savages. William also made pen and ink drawings for David's series of articles on birds in the 1897 *Midland Monthly Illustrated*.

Despite his involvement through David with the Iowa Ornithological Association, William Savage was mostly standing still as the world of ornithology developed around him. He indicated that he had seen the elegant scientific works by Spencer Fullerton Baird



SHSI (DES MOINES)

Savage, in 1881.

From the diary

12 Mon. [October 1891] dig some potatoes P.M. to Vega. P.O. & at night Evi Sharpless gave a lecture on the discovery. & the history of Jamaica at Hickory Grove.

13 Tue. dig some potatoes. (rain'd) went to trap.

14 Wed. to trap catch 1 Musk rat, then dig potatoes

15 Thu. finish digging potatoes. P.M. to creek & set said 3 trap for M. rat.

16 Fri. caught 1. rat mend Wm Runyons shoes. pd 5¢ mend 1 shoe for Mary Watson ch 5¢ then began to mend my shoe. (skin & board, rat.

17 Sat. finish Mending my shoe. then to Thos Siveters timber & pick up some Walnuts. & caught 10 sunfish.

18 Sun. to West Grove Meeting. to Ables & then to Hickory Grove. S.S.

19 Mon. to trap & to John Coltranes to look at Nannie Frazier's painting on velvet. then from there to our school house. then home & then back to school house Nannie having some painting there. P.M. began to paint a rose on velvet for Mary Watson. on a stand scarf.

20 Tue. A M. paint. Golden rod on the other end of scarf. P.M. finish mending my shoe mend my pants. skin a king fisher No. 2. I found on creek dying.

21 Wed Billey Stanley here with his team & we haul manure out of cowyard & S. end of west field.

in 1881, Elliott Coues in 1887, and Robert Ridgway in 1906, yet the names of birds that he applied to his paintings do not indicate that he made much use of these nationally recognized authorities. His names were often incorrect, obscure, or based on outdated sources. In his early years, for instance, his naming of birds appears to follow Alexander Wilson's work (published between 1808 and 1814), although Savage never showed any awareness of Wilson or his contemporaries Audubon and Nuttall. In fact, Savage never even mentioned using so basic a bird-watching tool as a binocular, or "field glass," as it was called in that day.

Cousin David, however, re-

corded in his diary that he received Wilson's *American Ornithology* (costing \$5.00) and a field glass (\$2.50) on May 1, 1891, by mail order from Chicago. David Savage, in a very short time, developed birding skills that would be admired today: daily lists, recording details of specimens, descriptions of birds' habits and nests, and correct names for birds based on *The American Ornithologists' Union Checklist of North American Birds*, first published in 1886 and revised in 1895. David, along with William's son Walter, also contributed much data to Iowa's first major book on birds, Rudolph M. Anderson's *The Birds of Iowa* (1907). David was just one of several young Iowa bird

students who must have been stimulated by the number of publications and additional leisure time compared to that available to previous generations. In fact, a number of his contemporaries left Iowa and became major contributors to the developing natural sciences. David pursued a successful career as a farmer and later developed a large library of nature books and became a student of botany.

In contrast, the knowledge of Iowa birds that William Savage must have acquired went mostly unrecorded, except for that revealed in his paintings. Fortu-





SHSI (DES MOINES)

↑ Charles Aldrich (in hat) visited William Savage on his farm in July 1903. They shared an interest in ornithology, and Aldrich, as head of the state's historical department, quickly realized the importance of Savage's paintings. (Note the birdhouse on the pole behind the men.)

← Orchard Oriole
This colorful songbird was labeled as "young" by Savage, and indeed, it is an immature male. On May 20, 1860, he wrote in his diary: "I portrayed a black-throated orchard oriole."

nately, 245 of his paintings have been preserved by the State Historical Society of Iowa for decades.

Perhaps the thought of the sale of the pictures to the State of Iowa was seeded on July 15, 1903. That day, Savage jotted in his diary: "Mr. Ed Harlan of Keosauqua & Mr. Aldrich from Des Moines here to look at Bird pictures."

Edgar Rubey Harlan was a native of nearby Keosauqua and practiced law there from 1896 to 1907 before joining Iowa's Historical Department. His records show that "in the summer of 1903 Charles Aldrich, Founder of the Histori-

cal Department of Iowa, in a tour of Van Buren County with this writer, met and formed an intimate acquaintance with William Savage, of Cedar Township, that county."

Aldrich, himself a lover of birds and a charter member of the American Ornithologists' Union, recognized the importance of the paintings. Interviewed by the *Des Moines Register and Leader*, he described the meeting at the house of "William Savage, a farmer, who makes a specialty of painting birds in water colors." Aldrich said, "He has a remarkable collection of 300 to 400 Iowa birds that seem to me

→ Long-eared Owl

This winter owl is captured in exceptional detail. Savage penciled in each of the features and then painted them with his watercolors.



to be as good as those of John James Audubon. Savage is 60 years old, and knows as much of woodcraft as Thoreau or John Burroughs. His collection is one that the state certainly ought to own."

Negotiations got under way. On May 6, 1905, Savage wrote in his diary: "Ed R. Harlan here & we talk & write some about disposing of my pictures, curios & relics." The variety of birds pictured was extensive. By this time, he had painted all the birds he had seen except for Wild Turkey, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Double-crested Cormorant, Bald Eagle, Osprey, and Vulture (he would later paint a Vulture).

When Charles Aldrich died on March 8, 1908, Edgar Harlan succeeded him as head of the Historical Department. Negotiations for the sale of the paintings must have been continuing, as Professor J. H. Paarmann from the Davenport Academy of Sciences was enlisted to evaluate them in late May. Paarmann "thought they were very good," Savage noted.

