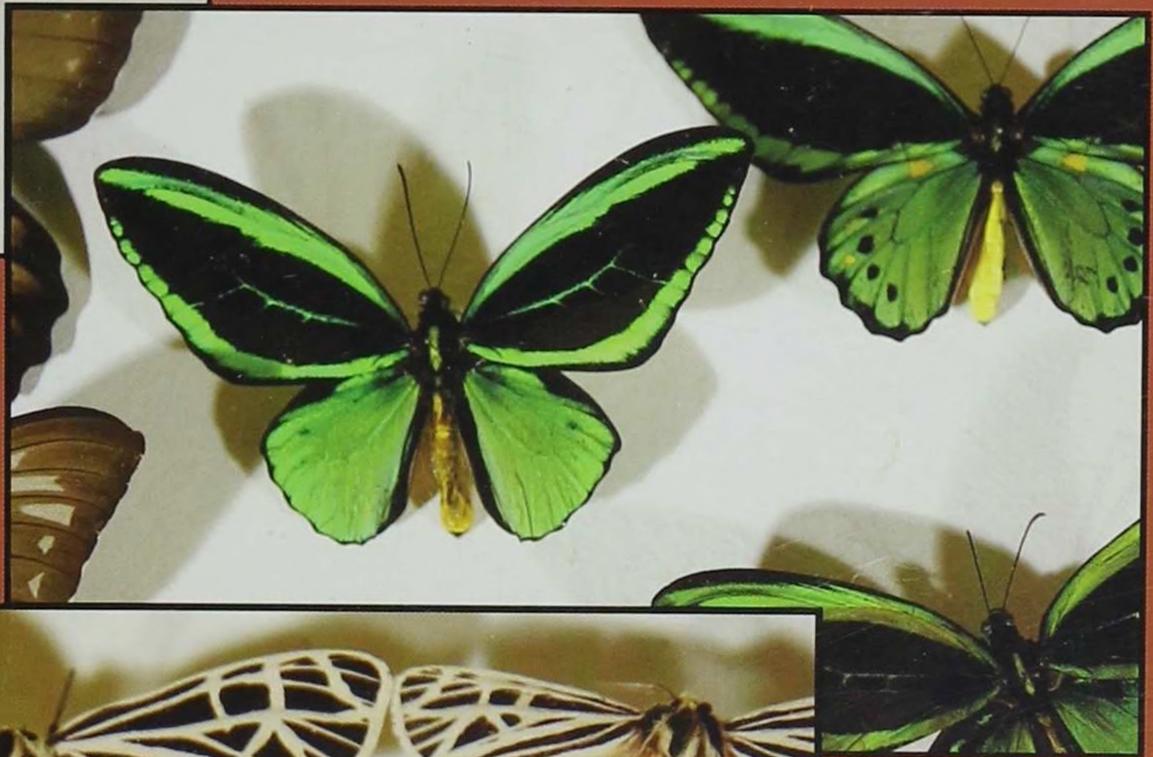


Rarely Seen Artifacts • Artist Edward Catich • Petersen/Harlan Award Winner • Seasonal Rituals

Spring 2009 • \$7

# Iowa Heritage

ILLUSTRATED



# Front Porch

This issue features an especially intriguing Iowan, Edward Catich: priest, artist, professor. One of Catich's many passions was calligraphy, which he called "one of our last, precious, craft-survivals from traditional eras." He was right to call it that. Think how in our own lives the methods and technologies of communicating through the written word have evolved, and how few of the old ways have survived. Maybe you'll relate to some of the methods I remember.

I still have the fat, black pencil with which I laboriously wrote my first letters. One end of the pencil is quite chewed up. For years I kept the pencil by my computer as a reminder that putting words to paper (or computer screen) has always stressed me out.

Remember when you learned cursive? As my teacher walked up and down the aisles, I attempted to master the Palmer Method. Each row of great spirals resembled a tornado sweeping across the soft, lined paper. I hear that teaching cursive is on the decline today; some educators say that children seldom need it or use it. Come to think of it, I mostly use cursive for lists, notes, checks, and greeting cards. How about you?

In eighth grade summer school, I learned a far more sophisticated technology, typing. Then, at my summer job in college, I entered the world of typesetting (as a proofreader). I worked at Liljequist Linotypers in Davenport. The business itself was evolving. Hand-set display type and hot type were giving way to phototype and experiments with punched paper tape fed into something I didn't understand. Something about "computers"?

Many of you probably remember the odd, angular letters of the only screen font available on early computers, back when they were called "word processors" (an egregious term, if ever there was one). Then, about three decades ago, desktop publishing became the new technology. In the giddy, unruly days of having every font at one's fingertips, newsletters became a visual cacophony of type and message.

Something gained—speed, economy—and something lost—beauty, subtlety. I wonder if there will be a day when we look back upon desktop publishing as "one of our last, precious, craft-survivals from traditional eras."

—Ginalie Swaim, editor

## From our readers

I'm writing regarding the issue of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* on Abraham Lincoln. I grew up in New Jersey, where local buildings had signs that said, "George Washington slept here." And now—the Iowa connection with another great pres. Whew!

Some of the stories do seem very modern. The news of Lincoln's death stirring the small editorials to spread false reports, seek revenge—all seem very up to date, even with the speedy Internet (speedy false news sometimes).

—John Hurley  
Belfast, Maine

I didn't think anyone could make me read more about Lincoln, but your last issue is so compelling—way to go!

—Holly Carver  
Iowa City, Iowa

The Louisa County Historical Society was surprised recently to see photos of remains of the old Bethel School in your Fall 2008 issue, pages 110 and 111, identified as a "limestone school on Highway 61 somewhere north of Mediapolis."

The rectangular stone building was constructed circa 1856 with limestone quarried nearby and is located in Louisa County about six miles south of Wapello and about two miles north of Newport Junction on U.S. Highway 61.

Young students from that area were educated at the Bethel School for more than 60 years and represented many of Louisa County's early families. The school was closed in 1920 when districts were consolidated.

The Bethel Church and cemetery is located on 35th Street a short distance northwest of the school. The well-kept church, built about the same time and by the same families, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

It amazes us that a photographer would submit photos of a building without checking into its history or to at least learn its name and give a more accurate location.

—Valeen Ziegenhorn  
Louisa County Historical Society  
Wapello, Iowa

## Iowa Heritage Illustrated

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Share your thoughts with the editor and readers here on the Front Porch. Send letters or e-mail to address above. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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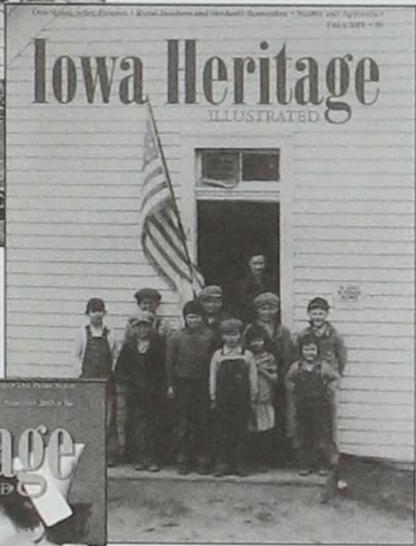
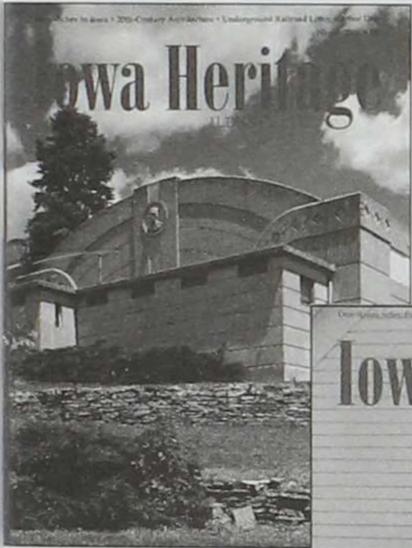
Contact the editor (see top of column). Submission guidelines: [www.iowaHistory.org](http://www.iowaHistory.org).

## STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY of IOWA

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# Heritage

Illustrated  
a Spring 2009, 90:1

## Jars and God: Reflections

**The Stove**  
Well County Press, November 1869

**Freedom:**  
The Art of Father Edward M. Catich  
by

**Cool Stuff from the Museum**  
Smith, Bill Johnson, and Jack Lufkin  
John Zeller

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obby of collecting insects around  
the 1970s and rapidly broadened to  
ld. From top: a harlequin beetle  
(*Amphispiza bilineata*) from South America;  
butterflies (*Ornithoptera priamus*)  
Pacific; and virgin tiger moths  
(*Zeugma cerina*) collected in the American  
wonders and more appear in our  
xhibit.

You're holding  
the best tour guide  
you can find  
for traveling into  
Iowa's past.

# Iowa Heritage

ILLUSTRATED

Rare photos  
and rich history  
in every issue.

# Iowa Heritage

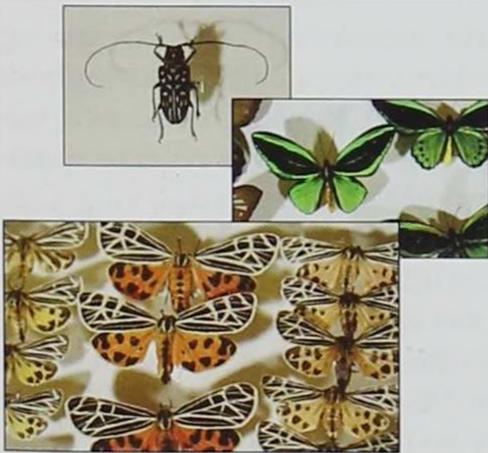
ILLUSTRATED

The Magazine of the State Historical Society of Iowa

Spring 2009, 90:1

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Note: We are no longer mailing the magazine with the tan wrap, so if your magazine arrives with a damaged cover, we would appreciate your letting us know (see editor's contact information on opposite page).



## On the Cover

John Pagliai's hobby of collecting insects around Ames began in the 1970s and rapidly broadened to around the world. From top: a harlequin beetle (*Acrocinus longimanus*) from South America; green birdwing butterflies (*Ornithoptera priamus*) from the South Pacific; and virgin tiger moths (*Grammia virgo*) collected in the American Midwest. These wonders and more appear in our new museum exhibit.

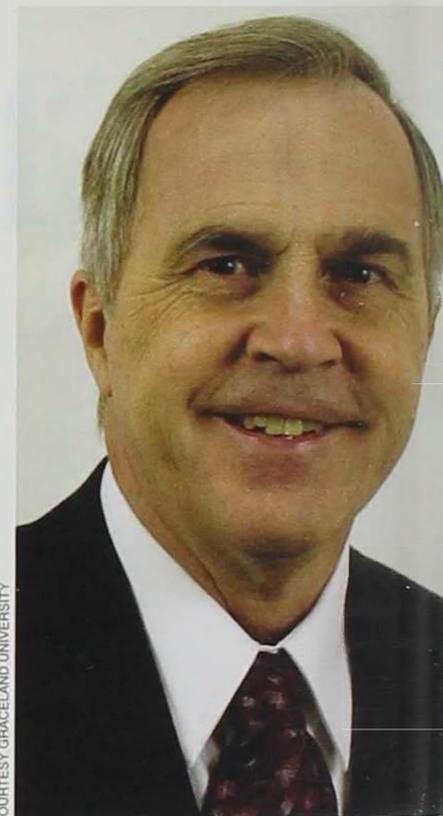
TOM MORAIN recently received the highest award of the State Historical Society of Iowa, the 2008 Petersen/Harlan Award for his long-term and continuing contributions in Iowa history.

