



The Ames Corn Mural

Daniel Webster's quotation, "When tillage begins, other arts follow," was inscribed on the Grant Wood murals at Iowa State. The second sentence of Webster's theme read, "The farmers therefore are the founders of human civilization." Houser's Ames corn mural reflects this agricultural theme. In it, ancient Indian agricultural practices are contrasted with modern American corn crop harvesting.

Two farmers, in symmetry of design, bend inward toward a monumental ear of common feed corn. Each collar, or leaf attachment, is clearly detailed. The seed embryo is enlarged at its base. A rich, red color behind the ear of corn suggests Mayan fresco backgrounds in which an Indian-red color was often so dense and vivid that it implied the application of many layers of paint. Warm copper and ochre

tones prevail in the painting of the left half of the mural which depicts maize cultivation.

In folklore, the Aztec word "teocentli" meant "God's ear of corn." In parts of Mexico the phrase used is "madre de maiz," or "mother of maize." The "milpa cycle" prevailed in the tropical farming system. A milpa was a cornfield wrested from the forest. It was productive for only three or four years after which it was abandoned for twenty years in order to restore its vigor. The process of "slash and burn" was accompanied by the belief that gods attended the milpa ceremonies. The theme of continuing life was closely bound with the crops and the renewed flowering after the death of the season. In the dry season of February and March the farmers cut down the trees which they left until the rains came. Then was the time to call upon the Chacs, the four gods of wind, to bring the great flames which would

burn the trees and forests to a black turf. A custom of whistling for the winds began the ritual. The weed-filled fields of the following year would be burned again to bring the charred trunks down to earth, allowing the corn to be planted. The moon was goddess of the soil, birth, and fertility. The Chacs were also rain gods and were associated with the four world directions.

In interpreting maize cultivation, Houser used images derived from these sources, showing the young Corn God, the Sun God, and a

Chac as rain god. With the Mayan farmer's dependence upon the weather, the gods became his intermediaries.

At Chichen-Itza, Houser worked closely with the local population whom he observed as diligently as the linear images he copied from the polychromed frescoes. Thus his Indian figure displays the flat shoulders, incurving waist, superb legs, and the Mayan visage — high nose, cheeks flattened down from eye to chin triangularly, and forehead forced back, a custom cosmetically achieved at babyhood.





The upward high sculptural effect hints at the aloofness and reasonableness associated with these intelligent Indians.

The Indian farmer wears a white loincloth wrapped around his body, the ends crossing diagonally in front upon a second piece, the maxtili, which hangs loosely between the legs in a triangular flap. The sandal has a sole and an upper part which covers the heel and is held onto the leg by a diagonal band. Strings pass between the toes to secure the sole. A white cloth thrown over the head and falling onto the shoulders cuts across the forehead at the hairline, then divides into strips hanging loosely over the shoulders. The farmer's implement is a hoe made of obsidian lashed to a stick.

Instead of the great Corn Mother, an effigy figure at the left border of the mural is the young Corn God seated cross-legged, with the suggestion of jungle foliage around him. He holds a votive pot of stylized maize leaves with the hieroglyph for maize inscribed below. The flattened forehead, or Hachas, is prominent. He wears a conventional boat-shaped, high-crowned headdress from which two broad bands fall sideward, over his shoulders. The plumes of the quetzal, a prized tropical bird, are typical of priestly headgear. Prominent ear disks, a heavy collar of beads, and an indication of a backcrest are all part of the decorative attire found in the temple frescoes. The torso is bare, but suggests that a loincloth may be concealed by a heavily decorated belt. The god wears wrist ornaments and ornamented leg-

gings.

Perspective was achieved by overlapping forms. In Mayan frescoes, any receding background was expressed by ascending vertical planes, the scene at the top being at a greater distance. The modern mural shows a gleaming white pyramid rising behind the Corn God, its steep staircase flanked by stylized and humanized heads of the serpent god, Quetzalcoatl. Smoke wafting across the face of the pyramid may be from sacrificial blood burned with copal in pots.

