

Palimpsest

VOLUME 54

NUMBER 4

JULY / AUGUST 1973



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L. Edward Purcell, Editor

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Cover: The rail station at Creston, Iowa, originally constructed by the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad (later CB&Q, now Burlington Northern) around 1880, is a good example of late Victorian station design. The second floor housed offices of the "Creston Division." At present the building is slated for destruction to make way for a parking lot. See story and photos p. 16. (Photo by John Schultz)

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.

William Salter: Portrait of a Pioneer Preacher

by

Martha Jordan Soland

He was short of stature, but he stood tall in the town. His trade was that of a Congregational preacher, but the warmth of his heart welcomed and rejoiced in good men of all faiths. His pulpit, steeped with New England morality and intellectualism, was not only the sounding board of the Lord, but was also the lectern of the historian and the podium of the man of letters. His words traveled beyond the town of Burlington and the state of Iowa to the entire nation. He was a man known and respected by statesmen and editors, by historians and men of letters, by theologians, and by many of the common folk of Burlington. He was an individual honored not only as a distinguished theologian, but also as a celebrated author and historian. He became a living legend in his own lifetime.

Pioneer and Preacher

William Salter, termed Iowa's historiographer long before his death, was born in 1821 of seafaring, New England ancestry. He, however, chose the ministry as

his career and turned his face westward. After graduating from Andover Theological Seminary, Salter, and a handful of dedicated young men, selected the newly created territories of Wisconsin and Iowa as fertile fields for their labors.

Salter and his companions—the Iowa Band—went West in 1843 to organize congregations, to build churches, and to battle sin in all its infinite varieties. They were the single most distinguished Protestant group of their time in Iowa, and Salter, through the years, emerged superior to them all—recognized as a man who both made and recorded history.

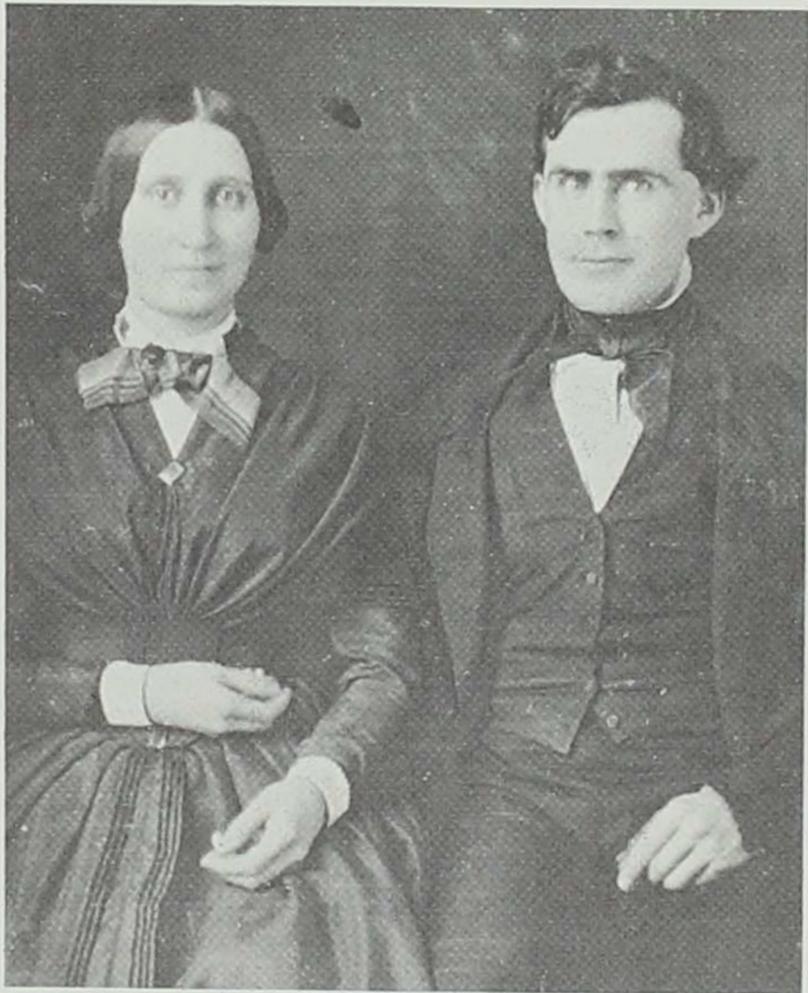
Salter was called in 1846 to the Burlington Congregational Church where he continued his pastorate until his death in 1910. Upon his arrival in town, bringing a personal library valued at one hundred dollars, the twenty-five year-old preacher found his new home no picturesque New England village. He moved into a jerry-built, slatterly, Upper Mississippi steamboat landing cynically called "Catfish Bend" by the less desirable element of the population. Many newly arrived citizens were as uncivilized as the frontier—men more interested in commandeering their neighbor's purse and property than in the commandments of the Lord, thugs with

This article is based primarily upon files of Burlington newspapers, 1846-1910, upon such journals as the *Annals of Iowa* and *The Palimpsest*, and on Salter's works, published and unpublished. *Dr. William Salter: Western Torchbearer*, by Philip D. Jordan (Oxford, Ohio: The Mississippi Valley Press, 1939) was indispensable, as were the records of the First Congregational Church, and interviews with individuals, some who knew Salter personally and others who had more than a passing acquaintance with his children.

more time for redeye than for religion, and chippies and floosies more concerned with the profits of prostitution than with prayer.

Through the mid-decades of the nineteenth century, Salter played a dominant role in transforming this slovenly community, where filth filled alleys, pigs wallowed in streets, and cows and horses freely grazed on the public square, into prosperous and cultivated twentieth-century Burlington. In addition to normal pastoral duties, he busied himself with community projects. The Congregational preacher paid his civic rent handsomely as an endorser of the YMCA and as a supporter of literary and lyceum groups. One of the founders of the Burlington public library, Salter served as a trustee from 1868 until his health forced him to resign in 1908. He gave his time generously to the organization and expansion of the city's school system and put in four terms as head of the school board. He believed the public school was "the symbol of American Civilization."

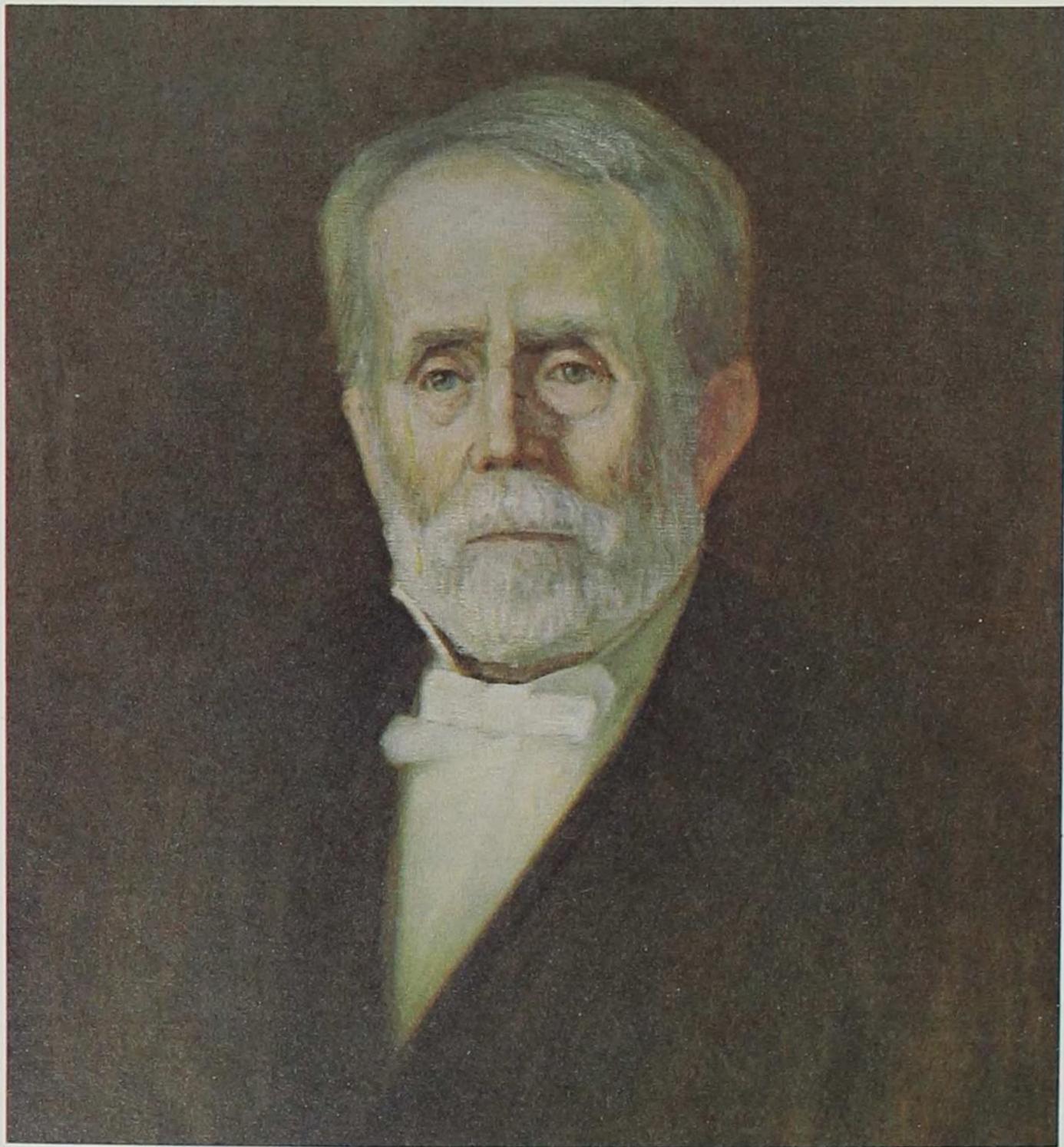
His devotion to education, a theme about which he spoke and wrote frequently, resulted in his being named a trustee of the State University of Iowa and a member of the United States Naval Academy's Board of Visitors. Believing that religion and education in America "go hand and hand," Salter served on educational committees of his church on both local and national levels. The State University of Iowa in 1864 honored this individual who held that, "Knowledge is



An early picture of Mary and William Salter from a family miniature. (Courtesy of the Iowa Department of History and Archives)

power [and] ignorance is weakness," by conferring upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. He spoke from the depth of his heart in 1898 when he declared, "Language and letters are the making of men."

Himself a member of The Society of the Sons of the Revolution, Salter also officiated as chaplain of the Stars and Stripes chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution from the founding of the group in 1897 until his death. He lectured to the daughters on historical subjects on numerous occasions—exhorting them in 1899 to "be as good as their ancestral mothers," and to lead patriotic and brave and pure and noble lives.



The oil portrait of William Salter by Louis Mayer, painted in 1902 and presented by Burlington friends to the Historical Department in Des Moines. (Courtesy of Iowa Department of History and Archives)

Salter's interest in patriotic organizations stemmed not only from the fact that his great-grandfather, Captain Mark Fernald, was active in 1776 as a rebel in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, but also because he believed strongly in the democratic experiment. He was deeply devoted to his country—a sentiment undoubtedly intensified by his experiences on Civil War battle-fronts and in field hospitals. His love of nation was clearly demonstrated in his last book published in 1909, *A Breviary of Worship*, in which he included not only a national prayer and a tribute to the patriotic dead, but also "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "The Star Spangled Banner."

