

Khrushchev in Iowa • 20th-Century Architecture • Underground Railroad Letter • Arbor Day

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Iowa Heritage

ILLUSTRATED



Front Porch

Dear Readers,

In 1959, a 65-year-old world leader named Nikita Khrushchev came to Iowa, amidst great national and local fanfare. For days preceding his arrival, newspaper articles touched on every aspect of his visit to the United States—his first bite of apple pie, what he and his wife wore to dinner, his response to watching Shirley MacLaine dance the can-can on a Hollywood set, the type of weapons carried by his bodyguards. Reporters jotted down when he scowled, when he joked. Transcripts of his speeches filled the pages; columnists guessed at their deeper meaning. The fact that he was coming to Iowa, his only midwestern stop, and in particular to meet an Iowa farmer, made Nikita Khrushchev's visit hot news during the Cold War. That story appears in this issue. Some of you may have memories of that event.

We also feature the story of another individual's arrival in Iowa, a century before Khrushchev. In 1858, 16-year-old Fannie (later, Frances) Overton came to this state, but her arrival was kept secret. The oppressive 1850 Fugitive Slave Law penalized any citizen who assisted runaway slaves, so keeping a low profile was essential for abolitionists as well as for the fugitives themselves.

The young African American slipped into Grinnell, stayed for awhile with a helpful family, and even attended school. Then as local tensions built up, she slipped out of town—another courageous, resourceful traveler on that risky and secretive network called the Underground Railroad.

Today the Underground Railroad is hot news. Do an Internet search for the topic on Google—that great measuring stick of current culture—and you'll come up with well over two million sites. (Nikita Khrushchev on the other hand only brings up 106,000.) Iowa has joined

other states in a National Park Service initiative to identify, document, protect, and interpret the sites related to the Underground Railroad. The Iowa Freedom Trail Project is an ambitious effort, trying to uncover what was deliberately kept secret, and which therefore left behind little historical evidence. As early as 1872, *Iowa State Register* editor Ret Clarkson lamented that "every day the various items and incidents of these historic facts [about the Underground Railroad are] rapidly being forgotten."

Clarkson was right. Today, "Iowa is left with snippets of that past," writes historian Lowell Soike. "A few reminiscences here and there survive along with an occasional account in a county history book or a letter deposited at a library or archives. Because little survives of that [Underground Railroad] history in documents, it is important to seek other means as well for telling the story. The places where things happened and the artifacts they left behind can become part of the effort."

Working with Soike and the project's historical researcher, John Zeller, at the State Historical Society of Iowa, historians and archaeologists have been searching for documentable Underground Railroad sites in Iowa and related artifacts. It is tedious, painstaking work, sometimes helped, and sometimes complicated, by local memory and tradition that have accumulated around such a dramatic and covert operation as the Underground Railroad.

Once the Iowa Freedom Trail Project is completed, we'll tell you about its discoveries. In the meantime, we present in this issue one of those precious reminiscences that did survive, a letter describing young Frances Overton's arrival and stay in Grinnell "by the underground line."

—The Editor

Iowa Heritage Illustrated

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On the Cover

In Cerro Gordo County, the Ventura High School Auditorium and Gymnasium was completed in 1940, under the federal Work Projects Administration. This issue presents some of Iowa's most significant 20th-century architecture, as selected and celebrated by the American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter. (Photo copyright Cameron Campbell)

Comrade Khrushchev and Farmer Garst

Summit in an Iowa Cornfield

by Stephen J. Frese

The parade of foreign policy usually skipped rural Iowa, but on September 23, 1959, the eyes of the nation focused on Coon Rapids. Invited guests, curious onlookers, anxious reporters, and sharp-eyed photographers surrounded Roswell and Elizabeth Garst's white, wooden farmhouse. Awaiting the official motorcade, National Guardsmen lined the 75 miles of highway running between Des Moines and Garst's farm in Carroll County. Soviet Premier Nikita Sergeyeovich Khrushchev was touring the heart of the midwestern corn belt to see for himself (as one journalist put it) why "agriculture, America's biggest success, [was] communism's biggest failure."

Khrushchev was exploring capitalist agricultural practices, hoping to adapt them to Russian collective farms (*kolkhozes*). His encounters with Iowa farmer Roswell Garst helped open dialogue between the world's superpowers. Khrushchev believed that "an exchange of opinions would help . . . the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. come to understand each other better and show greater pliancy in settling controversial matters." Roswell Garst agreed. "You know," Garst told Khrushchev, "we two farmers could settle the problems of the world faster than diplomats."

Iowan Roswell Garst had begun sowing the seeds of his agricultural empire as early as 1916. In the following decades, he explored cutting-edge technologies: hybrid seed corn, intensive use of nitrogen fertilizers, and cellulose-enriched cattle feed. He partnered with Charley Thomas in the early 1930s to develop Garst and Thomas Hybrid Seed Corn Company, one of the largest operations of its kind in the nation. By the 1950s, Roswell Garst was well known among agriculturalists as innovative, independent, and vocal—and opinionated.

Westerners knew little about Khrushchev when he emerged as the undisputed leader of the Soviet Union in 1955. Would he offer hope for peace? Or would he trigger World War III and nuclear annihilation?



HE HAS THE MOON BUT WE HAVE THE HARVEST

Political cartoonist Frank Miller depicts Khrushchev, suitcase in hand, headed toward an Iowa farm, with a full moon and rocket overhead. On the day Khrushchev arrived in the United States—September 15, 1959—he announced that a Soviet rocket had reached the moon. The cartoon appeared on September 20, in anticipation of his arrival in Iowa two days later.

Born in 1894, Nikita Khrushchev was the son of peasants; as a boy, he tended sheep. "We children were lucky if we had a decent pair of shoes," he recalled. "We wiped our noses with our sleeves and kept our trousers up with a piece of string." He learned the blacksmith and locksmith trades, joined the Bolsheviks in 1918, served two years in the Red Army, and then climbed the Communist Party ladder one rung at a time until he reached Josef Stalin's inner circle. When Stalin died in 1953, Khrushchev's comrades underestimated him because he lacked formal education. Loyal to Stalin for almost thirty years, the man political "experts forgot to notice . . . turned out to be the dark horse in Stalin's stable," the *Des Moines Register* reported. Ten

days after Stalin's death, Khrushchev became first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the platform from which Stalin had vaulted into absolute power.

Khrushchev's first priority was to shift from Stalin's emphasis on industrialization and military expansion to the condition of Soviet farms. Under Stalin, the Soviets had produced little milk, meat, or eggs and suffered mass starvation. "My father thought that the Soviet political system could give people a better life," explained Sergei Khrushchev, Nikita's son, in a December 2003 interview. War breeds destruction; increased agricultural production, Sergei's father had insisted, promised Russia a prosperous future. "Persons are much more important than missiles," Sergei continued. "If you are producing missiles, you are wasting your resources. If you increase food production, you make life better for your people."

In a February 1955 speech before the Communist Central Committee, Khrushchev demanded that corn production increase by 800 percent by 1960. Offering a rare—and well-publicized—expression of praise for the United States and its animal husbandry, Khrushchev called for a Russian corn belt to produce grain to feed livestock. "That's just what the Russian economy needs—more and better livestock so the Russian people can eat better," stated *Des Moines Register* editorialist Lauren Soth that same month.

Soth continued: "We have no diplomatic authority . . . but we hereby extend an invitation to any delegation Khrushchev wants to select to come to Iowa to get the lowdown on raising high quality cattle, hogs, sheep and chickens. We promise to hide none of our 'secrets.' We will take the visiting delegation to Iowa's great agricultural experiment station at Ames, to some of the leading farmers of Iowa, to our livestock breeders, soil conservation experts and seed companies. Let the Russians see how we do it."

Soth also suggested sending a delegation of Iowa farmers, agronomists, and livestock specialists to the Soviet Union. At a time of increased polarization between Eastern Europe and the West, Soth's editorial expressed a minority opinion in the United States. He never thought the Soviets would see his proposal, much less accept it. But they did. "Soviet spies read the *Des Moines Register*, translated this editorial, and put it on Khrushchev's desk within a few days of publication," explained Elizabeth (Liz) Garst, granddaughter of Roswell Garst. Meanwhile, "both the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *New York Times* echoed the idea approvingly, and officials in the State Department and Agriculture were—like it or not—obliged to take the idea

seriously," writes Roswell Garst biographer Harold Lee.

It was a surprise to everyone—including the U.S. State Department—when Khrushchev accepted Soth's bold invitation. That summer, twelve Americans (five of them from Iowa) traveled to the Soviet Union, and Khrushchev sent a delegation to Iowa. After extensive negotiations, the State Department required that only scientists and agronomists—no politicians—be included in the Soviet delegation to the United States. Their plane flew directly to Des Moines, never going near Washington, D.C. The federal government wanted to distance itself from this initial agricultural exchange.

According to Liz Garst, the Iowa Farm Bureau selected only small family farms with no hired labor for the Soviets to tour, in an effort to prove to them that family farms of 80 to 160 acres were superior to Soviet collective farms. "The smallest farms in the Soviet Union were at least 20,000 acres," she explained. The farms managed by Garst, totaling about 5,000 acres, were omitted from the tour itinerary even though they employed the latest technology in grain and livestock production—exactly what the Soviets had come to see.

Using his own influence and connections, Garst managed to meet the visiting deputy minister of agriculture, Vladimir Matskevitch, and described his techniques to the Soviet official. Determined to see Garst's hybrid seed corn operation, Matskevitch refused to accompany his delegation to the next day's scheduled stop. Instead, he accepted the ride Garst provided to Coon Rapids and spent the day with Garst, taking detailed notes he later delivered to Khrushchev.

Impressed with Garst's operation and how his technology could be adapted for Soviet collective farms, Matskevitch invited Garst to come to the Soviet Union later that year. Garst believed a visit could ease Cold War tensions, and he hoped to sell—with the permission of a reluctant U.S. State Department—hybrid seed to the Soviets. He recognized both superpowers' problems in agriculture: for the United States it was surpluses; for the Soviets, it was scarcity. He believed U.S. surpluses could be a "weapon for peace."

State Department officials remained suspicious after the initial agricultural exchange, but Garst argued that he should be free to discuss all he knew about agriculture and to sell equipment and seed if they wanted to buy: "It would be ridiculous to tell them about how rapidly we could plant corn and then say 'we won't sell you a corn planter.'" After much deliberation, the State Department granted Garst an export license and permission to travel to Moscow—although U.S. officials

were sure Garst could not sell the Soviets anything.

The State Department learned not to underestimate Roswell Garst, a master salesman with evangelical enthusiasm for hybrid corn. "If it's sound, it will sell," he often said.

Garst began his Soviet tour in Moscow in September 1955. While in Odessa, he was interrupted in his speech about how American technology could improve Soviet agriculture by a summons to meet privately with Khrushchev in his Crimean summer home. There, Khrushchev and Garst talked about corn production, livestock, and possibilities of East-West trade. After the meeting Garst asked Khrushchev how the Soviet Union could know so little about American agriculture when they had easy access to U.S. farm journals, yet they had been able to steal the atomic bomb in three weeks.

Khrushchev laughed and raised two fingers: "It only took us two weeks. You locked up the atomic bomb, so we had to steal it. When you offered us information about agriculture for nothing, we thought that might be what it was worth."

The next day the Soviets ordered 5,000 tons of hybrid seed. Accounts of Roswell's meeting with Khrushchev appeared in Moscow's newspapers, and CBS News telephoned Garst for a report on the exchange.

Garst also provided journalists some of the first news of Khrushchev's family. Early western newspaper coverage of Khrushchev's rise to power stated that the new leader had been married, but it was not known if his wife was still living. Khrushchev's first wife died of hunger and exhaustion during the famine following the Russian civil war. Divorced from his second wife, he was now married to Nina, who would later host American agricultural delegations and accompany her husband to Coon Rapids. This represented a shift from Stalin's era, when leaders' wives and children were kept away from official events. Family, under Stalin, was a sign of weakness.

Upon his return, Garst wrote excitedly to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson: "We thought of ourselves as Marco Polos when we were in Russia; they think of themselves as descendants of Columbus—discovering the United States for the second time."

Garst hosted several agricultural delegations from the Soviet Union, Romania, and Hungary. "There were always Russians at the farm," Liz Garst remembered. Eastern Europeans were impressed that Roswell, Elizabeth, and their children all worked on their farms. "The image of the absentee capitalist landlord, living in luxury on the proceeds of his wage

slaves, was a preconception they all freely admitted having brought with them," wrote Garst biographer Harold Lee. "They were completely unprepared for the Midwestern lifestyle."

Garst's FBI dossier grew with his successes as a citizen diplomat. Sometimes he cooperated with the FBI; other times he was confrontational. Reviewing Garst's file in 1959, the bureau saw "no indication of any subversive activities, membership in communist front groups or the Communist Party. . . . It is quite apparent that his main interest in Russia and the satellites is in the sale of his product."

In 1956, Garst returned to Eastern Europe accompanied by his wife, Elizabeth. Earlier that year at the Twentieth Party Congress, Khrushchev had condemned Stalin's crimes in a so-called "secret speech," a devastating attack on Stalin and the former ruler's abuse of power. Moscow ordered Soviet satellite governments to read Khrushchev's secret speech at their own party assemblies. In Hungary, students and workers took advantage of the instability the speech caused within the Hungarian Communist Party to launch an uprising. The Garsts were in Budapest when Soviet tanks rolled into the city, stranding them for ten days while Khrushchev's army obliterated the rebels. Roswell and Elizabeth escaped up the Danube River to Czechoslovakia on a Polish coal ship. Disgusted with military actions that contradicted Khrushchev's commitment to peaceful agricultural exchange, Garst called a personal moratorium on East-West relations: "I am afraid to sell even as innocent a product as seed corn to the Russians for fear the material would not be loaded on ships without incidents and bad publicity."

By 1957, Garst's determination to end relations with the Soviet government had faded (though not his interest in Eastern Europe—he traveled to Yugoslavia and hosted a Bulgarian delegation). Monitoring progress in the Soviet Union over the following months, Garst became angry because they had not complied with his recommendations for fertilizing and planting corn. Predicting a colossal failure if the technology was incorrectly applied, Garst wanted to see Khrushchev again to set things straight. He also wanted to discuss "getting this armaments race stopped," something he considered "the most important single thing" facing the world at that time. Garst's message in his letter to Khrushchev was blunt: improving relations between the United States and the Soviet Union was necessary so that time, technology, energy, and valuable resources would not be wasted "preparing for a war that nobody wants—nobody expects—a war no one could survive."

Finally, another visit was arranged. Roswell and

Elizabeth met with Nikita and Nina in early 1959. The men discussed agriculture and prospects for world peace during conversations salted with anecdotes, proverbs, and humor. Their exchanges were sometimes aggressive and argumentative, but they each wanted comprehensive change most of all. Liz Garst described the two men as "quite gregarious and quite cantankerous. They were both showmen, and they were both very much peasants, neither of them were refined men. To tell you the truth, they were both kind of crude. Khrushchev was famous for pounding his shoe on the podium [at the United Nations]. Roswell was famous for putting his feet on farm wives' kitchen tables." Sometimes he still had manure on his shoes. Angry outbursts over their personal opinions of the arms race often interrupted agricultural discussions. Garst could speak bluntly to Khrushchev in a way that official diplomats could not.

At the visit's end, to reciprocate the Khrushchevs' hospitality, Elizabeth Garst invited Nikita and Nina to visit their Iowa home. Their relationship became international news when, on August 6, 1959, Garst was informed that Khrushchev had asked to visit Coon Rapids. Iowa Governor Herschel Loveless initially opposed Khrushchev's planned visit, fearing the encounter would fuel Soviet propaganda. The hostility of Eastern European immigrants toward Khrushchev, Loveless declared, might make the visit a "precarious venture." Many (politicians and private citizens) shared his views. Reactions in Coon Rapids varied. Some thought Garst's interests were purely business: he stood to make money on Soviet sales. One resident stated to a reporter: "You just don't feed your enemies." Another Coon Rapids resident summed it up this way: "I think it's wonderful having the spotlight on our town. Coon Rapids was unknown before, but for one day . . . the whole world will know our town."

Garst himself was unshaken in his belief that Khrushchev should come to the United States. "[Roswell] got lots of hate mail, but nobody knows how much or what they said because he put those letters in the trash can," Liz Garst recalled.

Despite initial reservations, in the month before Khrushchev's trip to the United States nearly 300 cities, towns, organizations, clubs, and individuals submitted invitations requesting the Soviet premier to visit. Invitations arrived at the U.S. State Department and Soviet Embassy everyday. *Washington Post* journalist Tom Wolfe credited America's unofficial "Corn Belt Ambassador to Moscow," Roswell Garst, with starting it all when he had invited Khrushchev to see his Coon Rapids farms.

Khrushchev landed in the United States on September 15, 1959. He arrived in Washington, D.C., amidst the tightest security measures ever undertaken for a visiting foreign visitor at that time. According to reports in the *Des Moines Register*, "even the manhole covers along the 15-mile route from Andrews air force base [were] battened down and sealed." Khrushchev's conversation with Eisenhower in the White House represented the first direct two-way discussion ever held between the president of the United States and the premier of the Soviet Union. At the end of Khrushchev's ten-day trip, he would meet again with Eisenhower for in-depth talks at Camp David. Khrushchev next traveled to New York City, where, according to the *Register*, 7,300 men (including sharpshooters and judo experts) were assigned to protect him in this "haven of anti-Communist refugees." Khrushchev addressed the United Nations, then flew to Los Angeles, where he threatened to end his U.S. visit and return immediately to Moscow because he was offended by the L.A. mayor's "frosty reception." The crisis passed and Khrushchev lunched with Hollywood stars and film industry moguls before traveling by train along the California coast to San Francisco, where he met with union leaders and workers, toured the International Business Machines (IBM) plant in nearby San José, and tasted apple pie for the first time.

The front page of the *Des Moines Register* heralded Khrushchev's arrival in Iowa on Tuesday afternoon,

SHSI (DES MOINES): WALTER VAN HORNE COLLECTION



Khrushchev rides with Governor Herschel Loveless, an interpreter, and Secret Service men in Des Moines.

September 22. According to the *Register*, approximately 25,000 spectators lined Des Moines streets along Khrushchev's route. Crowds, for the most part, were "politely silent." News coverage portrayed Khrushchev's sense of humor and described Iowa's friendly if not enthusiastic welcome. Khrushchev visited the Des Moines Packing Company at 1700 Maury Street, where he and his wife, Nina, sampled their first American hot dogs during their 40-minute tour. Reporters described how cautious security agents had checked the hot dog with a Geiger counter before Khrushchev ate it. "It's excellent. Don't change the formula," Khrushchev remarked through a translator. Plant president Lester Bookey's eleven-year-old son reportedly told Khrushchev that even though the Russians beat the United States to the moon, "we can beat you in sausages." Outside, striking workers from the Iowa Packing Company picketed, carrying signs in both Russian and English urging all people not to eat Swift meat.

During a tour of a farm machinery assembly line at the John Deere Des Moines Works, Khrushchev's comments emphasized the competitive nature of U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations. According to reporters on the scene, Khrushchev told officials that "we will beat you some day" in the arena of manufacturing.

The hectic pace of Khrushchev's travel schedule caught up with him in Des Moines, and Richard Wilson reported in the *Register* that the fatigued Soviet premier had "lost the bounce of the first days of his American journey." Following dinner Tuesday evening with the Greater Des Moines Chamber of Commerce, Khrushchev had his interpreter read his entire speech in En-

glish, rather than delivering it a paragraph at a time in Russian with pauses for translation.

The long day ended at the Hotel Fort Des Moines, where Khrushchev stayed overnight in an eleventh-floor presidential suite. Soldiers reportedly checked the rooms, gift packages, food, glasses, whiskey, and ice cubes with Geiger counters prior to the Soviet premier's arrival.