The deities who aided the growth of corn fill two overlapping spheres at the top of the mural. (A similar device is used in the modern farm scene where the sphere is the sun.)

In Mayan folklore the Sun God descends from a series of concentric circles decorated by patterns of hachures and large triangular sun rays. Houser made use of these symbols. Hachures are short lines used for shading and denoting surfaces in relief drawn in the direction of the stroke. These lines may be seen around the Sun God's head. A type of god mask is worn with a conspicuous "elephant" proboscis surmounted by nose plugs and eye plaques beneath and over the eyes. A threefold ear plug with a round center and upper and lower embellishments adorns the ear. A nose plug shows beads which might have been of prized turquoise. The mouth has jagged, sharpened teeth and a lolling tongue. The scarification around the mouth was a common mode of body decoration. The squared face

Office of the State Historical Society

Call for SHSI Board of Trustees Nominations

All members of the State Historical Society of Iowa are encouraged to participate in the annual election process for the State Historical Society's Board of Trustees. Nominations are now being accepted for four positions on the board. The terms of Lennis Moore (First Congressional District), Roger B. Natte (Sixth Congressional District), Margaret N. Keyes (At Large), and Carol A. Newton (At Large) will expire on 1 July 1985.

The Board of Trustees works to further understanding of Iowa history and to promote activities that help Iowans better understand their heritage.

Trustees serve three-year terms and must be members of the Society. Any Society member may make a nomination for an At Large position on the board. Any Society member from a Congressional District whose representative's term will expire (the First or Sixth Districts) may nominate a Society member from the respective Congressional District to represent the district. If you wish to make a nomination, send a one-page letter including the name, address, and biographical sketch of the nominee to:

BOARD OF TRUSTEES NOMINATIONS
Iowa State Historical Department
402 Iowa Avenue
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Your nomination *must* be received by 29 March 1985.

Nominations Now Open for 1985 Achievement Awards

The Board of Trustees of the State Historical Society of Iowa is accepting nominations for its 1985 annual awards for achievement in state and local history.

Historical organizations may be nominated by Society members for awards in the following categories:

1. Youth Programs
2. Special Exhibits
3. Special Programs
4. Newsletters
5. Publications
6. Historic Preservation
7. Overall Achievement

Individuals may be nominated by Society members for a specific activity or for overall achievement. Nominations will not be accepted for individuals in the overall achievement category who have previously received that award, but they may be nominated for a specific activity.

There will again be two levels of awards. Certificates of Recognition will be awarded for important contributions to state and local history. Certificates of Achievement will be reserved for activities that the Board's Committee on Awards judges to be most outstanding. The nomination should not specify the level of award. That will be determined by the committee.

Society members who wish to make nominations should write to the following address to request nomination forms:

ANNUAL AWARDS
Iowa State Historical Department
402 Iowa Avenue
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Nominations will be accepted *only* until 15 May 1985.

January 1985

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS, 1985

- March 7-9 Missouri Valley History Conference, Omaha, Nebraska
March 30 Iowa Chapter, Victorian Society in America, Des Moines
April 3-7 American Cultural Association, Louisville, Kentucky
April 12-13 Dakota History Conference, Madison, South Dakota
April 13 State Historical Society of Iowa's Board of Trustees Meeting, Iowa City
April 18-21 Organization of American Historians, Minneapolis, Minnesota
April 20 Iowa Local Historical and Museum Association, Des Moines
April 20 Quad Cities Genealogical Conference, Moline, Illinois

Introducing the Iowa Newspaper Project Staff . . .