"Tom Morain has done it all when it comes to supporting and advancing Iowa history," says historian Dorothy Schwieder, who first met Morain when they both taught Iowa history at Iowa State University. "It didn't take long to recognize that Tom is a highly imaginative person. He taught with enthusiasm and humor, a wonderful combination in the classroom."

After five years at ISU, he served as director of history at Living History Farms for 13 years, and then as administrator of the State Historical Society of Iowa (1995–2001). He is now director of government relations at Graceland University in Lamoni.

Marvin Bergman, editor of the *Annals of Iowa*, remarks that "in all of his positions, and in his books and lectures, and behind the scenes, Tom Morain has long been the (always smiling) public face of Iowa history. *Prairie Grass Roots*, his history of Jefferson, Iowa, in the first three decades of the 20th century, is a model of local history. *Iowa, Past to Present*, the elementary school textbook he co-authored with Dorothy Schwieder and Lynn Nielsen, remains the best book of its kind. In the midst of sound scholarship, Tom can always be counted on to find the human element in history, often with a humorous twist. His leadership in the public history community has done much to make Iowa history more accessible—and more fun."

Here, Tom shares with us a few of his thoughts on history. —The editor



Tom Morain

## Of Canning Jars and God: Reflections

by Tom Morain

REBECCA: *I never told you about that letter Jane Crofut got from her minister when she was sick. He wrote Jane a letter and on the envelope the address was like this: Jane Crofut, The Crofut Farm, Grover's Corners; Sutton County, New Hampshire; United States of America.*

GEORGE: *What's funny about that?*

REBECCA: *But listen, it's not finished: the United States of America; Continent of North America; Western Hemisphere; the Earth; the Solar System; the Universe; the Mind of God—that's what it said on the envelope.*

GEORGE: *What do you know!*

REBECCA: *And the postman brought it just the same.*

*End of Act I, Our Town, by Thornton Wilder*

Museum consultant Fred Schroeder introduced that passage from *Our Town* when he spoke to young museum professionals at an exhibit design seminar over three decades ago. For every article, lecture, or display we create, he told us, we choose where to root it on the "Spectrum of Abstraction." I never forgot his insight and often reflected on it at Living History Farms, the State Historical Society of Iowa, and now at Graceland University.

Imagine designing an exhibit on canning jars. You could focus on the jars themselves, how they are made

and used. Or you could broaden it beyond canning to include drying, smoking, or pickling. How about "Food Preservation around the World"? Food as a factor in human history? All living things require nutrition? Life? . . . The Mind of God?

Don't jump to the wrong conclusion. It is absolutely not true that the best exhibits are always those on the "Mind of God" end of the spectrum. Yea, verily, starving philosophy students should learn how to can green beans and tomatoes. But it is also true that there are many fact-laden history textbooks whose content com-

pletely effervesces shortly after the final exam, leaving only a bad aftertaste for history. Facts without context are sterile indeed.

In my own pantheon of history mentors, there is a special place for Arvilla Long. I interviewed her when I was researching my book on Iowa small towns in the early 20th century. In her '80s when I asked her for a session, she resisted at first; she thought she knew nothing about history and would appear foolish. Nevertheless, once she began talking about her own experiences learning to drive a car in the 1920s in rural Carroll County, she became very excited recalling the first time she backed the Model-T out of the barn. Why was this still a big deal 50 years later, I wondered. What was such a big deal about backing up a car?

Three weeks later, the "big deal" hit me like a ton of bricks as I was commuting home from Jefferson to Ames: When she could back the car out of the barn, she could go to town when SHE wanted! She did not have to wait for her husband to take her. The morning she backed out on her own was her Independence Day, her Bastille Day, her "Get Out of Jail Free" card. It was a freedom her mother and grandmother and great-grandmother and generations of rural women before them had never known.

I have thought about that interview many times because there are so many possible locations for it on the spectrum of abstractions between "learning to drive" and "the human condition." What opportunities does technology provide me that my parents did not have? What are the trade-offs in using new technologies—global warming, global competition, loss of community? What psychological barriers to freedom are imposed by my culture? What do I really need in order to be happy? Like a set of Russian nesting dolls—dolls inside dolls—questions of all dimensions lie embedded in simple acts.

**T**he chair of the Iowa State University history department once advised me to stick with history because, whatever else, "it's inside and clean." Wrong. The following year I became director of history at Living History Farms, recreating Iowa farming operations from the past 300 years. Up until then, I had known history only through class notes, books, and microfilm. But the Farms changed that. To stay in business the Farms had to engage visitors; it could not just talk at them. We had to relate the historical site to the visitors' experience. What is there in the story of the development of agriculture that is important for anyone to know? Why are we doing this?

Early in my role as the Farms' history director, I had an idea for a way to evaluate what visitors were learning, an outstandingly stupid idea. I thought about giving a short quiz to departing visitors on facts they "should have learned" on their tour. It would have been a colossal mistake (does No Child Left Behind come to mind?) because it would have encouraged every historical interpreter to teach to the quiz regardless of individual visitors' interests.

I grew into an advocate of what I call the "But" Approach to Historical Interpretation. The sure sign of a good interpretation program is when visitors leave saying, "You know, I had never thought about it, but . . ."

But what? We would never know what visitors were talking about as they headed down the interstate, but we were pretty sure they were talking about history. They were incorporating a little slice of the past into their own frame of reference. They were understanding the present differently because they had just experienced the past.

After nearly three decades as an Iowa historian, I still find the questions intriguing. The best history books and articles raise more questions than they answer. The better the article, the better the questions that it raises. How many different ways can I understand that incident? In what context do I place that fact? How does being an Iowan shape my perspective? Are any values universal or is everything relative to a particular culture?

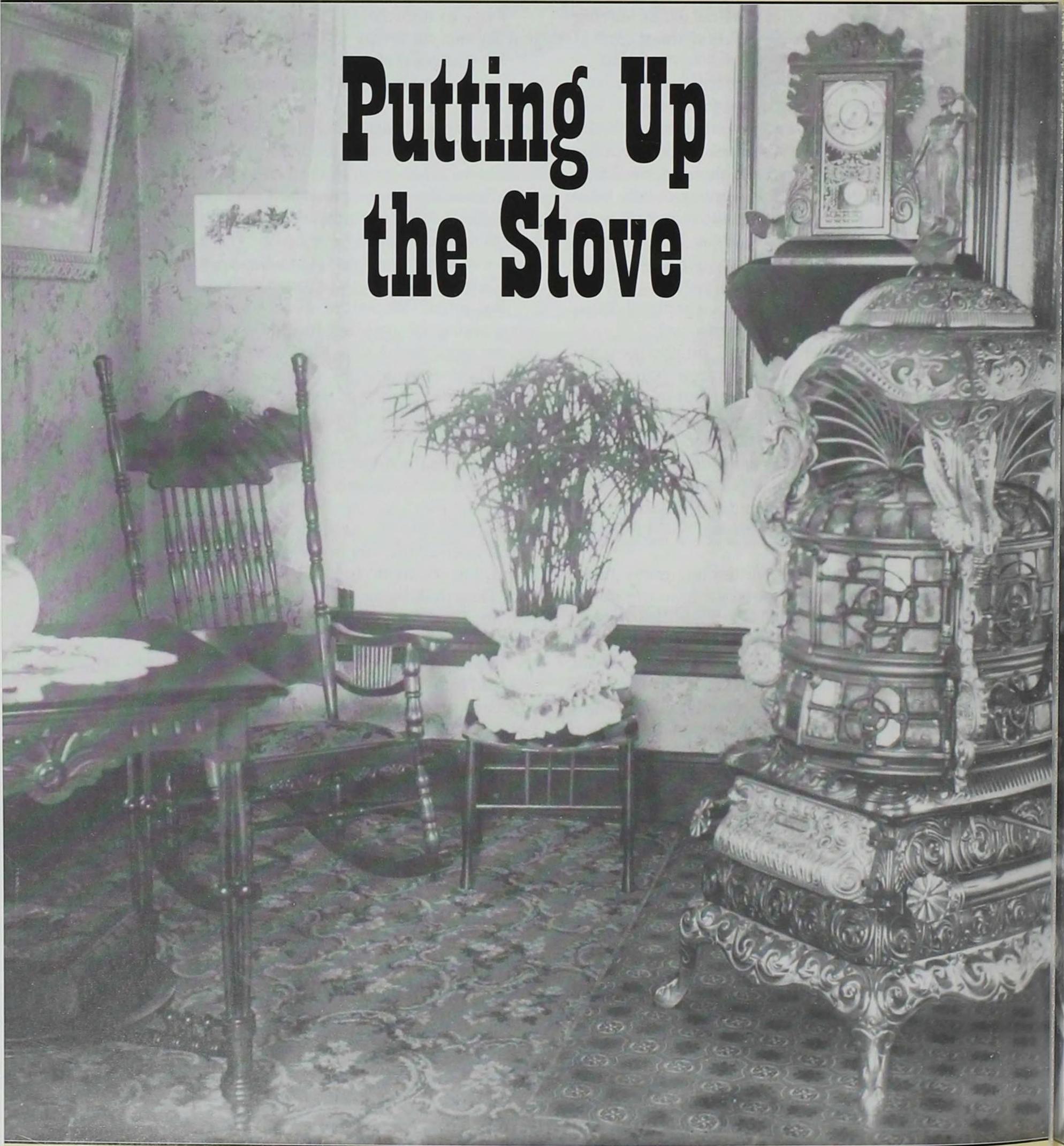
It is not the facts that I have learned to value in my study of Iowa history. It is the questions that they raise. Just because a question has no definitive answers does not mean it is not worth asking.

In Robert Frost's "Choose Something Like a Star," the poet shakes his fist at the universe and demands certainties that he will never get. But in the end, he accepts the mystery ("the star") and finds affirmation in the quest itself.

*And steadfast as Keats' Eremite,  
Not even stooping from its sphere,  
It asks a little of us here.  
It asks of us a certain height,  
So when at times the mob is swayed  
To carry praise or blame too far,  
We may choose something like a star  
To stay our minds on and be staid.*

The first 30 years have been great. I'm looking forward to the next 30. ❖

# Putting Up the Stove



TEXT REPRINTED FROM MITCHELL COUNTY PRESS (OSAGE), 11-4-1889. PHOTO FROM SHSI (IOWA CITY)

*Readers of the Mitchell County Press  
surely related to this rant, which appeared  
in their newspaper in November 1869.*



**I**n consequence of the arrival of cold weather once more, about these days there is a universal putting up of stoves preparatory for the winter campaign, and undoubtedly, a great deal of profanity is indulged in.

One who has had considerable experience in the work of putting up stoves says the first step to be taken is to put on a very old and ragged coat, under the impression that when he gets his mouth full of plaster it will keep his shirt bosom clean. Next he gets his hands inside the place where the pipe ought to go, and blacks his fingers, and then he carefully makes a black mark down one side of his nose. It is impossible to make any headway in doing this work, until his mark is made down the side of the nose. Having got his face properly marked the victim is ready to begin the ceremony.

The head of the family—who is the big goose of the sacrifice—grasps one side of the bottom of the stove, and his wife and hired girl take hold of the other side. In this way the load is started from the woodshed toward the parlor. Going through the door the head of the family will carefully swing his side of the stove around and jam his thumb nail against the door post. This part of the ceremony is never omitted.

Having got the stove comfortably in place the next thing is to find the legs. Two of these are left inside the stove since the spring before. The other two must be hunted after for twenty-five minutes. They are usually found under the coal. Then the head of the family holds up one side of the stove while his wife puts two of the legs in place, and next he holds up the other side while the other two are fixed, and one of the first two falls out. By the time the stove is on its legs he gets reckless of his linen.

Then he goes off for the [stove]pipe and gets a cinder in his eye. It don't make any difference how

well the pipe was put up last year, it will be found a little too short or a little too long. The head of the family jams his hat over his eyes and taking a pipe under each arm goes to the tin shop to have it fixed.