On Wednesday morning, September 23, the Khrushchev family (including two daughters, Rada and Julia, and son Sergei, then a young engineer in the Soviet missile and space program) headed to the Garst farm. More than 700 National Guardsmen lined the 165-mile route from Des Moines to Coon Rapids to Ames and back to Des Moines.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Garst was the only individual—except for Eisenhower—whom Khrushchev specifically asked to see while in the United States. "Before arriving here I had a picture of Mr. Garst's good farm from accounts and films," Khrushchev had said. "I have known Mr. Garst for years; however it is always better to see than to hear. . . . Let us exchange experience. This will be useful to our countries."

Hundreds of reporters greeted Khrushchev's entourage as it reached Coon Rapids that morning. Reporter Arthur Edson described the scene: "Photographers

Opposite: With reporters clustered around the back of a truck, Khrushchev (in light suit) and Garst hold ears of hybrid seed corn on Garst's farm.

BOTH PHOTOS THIS PAGE: SHSI (DES MOINES) WALTER VAN HORNE COLLECTION



Crowds gathered on the parking ramp at Tenth and Walnut Streets in Des Moines watch Khrushchev's entourage. The signs on the left say: "We are inviting you to attend the S.E. 14th St. Drive-In Theatre." The sign on the right is not so friendly.



roosted in the trees, in the barnlofts, in the upstairs windows, and reporters squeezed and jammed up close as best they could to see what was going on." The Associated Press occupied one barn; United Press International claimed another. A television tower had been built in the upper pasture, and extra phone lines were installed for the occasion. Liz Garst recalled that they set up a press parking lot for 300 cars. "Nobody knows how many reporters showed up on the farm that morning, but estimates range between 1,500 and 3,000 reporters," Liz said. Highway patrolmen, National Guardsmen, caterers, television technicians, politicians, and onlookers converged on the farm. Crowds were beyond control. According to Liz, reporters crushed the silo roof, waded through cattle lots, broke into the house to use the telephone, and trampled friends and neighbors who were invited guests for the day. "As my grandmother said, 'The reporters were really much worse than the flies.'" Reporters asked all the wrong questions, Roswell Garst complained. "They were more interested in what Mrs. Garst was going to serve for lunch than what the exchange could do for world peace."

Garst showed the visitors his large-scale planting, harvesting, and livestock feeding operations, and grew angry at reporters who crowded in too closely. "One of the more famous incidents of the day," Liz recalled, "was when my grandfather started to lose his cool [because reporters] couldn't be kept back." Reporters pressed too close when Garst was showing Khrushchev silage, and Roswell, "in a fit of temper heaved great handfuls of corn silage at the reporters." Corn silage, Liz explained, stinks. "Khrushchev thought that was really funny," Liz said. So did the world press. A photo of Garst pelting reporters and photographers with silage became one of the most published images of



Standing behind a livestock feed bunk, Garst (right) laughs at Khrushchev's remark that "even the horse over there wants to see a Communist." Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., (Khrushchev's official host on the U.S. tour) stands behind the pair.

Khrushchev's visit to the Garst farm. Roswell's display of temper humiliated his wife, Elizabeth. "My grandmother was furious," Liz remembers. "She was humiliated that her crude husband made the world press, made *Life Magazine*," throwing corn silage.

The dignitaries ate lunch under a tent on the lawn. The meal was catered for security reasons, much to Elizabeth Garst's dismay. She had wanted to prepare the meal herself in her own kitchen. Khrushchev sat with Garst and Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. (U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and Khrushchev's official host), Adlai Stevenson (former Illinois governor and Democratic presidential nominee), and Lauren Soth (whose 1955 editorial inviting Khrushchev had won a Pulitzer Prize in 1956). They discussed trade, armaments inspec-

tion, and the ability of their countries to shift to peacetime economies. Later in the afternoon the entourage moved on to tour Iowa State University and the agricultural experiment station there. The next day's stop was Pittsburgh, then on to Washington, D.C., and three days at Camp David.

"Father often reminisced about the American farmer," Sergei Khrushchev wrote years later. "Garst and his sons produced more than any of our collective farms."

Garst's pursuit of peace through agriculture paved the way for Khrushchev's negotiations with Eisenhower. "It was Roswell Garst, pioneering seed corn genius of Coon Rapids, who grubbed most of the underbrush out of the tangled pathway leading to Camp David," wrote journalist Fagan D. Adler. In a television interview conducted in Garst's backyard, Khrushchev stated, "Every conversation I have had with Mr. Garst since 1955 has been important in the build-up for the meeting at Camp David."

Critics denounced Garst as a communist sympathizer. To the contrary, Garst was a capitalist eager to open new markets and make a profit. According to Liz Garst, any profit her grandfather's company made on selling seed to the Soviet Union was offset by cancelled orders from U.S. farmers who refused to do business with a "commie sympathizer."

Roswell Garst estimated that 80 percent of the mail he received expressed hope and confidence that tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union would decrease as a result of this exchange. The rest contained bitter condemnations. To everyone who wrote him prior to Khrushchev's visit, he replied: "Hungry people are dangerous people. . . . The peace of the world is dependent upon solving the world's food problems."

The U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities disagreed, warning in September 1959 that the "great expectations aroused by the exchange [of visits between American and Soviet representatives] reveal the tragic failure of Western statesmen to recognize the character and the magnitude of the Communist challenge." Citing the Soviet response to the Hungarian uprising and Khrushchev's unprovoked threat on Berlin, Henry Kissinger (then associate director for Harvard's Center for International Studies) stated that ending the Cold War depended on political issues—not the Soviet's ability to produce enough food. "The exchange of visits will assist the cause of peace only if it . . . reverses the course which has repeatedly brought the world to the brink of war."

Khrushchev changed Americans' view of himself and his country for the better. "While fearful that this changeable man might someday 'push the button,' many agreed that there is a practical element of sincerity in his attempt to ease tensions," observed Richard Wilson, the *Des Moines Register's* Washington correspondent, four days after Khrushchev's visit to Coon Rapids. Although many of his explorations into American agriculture translated into successful Soviet reforms, ultimately these exchanges contributed to his political downfall. Khrushchev's 1957 pledge to overtake America in agricultural production turned into an embarrassing disaster when he tried to push through too many reforms with too few resources and inadequate infrastructure. Despite his awkward efforts to ease Cold War tensions, Khrushchev's foreign policy blunders triggered the period's most dangerous international crises when he ordered construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and placed missiles in Cuba in 1962.

"I am old and tired," Khrushchev said following the 1964 Presidium meeting that ousted him from power. "Could anyone have dreamed of telling Stalin that he didn't suit us anymore and suggesting he retire? Not even a wet spot would have remained where we had been standing. Now everything is different. The fear is gone, and we can talk as equals. That is my contribution."

Condemned for his failures as a leader and his earlier complicity in Stalin's brutal crimes, Khrushchev became a "nonperson" in the Soviet Union. His name was suppressed by his Kremlin successors, ignored by Soviet citizens, and erased from the country's history books. "After I die," Khrushchev said, "they will place my actions on a scale—on one side evil, on the other side good. I hope the good will outweigh the bad." Khrushchev died in 1971; Roswell Garst, in 1977.

Khrushchev's attempts to reform communism prepared the ground for its eventual collapse, planting seeds of economic restructuring and openness—*perestroika* and *glasnost*—that would germinate under Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin in decades to come. In the late 1980s, Washington realized (or finally admitted) that the "evil empire" had been rotting from within—something Roswell Garst, an unorthodox diplomat, knew all along. Comrade Khrushchev and Farmer Garst recognized that agricultural exchanges provided a legitimate path toward international peace. ❖

Stephen Frese is a sophomore at Marshalltown High School in Marshalltown, Iowa. This article is an expanded version of his 2004 National History Day Senior Historical Paper, for which he won the First Place Medal nationally.

It's not every day you get to call the son of

Editor's Note: Stephen Frese knows what any historical writer quickly learns: research stretches over great periods of time and takes you to unexpected places and people. "It's hard to stop doing research once you get started," he says.

Frese is a sophomore at Marshalltown High School. In 2003, while a freshman, he began researching Khrushchev's 1959 visit to Iowa. "I'd heard that when Khrushchev came to Iowa, he thought that the grain silos were really missile silos in disguise. I wanted to know more about this, and what I learned made the Khrushchev visit to the Roswell Garst farm seem like a perfect topic for the 2004 National History Day theme, 'Exploration, Encounter, Exchange in History.'"

National History Day (NHD) is an academic program that helps students learn about historical issues, people, and events. Students in grades 6 through 12 present historical papers, documentaries, exhibits, or performances at one of 15 district events. Top projects advance to the state event, and then an elite few represent Iowa at the national event. (For details on NHD in Iowa contact Naomi Peuse, State Historical Society of Iowa, 600 E. Locust, Des Moines, IA 50319; 515-281-6860; or by e-mail: Naomi.Peuse@iowa.gov.)

Frese's project, in the Senior Historical Paper division, was selected for national participation at the state event in May 2004. Frese had secured this achievement the previous two years in the junior division, bringing home silver and gold medals. But this year he was participating in the senior division, against students older than he. In June 2004, competing against 84 others, he won first in the nation in his category. The judges marked every criteria "superior."

History Day projects require in-depth research and analysis. Researching over eleven months, Frese used some 60 sources, including books, newspaper and magazine articles, documentaries, primary sources, and interviews (see Note on Sources below). Here we asked this young historian to take us along on his journey into the Garst-Khrushchev story.

While searching the Web for Khrushchev information, I came across a CNN interview with Sergei Khrushchev, son of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. I learned from this interview that Sergei had moved to the United States and become a professor at Brown University. On the Brown University Web site I located Sergei's address and phone number, and then wrote him a letter telling him about my project and requesting an interview. He answered my letter and then we corresponded by e-mail several times before setting December 4, 2003, as the date for a phone interview. Sergei Khrushchev had accompanied his father to Iowa and it was interesting to discuss his memories of the visit. "The Americans thought that the Soviets wanted to build Communism on American soil," Sergei Khrushchev said, "and we were scared that Americans would start war to forcefully implement their way of thinking on us." He corrected one rumor that has persisted in Iowa since 1959: legend has it that Khrushchev thought all of the farm silos were missile silos. "My father knew that there were no missile silos in the United States at that time—the U.S. started building missile silos in 1962," Sergei said. "He knew that Mr. Garst's silos stored food for pigs and cows. My father was interested in pigs more than missiles."

The Roswell Garst Papers at the Iowa State University Archives in Ames were an invaluable source for my research. I examined several boxes that contained extensive correspondence, newspaper clippings from all over the country, Russian newspapers Garst gathered on his many trips (he often made news in the Soviet Union), and transcribed interviews that Garst granted following Khrushchev's visit. Garst included countless letters written by him about the importance of developing agriculture around the world in order to secure a lasting peace.

After researching the Garst Papers at Iowa State, I

NOTE ON SOURCES FOR "COMRADE KHRUSHCHEV AND FARMER GARST: SUMMIT IN AN IOWA CORNFIELD"

Early articles on Garst or Khrushchev included these: Curtis Harnack, "Farm Messiah from Coon Rapids," *Iowan* 4 (June–July 1956): 17–44; "Khrushchev Story: How 'Dark Horse' Took Over," *Des Moines Register*, Feb. 9, 1955; Lauren K. Soth, "If the Russians Want More Meat..." *Des Moines Register*, Feb. 10, 1955; Richard Wilson, "Khrushchev Rise Causes U.S. Concern," *Des Moines Register*, Feb. 9, 1955. During September 1959, the *Des Moines Register* provided extensive coverage of Khrushchev's visit to the U.S. and Iowa, including a series of articles by Harrison Salisbury, Richard Wilson, and George Mills. These articles (too numerous to list here) were very helpful.

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a former Soviet leader

■ by Stephen J. Frese

toured the farm of Roswell and Elizabeth Garst on Highway 141 near Coon Rapids. The farm is now the Garst Farm Resort and is operated by their granddaughter, Elizabeth "Liz" Garst. The tour made the history of my project come to life before my eyes. Being in the place where this historic East-West encounter occurred—even though it was now quiet and there were no reporters nesting in the trees—gave me a sense of its significance. The farmhouse has been restored, maintaining its early 1900s flavor, and is filled with photographs of Khrushchev's visit and the Garst family; memorabilia from the Garst and Thomas Seed Corn Company; gifts from Russian visitors; and hundreds of stories of the Garst family and their guests. With Liz Garst as my tour guide, it was as if the walls could talk.

While interviewing her I learned things that were not disclosed in published accounts. For instance, none of the 700 National Guardsmen activated to protect Premier Khrushchev in Iowa were given bullets for their guns because our State Department was afraid of an assassination attempt from the inside. Liz was eight years old when the visit took place, and the memories she shared with me of her childhood encounters with the Soviets (during the 1959 visit and others before and after) added another dimension to my research. While many American children were conditioned to believe that the Soviets would start a nuclear war, Liz followed Russians around her grandfather's farm, collecting medals from the Soviet visitors and spying on Khrushchev's food-tasters, hoping to find out what would happen if "one of them dropped dead."

Following my tour and interview, I watched a videotape compiled from newsreel footage from Khrushchev's visit. Newscasts showed the crowd of reporters, photographers, and curious onlookers as they crushed in around Garst and Khrushchev throughout their inspection of Garst's farming operations. I had read so many accounts

of the crowded scene, but as Khrushchev often said in quoting a Russian proverb, "It is a hundred times better to see than to hear." I enjoyed watching the chaotic scene for myself while sitting in the farmhouse at the center of the event. Looking out the dining room windows, I could almost imagine the excitement of the day. A sense of place helps bring history to life.

After my day touring and conducting research at the Garst farm I stopped at the Coon Rapids Public Library to read the local newspaper's coverage of Khrushchev's visit. The librarian set me up with the September/October 1959 roll of microfilm, and then, after asking questions about the nature of my research, returned with a crumbling scrapbook stuffed with photographs and clippings that chronicled Roswell Garst's work as a citizen diplomat. The librarian did not know who had compiled and titled the scrapbook ("Encounter with Garst: Challenger of Tradition")—she only knew that it had been in a library cupboard for years. The scrapbook was an extremely valuable source of information about Garst.

Doing research for National History Day makes you feel special. People treated me like I was a real historian, not just a high school student working on a history project. It's not every day you get to call the son of a former Soviet leader and talk to him about an important event in world history. It's kind of humbling to walk in the same places as the people you're studying. And it was great to talk to Liz Garst about her memories, to see major world news through the eyes of an eight-year-old. ❖



National History Day winner Stephen Frese and Liz Garst at the Garst farm.

Russian delegation to Iowa; "Encounter with Garst: Challenger of Tradition," scrapbook, Coon Rapids Public Library, Coon Rapids, Iowa.

On Dec. 4, 2003, I conducted a phone interview of Sergei N. Khrushchev (digitally recorded). On Feb. 11, 2004, I toured the Garst Farm Resorts (1390 Hwy. 141, Coon Rapids, Iowa), interviewed and tape-recorded Elizabeth Garst (Roswell's granddaughter), and viewed a videotape, "Film Memories: Roswell Garst."

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Annotations to the original National History Day paper are held in *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* production files (State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City).

A Gamble for Freedom

Frances Overton and the Underground Railroad in Grinnell

by Rebecca Conard

In the spring of 1887, Amos Bixby sat down to write a letter to his old friend Leonard Parker. Parker had asked for Bixby's memories of a dramatic event in which they both had been involved three decades earlier.

For readers today, Bixby's letter offers a rare glimpse into Iowans' participation in the Underground Railroad prior to the Civil War. That glimpse frames a young woman, a teenager really, who, in a gamble for freedom, abandoned the familiar to become a fugitive slave in unknown territory, literally and figuratively, where she was utterly dependent on the kindness of strangers.

The metaphor "underground railroad" came into use as railroad companies were building a tangible network of iron rails throughout the young, expanding nation. After Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 (which required Northerners to assist in capturing runaway slaves), abolitionists intensified their activities, more runaway slaves sought and received aid from antislavery sympathizers, and "underground railroad" entered the common lexicon. Modern usage assigns the capital letters "U" and "R," signifying in part the legendary quality this vast, nebulous, conspiratorial movement assumed after the Civil War.

During the late 1850s, the time period Bixby recalls in his letter, the

nation was polarizing on the issue of slavery. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared in 1852, strengthening the opposition to slavery on moral grounds; the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act institutionalized the slavery debate into westward expansion; the 1857 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the Dred Scott case denied citizenship to escaped slaves and free blacks alike and ruled unconstitutional the Missouri Compromise, thereby denying Congress the power to prohibit slavery in any U.S. territory; and the zealous abolitionist John Brown relentlessly agitated in Kansas, Missouri, and Iowa. Until the Civil War was decided, slaves who managed to unloose the chains of human bondage were never truly free in U.S. states and territories, which is why the various routes of the Underground Railroad led to Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean.

Iowa was a stopping place on the Underground Railroad. Although some escapees made Iowa their permanent home, those who provided aid expected fugitive slaves either to move on or to make it on their own once they were out of danger. The new town of Grinnell, which attracted both staunch abolitionists and outspoken anti-abolitionists, became a microcosm of the nation's turmoil. Antislavery activists in Iowa often had ties to Oberlin, Ohio, one of the

staunchest abolitionist communities in the country. In Grinnell, those ties included Leonard F. Parker and his wife, Sarah, both graduates of Oberlin College. After teaching for a few years in Pennsylvania, the Parkers had ventured west and settled in Grinnell in 1856; shortly thereafter, Leonard became the county superintendent of schools. In Grinnell, the Parkers rejoined former Oberlin classmates: Samuel F. Cooper, a newspaper editor, and his wife, Jane. They also found kindred spirits in Amos and Augusta Bixby, social reform advocates who had come to Grinnell from Maine. Amos was a lawyer. Together with Josiah B. Grinnell, the Parkers, the Coopers, and the Bixbys helped to establish Grinnell as a center of progressive education.

Leonard Parker's long professional career included teaching at Iowa College (now Grinnell College) and at the University of Iowa; serving with the 46th Iowa Volunteers in the Civil War; and serving a term in the Iowa House of Representatives. The Bixbys eventually continued westward, moving to Colorado and then on to California. But in the late 1850s they were core abolitionists in Grinnell and advocates for racial equality in education. The fugitive slave Frances Overton played an unwitting part in their bid to integrate the Grinnell public school, which led to a community

riot in 1860. In 1858 the Bixbys gave Frances harbor in their home, employed her as a maid, and began to school her.

Frances proved to be an eager and fast learner. This prompted the Bixbys to seek her enrollment in the public school, which she attended without incident as long as she was the only black student. However, when another abolitionist attempted to enroll four more fugitive slaves, all young men, mounting tension in the community escalated to open hostilities, and the school directors closed the school before the end of the term in order to avert bloodshed. Fearing that the incident would attract slave catchers, the abolitionists moved Frances and the four male fugitives from Grinnell to an unspecified Quaker settlement about fifty miles away, possibly near Oskaloosa, where evangelical Quakers resided.

Primary documents such as Bixby's letter open our senses to the past because they communicate human thoughts and emotions across time and space. But they must be examined as pieces of a complex historical puzzle and as creations tied to particular moments in time. In this case, Bixby's paternalistic tone hints at the subtle as well as the overt racism that continued to circumscribe Frances Overton's life once she had achieved quasi freedom. Equally important, Bixby's account of events that happened 30 years earlier reveals the urge among those who had been active in the abolitionist movement to create a legacy by documenting their participation in the great, noble cause of the antebellum period.

Here is Amos Bixby's letter.

Rebecca Conard is professor of history at Middle Tennessee State University, where she codirects the Public History Program. She has written extensively on Iowa history.

Boulder, Colorado, May 16, 1887.
Prof. Leonard F. Parker.