According to the department's notes, Paarmann had also indicated that "said birds are accurately done. Most sitting on Iowa plants. Landscape backgrounds are poor. Some unrelated birds in groupings. True color—done from freshly killed birds." Aware that museum specimens often lost their color, Paarmann advised that "pictures should be protected from fading," and he "recommended purchase by state of Iowa."

William Savage started June 1, 1908, a Monday, this way: "painting some & read." He painted more on the next few days, a picture of a Wood duck, snipe, and Red-headed Woodpecker, and throughout that month he pursued conversations about selling his paintings to the state, as well as selling a few

individual paintings to acquaintances. On the 11th he recorded: "I wrote a P. card to E. R. Harlan Des Moines Iowa" and the next day, he mowed and "shot 2 old Jay Birds they were troubling the Baltimore Orioles that have a nest S. of house." As the month went on he felt ill ("very dumpish," he called it), but recovered enough to visit neighbors and, as he wrote on the 24th, to "mow some & read & hunt for rab." Three weeks later, on July 8, Savage died, at age 75.

The paintings, acquired by his son John, were finally sold in 1917 to the Iowa Historical Department (now the State Historical Society of Iowa) for \$400. Many were exhibited for more than a decade, and a few are now displayed in a current State Historical Society museum exhibit, *The Delicate Balance: Human Values and Iowa's Natural Resources*. Their appearance on these pages in color marks the first time they have been published.

In the October 1908 *Annals of Iowa*, Edgar Harlan eulogized William Savage in simple, respectful terms. "He followed his trade [of tailoring] until that vanished as a country custom," Harlan wrote. "He farmed and painted houses and trapped for furs. He kept a diary of domestic and neighborhood affairs and especially of natural history phenomena. His passion for recording his observations was most peculiarly evidenced in the record he made in water-color of every bird, save two, he observed in Iowa, and many he received from elsewhere. . . . He did his work without desire for and he never received the attention of scientists. He was modest, honest, sober and always lived close to nature. His records may or

From the diary

9 Sat. [May 1908] trim big peas tree

10 Sun walk to Millard Nichol's & visit with them all day. home in eve.

11 Mon. stick the peas in garden. & read

12 Tue. went down to John A.s rain in eve hunt some shot 1 rab. stay at johns all night rain all night. I found I left my keys at home in door.

13 Wed. rain some I came home. found keys all right dreadful hot (about done me up.

14 Thu. read and rest feel fairly well shot 1 rab.

15 Fri. read and rest

16 Sat. shot 1 F. s. and fix garden fence some.

17 Sun. home all day folks went to Willie Standleys Ralph Harter here left an order for me to paint for him Wood Duck Snipe & red headed Woodpecker.

18 Mon. began to clean up my E. shop,

19 Tue. working in shop.

20 Wed. work in shop & began to sketch on wood duck.

21 Thu. draw some on duck.

22 Fri. on said duck.

23 Sat. sleep & read.

24 Sun. sleep & read.

25 Mon. wrote letter E.R. Harlan & 1 to our Sam in Kansas & put them in M. box rain.

26 Tue. tinker in shop

27 Wed. put breast pocket in my black vest & sew the buttons on it & my black coat

may not be of service to the world."

Perhaps uncertain of the scientific importance of Savage's records, Harlan did recognize the value of the man's life. Harlan's obituary of Savage was among 18 "Notable Deaths" in that issue of the *Annals of Iowa*. The other 17 obituaries honored politicians, attorneys, bankers, business leaders, and prominent landowners.

Savage's life bridged great change in the American public's use and appreciation of birds. When he had first arrived in Iowa, his daily chores and jaunts took him into the forests and fields where birds abounded. He hunted and trapped them for food and income, and over the years he drew and painted them as avidly as other or-

nithologists collected specimens and eggs. As the years passed, the nationwide movement to protect birds developed, including bird protection laws, Christmas Bird Counts as a replacement for Christmas bird hunting, public sentiment against using feathers in women's hats, and professional calls to end the collection of birds and their eggs. In Iowa, David L. Savage covered the subject nicely in his article "Bird Protection" in *The Iowa Ornithologist* in 1898, and Congressman John Lacey from Oskaloosa, was instrumental in passing the first federal game law—the "Lacey Act"—which made interstate transportation of wild game taken illegally a federal offense and marked the end of mar-

ket hunting of birds. (A park in Van Buren County was named in Lacey's honor in 1926.)

Yet it was not until eight years after Willam Savage's death, through the 1916 Migratory Bird Treaty with Canada and the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act, that the federal government began to regulate the killing of all bird species. Within his lifetime, however, Savage had indicated an awareness of the need to limit the shooting of birds. In a talk he gave at the Congregational Church in Salem on November 12, 1897, he advised: "If it be a new or strange bird to you, in the mind of your unworthy servant, you are excusable, if you bring the slaughtering gun to bear & capture the prize." Then he





← Evening Grosbeak

This colorful songbird is a rare winter visitor, so it is not surprising that Savage made note of it in his diary. Between January 29 and February 17, 1895, Savage writes of "Evening Grossbeaks," (as he spelled it) seven times, including these entries:

Feb. 11: "Seth brought home 7 Evening Grosbeaks him & John shot in C. Bottom"

Feb 14: "paint some ♀ Evening grossbeak"

Feb. 17: "sketch & paint some buckberrie twigs under ♂ & ♀ Evening Grosbeaks. for Wm Edwards"

It is not always possible to match diary entries and paintings. Very few of the paintings are dated; this one, on the back, says "copied 1899." Whether this is the painting noted in the diary in February 1895, or a copy of it, made in 1899, is unclear. What is clear is that by the 1890s Savage wrote far more often in his diary about painting birds than in the earlier years.