During the course of the 1985 issues of News for Members, we'd like to introduce State Historical Society of Iowa members to the staff of the Iowa Newspaper Project. In this first newsletter of the year, we'd like to have you meet Nancy Kraft, project director, Renée Atcherson, cataloging intern, and Brenda Todaro, public relations intern:

. . . Nancy Kraft, Project Director

We're sure you already know Nancy Kraft as cataloger for the Iowa State Historical Department's library facilities in Iowa City, but we'd like to introduce her again as project director of the Iowa Newspaper Project. [Nancy has also just been named head librarian for the ISHD's Iowa City library and research collections. See the March issue of *News for Members* for an interview with Nancy about her new responsibilities and plans for the Iowa City library.] A good share of Nancy's energy has been directed toward the project for almost two years. She has been closely involved with all aspects of the newspaper project, from the early stages of planning and grant-writing to the current phase of training catalogers to locate newspapers in Iowa. Nancy says there are three main reasons for the success of the Iowa Newspaper Project thus far. Firstly, Nancy has stayed in close contact with the project's advisory committee and has received constant input from them. Secondly,

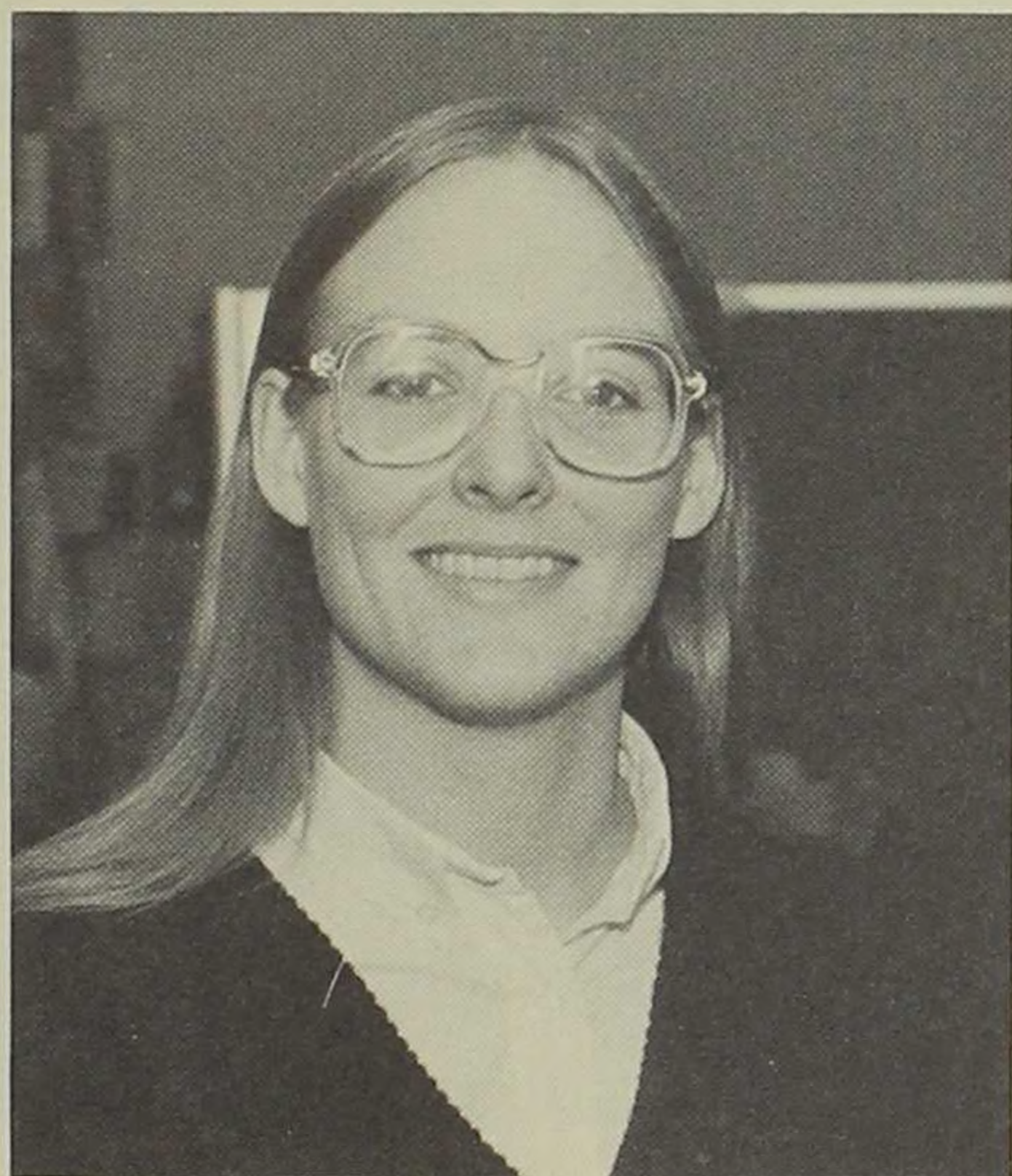


the project staff has worked closely with the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), the Library of Congress, and the National Endowment for the Humanities on policies for cataloging newspapers (because of Nancy's cooperation, these three agencies are using the Iowa Newspaper Project as a model for newspaper projects in other states). Thirdly, the project has received extensive statewide support. Iowa State University's library will be the cataloging center for the western half of the state, while the ISHD library in Iowa City will handle cataloging for the eastern half. The ISHD office in Des Moines, a major repository for Iowa newspapers, will provide support staff for the project. University of Iowa students will serve as cataloging and public relations interns.

Nancy is now in the process of training catalogers for the newspaper project. They will record the location at which each newspaper is found, the form in which it is found (bound issues, microfilm, microfiche, or other), and the dates for which it is available. The catalogers will also serve as project ambassadors in their extensive travel to libraries, newspaper offices, courthouses, and museums (over seven hundred sites) throughout the state.

