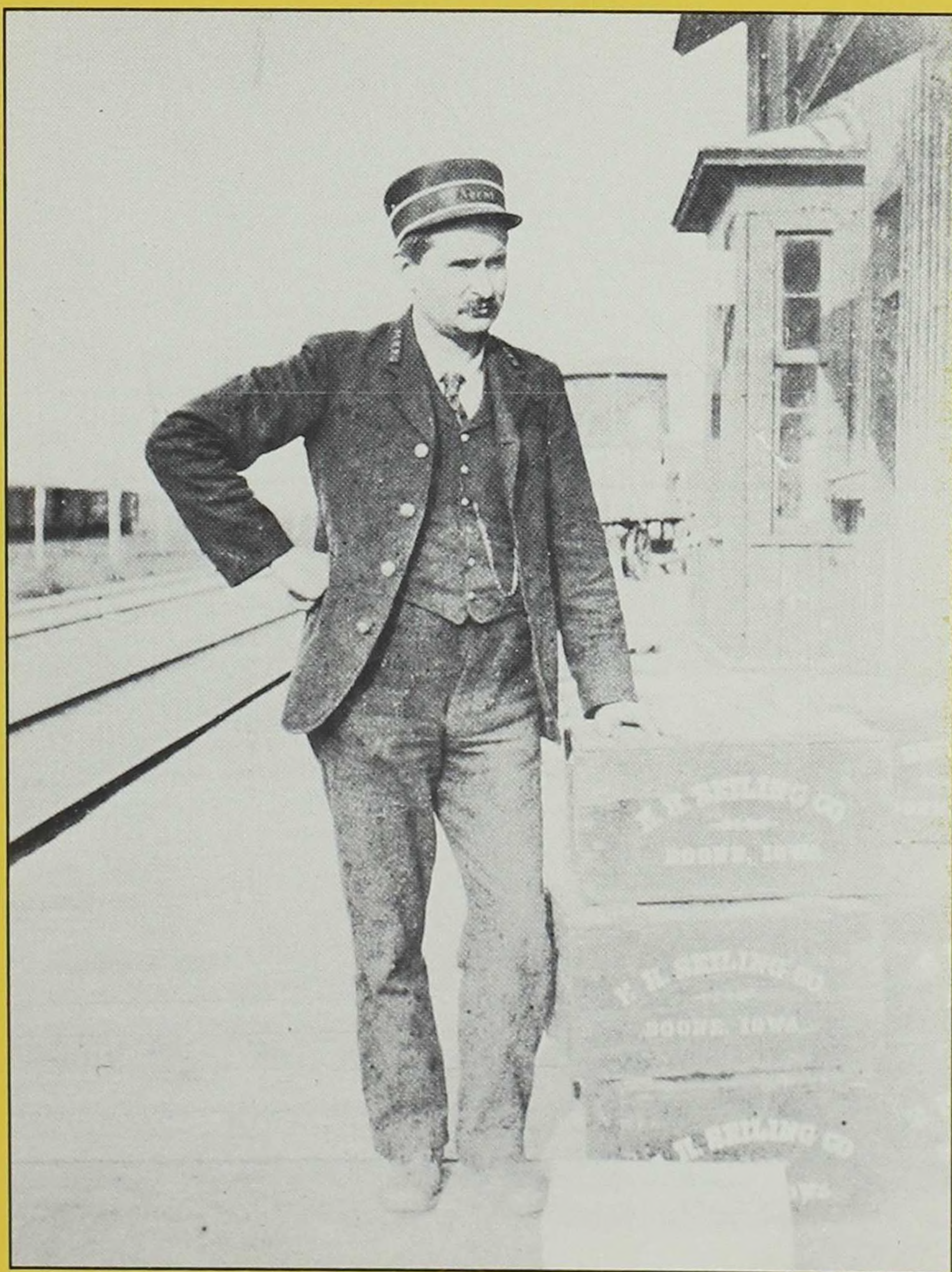


# *The* PALIMPSEST

IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 64 NUMBER 3

MAY/JUNE 1983







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Office of the State Historical Society  
The Palimpsest

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# The PALIMPSEST

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Adrian D. Anderson, Executive Director

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Mary K. Fredericksen, Editor

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Cover: *Chicago & North Western Agent William H. Marple poses with freight at the railroad's Lohrville, Iowa, depot in 1910. In the photographic essay appearing in this issue of the Palimpsest, H. Roger Grant examines the role of the small-town railroad station agent in Iowa in the early years of the twentieth century. (courtesy the author)*



## The Meaning of the Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete, and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.





# Higher Education in Cedar Falls: Town and Gown in the First Hundred Years

by William C. Lang



"I was a farmer in Lincoln Township of Black Hawk County," wrote Captain Edward G. Miller, who introduced the initial legislation for a normal school at Cedar Falls. "I think the first time I saw the . . . Soldiers' Orphans' Home, the thought came to me 'That is the place for a State Normal School.' The idea took complete possession of me; I felt sure that the thing could be done; of its desirability it seemed hardly necessary to argue." When Miller "broached the subject to leading citizens of Cedar Falls," he was, however, "disappointed—astonished—to see with what coolness the proposition was received. . . . They wanted the property to continue as a state institution . . . but there was one who would have preferred to try for a school for imbeciles." Upon election to the Iowa General Assembly in 1874, Miller made it clear that his position regarding the building was "a Normal or nothing." At that point the "best citizens" of Cedar Falls came to his support.

In 1876 the newly elected representative, H.C. Hemenway of Cedar Falls, and Senator Miller made a concerted effort to secure the approval of the General Assembly for the transformation of the Orphans' Home into a normal school. The local press strongly supported the proposal. The editor of the *Cedar Falls Gazette* took pride in the fact that Iowa was "so philanthropic as to be in the forefront of caring for her insane, her deaf, her blind, her soldiers' orphans, her reformatory school for youth." He argued, however, that Iowa was "today, without a training school for her teachers who are to establish in the minds of our children truth and principles which will control them through life." He expected that consideration of good policy and public welfare would result in the "solid endorsement of both houses" in estab-

lishing a normal school in Cedar Falls.

The endorsement the editor called for actually turned into a bare constitutional majority achieved only after much "horse trading" and "horse collaring" on the last day of the session. But the deed was done and the governor signed the bill into law.

The General Assembly adjourned without appointing a board of directors, a task which fell to Governor Samuel Kirkwood. The governor secured esteemed citizens from all sections of the state to serve on the board. Only one director came from Black Hawk County. The others came from the extreme east, southeast, central, northwest, and southwest sections of the state. The governor thus set a very significant precedent. The school could claim, as Principal Gilchrist did in his inaugural address, that the institution was "The Iowa State Normal School."

There were difficulties early in the life of the school. The board of directors and Principal Gilchrist had differences over just what the school was to be. The institution was to train teachers, but what did that mean? To H.C. Hemenway, chairman of the board, the institution's restricted function was "to train teachers for the common schools." He did not feel that teachers needed much more than elementary knowledge in the three R's and some instruction in "how to teach and organize a school." The faculty accepted his position as a base but expected to do far more. Indeed, in his inaugural address, Principal Gilchrist noted that the common schools included high schools. But even training for teaching of elementary and high school subjects was not enough. To Gilchrist the normal's "bounden duty" was to prepare "educators fitted for the best positions in the compass of our public school system." He saw far beyond a narrowly conceived teacher preparation. Gilchrist de-

*The campanile was erected in 1926 as a memorial to the founders of the college. The 100-foot tower was funded by donations from alumni, faculty, students, and friends of the college. (ISHD, Historical Museum and Archives)*

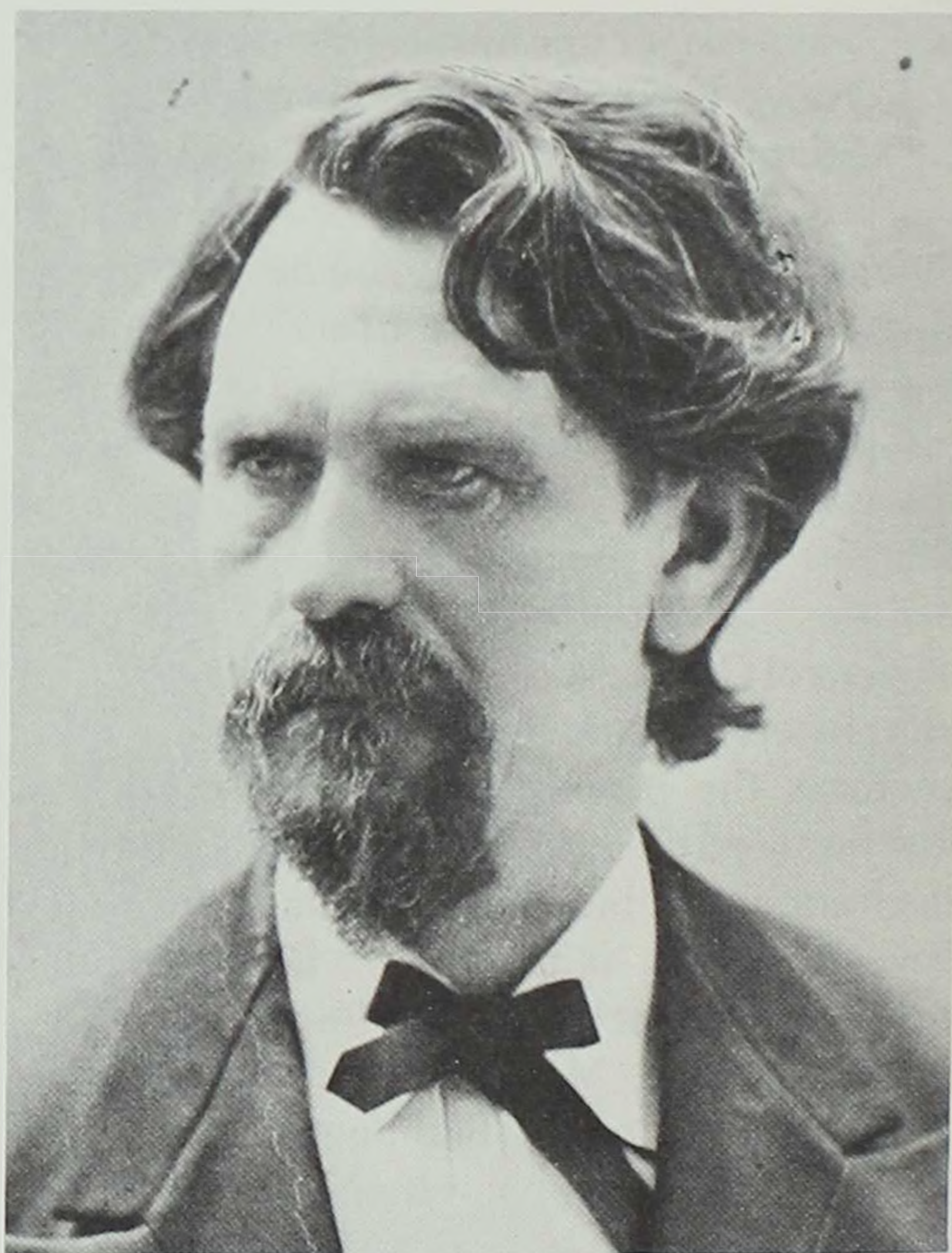


clared: "The teaching of the deeper sciences, the search through the broader and richer fields of human knowledge have such a stimulating power, such an inspiration over the students of *all grades*, that no school can afford to do without such instruction and exploration. . . . The intrinsic charm of knowledge, passing before [the student's] senses, allures him; and falling in love with the mystic beauty of the Knowable but Unknown, his soul is inflamed . . . He sees the far off heights of the golden glories, and, never wearying, onward he ascends, until, standing upon the summit, he surveys with one sweep all that is around him—the far extending tableland and distant deep valleys of human thought and human wisdom."

The faculty envisaged an education that encompassed not only the "deeper" sciences but courses in Latin, Greek, German, French, and English. The first catalog carried the principal's statement that some normal school curricula would correspond "to the work of a college."

To the board of directors, however, the true measure of the educational quality in a state lay in the literacy statistics. To expect much more of universal public education than instruction in reading, writing, computation, spelling, and similar activities was to project it into areas which were not public responsibilities. Such areas the individual should pursue at his own expense. Professor Gilchrist's efforts to implement his ideals at Cedar Falls brought him frustration and even failure in the early years—but the people of Cedar Falls came to accept the institution however ambivalent its characteristics.

As the school grew, it soon needed more room. An appropriation of \$30,000 for a new building in 1882 drew plaudits from both town and gown. But when the estimates for the construction of the new building as planned by the principal, board, and architect came to well



*James C. Gilchrist, the first principal of the Iowa State Normal School, c. 1880. (courtesy UNI Photo Archives)*

over the appropriated amount, gloom replaced the joy which had been so obvious a few months before. Principal Gilchrist, however, was a determined man. He was not about to let the opportunity escape. He canvassed faculty and community and was able to tell the board at its meeting in June 1882 that "a voluntary subscription of citizens" made it possible "to donate \$5,000.00 to help the Board to erect [the] new building according to the plan." With this assurance, the board let contracts well over the appropriated sum of \$30,000 to build and complete "South Hall"—later "Gilchrist Hall." Sixty-four individuals and firms subscribed \$5,010.00 in amounts ranging from \$10 to \$500 per contributor. Town and gown had joined to show their mutual interest in the growth of the school. While the townspeople contributed the larger sums, some of the faculty members gave over ten percent of their annual salary to the

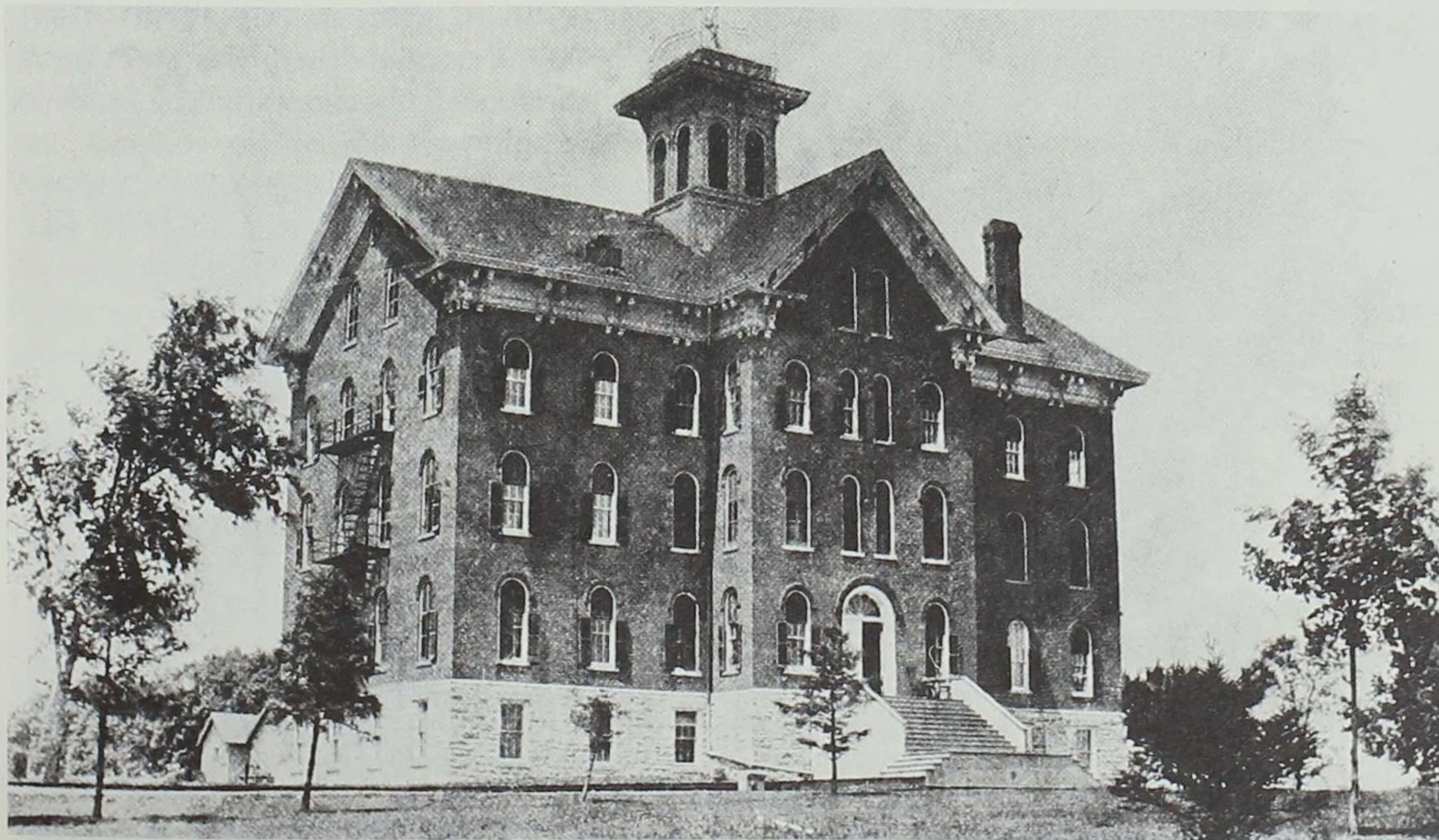


project.

With the new facilities came new tensions. How should they be used? What new programs should be inaugurated? Answers to such questions led to new divisions. The board of directors had not approved part of the faculty's plan for a diversified curriculum, nor had all the faculty agreed to the policies and procedures the principal followed in arranging classes, suggesting new programs, or requiring a board of examiners from off-campus to approve candidates for graduation. Long and complex disagreements ultimately resulted in some new board members being appointed. Their assessment of the problems led them in 1886 to elect Homer H. Seerley to replace Principal Gilchrist.