↑ Blue-winged Teal and Scarlet Tanager

Savage created an odd combination here, posing a colorful, male, and peculiarly shaped Blue-winged Teal with a male Scarlet Tanager, which he did not identify, perched on a weed. Scarlet Tanagers live in the deep woods, and teal are marsh birds.

The only clue in the diary, though its connection to this particular painting is speculative, appears on September 23, 1898: "look over pictures. & select some I can add a small bird to. & sketch Blackwinged Red bird with Blue winged Teal."



added: "But one friendly desire, as well as these instructions. After you have slain one beauty, permit the remainder to enjoy life, for this is the course followed by your Bird loving friend William Savage."

Savage lived a simple life. His transportation may have been mostly on foot, for his diary makes little mention of riding horseback or using wagons or taking trains. His 80-acre farm kept him self-sufficient, but he died with very few savings (\$462—about \$8,000 in today's dollars). In the early years, his busy life as a pioneer farmer did not provide much spare time. Later his sons assumed more of the labor, leaving him more time for hunting and trapping and for painting birds. As he once explained, "Birds and Nature

was my Ideal, Birds and Flowers was my delight to paint."

By modern standards, Savage's birds are a bit stiff and some are poorly posed, but Audubon had these faults, too. The Savage paintings' quality and detail are surprisingly good, and their breadth impressive. His paintings that have survived represent about 196 species from Iowa. (By comparison, in 1907, Rudolph Anderson listed 353 species for the entire state, and as of year 2000 there are 404 species.)

A pioneer farmer who seldom traveled, who lived in an area with little habitat for water birds, and who worked long hours year-round, he nevertheless painted most of the birds that could be expected to have occurred there. For the most part, William Savage, with his young cousin David, studied the same birds that Iowans see today. Most surprising is that a

↑ **Whip-poor-will**
Technically, this painting is one of Savage's best. It shows very nice detail of a nocturnal species that is rarely seen. Its song, of course, is easily recognized.

pioneer farmer was so dedicated and skillful to paint them at a time when very little had been researched or written about Iowa's birds. ❖

Thomas H. Kent, M.D., has been birding for over 50 years and holds the record for the most species seen in Iowa. He and his father, Fred Kent, photographed birds extensively and coauthored a book on eastern Iowa birds. He is also the co-author of two definitive books on Iowa ornithology.

Two Ornithologists, a Century Apart

For more than 15 years I had known about the William Savage paintings, but I had never seen them. What attracted me to them were two possible rarities, which Savage's son had reported as Harris's Hawk and Gray Hawk and were labeled Black Warrior and Gray Star Buzzard. When I looked at the actual paintings, I realized that the Savages had misidentified those birds. Yet I was surprised by the quality and details of the paintings and became intrigued by the story behind them, which was partially unveiled by Savage's diaries. I set three goals: to accurately identify all the birds in the paintings, to summarize the information in a logical order, and to photograph each painting in color.

Although most of the birds were easily identified from Savage's representations, many had never been labeled. Few of the paintings bore dates or locations, although the diaries revealed many clues. If species names did appear on the paintings, they were often inaccurate based on today's authorities. (It is also possible that Savage labeled some of the paintings years after he painted them; on July 27, 1894, he wrote in his diary: "write names on more pictures" before exhibiting them in Fairfield.) The grouping of some species is often quite illogical to the modern observer. Savage may have copied single birds into composite paintings, which he was fond of making in his later years.

The end product of my three-



↑ American Kestrel and Red-tailed Hawk

This adult rufous morph Red-tailed Hawk is a rare variant of the species. Savage's son Walter identified the specimen as a Harris's Hawk, based on a description by ornithologist Elliott Coues. William Savage labeled it Black Warrior. However, Coues equates Black Warrior with Harlan's Hawk, which is today considered another variant of Red-tailed Hawk. This puzzling hawk along with the Gray Star Buzzard (page 72), sparked the author's interest in the William Savage collection of paintings and diaries.

year project is a two-volume compilation of all known information pertaining to all 245 paintings (which depict 397 birds of 255 species, plus 22 mammals of 13 species). A color representation of each painting (electronically scanned from the slides) is followed by the accurate common names of the birds represented (based on the *American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds, Seventh Edition* [1998]); the

names assigned by Savage; any other information written on the painting or relevant to it (including quoted diary entries); and notes on the quality and condition of each painting. I have donated these volumes and a complete set of color slides to the museum collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa (Des Moines), where they can be accessed by researchers interested in Savage, his paintings, or ornithology. —Thomas H. Kent

NOTE ON SOURCES

The primary sources for this article are the paintings, original diaries (1856-1908), and typed transcripts (1863-1908), all housed at the State Historical Society of Iowa (Des Moines). The paintings are in the museum collections; the diaries and other written or printed material (including a few hand-written speeches) are in Special Collections. The diaries for March 1856 through October 1863 were serialized in the *Annals of Iowa* (Oct. 1933, Jan. 1934, Oct. 1934, Oct. 1935, Oct. 1936, and Jan. 1937). Lewis D. Savage made available in original and typescript form the diary of his father, David L. Savage, and guided me on a tour of the farm site and surroundings frequented by William Savage. Both Dr. Alfred D. Savage (David's grandson) and Lewis D. Savage provided many personal documents, photographs, and newspaper clippings about William Savage and the entire Savage clan. Thanks also to these State Historical Society staff: curator Bill Johnson, registrar Jodi Evans, and audio-visual archivist Mary Bennett. They facilitated my photographing the Savage paintings over several days.

EDITOR'S NOTE

"A visual, intellectual and emotional legacy at Iowa State" is how Lynette Pohlman describes the sculpture of Christian Petersen (1885-1961). Pohlman is director of the University Museums at Iowa State University in Ames, where an exhibit, a book, and an array of events this fall celebrate the artistic achievements and energy of Petersen, as well as the restoration and conservation of his work by Iowa State.