Nancy says that it has been an especially fun project so far, with good response from people who have heard about it. Many people have called Nancy or written to her with questions about the project or with information about "missing" newspapers (newspapers that are known to have been published in Iowa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but for which no copies have ever been located). Missing newspapers have turned up in interesting and unexpected places, including The Galley bar in Bondurant, Iowa. Other missing newspapers have been discovered to be in the hands (or attics) of private individuals. Overall, the project has a certain treasure-hunt quality to it that makes it continually exciting to be a part of it. — *Brenda Todaro, Public Relations Intern, Iowa Newspaper Project*

. . . Renée Atcherson, Cataloging Intern



Renée Atcherson started working for the Iowa Newspaper Project last fall as a cataloging intern. The internship is sponsored by the University of Iowa. To date, Renée has assisted the ISHD's Iowa City cataloger in working through a general cataloging backlog in preparation for the massive cataloging phase of the newspaper project. Renée has worked closely with Project Director Nancy Kraft to establish newspaper cataloging procedures. She is also responsible for keeping the interlibrary loan policies for newspapers up-to-date for the forty-six Iowa libraries on OCLC (a bibliographic computer and telecommunications system to support resource sharing among libraries). Cataloging newspapers involves checking newly acquired or newly located issues or runs of newspapers against already existing regional computer databases for newspaper holdings to determine whether a regional database entry should be updated or whether an entirely new catalog entry should be

created. The double-checking and the detail of information required for each newspaper title is quite laborious. Yet Renée says she loves cataloging.

Renée received a bachelor of music degree in music theory from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and a master of arts degree in music theory at the University of Iowa. She is currently working toward a master of arts degree in library and information science at the University of Iowa.

. . . Brenda Todaro, Public Relations Intern

Brenda Todaro began working in September 1984 as the public relations intern for the Iowa Newspaper Project. The internship is sponsored by the University of Iowa. Her responsibilities include developing a general publicity plan and calendar for the project, writing general news releases for local media, and identifying new contacts among the media and special interest groups. She also organizes office publicity procedures and assists with daily correspondence and displays for the project. Brenda says, "To get the word out on a statewide basis in Iowa means getting our message across to hundreds of small towns in ninety-nine counties. We'll make the most use of the local weekly newspapers."

