

THE ORPHAN'S FRIEND

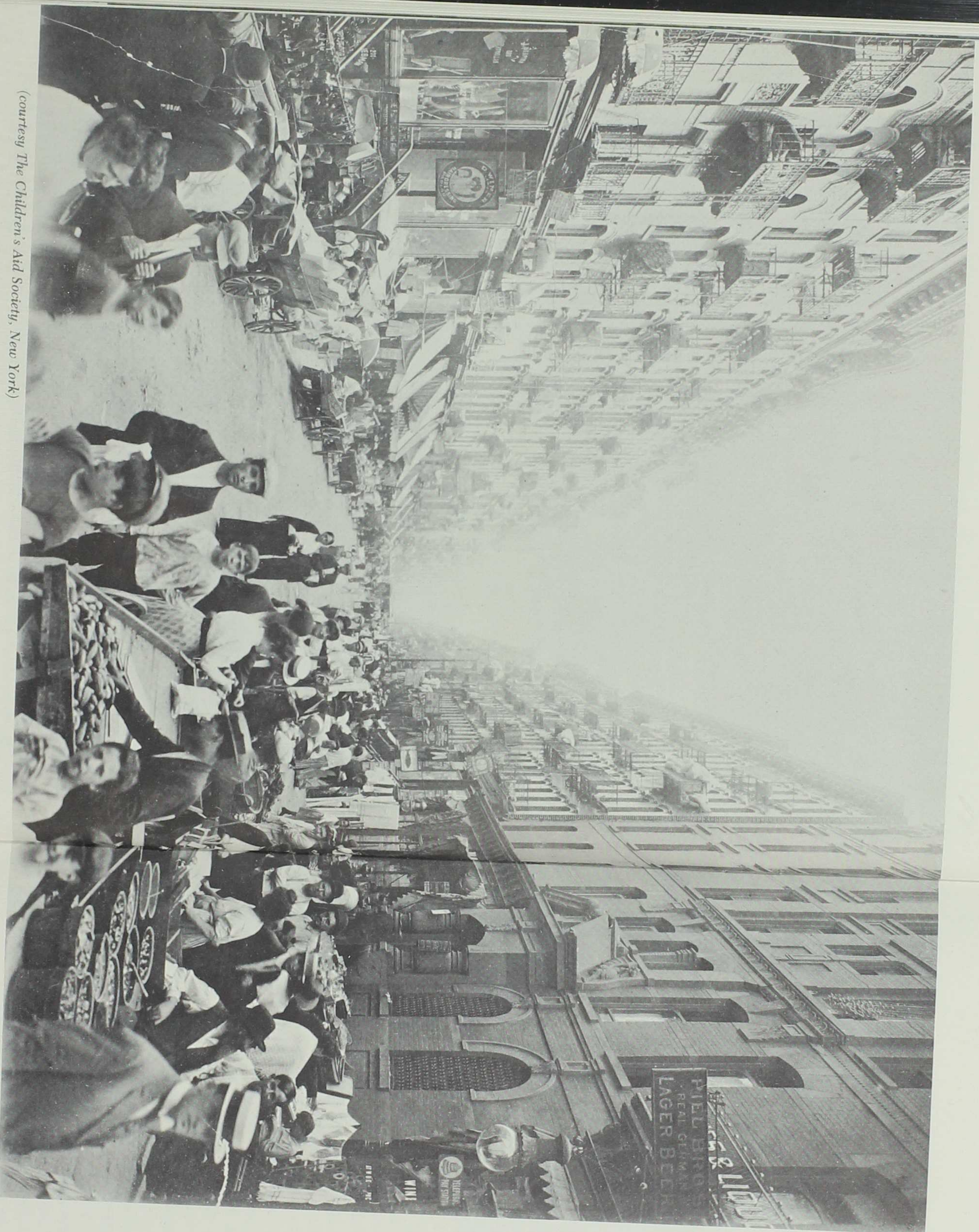
Charles Collins Townsend
and
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by
Marcella C. Fisher

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(courtesy The Children's Aid Society, New York)

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Today, paths beaten by generations of feet into flat brown clay ribbons zigzag upward from the ravine to the present Shimek schoolhouse on the bluff above. On this upper level in 1890 the Samuel Whiting family had corn fields and pastureage for their cows. Plows turned up Indian arrowheads, axes and spear points, and the present Sam Whiting says there was an Indian campground nearby and Indian graves on Ridge Road. Later still a dance hall stood south of the school. On the lower level the Whiting red-brick farmstead still stands on the avenue named for the former Fayette County, Iowa settler. Redheaded woodpeckers flash by in branches of oak, ash, walnut and hickory still growing in the neighborhood, mixed with new timber and brush. But where was the orphans' well? Mr. Whiting guesses it is now under Oaklawn Avenue. The well, the farm home, and the waifs themselves are gone. But what remains of Townsend's plan in Iowa—from its beginning through its ragged execution to its faltering conclusion—can be traced more surely in his own writings, in church and court records, in editorials and angry letters. This story of a well-meaning enterprise destroyed by mistrust in the community leaves its central character, a man at once respected, reviled and misunderstood in his own time, a confusing figure.