My dear friend:

Your letter, full of remembrances, and inclosing historical sketch, is rec'd, and the manuscript herewith returned. In the main I remember the incidents as related, but, with the aid of Mrs. Bixby's recollections, could be a little more specific respecting the history of the runaway slave girl called Eliza in Miss Kellogg's account. She came to us, by the underground line, as Fannie Overton, taking her master's name of Overton. But as we had a Fannie in our family, by consent of all her name was changed to Frances Overton—and she was always after known as Frances. She was then 16 years old, and Mrs. Bixby says that she had, previously, no conception of how blank and benighted a human mind could be. Seeing a picture of the crucifixion, she exclaimed, "What dey doing to dat man up dare?" Any idea of Christ was as new to her as to any heathen. Being told that the world is round, she regarded herself as an eye-witness to the contrary — having traveled from Missouri to Kansas, and from Kansas to Grinnell, and found it all a plain. "But," said she, "if you tell me, Mrs. Bixby, that a man can stand with his feet on the ceiling, and his head down, I will believe you, and that the earth is round, — and that men can walk on the other side, with their heads down.[""] She would take on faith anything that her new mistress told her.

She was so eager to learn that she did

not have to be taught — she'd follow on as fast as Mrs. Bixby could talk to her. Not knowing the alphabet when she came, three months afterwards she took the Sunday School prize offered for the scholar who could repeat the greatest number of Scripture verses. This caused offence to some white competitors.

During her stay with us, two slave girls ran away from their master in Western Nebraska, and were pursued by a professional slave hunter through Iowa. Capt. Clark was reported to have met him at Sugar Grove, the stage station a little way south of Grinnell, to inform that a nice piece of property known as Frances, was unlawfully harbored in Grinnell. He also wrote, or was supposed to have written, to her old master, Mr. Overton. These things gave us all many a touch of trepidation — not knowing what day she might be demanded for return to slavery, under the fugitive slave law. The penalties for aiding, or for harboring fugitive slaves were so severe that one might well dread them.

She made a fortress of our garret, reached by a small aperture through the ceiling, where she could pull the ladder up after her, and where she kept a store of weapons of defence. It was thought if the slave hunters came, and discovered her hiding place, she could keep them at bay until the Abolition town was aroused. We depended on such men as Harvey Bliss to rescue her. At length the danger was so imminent that it was thought best to find for her a more secure retreat, and you

were the man to direct her to a Quaker neighborhood, about 50 miles distant.

A few years years [*sic*] after our arrival in this country, word came that Frances had not turned out very well, and that some of those who thought it wrong for us to harbor her as we did, said, "See how the wench who took the Sunday School prize has turned out, after all." But — I say this to you in confidence — there is a bit of history connected with her child-slave life that may account for her fall. She said that her master's sons, the Overton boys, used to misread the Bible to her — that is make it read that the sin to which their young lusts inclined them, was not only not a sin, but was actually commanded by the Word. It is, therefore, presumable that Heaven did not stoop to save the virtue of the poor, deluded, defenceless slave girl — Her's was but the unhappy lot of slave girls since the world began.

I think it was in the spring preceding the Harpers Ferry raid that John Brown visited Grinnell. I remember that the roads were very muddy when it was announced that he, and his boys, and train of fugitives, were approaching the town on foot. Mr. Phelps, and a few others, as I remember, went out to meet them. There was quite a gathering to greet them at the hotel, on south side of the town. It was late in the cool morning, and John Brown being asked if he was not tired and hungry, having had no breakfast, he replied that he was not — that by extreme temperance, and by train-

ing in enduring hardships, he could go 24 hours without food, and not suffer hunger.

It being suggested to him that as he was getting old, it was hoped by his friends, who recognized his great and fearless service in the cause of Kansas, and for the abolition party, — that he would take a rest at his home in New York, and let younger men fight it out, he made a very brief, evasive answer, but I remember that the look on his face was as much as to say, "I am ready to be offered. Without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of the sin of American Slavery." At the evening meeting in the church, he spoke with others, briefly, but feelingly. He repeated the passage from Job in which occur the words, The cause which I knew not I searched out. It has been said that voice is soul, and certainly is put into his voice the expression of the soul that still goes marching on, as he slowly repeated the words.

... So much of reminiscence — and now let me say that we hope you will make us another visit, when you want recreation — you and your family. Mrs. Parker is one of the best remembered of all the early inhabitants of Grinnell. It is doubtful if ever we visit eastward again — but, if I live, may go to California, where all my brothers and sisters are. We have had one life in Maine, another in Iowa, a third in Colorado, now whether we have a fourth in California — we are quite submissive to the Providence that has guided us in all our journeying. Good bye — for the present — dear friend.

Yours most Truly,
Amos Bixby.

The Amos Bixby letter is published here with the permission of the Grinnell College Archives, which holds the original. A copy of the letter is in the Leonard F. Parker Papers, MS 44, box 1, folder "Schroeder's research files," Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City. Biographical material used for the introduction was found in the Leonard F. Parker Papers and Benjamin F. Gue's History of Iowa from the Earliest Times . . . vol. 4 (New York: Century History Co., 1903), and provided by Grinnell College archivist Kathryn Rod.

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Reading the Past

ONCE IN A WHILE we are reminded that even scholarly history can be inspiring. For me, *The Education of Jane Addams*, by Grinnell College history professor Victoria Bissell Brown, is such a reminder. Jane Addams is a true American hero, and Brown clearly affirms that common wisdom. The irony, as Brown shows us so engagingly in her account of Addams's coming of age, is that Addams became such a hero only after she abandoned the ambition to be a hero and decided instead to be a servant in the cause of democracy.

In 1889 Addams established Hull-House, where she and her associates lived among and provided services for a working-class community on the north side of Chicago until her death in 1935. Her success at Hull-House provided the platform for her to become a leading voice advocating many of the reforms associated with the Progressive movement.

Much has been written about Addams's work at Hull-House and beyond. Now Brown has combed through a large body of correspondence and other sources to provide a provocative account of the ideas, events, and personal relationships that shaped the person who became the Jane Addams of Hull-House fame. Almost every chapter of this amazingly rich book contains a couple of paragraphs that I wanted to read aloud to the nearest person—paragraphs that distill the forces that shaped

Addams's character and the way she responded to those forces. One of these paragraphs from the introduction sums up the entire book: "*The Education of Jane Addams* is about how a daughter of America's small-town prairie elite was transformed by the dignity of her own philosophy. . . . The story told here traces Addams's evolution from an ambitious, arrogant youth caught up in heroic dreams of individual triumph to a young woman humbled by ill health, family duty, and spiritual doubt. It examines the process of emotional and philosophical growth that allowed the young Jane Addams to transcend the conceits of her youth, and then follows her path to Chicago, where she sought salvation in collective, cooperative action and enjoyed greater fame and success than she could have imagined in her schoolgirl fantasies. Her dreams of a life as a public figure carried her furthest, it turned out, when she folded ambition for herself into ambition for democracy."

Through all of the changes in her ideas and her character, the central image Brown conveys of Addams is that of a mediator. That has made it difficult for subsequent reformers to adopt her as a model: "Any nonpacifist movement that attempts to enlist Addams

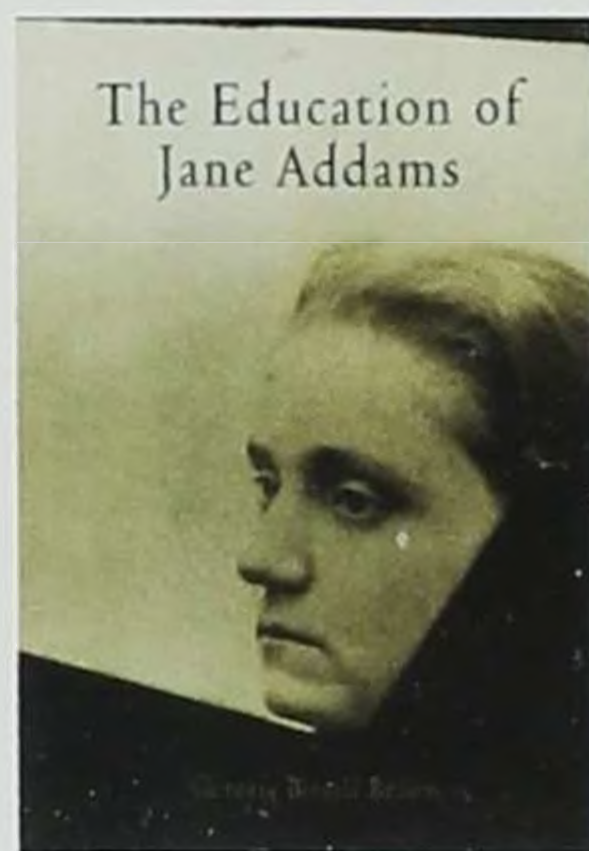
as its advocate winds up disappointed because her words are never as angry, as exclusionary, as damning of the other side as our partisan passions desire."

This is a book about ideas. Brown takes us inside a mind that the feminist philosopher Charlotte Perkins Gilman said had "more 'floor space' in it than any other I have known. She could set a subject down, unprejudiced, and walk all around it, allowing fairly for every one's point of view." And it is remarkable just how good a guide to the depth of her thinking is her voluminous correspondence with family and friends. But this history of ideas, as befits its subject's personality, has a distinctly social cast. We do see how Addams distills and adapts ideas from the books she reads and from the large social and political movements of her time. But Brown devotes even more space to showing how Addams continually revised her ideas based on her day-to-day interactions with family and friends, with coworkers and patrons and working-class neighbors. Human relationships provide the context for the development of Addams's ideas and religious views and the shaping of her character. The book is also full of keen psychological insight without lapsing into the sort of psychoanalytic speculation that can be burdensome or fanciful in lesser hands.

The result is a remarkably perceptive account of how the devoted daughter of a well-to-do mill owner and banker in a small midwestern town became a heroic advocate for working-class residents of the city perhaps most identified in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with industrialism and labor strife. Only the last third of the book deals with her Hull-House career, showing how the ideas she had developed by her late twenties were enacted in the neighborhood surrounding Hull-House, and how interactions with the neighborhood residents further refined those ideas. The book ends in 1895, five years after Hull-House had been established. Addams would live for another four decades, "never abandoning her post as head resident at Hull-House but continuously expanding her sphere of influence beyond Chicago, beyond Illinois, and, ultimately, beyond the United States."

Brown's admiration for Addams shines through on every page, even as she recognizes her flaws (most notably, her tendency to distance herself from the people closest to her). Iowans can hope that this book will stimulate interest in such similarly committed women as Flora Dunlap in Des Moines, Mary Treglia in Sioux City, and Jane Boyd in Cedar Rapids. Beyond its historical value, the book can also serve to inspire all of us who struggle to define our responsibility in the world. For that reason, it may be particularly valuable for young people struggling with a sense of their vocation.

—by Marvin Bergman, editor of *The Annals of Iowa*



The Education of Jane Addams, by Victoria Bissell Brown. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. viii, 421 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

A Tour of Iowa's 20th-Century Architecture

■ Photographs by Cameron Campbell

■ Captions by Barbara Mitchell

■ Introduction by Ginalie Swaim

They have become part of our daily landscape. The structures built in 20th-century Iowa—even those constructed as recently as the 1990s—quickly merged into our built environment, our visual consciousness. We walk or drive past them, seldom remembering that they rose from stacks of stone and wood, brick and steel, and later from thick ribbons of poured concrete. Even less often do we recall that these structures began as an idea in an architect's mind, as intricate drawings on a drafting table. In Iowa, "by the end of the 19th century, most moderately populated communities included practicing architects," writes Jason Alread, assistant professor of architecture at Iowa State University; "their influence is seen through the quality of the structures throughout the 20th century."

To mark its 100th anniversary in 2004, the American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter (AIA Iowa) undertook a monumental task—"to seek out the most

significant architecture created in the state of Iowa during the 20th century." The criteria? The structure must be located in Iowa, still standing, and have been designed by an architect.

Over nine months, more than 300 entries poured in to the AIA Iowa office—from all parts of Iowa; representative of commercial, institutional, and residential properties; and submitted by architects and the general public. A nominating committee (*listed below*) sifted through the entries, considering the buildings' aesthetics and social significance. Next, 125 were documented and presented to a jury mandated to select 50 buildings, singling out one for each decade and finally one "Building of the Century."

In October 2004, the buildings were announced—at a special reception in the State Historical Building as well as in a handsome book, a two-hour IPTV documentary, and a traveling exhibit (*see box below*). The stunning photo-

graphs in the book and exhibit are the work of Cameron Campbell, Iowa State University professor of architecture and design. He tells us more about his work on page 181.

On the following pages, *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* presents a sample of these 50 buildings. Although we wish we could have presented all 50, that's the job of the book and the exhibit. Instead, we asked preservation architect Jack Porter and architectural historian Barbara Mitchell (both on the staff of the State Historical Society of Iowa) to select among the 50, with an eye for ones that illustrate particularly well the changing aesthetics, styles, materials, and technologies of 100 years of architecture in Iowa. The captions by Barbara Mitchell, which accompany Campbell's photographs, lead us across Iowa to some of our most beloved and respected structures, and remind us of why they're among the century's most significant.

—The Editor

Nominating Committee: Jason Alread (assistant professor of architecture, Iowa State University); Judy McClure (former preservation architect, State Historical Society of Iowa); Jack Porter (preservation architect, State Historical Society of Iowa); Matt Rodekamp (architect, Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture); Suzanne Schwengels (executive vice-president of AIA Iowa); and Wesley Shank (professor emeritus of architectural history, Iowa State University). **Jury:** Robert Broshar (former national president of AIA); Robert Findlay (professor emeritus of architectural design, Iowa State University); Eliot Nusbaum (*Traditional Home* editor and former *Des Moines Register* architecture critic); Chuck Offenburger (former *Des Moines Register* columnist); and Robert D. Ray (former governor of Iowa).

"A Century of Iowa Architecture" Exhibit Travels Across Iowa

- Sioux City Public Museum: Feb. 11–March 27, 2005
- Dubuque Museum of Art: May 1–Aug. 31, 2005
- Iowa State University, College of Design: Sept. 26–Oct. 30, 2005
- MacNider Art Museum, Mason City: Jan. 26–April 16, 2006

Kendall Young Library

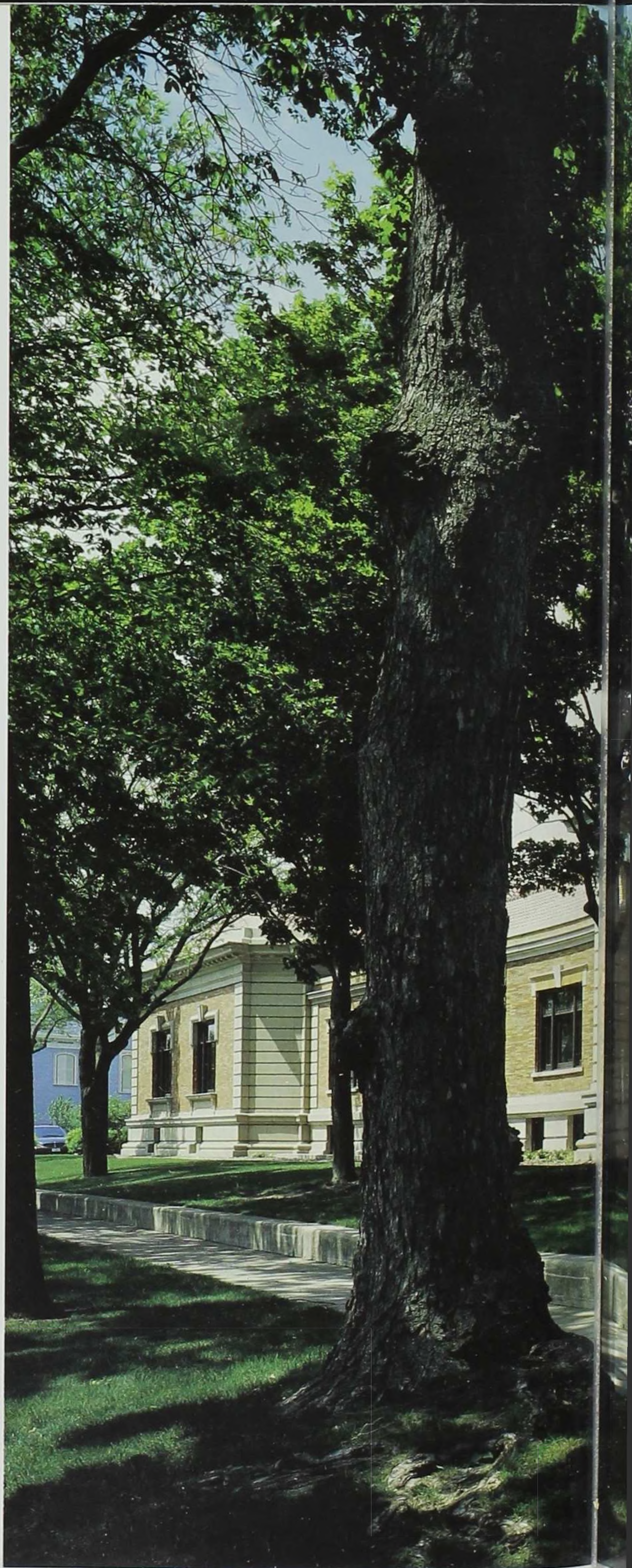
1905, Webster City

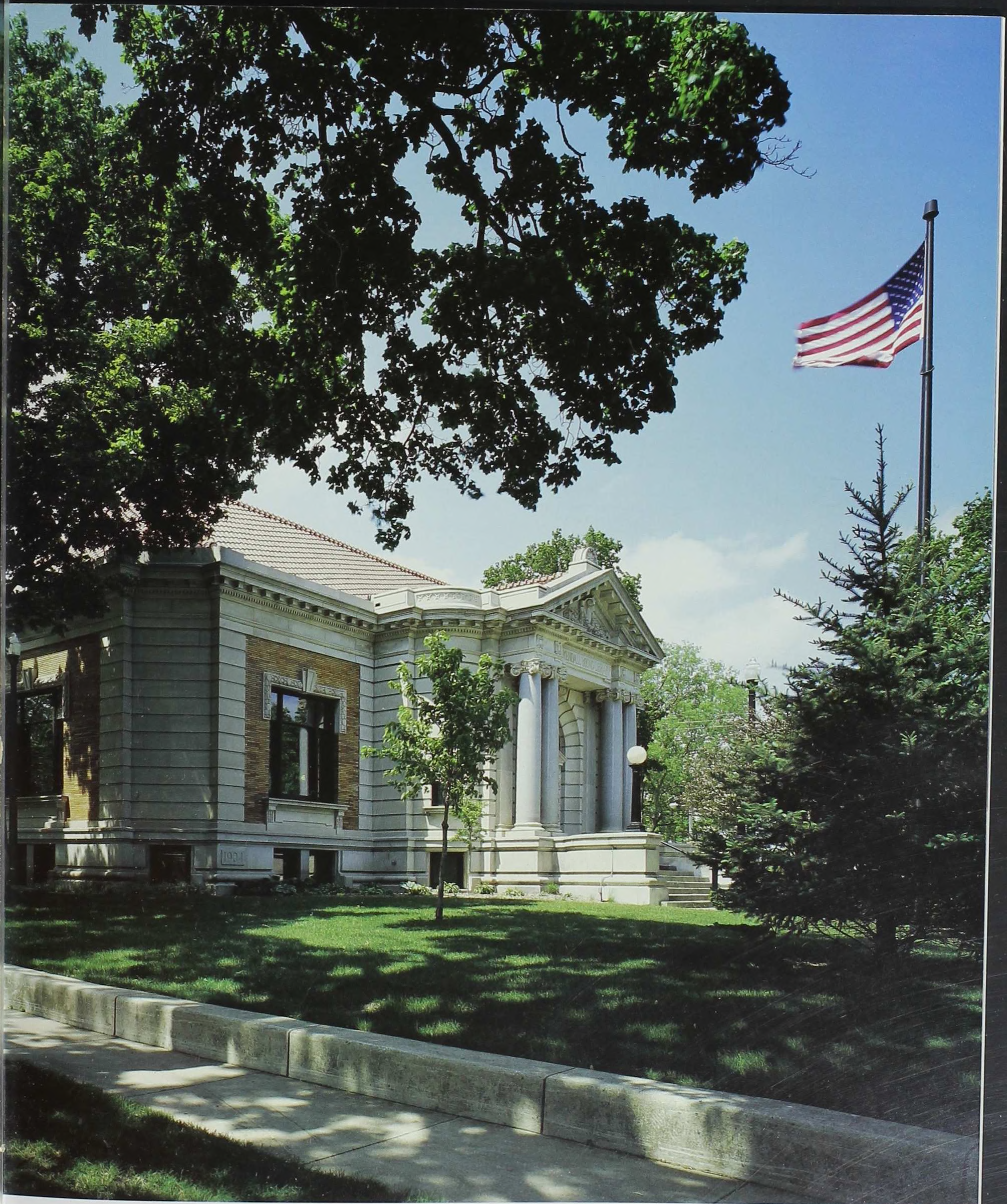
Architects: Patton & Miller

1900s

The first decade of the 20th century saw an increase in civic-mindedness in architecture. One of the most prolific ways in which this was manifest in the Midwest was the construction of public libraries. Public libraries became a new and distinct building type, many incorporating the Classical Revival styles promulgated by the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Made possible by the philanthropic attitudes of wealthy Americans—most notably Andrew Carnegie—and orchestrated by civic boosterism, the buildings were designed by architects increasingly becoming known for their library designs.