Born in 1885 in Dybbol, Denmark, Petersen immigrated to America as a child. His early training and work in die-cutting, design, intaglio engraving, and sculpture all took place on the East Coast, but by the late 1920s he had moved to Chicago and was receiving medallion and portrait commissions in Iowa. In 1934,

he was invited to Iowa by Grant Wood, project director for the New Deal's Public Works of Art Project, and from then until his death in 1961, Iowa State University was the base of his prolific career as the first campus sculptor-in-residence in the United States.

The following pages briefly sketch the story behind some of Petersen's most well-known and beloved sculptures on the Iowa State campus. The text appears here with the permission of Iowa State University Press and is adapted from *Christian Petersen, Sculptor* (ISU Press, September 2000). The complete story of Petersen's career is told in the book as well as in the retrospective exhibit at ISU's Brunner Art Museum. (For details, see the box on page 96.)



CHRISTIAN PETERSEN, SCULPTOR

by Lea Rosson DeLong
with an introduction by Charles C. Eldredge

The sculpture of Christian Petersen has been long admired by visitors to Iowa State University, with which he began his long association as sculptor-in-residence in 1934. Yet, his art remains unfamiliar to many other Americans today, even to specialists in the subject.

In his proclivity for midwestern motifs, the sculptor conformed to the principles enumerated decades earlier by another Iowan, author-and-critic Hamlin Garland, who advised American artists that "art, to be vital, must be local in its subject."

Like Garland, Petersen envisioned the flourishing of "an American art, here in the Midwest,

where America has its roots. Here," he predicted in 1934, "shall be the soil, and the seed, and the strength of art." During the difficult years of the Depression, the agricultural college in Ames provided not only salary (albeit meager), but also inspiration. "I figured I couldn't get to in a university with art courses," he confessed; "I have always found the keenest appreciation of my efforts has been by men and women whose work calls for some use of the hands."

He might have preferred fine stone or bronze, or yet rarer stuff; but, during the Depression, his precarious financial situation and

that of Iowa State College precluded such luxuries. Instead, Petersen worked in humbler materials, generally carved limestone or modelling plaster or terra cotta fired from local clays.

He drew inspiration from his observations of rural life and newsworthy events of the day. These images drawn from his own time and place appealed to the art-

"When a chisel finally fits your hand," Christian Petersen once said, "it is just a matter of learning the nature of the different materials—and using them to put forth your ideas." Right: Petersen works on *The Gentle Doctor*, 1937.



UNLESS INDICATED, ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS ARCHIVES



Terra cotta fountain is part of the *History of Dairying Mural*, Petersen's first sculpture on the Iowa State campus.

ist and to his hard-working Iowa neighbors.

Given the campus location of his studio in the veterinary quadrangle, animals not surprisingly entered his repertoire of subjects. His former students recalled their teacher sending them from the studio out to the vet barns to draw from the live (animal) models. Their availability and their significance to the school's agricultural curriculum, as well as to the state's economy, made them ready motifs.

In his monuments for the Iowa State University campus, as well as in his independent studio works, Christian Petersen left a legacy that documents his own personal vision . . . [and also] the

competing forces that flourished in American sculpture during an important transitional period.

—Charles C. Eldredge



Petersen seems to have been the only professional sculptor on the Iowa [Public Works of Art] Project—in fact, one of the very few in the Midwest who did not work in Chicago—and the only one who produced any sculpture that can still be identified. In addition, he was older than most of the other artists (including Wood), had lived and worked in the East, and had already established his repu-

tation. Finally, he appears to be the only participant who parlayed his opportunities on the Iowa Project into a permanent job. In contrast to the primary task of the Iowa project—murals for the library at Iowa State—Petersen's was not a group job, or as it might have been termed in Iowa at the time, a cooperative project. He alone was assigned to work on the dairy sculpture cycle, and the responsibility for its success was his alone.

The six panels [of the dairy mural] were installed three on each side of a center panel whose depth extended out of the low relief into nearly freestanding in the heads of three Jersey cows who stretch out of the flattened panel

toward an actual pool of water from which they seem to drink [see left]. The sophisticated trompe l'oeil effect that Petersen achieved here demonstrated not only his knowledge of art history but also his ability to adapt it to an Iowa subject. The series of sculptures is one side of an outdoor "room" bordered by terraces, plantings, and other buildings. Sensitivity to the site of his sculpture was an enduring characteristic of Petersen's as, over the years, he added a long series of outdoor sculptures to the campus. In every case, his designs took account of both the natural and the man-made aspects of the environment into which he would place his work. The inclusion of the pool in the dairy complex was the first of several instances in which Petersen would integrate water into his schemes for campus monuments.



Over the next twenty years, Christian Petersen created six more public sculptures for the Iowa State campus, . . . [and] produced many other sculptures related to Iowa State or on other subjects at the same time that he maintained a constant stream of portrait busts and plaques. During these years, he was also a popular teacher whose classes each quarter were full to overflowing, making increasing demands on his time and energy. When he began, only women students were allowed into the sculpture course (because they were offered through the home economics curriculum), but by spring of 1939, men joined the classes.

While Petersen was still working on the dairy courtyard reliefs in 1935, the college was renovating



Petersen instructs students in the mid-1930s. Below: *Three Athletes*, in terra cotta.