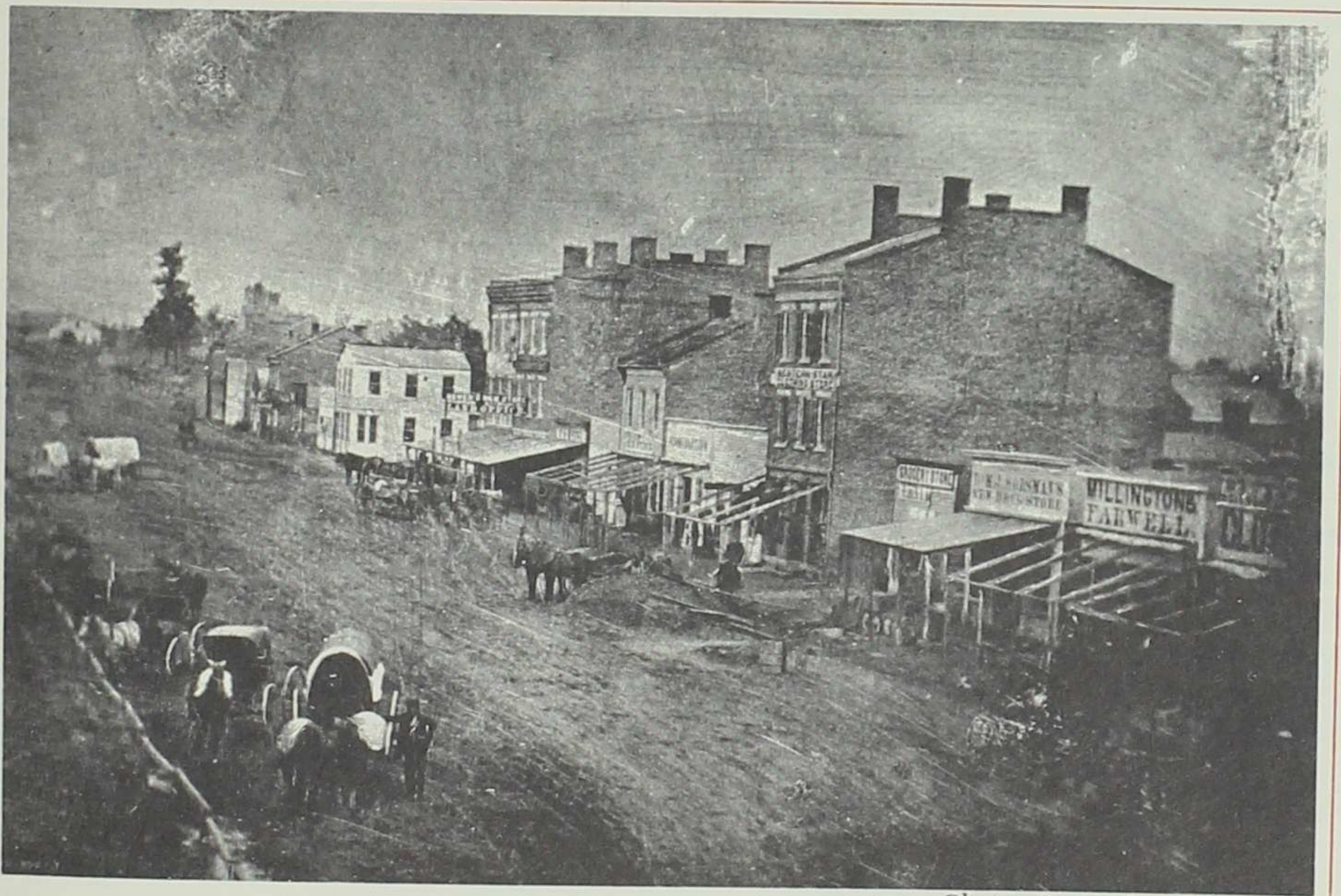
Charles C. Townsend (also C. C. Townsend) was born in Hebron, Connecticut, December 25, 1808, the son of John and Isabella (Chapman) Townsend. At 17, he set out on foot for Hartford, Connecticut, 18 miles away, to become a clerk in the store at Front and Bridge Streets run by his life-long friend, Samuel Barber. Sometime later, Samuel, at his own expense, sent Townsend to nearby Manchester to attend Preparatory School there. Returning to Hartford after his studies, Townsend entered Washington College (later Trinity), founded in 1828. In 1835 he entered the

theological department of Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, and graduated in 1838. The same year he was ordained to the Diaconate by Bishop Charles P. McIlvane and assigned his first missionary post at Ashtabula, Ohio. Townsend spent the next 14 years doing missionary work in Kentucky and on what he called "the furious frontier" of Arkansas.

In the mid-1800s the professional missionary had to be a jack-of-all-trades. His work included everything from locating and reporting on scattered Episcopalians, to teaching at mission schools, to organizing congregations and performing the duties of a regular minister. The missionary's relation to the official church organization was loosely defined, as was the means by which the missionary was paid.

Charles Townsend was no exception. He continued with missionary work in Kentucky, observing the church's efforts to deal with religious instruction for the slaves, and formulating plans to start his own religious school. He managed to get a "neat, whitewashed log school room" built in 1845 before moving on to Fort Smith, Arkansas, to organize Episcopalians on the frontier into a Congregation and to do some missionary work with the Indians. Shocked by the treatment of the Five Civilized Tribes, who had already undergone their famous removal from the Southeastern states along the "Trail of Tears," he and his wife began teaching nine orphans, including Cherokee girls, in his "hired house." He also made visits to black slaves.