Chicago architects Grant Clark Miller and Normand Smith Patton, well known for their library designs, were commissioned for the Kendall Young Library in Webster City. The building is constructed of Bedford limestone and mottled brick, with granite, marble, and stained glass detailing. When it was completed in 1905, it was the only library in the state with a complete private financial endowment. The library was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.





ALL PHOTOGRAPHS PAGES 162-180 COPYRIGHT CAMERON CAMPBELL

Kendall Young Library

1905, Webster City

Architects: Patton & Miller

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ALL PHOTOGRAPHY PAGES 162-163 COPYRIGHT CAMERON CAMPBELL



Merchants National Bank Building

1915, Grinnell

Architect: Louis H. Sullivan

1910s

As the public library took on a unique form in the first decade of the new century, a new architectural style was developing in the American Midwest. The "Prairie School" style of architecture became a distinct alternative to Classical Revival styles popular at the time. Commonly attributed to Frank Lloyd Wright, the Prairie style was originally nurtured by his mentor, architect Louis Sullivan. Borrowing inspiration from other aesthetic and architectural movements, the style used modern technology and the spirit of the natural prairie to produce buildings with simple, straightforward forms and sumptuous ornament.

The Merchants National Bank in Grinnell (*left*) and the Woodbury County Courthouse in Sioux City (*right*) are two exceptional examples in Iowa. Both properties have been honored with listings as National Historic Landmarks. The Woodbury County Courthouse also received a Save America's Treasures grant in 2002.



Woodbury County Courthouse

1918, Sioux City

Architects: William Steele and Purcell & Elmslie

Salisbury House

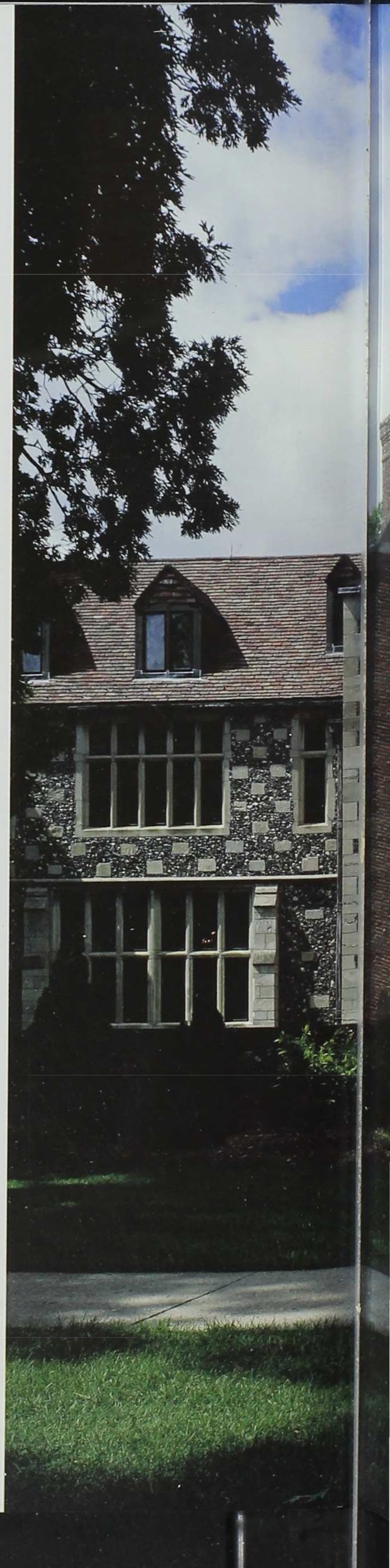
1928, Des Moines

Architects: Boyd & Moore and Rasmussen & Wayland

1920s

The Roaring Twenties was an era marked by prosperity, new opportunities, steady economic growth, and cultural consumption. Wealthy Americans built grand homes in the style of British country estates. Owners became personally involved in the design, creating "period rooms" with antiques acquired during their extensive, worldwide travels. The entire package, including the estate, home, artwork, and furnishings, was meant to express the social status of the occupants.

In 1922, Carl and Edith Weeks became enamored with the King's House in Salisbury, England. Upon their return from abroad, they hired Des Moines architect Byron Boyd and New York architect William Rasmussen to design a house inspired by the noble English estate. The final product incorporates salvaged architectural features from various buildings, and the Weeks' antiques and vast art and manuscript collections, as well as all the modern conveniences demanded by the times. The Salisbury House was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977.





Salisbury House

1928, Des Moines

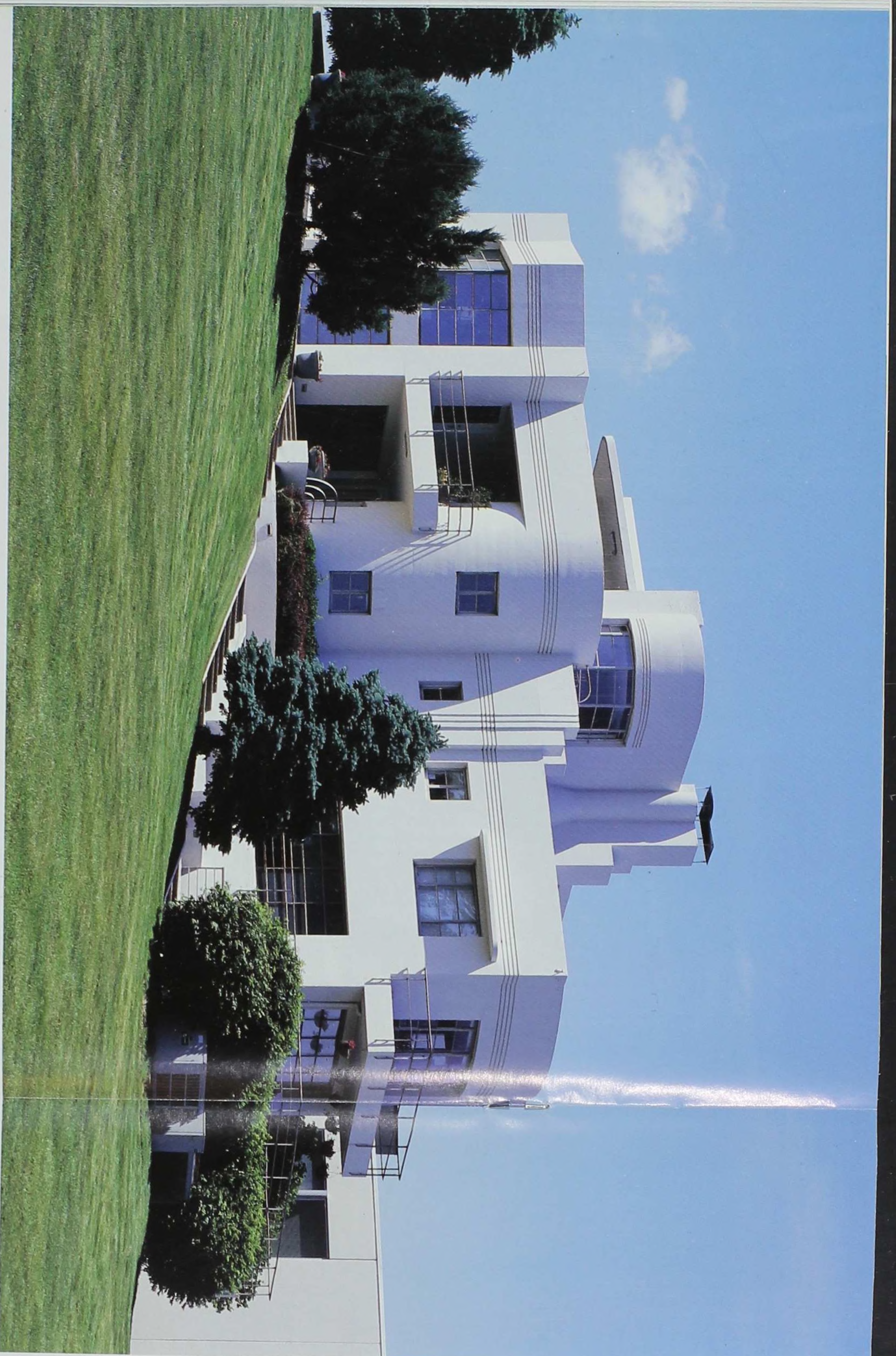
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1930S

Close on the heels of the Prairie style, Art Deco was showcased at the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs Industriels et Modernes, held in Paris. This streamlined expression became evident in everything from artwork and industrial design to buildings and architectural detailing. Art Deco and its sibling, Streamline Moderne, combined the use of modern materials, especially reinforced concrete, with the aesthetic of the machine, making a strong statement of speed, power, precision, and efficiency.

The Butler House in Des Moines (*above*) exhibits many tenets of these styles, including interrelated geometric shapes and volumes, in this case organized around a central ramped circulation core. Des Moines

architect George Kraetsch worked closely with owner Earl Butler to create a house that expressed machinery, science, and technology.

In Sioux City, local architect Henry Kamphoefner designed the Grandview Park Band Shell (*right*), constructed using federal relief dollars and workers between 1934 and 1935. The first of two band shells designed by Kamphoefner in Iowa, the Grandview Park Band Shell has received numerous design awards.

Earl Butler House

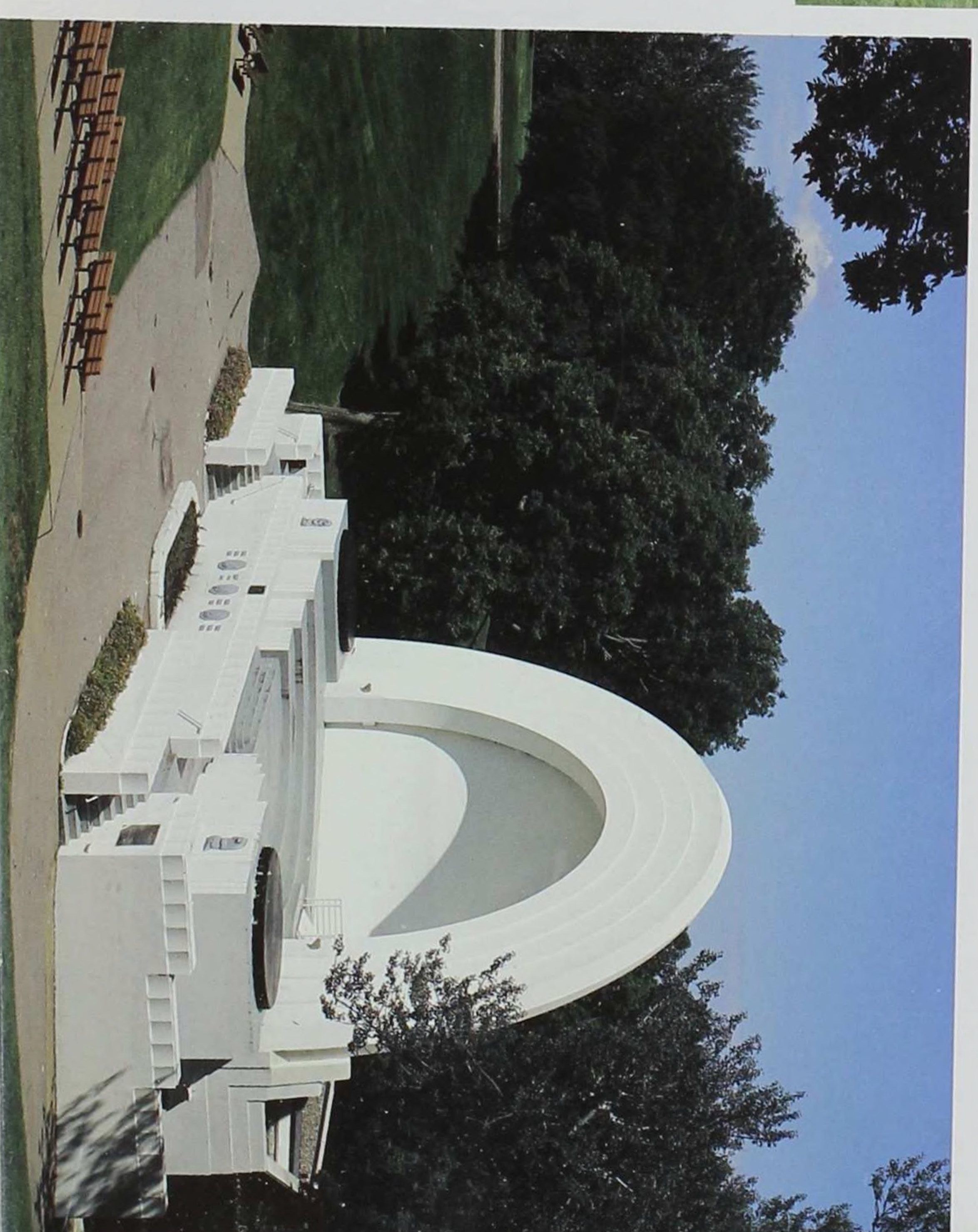
1937, Des Moines

Architects: Kraetsch & Kraetsch

Grandview Park Band Shell

1935, Sioux City

Architect: Henry L. Kamphoefner





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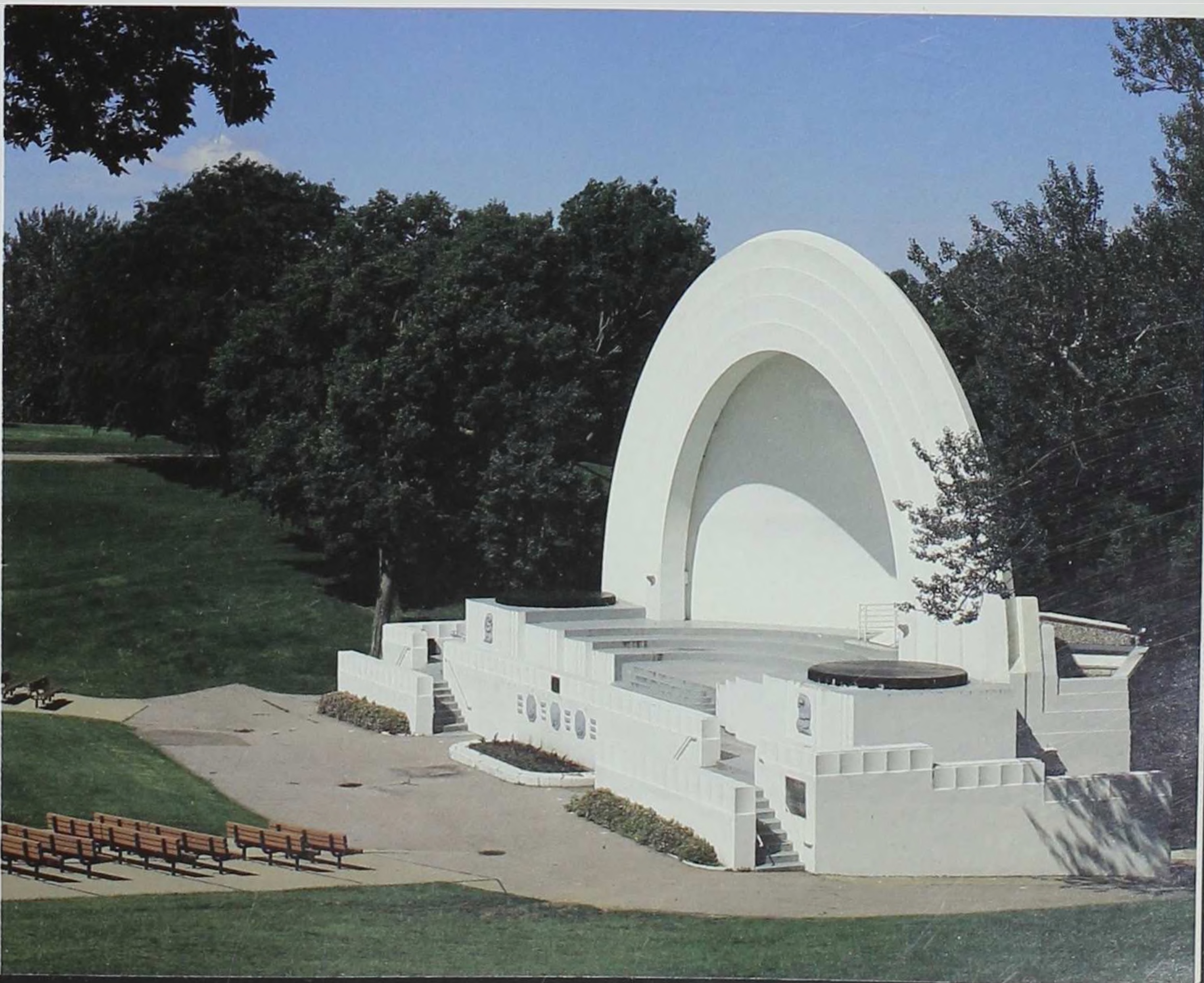
1937, Des Moines

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Grandview Park Band Shell

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Architect: Henry L. Kamphoefner







High School Auditorium and Gymnasium

1940, Ventura

Architect: Thorwald Thorson

1940s

During the 1930s and into the first years of the 1940s, a federal economic relief program resulted in the construction of many public facilities throughout the nation. Many of the buildings constructed in the later years of the program became known stylistically as PWA Moderne, named after the federal agency that funded many of them, the Public Works Administration.

Built by the Work Projects Administration, a sister agency to the PWA, the Ventura gymnasium is a late example of the PWA Moderne styling, with smooth concrete walls accented with vertical and horizontal bands and geometric motifs. Four arched reinforced concrete trusses support its broad arched roof. The gymnasium also features a limestone carving of a Viking warrior and a cast concrete figure of a basketball player, both by artist Christian Petersen, who was involved in another federal relief program, the Public Works of Art Project, and was the Campus Artist-in-Residence at Iowa State College.



High School Auditorium and Gymnasium

1940, *Ventura*

Architect: *Thorvald Thorson*

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1950s

Following the Second World War, the population boom and influx of returning veterans created a housing crisis in America. Housing developers turned to simplified, mass-produced, and affordable designs. Architects were also inspired to meet the housing needs with new designs incorporating modern materials such as glass, concrete, and steel. Indoor and outdoor living spaces were integrated using contemporary cantilevers, non-load-bearing curtain walls, and post-and-beam construction. *House Beautiful*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *Better Homes and Gardens* showcased the new designs.

In *Ladies' Home Journal*, Frank Lloyd Wright revisited his Usonian house designs of the 1930s, providing economical postwar designs. Cedar Rock (the Lowell Walter House, *above*) in Quasqueton is based on one of the designs, described as a "crystal house, for town or country"—although in keeping with Wright's original Usonian philosophy, the relation of the house to the site became a key design factor.