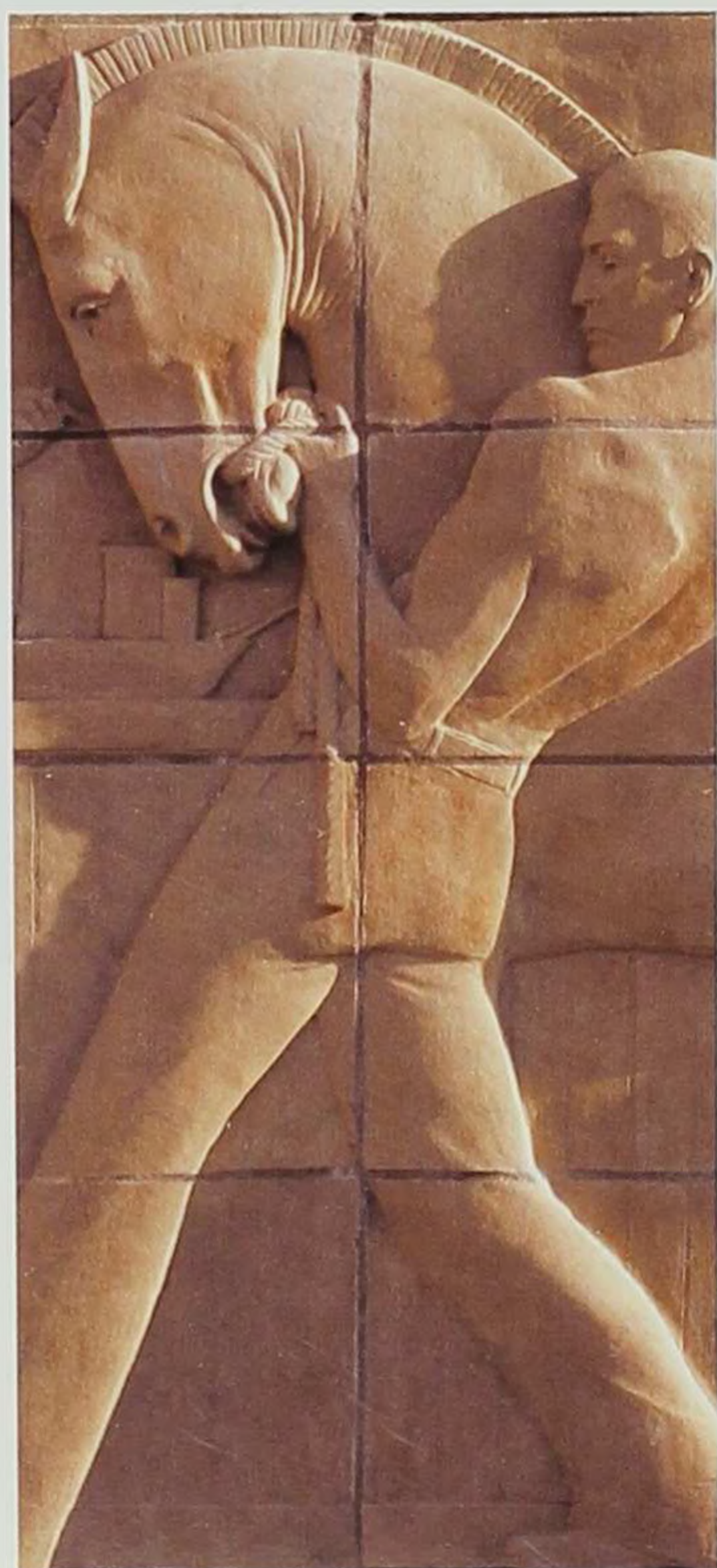
its gymnasium, known as State Gym. When the dairy sculptures were finished and installed (and while he was developing the concepts for the veterinary complex), he inserted into the new staircase front of the building three reliefs of college athletes in action [see above]. In all the figures, this quality [of formality and stateliness] comes from the sharp carving and bold outline of forms that do not just capture a moment in these

athletic contests, but distill motions and poses so characteristic that they can typify an entire sport.



In the spring of 1935, Petersen began developing ideas for his next major campus sculpture. The dean of veterinary medicine, Charles H. Stange, had requested a work of

art for the veterinary complex, and during the summer of 1935, his discussions with Petersen helped the sculptor formulate the theme for a large sculptural panel. With help of his wife, Charlotte, Petersen acquainted himself with the history and recent developments in veterinary science, then composed an active scene of sturdy men and farm animals. Like the dairy sculptures, it was also to be a relief, but this time a single panel, not broken into seven separate scenes. Nothing of its size was produced in Iowa or perhaps in the entire Midwest during the 1930s. In pro-



Center detail from the *Veterinary Medicine Mural*. (Color variations between detail and entire mural relate to lighting variations when photographed.)

posing his new sculpture to the college administration, Petersen described the primary theme as "the protection of human health by guarding animal health through the development of vaccines."

[In the center panel, stands a] spirited horse, flexing his muscles and bending his head down sharply as if on the verge of rearing up [see detail below]. The musculature of the shirtless man and the arch of his back as he strains to subdue the horse suggest that man and animal are equal contenders in this contest for dominance. Widespread legs planted on the ground, the man wraps his right arm over the shoulder of the horse as his left firmly tugs back on a bridle in the horse's mouth. The tone of struggle, of muscle against muscle, will against will, of these two massive and central forms is in contrast to the studious concentration of the vet who withdraws the horse's blood. This theme of struggle was one that hovered over a good deal of art in the 1930s, and in no other work does Petersen express so clearly that feature of his times. For all of the vigor that courses across the panel, it is typical of much public, especially federal, sculpture of its time in that there is little aggressive emotion displayed, but rather a grim, determined, and concentrated focus on the task at hand. The emotional tone is expressed mainly through the action of the body. Much of Petersen's sculpture possesses a calm, steady, even introspective air, but this panel is lively and animated, full of quickened postures and tense contests.

The central figures of the tall, powerful, muscular horse and the man who battles to contain him dominate the entire panel. They are bracketed by two groups who

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JIM FOSSE



The Gentle Doctor, in terra cotta, stands in the foreground of the *Veterinary Medicine Mural*.

kneel or bend to execute their procedures: the two men with the calf on the left and, to the right, two other men who vaccinate a hog.