Salter was such a forceful, pleasing, and accomplished speaker—although sometimes he spoke far too long—that lay groups and church organizations swamped him with invitations. He gave lecture series on religious and literary topics—the Reformation, the Apostles Creed, and the head, hand, and foot in the English language—told of his activities on Civil War battlefields, narrated his European experiences, endorsed the temperance movement, spoke at Fourth of July celebrations and Old Settlers' Reunions, lectured on the Jolliet-Marquette expedition, and delivered messages to state and national religious conventions. The Burlington Forty-Niners, headed, they believed, for easy fortunes plucked from California streams, requested a farewell sermon from him.

Although he must have been boring at times, audiences hung on his words. The

Burlington *Hawk-Eye* reported one listener's comment on the head, hand, and foot speech. "I think that in the lecturer we had the *head* of a master, the *hand* of a skillful manipulator, a *foot* steady in the march of progress, and a noble heart to impel him on." Both local newspapers printed many of his speeches and sermons.

Salter journeyed to Cedar Rapids to entertain fellow members of the Society of Colonial Wars with a talk on Jonathan Edwards, and he accepted an invitation from the Pepperrell Association, Kittery Point, Maine to speak on his ancestor William Pepperrell, Maine pioneer, merchant-adventurer, and a veteran of the siege of Louisbourg. This lecture was published in the *Journal of American History*. He also preached at the fiftieth anniversary of the Keokuk Congregational Church and spoke at the Fort Madison centennial celebration.

Prior to the Civil War, when antislavery sentiment ran high in Burlington, Salter not only allied himself with antislavery societies, but also operated an underground railroad station to aid slaves fleeing toward the Canadian border and freedom. "Colored Brother[s]" found sanctuary in a hidden room situated beneath his church and in his home. From his pulpit in 1859, he urged the "immediate commencement of the work of emancipation."

When the tragic war finally came, Salter did not hold that it was caused only by slavery. The conflict, he believed, lay in part in the confusion over the proper relationship between the states and the

federal government.

During the awful civil strife, when Burlington Republicans branded Democrats as Copperheads and Democrats retaliated by insulting and assaulting Republicans on the streets, Salter, although he "deplored all war," worked actively for the Union and emancipation. He preached on "The Duty of the Soldier," wrote an interpretation of *The Great Rebellion in the Light of Christianity*, and published a sermon delivered over the body of "a soldier of the Republic." He ministered to recruits who rendezvoused at Burlington's camps Warren and Lauman, and prayed for men who marched to the levee to board steamboats. He comforted worrying wives and lonesome children left behind, and lectured on the life and times of Shakespeare to raise funds for combatants' needy families.

As a member of the United States Christian Commission, Salter, accompanied by Joseph W. Pickett, pastor of the Congregational church, Mount Pleasant, Iowa, extended his ministry in the summer of 1864 to the army hospitals of Tennessee and the battlefields of Georgia. His sixty days spent with the Commission was a sickening experience for this peaceful and sensitive individual. Among the first wounded Salter and Pickett visited were survivors of the fight on Kenesaw Mountain, Georgia—"some wounded in the head and eyes," and as Salter recalled in later years, "some with legs off or arms off." Salter found the condition of these men "too oppressive," and passed them by. His companion, however, disciplined himself to give "them his gracious and genial sympathy."

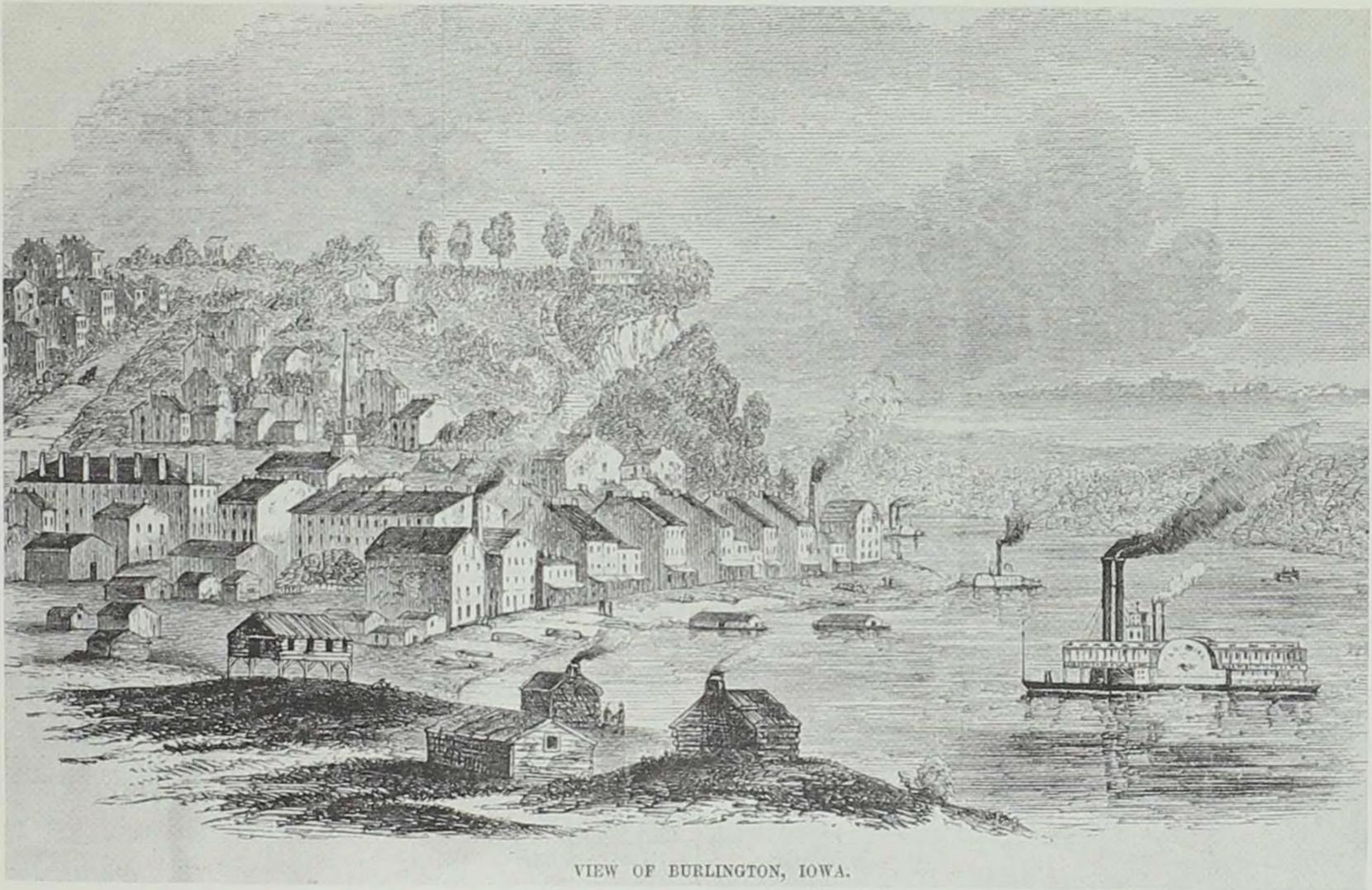
During his sixty days of service, Salter

wrote letters for blue-coated casualties and recorded that he shared his meals with those weary of hospital fare. He distributed writing paper, envelopes, pens, newspapers, magazines, testaments, combs, and knickknacks from his haversack. He preached to discouraged men in bivouacs and hospitals and visited a military prison where deserters and thieves were incarcerated. It was filthy, and Salter judged it not only a disgrace to the army, but also to the nation. There he was shocked to encounter a deserter from Wisconsin who said, "he was willing to fight for his country, but not for the niggers!"

As he became accustomed to the horror of war, Salter buried the dead and gave what comfort he could to both Johnny Reb and Billy Yank. He treated his dysentery with whiskey and nutmeg, and was sickened at Atlanta by the sight of flies swarming over the bodies of the Confederate dead. The war, he concluded, "brought upon the United States the darkest years of its history."

Upon his return to Burlington, tired, but also gratified that his sixty days service had been a mission of mercy, he once again opened his heart and his purse to those in need. He served as a trustee of the Iowa Soldiers' Orphan Home in Davenport and for years lent support to the Colored Baptist Church in Burlington. No narrow sectarian, Salter served as president of the Burlington Sunday School Union, preached the 1869 Union Thanksgiving sermon in "Old Zion" church, and attended the testing of the new organ at St. John's German Catholic Church.

The Congregational minister enjoyed the friendship not only of fellow clergymen on the local, state, and national level,



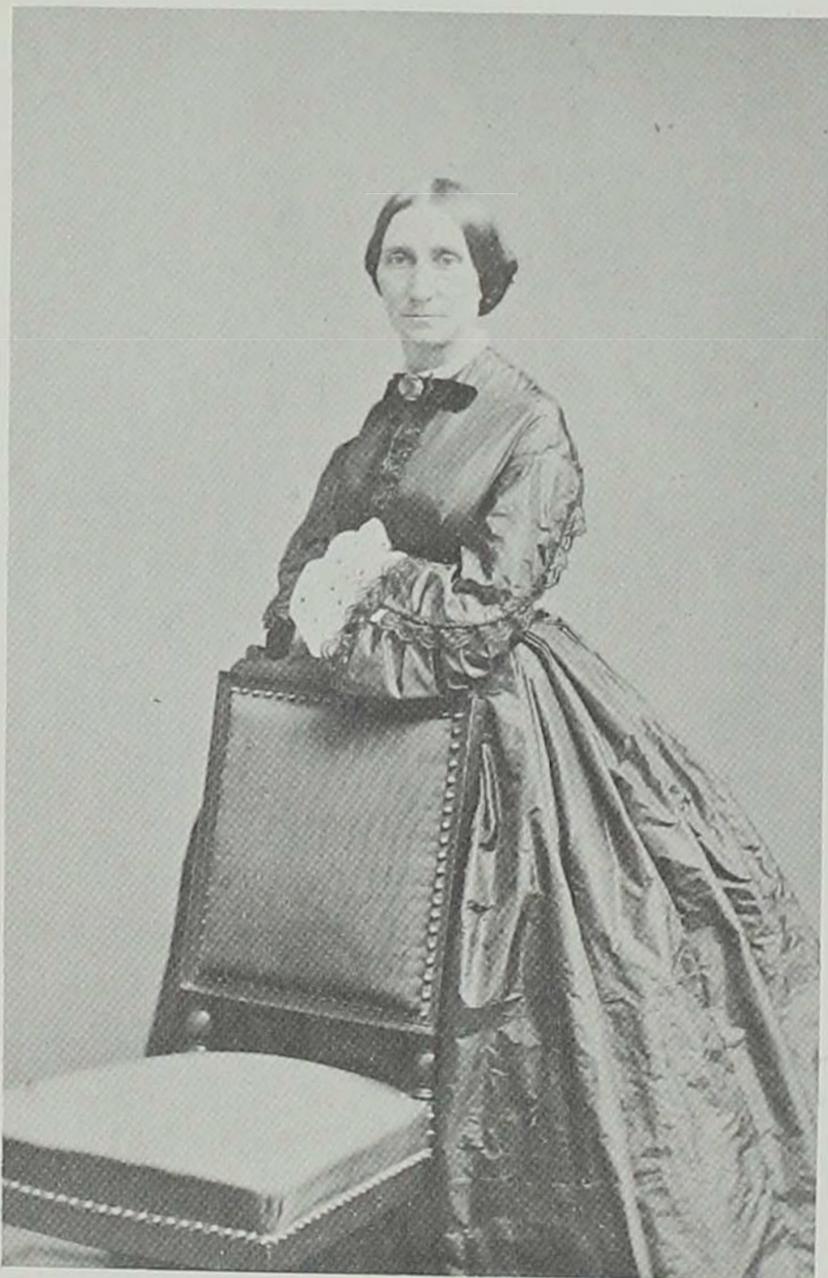
VIEW OF BURLINGTON, IOWA.