Similarly, Iowa architect Ray Crites designed his

own home using one of Wright's Usonian principles. In Crites House No. 1 (*right*), as in Cedar Rock, the relation of the house to its site became a key design factor.

In 1981, Cedar Rock was donated to the Iowa Conservation Commission and the people of the state of Iowa. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. Maintained and operated by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, it is open to the public from May through October.

"Cedar Rock" (Lowell Walter House)

1950, Quasqueton

Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright

Crites House No. 1

1959, Cedar Rapids

Architects: Crites & McConnell





Building of the Century



C. Y. Stephens Auditorium

1969, Iowa State University, Ames

Architects: Crites & McConnell

and Brooks Borg & Skiles, Architects-Engineers

1960s

C. Y. Stephens Auditorium on the Iowa State University campus represents not only the culmination of Modernist ideals in the 1960s but also a desire to bring a higher level of performing arts and culture to central Iowa. From the sculptural expression of its concrete, glass, and wood down to the hand-woven silver stage curtain, the building is an unsurpassed example of post-World War II Modernism in Iowa. It breaks away from historical precedents and honestly expresses its architectural materials, technology, and function. A newspaper article at the time of its opening rightly states that no effort was made to hide the 13,000 cubic yards of concrete used during construction. Instead, cedar, hemlock, and oak underscore and warm the subtle curves of the balconies and ceilings, contributing to its almost perfect acoustics. Since its construction, C. Y. Stephens has invigorated the performing arts and provided inspiration for many of Iowa's architects. It genuinely is Iowa's "Building of the Century."





C. Y. Stephens Auditorium
 1969, Iowa State University, Ames
*Architects: Crites & McConnell
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Building of the Century

1970s

Continuing in the same vein as in C. Y. Stephens Auditorium, concrete and glass became the materials of choice in the 1970s, as architects strove to find new ways to express the materials' sculptural abilities. Sometimes termed "Brutalism," this new style of architecture was considered a refinement of the Modernist tenet of truth in materials. Begun in England in the 1960s, Brutalism quickly spread. The structure and circulation core of buildings remained visible, with glass providing a welcome contrast to the raw surface

of the concrete, which was either manipulated to expose the aggregate or left *béton brut*, with just the pattern of the formwork remaining as a finish surface.

Because of the harsh honesty of the materials, many of these buildings are still thought to be aesthetically unattractive and oppressive. However, there are many striking examples throughout the state of Iowa, including Des Moines's Iowa Society of Christian Churches Building, with its expansive cantilevered roof.

Iowa Society of Christian Churches Building

1972, Des Moines

Architects: Smith, Voorhees & Jensen





Carver-Hawkeye Arena

1982, University of Iowa, Iowa City

Architects: Caudill Rowlett Scott Architects with The Durrant Group, Inc.

1980s

The 1980s served as a period of transition for Iowa's architecture. Postmodernism, a new style based on historic architecture, was finally starting to take hold after germinating for over a decade. But many Iowa architects refused to follow the nationwide trend and were determined to push structure and materials to their limits, continuing to use Modernist ideals as a foundation for their work.

The vastness of the University of Iowa's Carver-Hawkeye Arena is deceptively hunkered under a low, sprawling roof span. The massive superstructure, with its orderly web of steel atop low walls of concrete and glass, is the primary architectural expression of the building's exterior. Hidden beneath, the voluminous arena draws spectators into the action and further enriches their architectural experience.



Des Moines Art Center

Des Moines

1948, Original Portion

Architects: Saarinen Swanson & Saarinen

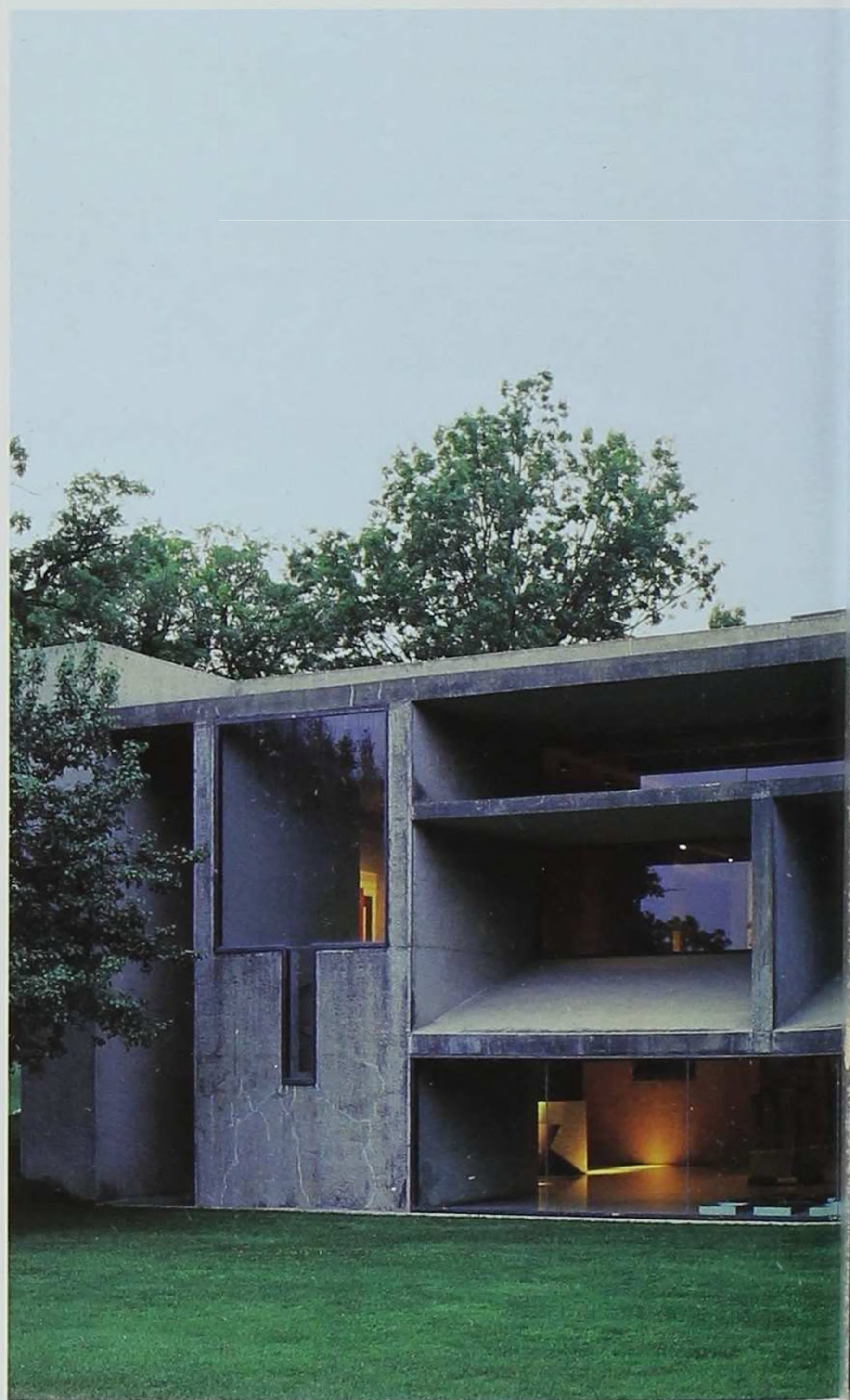
Architects and Brooks Borg, Architects-Engineers

1968, First Addition

Architects: I. M. Pei & Partners

1985, Second Addition

Architect: Richard Meier



1940s-1960s-1980s

The Des Moines Art Center provides a unique opportunity to view the architecture of three different decades in one building. In 1933, James D. Edmundson bequeathed funds to the Des Moines Association of Fine Arts for the construction of a museum and acquisition of artwork to fill it. The trustees wanted an architect who could bring modern vision to the project—something that could challenge the pre-World War II trend toward monumental museum designs. The world-renowned architect Eliel Saarinen filled that role superbly. When Saarinen's original building (*left*) was finished in 1948, its low profile and Lannon stone



cladding blended perfectly into Greenwood Park's natural setting while still exhibiting his modern ideals.

The building was a source of pride for the community, and its importance was taken into consideration in the late 1960s as plans moved forward for an addition to exhibit sculpture. Again desiring a building that would reflect the architecture of the time and respect Saarinen's design, the trustees commissioned architect I. M. Pei. Constructed during a period of High Modernism in Iowa, Pei's masterful concrete and glass museum addition (*center*) was his first of a building type for which he is now well known.

In the 1980s, the Art Center again began to outgrow its facilities. This time, the trustees held a competition to find a world-class architect. Richard Meier's proposal for a three-part addition won out in a bid to not overwhelm Saarinen's and Pei's designs. Meier's highly sculptural design (*right*), finished in 1985 and clad with granite and white porcelain-coated metal panels, nicely complements the existing portions of the building, and has received numerous design awards.

The Des Moines Art Center was listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its architectural significance in October 2004.



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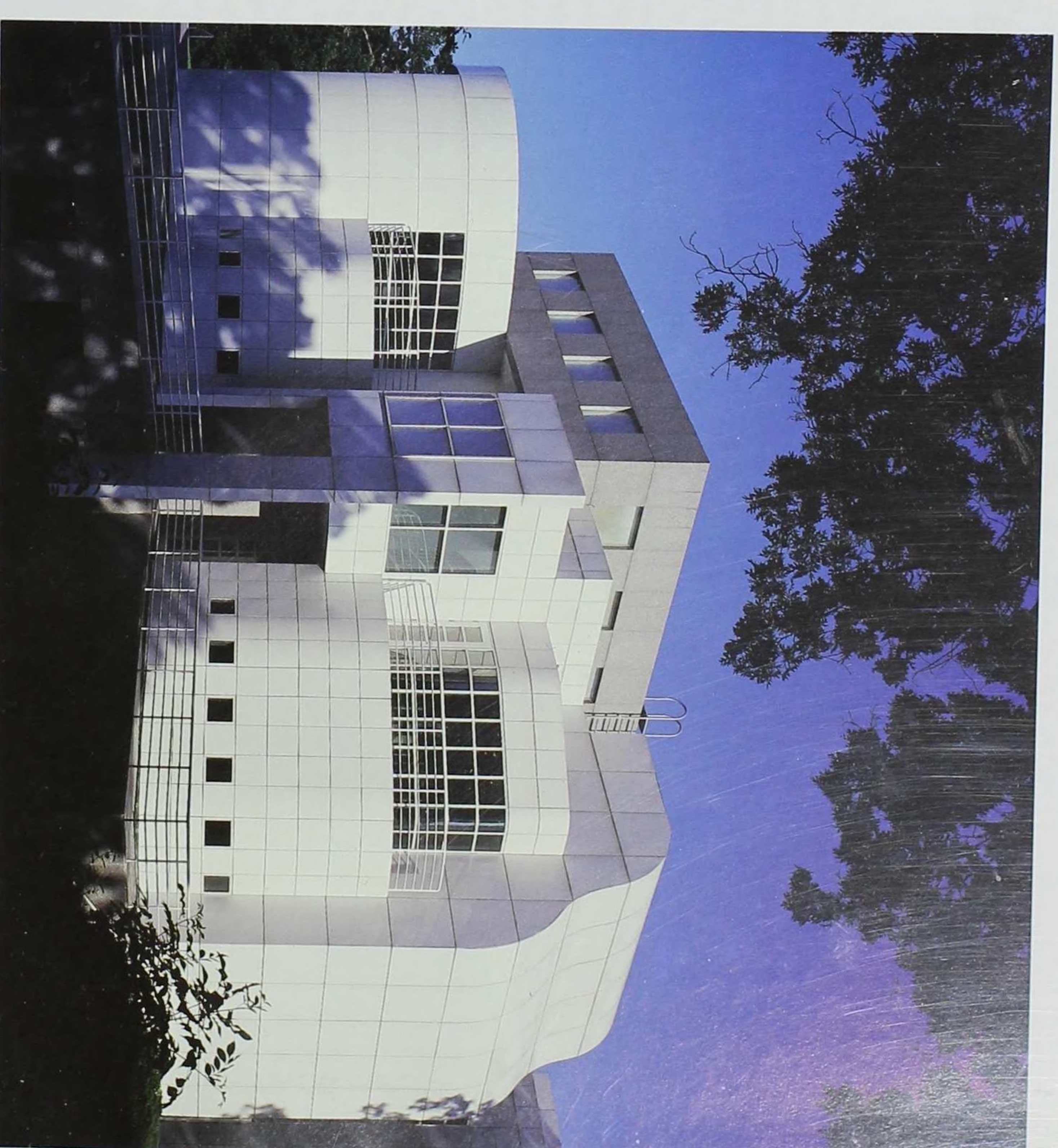
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1990s

Postmodernism was a movement that grew out of architecture's rejection of Modernism and a desire to return to the past without replicating it precisely. The "Less is More" philosophy espoused by Mies van der Rohe in the mid-20th century was replaced by a reliance on classically themed ornament adorning new construction. In the 1990s, Postmodernism became entrenched in the architectural and urban planning world, firmly seated alongside New Urbanism as one of the most prominent movements of this yet undefinable decade. Coupled with an increased exploration of the capabilities of new materials and technology, architectural expression looked back as much as it looked toward the future.

Exhibiting this trend, the EMC Insurance Building in downtown Des Moines is classically inspired, from the use of gentle arches on the tower to the humanly scaled colonnade at the street. The high-tech design of the exterior cladding system, however, was intended to provide increased energy efficiency and comfort to the occupants, as well as provide a dramatic addition to the city's skyline.



EMC Insurance Building (Employers Mutual Building)

1997, Des Moines

Architects: Brooks Borg Skiles Architecture-Engineering

Every Building in its Best Form

■ *By Cameron Campbell*

As an architectural photographer for the "Iowa Architecture of the 20th Century" project, my task was to travel the state and capture for posterity a moment in time of our cultural heritage. I found the opportunity both exciting and overwhelming. While I visited various towns and spoke with the people there, I talked about excellence in architecture, and it was interesting to hear the wide range of opinions about the subject. For this project celebrating the 100-year anniversary of the founding of the American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter, I considered it my duty to show every building in its best form in order to substantiate the selection and to honor every work.

This project harnessed all of my romantic notions of photographing across Iowa's landscape—traveling the state multiple times I absorbed the expanse of sky overhead and the sea of fields flowing to the horizon. However, Iowa's reputation of unpredictable weather proved true; sometimes the haze from humidity and surprise storms complicated the journey. Then, as if cleansing a palette, the storms would clear and a rich deep blue sky would emerge with crisp white clouds.

I enjoyed the disorientation of arriving in a small town, not always knowing where the building was located and having to discover the building in its situation. Certain times I arrived and the building was in perfect light and perfect conditions, but more often than not, I had to wait hours, return many times, and sometimes settle for the reality of the situation.

Ironically, the first house I went to photograph was one of the last ones I finished photographing, because it was the most challenging. The Joshua G.

Melson House, in Mason City, is part of the Rock Crest/Rock Glen group of Prairie style houses. It sat nestled perfectly in the dappled fall colors. Unfortunately, the owners were not home, and I reluctantly decided not to trespass in order to photograph it. Had I known at that point how wonderful the homeowners were, I would have completed the project right then and there. Instead, the winter came and so did spring, and by the time I returned, the house was overwhelmed with foliage. The shot I captured benefited from waiting, because in the end it was about how the building blended into the landscape. The key moment of the house erupted as it was nestled in the birth of spring.

Even projects with which I was greatly familiar were challenging. Early in my architectural photography career, I had extensively photographed the Earl Butler House in Des Moines, a fine example of Streamline Moderne architecture. When I looked through my earlier shots, I realized what I had missed. Bringing this knowledge to bear on the project allowed me to photograph the Butler House with ease—but one could say that that photo took over ten years to execute.

By the time I had finished photographing all 50 buildings on the list, I was ready to return and photograph them again. But time prevailed over my love of photography and architecture. Despite the difficulties of such a large project, the benefits have been rich. I am humbled to be a part of the story of the architectural works that are a part of Iowa's history. ❖

Cameron Campbell is an assistant professor of architecture and art & design in the College of Design at Iowa State University.



Enjoy Cameron Campbell's black-and-white photographs of all 50 buildings in *A Century of Iowa Architecture, 1900-1999* (American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter). Text by Jason Alread (assistant professor of architecture, Iowa State University) carefully explains how the buildings chosen reflected prevailing styles of each decade or broke new ground. Alread writes that this review of Iowa's 20th-century buildings does not support "the common belief that cultured ideas moved slowly through the state from east to west" but does show Iowa's "extraordinary growth." "Concentrations of noteworthy buildings [reveal] the prosperity of towns during a particular time."

Purchase the book at the State Historical Society's Museum Store: 600 E. Locust, Des Moines; 515-283-1757; www.iowahistory.org. Price: \$19.95 (discounts apply for members of the State Historical Society of Iowa).

Symbolic Trees and Practice

The Iowa Arbor Day Manuals

by Lori Vermaas

"TO-DAY LET US drop school and lessons, and spend the day in the open air," exhorted Iowa Superintendent of Public Instruction Henry Sabin in the annual Iowa Arbor Day manual of 1891—surely welcome instructions to many students. "Put your books in the desk, you will have no need of them," he directed, because nature "is a book as old as the world." In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Arbor Day was one of the strongest efforts to raise awareness about tree planting, cultivation, and appreciation. But the holiday inculcated other goals, too: to inspire patriotism and to improve schoolgrounds. A look at some of the early Arbor Day celebrations in the United States and the yearly Arbor Day manuals produced by the Iowa Department of Public Instruction (DPI) a century ago reveals the ebb and flow of these goals in the Iowa school system.

ARBOR DAY was the brainchild of J. Sterling Morton, editor of the *Nebraska City News* (and later U.S. secretary of agriculture). He proposed at a Nebraska State Board of Agriculture meeting in January 1872 that the state's citizens needed to observe a day of tree planting in the spring. Premiums were announced (\$100 to the county agricultural society that planted the most trees, and a collection of books on farming to the individual who planted the most). Three months later, Nebraska's Arbor Day was a triumphant success, with Nebraskans reportedly planting over one million trees.