At an early point in the realization of this sculpture panel, Petersen conceived the idea of a figure to accompany the relief panel and expand the space to create an entire sculptural envi-



ronment. Considering the scientific rigor of the themes on the panel and the tone of contention as the men submitted the animals to various procedures, Petersen may have wanted to "humanize" the profession somewhat. His solution was to present an individual, a figure who seemed to have an identity and was not just a participant in a scientific crusade for the health and betterment of men and animals. He worked through a number of designs that showed a veterinarian coming to

the aid of an ailing family pet, sometimes accompanied by a concerned child. In the end, he settled upon a stalwart but sympathetic man dressed in plain clothes and a lab coat, holding a sick puppy while the mother dog worries at his feet. The doctor cradles the limp puppy in two oversize hands as he gazes down at it with both compassion and competence. The mother leans against his lower leg, her head lifted mournfully toward her pup.

The sculpture is the simplest

composition Petersen had so far developed, and has been purged of any hint of his early Beaux Arts style. Compared with the animation and complexity of the relief, the figure is almost stark in the economy of its modeling.

The Gentle Doctor gradually became a symbol of the college and is often regarded as a symbol of the overall profession. A 1941 article in *Veterinary Student* praised the sculpture as typifying "the fine type of men who made up our Veterinary profession today.

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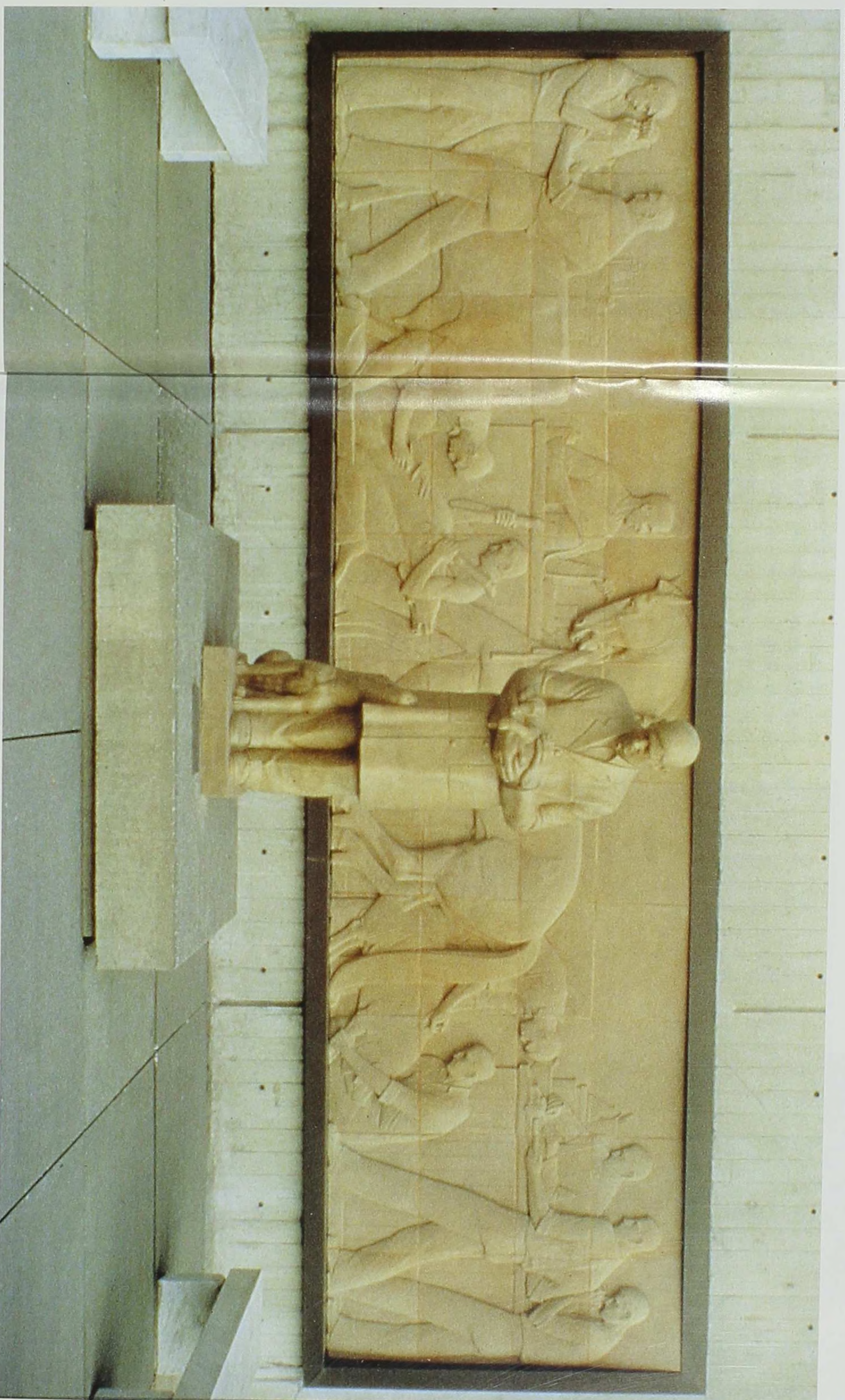
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Cornhusker was modeled after husking champion Marion Link. "Sometimes people think I'm staring at them," Petersen once told a reporter, "but all I'm doing is gaining material."

Like the country doctor, he is motivated by the spirit to serve humbly and to save life."



In 1941, as the country was pulling out of the Depression, Petersen produced two sculptures that address farm life, which are among the few instances at the time of a Midwestern artist taking up this theme in sculpture. *Cornhusker* is based on a scene witnessed by Petersen and described by his friend in agricultural journalism, Charles Rogers.