When he gets back he steps upon one of the best parlor chairs to see if the pipe fits, and his wife makes him get down for fear he will scratch the varnish off from the chair with the nails in his boot heel. In getting down he will surely step on the cat, and may thank his stars if not [on] the baby. Then he gets an old chair and climbs up to the chimney again to find that in cutting the pipe off, the end has been left too big for the hole in the chimney. So he goes to the woodshed and splits one side of the end of the pipe with an old axe, and squeezes it in his hands to make it smaller.

Finally he gets the pipe in shape and finds that the stove does not stand true. Then himself and wife and the hired girl move the stove to the left, and the legs fall out again. Next it is to move to the right. More difficulty with legs. Moved to the front a little. [The stovepipe] elbow [is] not even with the hole in the chimney, and he goes to the woodshed after some little blocks.

While putting the blocks under the legs the pipe comes out of the chimney. Then remedied, the elbow keeps tipping over to the great alarm of the wife. Head of the family gets the dinner table out, puts the old chair on it, gets his wife to hold the chair, and balances himself on it to drive some nails in the ceiling. Drops the hammer on his wife's head. At last gets the nails driven, makes a wire swing to hold the pipe, hammers a little here, pulls out a little there, takes a long breath, and announces the ceremony completed

Job never put up any stoves. It would have ruined his reputation if he had. ❖

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# Disciplined Freedom

## The Life and Art of Father Edward M. Catich

by Andrew Harvey

**H**e was described as “a man of protean talent, boundless energy, and uncompromising adherence to principles—religious, moral, artistic, and professional.” But the childhood of Edward Catich—who would become a passionate, outspoken priest, artist, and professor at St. Ambrose College—held no hint of such a future.

The son of Croatian immigrants, Edward Catich (with his twin, Vincent) was born in Stevensville, Montana, on January 4, 1906. An older brother and sister had been born in Yugoslavia; yet another set of twins was born in 1915. Michell Catich and his wife had their hands full raising six children on the wages of a copper miner in Butte. Before Edward (or “Ned,” as he was called) reached adolescence, his mother had died and his father had returned to Croatia and brought back a new wife. Edward remembered her as “a wonderfully fine woman” and that he and his siblings “spoke nothing but Croatian in the house.”

His father developed “miner’s cough” and went to Fresno, California, to recuperate, taking his oldest son and leaving the others in the care of their stepmother, who soon fell ill and was hospitalized. Michell, still ailing, returned to Montana; he died within weeks. His wife followed him in death, at the age of 29.

Now orphaned, the Catich children were separated. Edward’s sister went to live in Fresno with his older brother, and the two sets of twins were sent to an orphanage run by his father’s fraternal association, the Loyal Order of Moose, in Mooseheart, Illinois.

At Mooseheart, Edward Catich received an educa-

tion and apprenticed with a sign-painter. He was also introduced to music; in later years he would become adept at playing the cello, trumpet, trombone, and harmonica. After graduating from Mooseheart in 1924, he moved to Chicago and managed to scrape by with jobs playing jazz in clubs and painting signs professionally. Many years later he recalled, “I had a job painting a sign with letters 20 feet tall on the side of a 28-story building. We were working on a scaffolding, and, with the Chicago wind in August it was a pretty scary experience. It seemed that the paint was dripping practically horizontally in the wind, and I thought, ‘Boy I’ve got to get away from this.’”

Catich found sign-painting an unforgiving business—“I lost my first two jobs because I was not ‘fast enough,’”—so he decided to matriculate at the Chicago Art Institute. “I learned that the people who designed the posters and did the layout for art work, those with inside jobs, always had training in the Chicago Art Institute.” There he studied art history, design, painting, and anatomy and graduated in 1929.

It was also about this time that he felt the spiritual calling to become a priest. He spoke to the chaplain at

**Father Edward Catich, renowned calligrapher, inscribes a marble wall at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, c. 1965. A priest, artist, and professor at Davenport’s St. Ambrose College (now a university), Catich believed that “art is not freedom from discipline, but Disciplined Freedom.”**

THE QUALITY AND CHARACTER OF THE COLLECTIONS IN THIS MUSEUM HAVE BEEN ENHANCED  
THROUGH THE EXTRAORDINARY GENEROSITY OF THESE BE



Mooseheart about this, and it was recommended that he attend St. Ambrose College in Davenport, Iowa.

Enrolled at the Catholic college in 1931, Catich planted the seeds for its art department. "I got a job as the college bandmaster," he recounted. "It paid board, room and a small salary. There was no art department here then, and I liked the idea of teaching, so I was permitted to teach some art classes here when I was an undergraduate." He established a jazz orchestra called the Ambie Joy Boys and another musical group, the Royal Ambrosians. Earning his bachelor's degree in three years, he next completed his master's in art at the University of Iowa in 1935; his thesis was on "teaching calligraphy and lettering to high school students."

His studies did not end there. Right after graduation, he was admitted for study for the priesthood and was sent to the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. While there, his earlier fascination with art history and paleography (the study of ancient writing systems) deepened, and he concentrated in particular on a historically significant inscription on an ancient Roman monument. His conclusions about this inscription and the formation of Roman capital letters were published in the 1960s, adding to his growing renown as a master calligrapher and inscriber.

**O**rdained in December 1938, Catich returned to Davenport at the request of the bishop to teach at St. Ambrose, where he would found the art department and teach for 40 years.

For a time he also resumed his responsibility of leading the college band, and, during World War II, he taught engineering and draftsmanship to the navy men on the campus. Outside of St. Ambrose, he taught drawing and painting at the Davenport Municipal Art Gallery.

In the classroom, Catich was an imposing figure, commanding respect. His survey of art was required of most St. Ambrose students. He was an excellent communicator who wanted his students to take art

seriously. Rick Calvette, a 1968 St. Ambrose graduate, recalled, "Lots of people were scared to death of him. But when you got to know him, you found out he was great." Leslie Bell, a former student and current art professor at St. Ambrose, commented, "He was riveting.

I tell people that if you walked by his classroom, you'd be nervous for the people inside because he always sounded like he was giving a fire and brimstone sermon. But you'd look in, and everyone had these blissful, intellectual smiles on their faces.

"Nothing was too theoretical or lofty that it couldn't be demonstrated to the class with paint and brush," Bell added. "He'd quote Thomas Aquinas as much as he quoted Picasso. . . . He always considered ethics and

morals an important part of art."

Tom Chouteau, student and later colleague, remembered how Catich sparked "intellectual excitement." "We art majors were a small group of men, some ex-GIs, intent on art studies, and perhaps only vaguely aware that our world of ideas was being forcibly opened up to the likes of Edvard Munch, Eric Gill, Thomas Aquinas, Dorothy Day, Ananda Coomaraswamy and Ade Bethune."

Catich inspired many of his students to continue in art. Like Bell and Chouteau, Paul Herrera and John Schmits became art professors at St. Ambrose; others, like letter designer Peter Noth and Jack Winne, applied his ideals and techniques in their own careers at Hallmark Cards.

**C**atich was a prolific artist in his own right. He designed and produced hundreds of works of art—watercolors and oils, wood and stone carving and inscription, stained glass, printing, sculpture, scratchboard, calligraphy. Most of his art was religious in nature. A late nighter and early riser, he often worked in his studio in Lewis Hall at all hours.

Despite his devotion to art, Catich insisted that "I



Catich's art was secular and religious, abstract and representational. In *Camelephant*, he applied paper to wet paint.

would rather give up my art than let it come ahead of my Christian vows," and that his "greatest satisfaction" was being a priest. His parish was in Atkinson, Illinois, less than an hour's drive from St. Ambrose. "It keeps me in contact not only with people but with what I'm ordained for. . . . I like being a priest there because it is a beautiful recall to reality, where I am confronted with life and death, with everyday people and their problems and their very real existence."

Although Catich was described as theologically conservative, he enjoyed shaking up his parishioners from the pulpit. In 1979 he recalled a service at which "I said something like, 'When God is displeased, she means what she says.' You better believe that perks up a congregation." Catich was not trying to be radical—only modern.

This approach applied to his art as well. "A basic principle of religious art is that we must express religious truths in contemporary terms," he contended. In 1950, he reportedly received a reprimand from the apostolic delegate, directing him to remove his painting *Theophora* from an exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. *Theophora* (Greek for "the one who brings the light") depicts a black Jesus sitting on the lap of a white Madonna. Years later, Catich's colleague Paul Herrera said that the Vatican had objected to the painting probably not for racial reasons but because it was non-traditional: "The problem," Herrera said, "was portraying religious characters as modern characters."

**I**n 1952, the Vatican issued its *Instruction on Holy Art*, which outlined acceptable portrayals of the sacred in modern art. "Every one is aware of the aberrations in vogue today with regard to matters of Sacred Art that have found ready acceptance in public and private art exhibitions," stated correspondence from the Holy Office in 1955 to the Vatican's representative in the United States. "Portrayal of sacred persons or objects borders on the shocking or ridiculous and, sad to say, in some instances have been introduced into churches, thereby profaning the house of God." The *Instruction on Holy Art* was not intended to "hinder progress towards lasting displays of

a truly sacred art," but rather to "[safeguard] faith and christian piety."

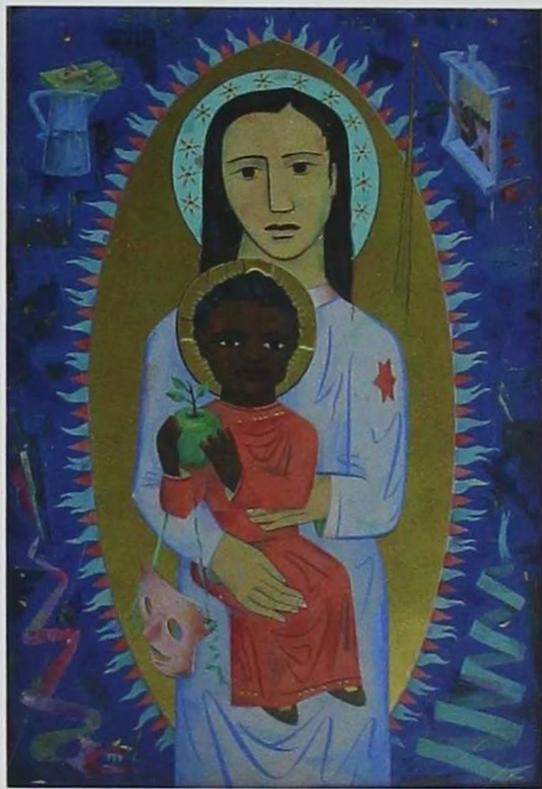
Catich's creative work in relation to the Vatican's *Instruction on Holy Art* was the subject of a letter in 1961 from the Vatican's U.S. representative to the bishop of the Davenport Diocese (in which Catich served). Bishop Ralph L. Hayes was informed that the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office had rendered a decision dealing "with a series of 'holy cards' that were designed by a priest from the Diocese of Davenport."

The letter instructed Hayes to "caution the priest in question so that in his artistic activity he exercise more discipline in accord with the norms of the Holy Office" and "observe the precepts" of the *Instruction on Holy Art*. Within four days, Hayes replied that Catich had "promised to observe the precept set forth . . . and in proof of his sincerity he is withdrawing from circulation the series of 'holy cards'" (small devotional cards bearing images of Jesus, saints, and biblical scenes).

Six months later Hayes was contacted again by the Vatican representative: "It has come to attention that The Catholic Messenger of December 21, 1961, carried an article by the same priest with illustrations" similar to those on the holy cards.

"The illustrations in question are indeed modern," Hayes countered, "but, in my opinion, they are not undignified nor grotesque; neither do they tend to diminish the piety and the devotion of the faithful. I have talked with many of our priests regarding this type of illustration produced by Father Catich. Some do not agree with his basic ideas of art; I have met none who considered the illustrations a source of scandal."