The idea spread to other states and was



ical Tree Care

PHOTO AND MANUAL: SHSI (IOWA CITY)

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WLB
3625
15-4
1899



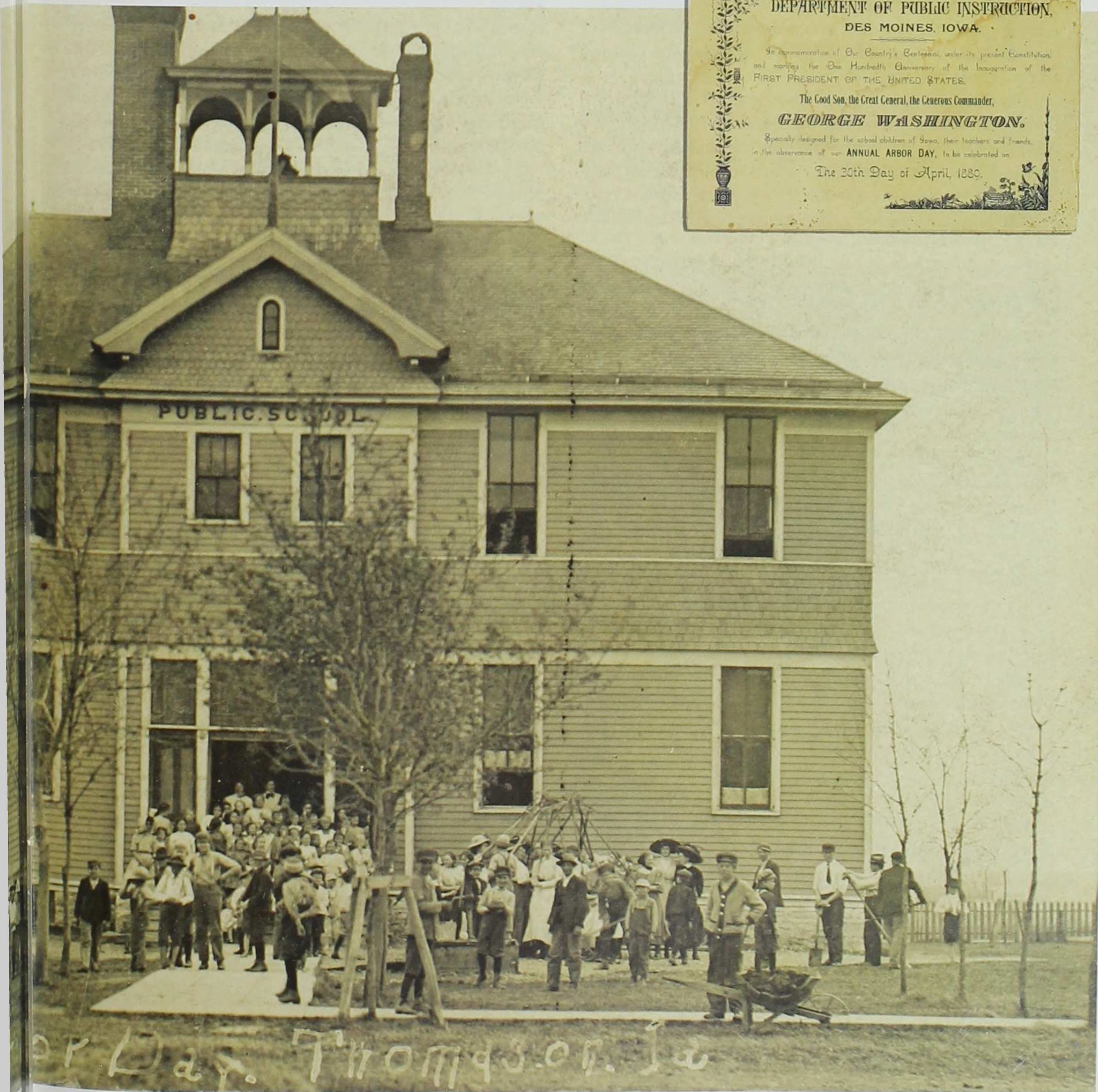
THE
Loyal Leaflet.

ISSUED BY THE
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION,
DES MOINES, IOWA.

In commemoration of Our Country's Centennial, under its present Constitution,
and marking the One Hundredth Anniversary of the inauguration of the
FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

The Good Son, the Great General, the Generous Commander,
GEORGE WASHINGTON.

Specially designed for the school children of Iowa, their teachers and friends,
in the observance of our ANNUAL ARBOR DAY, to be celebrated on
The 30th Day of April, 1889.



Symbolic Trees and Practical Tree Care

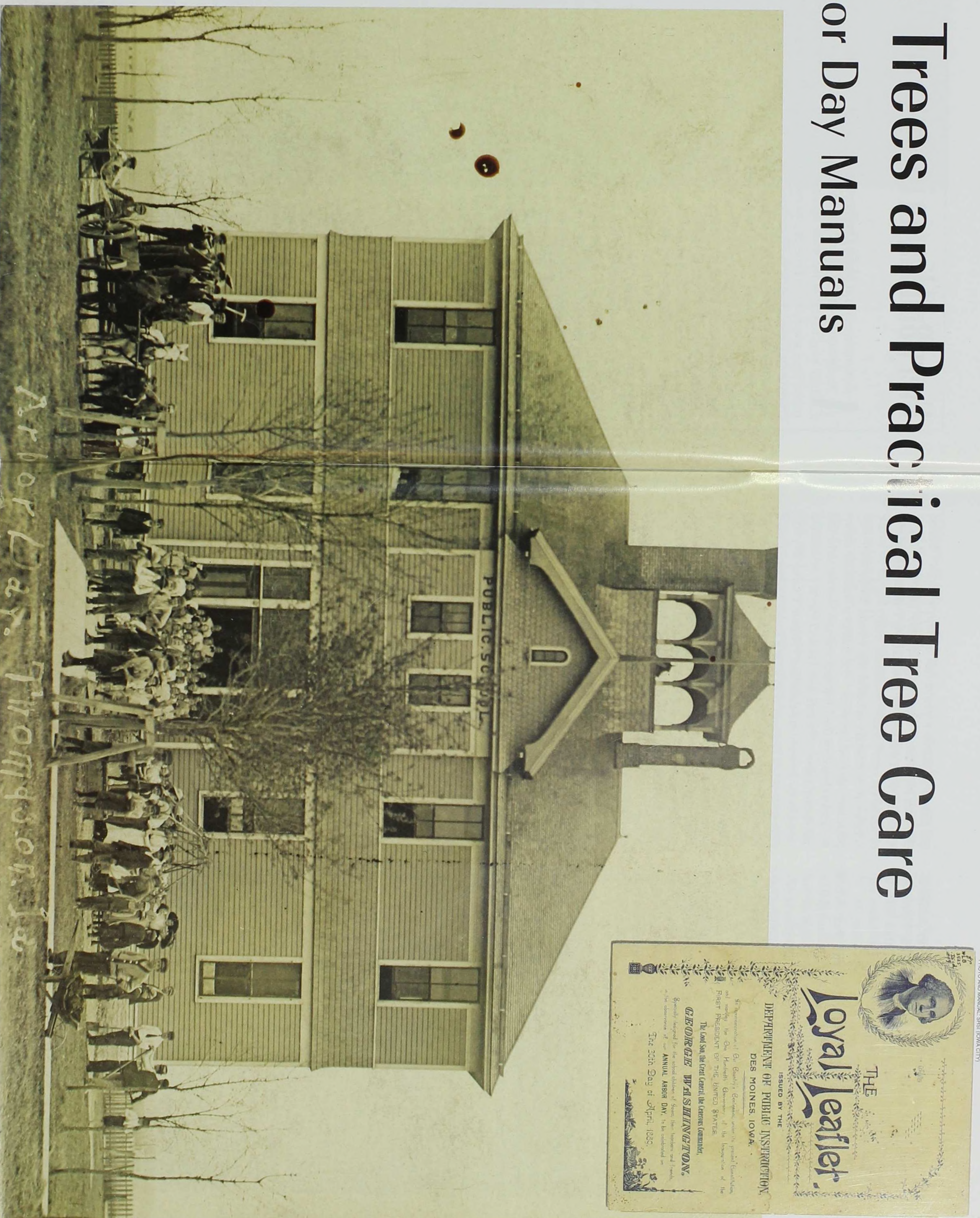
The Iowa Arbor Day Manuals

by Lori Vermaas

"TO-DAY LET US drop school and lessons, and spend the day in the open air," exhorted Iowa Superintendent of Public Instruction Henry Sabin in the annual Iowa Arbor Day manual of 1891—surely welcome instructions to many students. "Put your books in the desk, you will have no need of them," he directed, because nature "is a book as old as the world." In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Arbor Day was one of the strongest efforts to raise awareness about tree planting, cultivation, and appreciation. But the holiday inculcated other goals, too: to inspire patriotism and to improve schoolgrounds. A look at some of the early Arbor Day celebrations in the United States and the yearly Arbor Day manuals produced by the Iowa Department of Public Instruction (DPI) a century ago reveals the ebb and flow of these goals in the Iowa school system.

ARBOR DAY was the brainchild of J. Sterling Morton, editor of the *Nebraska City News* (and later U.S. secretary of agriculture). He proposed at a Nebraska State Board of Agriculture meeting in January 1872 that the state's citizens needed to observe a day of tree planting in the spring. Premiums were announced (\$100 to the county agricultural society that planted the most trees, and a collection of books on farming to the individual who planted the most). Three months later, Nebraska's Arbor Day was a triumphant success, with Nebraskans reportedly planting over one million trees.

The idea spread to other states and was



initially promoted by state agricultural and horticultural associations. In Iowa, for instance, the State Horticultural Society sponsored the state's first Arbor Day in 1874 (see sidebar). But within a decade, the American public school became the most accepted venue.

The "Cincinnati Plan" influenced all other Arbor Day celebrations in U.S. schools. The plan emerged in 1882, when the first American Forestry Congress met in Cincinnati and Ohio's public schools hosted the state's first Arbor Day festival, a three-day event. National forestry experts lectured, schools dismissed students for two days, and reportedly 50,000 Cincinnatians planted commemorative tree groves.

On the next year's Arbor Day, 17,000 Cincinnati students converged on the city's Eden Park to dedicate the Authors Grove, one of the five commemorative groves planted the previous year. Thousands of spectators watched the pleasing spectacle "of gayly dressed children in active motion . . . whose voices . . . sounded like

the chattering from a grove full of happy birds." Some children organized into imaginatively named companies, like the Emerson or Longfellow Forestry Cadets, or Franklin or Whittier Foresters. Forming 25 or more "circles of humanity around the young trees, with the populace massed between," the children installed granite tablets bearing the honored authors' names and the ceremony's date. The children recited literary selections (usually by tree enthusiasts like William Cullen Bryant, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and James Russell Lowell), read forestry essays and extracts related to the trees' honorees, and sang patriotic and celebratory songs. The state forestry association dedicated the four other groves in Eden Park to presidents, military heroes, pioneers, and other distinguished citizens. Playing up the patriotic symbolism that 19th-century Americans characteristically attached to trees, organizers hailed the young, named trees as forming "the first memorial groves ever planted in America."

Arbor Day and the Iowa State Horticultural Society

By the 1860s, concerned Americans were drawing attention to the dramatic deforestation of parts of the United States, and in the following years, citizens and states embarked on organized efforts to plant trees, often through local granges and state agricultural or horticultural associations. In Iowa, to celebrate Iowa's first Arbor Day—April 20, 1874—the Iowa State Horticultural Society offered cash awards to those citizens (adults, children, and groups) who planted and maintained the most trees, in permanent groves or belts, in the four categories of evergreens or larches; nut-bearing trees (like oaks); elms, maples, and other soft-wooded deciduous trees (basswoods, willows, cottonwoods); and trees not native to Iowa. Later, honey locust and hardy catalpa were added. Strict rules dictated that the trees must be planted on Arbor Day; in October, only competitors accompanied by two witnesses could tally the healthy trees; participants then needed to secure a certified affidavit from a justice of the peace.

Yet Iowa's first Arbor Day, complained Horticultural Society member Lawrie Tatum, "was wholly a failure." Continuous rain in eastern Iowa and snow in the western half prevented tree-planting for that day. But Iowans planted trees "extensively . . . in hundreds of neighborhoods" the following two days, and then flooded the society's offices with "scores of applications asking if entry could be made for trees planted" past the April 20

deadline. From that point on, the society allowed that trees planted throughout the spring would qualify.

But other problems remained. Although many Iowans professed enthusiasm for the contest, they found the rules troublesome and tree seedlings difficult to locate and too costly. Nurseries had problems maintaining forest trees in the Iowa climate. Consequently, Iowans tended to purchase non-native seedlings from nurseries outside Iowa, a matter of concern for the Horticultural Society.

The Arbor Day tree-planting contests continued for several years, but the State Horticultural Society announced only a few winners: two in 1878, one in 1879, and one in 1880. The organization still encouraged Arbor Day, pushing schools to tie practical lessons in horticulture to nature study. F.M. Powell (retiring president of the Horticultural Society and superintendent of the State Institution for the Feeble-Minded in Glenwood) affirmed that it was all horticulturalists' duty to encourage both. "Teachers are becoming [obsessive and overly enthusiastic] cranks on nature studies," Powell noted in 1897, "and I consider this an opportune time to introduce horticultural studies in the schools. It is a fad and is going to have its run." Children, especially rural children likely to be farmers, needed sound, science-based instruction on planting and cultivation, provided by Iowa schools.

—by Lori Vermaas

IOWA'S PUBLIC SCHOOL system started its own Arbor Day celebrations in the late 1880s. Intending to bolster an 1882 Iowa school law that required the planting of at least 12 shade trees per schoolhouse, State Superintendent John W. Akers (1882–1888) looked to Ohio's Cincinnati Plan as an effective model for the initial celebration of Arbor Day in Iowa's schools in 1887. In a forestry circular directed to the schools, Akers suggested that teachers engage the students in literary and singing exercises during tree-planting ceremonies and also encourage them to regard trees as "living emblems" of admirable personalities, the latter via tree-naming ceremonies. American educator Horace Mann was the suggested honoree that year.

The 1887 forestry circular proved so popular that the next year the Iowa Department of Public Instruction produced the state's first Arbor Day manual specifically for schools. In the next several years, these DPI manuals provided endless material about trees and their aesthetic beauty for classroom recitations and performances, including poetry, songs, "personations," and playlets. The focus of Arbor Day was ostensibly tree stewardship, nature study, and appreciation of the nation's natural resources, but the early manuals vigorously promoted the nation's historical and cultural riches as well. With titles like *The Loyal Leaflet* and *Patriotism and the Playground*, they revealed the symbolic allure of American trees, scripting patriotism as the ultimate object lesson of the first decade of Arbor Day celebrations. Indeed, promoters believed, planting, naming, and caring for trees would improve young citizens' budding sense of civic duty and allegiance.

Iowa Superintendent Henry Sabin in particular championed the naming ceremonies. For example, because Iowa's Arbor Day in 1888 (April 27) coincided with Ulysses S. Grant's birthday, Sabin advised teachers to center activities around the Civil War general's moral and historical significance. Regarding tree care as an expression of "a sacred trust and duty" and a tree's growth as "emblematic of the heights attainable in human character," Sabin encouraged teachers to have their students plant a tree in Grant's name.

Naming trees after famous Americans was not uncommon, especially in the years preceding the young nation's 1876 centennial. In Philadelphia, Penn's Treaty Elm honored Quaker leader William Penn and his signing of a peace treaty with the Delaware, Mingoes, and other Susquehanna Nations in 1682. The Washington Elm in Boston's Common commemorated George Washington's act of assuming command of revolutionary forces under its branches in 1775. In the 1860s and 1870s, some of California's long-lived sequoias had been

named after famous Americans. Swept up in the trend, Sabin soberly advised in 1888 that the Arbor Day tree planted by students "be called 'the Grant Tree.'" "Let the little children, as they plant it, be taught to revere the name of him, who by his sword carved victory out of defeat, and opened the way to peace, to his distracted country." Visualizing the memorial tree as "a perpetual reminder of the debt" children owed to both Grant and "the humblest Union Soldier," Sabin hoped that this and other Arbor Day activities would serve as "the truest incentives to patriotism."

SABIN CONTINUED his energetic commentary in Arbor Day manuals throughout his eight years as Iowa's superintendent (1888–1892 and 1894–1898). He exulted in the panorama of American history. In the 1889 manual, *The Loyal Leaflet*, Sabin triumphed that the past century was a marvel, marked by breathtaking urban development and territorial and industrial expansion, where once "was only the silence of the forest [and] the untrodden surface of the prairie." The favorable result of stunning technological inventions—the railroad, telegraph, telephone, steamboat, and electric lighting—the United States as recounted by Sabin was a dynamic country, blessed with "a free government" and "divine Providence."

The year 1889 was an especially stellar one for it marked two historical moments—the 100th anniversaries of the U.S. Constitution and George Washington's inauguration as the first president. Sabin again proposed that students plant a memorial tree—this time for George Washington. This time more strongly elaborating on the metaphorical meaning of such a tree-planting experience, he directed that students "plant it deep, that its roots may take a firm hold, as his name has in the hearts of his countrymen. Water it in the drought of summer, guard it and strengthen it to resist the winds of winter." Encourage "the children to call it their Washington tree," he advised teachers. "Let them associate with it his words, his deeds, his character, and thus form within their minds that lofty ideal of citizenship which is the soul of true patriotism, the safeguard of republican liberty." Planting Washington trees, as with the Grant trees the year before, figured more as lessons in civics and citizenship than in nature. Indeed, Sabin's final remarks expressed less interest in the appreciation of trees than anxiety about appreciation of the nation's history—as if something was at risk of falling away. Amid a syllabus of tree-related readings and patriotic songs ("America," "The American Flag," "The Ship of

State," "Centennial Hymn," "Union and Liberty," and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"), Sabin lamented that "the founders are all dead, [and] the ranks of the defenders grow thinner with each passing year."

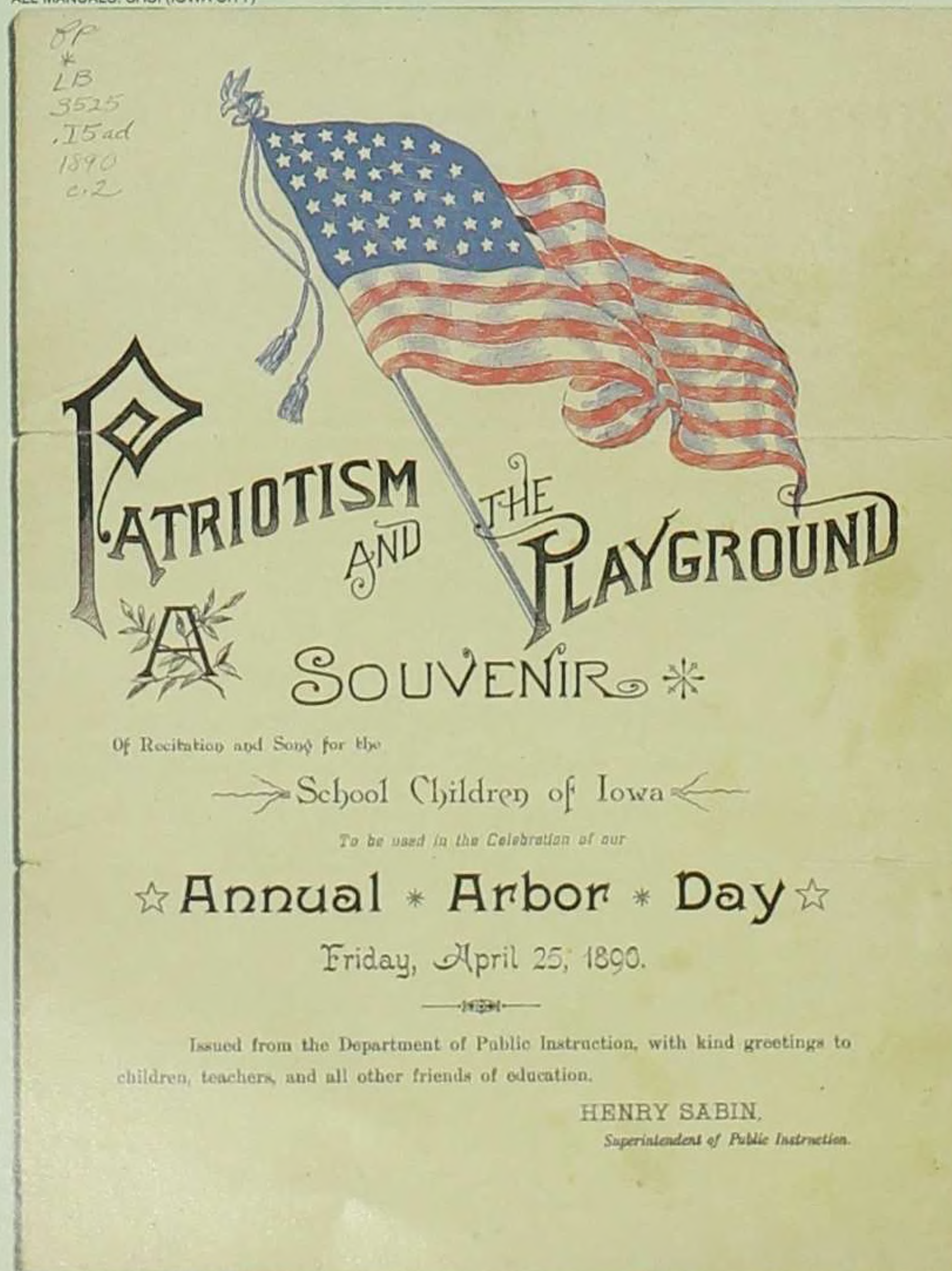
In subsequent manuals during the 1890s, Iowa superintendents continued to encourage students to use trees, "trimmed or festooned," to personify and celebrate American literary or historical figures, along with other patriotic ceremonies, including singing songs about the flag and participating in a variety of flag-drill activities. The 1892 *Arbor Day Leaflet* was particularly historically minded. The new interim superintendent, John B. Knoepfler (1892–1894), conceded dual goals. He announced that it was "a day to be devoted to tree-planting and the study of nature, and to lessons in patriotism and the language of our flag." The year 1892 also marked the 400th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in America, so Knoepfler singled out Columbus as the figure to be memorialized with a named tree. With a literary excerpt from geographer and geologist Arnold Henry Guyot later in the pamphlet describing the Old and New Worlds as trees themselves—the Old as "a mighty oak, with stout and sturdy trunk," and America as "the slender and flexible palm tree"—Iowa's Arbor Day celebrations continued to use trees to embody patriotic lessons and stimulate the desire for civic duty.