The bitterness engendered by this drastic action seemed to create a split between town and gown. The community of Cedar Falls strongly disapproved of the action of the directors and some citizens talked of seeking ways to set it aside. Though it never happened, it was

clear that Principal Gilchrist, stern, austere, and somewhat autocratic though he may have been, had won the hearts of most residents of Cedar Falls. The editor of the *Cedar Falls Gazette* observed, "The changing fortune and injustice of public position cannot lessen the high estimate in which [the Gilchrist family] are so justly held or effect [*sic*] their usefulness in their chosen sphere of educational labor." As many as 300 people attended a special reception for the departing principal. Although not all the faculty were there, speakers praised and honored him for making the normal school "the pride of the State and the copy and envy of the whole country." Principal Gilchrist, in his response, confessed bewilderment at the outpouring of generosity and emotion which meant so much to him. Then in a surge of feeling he revealed something of the harshness, if not the heartlessness, of the procedures then followed in dealing with employees of state educational institutions. "By the decree of fate, I go where I know not . . . The trees



The first building at the Iowa State Normal School. The building originally served as the Iowa Soldiers' Orphans' Home, Cedar Falls. (SHSI)



that my own hands have planted, I hoped to see spread their broad branches over many a square meter and give refreshing shade in the heat of day." He had, however, planted well and nurtured carefully the infant normal school, and his vision of proper teacher education is not without value even today.

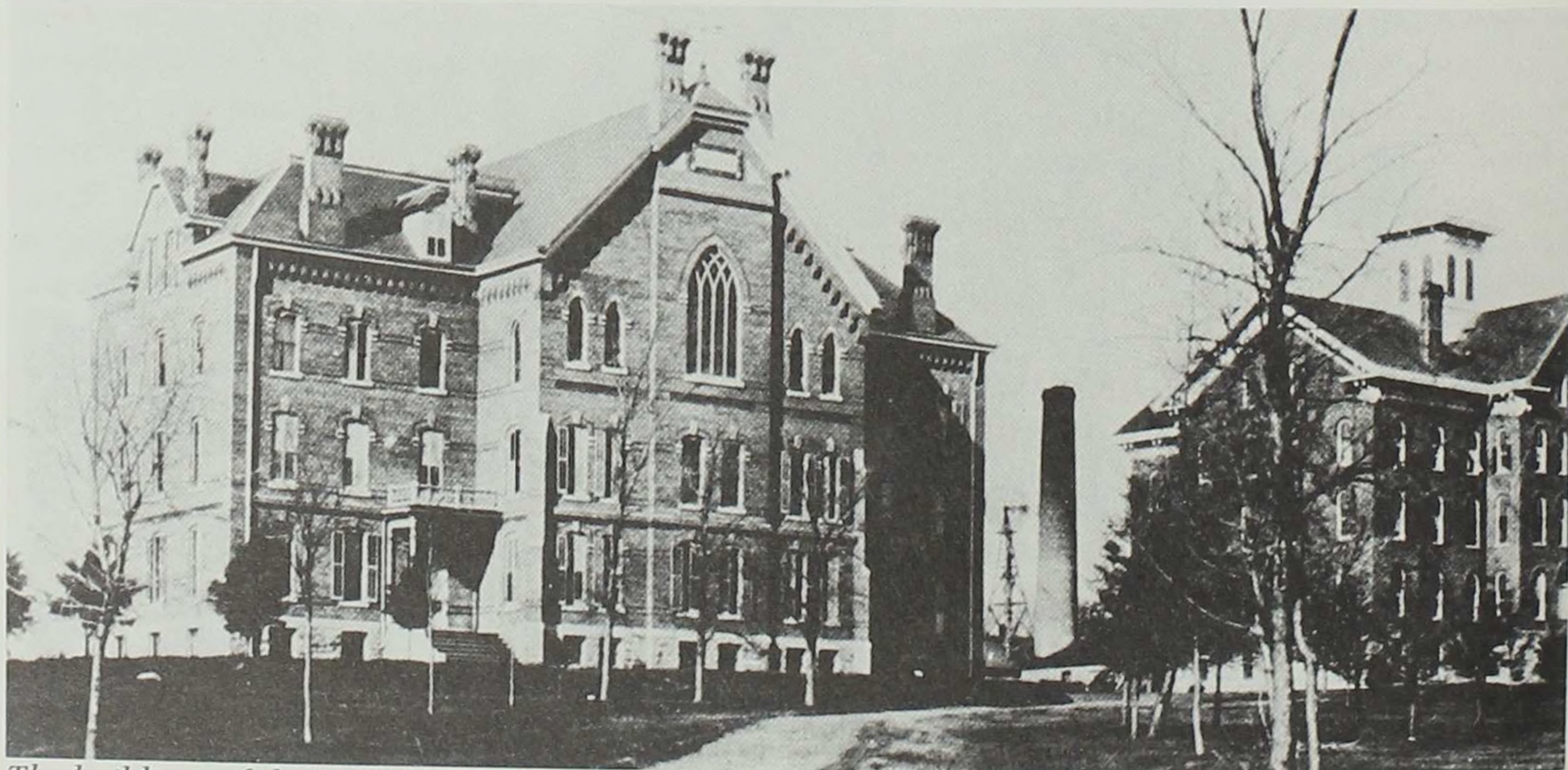
The newly elected principal waited three weeks before accepting the appointment. In that time he calmly assessed the problems of the school, met with some of the faculty, and sought the advice of friends around the state. He would have to handle the "disgruntled friends" of Mr. Gilchrist who some said would do "all the mischief" they could. There was a report that some of them had "tried to intimidate Seerley from accepting." Some gossip in Cedar Falls even suggested the action of the board was part of a Congregationalist conspiracy to secure one of their number "instead of a Methodist as head of the School."

Uncertainty and suspicion surely existed. The first few years of Seerley's administration saw little growth in the school's enrollment, though teachers and teacher education were greatly needed in the state. However, the new leader went about his task of uniting town and

gown. People in the state discovered that his Congregational public prayers were as fervent as those of his Methodist predecessor. They found that he created for the school a sound relationship with county and city superintendents of schools. They also found that he was responsive to the "will of the people" of which he spoke with great respect and which he sought to understand. Any reserve toward the man soon melted away. Principal Seerley became President Seerley after only two years and an era of good feelings between town and gown emerged.

New associations developed between them as Cedar Falls extended its water and sewer lines to "Normalville." The improvements removed the constant threat of a contaminated water supply and "unpleasant odors and gases" from the school's problems. The sewer connection allayed any complaints about an objectionable stench which had arisen since the normal had laid a sewer line from "The Hill" directly north to the small branch of Dry Run Creek.

By 1890 the normal school was entering a period of accelerated growth. The faculty, even though greatly overworked in



*The buildings of the Iowa State Normal School, 1882 to the early 1890s. (courtesy UNI Photo Archives)*



overcrowded facilities, took great satisfaction in the increasing support given the institution by parents, prospective teachers, and teachers. Although the financial panic of the mid-1890s severely limited funds, a small appropriation for a new building in 1894 gave hope for the future. The only discordant note struck during the period came from H.C. Hemenway, co-creator of the school and first president of its board of directors. He had been reappointed to the board in 1893 to fill an unexpired term. He still seemed to be distressed that the normal school had expanded its curriculum to include training of high school as well as elementary school teachers. When he was not appointed by the Republicans to a full term, he spoke out openly that the normal school and its leadership violated the law by not concentrating its resources on the education of teachers for "the common schools," which, to Hemenway, signified the elementary grades only. President Seerley responded by saying that no qualified person seeking training as an elementary teacher had ever been denied admission. The opportunity for such training was more available than ever at the State Normal School.

By 1900 the enrollment at the school approached 2,000. Its needs were stupendous. Fortunately, economic conditions had improved by the end of the century in the nation and in Iowa. The new prosperity, combined with the astute and vigorous leadership of a Cedar Falls representative in the General Assembly, Charles A. Wise, and the honest, straightforward, persuasive presentations by President Seerley, led to years of high hopes for the school. In 1900 an appropriation of \$100,000 for a new building—more than twice as much as had previously been granted for such purposes—seemed to promise a solution to space problems, but more money was needed to help expand the staff and raise faculty salaries which, for years, had not exceeded

\$1,600.

In 1902, a new Republican governor, Albert Baird Cummins, assumed office. Associating himself with the "new progressivism" which departed from the conservative stance of the "Old Guard," he supported education unqualifiedly and gave the normal school high praise for its excellent work. He noted the overcrowded conditions at the school and declared,



*Dr. Homer H. Seerley replaced Principal Gilchrist in 1886 and guided the school through the first decade of the twentieth century. (ISHD, Historical Museum and Archives)*

"Nothing but the disabilities of poverty can be pleaded in defense" of not furnishing additional facilities. "Iowa," he insisted, "cannot make this defense." With such friendly support at the gubernatorial level, town and gown decided to act in consort to assure that no one in Iowa governmental circles could misunderstand their needs and desires. Together they invited the governor, state officials, and all the members of the General Assembly to attend the



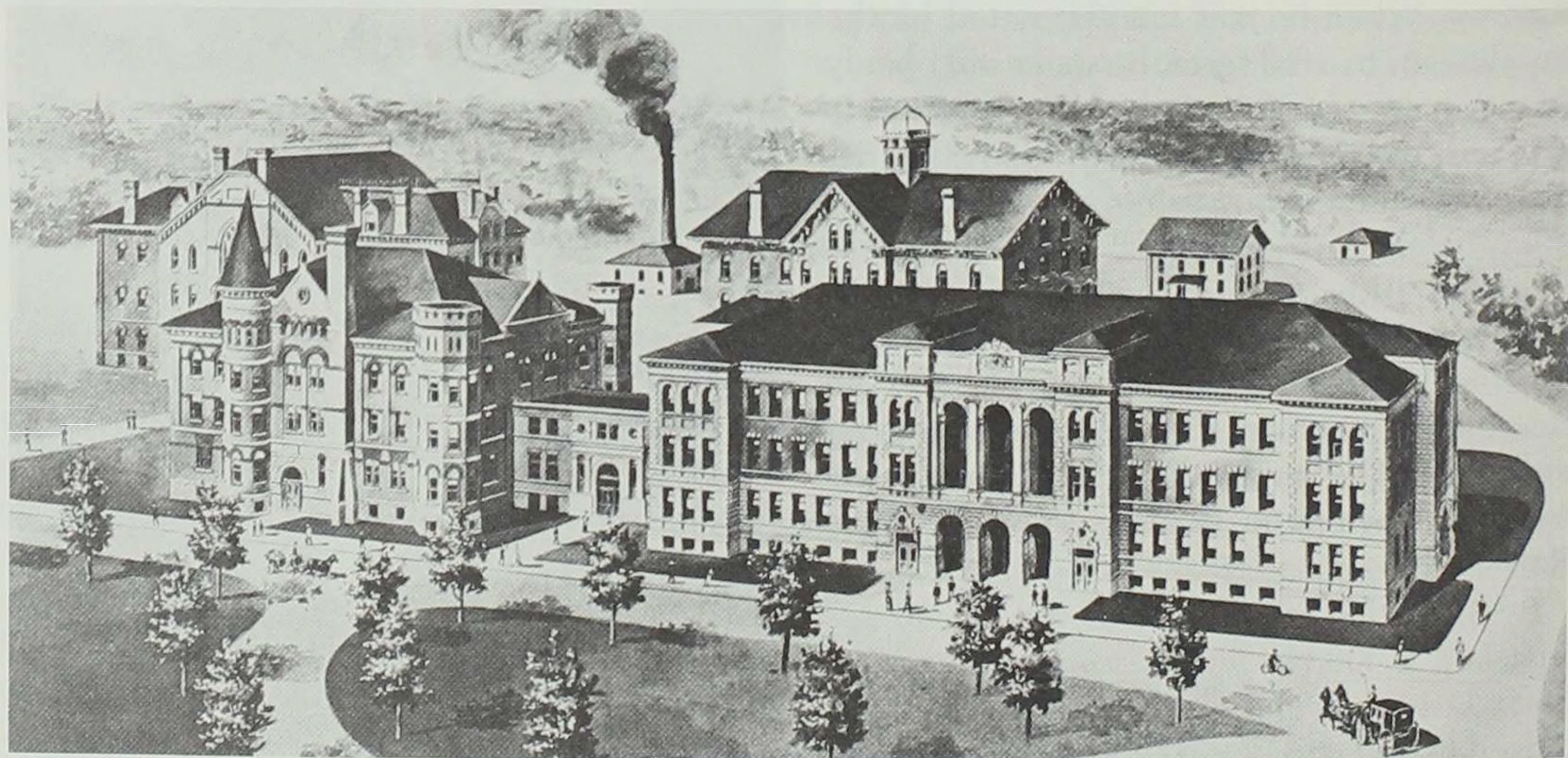
dedication of the new Auditorium Building January 30, 1902, as guests of the city of Cedar Falls and the State Normal School. The invitation was accepted.

What a stir of excitement for the town and the school as preparations for the event went forward. Over \$1,000 was raised to entertain the guests. Over 1,600 yards of bunting decorated the new building in which the governor and the other guests enjoyed a four-course dinner, heard speeches of dedication, and appeals for further support. Never before had town and gown been so united in their purposes.

The liberal appropriation for buildings in 1900 was followed in the next biennium with

buildings at the normal school. The actions of the General Assembly in 1902 provided the means by which President Seerley could begin to fulfill the promise he had made a few months before that with proper means "this school for teachers can be one of the leading schools of its class in the United States." Indeed, about this time, Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, declared that "Seerley's school," as he called it, was second only to Teachers College in his own institution.

Changes came rapidly in the first decade of the century. The growth of the school made it the largest of the three state-supported



*The hustle and bustle of the growing normal school at the turn of the century is well reflected in this 1900 depiction of the campus. (courtesy UNI Photo Archives)*

even more money for faculty than the increased numbers required. The result was that it was possible to increase the salaries of the faculty by as much as \$200. Those who had been teaching from the beginning of the school were to receive \$1,800, rather than the \$1,600 they had been paid since 1890. The president's salary was increased from \$3,500 to \$5,000. Equally important was the legislative decision to levy a statewide tax on all property of  $\frac{1}{10}$  mill for five years, such money to be set aside for

institutions of higher learning, and so it remained for a few years. The president of the Iowa State Normal School had declared on many occasions that it was a normal school and that it would remain a normal school. Soon, however, it was caught up in the Teachers College movement. By May 1904 it added to its other degrees and certificates a Bachelor of Arts in Education degree for those completing the four-year program for high school graduates. There were some people in the state



who wondered about developments at the school. A joint group of the General Assembly, the Whipple Committee, expressed concerns about course duplication and the general direction the normal school was taking.

The report of the Whipple Committee in January 1906 criticized all three state schools but was especially severe on the normal school. The committee declared that the normal had indeed gone beyond its legislative mandate. To them the "Common Schools" excluded high schools, and the law clearly stated training teachers for the "Common Schools" was the sole task of the normal. Indeed, "It seems plain," said the committee's report, "that we have in the State Normal School a miniature university, where a large part of the work is a duplication of that done in Iowa City." The committee suggested problems among the three institutions might be eased by the establishment of a single board of regents.

The Whipple report had a predictable impact upon all parties in Cedar Falls. Members of the board of directors of the normal school expressed surprise at "the ignorance, stupidity, and unfairness of the report." They were astounded by the charge that salaries of professors were too high. So were the professors. President Seerley wrote more dispassionately of the committee's report. He did not attack the idea of a unified board but he did defend the curricula and degree programs of the normal school. He pointed out that throughout its history the normal had interpreted "common school" as a school supported by taxation — a "public school." For thirty years the normal school had acted on this premise, and for thirty years it had received legislative and executive approval of its position. He concluded with the observation that in some areas the university was offering work which the normal school had initiated.

**B**y 1909 the General Assembly acted upon the recommendation of the Whipple

Committee and created a single board to govern the three schools. Although Cedar Falls agonized over the meaning of this action, both faculty and citizens could take comfort in a statute which made the normal school the Iowa State Teachers College. The General Assembly had thereby approved the four-year Bachelor of Arts in Education degree which had been so strongly criticized in the Whipple report.

For three years the new board of education worked on what seemed to be its legislative mandate: to examine the work of the three schools and coordinate their efforts to avoid duplication. In its first report the board of education acknowledged the role the teachers college had assumed in the educational system of the state. However, behind the scenes, the finance committee of the board believed that the time had come "to unify" the state educational system. President Seerley and a member of the board from Cedar Falls knew nothing of the proposed plan until it was made public but people in Cedar Falls agreed that President Seerley's report to the board in August 1912 expressed their view: "Today the Iowa State Teachers College ranks as the superior public institution of its kind and class in the United States. Its efficiency is unquestioned, its breadth of view is acknowledged and its capacity to accomplish is recognized."

Few individuals, however, were prepared for the recommendations which came from the board on October 9, 1912. Referring to its responsibility to coordinate the work of the three institutions, the board recommended "that all courses in professional education and in liberal arts now offered at the Iowa State Teachers College, which extend beyond the Sophomore year, be discontinued." A stunned community could not believe the proposal. The board of education, however, was adamant about its recommendation. It would not listen to President Seerley's request for a year's postponement.





*The normal school neighborhood, c. 1906, with the school buildings atop the hill in the background.*

The proposal to reduce the teachers college to a two-year school met with determined opposition from Roger Leavitt, the board member from Cedar Falls. Students, alumni, and local citizens also joined in a chorus of protest that rose to a mighty climax when the General Assembly met in 1913. As the session progressed, it became clear that the recommendations of the board of education would not have legislative support. Indeed, the Senate passed a bill 43 to 4 which provided that "duplication of courses be permitted by the Board only when so to do will promote the educational interest of the state." The bill also made it clear that the Senate expected the board to rescind its recommendations. A slightly amended version of the bill passed the House 85 to 7. The Assembly adjourned without taking final action on the amended bill, but the will of the legislators was clear. The board of education saw that it could not achieve any of its purposes with such overwhelming opposition and, on April 8, 1913, it rescinded its order concerning courses of study at the three institutions.

Roger Leavitt suggested that the rejection of the coordination plan had come about for two reasons: the united devotion of towns and faculties to secure the continuation of the three institutions in the form they had assumed; and because, to quote Leavitt directly, "it would

destroy the life work of Iowa's leading citizen — President Seerley. He easily stood at the head of teacher training in the United States and was so recognized and this school [the Teachers College] stood ahead of all such schools."