These were not the first times that Catich came under fire for his holy cards or illustrations. According to the *Catholic Messenger*, the priest had printed holy cards in the late 1940s in which Jesus was represented as black. "The truth of theology is that the artist must represent the age in which he lives. Christ to a Negro must be a Negro for him to be meaningful. For a Chinese person, Christ must be Chinese," he said years later. "The Vatican stepped down on me for the Negro Christ, but now I've kind of disregarded that. I think we've come



**In Catich's *Theophora*, a black Jesus sits on a white Madonna's lap, against a backdrop of gold leaf and symbols**



**Above: St. Joseph wears modern work clothes and a carpenter's apron on this holy card, one of dozens designed and printed by Catich.**

**Right: He depicted the events surrounding the Crucifixion as modern-day events to remind Christians that the meaning applies to today. In this Station of the Cross, a press photographer snaps a picture of Jesus as he falls for the first time. This series hangs in the St. Ambrose chapel.**



to a point in our Church where they're beginning to recognize that this is the right approach."

Catich operated his own press on which he printed the holy cards and other materials. He chose the name Catfish Press not because of its similarity to his own name. Rather, he wanted the name to reflect his mission, "a pictorial theology proportioned to our age." Because the fish is an august symbol in Christianity, he adapted it to the Mississippi region: "Had the early Christians lived in the Mississippi valley and had they elected to choose the fish as symbolic of their Eucharist and of Christ, son of God and redeemer, they would have chosen a fish characteristic of and indigenous to that valley—the catfish."

**H**e had no use for sentimentality—"the overdoing of any emotional effect." Reason was paramount. The "view of a long-hair[ed], bearded and gowned Christ is not appropriate for our time," he stated. "Our age is loaded down with millions of reproductions, all too familiar, of a sweetly sentimental portrait-type that calls to mind, not the God-made-Man of better ages, but a bearded lady fit for the circus." "If, on the contrary," he said on another occasion, "Christ is portrayed as a member of our household, and our city, a person of our land and language, we are thrust uncomfortably close to truths

we perhaps would rather not examine for fear of their personal implications in our lives."

This is clearly seen in Catich's creations in the 1950s of Stations of the Cross—series of 14 carvings, pictures, or scriptures depicting the final hours of Jesus and used by Christians to meditate on the meaning of the Crucifixion. For St. Wenceslaus Church in Iowa City, Catich created Stations of the Cross that portrayed Christ and his contemporaries as modern-day figures "because," he explained, "[the stations] are to be used by people living *today*, not in the Medieval, Renaissance or early Christian era. . . . I wish people to see themselves in these Stations and so in the Stations there are laborers, appeasers, intellectuals, and even little children—and all dressed in present day clothing." He pushed to dispel the notion "that Christ's Passion in 33 A.D. has no relationship to the sins committed in 1952 A.D."

For Regina High School in Iowa City, he designed Stations of the Cross with similar modern characters. "We have Pontius Pilate on a swivel chair, glasses on his forehead and reading his legal documents. The soldier guarding Christ holds a left-handed Browning five-shot automatic." He also designed slate Stations of the Cross for a chapel at St. Ambrose College in the 1950s, but because they were deemed controversial, they were not installed until the 1970s.

**Catich (left) examines the Trajan Inscription in Rome.**



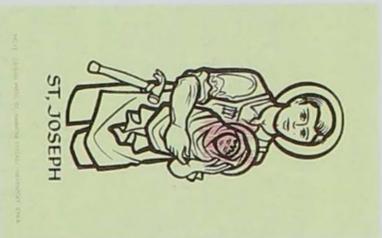
Perhaps Edward Catich's greatest contributions were his scholarly study of lettering and his superb inscriptions and calligraphy. While studying in Rome in the 1930s, he had meticulously examined the Trajan Inscription on the towering Trajan's Column, completed in 113 A.D. to commemorate military campaigns of Roman emperor Trajan. The Trajan Inscription, a single sentence carved at the base of column, is "generally considered the fin-

est example of chisel-cut lettering of the best period of Roman inscription making" and the original model of Roman capital letterforms still used today.

Unlike earlier scholars, who had studied cast reproductions of the inscription in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Catich scrupulously examined the original, measuring, photographing, and making rubbings of the time-eroded letters.

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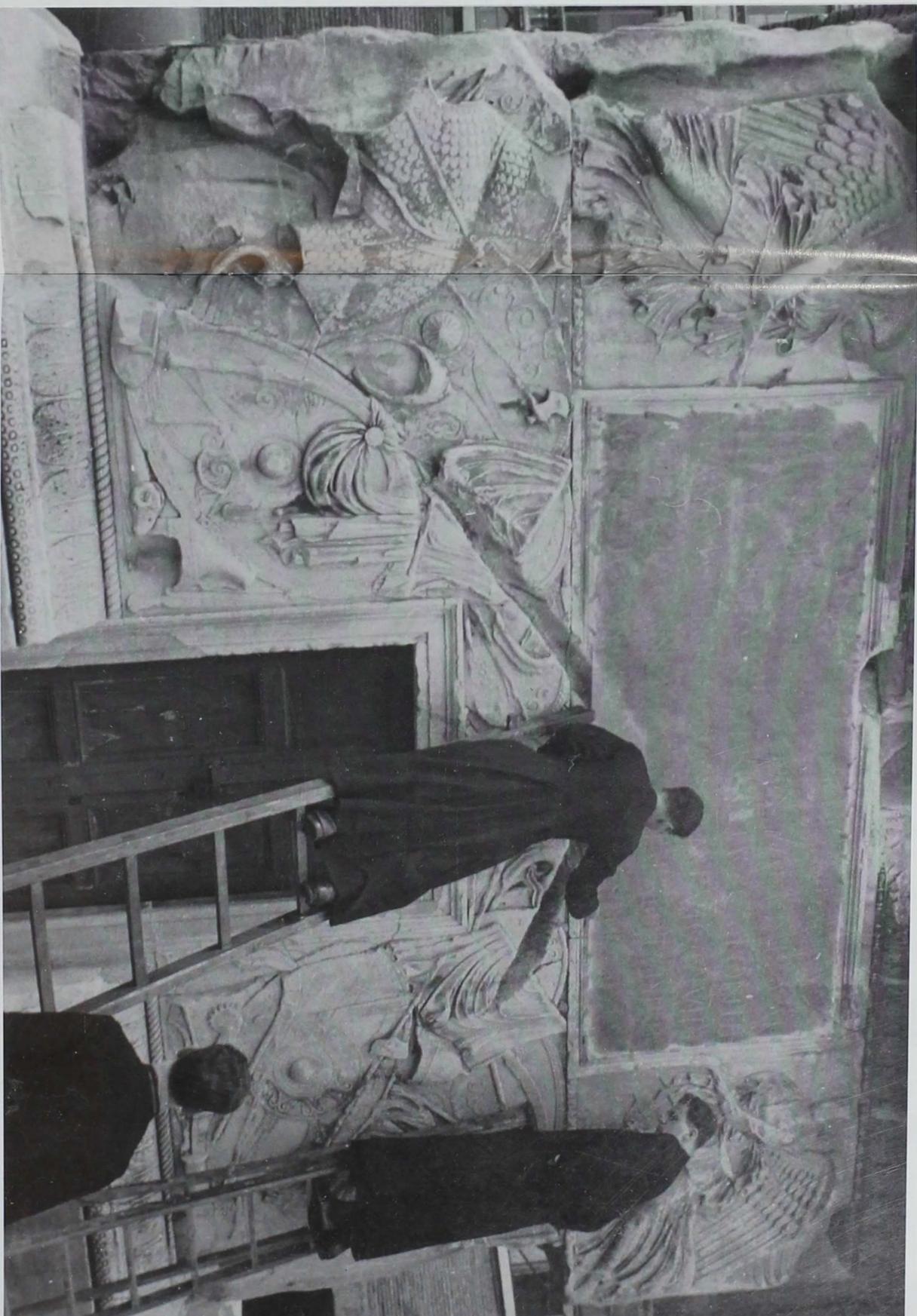
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Fast, direct letter-making, both in department stores and commercial sign shops, was an essential and distinguishing mark of Chicago's sign-making craft. Meticulously and carefully shaped letters, though admired by fellow workmen, often went unnoticed by the sign-shop owner and his client.

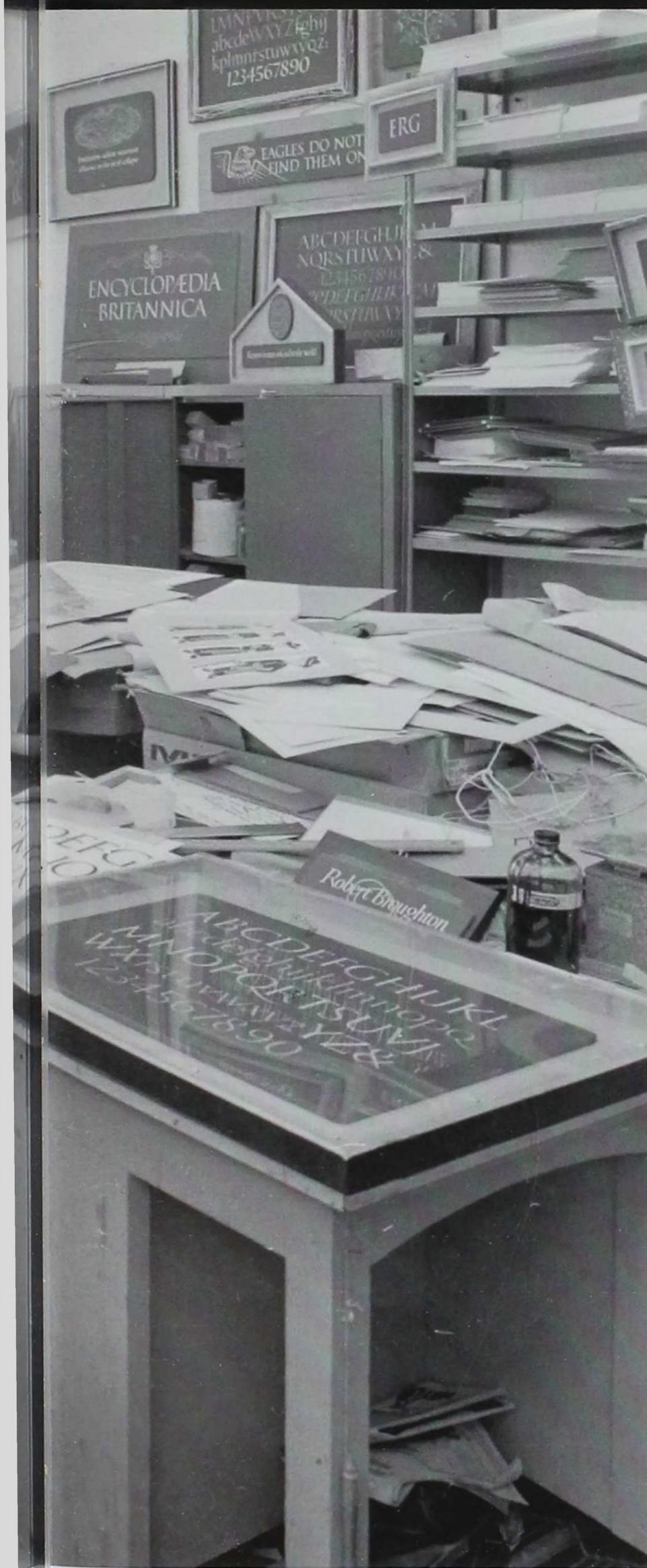
"The reason for fast letter-production in Chicago at this time is readily understood. Trade unions were strong and wages high. . . . Accordingly the fast worker who could turn out a commercially acceptable product was highly prized by his wage-and-price conscious employer, and, in times of stress and unemployment, was the man likely to hold his job."