THE MANUALS' CONTENT, however, began to change significantly by the early 20th century. School administrators teamed with state horticulturalists to steer their content towards more practical activities. Educators began to realize that the day's celebration of trees, nature, and national history was not beautifying schoolyards, nor were children learning about tree care. Although DPI calculations since 1886 showed an increase in the number of trees "set out and in thrifty condition," by the late 1890s the accuracy of these estimates came under dispute. Horticulturalists and state officials noticed that many schoolhouses were "without trees" and described schoolyards as "bleak, open places generally." For every seven trees children planted, usually only one would remain, and that one would be "barely alive."

Some educators blamed the teachers by suggesting that they failed to follow through. Even Sabin complained, saying in 1894 that "it is not enough to plant a tree, with pleasant Arbor Day exercises." "It must be cared for afterwards," he chided. "The children should be taught to have a real pride in the growth of the Washington Tree, the Grant Tree, or of any other even though it may have no particular name."

"We make this address to you, and not to the children . . . for good and valid reasons," Sabin scolded.

ALL MANUALS: SHSI (IOWA CITY)



Leafing through the manuals

The 1890 Arbor Day manual (left) encouraged "patriotism in our schools" through the use of portraits of Washington, Lincoln, and Grant, recitations, and flag exercises. "Then, if their country ever needs their help, [students] can keep time to the roll of drums and understand the bugle call." On the practical side, tips were provided for transplanting trees and growing screens of ornamental vines. Only brief mention was made of extending the study of nature beyond Arbor Day.

The next year's manual, *A Forest Festival of Song and Sentiment*, had a decidedly Iowa focus. Thirty-nine Iowans contributed brief articles on Iowa trees, flowers, and birds. "The Oak—Outline for Study" presented a simple botany lesson, new to the manuals. But most of the content was still literary, like the nine-stanza poem on Iowa trees: "Catalpa loose and flowery, and honey locust clean/Put out their long, dry fingers here, to cast the ripened bean."

More nature study and less naming of trees characterized the 1893 and 1894 manuals. For Arbor Day in

"Traveling about the State at times, we are pained to notice the bare and desolate condition of too many of the school-house yards. Often the trees which were planted in former years have been allowed to die, evidently through want of care. Seldom have we noticed any attempts to cultivate shrubbery or flowers about the grounds. Very little has been done to make the approaches to the building, or its surroundings, in any way attractive." Unsightly outhouses stood out in the open, without the benefit of the privacy and shade that trees or even a cluster of evergreens would provide.

Teachers did not accept all the blame. Some complained that local school directors gave little help, or that districts didn't "allow them the necessary time" for Arbor Day exercises. They reported that consequently many trees planted for Arbor Day died over the summer or were destroyed by vandals. Horticulturalists chimed in too, pointing out that even when they offered trees free of charge to school districts, most never took advantage of the offer.

Educators and state officials thus began to realize that they needed to work together to develop year-round curriculum in nature study and incorporate it more thoroughly into their Arbor Day celebrations. Such a shift was part of a larger educational phenomenon, the nature-study movement, which encouraged exper-

iential instruction and field observations via practical and hands-on lessons. These revolutionary ideas in U.S. classroom instruction, which first appeared in the 1880s, figured as especially beneficial for a nation needing both manually trained workers for industry and agriculturally trained farmers to feed that nation.

THE NEW FOCUS in the manuals began to surface at least as early as the 1910s. For instance, the 1913 manual, *Iowa Arbor and Bird Day Book*, fortified teachers' knowledge with pointers on planting trees and showed the practical benefits of schoolyard improvement. A photograph of "A Much Neglected School House"—its yard bereft of trees and full of weeds—contrasted sharply with three others that depicted the Arbor Day ideal: verdant and well-managed schoolgrounds.

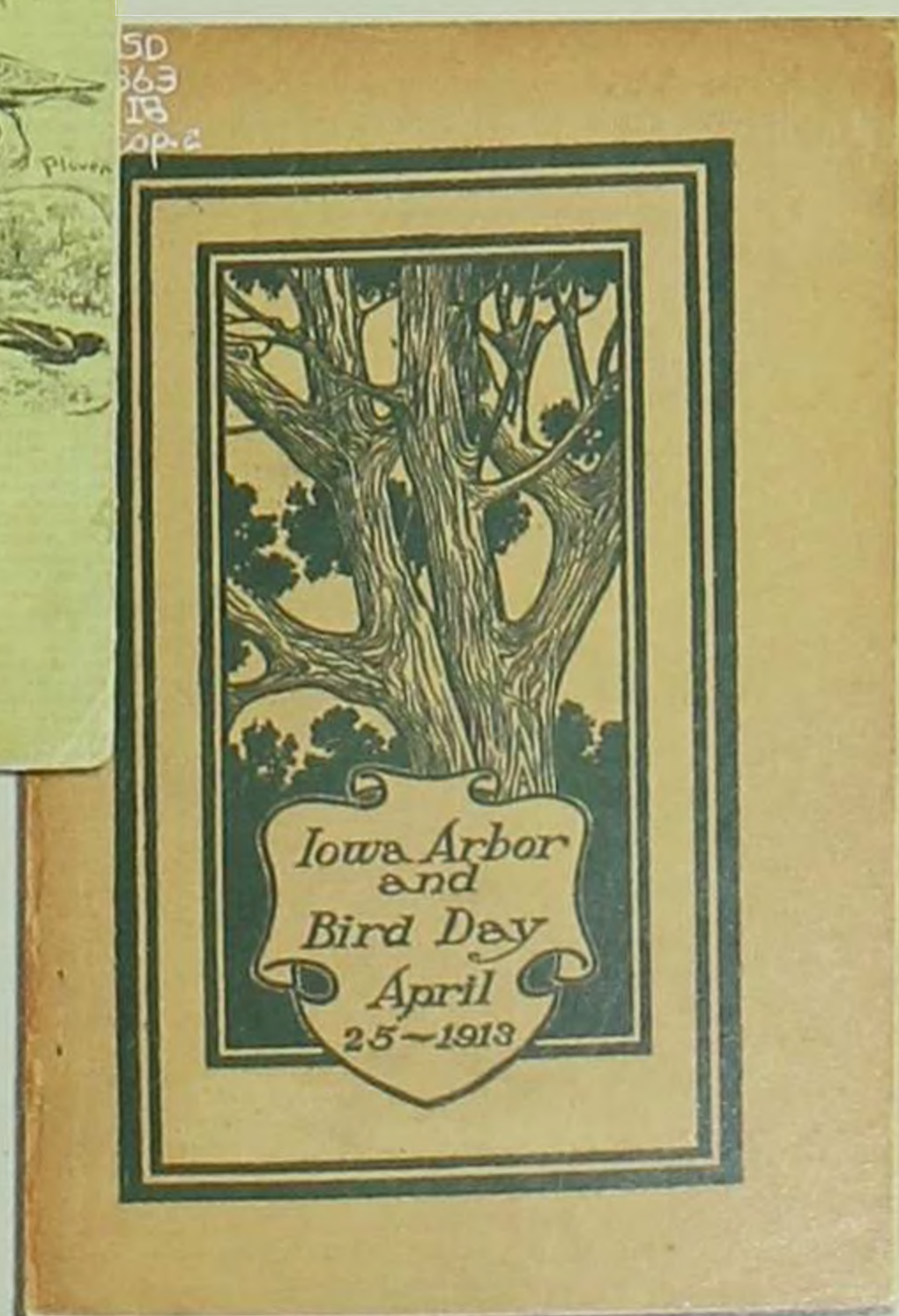
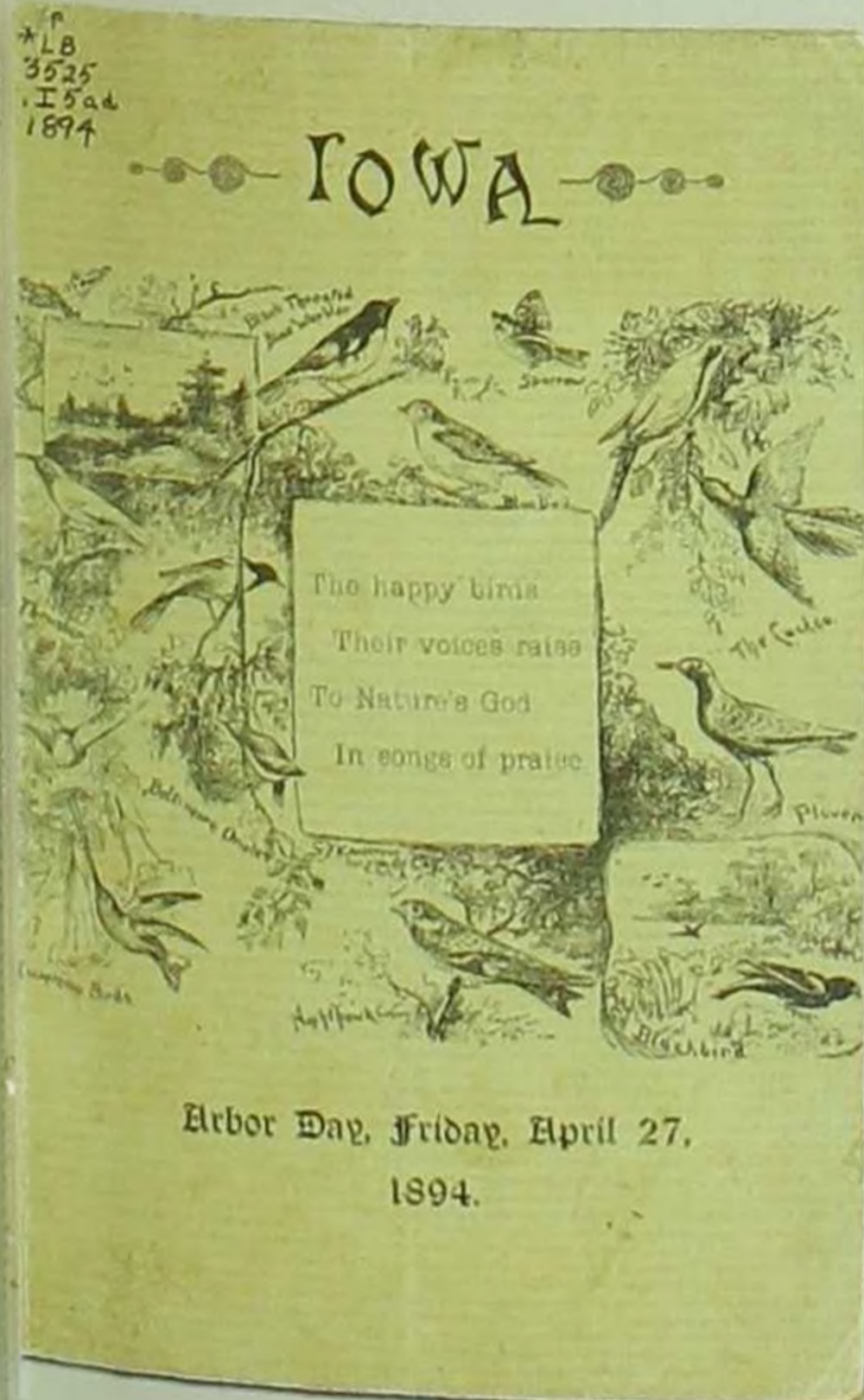
These healthier environments would "bind young people to country life," while allowing them "to cultivate the habit of observation," explained Iowa Horticultural Society member Eugene Secor, of Forest City. Students would learn to "see things," "enlarging their outlook in life and increasing their happiness." Photograph captions described the ideal schoolyard as a site of natural splendor, a place "Where Leaves Rustle to

1893, for instance, the manual encouraged students to write essays on the uses and benefits of trees, and to improve and beautify their schoolyards—instead of marching among trees with flags, or naming them after historical figures. Iowa State College professor J. L. Budd called "attention to some of our handsome and useful trees . . . neglected by our planters": oaks, hackberry, and linden. Students were instructed to choose among the previous year's top three vote-getters: oak, maple, and elm for state tree, and rose, pansy, and goldenrod for state flower. The manual still included nature poems for classroom recitation, but the lessons no longer exclusively fo-

ocused on patriotism and the reverence for American history. The use of trees in American schools had shifted from the symbolic to the practical and scientific.

Arbor Day manuals also began to include material on studying and appreciating birds and celebrating Bird Day. In the 1893 manual, Iowa historian Charles Aldrich decried the disappearance of "precious song birds" due to cultivation, mowing machines, and drainage; America's bird populations were declining also because women's hat fashions called for feathers, wings, and even entire birds. In the 20th century, Arbor Day and Bird Day would be clearly tied together.

—The Editor



The Ideal and the Actual

Arbor Day manuals vigorously promoted tree planting on schoolgrounds, but how thoroughly was that ideal carried out? Photographs, school records, and teachers' papers yield conflicting answers. Judging from this 1934 photograph (right), Mercer School #4 in Adams County lacked every kind of trees or shrubs.

At the other extreme were two rural schools where Sarah Gillespie Huftalen taught. According to her sketch below, trees bordered three sides of the yard of Oneida Township School #7 (known as Arbor Vitae Summit School). Huftalen taught at this Delaware County school from 1904 to 1909. According to her drawing, 19 trees surrounded the school; most were arbor vitae and probably functioned as a windbreak. All but one bore names, including temperance leader Frances Willard, authors

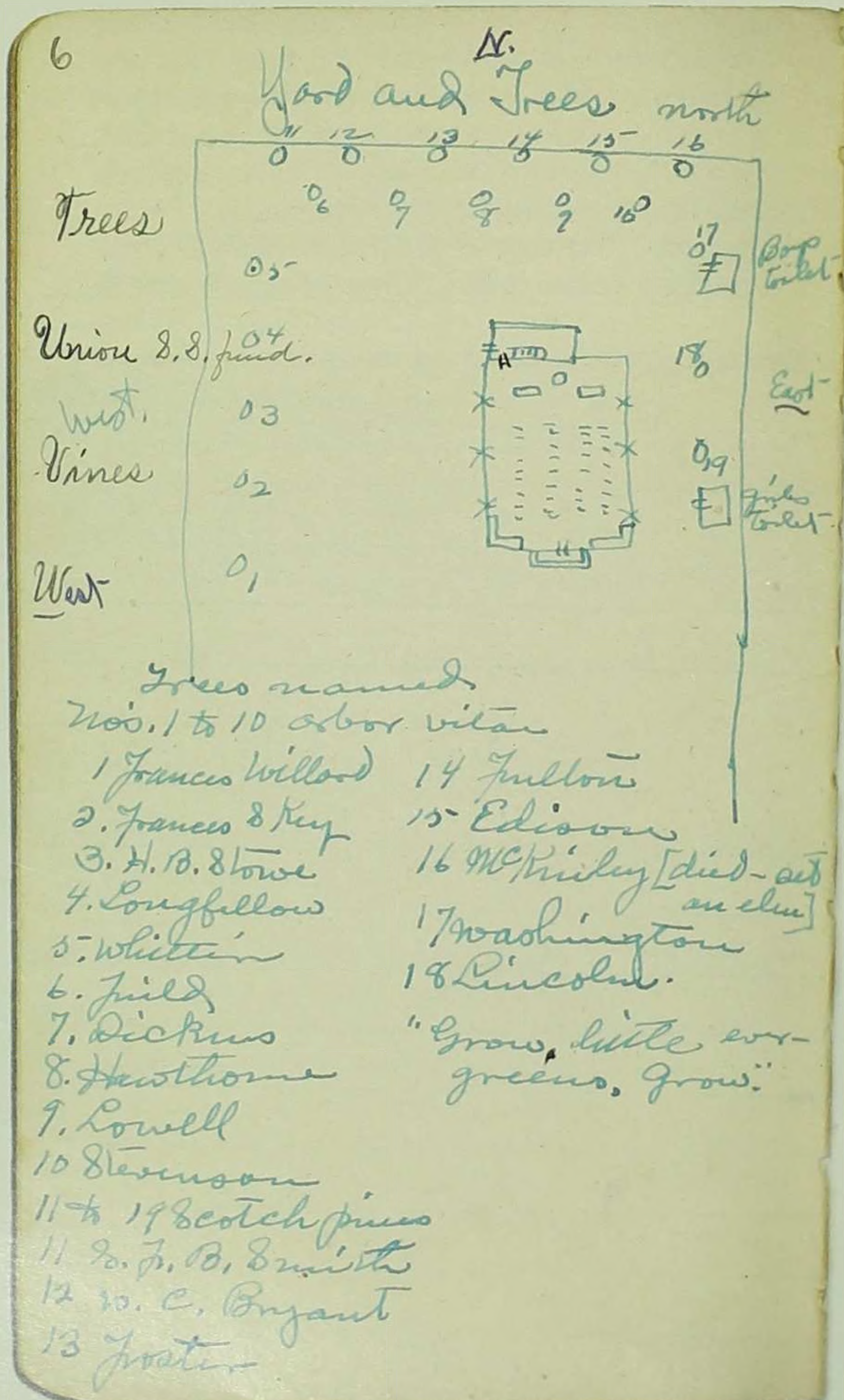


Stowe, Hawthorne, and Bryant, inventors Fulton and Edison, and presidents Washington, Lincoln, and McKinley. Of the McKinley tree she noted, "died—set an elm."

In August 1909 Huftalen took a new teaching job in Tarkio Township in Page County. Faced with a neglected schoolyard, she rallied students, parents, and others to help beautify the site. They mowed weeds and hauled away brush and trash (including wagonloads of ashes, broken glass, and old iron). They cut and graded the slope into a level playground, sodded a lawn, planted flower beds, laid walkways, and, of course, planted trees. One of her photo albums documents the labor and love poured into the schoolyard improvements, which stretched over two years. She captioned the photo below, "Mildred and Beulah Hall looking at a little tree which they planted on the school grounds in the spring, watched and hoed it during the summer and are now loving it through the winter."

The Huftalen Collection at the State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City) comprises 13 boxes of school and curriculum records, photographs, diaries, and scrapbooks.