His time in Arkansas was one of spiritual and physical trial. Sectarian battles led to "virulent opposition . . . against the church during a season of religious excitement." He fell ill. A fire destroyed the meeting room for the church at the Fort, dispiriting the congregation already torn by dissension over where to locate the future chapel. Townsend had initiated plans for the chapel and a Mission school with his own money and tried to secure the Bishop's permission to solicit funds for them. Given the ar-



Clinton Street, Iowa City, 1853

gumentative nature of the parishioners, the Bishop denied permission, but did agree to allow Townsend to travel east to visit friends and ask their aid. Before Townsend left he convinced the government to allow him to use the garrison grounds for a "chapel" but by the time he returned the congregation was caught by a "fearful visitation"—cholera. Though services were continued in "a room," few attended and the arguments began again—some of the parishioners opposed using the garrison grounds, demanding a brick church in town "suited to their taste," a church for which they seemed reluctant to pay.

Townsend lost patience. He sold off "all his little property" to the warden to whom he owed his largest debt, asked to be relieved of his duties, and moved further north into a log cabin he thought a good location for a boarding school and conducive to missionary work. But once again, he could not raise contributions to

build a permanent church and school. Frustrated by failure, his health challenged, he began to look for other work. When the Missionary Association for the West offered him a post in Iowa, he took it and immediately set out on horseback in the winter of 1852, leaving behind his family and his meager possessions in the mountains "at our only home on earth."

Just outside of Iowa City, Townsend met the Stephen Maynards, formerly of Ohio, and spent the night at their farm. In years to come, their paths would cross many times. The next day he plunged into a snow storm and "took the prairie route to Iowa City while the snow drifted so furiously that . . . man [and] horse could scarcely keep the road. Before dark, however, this beautiful city rose to view reposing on its eminence, like an encampment; and what appeared in the distance, like

whitened tents, proved to be the stone Capitol with its white dome, and a cluster of 7 or 8 churches. With thanksgiving to God, we crossed the intervening Iowa, and drove up the hill to this City of Churches; a cheerful resting place after a cheerless journey."

Townsend spent his first days in Iowa City conducting a service in the borrowed Methodist Church, another in Dr. Reynolds' school room. It was intensely cold, between four and eight degrees below zero—unfavorable weather to search for Episcopalians. But he found eight communicants and seven families, more than 30 individuals in town. The Sunday school, he said, went into operation with 12 pupils and three teachers. Alms of the communion service went toward the funds of the Missionary Association for the West. He noted the population of Iowa City as nearly 2,000 and its churches as Presbyterian, old and new school; Methodists, Protestant and Radical; Baptists; Universalists; Roman Catholic; but no Protestant Episcopal church.

Next, Townsend went to Cedar Rapids to look over his new "field," discovering there an Episcopal community organized enough to have dug a basement ready for framing a Gothic style structure already named Grace Church. In his letters home he carefully notes the size and growth of the congregation and the inadequacy of the space available, as well as describing his first taste of real midwest winter:

I am as comfortable as I could expect to be so near the polar regions. I have a warm room in a brick building three stories high (in N.Y. style) and a good pile of wood. This I cut & split myself for exercise. I study and sleep in this room, and take my meals in the family of my Senior Warden Hon. Judge Greene. Sometimes these north western blasts make this tall building tremble and once my chair shook under me as with an earthquake. The climate is variable.

Despite the weather, Townsend was happy. He had found a group of communicants willing to work for a permanent church, and he had a new iron in the fire besides. The first issue of his *Annals of a Western Missionary* came from

the press of Finch & McCabe, Cedar Rapids, in February of 1853. Containing news from the western missionary field, church statistics, names of subscribers and donors of money, the *Annals* was to sustain his work for many hard years. He also continued teaching school and traveling to nearby settlements with his "faithful missionary horse." Following the missionary pattern of maintaining only loosely held ties with a given parish until the arrival of an officially called minister, he returned to the "City of Churches" requesting a post in Iowa City from a visiting representative of the Missionary Association. It was granted.

Setting into a daily routine, Townsend arose at 4 A.M., read the Bible in Greek and Hebrew, wrote his *Annals*, taught school until 5 P.M., made pastoral calls and studied until 10 P.M. On visits to outlying farms he enjoyed seeing Iowa's "undulating prairies of living green . . . fields of corn, wheat and oats, and orchards of choice fruits."

In the spring of 1853 he helped organize the parish of Trinity Episcopal Church, and with Maynard and other delegates arranged for the parish to be "canonically connected" to the Iowa diocese which was meeting for its first convention on August 17 at Muscatine. In the fall, the Iowa City church vestry moved to establish their church on a permanent basis and invited Townsend to be pastor at Trinity for a salary of \$500 a year. They requested that he solicit money in the East, pledging themselves to "sustain any plan which our pastor with our Eastern benefactors may adopt for the establishment, in the vicinity of this City, of an Home of Industry or Mission Farm and School, for the benefit of poor and friendless children." A similar request was made of him by Episcopal communicants in Washington, Iowa.

So once again Townsend planned to travel East—this time to raise money for an orphanage and for two churches. However, he went to Arkansas first, perhaps to collect the wife and family he left there. Waiting out the winter and

the arrival of a riverboat to the East, he built a log schoolhouse and wrote a pamphlet about his plans for "The Iowa City Home of Industry, or Orphans' Home." In early May he was back in Iowa City where his notes entered in Trinity church's Register show two subscriptions of \$500 each for the building of a church, and an increase in the number of communicants. In the summer he left for New York.