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Fiercely opinionated about religious art, Catrich spoke out frequently in interviews and lectures, and he wrote more than 50 papers dealing with Christian art. In his 1951 work, *A Priest Speaks on Chalice-Design*, he laid out the ideal design for a chalice in terms of meaning, function, and

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Catich's broadsides joined movement, color, composition, and lettering. Right: He often intertwined animals and letterforms.

design, and decried the then-popular practice of selecting chalices based on their showiness.

When the Los Angeles County Museum of Art was searching for a master carver to inscribe its donor recognition wall, 38 gallery slates, and other graphic designations, "three of the four experts told the search team that if they wanted to get decent letters inscribed, they'd have to go to Iowa and hire Father Catich," according to a *Des Moines Register* reporter. Catich was appointed the museum's permanent consultant in 1964.

For Wichita State University, he designed and inscribed 28 slates identifying the campus buildings. Encyclopedia Britannica commissioned him to design their corporate identity symbol and bicentennial medal. For the Rensselaer Foundation in Troy, New York, he designed and painted alphabets in Hebrew, Greek, and Roman for its auditorium.

Praise followed. Paul F. Gehl, from Chicago's Newberry Library, described him as "a crucial figure in the revival of calligraphy in the U.S. after the second World War" and "unquestionably one of this century's greatest masters of the chisel. . . . What clearly distinguishes him from the merely craft-cutters of stone was his eye for overall composition and especially for the letter forms themselves."

A 2007 exhibit of Catich's work in Davenport included smaller tablets that "spell out entire alphabets, bear Latin inscriptions or amuse with original Catich quips," according to curator Elisabeth Foxley Leach. "There is the whimsy of his organic, and at times gymnastic, alphabets in pen and ink, the devotional aspect of a glittering mosaic, an oil or a gouache, the jewel-like precision of a silver chalice." Exhibit reviewer Bruce Carter described one example of Catich calligra-

phy as "a set of dancing uppercase letters overlapping and touching on slate, like dancers on a stage before an audience of golden lowercase letters."

**E**dward Catich was found dead in his studio on Good Friday, April 14, 1979, at age 73. The *Catholic Messenger*, which had published so many of his expositions on religious art, commented that "to the ordinary, he seemed a recluse of sorts," yet "the mark of talent is everywhere."

Catich did not seek fame; it found him. He was "such an extremely modest man" who "could be quite ignored in his own town," said Kenneth Donahue of the Los Angeles County Museum. "But in Los Angeles, he's a famous man."

In spite of his renown, Catich chose to remain at St. Ambrose. "Being in Iowa is a real godsend to me, because it means being near to the earth. It's where I want to be. Oh, I've been offered positions elsewhere, but where else could I do the things I want to do, and still teach, and not be bothered by too much publicity, and an invasion of privacy, you see? I like the comparative anonymity. A lot of people like to be publicized, but I am not interested in that." ❖

*Author Andrew Harvey graduated from St. Ambrose University in 2007 with bachelor's degrees in theatre and history, and he worked there as the assistant director of alumni and parent relations. He is now a graduate student at Michigan State University, earning his master of fine arts in acting.*



#### NOTE ON SOURCES

The quotation that begins this article ("a man of protean talent . . .") is by Donald McDonald, editor of the *Catholic Messenger* from 1949 to 1959.

The Rev. E. M. Catich Papers are housed in Special Collections & Archives, St. Ambrose University. These include correspondence; the 1950 letter regarding Catich's painting *Theophora* has not been found, either by St. Ambrose archivists or by the chancery office in the Diocese of Davenport.

St. Ambrose owns hundreds of pieces of Catich's artwork across several mediums: slate, calligraphic broadsides, sketches, and oil and watercolor paintings. Many were bequeathed by John Schmits, a former student of Catich's. For electronic access, visit <http://catich.sau.edu>.

Catich expressed his views on religious art in the *Catholic Messenger*, published weekly by the Davenport Diocese. For articles by or about him, see 6-19-1952, 5-17-1956, 3-27-1958, 12-2-1961, 12-21-1961, 4-19-1979, 5-3-1979, 10-19-2006.

Among publications and material by Catich, these were used for this article: *Letters Redrawn from the Trajan Inscription in Rome* (Davenport: Catfish Press, St. Ambrose College, 1961); *Eric Gill: His Social and Artistic Roots* (Iowa City: Prairie Press, 1964); *The Origin of the Serif: Brush Writing & Roman Letters* (Davenport: Catfish Press, St. Ambrose College, [1968]); *Reed, Pen, & Brush Alphabets for Writing and Lettering* (Davenport: Catfish Press, St. Ambrose College, c. 1972); Edward M. Catich, "Address by Fr. Edward M. Catich, Mooseheart Graduate, Class of 1924, Professor, St. Ambrose College, Davenport, Iowa," 61st Annual International Convention of the Supreme Lodge of the World, Loyal Order of Moose, San Francisco, CA, Aug. 1949.

Sources on Catich include *Acorns & Oaks*, St. Ambrose College (Jan. and April 1962); Leslie Bell, "One Facet of Fr. Edward Catich," *Arts Counselor*

(Winter 1979-80); "The Calligraphy of Fr. Catich Distinguishes the Campus Scene," *Wichita State University Alumni Report* (Jan.-Feb. 1980); Carroll Coleman Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City, Iowa; Bruce Carter, "No Compromise, and Nothing Haphazard," *River Cities' Reader*, 3-21-2007, [www.rcreader.com/art/no-compromise-and-nothing-haphazard](http://www.rcreader.com/art/no-compromise-and-nothing-haphazard) (accessed 8-27-2009); "Father Catich: Calligrapher," *Iowan* (Spring 1977); Alma Gaul, "A Painting for This Time," "Catich Was a Giant, a Titan, a Genius," and "Why Did the Vatican Object?" *Quad-City Times*, 12-21-2003; articles by Paul Herrera and James Kelleher in *Edward M. Catich, 1906-1979* (Davenport: Davenport Municipal Art Gallery, 1983); "Iowan Shows Christ in Modern Clothing," *Des Moines Register*, 11-24-1959; Elisabeth Foxley Leach, *Edward M. Catich: Rock, Paper, Scissors, Glass*, exhibit catalog, Figge Art Museum, March 17-May 13, 2007; George William McDaniel, *A Great and Lasting Beginning: The First 125 Years of St. Ambrose University* (Davenport: St. Ambrose University, 2006); James Ney, "Iowa's Master of Ancient Arts," *Des Moines Register*, 8-18-1974; Rensselaer Newman Foundation, "Rensselaer Newman Foundation Tour," <http://www.chapelandculturalcenter.org> (accessed 4-2-2009); and "Selected Chronology" and Thomas F. Chouteau, "Memories of Catich the Teacher," in *Father Edward Catich: The Liturgical Work* (Davenport: St. Ambrose University, 1998).

In Iowa, Catich's religious art appears in Pella (St. Mary Catholic Church), Iowa City (Regina High School and St. Wenceslaus Church), and Davenport (St. Ambrose University).

Annotations to the original manuscript are kept in the *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* production files, State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City).

**RARELY  
SEEN:**  
Cool Stuff  
from the  
**MUSEUM**



*Text by curators Michael Smith,  
Bill Johnson, and Jack Lufkin*

*Photography by John Zeller*



**"Hey, that's cool!"**

**That's what we hear from some of our visitors when they happen upon a particular item in our museum exhibits.**

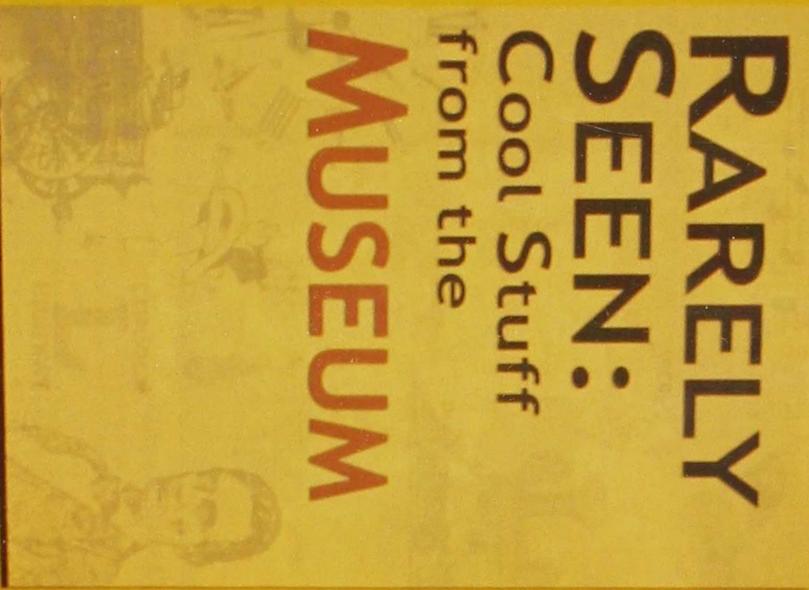
**Others might remark, "Remember how Grandma used to have one like that?"**

**Or, "You never see those anymore, do you?"**

**Surely you'll make similar comments when you visit our new exhibit "Rarely Seen: Cool Stuff from the Museum."**

**On these pages, enjoy a sampling of some of the "cool stuff" we're showcasing.**





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**T**he State Historical Society has been collecting the stuff of Iowa history for over 150 years.

Some objects in our museum collections relate to famous people, places, and events that are prominent in our collective memory. Think of foreign dignitaries and faraway wars, or local disasters and popular landmarks.

Ordinary people and everyday events, however, are as meaningful as are famous people and momentous events. So, too, are common rites of passage—like marrying and mourning—and everyday objects—like toys and chairs.

Objects that represent innovation remind us that Iowans have continually searched for better, faster, and easier technologies—whether in agriculture or electronics.

Works of art offer unique visions of the world. They add beauty to our lives, sustain cultural traditions, and feed the imagination, be they sculpture, needlework, theater, or music.

In a 1959 visit to Iowa, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev presented this cloak, or burka, to Coon Rapids farmer Roswell Garst, explaining that as a young man he had worn one while herding sheep in the Ukraine.

An innovator in hybrid seed corn and agricultural technology, Garst had hosted delegations and exchanged visits with agriculturalists from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Garst first met Khrushchev in 1955 at his summer home in the Crimea.