The euphoria which came with victory solidified the town and gown relationship in Cedar Falls. Such relationships do not run smoothly for any length of time, however, and within four years a dispute arose in Cedar Falls. In 1917 a group of citizens of the town objected to using student teachers from the teachers college in the elementary grades of the city school system. The question of the continued use of student teachers quickly became an issue in the election of school board members. When those who wished student teaching discontinued carried the school board elections in 1918 and 1919, the remaining members of the board resigned. They were replaced by individuals opposing the practice. The college then immediately withdrew its student teachers and supervisors. It did not again seek to place student teachers in the Cedar Falls schools until the late 1960s, even though the General Assembly had enacted a statute in 1919 which legalized agreements between local districts and the State Board of Education for student teaching purposes.



Two world wars and a great depression had some devastating effects on both town and gown but their basic feelings toward one another remained as they had been. During the First World War, strict economy kept faculty salaries almost stationary in a time of inflation. Total enrollment fell by almost one-third, men by over two-thirds. Over a score of the faculty were released or entered war service. All able-bodied men students who were not conscientious objectors became members of the Student Army Training Corps. For them the campus became a training camp. The gymnasium became their barracks and a small wooden structure became their mess hall. The whole community took this training very seriously and glowing reports of the patriotism and precision drilling of the Corps appeared in the local paper. The most serious impact of the war on academic pursuits came in modern foreign languages. Anti-German feeling, which had begun to surface with the beginning of the conflict, mushroomed after America's entry into it. President Seerley was "pleased" to report to the Iowa Council of Defense that with the declaration of war he had had "the library investigated and every book" on the council's list of "improper German works" had been "immediately removed from the shelves" with the librarian's "hearty cooperation." A year after America's entry into the conflict, the schools of Cedar Falls responded to the request of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction that all Iowa schools abolish the study of German by burning their German texts. The Training School pupils, with the consent of the president and school superintendent, had their own bonfire. With the obvious approval of the local press, the students "made merry while the flames danced." Instruction in the language continued in the city schools with translations of President Wilson's speeches into German. College enrollment in German courses, the most popular of the modern languages studied before the war, dropped to almost

nothing. What few courses the college offered carried an explanation well into the 1920s that nothing in them would "offend the feelings of a loyal American." Indeed, Governor W.L. Harding in May 1918 denounced the study and use of all foreign languages. He issued an edict, later declared unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court, which prohibited the use of anything but English as a medium of instruction in all schools and which also required that all individuals and groups, regardless of their native tongue use English in conversations in public or on the telephone, in public addresses or church services. This order left deep scars in Cedar Falls which had large numbers of Germans and Danes who traditionally had held church services in their native languages.

War-time emotions finally subsided, but serious economic problems remained. While most of the nation's industries seemed to be enjoying prosperity in the twenties, this was not true of agriculture. Prices for farm commodities were too low to meet the cost of production. Consequently, the college experienced continued severe economic problems. During the whole of Seerley's final decade as president, faculty salaries held steady while inflation decreased purchasing power by about one-half. The community suffered along with the faculty in these times and it appeared to solidify the bonds between them. As the national economy moved from a depression in a few industries to one that embraced the economic life of the nation and, indeed, of the entire world, the college found itself in even more serious economic difficulties. Enrollment declined by nearly one-half in the five years from 1928 to 1933. Appropriations declined forty percent in the same period. In addition faculty salaries fell over twenty-five percent while instructional positions were reduced by twenty percent.

While economic conditions improved somewhat during the latter years of the decade,



there were still financial difficulties for faculty and staff alike. To compound the problem, President Latham faced the need of raising the academic level of the staff to meet accreditation requirements. At the same time the attorney general decided in 1930 that the board of education had no authority to make any state money available for retirement purposes. The hard decisions which had to be made engendered bitterness in both the community and the college. To handle the first problem, President Latham received board approval to reduce the number of those in the professorial rank from over 100 to 33. In the future all academic staff had to have baccalaureate or advanced degrees. Scores of faculty members requested leaves of absence (without pay) to continue their academic training. The trauma of this action could hardly be appreciated by those outside academic circles. However, the results of the courageous decision resulted in

the college becoming recognized as a fully accredited four-year collegiate institution by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. It was placed on the approved list of the most prestigious accrediting agency of that time, the Association of American Universities, and its female graduates were henceforth accepted without reservation into membership by the American Association of University Women.

\* \* \*

The need for some support for retiring faculty members was apparent. No retirement system existed. In the past superannuated staff members had continued in some cases to teach into their eighties. When such persons withdrew from active teaching, the college had sought to give them some "detached service" with nominal remuneration. The aforementioned decision by the attorney general made it impossible to continue granting any money to



*Military programs were established during World War II and the college served as a training center for WAVES and Army Air Corps cadets. The impact of the war on campus life was apparent with the posing of student Jane Shennahan, of Des Moines, Air Crewman Jack Gideon, of Council Bluffs, and Seaman Ruth Grimes, of St. Louis, in front of the campanile. (courtesy UNI Photo Archives)*



staff members when they retired. At least eight members of the faculty were affected by the decision. Much of the staff and many in the community were embittered by what they considered a breach of a commitment by the board of education. To those retirees who had no other income, the failure to receive continued support worked serious hardship. In the case of at least one such person, members of the college faculty made special efforts to support their poverty-stricken colleague. Letters to President Latham contained heartrending pleas for support from some individuals who had given many years to the state at low salaries to educate aspiring teachers. By the mid-1930s the board of education agreed to allow staff members who had reached a newly established retirement age of 70 to be continued as part-time teachers until they reached 80, but at a maximum of \$75 per month.

The coming of World War II changed the structure of both college and community. Within a year after the outbreak of hostilities, WAVES and Army Air Corps cadets flooded onto the campus. Enrollment of civilian male students dropped to 62. Faculty members were "retooled" to teach in unfamiliar areas. Musicians taught physics and mathematics, mathematics teachers taught navigation, and one industrial arts teacher taught aerodynamics. The establishment of military programs on the campus was a boon for the institution. By the end of the war over 20,000 WAVES had been stationed at the college and over 5,000 Army Air cadets had completed part of their training there. Although the college maintained its educational program for teachers, the military dominated the life of the institution. The community of Cedar Falls responded with alacrity to President Price's request that the citizens make the trainees as much a part of the community's life as possible. Many of those who spent but short terms of training in Cedar Falls wrote or spoke warmly of its hospitality

and friendliness.

The end of the war brought a new influx of "GIs." Beginning in 1945 when seventeen veterans (ten percent of the male student body) came to the campus, GI enrollment expanded until by 1948 there were 1,120 of them, making up three-quarters of the males enrolled. The number declined almost as rapidly as it had grown. By 1952 there were only 209, representing nineteen percent of the males. The number of GIs would undoubtedly have been higher had not the college decided to continue its exclusive role as a teacher education institution. It required all students to pursue the course leading to teacher certification.

The faculty found it a joy to have these returning veterans in their classes. Those who had been students before were much better students. They read more widely, studied more seriously, and entered more enthusiastically into student activities than most of their non-veteran peers. They challenged the teachers to do a better job of teaching. They sought out the courses that they wanted without concern for difficulty. Moreover, they scorned professors who had not kept up with recent findings to which GIs had sometimes been exposed in specialized military training. The advent of these veterans also brought the first significant number of married students to the campus and the community. Special efforts by citizens of Cedar Falls in 1945 provided 300 housing units for these students. Waterloo provided housing for fifty families in barracks moved in from Nebraska. With special effort, accommodations for an additional 340 veterans were found the next fall. Soon the erection of quonset huts and barracks on college property brought the students and their families virtually onto the campus.

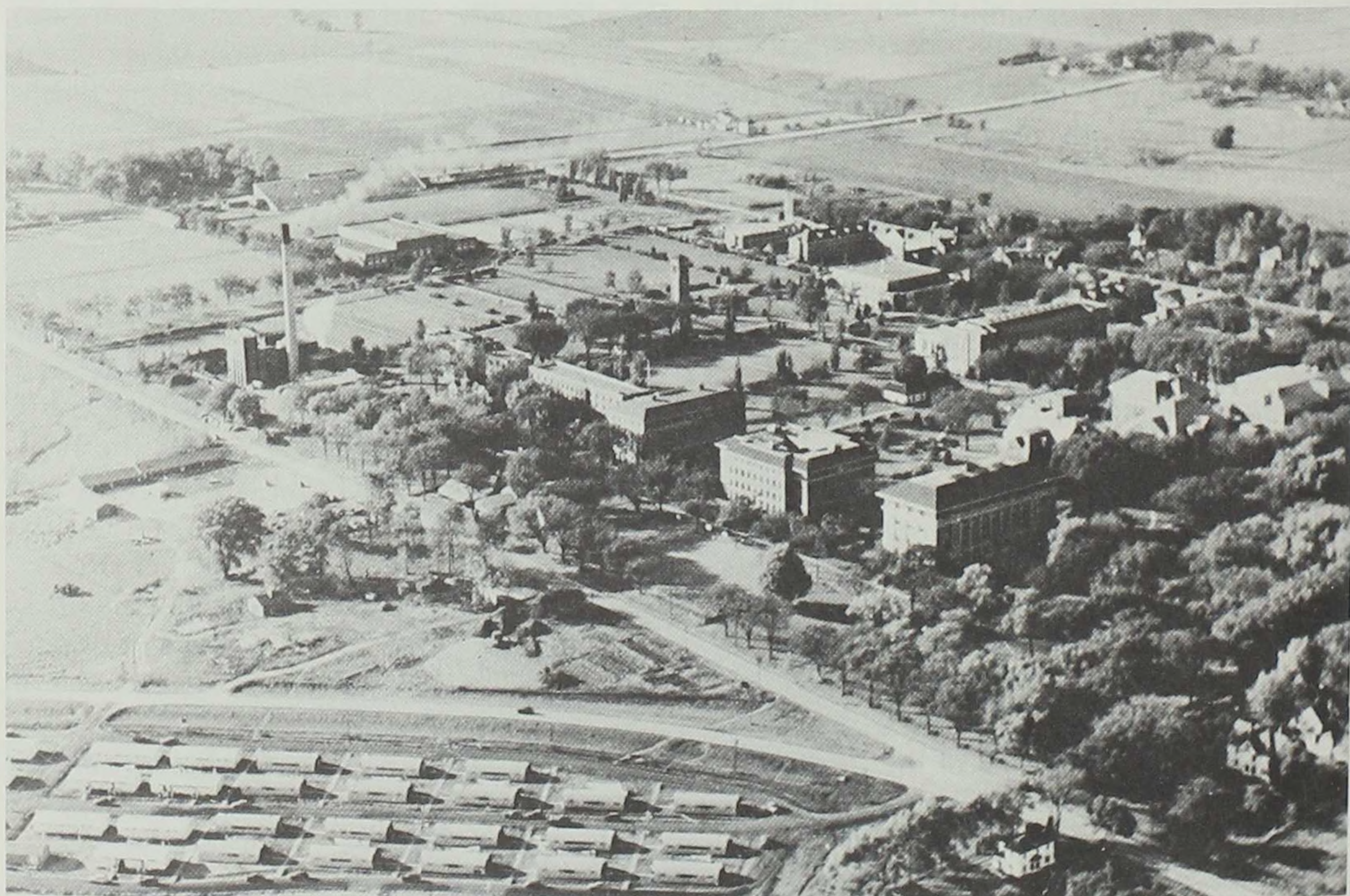
The 1950s saw the emergence of McCarthyism. The fear of subversion by communists or others plotting against the United States government was used by Senator



Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin as early as 1951 as a launching mechanism to spread accusations and innuendos that distressed many. Some feared he was right while others feared his reckless methods were undermining civil liberties. By 1953, McCarthy, to use *Time* magazine's term, "was riding still roughshod" on his steed of fear and panic.

The mood created in 1953 served to set some members of town and gown against one another. An anonymously written document, which was circulated not only in the college community but in the community at large, charged that some members of the college faculty were subversives who advocated communist doctrines and other ideas destructive of what has been called "the American way of life." The concern over the charges was so widespread that the State Board of Regents decided to investigate

the allegations. In April 1953 they not only talked with those accused in the document, but also invited any citizen who so desired to appear before the board on the matter. No one appeared. The board, having satisfied itself that the charges were unsubstantiated, brought the incident to a close. However, the broader issues of what might be properly taught, the distinction between the study and advocacy of a doctrine, and the basic problem of freedom in educational instruction had been dealt with only in passing. Suspicions lingered on. On the one hand some thought that dangers existed because of certain faculty members; on the other hand others thought the effort to associate staff members with a conspiracy posed a continuing threat to the basic purposes of education in a free society. President Maucker, who had taken office in 1950, and the



A 1947 aerial view of the campus. Note the quonset huts and barracks that were moved in to accommodate the large influx of veterans and their families (lower left corner of the photograph). (courtesy UNI Photo Archives)



board, made it clear that they would allow the largest area of freedom possible in instruction as long as it was consonant with law and the constitutional guarantees this nation provided.

In the late 1950s the teachers college continued to grow and received increased support. In the early 1960s, town and gown joined in a successful effort to enlarge the role of the institution by the creation of a state college not limited to teacher education. A few years later the fledgling State College of Iowa became the University of Northern Iowa — without, however, receiving any sufficient increase in financial support. The fifteen years from the early 1950s to the late 1960s were a time when the relationship between town and gown was as close as it had been in but few previous years. The institution under President Maucker's leadership implemented a general education program begun under President Price which became the paradigm of such educational efforts in institutions across the nation. Dr. Howard Bowen, then president of Grinnell College, when speaking on the Cedar Falls campus, said that the program was the finest in the state. Indeed the teacher education program continued to influence scores of schools. Under prodding from the president, the faculty and students attained extremely high levels of academic achievement. The visions of both town and gown expanded as special cooperative efforts brought an international dimension to campus life and learning. Graduate work began. Faculty participation in decision making increased while students played larger roles in their self-government.

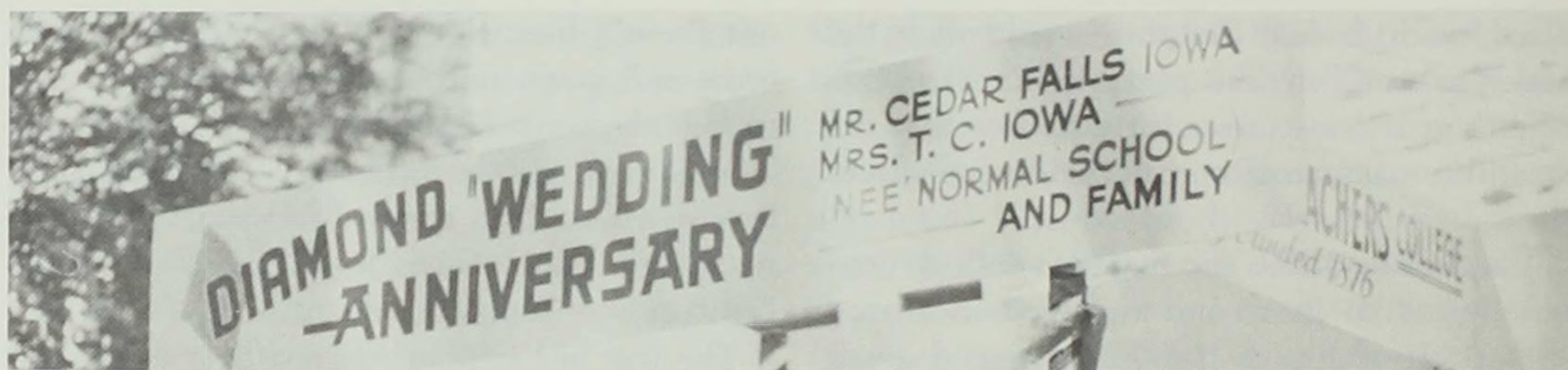
However, by the late 1960s these achievements were pushed into the background by problems which began with an increased national consciousness of the need to fulfill long postponed civil rights demands and afford greater opportunities for minorities. Then came the increased concern over the conflict in Southeast Asia. The State College of Iowa was

not exempt from the turmoil of the times and town and gown underwent new stresses and ultimately confrontations as newly emerging values disrupted the hitherto close relationship between town and gown. The years were not necessarily happy ones for Cedar Falls or its institution of higher learning.

The war in Vietnam was a widely discussed and very divisive topic. A controversy swirled up about Ed Hoffmans, who was an instructor in English, and a raging discussion concerning academic freedom accompanied that controversy. President Maucker took the position that, in an article published in the *Northern Iowan* in 1967 about avoiding and repudiating the draft, Mr. Hoffmans had not proposed action but had proposed an idea for discussion. Thus he should be allowed to continue to express his ideas and to continue as a faculty member. The president's position aroused the antagonism of a great many people who made their opinions known in the press and elsewhere. Indeed one of the leading citizens of the community denounced the president at a public meeting. Later in 1967 Mr. Hoffmans received notice that his contract would not be renewed at the end of the school year. Some of those who wanted him removed from the faculty for other reasons were convinced that the action was in response to earlier pressures and not for academic reasons. The decision, however, was based on his instructional record at the college. For his defense of academic freedom President Maucker was given the coveted Meiklejohn Award by the American Association of University Professors.

In addition, there were the problems in minority relations that led to sit-ins at the president's home and demands for added facilities. The tragedies at Kent State University and Jackson State College, along with local student unrest over the war policy of the national administration, particularly the invasion of Cambodia, led to civil disobedience, attempted arson on the campus, and an abrupt halt to the





This descriptive sign atop a parade float during the 1951 Diamond Jubilee celebration of the school's founding underscored the strong supportive relationship that has existed, and continues to exist, between town and gown in Cedar Falls. (courtesy UNI Photo Archives)

school year in 1970. As a result of these problems, the attitude of the town toward the university deteriorated and a further decline in the formerly close relationship between town and gown was noticeable.

In spite of disappointments, President Maucker did not lose faith in his ideals, in the students, in the need to implement justice, or in the ability of the university to survive and meet the needs of the students, the state, the nation, and the world.

A change in attitude has taken place in recent years, highlighted by relaxed tensions and generous support from both town and gown for the various projects put forth by President Kamerick's administration. It is well to remember, however, that creative tension between town and gown is as old as universities, and it will not cease. Towns have a tendency to be conservative and tend toward the old ways. The gown, on the other hand, has a tendency to be innovative, questioning, searching for truth and finding fault with the existing order. But towns can be innovative and gowns can be conservative and often are.