He found that New Yorkers were more than willing to help him relieve the city of its hordes of vagabond urchins. Not far from his old friend Samuel Barber, Townsend became aware of the "murderous blocks" of tenements along streets choked with beggars, pickpockets, drunkards, thieves, rag-and-bone pickers, prostitutes, dogs, organ grinders and monkeys and "the aggressive and the depraved." At one notorious rogues' den on Laurens Street, "no drove of animals could pass by and keep its numbers intact." One small dark cellar housed 14 persons, men, women and children, the old and the young, without partitions, and one contemporary observer reported that "Two little newsboys slept one winter in the iron tube of the bridge at Harlem; two others made their bed in a burned out safe in Wall Street. Sometimes they ensconced themselves in the cabin of a ferry boat, and thus spent the night. Old boilers, barges, steps and, above all, steam gratings, were their favorite beds."

Even the wife of William B. Astor was not blind to her city's lower depths, subscribing to the newly-formed Children's Aid Society of New York. The precursor of the Society had been established in 1850 on Little Water Street by an Episcopalian named Pease. A few years later another Episcopalian, Archibald Russell, took the operation over and incorporated it in 1856 as The Children's Aid Society of New York. At about this time, Charles Loring Brace presented a plan to New York and Long Island business men whereby employers would arrange underground railways to transport their

workers to and from homes outside the crowded city center. This idea proved unpopular because the excess population did not want to go.

Then the Labor Exchange of the Commissioners of Emigration said something might be accomplished by "a grand organized movement for transferring our unemployed labor to the West." But founders of the Children's Aid Society said the best idea of all was to send outcast children to "the farmer's home" because "the cultivators of the soil are in America our most solid and intelligent class. . . ." Circulars went out to city weeklies and rural papers with the result that hundreds of applications came pouring in "from farmers and mechanics all through the Union. . . ."

"We formed little companies of emigrants, and, after thoroughly cleaning and clothing them, put them under a competent agent, and, first selecting a village where there was a call or opening for such a party, we dispatched them to the place. The farming community having been duly notified, there was usually a dense crowd of people at the station awaiting the arrival of the youthful travellers." One of the agents, E.P. Smith, describing his first trip to the West with a load of emigrants, said that in Detroit, the first stop, there were applications for 15 of his children, the applicants bearing recommendations for themselves from pastors and justices of the peace. "There was a rivalry among the boys to see which first could get a home in the country, and before Saturday they were all gone. Rev. Mr. O. took several home with him and nine of the smallest I accompanied to Chicago, and sent to Mr. Townsend, Iowa City," Mr. Smith said.

Like Pease, Russell, Brace, and Smith, Charles Townsend had his own plan for finding homes for New York's destitute children, a plan he spent the rest of his life trying to realize. As he would later report:

We proposed a farm school, in Iowa, on a small scale, and, from the failure of promised cooperation, it became an

individual, private enterprise, dependent, under God, upon the industry of its inmates, and the charity of its friends.

Our first home was a rented farmhouse; and our outfit for an Iowa winter was bought on a year's credit at ten per cent. We, therefore, began in debt, with no compensation for Missionary services beyond the weekly contributions of a *winter* congregation!

Townsend wrote biographical sketches of some of the first orphans he found in New York. "John," for example, was "found in a bake house; slept on some straw in a cart . . . will make an industrious farmer"; "George, in pitiful condition on the streets, now cultivates his own garden in Iowa and has a good home with a farmer"; "five older boys in good homes with farmers"; "Frances, found in the Sun building in New York City, now in a good home with the Stephen Maynards"; "Ellen, from Randall's Island, now an assistant housekeeper at The Home, and a teacher of the smaller children, hoping to go to the new Normal school in Iowa City"; "Mary, 16, from Fort Smith, going to school in Iowa City with lame Susan whose parents had died of cholera."