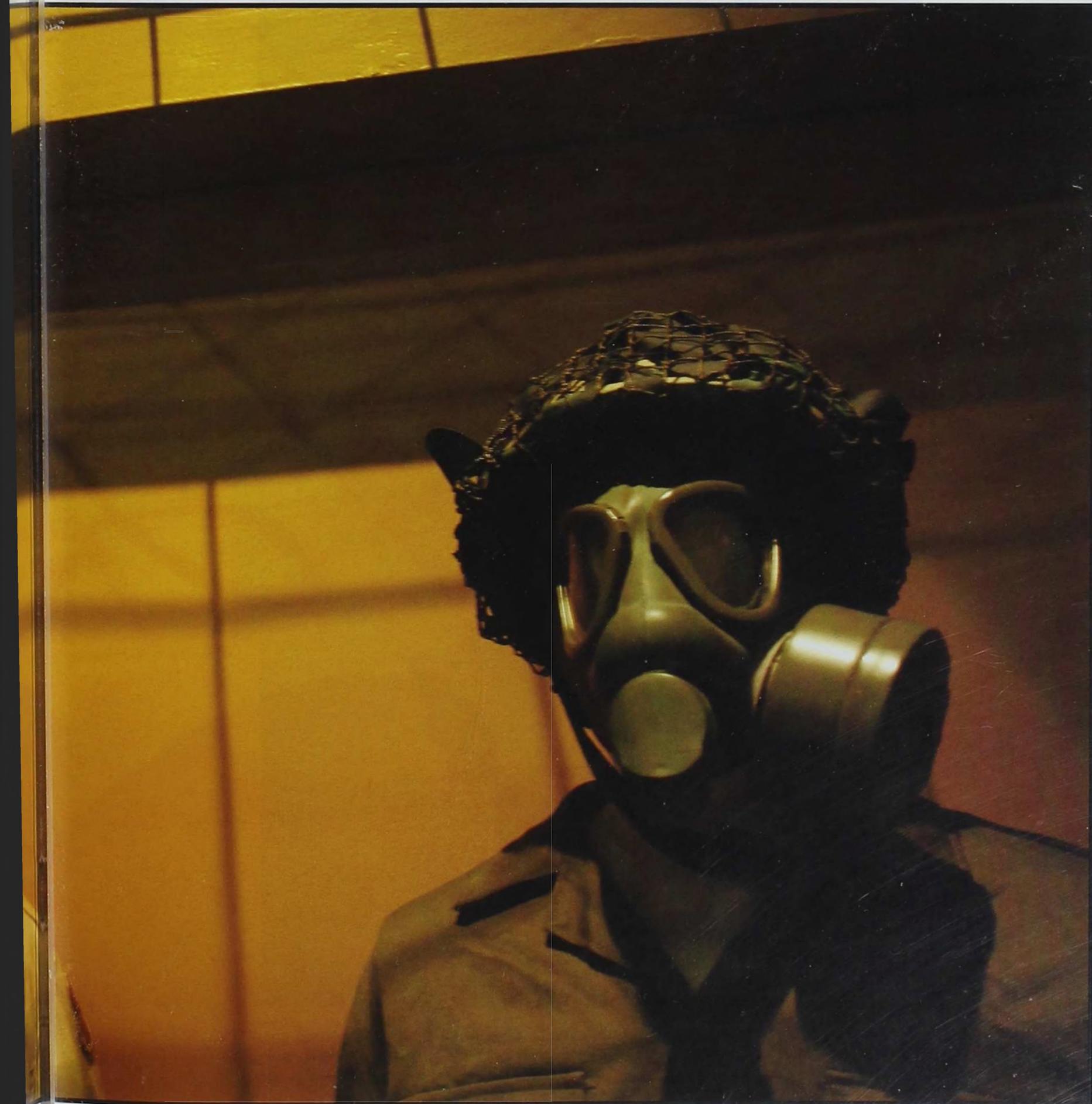


On left: Operation Iraqi Freedom was in its second year when Sgt. Shelaine Tuytchaegers donned this uniform. Based in Des Moines, she and other members of the 366th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment U.S. Army Reserve were ordered to Mosul. There she served as a broadcast journalist.

Right: Maj. Edward Bryja acquired this Iraqi enlisted man's uniform while inspecting one of the many warehouses in the Taji area in Iraq. Bryja was deployed to Iraq in 2003 as a public affairs officer with the U.S. Army's Third Corps Support Command. During his tour he investigated the Republican Guard bases near Taji. This area held an Iraqi army air force base, repair facilities for the local Hammurabi Mechanized Division, rocket factories, and reported botulism and uranium enrichment facilities.

The gas mask is a reminder of the weapons of mass destruction that the multinational forces expected to encounter.





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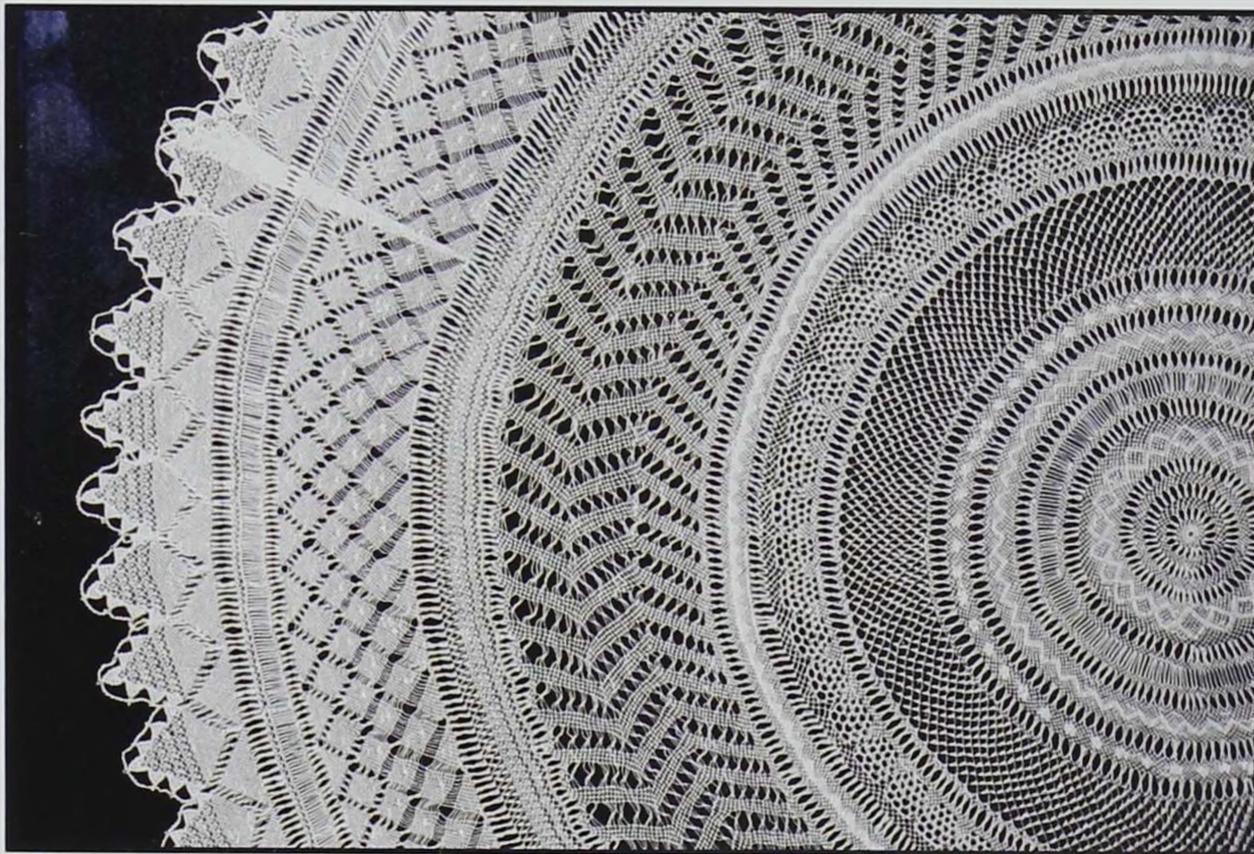
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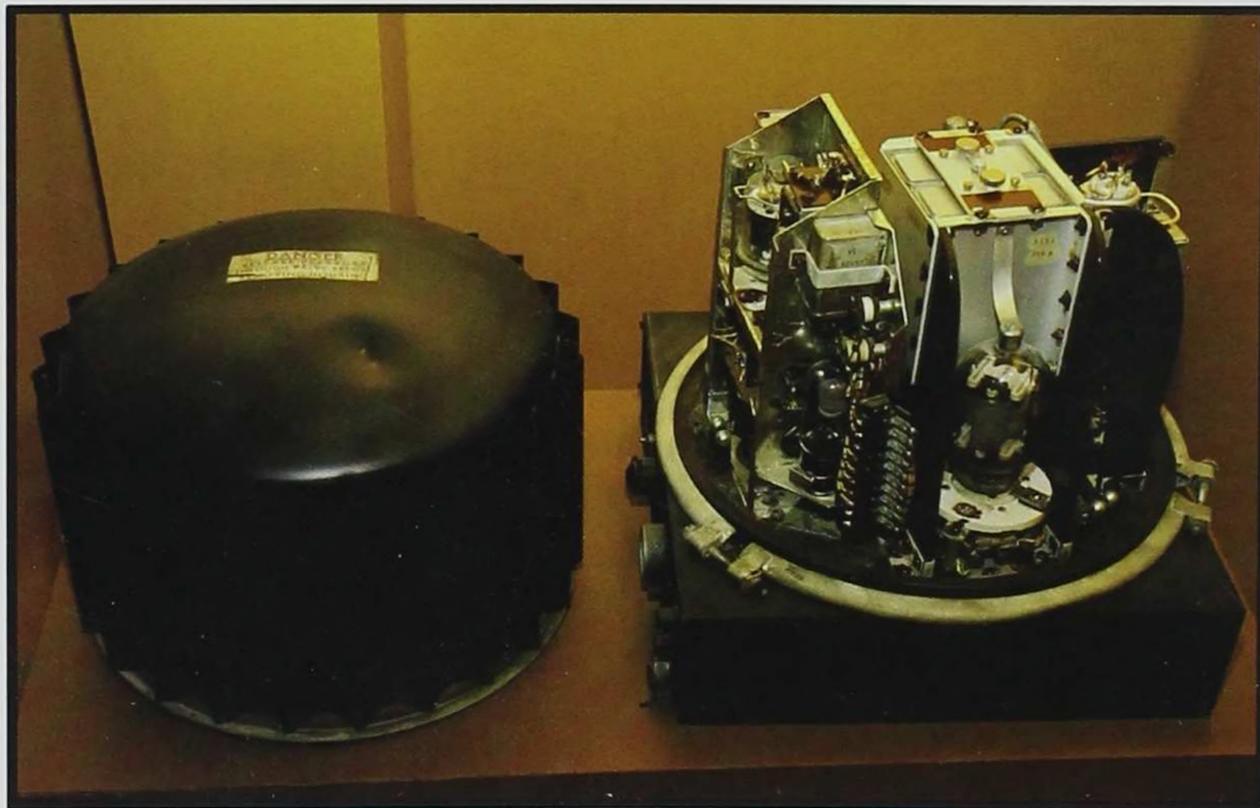
Designed to circulate air and dispel odors in a barn, ventilators like this one were commonly installed on barn roofs. This galvanized-steel Tip Top Ventilator was made in Des Moines by the Anderson Manufacturing Company and was used on a barn on the Van Pilsum farm near Prairie City about 1920.



Genevieve Nahra Mougin keeps alive her Lebanese heritage through traditional lacework. She says, "It's just something to do with my old age."

Her mother began teaching her needlework when she was only seven, using an ordinary needle and fine linen thread. The craft is known throughout the Middle East and is referred to variously as Phoenician, Syrian, Armenian, Arabian, or, simply, knotted lace.

She uses no patterns. Her designs, she says, "come straight from my head." Her most ambitious piece is this drum table cloth. With a diameter of 47 inches, it took her over eight months to complete. She wears two pairs of glasses because of the delicacy of the lacework.



The threat of German U-boats in World War II was brought under control by the electronic wizardry of George Town, Kenneth Henderson, and Harold Goldberg. Working for the Stromberg-Carlson Company, they developed the radar power source that brought the Navy Standard Radar Modulator (Moar II) into service as airborne radar. The units revolutionized the defense against German submarines. The radar could detect a periscope at four miles and a submarine's conning tower at 45 miles.

After the war, Town and Henderson joined the engineering faculty at Iowa State University.

Like many couples in the early 1940s, Arlene Alberts and Clinton Fogde were ready to marry after World War II ended.

But Arlene could not find a wedding dress, and white silk was not to be had anywhere because most of it was used for parachutes. That was when Clinton realized that he had ready access to yards of white parachute silk.

Still enlisted, Clinton and his buddies in the army air corps readied a cargo plane with a large cargo parachute tied to railroad ties. They took off from their station near Omaha. Flying low over the Alberts farm near Pocahontas, they pushed out the parachute. It floated down on the farm and was recovered by Arlene's father. Arlene had her dress fashioned out of the silk, and the couple was married on June 16.