I believe that the idea of the university was caught very well by James Hearst in his centennial poem for the University of Northern Iowa which he entitled *Evergreen Transformations*. The section entitled *The University*, in its remarkable way, emphasized much of what is referred to when attention is called to the close

relationship between town and gown in Cedar Falls for over 100 years and the creative tensions that have been part of that relationship:

*The architecture of scholarship  
survives, times may break stained glass  
windows and tumble stones, but the  
edifice  
of faith and thought, poetry, art,  
harmony,  
the probing sciences, stands wherever  
men have cherished it.*

#### Note on Sources

The University of Northern Iowa archives are the main repository of the sources of the history of the institution. The collection includes the minutes and reports of boards, faculty, and committees; the correspondence and reports of presidents (except for Gilchrist's letters); the minutes of meetings and reports of literary societies and other student academic and social organizations; documentary material written by staff members, past and present; professional publications of staff members. The author interviewed past and present staff and students. *Iowa Documents* provided speeches and reports of governors, superintendents of public instruction, and committees of the General Assembly. The Iowa Historical Library and Museum provided material on legislative debates, copies of bills proposed but never enacted, and legislative proceedings recorded in the daily press. The diary of David Sands Wright, a staff member from 1876 to 1930, provided valuable information as did his "Fifty Years at the Teachers College," a volume of reminiscences and sketches published in 1926. Irving Hart's article, "The First Seventy-five Years," published in 1951 included original material since he was the first director of the extension services at the college, an active staff member, and finally, archivist at the institution. The *Journals* of the Senate and House of the General Assembly provided a history of legislation relating to the institution. Student publications, as well as the local and statewide press, provided pertinent materials. Not the least important was the information furnished by living presidents and officials.



Office of the State Historical Society

## Society Banquet—June 25—Make Your Reservations Now

Members of the State Historical Society of Iowa are cordially invited to attend the Society's 1983 banquet, to be held on Saturday, June 25th, at 6:45 P.M. at the Scheman Continuing Education Building on the campus of Iowa State University in Ames.

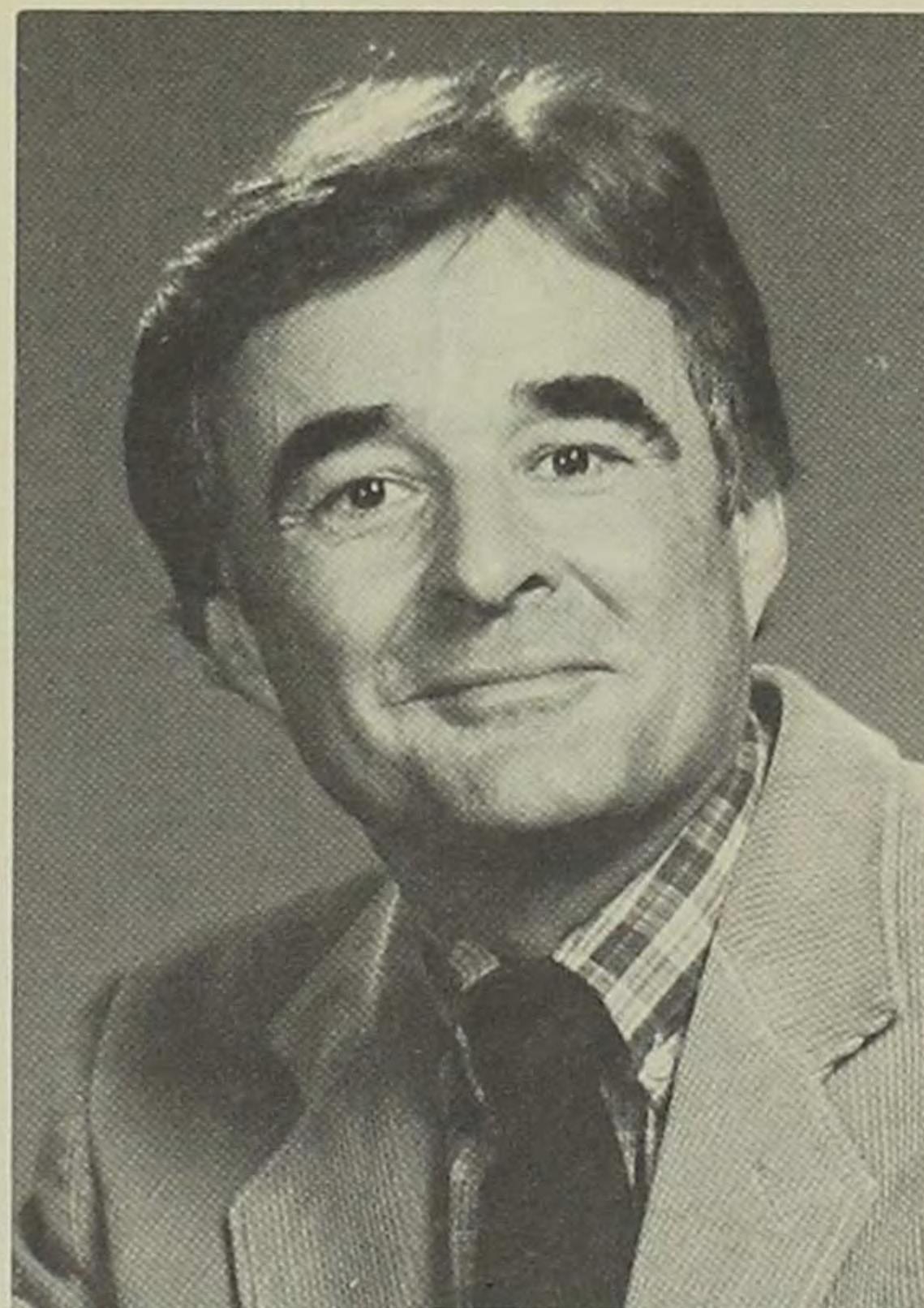
Dr. Richard S. Kirkendall, the Henry A. Wallace Professor of History at Iowa State University, will address the banquet on "The View from the Editor's Desk: Henry A. Wallace and Rural Iowa in the Twenties and the Great Depression." Dr. Kirkendall is the author of numerous articles and books on twentieth century American political history and other historical topics.

The program will also include the presentation of awards to individuals and organizations for achievement in local history. An additional award has been established for the best article to appear in the *Palimpsest* during the previous calendar year. See elsewhere in this issue of *News for Members* for details about the Trustees' Award.

During the afternoon of the 25th, a bus tour of historic sites in the Ames area will be offered if at least 20 persons make advance reservations. The tour will be led by members of the Ames Heritage Association and will include stops at the Farm House Museum on the Iowa State University campus and the first school-house in Ames. The cost of the tour will be \$2.50 per person and departure time is tentatively set for 1:00 P.M. Full details and itinerary will be mailed to those who make reservations for the tour. Please use the reservation form provided in this issue of *News for Members*.

A social hour will begin at 5:30 P.M. in the second floor lobby area of the Scheman Building. There will be a variety of displays and exhibits in this area before and during the social hour.

Advance reservations for the banquet are required. The cost is \$15.00 per person. Checks or money orders should be payable to the State Historical Society of Iowa. Enclose an additional \$2.50 per person for any reservations for the bus tour.—William M. Cochran



## Bertha Shambaugh Exhibit at Museum of Amana History

An exhibit honoring the life and work of Bertha Shambaugh opened April 15 at the Museum of Amana History in Amana. The exhibit, titled "The Source: Bertha M.H. Shambaugh—Friend of Amana, Historian and Outstanding Iowan," features objects illustrative of her varied life accomplishments and interests. Bertha Shambaugh is best remembered as the author of two important books on Amana history: *Amana, the Community of True Inspiration*, published in 1908; and *Amana That Was and Amana That Is*, published in 1932 and a book which revised and updated her 1908 book. These works are still considered the most comprehensive studies of Amana history. She was also a noted photographer, naturalist, artist, and teacher. Her husband, Benjamin Franklin Shambaugh, served as the superintendent of the State Historical Society of Iowa and chaired the political science department at the University of Iowa and Bertha became a noted hostess for campus functions. The current museum exhibit includes many photographs of Bertha and her husband, their Iowa City home, and documentary photographs of the Amanas and Iowa City.

The exhibit was designed by Madeline Roemig, director of the Museum of Amana History, and Mary Bennett, manuscripts assistant, Iowa State Historical Department/Office of the State Historical Society. The objects in the exhibit are on loan from the State Historical Society of Iowa, the University of Iowa, and the people of the Amanas. The exhibit will run until November 15, when the museum season ends. The Museum of Amana History is open Monday through Saturday, 10 A.M. to 5 P.M., and Sunday, 12 P.M. to 5 P.M.

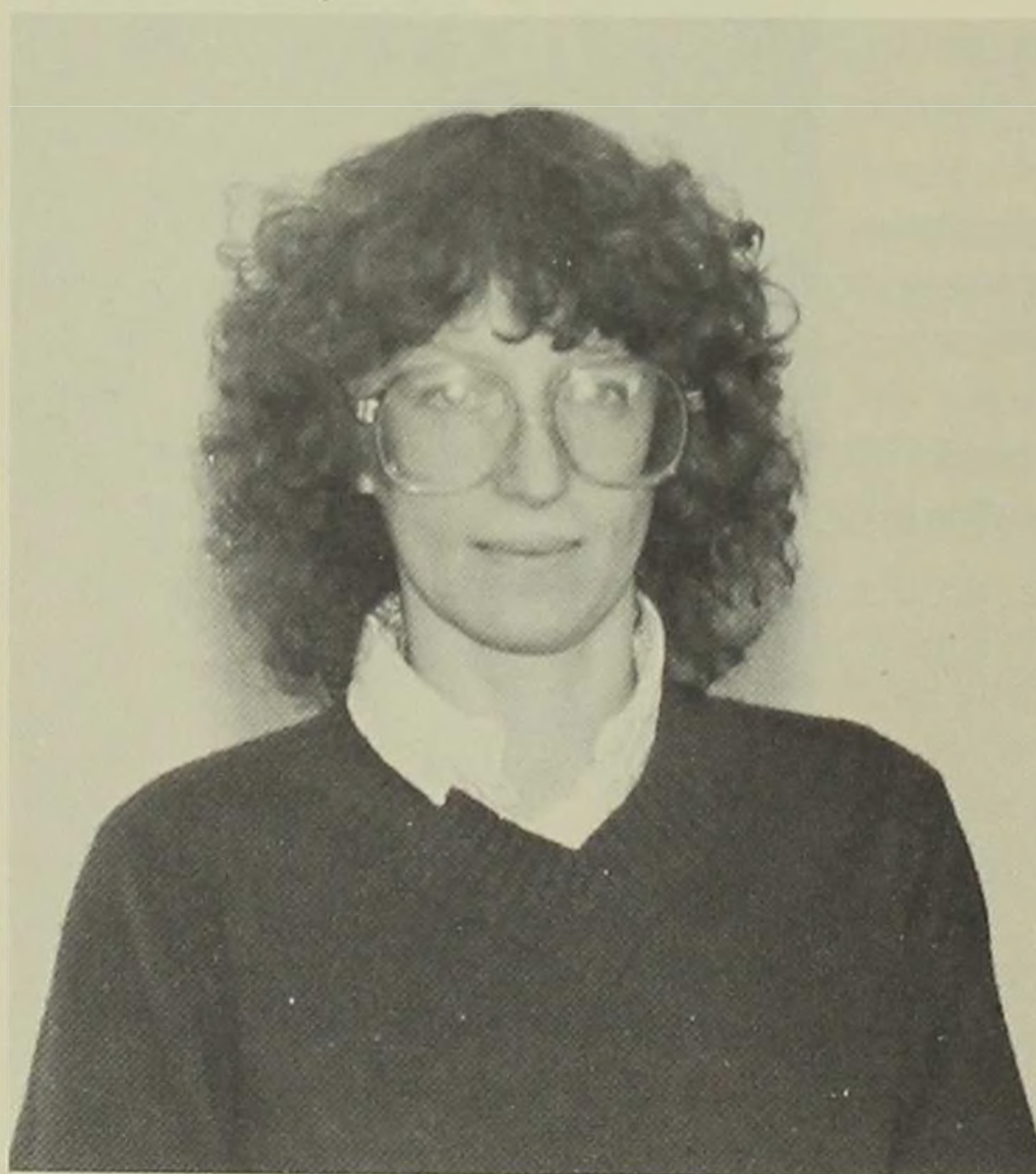


## Cast Your Vote for the Trustees' Award

Remember to cast your vote for the newly established Trustees' Award. The award will be given annually to the individual who, in the opinion of the membership of the State Historical Society, wrote the best article published in the *Palimpsest* in the previous calendar year. The award will be presented at the annual banquet of the Society, June 25.

Send your choice for the 1982 award to: Mary K. Fredericksen, Editor, The *Palimpsest*, State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

## Meet Nancy Kraft



Nancy Kraft joined the research collections staff of the State Historical Society in 1981. As a Librarian I she is primarily responsible for cataloguing and classifying nineteenth and twentieth century materials added to the collection, using the OCLC (Online Computer Library Center, Incorporated) cataloguing computer.

Nancy sees the cataloguer's role as being able to classify materials under headings that people are looking for. To do this, she uses what she calls "creative cataloguing," in which she is constantly thinking of possible subject headings Society library users might be checking. Nancy also provides backup reference service, a position she says helps her in cataloguing because she can see what kinds of questions library users are asking.

In addition, Kraft maintains the Society's map collections. "We basically try to collect maps from the mid-1800s to the present," she said. "I

have minor repairs made on them, and if they are damaged I have them microfilmed so people can still look at them."

Nancy received her master's degree in library science from the University of Iowa in 1980 and her bachelor's degree in library science and Russian from the University of South Dakota in 1975.

Kraft is originally from Wessington Springs, South Dakota, and moved to Iowa in 1980. Her husband, also a librarian, is employed at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, where they make their home. The commuting involved is nothing new for her, though. From 1974 to 1980 she worked as a librarian at Sioux Empire College in Hawarden, Iowa, while commuting from South Dakota. Her next position was Assistant Librarian for Technical Services at the University of Dubuque.

In June 1982 Nancy attended the Newberry Library's Summer Institute in Cartography. One product of the Institute was a slide presentation of Society map resources that highlighted the University of Iowa's 1982 Elderhostel program. The slide presentation is now available for use by Society members.

Nancy Kraft can see the day when computers will connect most of the libraries in the country, and she is active in creating such a system in Iowa. As an executive member of the Iowa OCLC Council, she is involved in coordinating, advising, and setting policy on OCLC-related matters for Council member libraries. The Online Computer Library Center designed and operates a bibliographic computer and telecommunications system to support resource sharing among libraries. In addition to her work with the OCLC system, Kraft also attended a conference at the University of Iowa in 1982 on the use of microcomputers in libraries and information centers. She is currently enrolled in a computer science course to further broaden her library skills.

Having some contact with foreign languages is a part of her Society job that gives Kraft pleasure. Although she majored in the Russian language in college, she does not come in contact with Russian articles in her work. But cataloguing books in Czech, Dutch, Danish, and other languages is a task she enjoys. "I get to touch languages, which is one of my loves," she said.

In her spare time Kraft enjoys reading and baking bread.



## Board of Trustees Election Time

All members of the State Historical Society of Iowa are eligible to participate in the elections for Board of Trustees of the Society. These elections are to fill vacancies that will open on June 30, 1983, in the Fourth and Fifth Congressional District seats and in two at large seats. The people elected will serve three-year terms and work to achieve the board's purposes, namely, to further an understanding of Iowa history, to promote activities and endeavors that will help Iowans better understand their own heritage, and to provide general support services to the Iowa State Historical Department.

To vote, mark the ballot provided in this issue of *News for Members* with your choice for one candidate for each congressional district seat and with your two choices for at large seats. You should vote for a total of four candidates.

Do not sign your ballot, as this will invalidate it. Clip out the marked ballot and mail it to: Election Committee, Office of the State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240. Make sure that your name and address are on the envelope in which you mail your ballot since your name will be checked against Society membership records for voting eligibility. Your ballot will be invalid if you do not record your name and address on the envelope in which it is mailed.

### Fourth Congressional District

*Norman A. Erbe* (Boone) served as governor of Iowa from 1961 to 1963 and as attorney general from 1957 to 1961. He teaches courses in Iowa history, American frontier history, and state and local government at the Des Moines Area Community College, where he is also the head of the Department of International Trade Studies. He is the author of two books and several published articles.

*Robert G. Wright* (Des Moines) is business manager of the Iowa Laborer's District Council. He received an undergraduate degree from Indiana State University and a master's degree from Butler University. His activity in the historical and archaeological organizations of Kentucky and Indiana prior to his moving to Iowa included being a founding member of the Kentucky Archaeological Association. He has published articles on history and education.

### Fifth Congressional District

*Robert Dietrich* (Creston) teaches history at Southwestern Community College (Area XIV); M.A. (American history), University of Iowa; active in promoting state/local history; teacher of Iowa history; director, Southwest Iowa Railroad History Project, 1982; Iowa State Historical Department board member, 1980 to 1982; past board member of the Union County Historical Society; co-chairman, 1981 Creston Railroad Heritage Festival.

*W. Lee Honeyman* (Emerson) is a farmer and businessman, and a graduate of Iowa State College. He is an active local historian and genealogist, having served as chairman of the Montgomery County Bicentennial Committee in 1976, as a leader in the Montgomery County Genealogical Society, and as a researcher, writer, and lecturer on such subjects as transportation in Iowa and the role of Iowa in the Kansas-Nebraska conflict.

### At Large

*Tracy E. Anderson* (Kalona) received a B.A. in education from Iowa State Teachers College, and an M.A. in American history and a J.D. from the University of Iowa. He taught history at Mid-Prairie High School and Iowa Lakes Community College before serving as county attorney for Washington County and city attorney for Kalona. His memberships include the Organization of American Historians, the Washington County Historical Society, and the Kalona Historical Society.

*William M. Furnish* (Atalissa) received a Ph.D. in geology from the University of Iowa. He taught geology at the University of Iowa from 1953 through 1977 and served as department chairman from 1957 through 1962; presently Professor Emeritus. He has published in the *Palimpsest* and the *Cedar County Historical Review* and is a member of the Iowa State Preserves Board and the board of directors of the Cedar County Historical Society.