Burlington in 1850.

but also of scores of Iowans, of civic leaders in Burlington, and of most of the commonfolk in town. Salter's "ways were the ways of pleasantness," remembered a friend at the time of his death, and the *Burlington Gazette* commented that no one would sink so low as to speak ill of him. This, however, was stretching the truth. One member of his congregation not only disagreed with his interpretation of the doctrine of original sin, but also was most critical of his style of dress. Individuals excommunicated for intemperance and immorality, such as Dr. S. S. Ransom, scarcely sang his praises, and the person who pilfered a robe and two history books from his well-known carriage, while it parked in front of the Sen. James Grimes' residence, certainly did not hold him in high esteem. He was no "plaster saint."

Like any man, he had his moments of despair, depression, and uncertainty. At times his even disposition cracked and his temper crackled. Although few surpassed him in tolerance, sympathy and forbearance, on root question he could be obstinate. He thought he knew right from wrong and never hesitated to admonish those who strayed from the fold.

Nevertheless, Salter was Burlington's most popular citizen and a year after Appomattox a concourse of his parishioners and admirers crowded into the old Congregational church, to pay him tribute. Plans were made for building a new structure. On July 4, 1867, Salter, "In gratitude to God for the suppression of the rebellion and for the new life of the nation," proudly spread the first mortar on the cornerstone of the present church. In keeping



Mary Salter

with his character, he included copies of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, the Constitution of Iowa, Washington's Farewell Address, and Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. "Christ the Corner Stone of the Church," served as the text for his sermon on the occasion.

This church, gutted by fire in 1899 and rebuilt and rededicated in 1900, has been affectionately known to generations to Burlingtonians as "Dr. William Salter's church."

Friends again gathered in 1886 to hear his "Forty Years' Ministry" sermon, tinged with recollections of the past—the outbreak of the Mexican War, the discovery of gold in California, the Mormon exodus from Nauvoo, and the days during which the walls of the old church rose brick by brick—and to attend a public reception honoring him lasting from four o'clock in the afternoon until nine-thirty in the evening. It was a memorable occasion in the history of the city reported the *Burlington Gazette*.

Tragedy, however, entered the life of Salter on a June morning in 1893. Dr. and Mrs. Salter took friends riding through Aspen Grove Cemetery, and during the course of the outing, an oak tree suddenly escaped the control of workmen taking it down, and crashed to earth. Salter's survey was directly in its path. Mary Salter died instantly, and Salter was injured so severely that he was unable to attend his wife's funeral. Perhaps it was some comfort to him that two members of the Iowa Band officiated at the service.

Three years later, every pew in the Congregational church was filled and friends overflowed onto camp chairs set up in the aisles at the celebration commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Salter's pastorate. The *Burlington Hawk-Eye* devoted almost three pages to his jubilee, printed his sermon to the Sunday School children, and recorded their response which took the form of a symbolic bunch of flowers. Lillies of the valley came from the primary school, roses from the intermediate school,

and Easter lillies from adults, because we "all love you." The ministerial association paid the Congregational preacher tribute with a laudatory resolution, and greetings, notes of congratulations, and poems honoring him poured into Burlington.

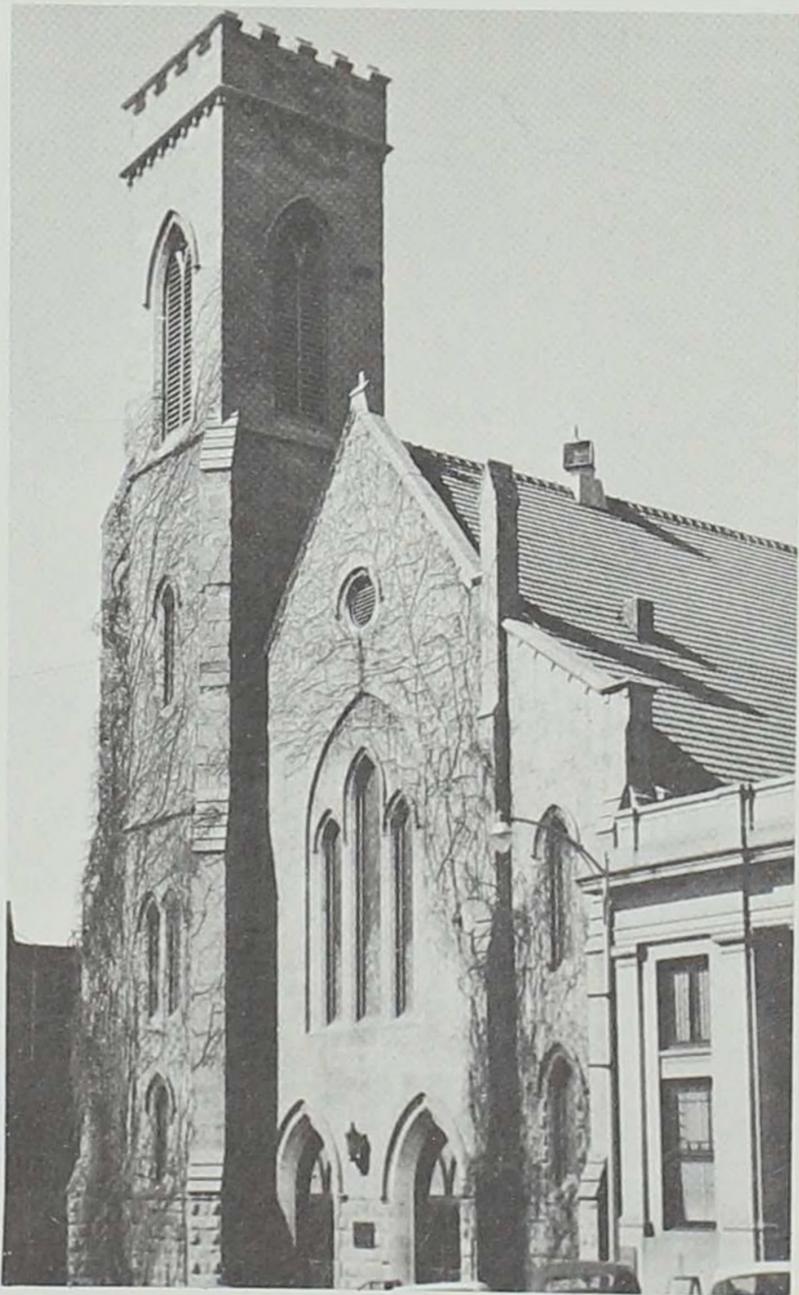
In 1902, seventeen of Salter's Burlington friends paid him tribute by commissioning Louis Mayer to paint his portrait in oil. The portrait was presented with simple, but appropriate, ceremonies to the Historical Department of Iowa, Des Moines. In his speech of acceptance, Governor Albert B. Cummins credited Burlington's revered minister with giving "us the impulse in the years gone by, that keeps us true to the doctrines of good life, good morals, and good government."

Historian and Writer

An individual of tremendous energy, Salter, during his long ministry in Burlington, burned candles in his study early in the morning and late into the night. In addition to devoting himself to the welfare of his congregation and his city, he was also a close student of literature and of history—a true scholar who willingly spent an entire day verifying a single fact. He penned corrections on articles clipped from newspapers before pasting them in his city directory, and he noted errors in the *Annals of Iowa*.

Although the pioneer preacher early developed an interest in setting down narratives of early Iowa and its people, he did not limit himself to local history.

He was a man comfortable with Greek and Latin and conversant with the classics—both sacred and secular. He astonished Burlingtonians by bringing out articles in the *Iowa Historical Record* and the *Annals of Iowa* and by publishing books and sermons. Indeed, he earned a place among those "brilliant amateurs" who, during the last decades of the nineteenth century, turned their attention to the American scene. He appreciated hard facts and used



The first Congregational Church of Burlington, the last of Rev. Salter's church buildings.

them rather than relying, as so many early nineteenth-century writers were apt to do, on unfounded tradition and unreliable chronicles. Salter read Francis Parkman, George Bancroft, and John B. McMaster, and like them, made use of primary source material such as personal letters, diaries, journals, and newspapers. He sifted and evaluated evidence. Indeed, he did more. Inspired by the impact of the German "scientific" school of historical writing, he buttressed his contributions with footnotes and bibliographies.

Much of this is evidenced in Salter's *Life of James W. Grimes*, a biography of the Burlington pioneer who served as third governor of Iowa and who cast the vote in the United States Senate which saved President Andrew Johnson from being found guilty on impeachment charges. In this volume, a treasure house for the student of both Iowa and United States history, Salter included much of Grimes' personal and professional correspondence which he obtained from Mrs. Grimes. The letters, describing Burlington in 1836, predicting that civil strife was imminent in December 1861, narrating Burlington's shock upon hearing the news of the assassination of Lincoln in 1865, and recording the Senator's sad admission that his political career was at an end in 1869, might have been lost had Salter not sought them out and published them.

Perhaps the most disappointing feature of the Grimes' book is that it, like many other nineteenth-century biographies, fails to humanize Grimes, to emphasize character and personality traits, and to instill life. Although Salter did attempt this, he was less than successful because he was confined by the style of his times. Few

biographers of his generation wrote more than impersonal lives, neglecting to include intimate anecdotes and colorful interpretation. So Salter, like others, put down the facts of Grimes' life and printed the correspondence fairly and impersonally. It is unfair to chide him for following the contemporary pattern of historical writing in any of his published works.

Although his biography of Grimes certainly superceded it in originality, Salter considered *Iowa: The First Free State in the Louisiana Purchase* his finest historical work. In this history of Iowa, Salter treated the political fortunes and misfortunes of the Upper Mississippi Valley between 1673, when Pere Marquette and Louis Jolliet dipped paddles in the Fathers of Waters, and 1846, when the state of Iowa was organized. The book, published in 1905, is interesting and readable. Salter did an excellent job in the first chapter setting the seventeenth century in perspective in both the New and Old World, an historical and literary task many authors neglect to perform or fail to accomplish in clear and concise prose. Although he researched from original sources, they were published rather than unpublished. He not only footnoted his quotations, but also his illustrations.

As one would expect, research and archeology conducted since Salter's death outdate some sections of the book. For example, he placed the site of Marquette and Jolliet's pleasant encounter with the Illini Indians near the mouth of the Des Moines River. Joseph P. Donnelly, in his meticulously researched and copiously cited biography of Marquette, published in 1968, states that all evidence points to the fact that the explorers landed at the mouth

of the Iowa River. *Iowa: The First Free State in the Louisiana Purchase*, nevertheless, remains a fine piece of research and still has much to commend it.

In addition to a life of Grimes and a history of Iowa, Salter published religious books. His *Words of Life for 1905* was to many readers a joy and inspiration. Drawing from his vast literary and historical reservoir, the author set down an apt quotation for each day of the year. He included the words of Plato and Pythagoras, and of Benjamin Franklin, Charles Dickens, Tertullian, Cotton Mather, Charles Darwin, James Madison, and Robert Browning. He quoted Martin Luther be-

fore the Diet of Worms, "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise," and included James W. Grimes' uncompromising stand against the expansion of slavery, "With the blessing of God, I will war and war continually against the abandonment to slavery of a single foot of soil now consecrated to Freedom." This thought-provoking volume would find a welcome home almost anywhere in the English speaking world today, and is a fine example of the manner in which Salter intermingled theology, history, and literature.