—The Editor



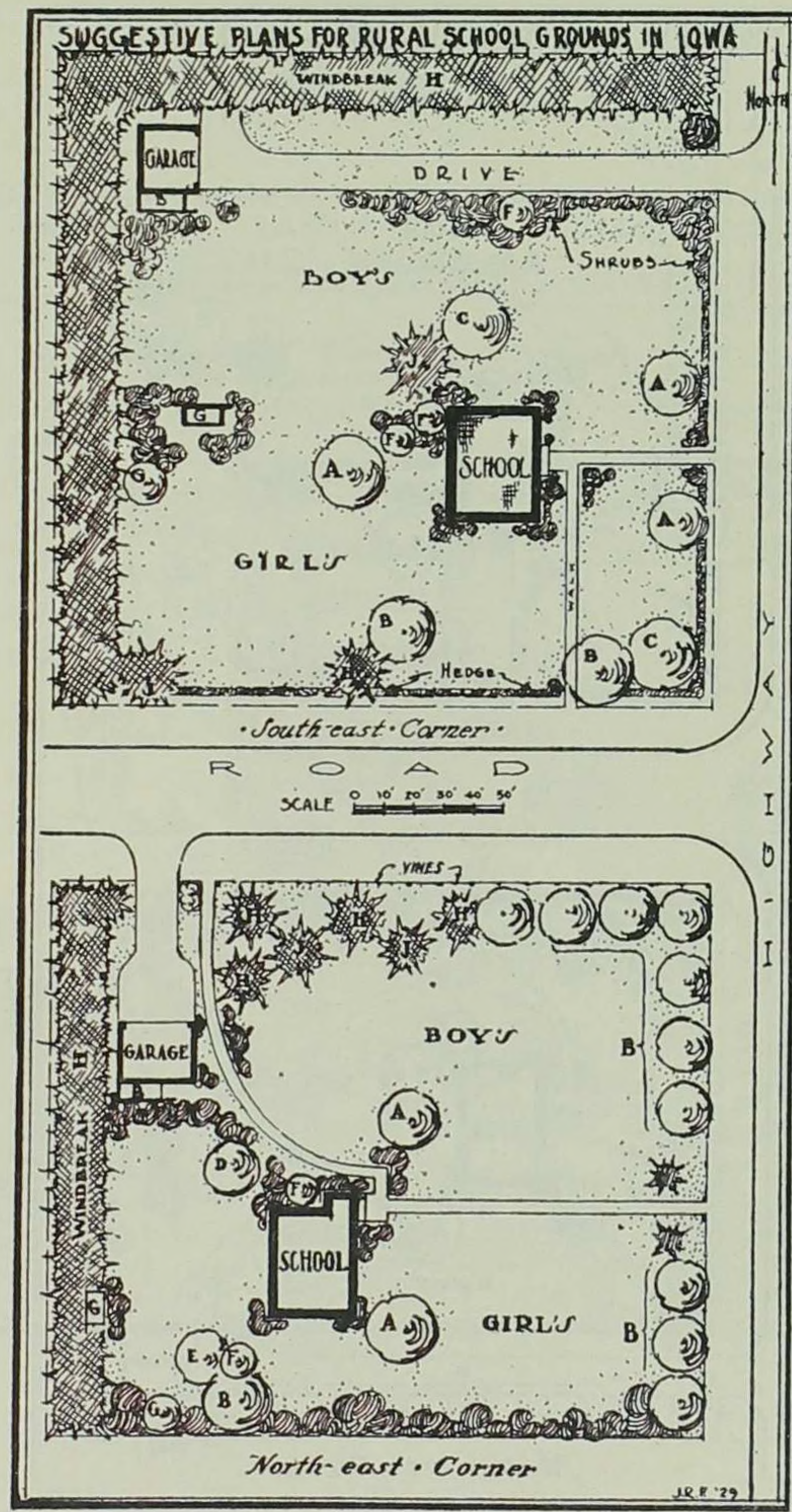
the Rabbits Tread" or "A Place Where Birds Sing."

The spotlight had clearly expanded away from just the appreciation of individual trees. "The tree, itself, is undoubtedly a splendid subject," a U.S. Forest Service article stated, "but sometimes we see so many trees that we fail to notice the forest." The traditional literary snippets on trees, birds, and nature, however, still appeared—even a play with dryads adorned in green tissue-paper rosettes and coronets. But articles on forestry, tree husbandry, Iowa's wildflowers, conservation, and the economic value of birds predominated, some quite lengthy and many written by specialists. The thin, flimsy Arbor Day manuals of earlier years had been transformed into a 109-page manual by 1913, commensurate with educators' more focused commitment to nature education, tree stewardship, and practical instruction.

THE STRESS on a more conservation-based approach predominated in the 1929 manual. The study of birds and their protection, the study of wildflowers, and learning about forest rehabilitation and "the protection and perpetuation of our trees," along with a short section on how to behave responsibly outdoors, occupied fully two thirds of the edition. The tree-related curriculum was much more extensive in that it included month-by-month lesson plans for three age groups; listed references and correlated the "outdoor lessons" with language, geography, art, arithmetic, and other subjects; and offered sample schoolyard landscape designs (see right).

The designs were especially significant, since improving and beautifying schoolyards had been another goal of Iowa educators for more than three decades. The evaluation criteria under the Iowa Standard School Law (first passed in 1919) continued to call for "trees, shrubbery, and flowers attractively placed"—but far too many rural schoolyards were still barren and unsightly. The six model landscape plans for schoolgrounds submitted by extension landscape architect John R. Fitzsimmons, from Iowa State College, aimed to inspire schoolyard improvements. They accommodated different locations and grades of land, with recommendations for specific trees, vines, shrubs, and flowers.

The 1929 manual still included recitations, of course, mostly sentimental verse. A few somber poems spoke to recent American history. "Yankee Trees in France" testified to "those who perished overseas" in World War I. "Tragedy of the Trees" connected drought, impoverished soil, and "abandoned farms" to the tragedy of timberland turned to "real estate" and "waste stump land."

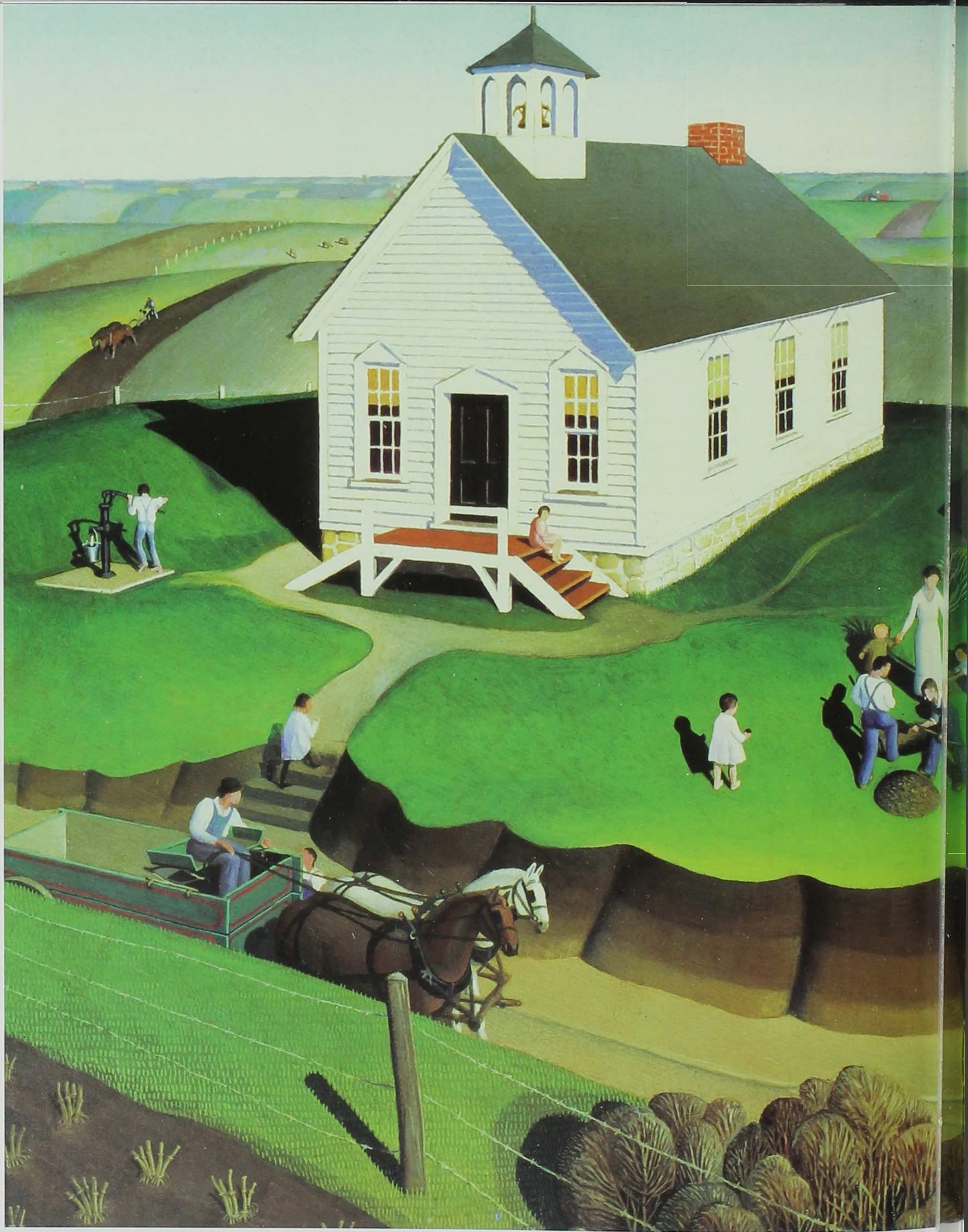


But the main theme had firmly turned to teaching about conservation, ecological concepts, and practical tree care, rather than patriotism and national history.

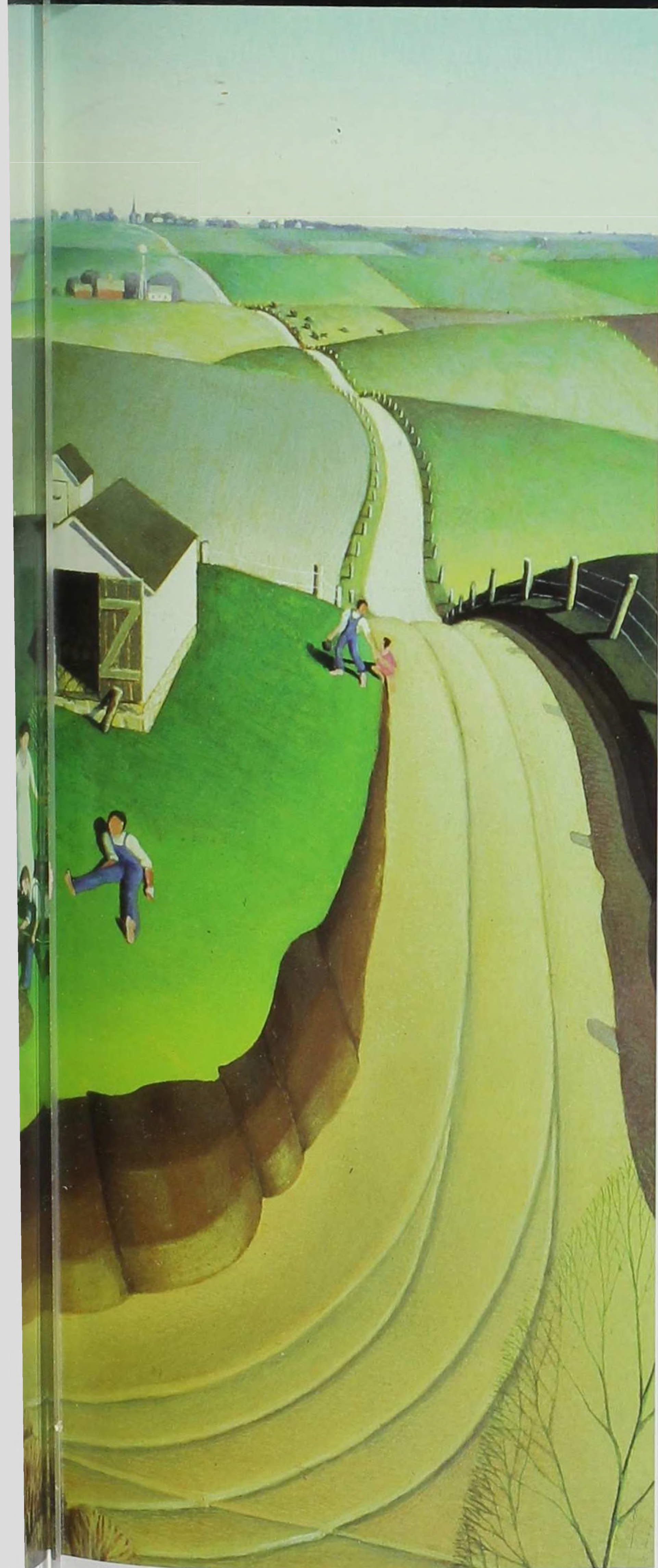
GIVEN THE DPI'S stress on science and tree husbandry in the early 20th century, it might seem ironic that Iowa artist Grant Wood's *Arbor Day* (1932) immortalized the state's earlier Arbor Day celebrations. Nostalgia is powerful.

The painting was commissioned by the Cedar Rapids Community School District in honor of two of Grant's fellow teachers at McKinley School. (In 2003, the painting was used as basis of the design for Iowa's commemorative quarter, "Foundations in Education.")

According to art historian Wanda Corn, Grant Wood's *Arbor Day* depicted the typical Iowa school-



Grant Wood's painting *Arbor Day* (1932) honored Catherine Motejl and Rose L. Waterstradt, who had taught in rural schools and organized Arbor Day celebrations. The painting became the basis of the design for Iowa's commemorative quarter in 2003.



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house "as it looked in the 1890s, when it stood out on the barren landscape." This was the very landscape that had dismayed and embarrassed school officials like Sabin, although arguably barren rural schoolyards still existed by the 1930s, even into the 1950s. Yet Wood placed the tree-planting celebration on a stage, with the schoolgrounds heightened as a "brilliantly lit" "island of land cut away from the surrounding roads and fields," bewitched, as Corn argues, with "magically glowing green grass, the pristine white schoolhouse, . . . and the immutable shadows cast up on the grass." Wood's elegiac landscape, absent of mechanization, suggested that many Americans now appreciated a simpler time. As one reviewer of the 1932 painting put it, "things . . . are fast being swallowed up in the modern civilization."

Wood captured the essence of the early impetus for the Arbor Day holiday as celebrated in Iowa's schools and prescribed in state manuals. Painted during a time when enthusiasm for the nature-study movement peaked, his depiction of the tree-planting holiday restored the basic act of planting trees in Iowa as a wholesome ceremony—a rite of passage involving children's physical labor, likely followed by romantic poetry recitations and appreciative literary chants, as the class encircled their newly planted and soon-to-be-named sapling. ❖

Lori Vermaas is the author of Sequoia: The Heralded Tree in American Art and Culture (Smithsonian Press, 2003) and production editor for the Journal of Paleontology. The book developed from her American studies dissertation (University of Iowa, 2000).

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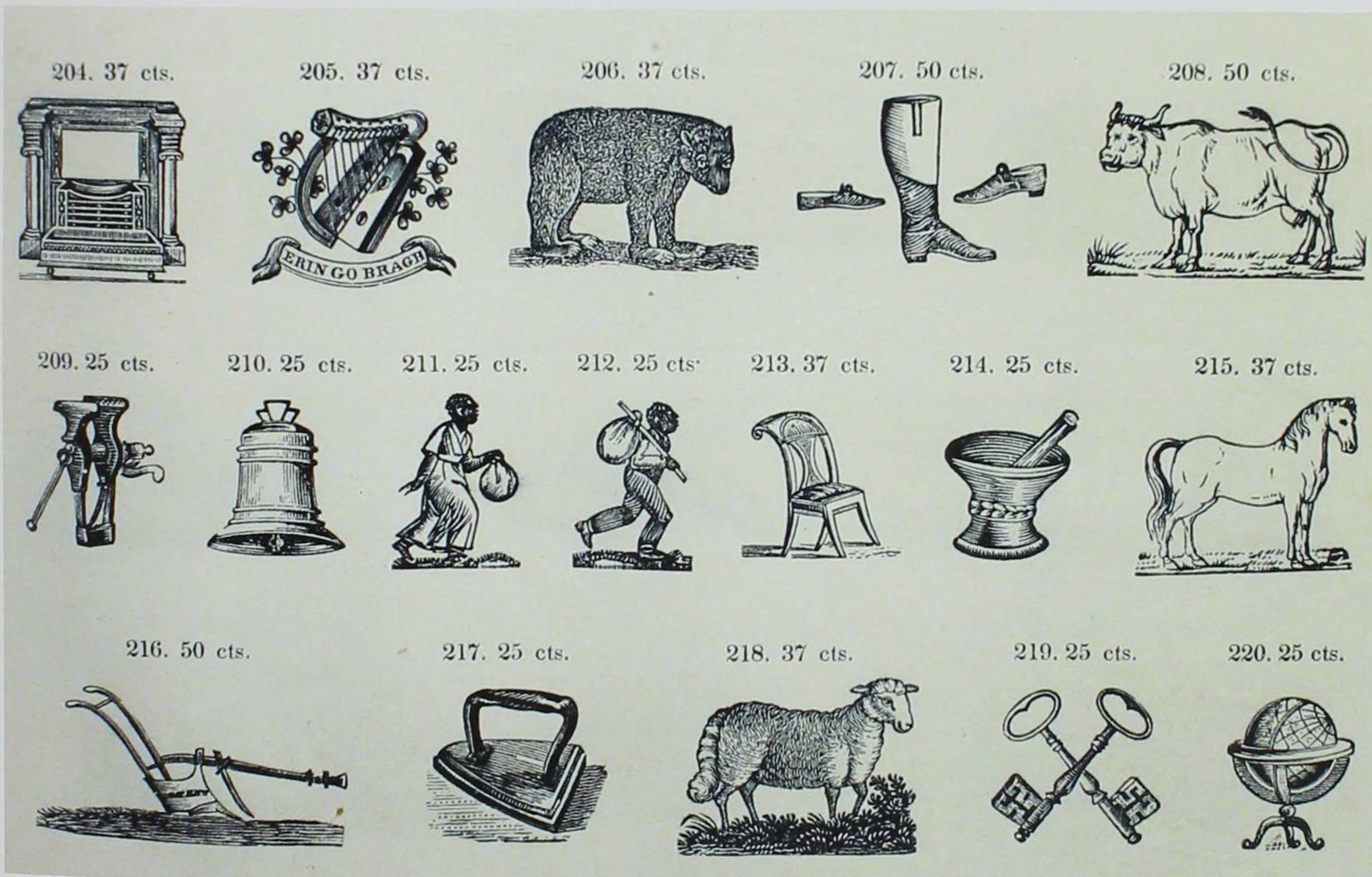
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SHSI (IOWA CITY)

One in a Million

Among the millions of items in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa is a thick book titled *Specimen of Printing Types and Ornaments from the Cincinnati Type Foundry*, published in 1844. This page from the book shows a variety of "metal ornaments" that newspaper and job printers could buy to illustrate the advertisements and notices that they printed.

Amidst the symbols for livestock and medicines, tools and furniture, sadirons and boots, are two symbols for runaway slaves—reminding us today that an enslaved person who managed to escape was considered a valuable commodity by the owner, but not a human being who deserved freedom.

Cincinnati (where this book was published) was a border point where fugitives met northern "conductors" on the Underground Railroad. But Iowa also saw its share of escaped slaves. The printer of a southeastern Iowa newspaper (possibly the *Keokuk Argus*) used a "runaway slave" ornament to draw attention to this notice published in 1846.

—The Editor



RUNAWAY on Sunday, the 31st of May, 1846, from the subscriber, living in Waterloo, Clark county, Mo., a Negro woman named **LUCY**, about 36 years old, very stout and heavy made, very black, very large feet and hands; had on when she left a Blue Calicoe dress and a Sun Bonnet; no other clothing. It is believed she will be conducted to the Territory of Iowa, in the direction of Keosauqua, or beyond that place, to a settlement of free negroes, that was set free by a Mr. Miers, living in Tully, Lewis county, Mo., some years ago. Any person apprehending said slave, and returning her to me, or securing her so that I can get her again, I will pay a liberal reward, and pay all reasonable expenses. Give information to Daniel Hines, Keokuk, or James F. Death, Farmington, I. T.

JOHN DEDMAN.
June 6, 1846. n21-3w



Inside: C.Y. Stephens Auditorium and more award-winning 20th-century architecture.

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