*Arthur Q. Larson* (LeMars) received B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees in history from the University of Illinois. He has taught history and political science at Westmar College since 1953 and holds the rank of professor. His writing has appeared in the *Palimpsest* and elsewhere and he has read papers at a number of conferences, including the 1983 Missouri Valley History Conference. His memberships include the Plymouth County Historical Museum Association.



LeRoy G. Pratt (Des Moines) is currently chairman of the Iowa State Historical Board; founder, Iowa Local Historical and Museum Association; past president, Iowa Society for the Preservation of Historic Landmarks, and Polk County Historical Society; member, board of directors of Living History Farms, and Iowa Archaeological Society; author, *Discovering Historic Iowa, The Counties and Courthouses of Iowa, From Cabin to Capital*; editor, Polk County Historical Society Newsletter.

William Silag (Ames), former editor of the *Palimpsest* is currently teaching history at Iowa State University. Degrees: B.A. from Cornell, and M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Iowa. He has published several articles on the history of Northwestern Iowa, Sioux City, the Italian-American community of Des Moines, and agriculture. He is a member of the Iowa Chapter of the Victorian Society of America.

John J. Witmer (Moscow) is a grain farmer and a graduate of the University of Iowa. He is a past president of the Iowa Local Historical and Museum Association, Cedar County Historical Society and Muscatine Area Heritage Association, and is a member of the Midwest Riverboat Buffs, the Quad-Cities and Iowa Archaeological Societies, and the Scott County Historical Society. He has written articles published in Cedar and Muscatine historical publications and is the editor of Muscatine's *Heritage Reflections*.

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## 1983 BOARD OF TRUSTEES ELECTION BALLOT

<p>FOURTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Robert G. Wright</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Norman A. Erbe</p>	<p>AT LARGE</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> John J. Witmer</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> William Silag</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> LeRoy G. Pratt</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Arthur Q. Larson</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> William M. Furnish</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Tracy E. Anderson</p>
<p>FIFTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> W. Lee Honeyman</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Robert Dietrich</p>	
<p>VOTE FOR ONE CANDIDATE IN EACH DISTRICT</p>	<p>VOTE FOR TWO CANDIDATES</p>

Do not sign this ballot.

Your name and address *must* be on envelope.

The ballot must be received by June 15, 1983. Send it to:

Election Committee  
Office of the State Historical Society  
402 Iowa Avenue  
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

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### Mailing Label Identification Numbers Speed Service

You have probably noticed the multidigit number that appears in the upper left-hand corner of the mailing label attached to your Society publications. This is an identification number that helps our staff to locate your membership records should problems arise in the delivery of your publications from the State Historical Society. If you refer to this number whenever you correspond with us—about changes in address or other matters—it shortens the time it takes the Society staff to respond and correct any problems. We appreciate your help in speeding and improving our service to the Society membership.



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## 1983 SHSI BANQUET RESERVATION

Scheman Continuing Education Building, ISU Campus, Ames

Saturday, June 25, 1983

Name \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Extra \$2.50 enclosed for Bus Tour

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

(City, State) \_\_\_\_\_ (ZIP code) \_\_\_\_\_

Please list names of others that you are enclosing payment for:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Extra \$2.50 enclosed for Bus Tour

Name \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Extra \$2.50 enclosed for Bus Tour

Name \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Extra \$2.50 enclosed for Bus Tour

Name \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Extra \$2.50 enclosed for Bus Tour

Send this form, accompanied by check to:

\$15.00 PER PERSON

Annual Banquet

Office of the State Historical Society

402 Iowa Avenue

Iowa City, Iowa 52240

☐ Send list of Ames area motels

PAYMENT MUST BE RECEIVED BY JUNE 15

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### Activities of Local Historical Organizations

The former Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific railroad depot at Spirit Lake, Iowa, which serves as the current home of the Dickinson County Museum, is 100-years old in 1983. The Dickinson County Historical Society has gradually restored the depot building, and its members wish to announce the museum's 1983 season opening on May 29. Special festivities are being planned for opening day, and for the season which marks the railroad depot's 100th year. For more information, contact: Faye Peterson, Curator, Dickinson County Museum, 507 11th Street, Milford, Iowa 51351.

A large stamp and postal history show will be held at the Five Flags Center in Dubuque, Iowa, on May 21 and 22. The show is part of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the city of Dubuque. Show hours are 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. each day, and admission is free.

Members of the State Historical Society receive free admission to Montauk, the restored home of Iowa Governor William Larrabee at Clermont, Iowa. The home is open to the public between Memorial Day and Labor Day, seven days a week, 12:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. Special tours may be arranged by appointment. For more information, call (319) 423-7173.

### 19th Century Iowa Material Culture Handbooks Available

Production is continuing on a series of informative handbooks about nineteenth century Iowa material culture. Two of the handbooks have been finished and are now available: *Parlor Furnishings* and *Reapers and Mowers*. Two more handbooks are in production, one on the subject of school furnishings and another on the subject of plows.

Anyone wishing to order either *Parlor Furnishings* or *Reapers and Mowers* should write to: Publications Sales, Office of the State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240. *Parlor Furnishings* sells for \$3.00, and *Reapers and Mowers* sells for \$3.50.

May 1983



## CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS, 1983

May 21	Iowa Genealogical Society, Iowa City
May 21-22	Dubuque Stamp and Postal History Show, Dubuque
May 22	Victorian Society in America, Des Moines
June 4	Northwest regional ILHMA, Sergeant Bluff
June 4-9	Special Libraries Association, New Orleans
June 5-9	American Association of Museums, San Diego, California
June 11	Southeast regional ILHMA, Oskaloosa
June 18	Southwest regional ILHMA, Indianola
June 24-30	American Library Association, Los Angeles
June 25	Northeast regional ILHMA, Cedar Rapids
June 25	Annual Meeting and Banquet of the State Historical Society, Ames

### Time Like a Furrow Available

In 1982 the State Historical Society published a book that should be of interest to many Iowans. James Hearst's *Time Like a Furrow* is a collection of twenty-four essays about rural life in Iowa between 1900 and 1940. The Iowa poet has described the world in which he grew up by writing of people at work and people at play, of chores, of animals, and of the rich terms of his own education. Both as a poet and essayist he attempts to strike what he terms a "balance sheet" in recounting what rural society has gained as well as lost through the process of modernization.

Joan Bunke, writing of *Time Like a Furrow* in the *Des Moines Sunday Register*, termed it a "memorable, and memory packed, collection." We hope that you will agree and that you will add *Time Like a Furrow* to the Iowa shelf of your collection.

# TIME LIKE A FURROW

Essays by  
James Hearst



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I would like to order *Time Like a Furrow*.

ORDER FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

(City, State) \_\_\_\_\_ (ZIP code) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Clothbound copies at \$15.95 (Member's price \$12.76)

\_\_\_\_\_ Paperbound copies at \$7.95 (Member's price \$6.36)

Please add \$1.00 per book for postage and handling.

Send orders to: Publication Sales  
State Historical Society  
402 Iowa Avenue  
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

clip along dotted line



## GOLDFINCH Completes Third Year of Publication

The *Goldfinch*, a magazine of Iowa history designed and written for fifth and sixth grade students, has just completed its third year of publication. It is a sixteen-page magazine, published four times each school year, that helps to fill the current need for Iowa history classroom materials. Each issue focuses on a single topic of Iowa history, and is written to capture the interest of young readers. The text of the magazine provides students with carefully researched information about a topic in Iowa history. Photographs and illustrations enhance the magazine and further the students' understanding of the topic.

The *Goldfinch* also provides teachers with a foundation on which to study the history of the state with their students. Each issue is accompanied by definitions of words from the text which challenge the students, and a list of suggested activities related to the issue's topic provides opportunity for further study. The *Goldfinch* is designed to encourage student interest in Iowa history and to serve as an aid for the teacher of Iowa history.

Topics in the last three years have ranged from Indians in Iowa, and early agriculture in Iowa, to sports in Iowa. The topic of the current *Goldfinch* issue is the home front in Iowa during World War II. During these days of tight school budgets, many Society members have purchased a *Goldfinch* gift subscription for a local school. The Society is now accepting subscriptions for the 1983-1984 school year.

Back issues of the *Goldfinch* are also available. The magazine can be purchased in ten-copy packages. Single title orders are \$12.00. A complete set of four titles for the academic years 1980-1981 or 1981-1982 is \$15.00. A complete set of four titles for the 1982-1983 academic year is \$24.00.

1980-1981 Titles: The Sky's the Limit (Aviation), Early Manufacturing, Early Agriculture, Going to School in Iowa.

1981-1982 Titles: Iowa Houses (Home Architecture), Immigrants, Town Builders of Iowa, Indians of Iowa.

1982-1983 Titles: Sports in Iowa, Automobile Transportation, Shape of the State (Boundaries), The Home Front (World War II).

The *Goldfinch* is published by the Iowa State Historical Department/Office of the State Historical Society. For more information about the *Goldfinch*, contact: Margaret Bonney, Editor, The *Goldfinch*, Office of the State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

## Selected Recent Manuscript Acquisitions

Wallis, John William. Diary. 1864. 27p. photocopy of typescript. Diary of a nineteen-year old Dubuque man who served as army clerk in the quartermaster department with the 3rd Division, 16th Army Corps, 1 January to 8 September 1864. Includes descriptions of quartermaster work, camp life, steamboat travel on the Mississippi, Vicksburg, Memphis, Cairo, campaigns and marches in Mississippi and Louisiana. Donor: Mr. John Rider Wallis.

Sipma, Sjoerd Aukes. Letter. 26 September 1848. Pella, Iowa. 18p. mimeograph. Translation of a letter written in Dutch by Sjoerd Aukes Sipma from Pella, Iowa, 26 September 1848, to friends and relatives in Bornwerd, Holland. Includes description of countryside and farming conditions, plant and animal life, population, prices of land and crops, transportation and markets, taxes, local history, customs, diet, costs to emigrant farmers, churches and schools, opportunities for various craftsmen, the Holland Association, Pella, news of friends in America. Donor: Mr. J.P. Teeslink.

Gray, Steve. Proudfoot and Bird. 1975. 29p. photocopy of typescript. Iowa State University student paper. Narrative history of Proudfoot and Bird, the leading architectural firm in Iowa in the early twentieth century. Includes brief biographical sketches of William T. Proudfoot, George W. Bird, and Harry D. Rawson; discussions of major construction projects of the firm and their style of architecture; buildings by the firm on the campuses of the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and the University of Northern Iowa; list of architects associated with the firm; footnotes and bibliography. Donor: Mr. Earl Rogers.

Dance, John. 1864. 66p. photocopy of holograph plus 3p. typescript introduction. Civil War diary of Captain John Dance, Co. K, 8th Iowa Cavalry and resident of Linn Twp., Cedar County, Iowa. Includes accounts of camp life and campaigns near Tuscaloosa, Ala., Macon, Ga., Vineville, Ga., Nashville, Tenn., Chattanooga, Tenn., Lost Mountain, Ga. Donor: Mrs. H.C. Vander Schaaf.



National Youth Administration. Final Report of the National Youth Administration for the State of Iowa. 30 October 1943. Compiled by G.A. Bingham, State Director of Work Projects. 205p. photocopy of typescript. Report is a history and record of accomplishment covering the period from September 1935 to July 1943. Includes origins of N.Y.A., definition of function, outline of organization, N.Y.A. officials and personnel, lists of state advisory and local advisory committees, finances and funding, analysis of causes of youth and rural unemployment, lists of N.Y.A. work projects, wages and training offered, newspaper articles and editorials on N.Y.A. in Iowa, statistics on N.Y.A., sample individual case histories of boys and girls in work projects, the N.Y.A. in national defense and the war production training program. Donor: Mrs. Susan Rogers.

Thompson, Frederick O. Interviews with Iowa Hunters. 1930-1931. 352p. photocopies of typescripts. Interviews collected and transcribed by Frederick O. Thompson in 1930 and 1931. Includes reminiscences of Iowa hunters who hunted in Iowa and neighboring states between 1860 and 1910. Donor: Mrs. Howard Grimes.

Iowa Universalist Convention. Papers, 1879-1972. 20 boxes. Articles of incorporation; bylaws; extensive correspondence; minutes of executive committee; programs, records, and minutes of annual conventions; annual treasurer's reports; annual parish reports and statistics; financial statistics and records of church properties; bills, receipts, and vouchers; records of Merle Hay Memorial Park project; Universalist Guild secretary's books; newspaper clippings and miscellaneous records. Donor: Mr. C.R. Shane.

Izaak Walton League. Chapter 36. Iowa City, Iowa. Minute book, 1923-1939. 1 vol. 42p. typescript. Minutes of the meetings of the Iowa City Chapter of the Izaak Walton League. From 1927 to 1939 the organization was known as the Iowa City Chapter of the Will H. Dilg Conservation League of Iowa. Includes regular reports of treasurer and secretary and records of speeches, films, discussions, resolutions, and activities. Donor: Mr. Bob Russell.

## Historical Organizations in Iowa

### Iowa Museum Association

This organization was formed to improve and maintain communication among museums in the state. It serves as a clearinghouse for museum-related information for its members and promotes inter-institutional services through sponsored workshops, other educational activities, and the availability of qualified advisory personnel. It works to communicate with and to educate the community about the role of museums as sites for the preservation of historic artifacts and Iowa's heritage. The Iowa Museum Association promotes professional standards, assists smaller institutions, and cooperates with other professional organizations and associations both inside and outside of the state of Iowa. For more information about the Iowa Museum Association, contact: Loren N. Horton, 3367 Hanover Court, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

### Iowa Historical Materials Preservation Society

This organization was formed to promote the identification, collection, and preservation of Iowa's historical records. To this end, the organization seeks to develop cooperation and the exchange of information among individuals and institutions interested in Iowa's historical records, both public and private. It disseminates information about available research materials and archival methodology, and it provides a forum for discussing matters of common concern. IHMPS cooperates with the Society of American Archivists and with the Midwest Archives Conference in these objectives, and with other cultural and educational organizations with similar concerns. For more information about the Iowa Historical Materials Preservation Society, contact: Gerald Peterson, c/o Special Collections, University of Northern Iowa Library, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613.

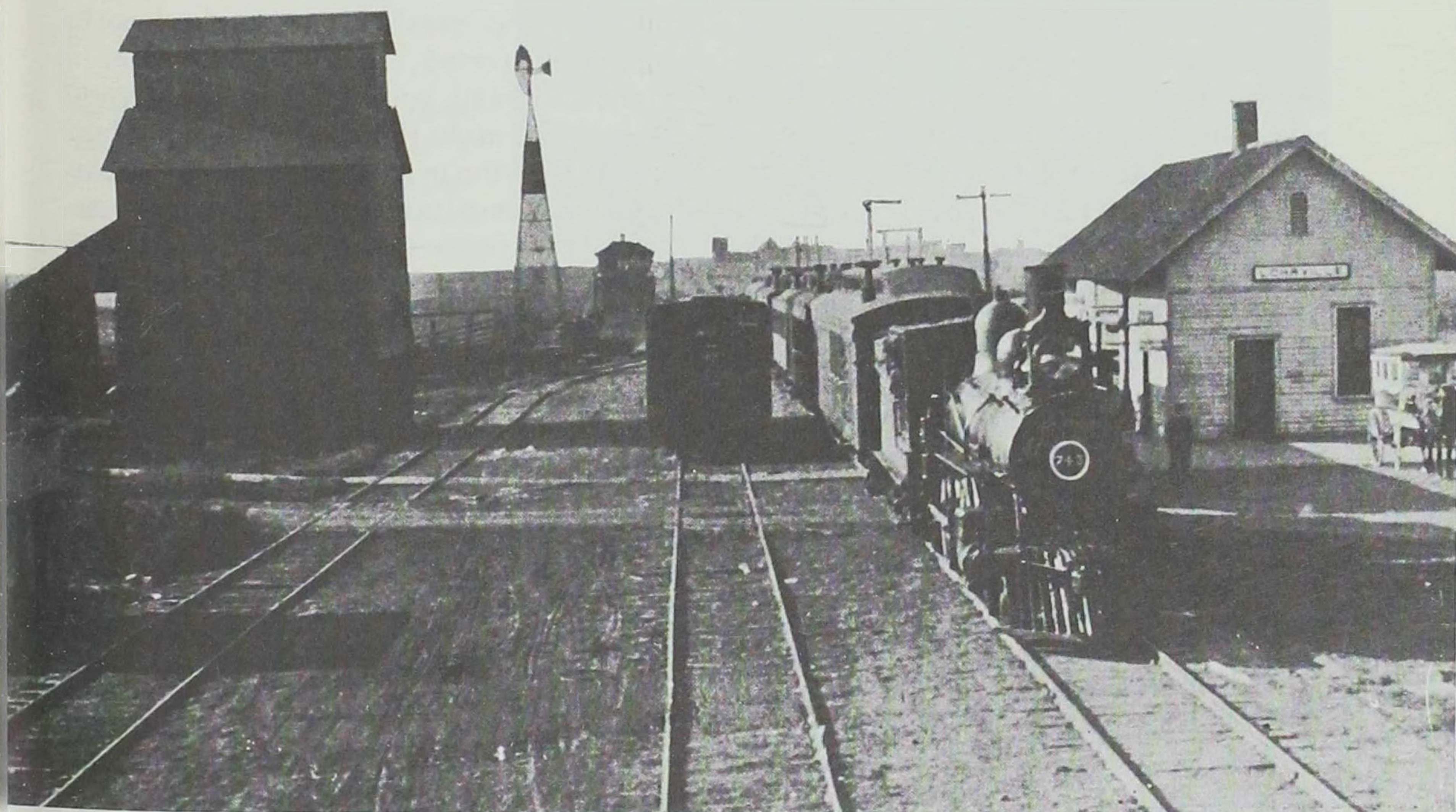
### Iowa Society for the Preservation of Historic Landmarks

This organization was formed to kindle an active interest in the historical buildings, sites, and landmarks of the state. It advises, aids, and encourages local groups and communities in their historic preservation activities. A statewide meeting of the Society is held each year. The Society also conducts a tour of some midwestern area of historical and architectural significance each year. For more information about the Iowa Society for the Preservation of Historic Landmarks, contact: Elizabeth Craw, 1226 North 24th Place, Fort Dodge, Iowa 50501.