After serving his congregation a full six decades, Salter gathered together and published a number of his sermons and recol-



The Salter home in Burlington, pictured in 1873. (Courtesy of Iowa Department of History and Archives)

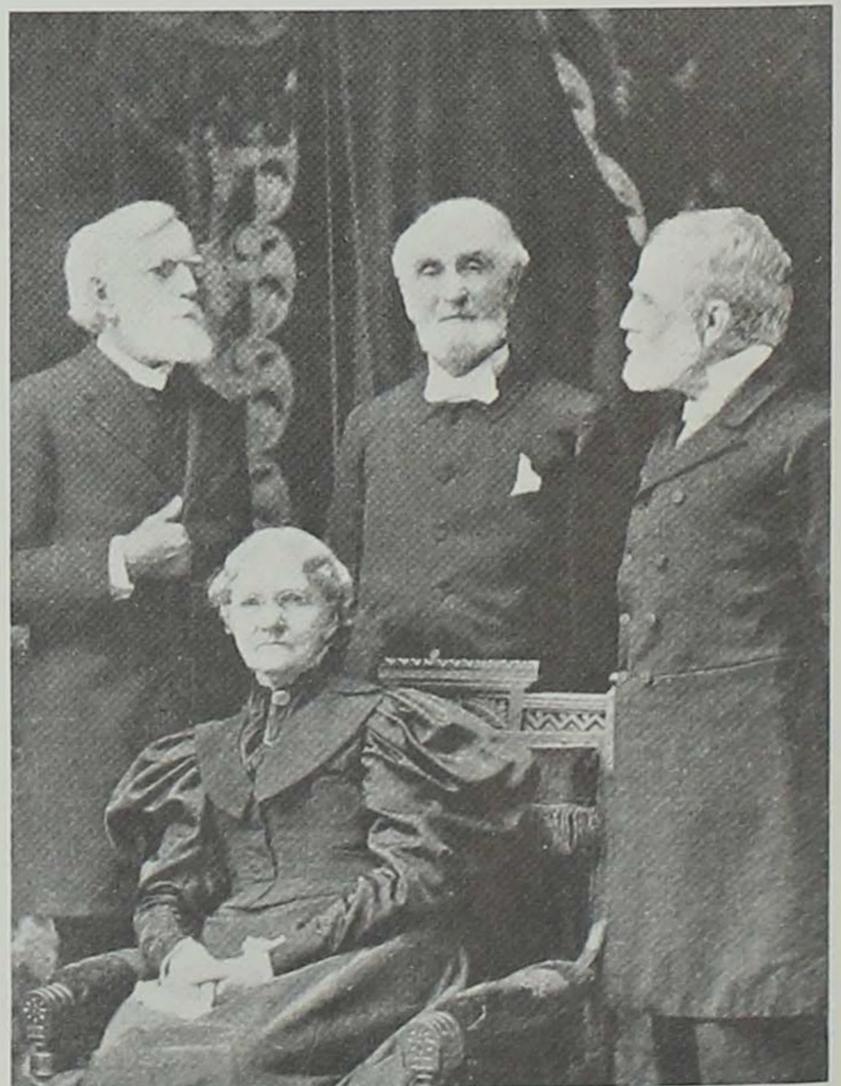
lections of the past in a work entitled *Sixty Years and Other Discourses With Reminiscences*. In this collection, he wrote on salvation by hope and self-denial, analyzed Benjamin Franklin's character, described his visits to historic churches in Europe, treated the Christian idealism of Emerson, and paid tribute to Asa Turner, the founder of the Iowa Band.

"The Spirit and Liberty of Christ," a sermon delivered before the General Association of Congregational churches and ministers of Iowa, included in *Sixty Years*, is a typical example of the manner in which Salter wove history and theology together. Taking as his text, "Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," the author included an account of the expansion of Christianity from the conversion of St. Paul to the arrival of the Iowa Band in the Black Hawk Purchase. In keeping with his character, he added a brief history of Iowa between 1673 and 1846. To those accustomed to defining a sermon as half an hour of unmitigated boredom, Salter's words spoken from the pulpit come as a refreshing and informative surprise.

In his "Benjamin Franklin," another section of *Sixty Years*, Salter interlaced biography, character analysis, and American history and patriotism, with a plea for ministers to preach morality rather than dogma, and an enjoinder to the press "to send forth clean and wholesome publications." When the reader finishes the piece he is not sure whether he has read an historical lecture penned by a clergyman,

or a sermon written by an historian. He is certain, however, that he has not only been enlightened historically, but also uplifted spiritually.

Salter's funeral sermons, delivered over the bodies of so many early settlers—including James W. Grimes, James G. Edwards, founder of the Burlington *Hawk-Eye*, and James Clarke, territorial governor of Iowa—were not only tributes to the dead, but were also well-researched biographical sketches filled with recollections of frontier Iowa. They are invaluable to the student of Burlington history seeking information concerning, for example, pi-



A. B. Robbins, E. Adams, and W. Salter, members of the Iowa Band (Mrs. Adams seated), in April 1896.

oneer women whose activities were not reported by local newspapers. The booklet prepared by Salter in 1887 on the death of Mrs. Eleanor T. Broadwell, who was formerly Mrs. James G. Edwards (Edwards died in 1851) including not only a fact-filled biography and a portrait, but also a short account of Edwards' journalistic career.

Salter's sermons, as demonstrated by "The Spirit and the Liberty of Christ," were characterized by the inclusion of historical description. Whether he was speaking of the conversion of St. Paul or celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the organization of his church, he set individuals and events against an historical backdrop. He included in the fiftieth anniversary sermon a short description of Burlington in 1836, and paid tribute to the Methodists who founded the first church in the community and raised the first meeting house, "Old Zion" church. Salter spoke of Dr. William Ross, a Burlington pioneer, as "a warm hearted Methodist," as a public spirited and generous individual, and as the man who built the Methodist Meeting House, an edifice which was let gratis to any group wishing to worship there. Salter concluded, "His work survives not only in the large and flourishing Methodist Church that has grown out of his labors, but also in all the churches . . . that have been built [in Burlington] to this day." Had Salter published nothing but sermons, the title "historian" would certainly have been linked to his name by his parishioners.

After his wife's death, Salter spent more

and more time in his study filling lonely hours with research and writing. He was an individual of remarkable physical endurance and astonishing mental discipline. Between 1895 and 1908 he contributed approximately twenty-eight pieces to the *Annals of Iowa*. Some ran as long as forty pages and others were less than a page. During this same span of years he also published four books—*Psalms for Worship and Instruction*, *Iowa: The First Free State in the Louisiana Purchase*, *Words of Life for 1905*, and *Sixty Years*. Charles Aldrich, editor of the *Annals*, welcomed his historical work and had high regard for his capabilities. "Whatever historical studies he [Salter] may bequeath to coming generations," the editor commented, "will be accepted as the truth."

Salter's contributions to the *Annals* are remarkable in their variety of subject matter. He not only discussed "The Louisiana Purchase In Correspondence of the Times," wrote an article on Captain John Smith, and submitted a piece on the political career of William Pitt Fessenden, but also he edited "The Eastern Border of Iowa in 1832," a section out of J. C. Beltrami's *A Pilgrimage in Europe and America*. He narrated General John M. Corse's Civil War activities, with copious quotations from original sources, and submitted the correspondence between A. C. Dodge and Thomas H. Benton concerning public lands, the Homestead Bill, and the Pacific railroad. Salter also wrote obituaries and reviewed books. Commenting on James K. Hosmer's *The History of the Louisiana*

Purchase, a subject in which he was particularly interested and knowledgeable, he wrote frankly, "The volume contains its own refutation in 'Livingston's Memoir to Talleyrand, Feb. 1803' which is given in an appendix."

The year he celebrated his eighty-seventh birthday, 1908, the Congregational minister sent his last contribution to the *Annals*. Entitled "Old Letters," this piece, published in two parts, included correspondence between George W. Jones, delegate to Congress from the Michigan and Wisconsin Territories, and Robert E. Lee, and between George Davenport and Jones. Salter also notified his editor that he was clearing off his desk. He sensed the end was near.

Two years later on July 17, 1910, Salter made his last appearance in his church and delivered his final benediction. His death came August 15th. Burlington mourned with flags hung at half-staff. The City Council and the Commercial Exchange paid him tribute. Business houses and public offices closed for the funeral, and men and women of every creed came and, after all the pews were filled, stood through the service to pay an affectionate farewell to "Burlington's Beloved Citizen." Both local newspapers published long stories narrating his career, quoting his words, retelling the story of Mrs. Salter's death, and chronicling the mission of the Iowa Band.

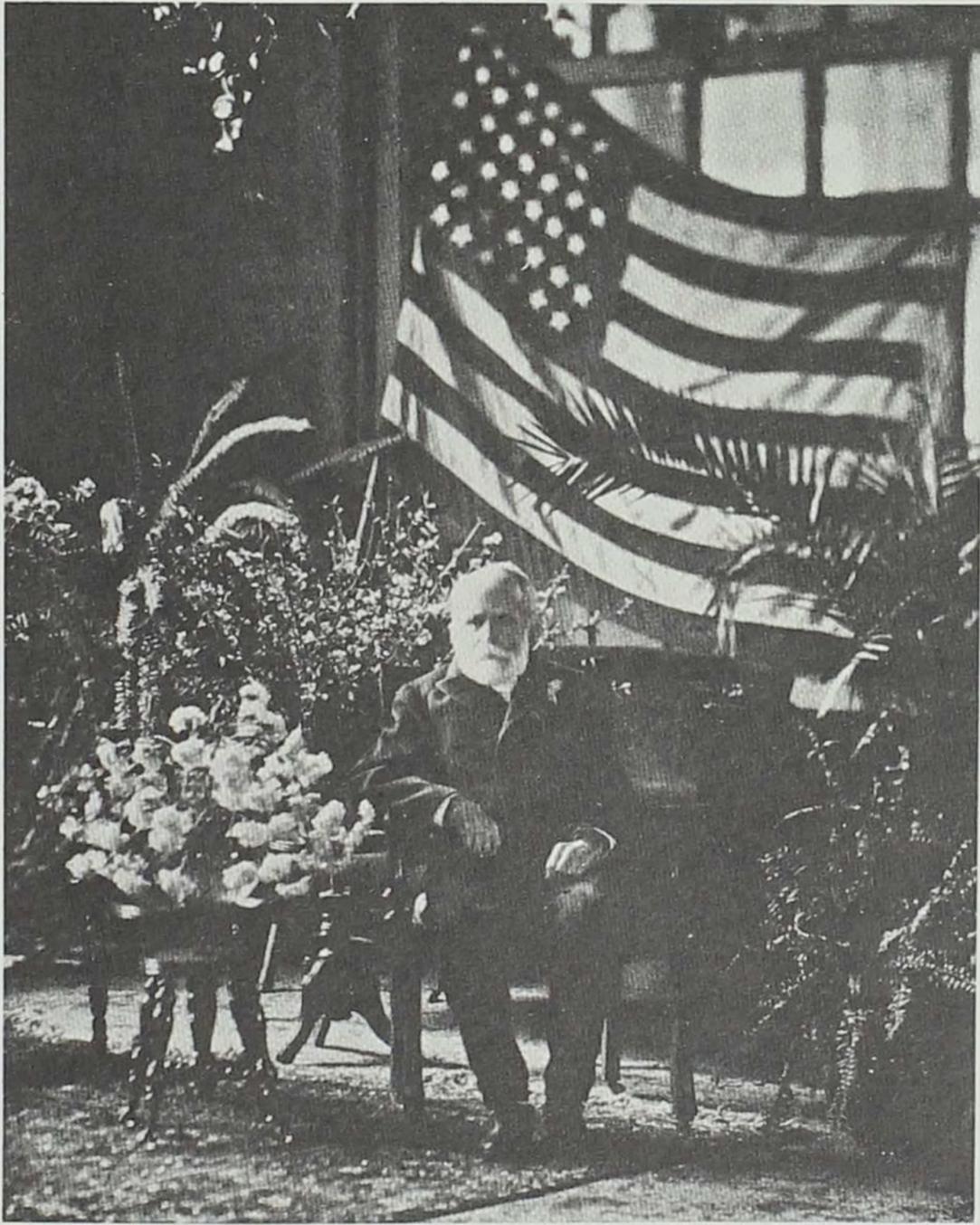
"The name and fame of Dr. Salter," a friend accurately predicted, "will be the heritage of Burlington."