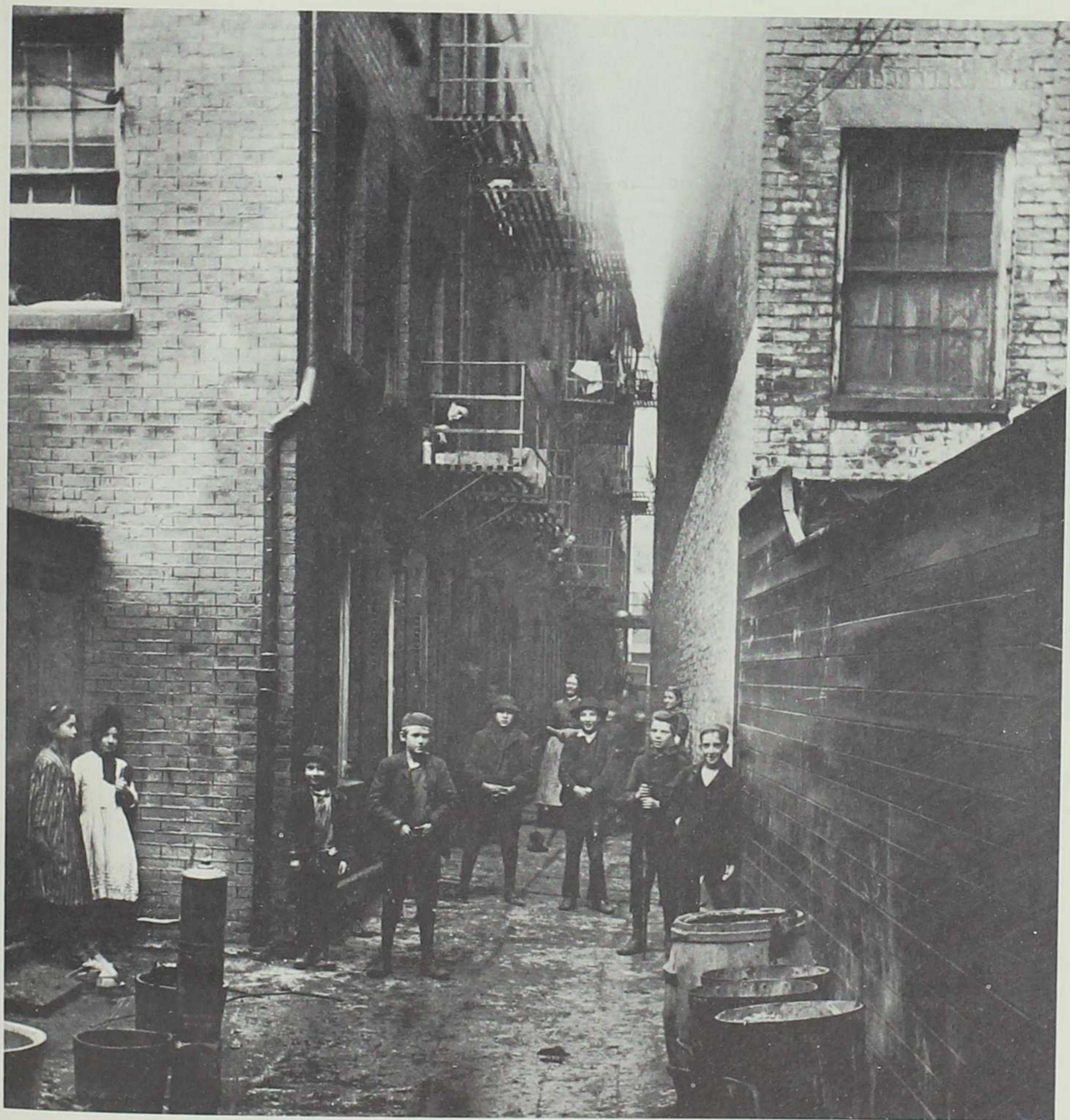
We do not know exactly when Townsend's first orphans arrived in Iowa City. Records show, however, that between June 1, 1854 and June 1, 1858, 50 boys, 43 girls, and 26 adults (some seeking employment) came to Iowa by emigrant train. Townsend's first group from the East was composed of nine boys, 13 girls, and four adults. During the first four years of his Iowa operation, the missionary noted, 12 young people learned to read; nine learned both to read and write; three were nearly ready to teach school; one boy died and was buried on The Home grounds; and three children and one adult were returned to the East. He said it cost about \$10 to transport a child from New York City, including provisions. When a child was adopted into the community, the \$10 was refunded.

Townsend paid for all of this through voluntary contributions from concerned individuals.

He began to call himself the "proprietor" of The Home, churning out appeal after appeal for money, the gifts to be sent in care of "Saml. Barber, No. 79 Water-street, New-York; Robert Graffen, Pine-street, Philadelphia, or to C.C. Townsend, Iowa City, Iowa." Soon, seeing the need for a supervised children's House of Reception closer to the streets of New York, Townsend rented a house on the north side of Staten Island as an auxiliary to The Home in Iowa City. When that was promptly filled, he rented a second. All three, the two Houses of Reception and The Home were put under the same Board of Trustees. One of his Iowa assistants agreed to go to Staten Island with her husband to manage the houses. It was not until nine years after its founding that Townsend actually managed to incorporate The Home on January 5, 1863 under the official title "Orphans' Home of Industry, Iowa City, Iowa." Until that time, Stephen Maynard, the church's senior warden, and R.H. Sylvester, an Iowa City lawyer, served as trustees while Townsend shuttled back and forth to New York on the newly-established railroad.

Their job was not easy. Beset by financial difficulties, the entire enterprise fell under suspicion in the Iowa City community.

Even before the New York waifs began to arrive in Iowa City, a protest against them appeared in *The Davenport Gazette* of July 27, 1854. An angry reader feared that Townsend was turning the "Capital of Iowa" into "a kind of Botany Bay for the 'VAGRANT BOYS AND GIRLS OF OUR LARGE CITIES.' We have quite enough of that kind of material thrown in among us incidentally," the reader continued, "but to enter upon *the importation* of our eastern juvenile vagrants, of both sexes—thoroughly initiated as they are into all kinds of vice and steeped in every pollution—to run the chance of becoming centres of evil influences among us of the worst character, is a matter too grave to pass over in silence." The greatest fear was that the orphan home, a "moral pest-



(from the Jacob A. Riis Collection, courtesy Museum of the City of New York)

house," would fail, scattering its "inmates" around the city.

Rumors began to circulate about "paupers" being brought into the county, and about Townsend's Home failing because it was not formally part of a church organization. To counteract such rumors, Townsend prepared a pamphlet, "Notice and Testimonial" for pre-

sentation at a Christmas festival to be held in the Methodist Church following a Christmas service. Here Episcopalians, other townspeople, and the children would meet each other.

All went well on Christmas day. The orphans sang "sacred pieces" and were given gifts. Then Townsend explained that during the four

months of The Home's operation, 10 children and four adults had been resident there and that of these, three adults and six children had since found good homes in the vicinity. "Under such circumstances," Townsend said, "the members of the vestry have approved the appropriation by their Pastor of funds collected for the Church and parsonage, to the wants of the Orphans' Home during the present winter, and have resolved upon postponing their building operations until the ensuing summer." After witnessing the favorable appearance of the orphans at the Christmas exercises, and hearing Townsend's report, 15 persons of Trinity Episcopal parish signed a testimonial attesting to the fact that The Home was indeed under the auspices of a Church, and that with "its present economy and industry," its success should be assured.