# The Railroad Station Agent in Small-Town Iowa

by H. Roger Grant



*The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul depot in Lohrville, c. 1910. This was one of three depots located in this community. (courtesy the author)*

Before the widespread presence of automobiles, trucks, and buses, trains bound the nation together. On the eve of World War I, Iowa alone among the states could claim that no point within its boundaries lay more than eight miles from the iron horse. Understandably, the railroad map of the Hawkeye State resembled a plate of wet spaghetti. Every community had at least one depot and many boasted two or more. For example, the Calhoun County village of Lohrville (1910 population of 674) sported three, those that belonged to the Great West-

ern, the Milwaukee, and the North Western. And each "deepo" had an agent, sometimes several, since the larger facilities often remained open continuously and had a sizable volume of business. The majority of depots, though, were staffed only by one person who understandably performed a multitude of services. The bigger ones might even have more than a "second" or "third trick" agent. They likely had a half-dozen or more employees who participated in a variety of specialized tasks that ranged from telegraphy to baggage handling.

The preeminent function of the small-town



agent in the daily routine of Iowans illustrates superbly the former importance of the railroad. As the line's official representative, he (occasionally she) was probably as well known as a town's pastor or physician. The reasons were many and varied. Primarily the agent met the public when he sold tickets, planned travel itineraries, and reported freight and express shipments. These activities affected virtually every adult, possibly several times a month, for virtually all merchandise entered and left by rail. In some places the agent's chances for exposure increased since the depot building itself contained living quarters for himself and his family. But even if the agent did not reside in the station, he got additional attention because of his sale of postal cards, stationery, stamps, and even spool thread and other notions. (These activities, however, sometimes

violated company rules, although the rules could be overlooked.) Occasionally, the agent served as the town's "reading man." Folks who could not read knew that the agent could. "If any reading matter came their way," explained C.C. Searls, a longtime Milwaukee agent at Postville, "they usually headed for the depot to have it interpreted." And there was more.

His firsthand knowledge of the cryptic Morse code made the station agent the best informed person in town. The chattering telegraph instruments carried more than just routine railroad business (train orders, equipment requests, and the like); they delivered commercial messages from Western Union, Postal Telegraph, and other firms. Even a community newspaper depended heavily on the agent's telegraphic abilities. As the daughter of a Poweshiek County newspaper editor recalled,





*An impressive side view of Lohrville's Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul depot, c. 1910. Note the sign which also designated the depot a Wells Fargo & Company Express office. (courtesy the author)*



"The [agent] was truly our link with national events, for in those days before radio and television the telegrapher got everything first, including the weather forecast. My father haunted the depot for these forecasts as well as important world events."

The excitement, even the glamour, of the agent's job made it attractive to many an Iowa lad. Usually he came from town, for farm boys always faced a multitude of daily chores. Commonly a youngster would "hang out" at the depot and, if he were lucky, strike up a friendship with the local agent. In exchange for instruction in telegraphy and station accounting, he would likely perform various odd jobs: carrying in buckets of coal during the heating season, helping to load and unload less-than-carload (l.c.l.) freight, sweeping floors, washing windows, and performing other janitorial tasks. Dan Knight, a former Hawkeye State agent for the Minneapolis & St. Louis (later North Western) recalled that "For many poor boys it was the break of a lifetime when they were able to learn a trade without cost and without having to live away from home while

doing so, then step into a job . . . in one of the most interesting industries in the world."

As in most types of work the station agent encountered his share of problems. The hustle-bustle of depot life made for many a hectic moment. A.B. Overby, agent for the Great Western in Tripoli, penned some thoughts about his job in 1926. Although located on a remote branchline, Overby's station was nevertheless a busy spot:

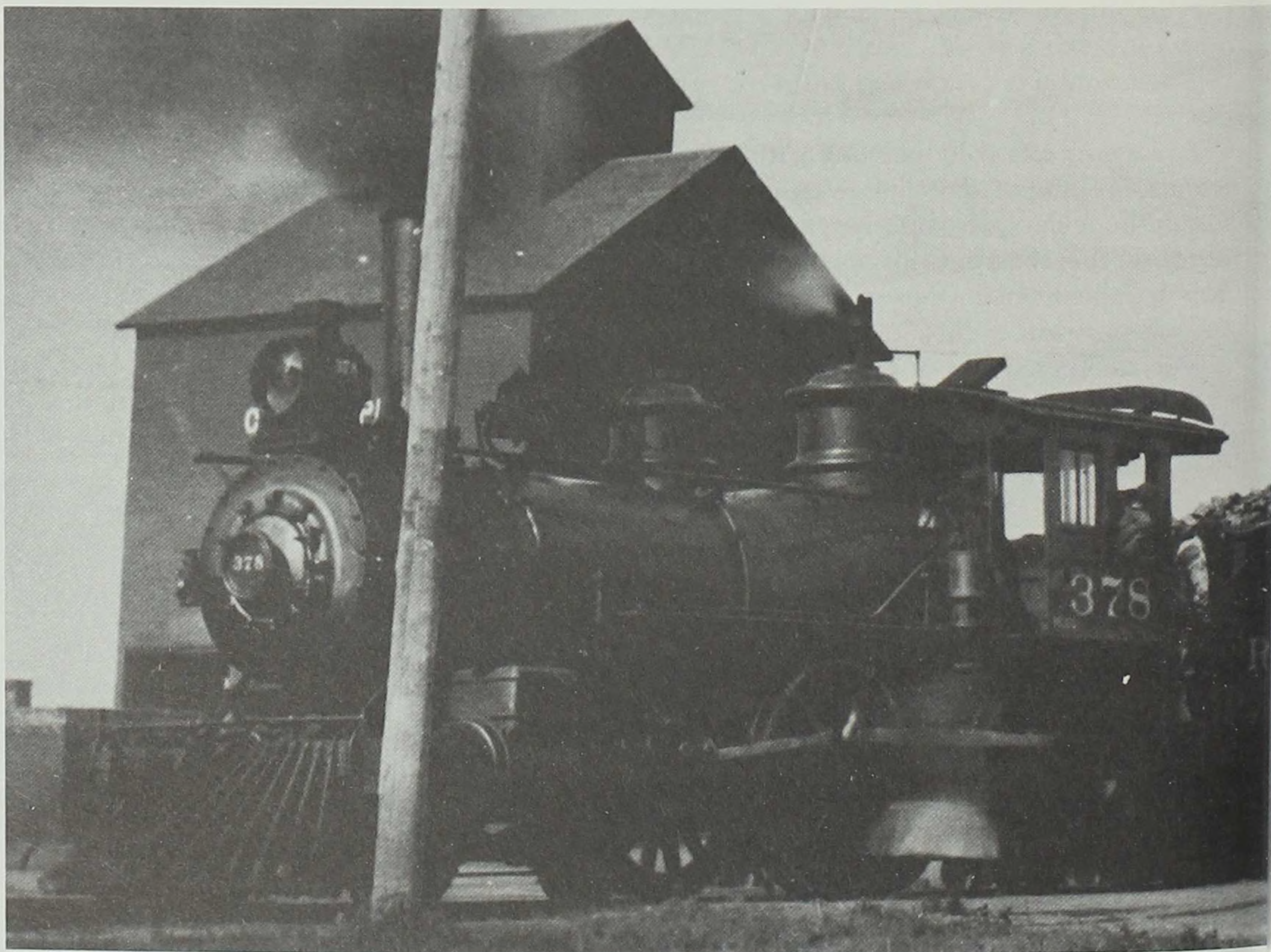
*Work can be frantic, especially when you are making switch list for local due in fifteen minutes; also fifteen or twenty waybills to make; several express shipments to prepare for passenger train, which is due to meet local at your station, and city telephone persistently ringing, the party on the line asking a question something like this: "Did Jim or Joe get off the train or did it not arrive yet?" In all probability you do not know either of them. Turning around to the ticket window another party asks: "Is there any freight for me?" without as much as telling you his name, taking it for granted*



*that you are the local railroad agent, you should know his name. . . . About one minute before passenger train is due, a traveling salesman rushes up with three trunks to check, three hundred pounds excess.*

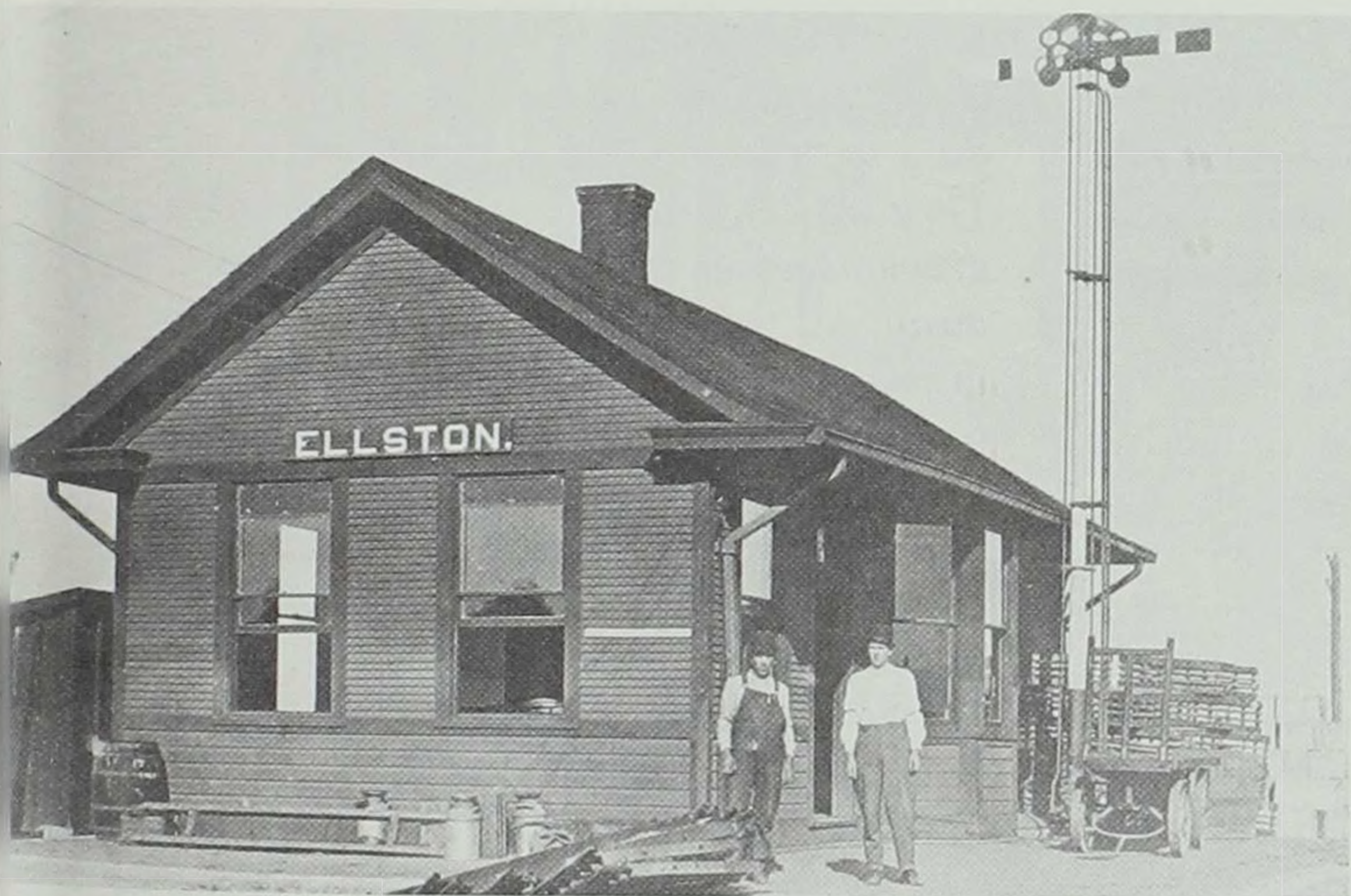
Station agents, too, never seemed too happy about certain duties. They disliked having to move about heavy amounts of freight, express, and mail. While they might get assistance from a friendly crewman, sectionman, helper or customer, a barrel of oil or a 100-pound sack of Sears, Roebuck catalogs could be a formidable obstacle and might even cause serious injury if mishandled. Pulling a loaded platform truck with its contrary iron wheels and stiff steering

mechanism was always a challenge, especially in snow and ice. And relaying train orders could be another troublesome assignment. Initially such communications were simply placed in the flat of the agent's hand. He then stood close enough to the passing train so that a crewman could slap his palm and remove the order. Fortunately, more effective equipment appeared toward the close of the nineteenth century. Yet problems continued. If an agent used the "P"-shaped train order hoop to hand up messages, he likely had to trudge along the track to retrieve it. (Without stopping a train, a crewman merely put his arm through the bamboo hoop, took off the paper order clipped to the handle, and cast the device to the ground.)

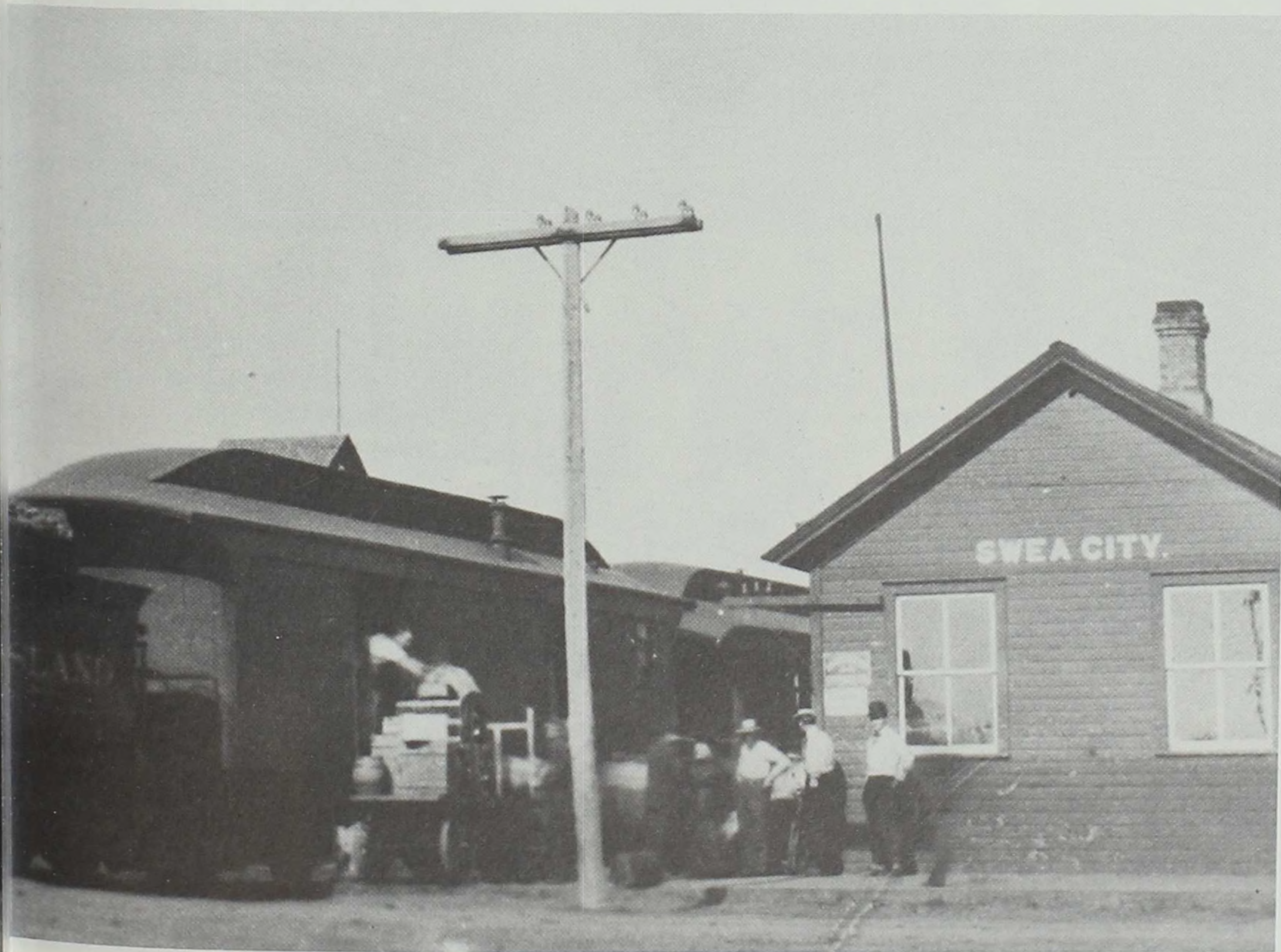


*The arrival of a branch line passenger local in Swea City, c. 1911. A "Where We Got Off" caption along the bottom of the photograph (trimmed out of this reproduction) indicated that the view came from a postal*





*The Chicago, Burlington & Quincy agent at Ellston (right) posed with a patron, c. 1920. Note the less-than-carload freight that either had arrived or awaited shipment. (courtesy the author)*