"There was never a citizen," another friend commented, "who left his impression so indelibly stamped on Burlington."

A Burlington school was named in his honor as was the Congregational student center at the University of Iowa. His portrait hangs in the reading room of the Burlington library, and a portion of his personal library is housed there together with a number of his published works. His name appears on a plaque set by the Historical Department of Iowa commemorating seven Burlington pioneers. The entire January 1911 issue of the *Annals of Iowa* was devoted to his memory.

Salter's Burlington congregation in 1910 expressed its devotion to him on a handsome bronze plaque which described him as the "Father of his people," as one "whose presence added grace to our joys and brought help and comfort in our sorrows," and as the "greatest among us." The heirs of his pioneer congregation paid him tribute many years later, in June 1973, by designing a display of Salter memorabilia and placing it in a lighted glass case near the 1910 plaque. This wall in which the bronze tribute was set has been designated "Memorial Wall."

Salter, a Yankee transplanted, sank deep roots in frontier Iowa. He became a living legend in his own time not only because he was a master of both the written and spoken language, and because he was a competent theologian and historian, but also because he was a kindly man—a man genuinely interested in people. He was a man never too hurried to pause and



Salter in the Congregational Church on April 13, 1906, the sixtieth anniversary of his pastorate.

visit on the street. He was a man who is remembered interrupting divine worship to assure the embarrassed mother of a squalling child that she and her infant were welcome at his service. He was a man who interested himself in every worthwhile community project, a man who generously contributed his time and his money to his adopted city and state. He was a man who served his nation faithfully.

Although Dr. William Salter was a man much honored and greatly respected in his lifetime, he was not a man who puffed with pride or swelled with self-importance. Although his neighbors considered him famous, he was a man who was pleased to shake the hands of humble folks. Although he earned national recognition, he was also an individual proud to call most Burlingtonians "friend." □

Iowa's Railroad Stations: A Pictorial Essay

by

H. Roger Grant

For decades the railroad station served as a focal point in Iowa town life. Whether through a sleepy hamlet or a bustling metropolitan center, the daily arrival and departure of passenger trains were important local events. "The depot," wrote an Iowa real-estate man in 1903, "is always a beehive of activity. 'Train-time' is an important event; passengers, freight, express and mail flow in great quantities. The hustle-bustle, which is America, can be found there. . . ."

Usually the station was located near the center of town. A. B. Stickney, the flamboyant and iconoclastic builder of the Chicago Great Western Railway, once told fellow railroad executives: "The depot should be built in as close to the business center of the city as possible. . . . That way

Little has been written about the rural railroad station. Larger stations, however, are treated in John Droege, *Passenger Terminals and Trains* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1916) and Carroll L. V. Meeks, *The Railroad Station: An Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956). Two useful journal articles are: Harold D. Eberlein, "Recent Railway Stations in American Cities," *The Architectural Record* XXXVI (August 1914), 99-122 and J. H. Phillips "The Evolution of the Suburban Station," *ibid.*, 123-128. Readers might also want to examine Edwin P. Alexander's *Down at the Depot: American Railroad Stations from 1831 to 1920* (New York: Bramhall House, 1970).

the public will remember you." In those towns founded by the railroad companies themselves—and there were many in Iowa—the depot typically appeared at one end of main street. In older communities, where the town had been built before the coming of the rails, the station might be found near the outskirts of town. In virtually all cases, however, it was linked to the central business district by brick or macadamized streets, possibly the only improved thoroughfares in the town.

By the first decade of the twentieth century Iowans could boast of superb railroad service, although many citizens blasted high rates and demanded stiff state and national regulation of the carriers. Iowa had nearly a dozen large steam roads and numerous shortlines which laced the Hawkeye state with more than 10,000 miles of track. One source noted that no point in Iowa was more than twelve miles from a steam rail line and a number of communities enjoyed multiple company service. By then, the state had nearly 500 miles of electric interurban tracks, making this the greatest mileage in any state west of the Mississippi River except for Texas and California. Naturally, depots were plentiful in Iowa. According to the "Index of Railway Stations," published in the January 1911 issue of *The Official Guide of the Railways*, the state had 1882 individual depot structures.

Today, not only has the passenger train become virtually extinct in Iowa, but hundreds of miles of track have been retired, with plans for massive abandon-

ments during the 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, hundreds of railroad stations have been closed in recent years, many razed, still more left idly standing and a few converted to other uses, ranging from museums to corncribs.

While Iowa's railroad stations may be viewed as symbols of a decaying industry and a by-gone era, many that remain have historical and architectural importance. The urban union stations, frequently massive brick structures with lofty towers, reflect the civic pride and boosterism that have been so much a part of America's past. Rural stations, usually of simple de-

sign, at times mirror this same spirit. History was made at Iowa depots, whether it was a politician's "whistle-stop" speech or the joyous return of veterans from the Great War.

Iowa's railroad stations commonly reflect popular tastes in building styles and thus are significant architecturally. The large stations of the 1880s and 1890s, like those for example in Cedar Rapids, Dubuque, and Burlington, were huge monuments to the transportation boom. Even in smaller communities, stations constructed during the latter half of the nineteenth century frequently contained a

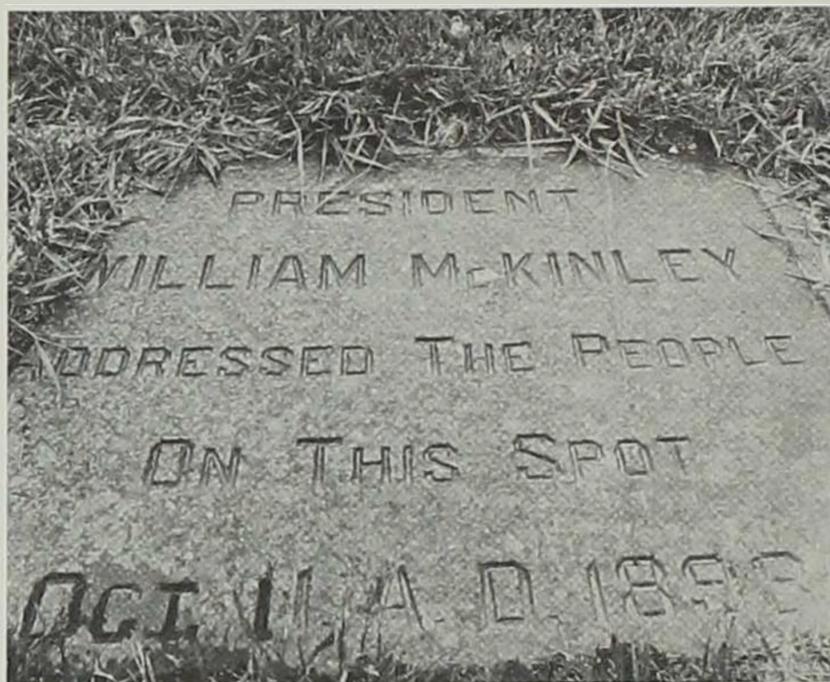


Sunset and shining rails at Nevada, Iowa. (John Schultz photo)

large amount of gingerbread, elaborate carriage canopies, and spacious freight and public waiting areas. More recent depots, of course, reflect modern tastes in architecture. For instance, stations in Ottumwa (Burlington Northern), Des Moines (former Chicago Great Western) and Perry (Milwaukee Road) complement other modern, local buildings.

Although Carroll L. V. Meeks, one of the nation's foremost students of railroad architecture, suggests that most pre-modern stations can be classified architecturally as "picturesque eclectic," a more generally meaningful categorization of Iowa station styles can be developed. Virtually all stations that survive today are either "Late Victorian," 1880-1910; "Early Modern," 1910-1930; or "Modern," since 1930. The most dramatic change in Iowa station architecture occurred shortly after the turn of the century when "Late Victorian" styles gave way to the "Early Modern." At this time local architectural firms and the companies themselves accepted the point of view advocated by railroad official John A. Droege and others who stressed the need to build structures for efficiency and passenger comfort rather than constructing "those painfully elaborate affairs which run more to striking architectural beauty than to utility."

A major exception to the notion that the "Early Modern" stations were first built in Iowa about 1910 were standardized rural depots which appeared earlier. With the rapid rise of "standardization" in American life during the 1890s, several railroads built a majority of their smaller depots to a common, highly functional design. Leaders of the standardized station



A commemorative marker at Boone, near the location of a now destroyed C&NW station. (John Schultz photo)

in the Hawkeye state were the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern (a Rock Island predecessor company), the Toledo and Northwestern (a Chicago and North Western forerunner), and the Minneapolis and St. Louis (now also a part of the North Western). In 1960, thirty-nine depots like the Rock Island station at Wellsburg could still be found in Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota, the states served by the BCR&N. The T&NW's stations were usually similar to the one at Sioux Rapids. Also in 1960, of the thirty-six stations still standing along the old T&NW (lines from Tama to Hawarden, Eagle Grove to Elmore and Eldora Junction to Alden, and Jewell to Wall Lake), twenty-two were virtually identical. Many M&StL small town stations were of a standard design, particularly those from Des Moines to Winthrop, Minnesota. As one railroad spokesman noted shortly before World War I, "Some roads, often when constructing new lines, have had their engineering departments design a cheap, wooden standard station. If business justifies, they

improve it." County-seat depots in Iowa, however, were less likely to be standardized than their rural counterparts.

While architectural styles changed over the decades, interior station floor plans remained similar. Urban stations and terminals had complex floor layouts, yet all had specially designed waiting rooms, express and baggage facilities, and ticket and office spaces. In larger communities freight facilities were often housed in a separate building. Smaller stations typically had three distinct sections: a waiting room, a center agent's office, and a freight-baggage-express area. But variations occurred. Although Iowa did not have "Jim Crow" waiting rooms to segregate the races, some stations, particularly in the southern Iowa coalfields, separated the sexes. For example, Albia's union depot, constructed by the Iowa Central Railroad in 1904, contained a commodious waiting area for women and children, but a Spartan-like room for men, most of whom traveled from Albia to work in the nearby Hocking mines. These facilities were separate but not equal.

From the nineteenth century to the present, two-story depot structures have been fairly common throughout Iowa. Large urban stations have almost always been multiple-story affairs. Such buildings needed to provide adequate space for passengers, baggagemen, and express agents and for office workers. Frequently, these stations served as division points for operating personnel and therefore the divisional superintendent, dispatchers, and other white-collar workers needed additional room. Commonly, these stations contained restaurant facilities for the convenience of the traveling public and

railroad employees.