"One bright October afternoon on a farm near Nevada, Iowa," [Rogers wrote], "spectators at a corn husking contest watched the nimble, smoothly articulating form of a neighbor boy move rhythmically up and down the rows to win the first leg of a contest which

was to carry him to the state championship and runner-up in the National.

"The artist, Sculptor Christian Petersen, had seen what others saw, though no doubt, with his practiced sculptor's eyes, he saw a good deal more. He followed Marion through the contest, making careful mental notes. That evening, while the memory of Marion's fine athletic body was still fresh in his mind, he went to the studio and made the quick sketch in clay. Later Petersen persuaded Marion to pose in the studio, and then he completed this statue."

4-H Calf [see right] is a subject that Petersen must have observed many times as he did sculpture demonstrations at the

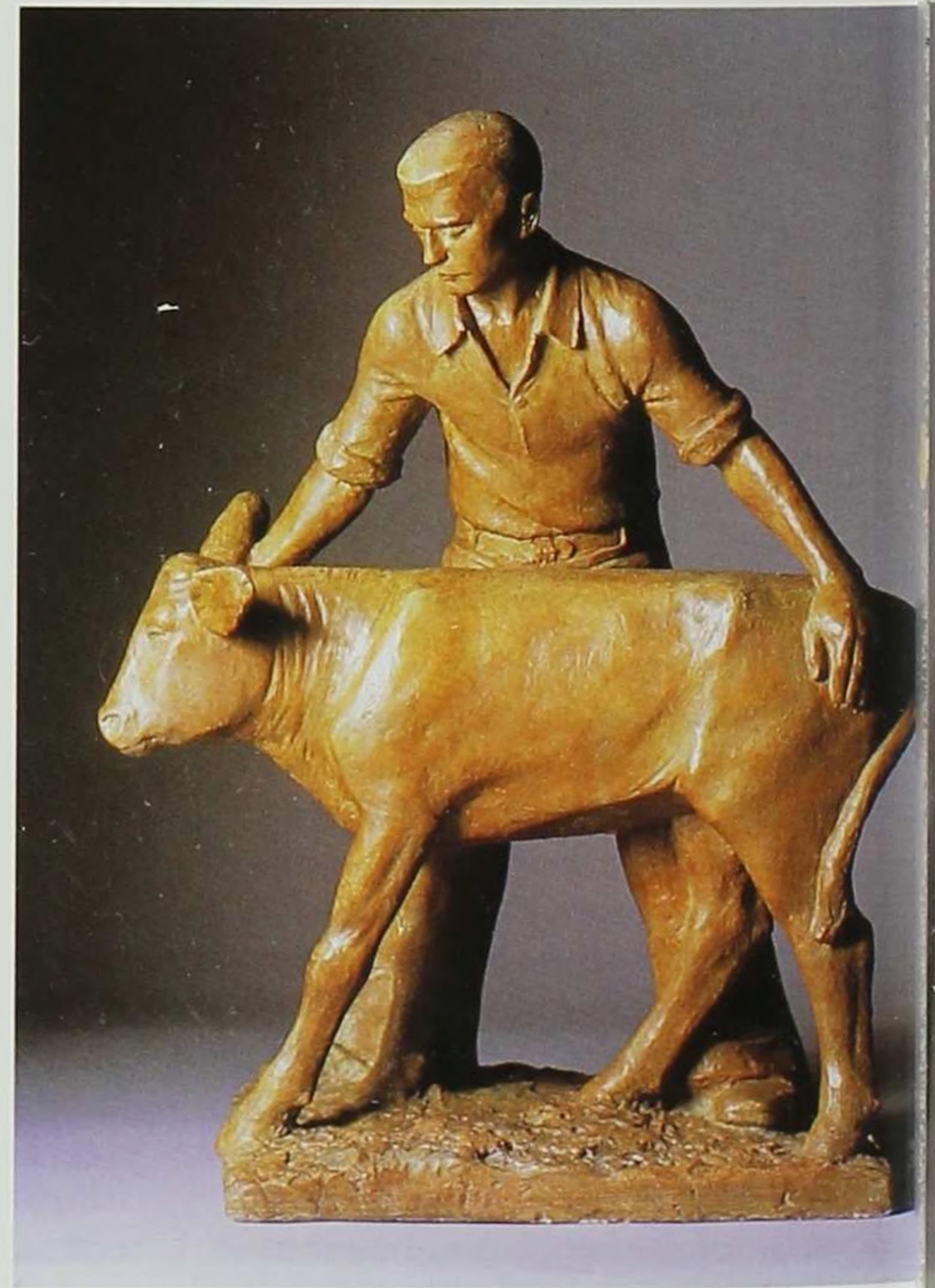
Iowa State Fair. Here, an adolescent farm boy studiously positions his calf. The title suggests that this is not a farm-yard scene but one in which the boy is showing his animal for judging at a fair. Though it does not have the abstracted simplification of the relief cattle in the dairy panels, it is still a very plain, unelaborated form, a description that could also apply in comparing the boy with the adult men who work to control their animals in the veterinary panel.

In producing sculptures on these themes, Petersen had little company among artists of the Depression era who were not working in fed-

eral programs. Even in those programs, however, relatively few freestanding sculptures (compared to the number of paintings) that depict the life of the farmer appear to have been created and preserved. Petersen's works are among the few that could be fitted into the regionalist program although, like most artists who found that term applied to them, he preferred not to be so narrowly labeled.



The most prominent [Petersen sculpture] on campus [is] a work so frequently encountered that it has become one of the identifying



Petersen's 4-H Calf, like *Cornhusker*, is painted plaster. Both were recently donated to ISU.

images of the University. The *Fountain of the Four Seasons*, 1940-41, is placed at the entrance to the Memorial Union, the center of student life. According to Petersen's biographer, Patricia L. Bliss, it began with a call from President Charles Friley, who had grown exasperated with the situation of the fountain in front of Memorial Union. A gift of the 1936 VEISHEA Central Committee, the fountain was the frequent target of jokesters, and the president wished the sculptor to transform it into something that would discourage such pranks.