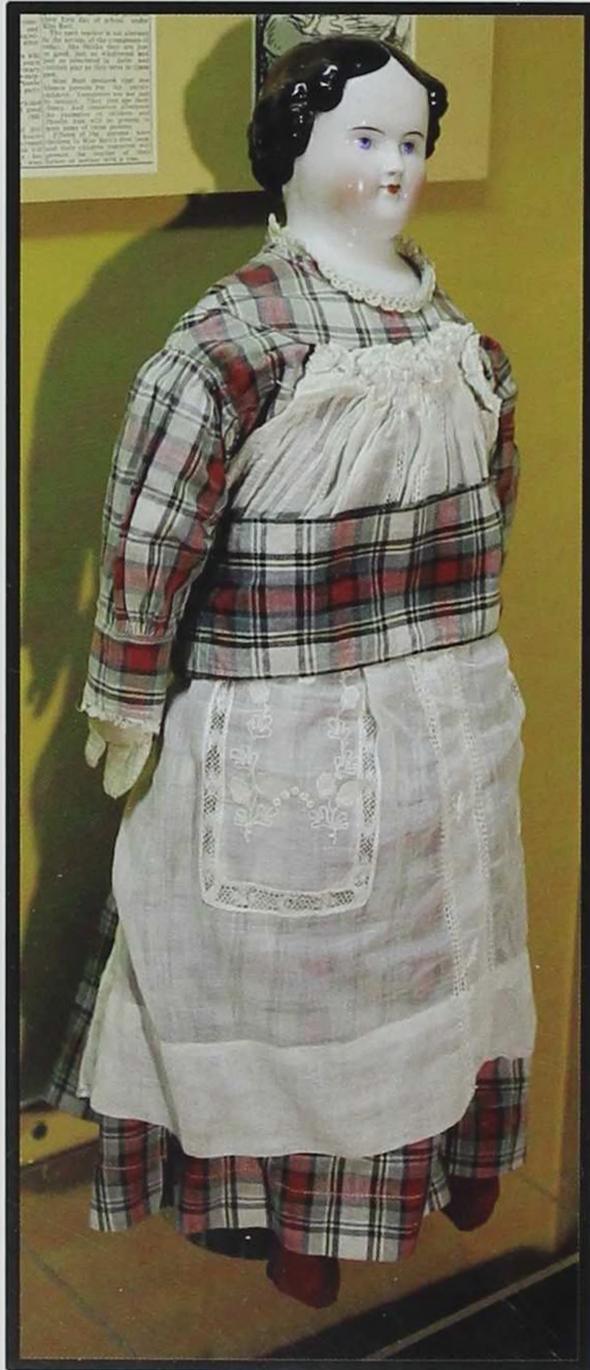




The "Torch of Life" was a daily reminder to Des Moines motorists to drive safely. In 1967 the sign was installed prominently on the exterior wall of the National Traveler's Life Insurance Company office on Keosauqua Way. On days when traffic fatalities occurred in Polk County, the neon light was turned off, signifying an extinguished life.



This stately hearse belonged to Elias Parker, who entered the funeral business in Jesup in 1912. Before that he was a farmer and blacksmith.



### Phoebe Ann Will Greet Old Friends Tomorrow

**MARGARET BURT.**  
made for her just seventy years ago this Christmas.

They include a ruffled pair of "panties," an undershirt, a chemise, a corset cover, a petticoat and a white embroidered dress with a red sash.

Boys, Miss Burt claims, are more maternal than girls. Boys always remember Phoebe Ann and ask about her whenever an old Longfellow student and Miss Burt meet, she avers.

Many men and women now living in the city recall the days when grief and homesickness were soothed by holding the doll or hearing a story about Phoebe Ann. She, like Miss Burt, played a prominent part in the lives of the little children, who attended their first day of school under Miss Burt.

The aged teacher is not alarmed by the actions of the youngsters of today. She thinks they are just as good, just as wholesome and just as interested in dolls and childish play as they were in times past.

Miss Burt declares that she blames parents for the unruly children. Youngsters are not bad by instinct. They just ape their elders. And tomorrow afternoon the champion of children and Phoebe Ann will be present to meet some of these parents.

Fifteen of the parents were children in Miss Burt's first room and their children tomorrow will be present tomorrow in her "dress-up" clothes, which were

**Phoebe Ann**

**E**NTERS Phoebe Ann, 76-year-old china-headed doll, and makes her bow at Longfellow school again tomorrow, after an absence of several years. Accompanying Phoebe Ann will be Miss Margaret Burt, 76 years old, who taught the primary room at Longfellow for twenty-eight years. It is around Phoebe Ann and Miss Burt that the party will center.

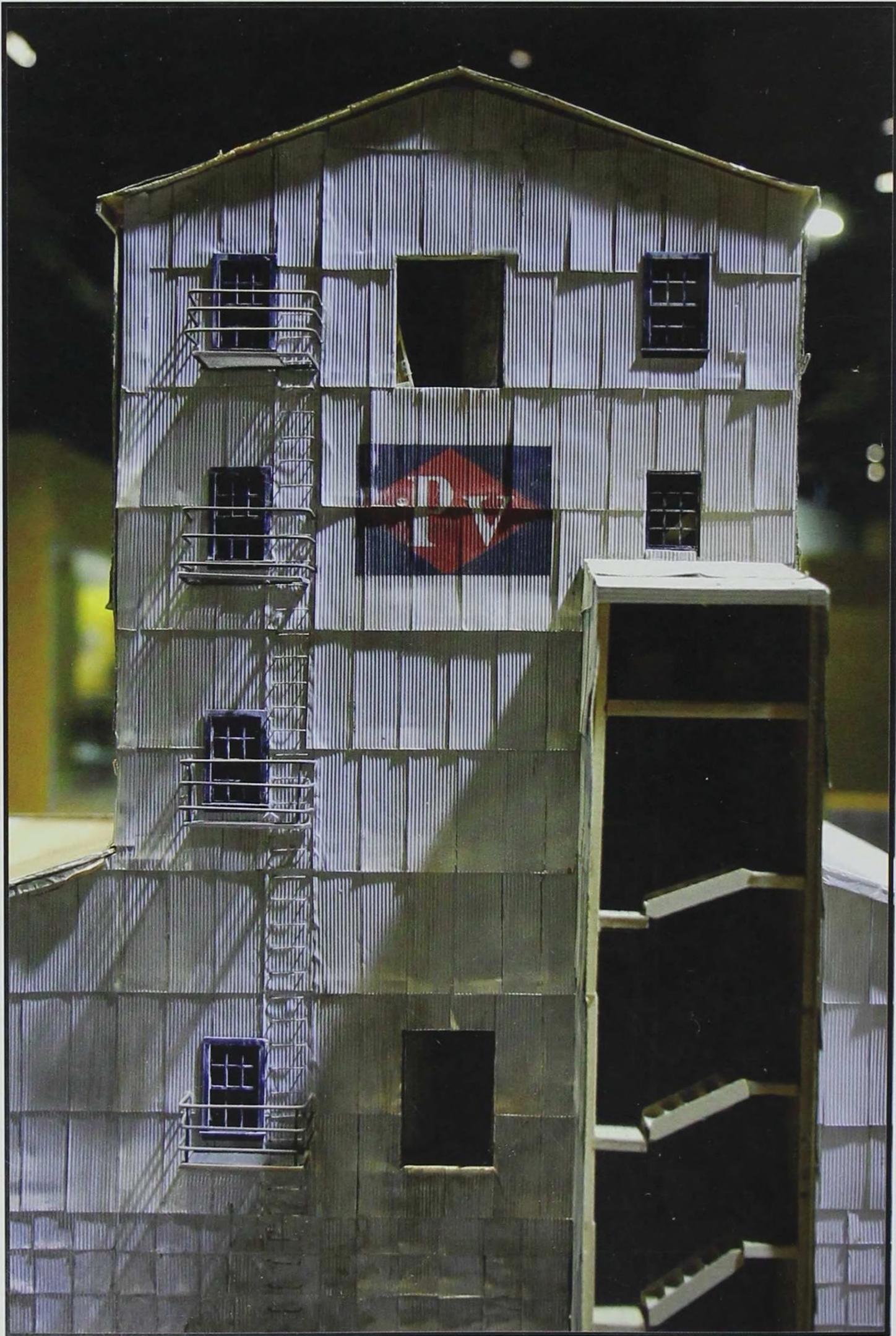
Phoebe Ann has been heralded as the apostle of amity and good will between teacher and children.

The black china-headed doll which used to enchant the hearts of little girls and boys around Christmas and other seasons will be present tomorrow in her "dress-up" clothes, which were

Meet Phoebe Ann. Teacher Margaret Burt used this ceramic china doll to soothe upset or timid kindergarteners at Longfellow School in Des Moines, where Burt taught for 28 years. In 1927 a reporter for the *Des Moines Evening News* recalled that "many men and women now living in the city recall the days when grief and homesickness were soothed by holding the doll or hearing a story about Phoebe Ann."



In 1890 Pastor Paul Bieger left the small Bethany Lutheran Church in Burlington, Iowa. This remembrance quilt was presented to him from the Ladies Aid Society. This close-up reveals only a few of the many varieties of fabrics, stitches, and patterns typical of a crazy quilt.





COURTESY ROBERT W. SCHOEFF, PROFESSOR EMERITUS, GRAIN SCIENCE DEPARTMENT, KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY



Left and bottom right: Two views of the scale model of the Agri Industries grain elevator in Council Bluffs. The model was used as an exhibit in a trial following a disaster at the facility on the afternoon of April 20, 1982.

Council Bluffs residents heard and felt the terrible explosion from miles away. Experts deduced that a spark had ignited grain dust. Fire leveled the elevator house and damaged the massive storage bins, with capacity for over two millions bushels of grain.

Five workers died and 24 were injured. Families of the victims sued Agri Industries.



Local businesses in Johnson County hoped that their ads painted on this theater backdrop would catch the eye of audience members awaiting the start of a performance. The colorful backdrop was used at Center School in Johnson County about 1933.

In the foreground is an Eastlake-style Kimball reed organ from the late 19th century. The organ and stool were sold by Waterloo dealer L. S. Parsons.

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Local businesses in Johnson County hoped that their ads painted on this theater backdrop would catch the eye of audience members awaiting the start of a performance. The colorful backdrop was used at Center School in Johnson County about 1933.

In the foreground is an Eastlake-style Kimball reed organ from the late 19th century. The organ and stool were sold by Waterloo dealer L. S. Parsons.



Behold an almost forgotten 1960s trend, the paper dress. Dorothy Hershner of Cedar Rapids acquired this dress through a promotion; she wore it only once—even though *Time* magazine predicted that cheap and disposable “paper clothing apparently is here to stay.”



Sculpted from Carrara marble, *America* was the creation of Vinnie Ream Hoxie for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair and represented the bounty of this nation.

Born in 1847, Vinnie Ream was awarded a contract from the U.S. Congress in 1866 for a full-size marble statue of Abraham Lincoln for the Capitol rotunda. The first woman to win such a federal commission, she was only 19 at the time.

Hoxie and her husband sometimes summered in Iowa City.

You'll see much more of Iowa history in the State Historical Society's new exhibit "Rarely Seen: Cool Stuff from the Museum."

Even more rarely seen are the staff who created the exhibit, such as technician Vern Tyler (right), who is putting the finishing touches on a furniture display.

Other behind-the-scenes museum staff for this exhibit include Tom Hardie (technician); Jodi Evans (registrar); Jerry Brown (exhibit designer); Pete Sixbey (conservator); Bill Johnson and Jack Lufkin (curators); and Michael Smith (chief curator and interim museum director).