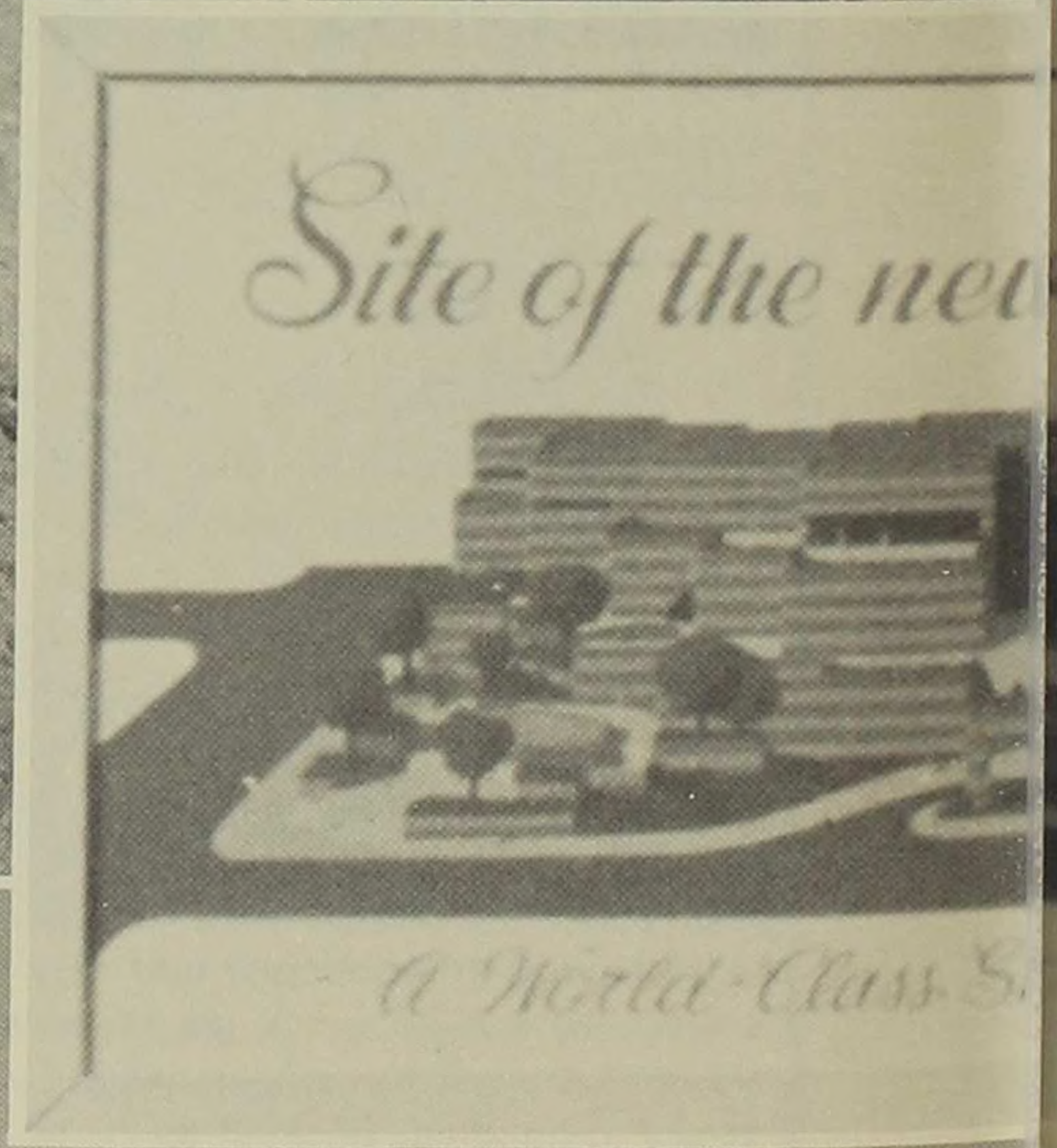
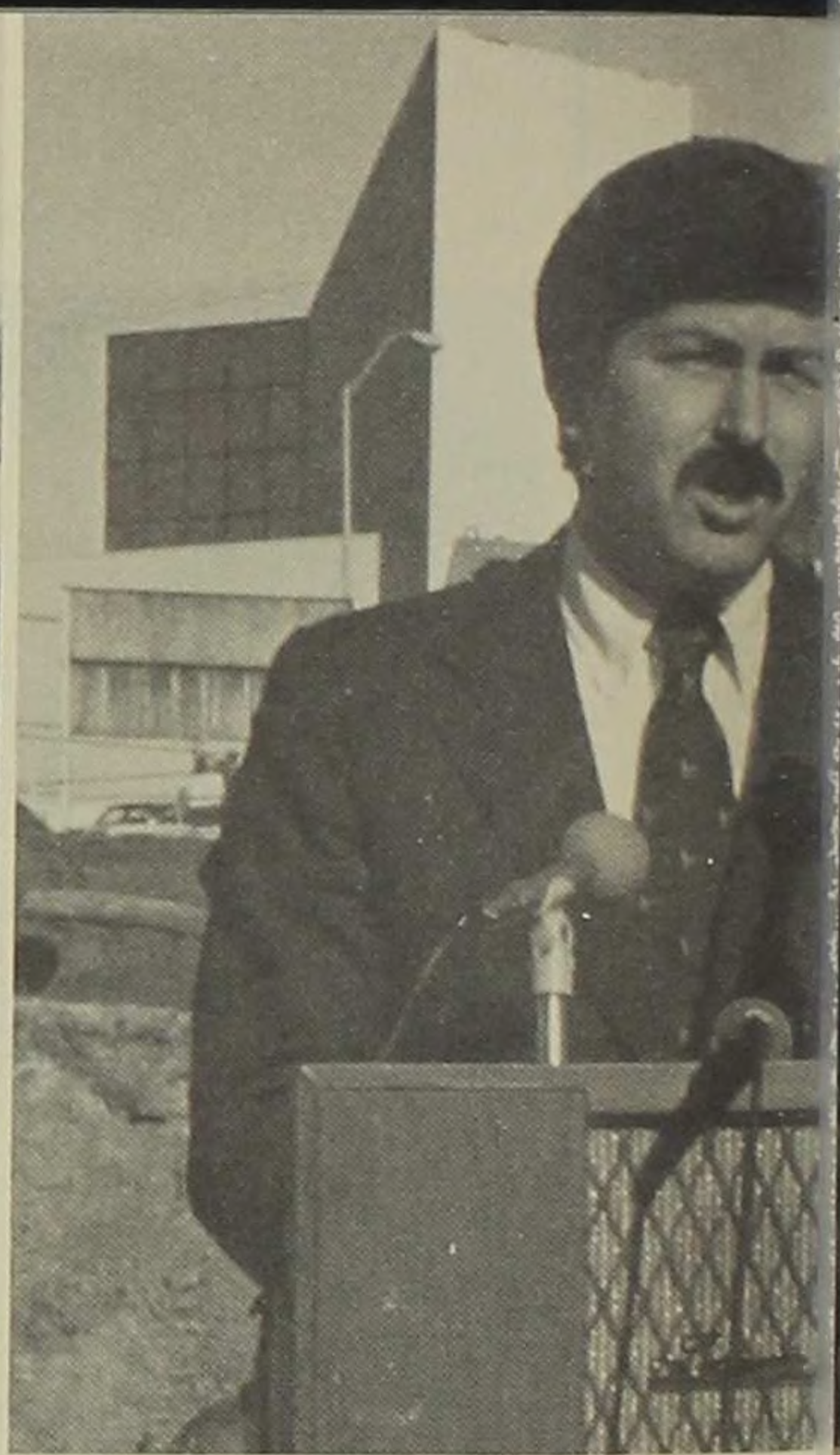
Brenda received her bachelor of arts degree from Humboldt State University in Arcata, California. She is a graduate student in the University of Iowa Writer's Workshop. She writes poetry.