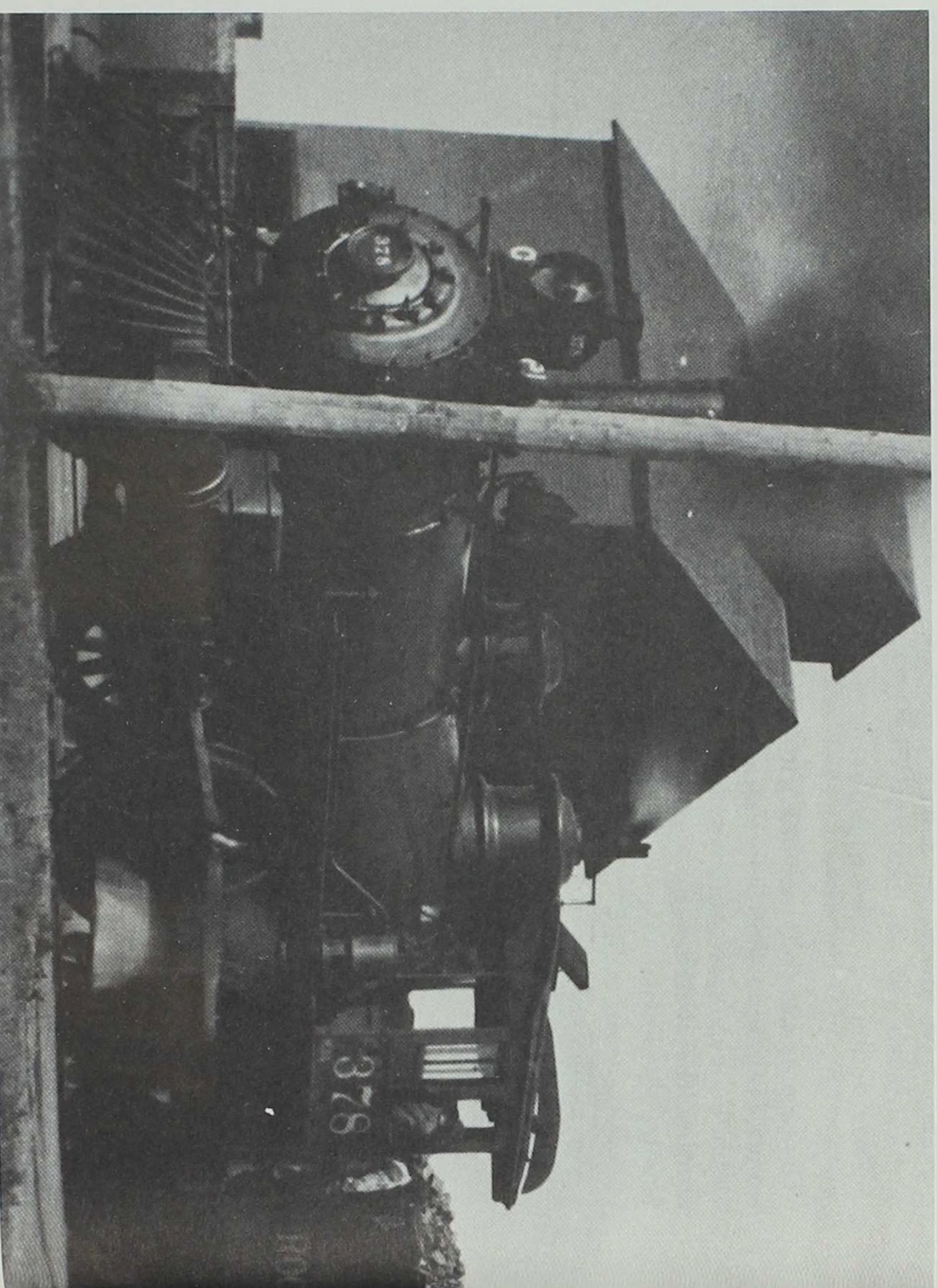
*card, one that the agent likely sold to the public. (courtesy the author)*



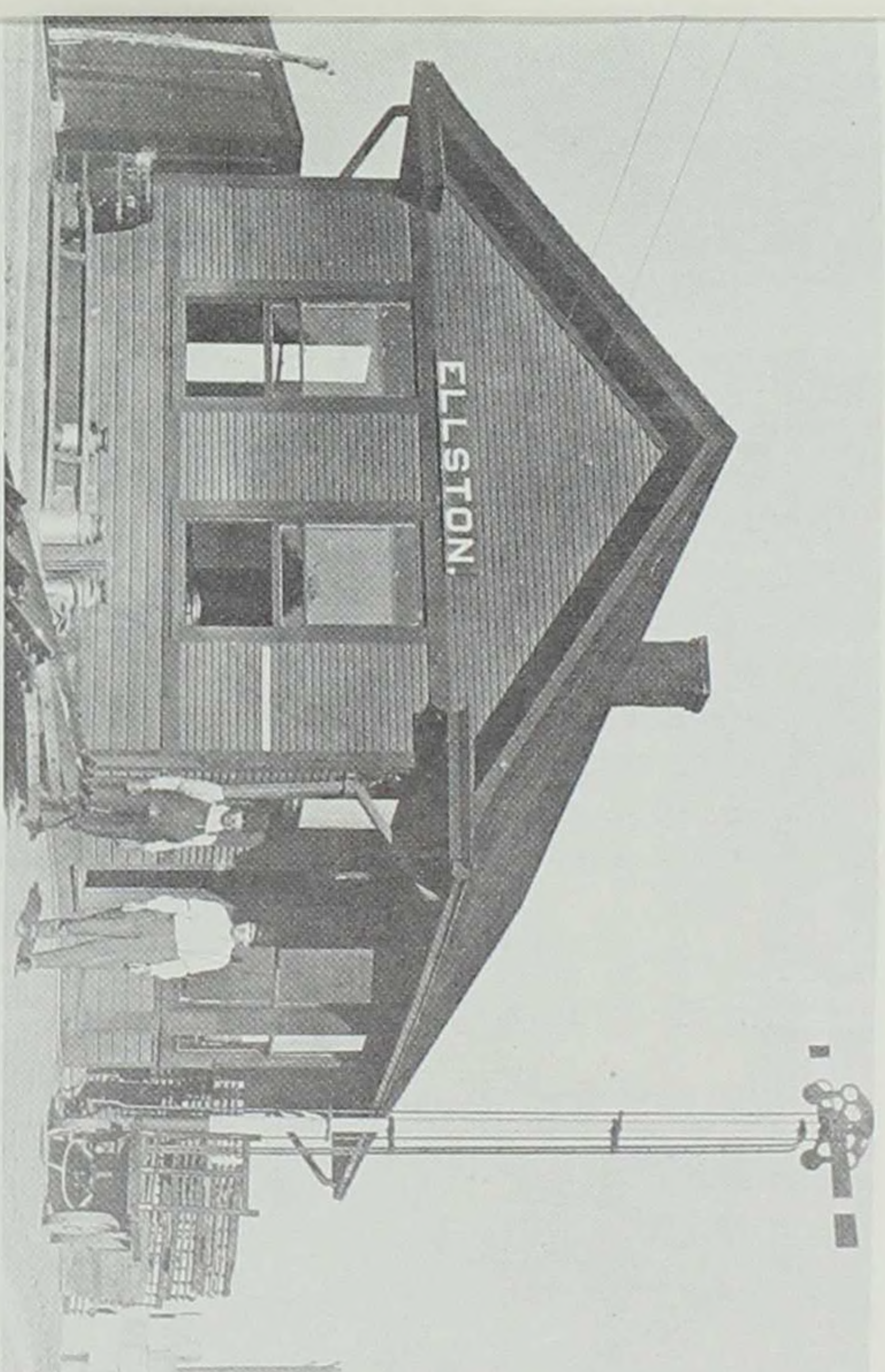
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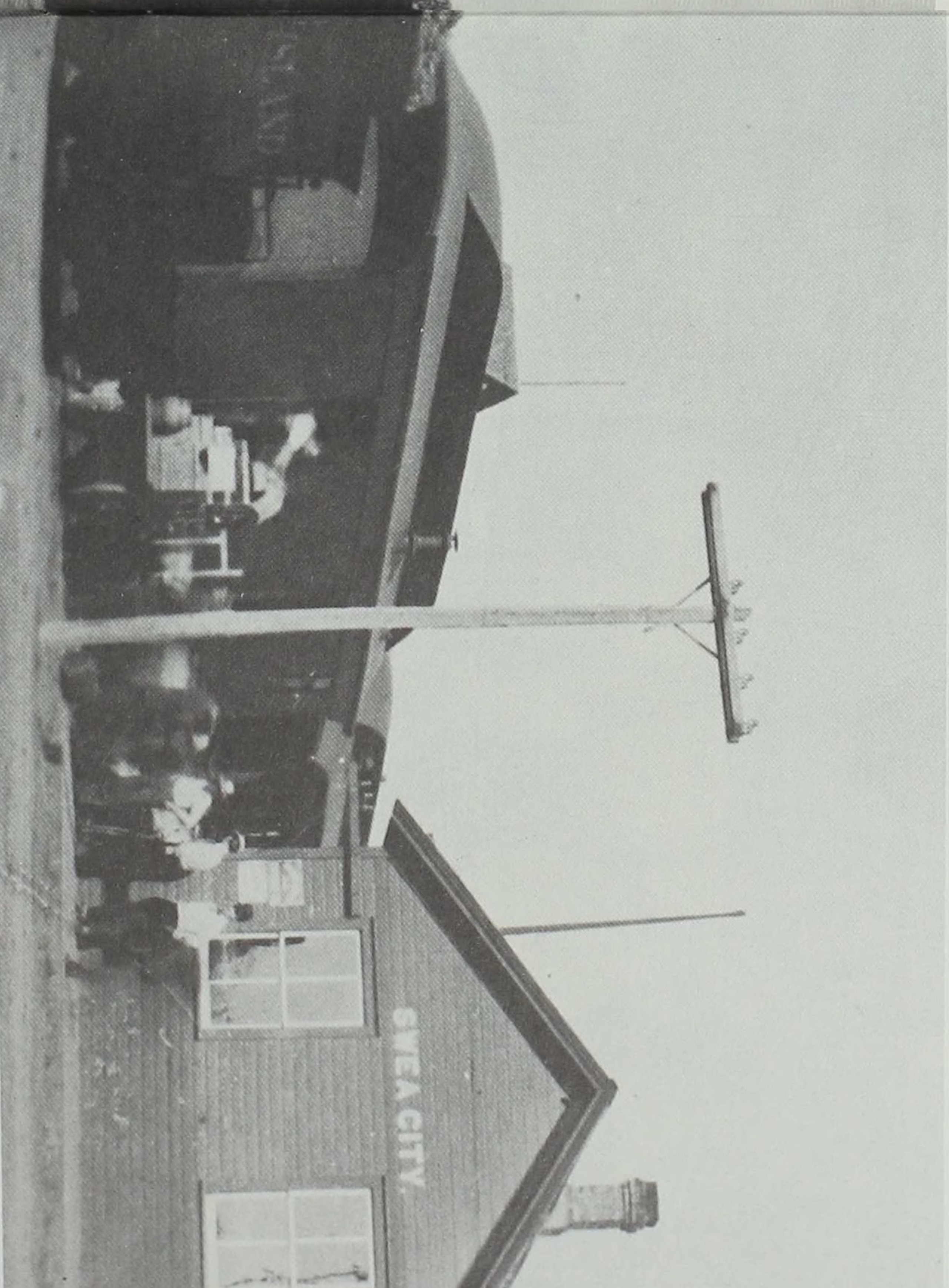
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*The Chicago, Burlington & Quincy agent at Ellston (right) posed with a patron, c. 1920. Note the less-than-carload freight that either had arrived or awaited shipment. (courtesy the author)*



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Finding the hoop could be an adventure when it landed in high weeds or deep snow or when it was dark. (By the 1940s the widespread use of the "Y" strip hoop ended this problem.) Feeding hungry stoves in offices and waiting rooms during the wintry months was a matter of seemingly unending toil and caused extra aches and pains. Coal houses were frequently a considerable distance from the depot, making the necessary daily trips unpleasant. Of course when the weather turned nasty, any outdoor task became an additional burden.

Commercial telegraphic work created its own special difficulties. While this business meant extra income, the bother nearly universally outweighed the compensation. Agent Knight explained:

*Invariably, somebody would show up about 20 minutes or so before you'd go off duty with a handful of death messages. They expected you to accept them with graciousness and to get them out right away. All the operator made from a telegram was 10 percent of any money he handled. If somebody came in with 5 or 6 telegrams that were to be paid for at the other end . . . I wouldn't get a nickle from sending any of them. . . . When you accepted the telegrams, you didn't know how long it was going to take to get rid of them because you had to call a relay operator. . . . And you had to wait until he was not busy. You might sit there for 2 hours waiting for him past your time to go*



Burlington Route Agent Martin J. Kenton at work in the Russell depot, c. 1925. The ubiquitous train order hoops can be seen to the right of the bay window area. (courtesy the author)





Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul depot at Akron in June 1907. (courtesy the author)

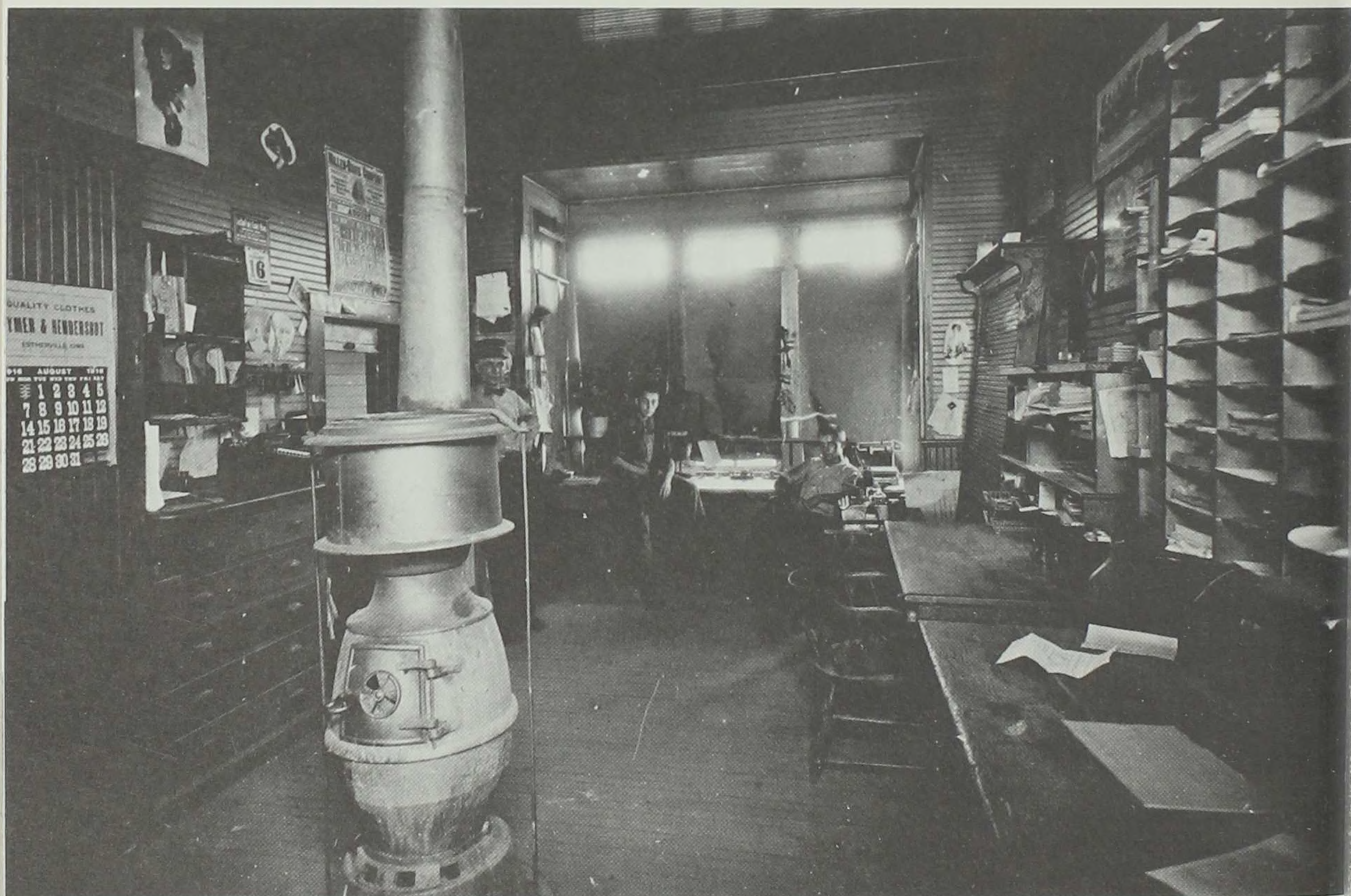
home. . . . On in-bound telegrams . . . if the telegram was paid for on the other end, you never got anything out of it. . . . If [the message] was for out in the country, and the people had no phone, and if it was an urgent message . . . you felt that you almost had to deliver it. If you drove out . . . and delivered it, you never got a nickel and you never got any thanks from the people. They expected it. There have been times when I got stuck in the snow and mud and I had to hire somebody to pull me out. . . . It was a fine thing for the Western Union but it was a mighty poor arrangement for the agent.

Relations with the public could also prove difficult. Questions and complaints were part of the daily routine. If shipments were late or damaged, patrons' tempers flared. Such occurrences were emotionally draining and extremely time consuming. Agents, for in-

stance, developed a hardy dislike for the cheap dish and drinking glass traffic. "Always two or three 5¢ each type glasses or a couple of 14¢ plates broken, requiring a trip to a store for inspection of packing, reason for damage, etc.," noted Agent Searls. "Most time consuming, when the time was so badly needed for all the other demanding work of the day. Naturally those handling such shipments felt their needs were equally as important as those of the livestock . . . shippers. We strived to keep them all happy. If we could get the 20¢ damage handled within 72 hours, it worked out rather well." Searls added, "Many times I paid them out of my own pocket to save time."