The State Historical Museum is located at 600 E. Locust, Des Moines, Iowa. Hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 9-4:30, and Sunday, noon-4:30. Closed Mondays and official state holidays. [www.iowahistory.org](http://www.iowahistory.org)





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*With surprising candor, a son looks back at his parents and the social dynamics of their neighborhood.*

## Mrs. Horton

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*by Loren N. Horton*

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BOTH PHOTOS COURTESY THE AUTHOR

My family never fit easily into the rural Iowa neighborhood in which we lived, because neither of my parents were born in the area, and we were not related to most of the other people in the area, as was common among the neighbors. We always were respected, but almost like an exotic, foreign family.

Nevertheless, my father, John Samuel Horton, regularly served on various boards—the district school board, the county school board, the telephone company board, the 4-H board, the Farm Bureau board, and so on. Also, he ran for elective office (he always lost), he worked at the election polls as clerk and judge, he worked for the Agricultural Adjustment Act during the New Deal, measuring “set-aside” land. He learned how to do electrical wiring, and he and my older brothers wired many of the houses in the neighborhood when the Rural Electrification Administration put up lines in the area. In other words, he saw such positions and work as part of his civic duties.

My mother, Iva Verona Brooks Horton (*left*), always was known by everyone in the neighborhood as “Mrs. Horton,” while all of the

other women were known by their first names. She refused to join the neighborhood women's club, which my father called the "Sew and Blow Club," but which I think actually was named the "Stitch and Chatter Club." I do know that there was much more chattering than stitching at club meetings.

She was active in the Farm Bureau Women's Group, attended many meetings in which lessons of various kinds were given, and she took classes, too. She learned to play the piano that way, and she learned to identify classical musical periods that way. But she refused to be a leader or an officer. She referred to such leadership positions as "getting us talked about by the neighbors." Calling attention to oneself was a bad thing, to her Victorian way of thinking.

However, as an anomaly to her attitude about calling attention to oneself, my mother regularly wrote the neighborhood news column for the *Murray Journal*, the *Osceola Tribune*, and the *Osceola Sentinel*. From about 1936 through 1950, she was one of the guest columnists for the *Des Moines Tribune*, for a column called "A Farm Woman Speaks Up." The supposed columnist of record was Inez Faber, under the pen name Elizabeth Beresford, but she got together a circle of women from central and southern Iowa, and they wrote most of the columns for her.

My mother enjoyed reading and creative writing. Whenever there was an occasion for some tribute to be written, such as in honor of a 50th anniversary or a wedding, people always came to her to do the writing of it. I remember them well, coming to the house and asking her to write something "that will sound pretty." She always did.

My mother cooperated with

some neighbors, and virtually shunned others. When the threshing ring came to our farm, there were only three women she would allow to come and help her cook: Blanche Coon, Blanche Gill, and *very* occasionally another woman. No one really liked this last woman, mainly because she thought she was better than other people. For instance, at 4-H club meetings all of the other women either fixed or brought food. This woman usually wore a wine-colored velvet dress and sat in the living room, making no effort to help in the kitchen. The most insulting remarks made about her were that "she never brings her apron so she can help out." This really was an insulting thing to say about another woman.

There were several events at which all of the neighbors gathered and brought food, such as the last day of school, a box supper, a pie supper, a cake walk, or a program at school. One of the famous dishes *always* brought to these gatherings was Laura Kane's "Bavarian cream." It was red jello beaten up with whipped cream. It was my favorite food as a child, and we never had it at home. Another famous dish, which no one liked, was another neighbor's chocolate cake with white frosting. The cake was monumentally dry and crumbly, and the frosting was very thick and so solid that whenever a knife or fork was inserted, the frosting shattered into dozens of pieces. Everybody avoided this cake, just as everyone fought to get at the Bavarian cream from Laura Kane.

**M**y mother enjoyed only a few things among the many that, as a farm wife, she had to do. She most assuredly did not enjoy cooking, gardening, washing and ironing clothes, can-

ning, housecleaning, and other such tasks. She gardened a lot and enjoyed flowers, but not vegetables or fruits. The washing, ironing, and housecleaning were done on what could charitably be called an irregular basis.

She sewed shirts for my three brothers and me, she made dresses, nightgowns, and aprons for herself, and nightshirts for everybody in the family. When I was quite young, she made for me what was called "rompers," a one-piece garment. She was very skillful at patching overalls, especially at the knees. Although she was quite good at utilitarian sewing, she much preferred to do sewing that offered a more creative outlet.

One of her favorite things to do was to quilt. She never made crazy quilts or patchwork quilts. Often she designed her own quilt patterns, but more often she took existing patterns from newspapers and magazines and from Farm Bureau meetings, and adapted them to her own ideas. After my folks moved from the farm into town, they burned or discarded hundreds of patterns before I could rescue them for their historical value.

She used all sorts of fabrics when she cut out quilt pieces. Usually the pieces were from old dresses and shirts, quite often from flowered or patterned feed and flour sacks, and sometimes from remnants given to her by other people. There was always a box or basket sitting by her chair, in which she kept the remnants, scissors, and whatever quilt piece pattern she happened to be working on at the moment. When we were sitting around the stove on fall and winter evenings, she would cut out quilt pieces while my father cracked walnuts and picked out the meats.

Some fabric remnants were large enough that Mom cut carpet



Iva and John Horton and their sons (clockwise from left) George, Harvey, Lowell, and Loren, about 1940.

rags from them, sewed them together, and rolled them in a large ball. When she had enough balls, she would take them to the weaver who wove them into long carpets, which we used as stair runners and in front of the kitchen stove and the sink. Carpets woven of denim from our overalls were used inside the back door to wipe our feet on when we came in from outside.

Quilts were utilitarian objects to us. We used them on beds for warmth in the winter, and we laid them on tops of beds all year around as "bed spreads." Mom also made comforters, which were made

of larger pieces, were tied rather than quilted, and had thicker padding between the cover and the backing. Cotton batting was used in quilts, but sometimes old blankets, (even horse blankets), worn-out quilts, or other large sheets of fabric were used as padding in comforters (or "comforts," as we called them).

When my mother was ready to "put a quilt in the frames," the frames were set up in the west end of our living room, and until a significant proportion of the quilt was finished and "rolled under," the traffic pattern through the room was very interrupted.

Various neighborhood women came to help her quilt. Among them might be Maggie "Mippy" McNeal Coon, Mary Alice "Allie" Twombly Brand, Loura Adams Kane, the two Blanches, Fern Moran, Addie Woods Burchett, Marjorie Day Havard, Alta Welker Havard, Mat-

tie Kelley (known to me as Aunt Dollie), and perhaps others I can't remember.

Another neighbor woman sometimes came to help, but after she had left my mother would pull out all of her stitches and do them over, because the stitches were "too big, not straight, not neat." Another woman would have been welcome, but she didn't drive, and her husband was not welcome anywhere except in his own home—perhaps not even there. Of this man, my father once remarked: "I hope I outlive him, just so I can help bury him, and tamp the dirt down really hard on top of him so that he can't get out."

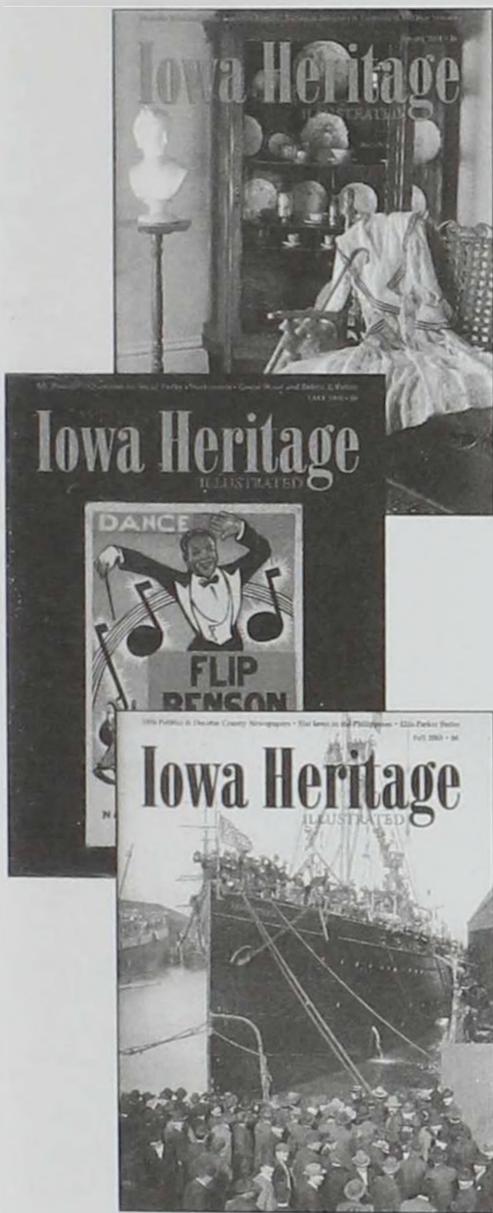
I well remember my mother describing the day, in about 1943, when she and Blanche Coon were helping quilt at Blanche Gill's house. After a while they noticed that Blanche Coon was quietly crying as she quilted. They asked her what was the matter. She told them that she had just gotten word that day that her adopted son, Johnnie, had been killed in action when his ship, the cruiser *Houston*, was sunk in the South Pacific.

In later years I asked Mom how many quilts she had made in her lifetime. She estimated that she made at least four a year from 1914 until 1940. After that she mostly made several baby quilts for various members of the family, and lap robes to distribute at veterans hospitals. She backed the lap robes with flannel because she thought that anything smoother would slide off the patients' laps.

She was still making lap robes until her eyesight failed in 1977. ❖

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Loren N. Horton lives in Iowa City. He continues to research, write, and lecture on Iowa history, after 17 years of teaching and 24 years at the State Historical Society of Iowa.



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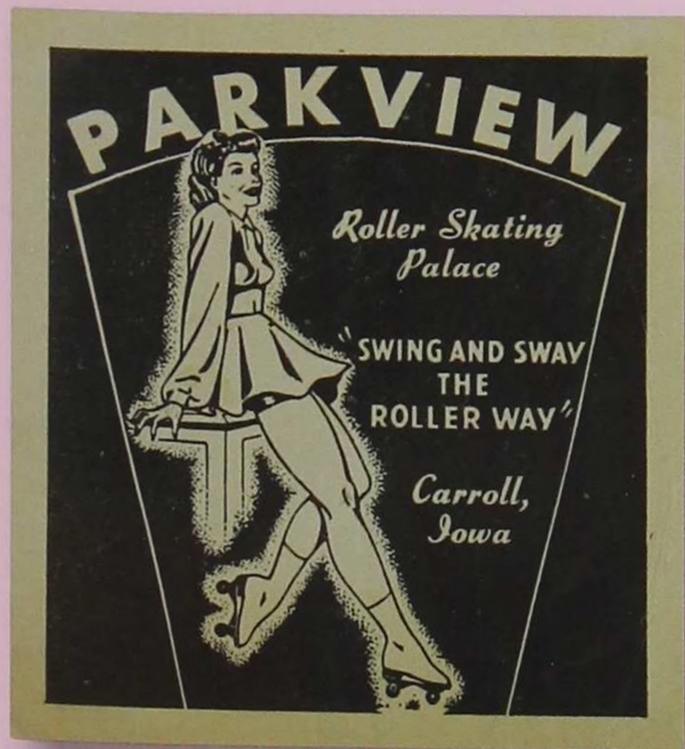
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## One in a Million

Collecting and trading roller skating stickers was great fun for skaters who displayed them on their metal skate cases, and free promotion for the skating rinks that handed them out for free. Representing five rinks in Iowa, these date from the 1950s.

PHOTOS BY JOHN ZELLER



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