Rural stations might also be two stories. The upper floor, however, contained living space for the agent and his family rather than offices. Certain Iowa railroads, particularly the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern and the Milwaukee Road, used the two-story country station extensively. These buildings provided needed housing for agents in communities where suitable living accommodations might be scarce or expensive. With an agent living over his place of work the company could expect him to be on call twenty-four hours a day. And having occupied stations, carriers could expect significantly lower fire-insurance rates.

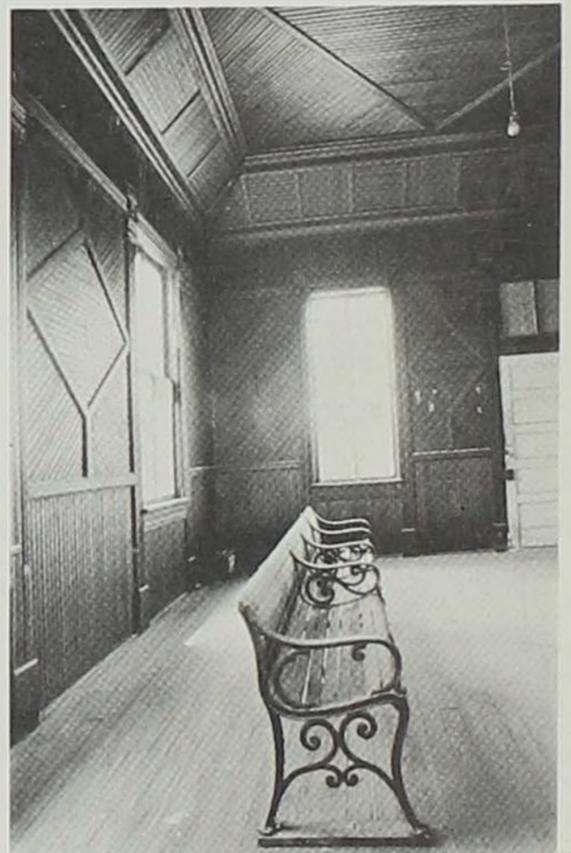
From the beginning of their construction, Iowa's railroad stations have been richly varied in appearance. They have ranged from the small Kelly-green depots of the M&StL to the large, brick, county-seat stations of the Burlington line. Whatever their appearance, they were, for generations, an important part of Iowa's everyday life. □

The following illustrations show a variety of Iowa railroad stations, past and present. Special photography has been provided by John Schultz, Indianola, Iowa.

LATE VICTORIAN



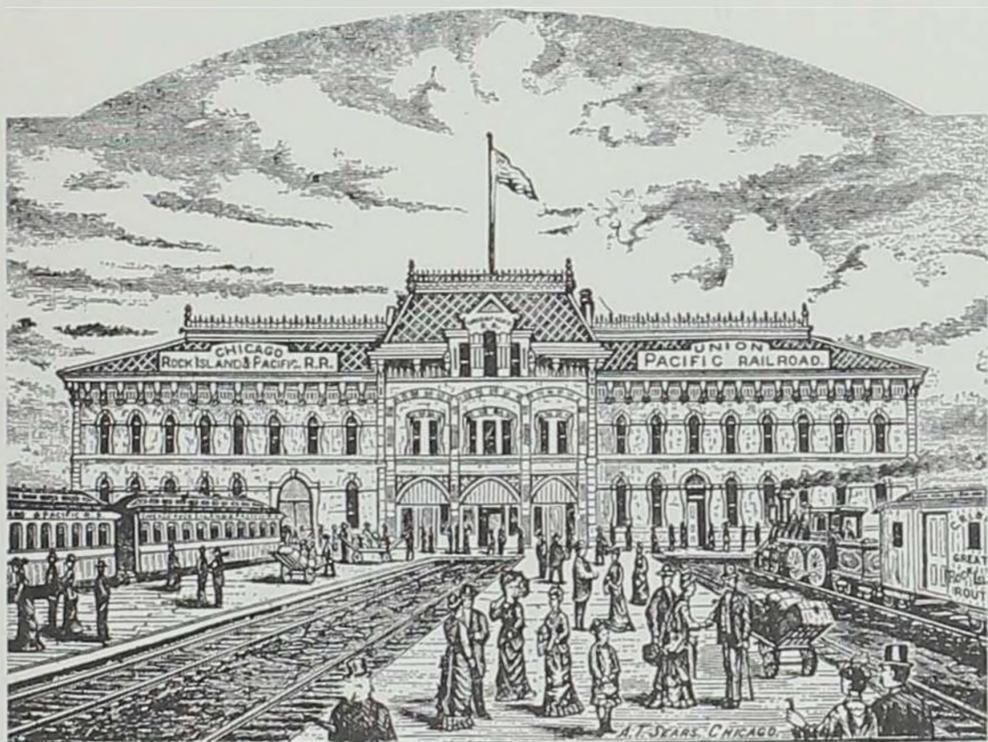
The Moravia, Iowa station (above and right) is a fine example of rural late Victorian station architecture. It was built by the Wabash, St. Louis & Pacific (later Wabash, now Norfolk & Western) around 1882. The beautiful wooden interior is of oak. (John Schultz photo)



The ornate interior of the Creston depot (see caption p. 1). (John Schultz photo)



A 1910 postcard view of the Shenandoah, Iowa station built around 1879 by the Council Bluffs & St. Louis Railway. This was for years the busiest station, except for Omaha, on the line.

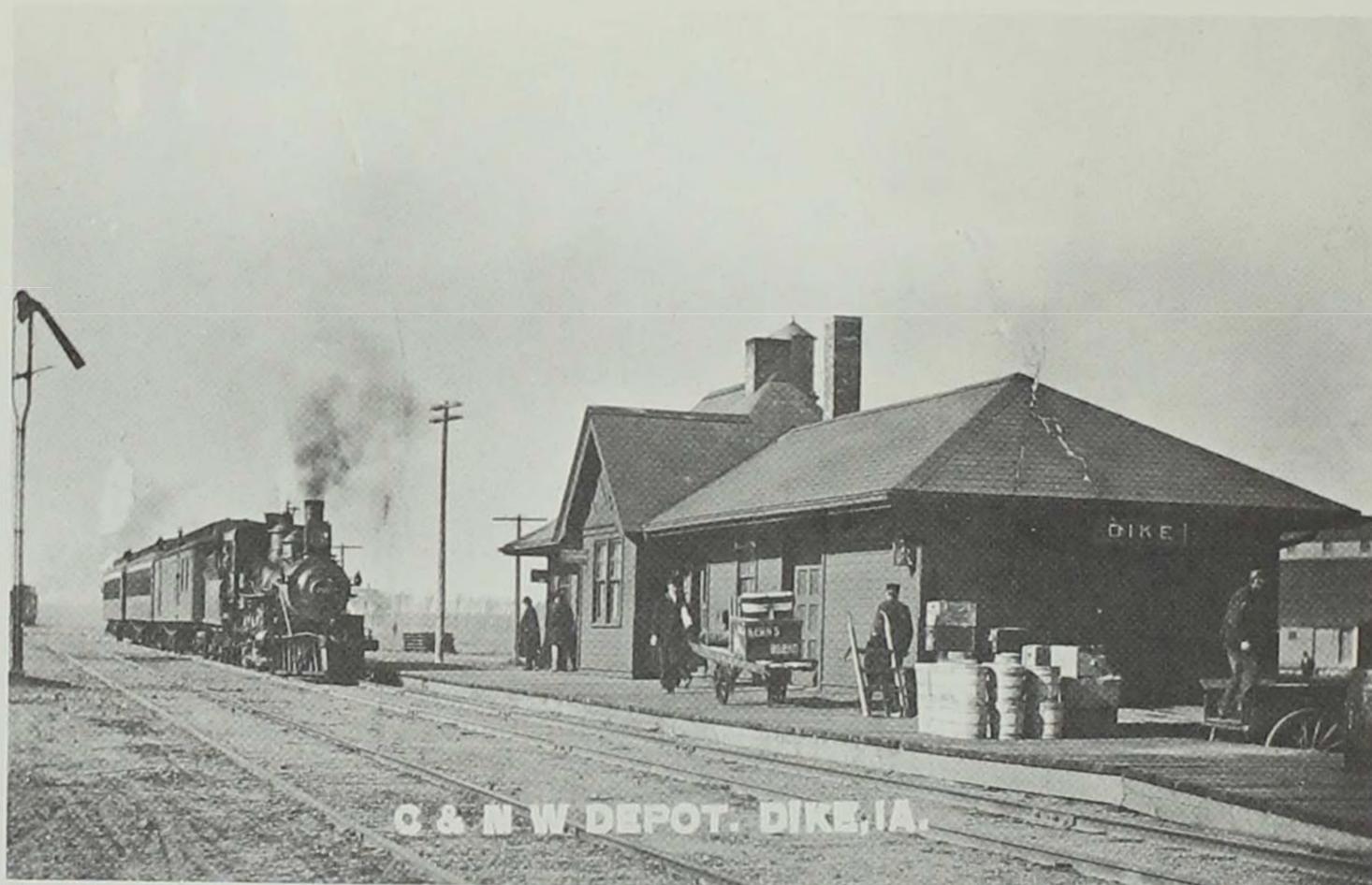


The union station in Council Bluffs, Iowa, built around 1870 and shown here in an 1886 engraving. The style is unusual for Iowa urban stations and resembles many Eastern stations of the period.

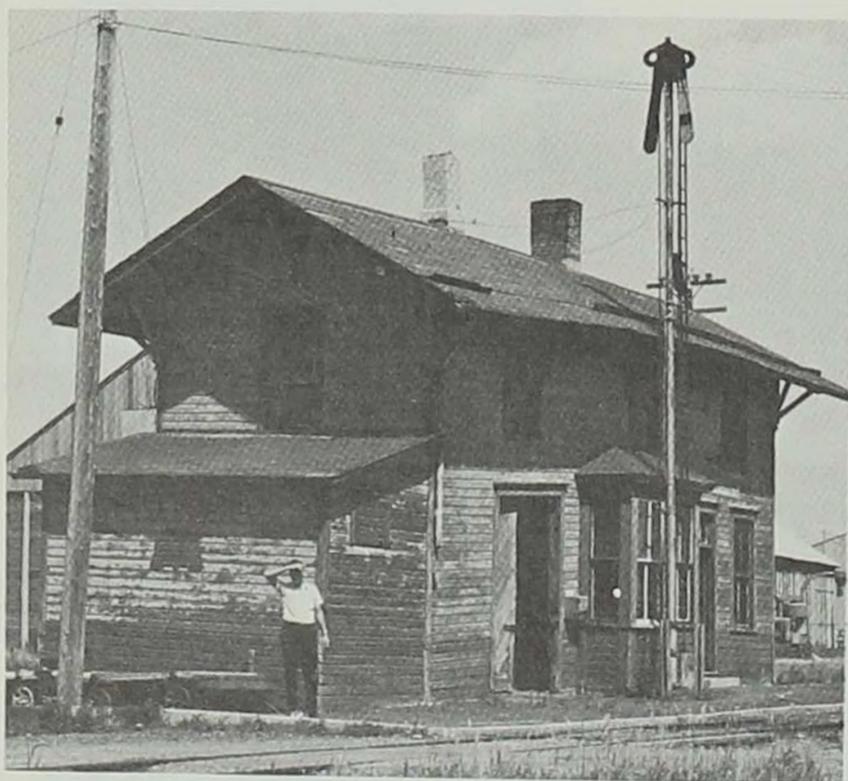


The Illinois Central built this large brick station in Dubuque in 1887. The building measured 290 feet long by 50 feet wide and was modernized by the railroad during World War II. The decorative tower reflects Eastern styles.