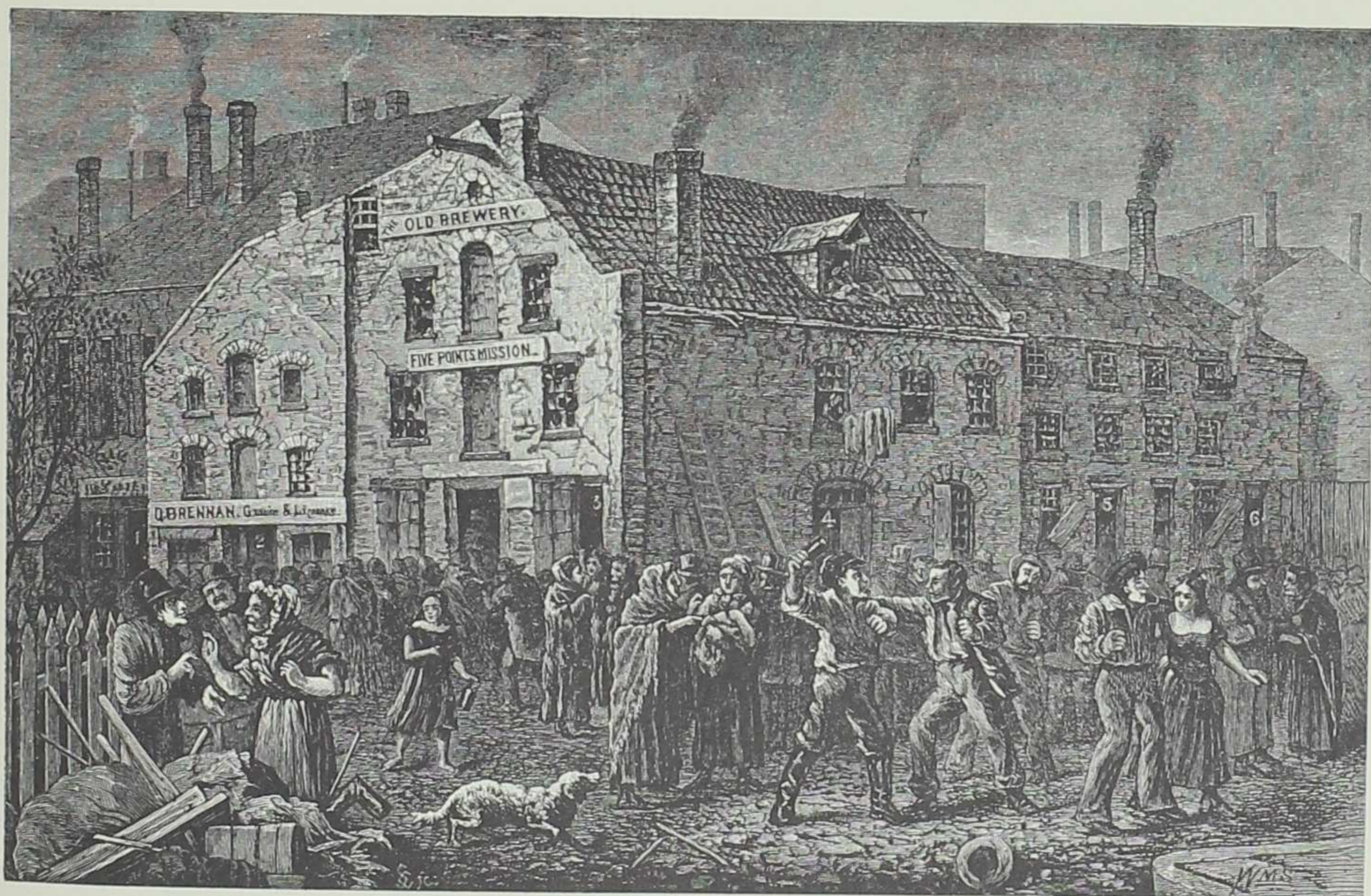
A separate testimonial signed three days earlier by J.H. Morehead said that although he was ignorant of some of the facts relating to The Home, he was aware that Mr. Townsend was laboring unceasingly to support the children and that "his whole time and energy, physical as well as mental, appear to be devoted to the building up of the church in this place, and the furtherance of the Children's Aid Society. The Vestry of this Church have at all times been aware of the whereabouts of their Pastor. His life has been exemplary, and all his efforts characterized by sincerity. If these traits of character entitle one to aid, such aid should be rendered him." Townsend seems to have weathered the first onslaught of criticism, but significantly, in his subsequent reports to the Diocese, he made no further mention of the proposed Episcopal church to have been built that summer.

But the problems weren't over. They were merely beginning. On January 28, 1861 the County Board of Supervisors appointed H.H. Winchester to look into the situation of the poor in Johnson County. On June 3 the Committee reported to the Board. It had looked

into the Orphans' Home of Industry, noting its history, the number of children present, the amount of property it possessed, and on the basis of Committee's report, the Board then passed the following resolution: "That the Rev. C.C. Townsend be required to give bonds suitably secured in a sum sufficient to indemnify the County against any loss it may sustain by supporting any of the orphan children of foundlings which he has brought or may hereafter bring into the county."