Petersen took as his inspiration a subject he had explored thoroughly only a few years earlier. In 1936, he had illustrated *Cha-Ki-Shi*, a children's book on the Meskwaki Indians of Iowa, and had spent time at their Tama settlement. Deciding he would like to continue this theme of Native Americans, he consulted with his geneticist-poet friend J. C. Cunningham, who shared that interest. The professor soon supplied a four-line Osage chant:

*Lo, I come to the tender planting
Lo, a tender shoot breaks forth
Lo, I collect the golden harvest
Lo, there is joy in my house*

Employing the original fountain as his centerpiece, Petersen designed a circular pool with an Indian woman placed at each of the four directions, picturing each of the lines of the chant. In his visualization of the first three lines, Petersen chose the grain most closely associated not only with Indians, but with Iowa and the agricultural curriculum of Iowa State as well: corn.



COURTESY OF IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, JIM HEEMSTRA, PHOTOGRAPHER



Fountain of the Four Seasons. Four figures sculpted of Bedford limestone kneel around a terra cotta fountain ring with a corn motif.

Petersen's next project, on the grounds in front of the home economics building, was also his most metaphorical public work. Dealing again with water, he designed a large, round, shallow

pool ringed by a low concrete band that rises less than a foot from ground level. Playing at water's edge along the south side of the circle are three small figures of children, all around three years



COURTESY OF IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, JIM HEEMSTRA, PHOTOGRAPHER

“Figures [in *Marriage Ring*, above] focus their attention downward,” comments guest curator **Lea Rosson DeLong**, **“and, as in a number of Petersen’s public sculptures, present no awareness of the viewer.”**

of age. Entitled *The Marriage Ring* [see above], the children symbolize the fruits, or the “jewels” of marriage, thus illustrating metaphorically the goal of the home economics program. This curriculum, restricted to women, taught them the skills of successful homemaking, often with an emphasis on the needs of children. Tellingly, the work is also known as *The Wedding Ring* and *The Ring of Life*.



By 1944, Petersen must have been well enough acquainted with the losses caused by the war to produce a sculpture [see right] that is particularly moving in its immediacy. Although he gave it a metaphorical title—*Price of Victory*—the image is disturbingly real. Petersen depicts an American soldier at the moment of death, as he is struck by a bullet. With his body already sagging toward the earth, one arm is drawn to his chest while the other hangs by his side, unable now to break the fall which will come in the next in-

stant. The face is not agonized or contorted, but hovers between awareness and unconsciousness. Petersen must have sent a photograph of the piece to [friend and designer] George Nerney and asked if he had any suggestions about it. Nerney replied, “I judge . . . that it would stir the feeling of anyone so deeply that it ought to be of some great use to assist those boys



***Price of Victory* was completed in 1944.**

who are giving up so much for us. It has so much that you have told so simply and so strongly.” According to Petersen’s first biographer, the sculpture did affect those who saw it, for when it was shown in the Gold Star Hall of the Memorial Union after the war ended, college administrators were asked to take it off display. “The statue apparently had created too much grief for those who had seen it, particularly persons who had lost a loved one in combat.” Upon learning of the reaction, Petersen reportedly commented, “It is the greatest compliment ever paid to my work.” ❖

Lea Rosson DeLong is guest curator of Christian Petersen, Sculptor, and the principal author of the book of the same title. She is a scholar of American art of the Depression era.

Charles C. Eldredge is the Hall Distinguished Professor of American Art and Culture at the University of Kansas, and was formerly director of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American Art.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To order *Christian Petersen, Sculptor*, contact Iowa State University Press. Address: 2121 S. State Ave., Ames, Iowa 50014-8300. Phone: 800-862-6657. Fax: 515-292-3348. Internet: www.isupress.com

The retrospective exhibit on Christian Petersen runs until December 31, 2000, at the Brunnier Art Museum, Scheman Building, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011. For information on the exhibit, lectures, and other events: 515-294-3342, or on the web at www.museums.iastate.edu.

Iowa Heritage Illustrated is grateful to Iowa State University Press for permission to publish these brief excerpts as an adaptation from *Christian Petersen, Sculptor*; and thanks Lynette Pohlman and Dana Michels (both of the Brunnier Art Museum), and Sally Clayton and Anne Bolen (ISU Press), for facilitating this presentation for readers of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*.



One in a Million

Among the millions of items in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa is this postcard bearing a photograph of women, probably taken about 1925.

The back of the postcard is stamped "De Marsh Studio Fairfield, Iowa." Although only one valise is visible, the freight wagon in the background suggests that the women were headed for a railroad outing.

What is clear is that the women saw hats as essential to their outfits. Every one of the 18 women wears a hat; many are variations on the popular 1920s cloche, characterized by little or no brim. The

1920s dress style, relaxed and loose-fitting, also predominates, but hemlines reach to mid-calf. No flappers or bared knees here!

For more on Iowans and hats, visit *Hold on to Your Hats*, a temporary exhibit in the State Historical Building in Des Moines. According to its curator, Michael O. Smith, the exhibit features some 70 hats—everything from a straw boater to a mourning hat, a dust cap to a beaver top hat, a Jewish kippah to a spiked military helmet, a 1947 wedding veil to a Ku Klux Klan hood. The exhibit runs until January 2001.

—The Editor

SHSI (DES MOINES); PHOTOGRAPHED BY THOMAS H. KENT



A Ruffed Grouse surveys the terrain in this watercolor by Iowan William Savage, painted in August 1895 for the first meeting of the Iowa Ornithological Association. This issue of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* introduces you to William Savage and his passion for birds.