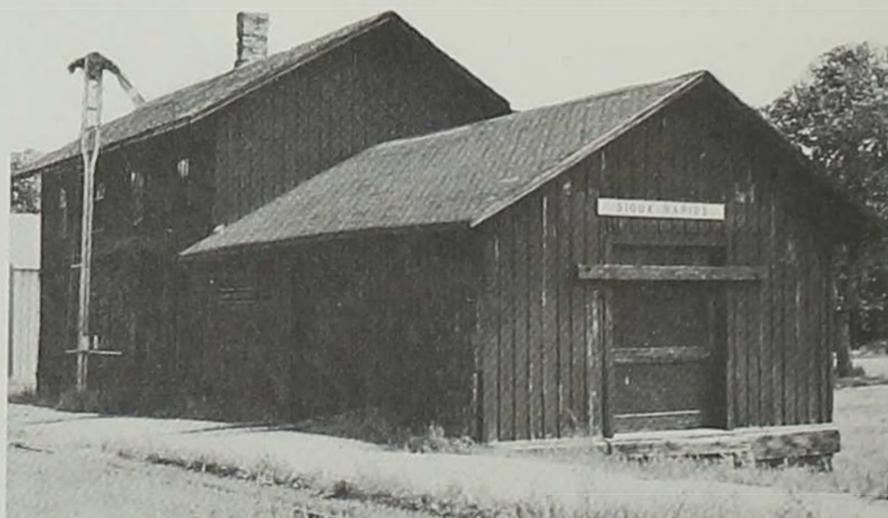
EARLY MODERN



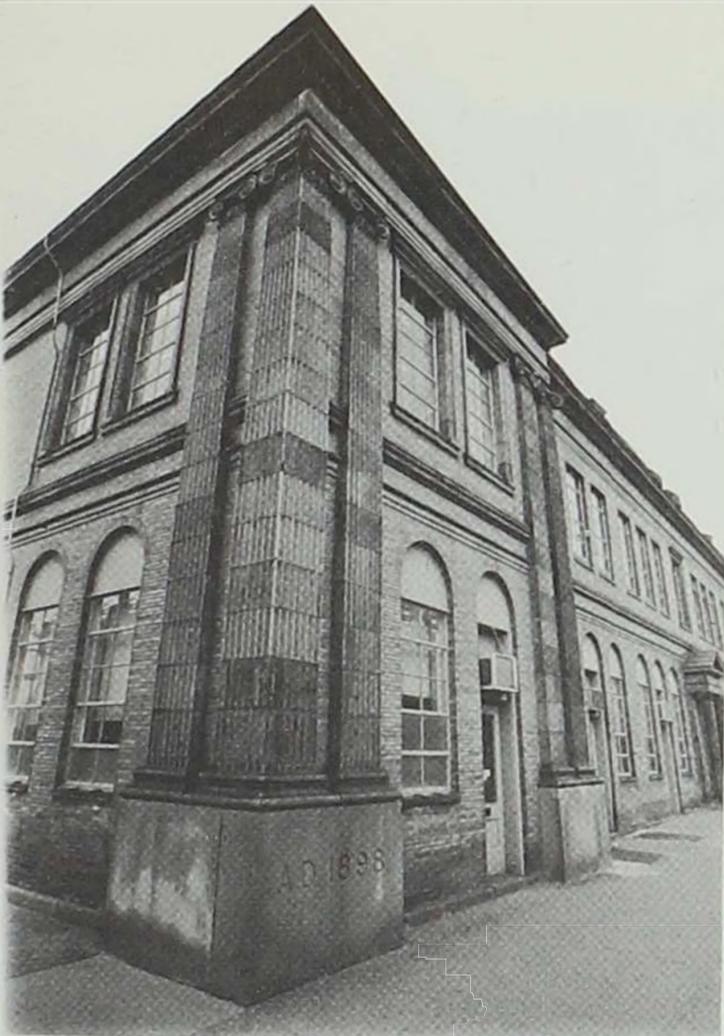
The Dike, Iowa station, built in 1900 by the Iowa, Minnesota & Northwestern Railway (a C&NW affiliated company), is of a standard design found on various Northwestern lines in Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota. This early twentieth-century post-card view shows local produce ready for loading on a passenger train.



This classic Rock Island station, located in Wellsburg, Iowa on the Vinton-Estherville branch, was built around 1890 and is similar in design to many other Milwaukee and Soo stations in the upper Middle-west. (Charles Bohi photo)



The Sioux Rapids station on the Toledo & Northwestern (now C&NW) dates from the mid-1880s. Virtually all T&NW stations were of this style and usually painted red. (Charles Bohi photo)



A corner of the remaining portion of the Des Moines union station shows the 1898 cornerstone. This large, urban station was owned jointly by the Wabash and Milwaukee. In addition, the Burlington and Great Western railroads also used the depot. In 1905, more than fifty trains a day used the station. Since World War II, about two-thirds of the building has been razed. The remaining section is now occupied by the Norfolk and Western (ex-Wabash) and Milwaukee roads and is also the headquarters of the Des Moines Union Railway. (John Schultz photo)



Dating from 1905, the Monticello, Iowa station is of a design often used for county-seat communities. Situated at the junction of two Milwaukee Road branches, the structure has a typical carriage canopy.



Dating from 1903, the Ft. Dodge station of the Chicago Great Western is a very rare design, perhaps unique. The photo dates from the same year, just after the building was completed as part of the last major railroad building project in the Hawkeye state.



The Osceola, Iowa station, built by the CB&Q in 1907 (above and right), is one of the few remaining stations with passenger service, now operated by Amtrak. (John Schultz photo)

MODERN



The Ottumwa, Iowa station was built by the CB&Q around 1950. The second floor houses the division offices of the "Ottumwa Division." (John Schultz photo)

The Perry, Iowa station, built in the mid-1960s replaced a much larger two-story depot which had been destroyed by fire. Perry, on the Milwaukee Road, is also a division headquarters. This station was abandoned for passenger service when the Milwaukee ended all but freight transport in early 1970.



The modern, 1960's Creston station in the shadow of the nineteenth century depot. (John Schultz photo)

Herbert Hoover and "War" on the Depression

by

James S. Olson

As the Great Depression quietly recedes into the American past, fewer and fewer people can truly understand the chaos of the 1930s. A new generation of Americans has reached maturity without experiencing the pangs of hunger, the frustrations of prolonged joblessness, and the fears of future insecurity. History can recreate those times and help contemporaries relate to the American past. But history is fickle, kind to some and cruel to others.

America's two Depression era Presidents, Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt, have been seen as differing sharply in their approach to the nation's problems. Despite this view, many now

This article was based primarily on the source materials collected in various federal records centers. At the National Archives in Washington, D.C., Records Group 234 consists of the large documentary deposits of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. The records of the older War Finance Corporation at the National Archives also proved helpful. At the Library of Congress, the letters of Jesse Jones and Ogden Mills, both R.F.C. directors, also proved most helpful. The valuable collections at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, Iowa were most useful. Finally, the oral history office at Columbia University, where the recollections of Eugene Meyer, Henry Bruere, Jackson Reynolds, and James Warburg are held, was indispensable. The *New York Times* was used as a source for the various speeches of government officials during the depression. The framework for discussion is set forth in William Leuchtenberg, "The New Deal and the Analogue of War" in John Braeman (ed.), *Change and Continuity in Twentieth Century America* (Columbus: Ohio State, 1964).

see Hoover as the one who began steps which his successor followed. During the years of his administration, the United States moved toward bureaucratic direction of the business cycle and federal intervention into the flow of the nation's social and political life. During the course of the Great Depression the federal government began to control and direct the economy of the United States. Since those years this power has been expanding in authority until today it affects every facet of American life. In order to justify the beginning of this massive governmental intervention, President Hoover used the language of war.

In fact, the use of military rhetoric to stimulate group loyalty and group enthusiasm has been a common tool of religious and political leaders in modern society. For the last century, since Sabine Baring-Gould coined the lyrics, the hymn "Onward Christian Soldier" has stirred various Protestant denominations to high pitches of genuine emotion. Its first stanza is replete with the metaphors of war:

Onward, Christian soldiers, Marching as
to war;

With the cross of Jesus, Going on before.
Christ the royal Master, Leads against
the foe;

Forward into battle, See, His banners
go!

Onward, Christian soldiers, Marching as
to war;

With the cross of Jesus, Going on before.
Such a combination of martial glory and
intense, emotional commitment generated



President Hoover addressing the Conference of Business and Administration Leaders for Economic Improvement on August 25, 1932. (Courtesy of Herbert Hoover Presidential Library)

a sense of national *esprit de corps*. Most recently, military rhetoric has been used by leaders to stimulate cooperative action by the American people against a national problem. In 1964, when President Lyndon Baines Johnson was initiating his "Great Society," he searched diligently for an appropriate title to give his antipoverty campaign. In his memoirs, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969*, President Johnson recalls:

The title War on Poverty was decided on during those days at the ranch. It

had disadvantages. The military image carried with it connotations of victory and defeat that could prove misleading. But I wanted to rally the nation, to sound a call to arms which would stir people in the government, in private industry, and on the campuses to lend their talents to a massive effort to eliminate the evil. (p. 74)

President Johnson had adopted military rhetoric to guarantee some unity out of what he knew would be an extremely controversial government program to end

poverty in America. This process of comparing America's problems and crisis with a military enemy, whether that enemy be Satan, unemployment, or industrial poverty, had become a national tradition.

During his most difficult days in the White House, Herbert Hoover participated in this tradition. Without question, Herbert Hoover was one of the most maligned Presidents in United States history. A every turn he encountered bitter criticism, fostered by the hopelessness and frustration of an industrial society caught up in the misery of economic dislocation. To President Hoover the Great Depression was the most significant peacetime crisis ever to confront the nation, one that threatened national survival. By invoking the analogues of war, by comparing the crisis of the first world war with the crisis of the Great Depression, he hoped to rekindle national unity and a sense of national purpose and commitment. By invoking patriotism and love of country, Hoover subtly tried to place the mantle of disloyalty upon his opponents, at the same time hoping to display widespread political support for his own proposals. In the effort he initiated early in 1932, for example, to convince Americans not to withdraw their savings deposits from the nation's distressed banks, he argued that it presented all Americans with a great "patriotic opportunity" to contribute to the economic stability of the country.

Patriotism can be a powerful tool in stimulating a sense of pride and hope. In recent months, when the U.S. prisoners of war returned from North Vietnam, even the most sarcastic of Americans must have marvelled at the loyalty and commitment of Navy Captain Jeremiah A. Denton, Jr.

Upon deplaning at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines, he spoke for the POW's and said, "We are happy to have this opportunity to serve our country under difficult circumstances. We are profoundly grateful to our commander-in-chief and to our nation for this day. God bless America." Had President Hoover been able to inspire his fellow Americans as Captain Denton did, his role as national leader in a time of crisis would have been easier. Hoover had characteristically tried to make the Great Depression appear as a serious and ominous threat to the national future.

President Hoover and his associates constantly invoked the image of war to rationalize the extraordinary measures they were undertaking to end the depression. In February 1932, the President declared that Americans were "engaged in a war against the depression." Four months later Hoover said that "the battle to set our economic machine in motion in this emergency takes new forms and requires new tactics from time to time." Military vocabulary, such as "tactics," "enemy," "fronts," "machine," "attack," and "campaign" appear frequently in the speeches of Republican officials during the Great Depression. In August 1932, for example, Ogden Mills, the Secretary of the Treasury under Herbert Hoover, remarked in a speech that the "great war against depression is being fought on many fronts in any parts of the world. One of the most stupendous activities of this great front has been the long battle of the last eighteen months to carry our financial structure safely through the world-wide collapse." Eugene Meyer, chairman of the Federal Reserve Board and head of the

Reconstruction Finance Corporation, later described the Hoover administration's anti-depression measures as a "retreating action, conducting a retreat and counter-attacking whenever we had opportunities."