Behind the County Board's action lay the still unanswered questions of whether The Home had the support of the Church, of whether it was fiscally respectable, and of what would happen to the orphans and the community if The Home failed. A House of Reception Townsend had set up on the Delaware River in Pennsylvania had to be closed when he became ill. He made attempts to justify the closing in his reports to a Diocesan convention. Anyone reading the Journals from these conventions could easily assume that the Orphans' Home in Iowa City was under the control of the Diocese. But after the County Board's action, the Ninth Annual Diocesan Convention made it clear that The Home was not under its jurisdiction. On May 28 and 29, 1862 in Davenport the convention adopted a resolution saying that the Diocese had "no charge of, or connection with this Institution. By this action the convention intends to imply no reflection on the charitable and self-denying efforts of the Rev. Mr. Townsend." *The Iowa City Republican* published the resolution in full on Wednesday, June 4.

Nonetheless, life at The Home continued at a lively pace. By 1864 there were three component farms, buildings and acreages, lying roughly north and south of Whiting Avenue and between Dubuque Street and Prairie du Chien Road. Here 10 laborers, nine boys and four teams did the heavy work. Stacked near the buildings were 200 cords of wood, 2,000 posts, 500 rods of new fence, 1,000 feet of



Five Points (Culver Pictures)

lumber. Beyond lay fields of rye, wheat, corn, potatoes, buckwheat, sorghum. The corn sold for 80¢ a bushel, Townsend reported, oats 60¢, potatoes 80¢, flour \$4.00 per 100 lbs., beef 6¢ a lb, and butter 22¢ a pound. He described the buildings, the school and chapel, the number of cattle, mules, yokes of steers, hogs, chickens, wagons and furniture. Over the years a mounting array of gifts had poured into The Home, including farm tools, casks of nails, bedsteads and cradles, quilts, hats and bonnets, food staples, and an umbrella. A special fund eventually produced a flock of 112 sheep, each of which the children named. In late December The Home acquired an infirmary for sick children arriving from the Staten Island House of Reception. Mrs. Townsend and a niece became "worn out and dangerously sick." For Mr. Townsend the care of 100 orphans in three farm homes, their "food, clothing, shoes, bedding and fires," was never a sinecure.

"And, moreover, beside the general provision of the necessaries of life, there are many little nameless things which demand unceasing care; and in connection with this class of poor, neglected children, many nameless trials . . ."

As if these problems weren't enough, in October of 1865 a suit was filed against Townsend by a father of one of the children, accusing him of "enticing a child under 12 years of age." Though Townsend claimed that the charge "never had the slightest foundation in law or fact, and never had any merits whatever," the case was to dog him for more than three years, and fuel the flames of ill will in Iowa City. On January 3, 1866 the case came up again and was again continued. The \$500 asked of him as a bond became a barrier, he said, to going East for needed funds. In the meantime he was obliged to borrow \$1,000, and a note for \$600 was due at the National Bank in Iowa City.

He made a plea in the January *Annals* for contributions. However, Johnson County district court records for May 19, 1866 show that the indictment against Townsend was dismissed, the defendant discharged, and his bail exonerated. Returning to the East, Townsend again undertook fund-gathering visits to friends and Churches, including door-to-door appeals ". . . to beg we are not ashamed." In August he was ready with a company of 25 children for Iowa.

The father appealed the decision, getting the law suit reintroduced in 1868, and seeing it through to its final hearing on January 15, 1869 in district court. The judge found for the plaintiff, awarding the father \$851.80 with interest.

Meanwhile, the situation around Townsend continued to deteriorate in Iowa City. Opposition to the children's presence had never really ceased, despite good reports of the orphans in farm homes, and their performance at concerts, at church, and in school. Townsend found himself dividing his time at The Home among answering letters, soliciting funds, replying to newspaper and local slanders, holding services in parishes as yet without pastors, and visiting "our children" previously placed in good homes. Dismayed, Townsend, in response to the slanders, on June 5, 1867 petitioned the Johnson County Board of Supervisors to appoint a committee "to visit the institution and investigate its affairs." Once again, he was to be disappointed. Trying to put on the best possible face, he wrote in his *Annals* that the Committee of three arrived and "expressed their approbation, and were pleased with their visit; so was the family. But alas! the influence [of] prejudice even upon well-meaning minds!" On June 7 the Committee reported to the Board, but despite the fact that, as Townsend notes, "one member of the committee was much interested in The Home, as he was an orphan himself, and had one of our children," the Board instructed the County Attorney to enjoin The Home from bringing any

more children into the county.

Townsend immediately began trying to place the remaining orphans. He traveled to Des Moines, to Washington, to Cedar Rapids, to Keokuk, to Ottumwa, to Davenport, to Farmington until by July 1 he had reduced the population of The Home to 30 children. The beginning of the legal dissolution of The Home came on July 1, 1868 when Townsend conveyed to his wife Martha a quit-claim deed to the acreage. He then went back to New York City and engaged a man and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Norris, to come as co-workers to The Home in Iowa City, and hired a female teacher for The House of Reception on Staten Island. "And now, in the good providence of God," he wrote, "after the labor and trials of about fifteen years in this work, I have a prospect of such cooperation as I have needed and sought after, and of less labor, responsibility, and opposition, and more prosperity, comfort and rest, than we have experienced during the lapse of these laborious years." He added that in the next number of the *Annals* he hoped to announce "a plan of reorganization of our whole enterprise." That same August, Townsend established the "Ragged School and Bread House," also called the "Soup House," at 127 Greenwich Street in New York. On October 20 and October 21 Martha Townsend and husband conveyed the land to Mr. and Mrs. Norris, David Simmons and Francis Knedlick. A sheriff's sale for The Home was held on November 12.