Since the depot served as the community gateway, "loafers" commonly became a nuisance and source of irritation. Some might be drunk, vile or generally undesirable. Agents usually coaxed these people to leave, but at times they had to get tough. The *Carroll*





*In August 1916 the Minneapolis & St. Louis agent and two assistants gave a photographer a few moments in the office of the Estherville station. Freight tariffs are stored on the right. (courtesy the author)*

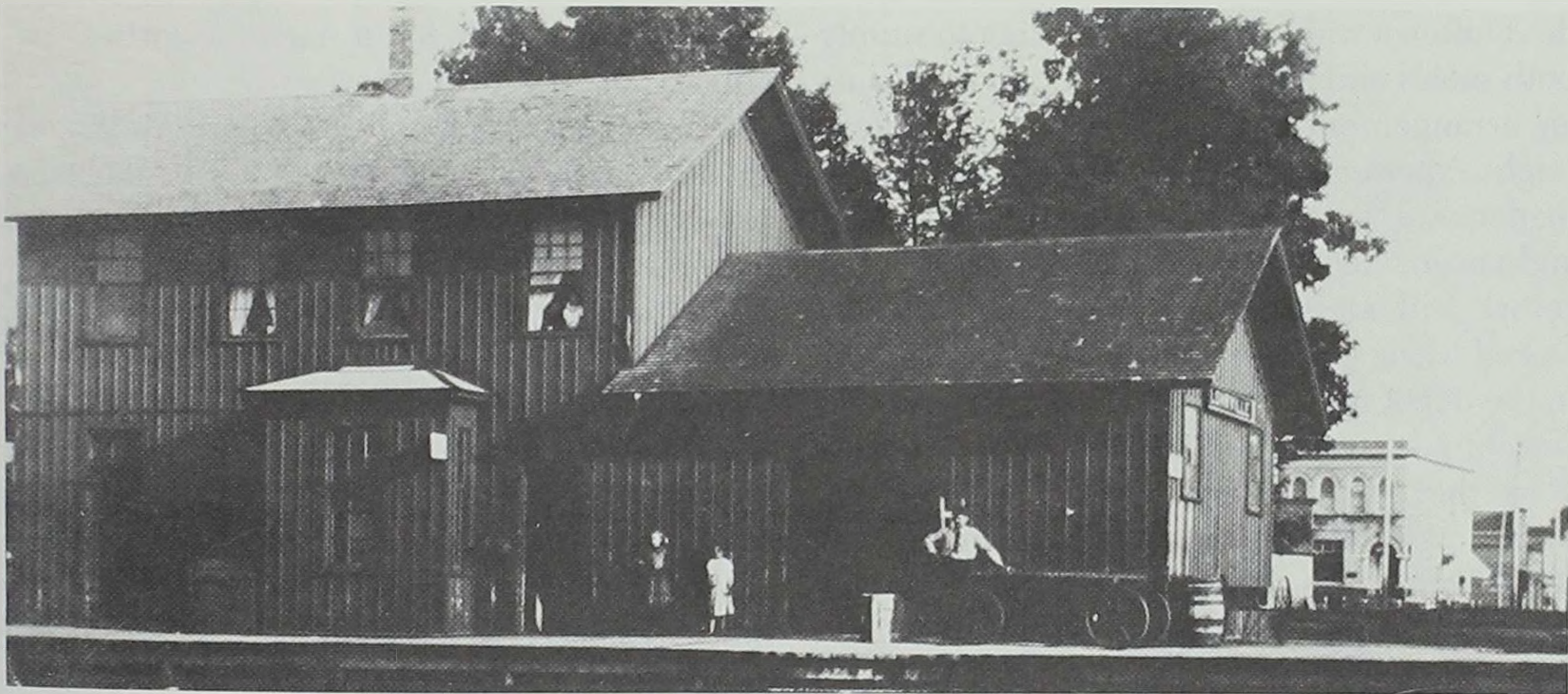
*Herald* reported in 1905 that the North Western agent "has made the announcement that hereafter loafers will be compelled to keep away from the depot and that unless his orders are heeded some arrests will be made in the very near future." The threat worked, at least temporarily.

There existed, of course, those annoying and usually silly questions. For example, some travelers could not understand a railroad timetable or tell the difference between A.M. and P.M. In response to repeated inquiries about time, one frustrated Iowa agent in 1894 placed the following sign under the popular station clock: "This is a clock; it is running; it is Chicago time; it is right; it is set every day at 10 o'clock.

Now keep your mouths shut."

The workaday life for the railroad station agent could have additional discomforting features. In particular, an "extra man," one who lacked a regular depot assignment, might be forced to move frequently throughout a division or occasionally an entire system without much prior notice. He could well face a lengthy, bone jarring ride on a "way-freight" or a poky passenger train in order to reach his destination at the prescribed time. Upon assuming his new post, the agent needed to make his own eating and sleeping arrangements. Either could prove difficult and some smaller communities lacked both a restaurant and a hotel. The usual solution lay with a local resi-





The Chicago & North Western depot in Lohrville, c. 1910. The agent, William H. Marple, and his family lived on the depot's second floor. (courtesy the author)



This view of the office of the Chicago Great Western depot in Lamont, c. 1910, shows Agent Bert Snodgrass on the left near the telegraph key. (courtesy the author)



A McKeen gas-electric motor train at Hampton in 1949, a year before the Chicago Great Western discontinued passenger service on the line between Oelwein and Clarion. (courtesy the author)



dent (often a widow) who was willing to supply both meals and a sleeping room. Even if such an arrangement could be made, the agent might experience a general lack of cleanliness, inadequate heat during the coldest months, and a cantankerous hostess. There existed a last resort. Although the majority of Iowa stations lacked living quarters, an agent could "batch" in the depot itself. He could acquire food from the ubiquitous grocery or general store and use a cot that was placed in the office or freight house. With the advent of all-weather roads and automobiles, the agent enjoyed greater options. Larger, nearby towns generally offered suitable facilities.

Once settled the railroad agent faced long hours of toil with only modest financial compensation. "When my dad hired out in 1900 . . . he worked one of the better paying jobs for \$45.00 for a 12 hour day six days a week [approximately 14 cents an hour] and no overtime," remembered Dan Knight. "Any union activity meant automatic dismissal." Agents throughout the state and nation eventually unionized and won substantial improvements in wages and working conditions. Prior to passage of the Railroad Retirement Act by a New Deal Congress in 1935, all railroad employees had to work until they could no longer do so; men stayed on the "extra board" for years until somebody died, quit or was fired. Vacations

did not become common until the forties "so nobody laid off until he was sick."

While once there were several thousand agents, the railroad industry in Iowa today employs only several score. This enormous contraction has occurred because of several factors: the virtual extinction of the passenger train; the increased use since the 1950s of mobile freight representatives and centralized agencies; the widespread employment of radios for train-control work; and, the major track abandonments caused by mergers, declining business and, in the case of the Milwaukee and Rock Island, bankruptcy and liquidation. Fewer and fewer Iowans recall the time when the station agent played a vital role in the town's life. Those few agents still working and those who have retired have their memories. And they are probably fond ones: "It's been a good life," reflected Knight. "I don't think I would have wanted anything else . . . there never was a day when I hated to go to work because every day was different." □

#### Note on Sources

Surprisingly, virtually no secondary literature has appeared on the subject of the railroad station agent in Iowa or the nation. The various company histories virtually ignore this type of employee and the few railroad labor studies focus on either strikes or the operating brotherhoods. Some attention, however, is paid to the role of the depot and the agent in H. Roger Grant and Charles W. Bohi, *The Country Railroad Station Agent in America* (Boulder, 1978).





# Mission Festival

by Lenore Salvaneschi

*St. Stephen's Lutheran Church and parsonage in Atkins, Iowa, c. 1920, home for the author during her childhood. (G. Rickels Collection, SHSI)*

No more dreaded yet exciting words existed in my childhood than Mission Festival. Undoubtedly it was because the words represented literally weeks of work and tension and anxiety on the part of my mother. It was strange that one day out of the whole year should be so significant. But the most important event of a preacher family's summer (exceeded only, in the minds of the children, by the "Grand and Glorious,") was Mission Festival Sunday.

Mission Festival came on a certain Sunday of the summer, chosen by each congregation on a

date not conflicting with that of another congregation, at which there would be two festival services with guest preachers. These guests were not necessarily missionaries (there weren't enough of these ordinarily to go around) but were very likely pastors from other congregations in the circuit. I never knew on what basis the preachers were chosen, but the local pastor certainly had to provide someone who would be a good speaker, and I suspect he also selected people who would be congenial to himself and to his family. The occasion lent itself to social as well as to religious refreshment.

Other congregations were always invited;



the host congregation prepared a refreshment stand; and in the days before World War II, many families made a day of it, attending forenoon and afternoon services, having a picnic lunch in between on the church grounds, and ending with the Walther League having a celebration with "party games," the acceptable name for square dancing, on the lawn in the evening. [The Walther League was the young people's organization of the Missouri Synod Lutheran churches.]

The local choir practiced feverishly to be able to show off the quality of its sopranos, and the parochial schoolteacher exercised his best

the compliment graciously, but inwardly may have thought wryly of his own "out of pocket" situation. I suspect that often he must also have been disturbed when the congregation sang "From Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strands" having no inkling of the nineteenth century imperialism reflected in the hymn.

If all this was supposed to be so edifying, why should it instill such terror into the heart of the preacher's wife, our Mamma-Gusti? The unfortunate reason was that, whether true or not, each Frau Pastor in the



*Representatives of various Benton, Linn, and possibly Iowa County Missouri Synod Lutheran parishes gather against the background of St. Stephen's church in 1923. While this was probably a Walther League rally, a similar crowd gathered for Mission Festivals. (G. Rickels Collection, SHSI)*

abilities on the organ. How many sermons were preached on the virtue of missionary (sometimes confused with charity) work at home and abroad, with emphasis upon the tangible expressions of concern for foreign fields. The emphasis upon fields "white with the harvest" never made much sense to me as a child, since fields covered with snow seldom were harvested in Iowa. Our congregation had the reputation of being one of the best contributors in the circuit to foreign mission endeavors. When other pastors congratulated Father upon his generous congregation, he acknowledged

German Lutheran congregations in Iowa in those days thought she was on trial. Mission Festival Sunday was her supreme moment of judgment by her peers, the other ministers' wives (and their husbands, for many a pastor compared his paragon of housekeeping virtue with others less efficient). And so, from Easter-tide on, until the second Sunday in June, our Mission Festival date, all the activities of the household were directed toward that one event.

The whole parsonage, every room of it, had to be cleaned. And housecleaning there was a



thorough affair. In the case of the bedrooms, *all* the clothing and bedding, with the exception of the mattresses, had to be hung outdoors on the lines to get the purifying rays of the sun. The mattresses in turn were carried down to the lawn and beaten frantically with rug beaters. I'm sure that when my mother finally owned an electric vacuum sweeper, its cleaning attachments, to her puritanical conscience, never really effected the proper cleaning of any mattress. Ceilings and wallpapered walls were swept with a broom, over which had been wrapped a soft cloth. Painted walls and woodwork were washed with soapsuds, floors were scrubbed, windows washed with a chamois and water and ammonia. Curtains were washed, and if they were "ecru" in color, given an infusion of coffee rinse, then stretched on curtain frames, merciless arrangements of lathes with tiny nails on which the edges of the curtains were impaled. It was impossible to stretch the curtains without also puncturing the fingers and skinning the knuckles. Usually, the frames were set at an angle against the south side of the



*The author and her mother, Mrs. G. Rickels, relaxing in the parsonage orchard during a summer 1921 picnic. (G. Rickels Collection, SHSI)*

house, to get the most sunshine and to protect them from the strong winds. It was a tragedy if the whole contraption were blown down and the accursed procedure had to be gone through again.

This housecleaning process, much of it depending upon the cooperation of the weather, could take weeks to complete. Cleaning Father's study would usually be done while he was away at the Spring Pastoral Conference. This gave one a chance to dust all the books very carefully, to polish the glass of the bookcases and probably to varnish the linoleum on the floor, all without disturbing him.

The worst days were those when the bedrooms or parlor had to be cleaned, for one needed perfect weather for these activities. As mentioned before, bedding and clothes had to be put out to air, and in the case of the parlor, this meant that the big rug — our only one — had to be taken out into the front lawn and beaten. Both Mother and Father would be in a bad mood, for on the most perfect of spring days, when the air was heavy with the scent of



*The author's younger brother, Robert, helping his grandmother, Beske Rickels, in the parsonage kitchen in 1925. (G. Rickels Collection, SHSI)*



spring flowers and the flickers were wild in the trees, Mother would need help in this cleaning and Father would yearn to be in the Maquoketa timber. Usually, because of her great anxieties, my mother's needs would predominate.

Not only the house, but also the yard and garden had to be in perfect shape and this was where my brother and I particularly had to help. Father did the planting, but my brother and I did the weeding, mowing and clipping, leaving the yard almost shorn.

As the great day approached, another cause of anxiety presented itself: the menu. What would we prepare for the guests? I'm sure that Mother always hoped that the guest preachers would not come the night before; that meant more meals to prepare at a time when the whole focus of her attention was on the Sunday dinner. On the other hand, if the men came the night before, they were less likely to bring their families with them. No matter what, it was an ordeal to plan the dinner. Without question, the entree had to be a roast, very likely of beef, baked in the oven of the old cookstove. Since the middle of June was usually hot and sultry, the joys of using the stove were nonexistent. There would be potatoes: this one time in the year, mashed and then put through a ricer, to be served with exquisite roast beef gravy. What vegetables were to be served? The question usually ended in the decision to have home-canned corn, perhaps beans, all sorts of relishes, beets, pickles, fresh celery, and coleslaw, of course, and then cherry pie for dessert at noon. My poor sister usually spent many minutes trying to whip the recalcitrant cream, which had been chilling for hours in the old cistern.

Imagine the logistics of the whole dinner: keeping the cookstove hot with cobs and wood, keeping some foods cool (milk and cream hung in the cistern, while everything else was placed in the basement, on top of the washing ma-

chine and benches), the setting of the table — two boards brought down from the attic, covered with the flannel liner, then the heavy linen tablecloth with the handmade lace insertion (ironed to perfection) and the "good" white china. In connection with the table settings, I shall never forget the one-upwomanship of a certain preacher's wife who was the feminine version of the *arbiter elegantiarum* for all the preachers' wives in the circuit. This lovely lady had a flair in dress and cuisine which was the envy of lesser souls who had not been blessed with the same degree of creativity. When the leader acquired a pink dinner service, and pink glassware to go with it, Mother — I think for the first time in her life — knew what envy meant. I well remember the time she accompanied Father to the county seat, where he often had to make hospital calls, and looked longingly in the window of a jewelry store which sold Noritake china. One bittersweet day, when she had received the final payment of the government insurance as one of the survivors of her brother, "missing in action" in World War I, she actually spent twenty dollars, after *much* searching of conscience, and thereafter rejoiced in *her* set of pretty green dishes.

At Mission Festival time, the orange blossoms south of the parsonage and Mother's climbing roses were in flower, and thus the centerpieces on the table and on the golden oak buffet were prepared with these fragrant blossoms. The altar in the church also would be decorated with huge bouquets of the bridal flowers, combined with peonies and feather fronds of asparagus, anchored solidly in fruit jars by members of the Ladies Aid.

Together with anxieties about the house and yard, about dinner and supper, there was the concern to be well dressed. Very likely Mother would have sewn a new summer dress for herself and for my sister, and probably made over one of hers for me. It was no small feat to juggle





A June 1922 pastors' picnic in Cedar Rapids. Again, while not a Mission Festival photograph, the summer setting is suggestive of Mission Festival. Mrs. G. Rickels is seated on the far right in the photograph, and the Reverend G. Rickels is standing fourth from the right. (G. Rickels Collection, SHSI)

the preparation of the dinner and the dressing of the family in time for the first service at ten o'clock on Mission Festival Sunday. My brother and I often aggravated the tension by caring more for the offerings of the "stand" than the necessities of the "heathen" mentioned so frequently in the sermons. We tended to disgrace our parents by coming in at the last moment in less than crisply starched finery.

Very often the table had to be reset after we came home from church, for there might be visiting preachers in addition to the invited speakers and their families. There was such excitement in the house. The men would be in Father's study, saturating Mother's freshly laundered curtains with cigar smoke; the women would be in the parlor or a few of the kindly (or nosey) ones might try to help in the

kitchen. The children meanwhile were merrily acquiring grass stains or begging more nickels to get some pop at the "stand."

Father was always the gracious host, saying grace, then *Gesegnete Mahlzeit* and urging Brother John, or whoever was the honored preacher, to help himself. Through sweat and smiles, Mother, in her best dress and embroidered apron, managed to get through the dinner and dishes (with all the women guests expected to help, the fancy embroidered flour sack dish towels carefully laid out for them) almost in time for the afternoon service. This service was usually more crowded; the elders were well prepared, however, and placed the overflow on wooden plank benches which had been built under the fragrant catalpa trees the day before. The afternoon service usually





*A view of the lush parsonage vineyards in 1923. Note the crooked ironwork of the church steeple in the background. The steeple was later removed and rebuilt. (G. Rickels Collection, SHSI)*

brought out more preachers' families — I think most of them tried to "make the circuit" every summer — and Mother might be hard put to supply enough food for all the previously uninvited who came to supper. Minced ham, sliced roast, potato salad, more coleslaw from the dishpan in the basement, more jars of preserved pickles and relishes from the store in the fruit room, beautiful fresh bread and rolls baked the day before, jello whip made in crocks, chocolate cake with seven-minute frosting and white cake with lemon filling, Mother's specialties, all appeared on the table.

Finally, in the cool of the evening, after the many dishes had once again, perhaps twice again, been washed, the women relaxed in the rockers in the parlor. The preachers visited in the study or carried the dining room chairs outside to the lawn (who had heard of lawn furniture?), and smoked their cigars and pipes while the children chased fireflies and

played hide-and-go-seek in the grapevines and bushes.

The Walther Leaguers arrived in their Fords and Chevies (one family always came in a *Buick*) and took over the school yard, playing "We've Got a New Pig in the Parlor," and other party games with much energy and bouncing of partners. We children watched for awhile, then begged for one more ice cream cone from the "stand," and came home thoroughly sticky, sick, and exhausted from the excitement and unwonted *Schlueckerei*.

The guests ordinarily left by a prudent hour, eleven at the latest. The cars of the revellers stirred up the dust, the crickets sang, and huge bundles of wash waited for the next morning of boiling suds and sunshine. Once again, the whole family relaxed in the knowledge that the collection had been up to the congregation's standards, and Mother's reputation had been upheld. □



The State Historical Society encourages submission of articles on the history of Iowa and the surrounding region that may be of interest to the general reading public. The originality and significance of an article, as well as the quality of an author's research and writing, will determine acceptance for publication. A brief biographical sketch should be submitted. All manuscripts must be double-spaced on medium weight paper. Ordinarily, the text of an article should not exceed 25 to 30 pages. As far as possible, citations should be worked into the body of the text. In this and other matters of form THE MLA STYLE SHEET is the standard guide. Black and white and colored illustrations are an integral part of the PALIMPSEST. Any photographic illustrations should accompany the manuscript, preferably five-by-seven or eight-by-ten glossy prints (unmarked on either side) or color slides. Send inquiries to: Palimpsest Editor, Office of the State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

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