In addition to imposing political unity upon the nation, the President also employed military rhetoric and wartime images to justify the momentous changes he had initiated in the development of public policy in America. Herbert Hoover was really the first American president to consciously direct the federal government to end a depression. Never before had the government in Washington, D.C. willingly pitted itself against the business cycle. Such an unprecedented commitment carried with it serious psychological consequences. Ever since the colonial period, Americans had maintained a fundamental distrust for political power, particularly when that power was manipulated by a central government.

President Hoover was reluctant to upset the balance between the local and federal governments. By giving the federal government extraordinary peacetime powers, he feared he might be setting a dangerous precedent. The analogue of war technique helped him sooth his personal misgivings about his momentous decision. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation (R.F.C.), established in January 1932, to end the depression, constituted a revolution in American public policy. Only by making the depression an emergency comparable in magnitude to the holocaust of 1917 could the President justify his actions.

The Reconstruction Finance Corporation Act had contradicted the main tenets of Hoover's political philosophy. Throughout his career the President had believed



Herbert Hoover and his Secretary of the Treasury, Ogden Mills, at the White House in 1932. (Courtesy of Herbert Hoover Presidential Library)

in the incomparable ability of America's private institutions to serve voluntarily the national interest. Governmental intervention into national life, he had believed, was unnecessary because of the willingness of Americans to solve their problems through voluntary cooperation. Such was the philosophy he had articulated throughout his personal and political career.

But the depression had defied solution by private groups. Hoover was then confronted with a simple choice: either use the federal government to stop the decline, or helplessly preside over the economic disintegration of the United States. At that point, he broke with the past and created the R.F.C., endowing it with two

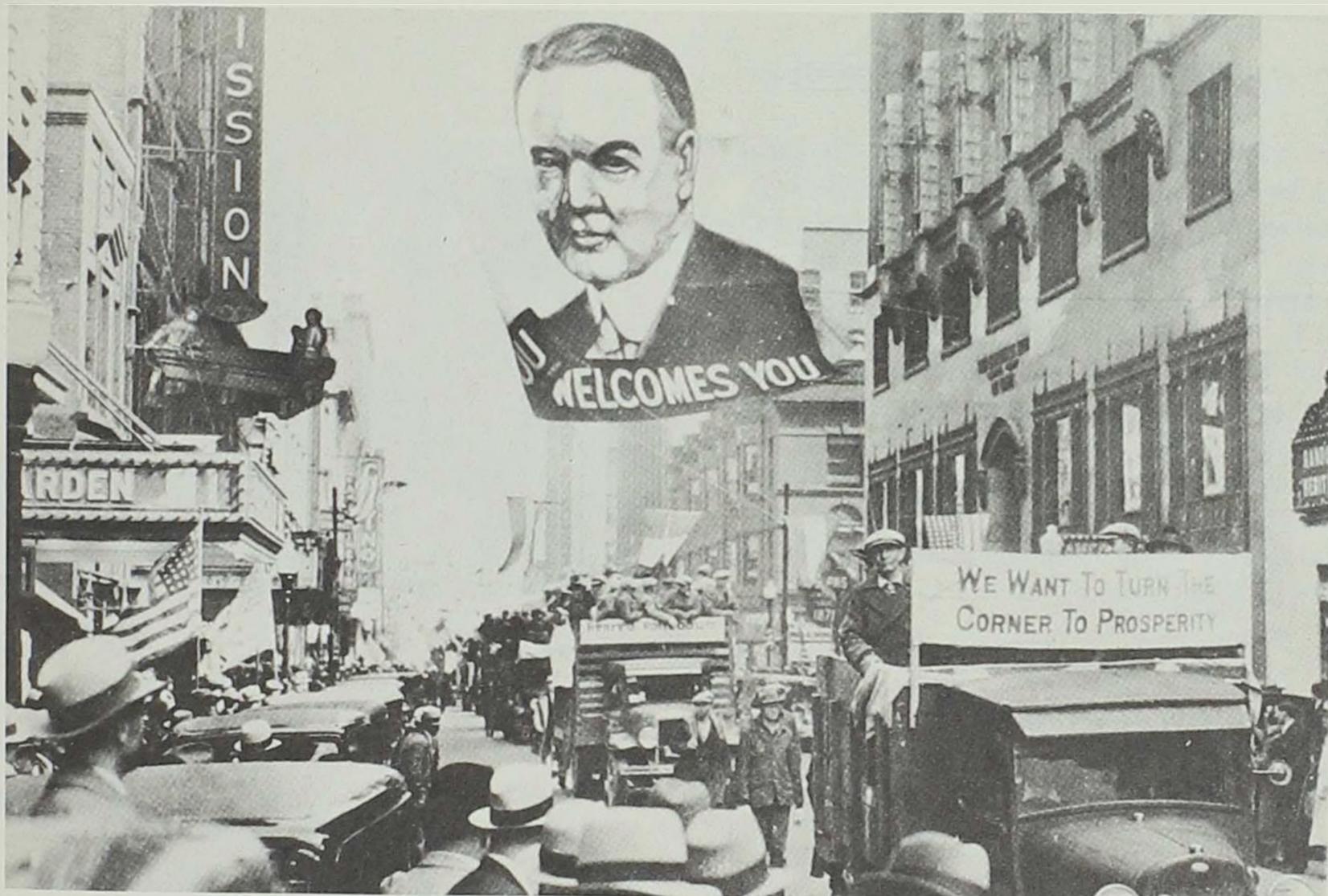
billion dollars to loan to America's distressed financial institutions. Five months later, in July of 1932, he again broke new ground by expanding the R.F.C.'s authority into the fields of public welfare and relief. The Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932 permitted the R.F.C. to make loans for stabilizing farm prices, for slum clearance, low-income housing, reforestation projects, public works construction, and welfare relief. This too constituted a breathtaking expansion in the role of the federal government. As he announced this new development, Hoover reassured the American people of the legitimacy of his actions by saying, "We used such emergency powers to win the war; we can use them to fight the depression, the misery and suffering from which are equally great." To rationalize this departure in public policy Hoover tried to recreate the spirit, patriotism, and unity which had usually accompanied major military engagements. He had defined the Great Depression as an emergency in which national survival was at stake. Under that definition, the depression became as ominous an event as a war, justifying the expansions of federal power which were being effected.

The Reconstruction Finance Corporation was Hoover's attempt to meet the Depression on a "wartime" footing. The old War Finance Corporation of World War I was a model for the depression agency. In terms of philosophy, personnel, and organization, the two institutions were nearly identical. Both were considered temporary and emergency organizations, having no purpose during normal economic conditions, and designed to liquify the frozen assets of the nation's

business and financial institutions. Both agencies assumed that as financial and economic tension relaxed, credit would resume its flow through normal, private channels. Governmental institutions would then be able to retire from the financial field.

In addition to their philosophical similarities, the President made sure that the W.F.C. and R.F.C. were linked by personnel. Eugene Meyer, chairman of the R.F.C., had also served as chairman of the War Finance Corporation during its formative years. To insure efficient and dependable operation, Meyer recruited some old W.F.C. employees to staff the new agency. George Cooksey, a former director of the W.F.C., was named secretary. As legal counsel for the new government corporation, Meyer selected Martin Bogue, formerly special legal counsel to the W.F.C. G. A. Marr, also a lawyer with the War Finance Corporation, joined Bogue in the R.F.C. legal division. To head the examining division, Meyer successfully recruited Leo Paulger, a former examiner with the W.F.C. In terms of personnel, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation was a direct descendant of the W.F.C.

Finally, President Hoover insisted that the organizational framework adopted by the R.F.C. officials reflect the structure of the War Finance Corporation. Just like the W.F.C., the Reconstruction Finance Corporation was divided internally into eight separate divisions: audit, legal, treasury, secretarial, agency, examining, railroad, and statistical. To facilitate the loan-making process they established thirty-three local loan agencies in various cities throughout the United States. The new



Farm demonstrators at Hoover's 1932 campaign trip to Des Moines. (Courtesy of Herbert Hoover Presidential Library)

depression-oriented Reconstruction Finance Corporation was a mirror image of an older, wartime institution. By combining the experience of the War Finance Corporation with the establishment of the R.F.C., President Hoover had gone far beyond mere rhetorical comparisons between the crisis of war and the crisis of the depression.

Indeed, the establishment and operation of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation in 1932 was complete reinstatement of federal intervention into the economy, and an unprecedented intervention because it had occurred during peace-time. The only precedent for such a development had been the War Finance Corporation a decade earlier; the President had called directly upon the experience in develop-

ing his approach to the depression in 1932. If one considers the New Deal's most important contribution to have been the governmental bureaucracy it created to direct the economy, then the R.F.C. constituted the first branch of that bureaucracy. If one finds the roots of the New Deal reaching back into the wartime experience, then it was President Hoover who began the restoration, on both the psychological and institutional levels, of federal economic planning. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation was the first of the famous "alphabet" agencies. Ironically, it was the engineer from Iowa, the man a generation has looked upon as a blind reactionary, who first initiated the revival. □

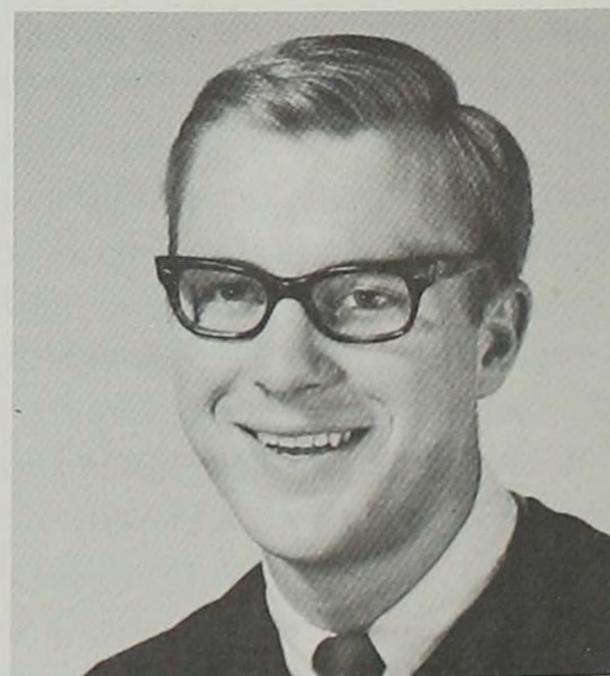
CONTRIBUTORS:

MARTHA JORDAN SOLAND, shown with five year-old son Philip, is a Burlington housewife and mother. She graduated from Mount Holyoke College and received a master's degree from the University of Minnesota. She is a junior member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and writes a weekly column for the Burlington *Shoppers Spree* and occasional articles for the *Hawk-Eye*. Her article on Rev. Salter was researched and written on the kitchen table "in moments snatched from riding the sweeper around the living room and chasing dog hair out from under the beds."



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The State Historical Society encourages submission of articles on the history of Iowa and the surrounding region which 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 at least medium weight paper. Ordinarily, the text of an article should not exceed twenty-five to thirty 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. Inquiries and correspondence should be sent to: Editor, State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Ave., Iowa City, Iowa 52240.



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