Writing some five months after the sale, *The Republican* in its issue of March 3, 1869 told the story of the final days of The Home in a few sentences. It said that after Townsend sent "a most excellent man and his wife out here, under false representations, to take charge of the institution, Mr. Norris and his wife found, as soon as they arrived, that they had been imposed upon, but here were children with none to care for them and they took charge and set to work, in conjunction with the county

authorities, to close the concern out to the best possible advantage to the children. Homes were found for most of them, some were sent back east at county expense, and a very few we believe remain as a county charge. The premises have been sold out by the sheriff on claimants' accounts, and the 'Orphans' Home near Iowa City' is practically closed up."

Back in New York, Townsend was overwhelmed by still more troubles. New suits were filed against him. On Friday, February 19, 1869 *The New York Evening Post* published an "expose" of Townsend's operations, including statements obtained from S.B. Halliday, then superintendent of the Five Points House of Industry, whose acquaintance with Townsend extended over a decade. The newspaper claimed that Townsend's Staten Island House of Reception had been closed "for some time since," despite the fact Townsend was still collecting funds. Neighbors reported to *The Post* that the house had never been run as a charity, that to the contrary, payment was asked for the children staying there. The New York Board of Health sent an inspector to the Greenwich street address who discovered that the children at "The Ragged School and Bread House" were not being cared for properly. Stuffed in small rooms, poorly dressed, unattended by any adult, some had diseases such as diphtheria and scarlet fever that were not being treated. Mr. Halliday wrote a letter to *The Post* saying that: "I have just seen and talked over with [Townsend] his whole affairs, and the disclosures from his own lips more than justify my first judgment of his utter unfitness for his self-constituted position." He summarized the history of Townsend's activities in Iowa beginning in 1854, mentioning Townsend's claim that 500 children were taken there from New York. He pointed out that Five Points and the Children's Aid Society were doing a more efficient job than Townsend in caring for the city's destitute children, and more cheaply. He mentioned the

law suits and mortgages in Iowa, the suits for back wages filed by his teachers in New York. "With the question of Mr. Townsend's integrity I shall not meddle. Nor would I hold him alone responsible for the consequences of this sorrowful failure and its attendant mischiefs. Where are his trustees?" *The Post* story revealed that the three women teachers who were suing Townsend for back wages had given their cases to the Working Women's Protective Association. The women, two of whom were said to be from Iowa, won their cases.

In the midst of this hopeless wrangling, Charles C. Townsend died from an infection that grew out of a minor injury caused when a window sash fell on his hand. On Saturday February 27, *The Times* published his obituary saying he died the preceding Thursday, or February 25. He was buried at his birthplace in Hebron. A brief notice in *The Iowa City Republican* on March 17 did not mention the day, the place, nor the circumstances of his death. *The Cedar Rapids Times* of March 18 said he died at St. Luke's Hospital in New York on February 27 "penniless and alone." *The Times* said the investigation of the "Ragged School and Bread House" had come to an abrupt termination.

The question of Townsend's character naturally arises. Was he a profiteer callously abusing his public image as "the orphan's friend," or was he perhaps a misguided philanthropist who had neither the business sense nor the personality to fight widespread public disapproval and economic hardship? He was a missionary, a scholar, a writer, a believer in the possibility of human improvement—all things that require dedication to a higher law than that of making the daily dollar. Testimonials to his good intentions appear again and again throughout the long battles with Iowa City and the New York authorities, but early assessments of his character when he first arrived in Iowa City hint at an over-zealousness, an other-worldliness, an inflexibility that might explain much that later

Note on Sources

The primary sources for this article are contemporary newspaper accounts, Townsend's letters and *Annals of a Western Missionary*. Charles Loring Brace's *The Dangerous Class of New York, and Twenty Years Work Among Them* (New York: Wynkoop & Hallenbeck, 1872); and General Charles W. Irish's "Rev. C.C. Townsend," *Iowa Historical Record* (Jan 1897, Iowa State Historical Society) are among the secondary sources.

A longer, annotated version of this article is available at the State Historical Society.

happened to him and his enterprise. Living a life of genteel poverty, a life still possible shortly before and after the Civil War, perhaps he was simply displaced by history as it moved into the Gilded Age, with its callousness to the spiritual and its harsh business-dominated notions of character and value. The real measure of *his* character, however, should be the effect he had upon the orphans under his charge. For this assessment, perhaps we should turn to General Charles W. Irish, who knew Townsend as a missionary in the early 1850s and knew also something of his work with the

orphans and the half-orphans: "I am glad to say that so far as my knowledge goes, the majority of the poor, friendless children, placed in Iowa homes by Mr. Townsend, grew up to be good and useful members of society, some even amassing a competence with which they entered successfully into business; and I recall instances where, with the means thus attained, parents long lost were hunted up and taken from public refuges, and made comfortable and happy for the remainder of their lives. On the other hand many of the waifs were found to be unworthy and soon became criminals. It was noted that these failures were among those who had attained several years of intimacy with the slum life of the great city where they were born, being in all cases the oldest children brought out from these haunts of vice. . . . As from the beginning of human society," he wrote, "failures have attracted more notice than have successes, so it was with Reverend Townsend's efforts . . ." □