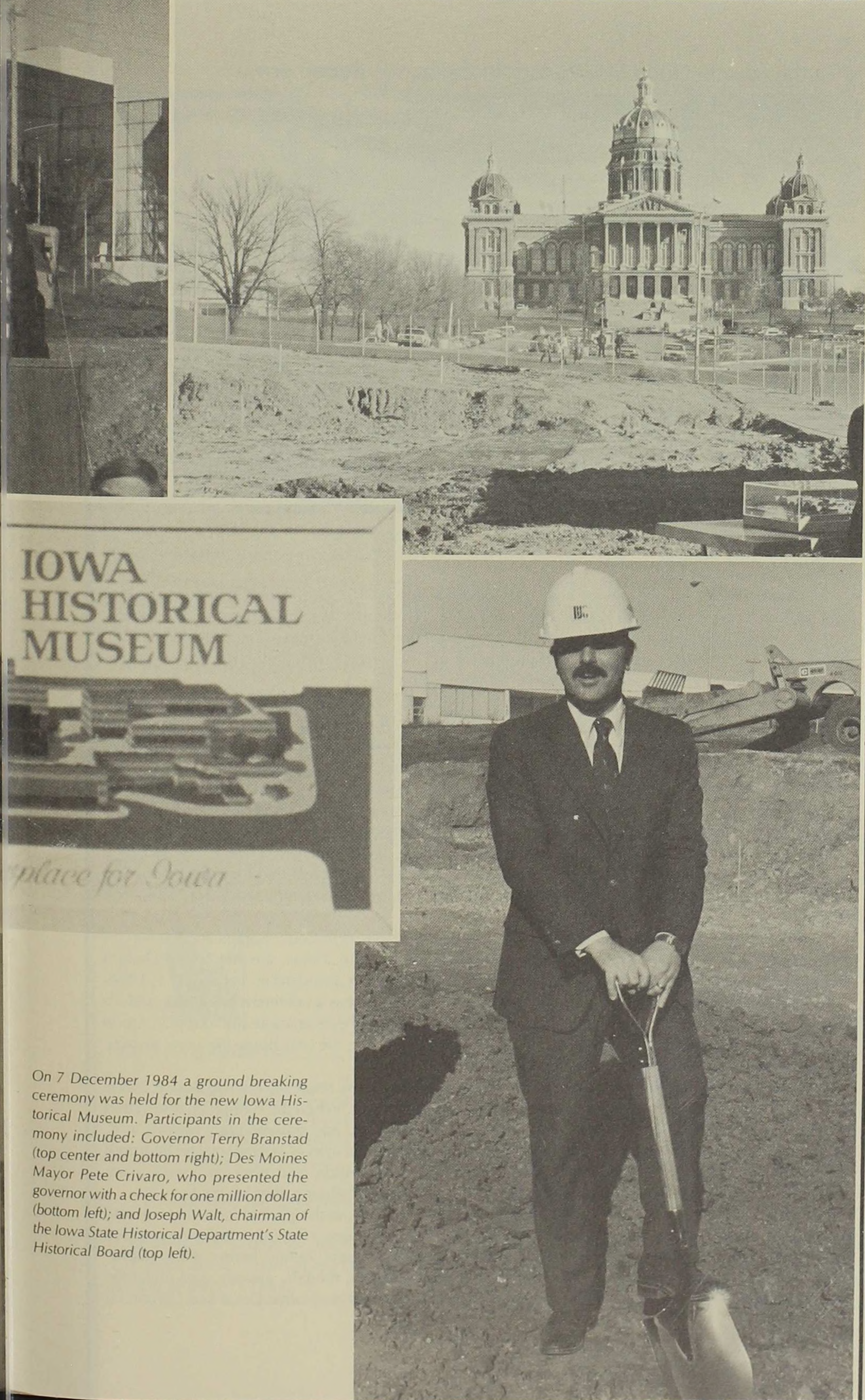


Telephone Survey of Members to be Conducted

A telephone survey of five hundred randomly-selected members of the State Historical Society of Iowa will be conducted in late March. The survey is part of an overall evaluation of our services and programs that is currently going on. We estimate that our survey questions will take no more than fifteen minutes of your time to respond to, and we hope that, if you are contacted by one of our surveyors, we can count on your support and participation in this project.

At its 27 October 1984 meeting, the members of the State Historical Society of Iowa's Board of Trustees elected George McDaniel to serve as its president and Norman Erbe to serve as its vice-president.

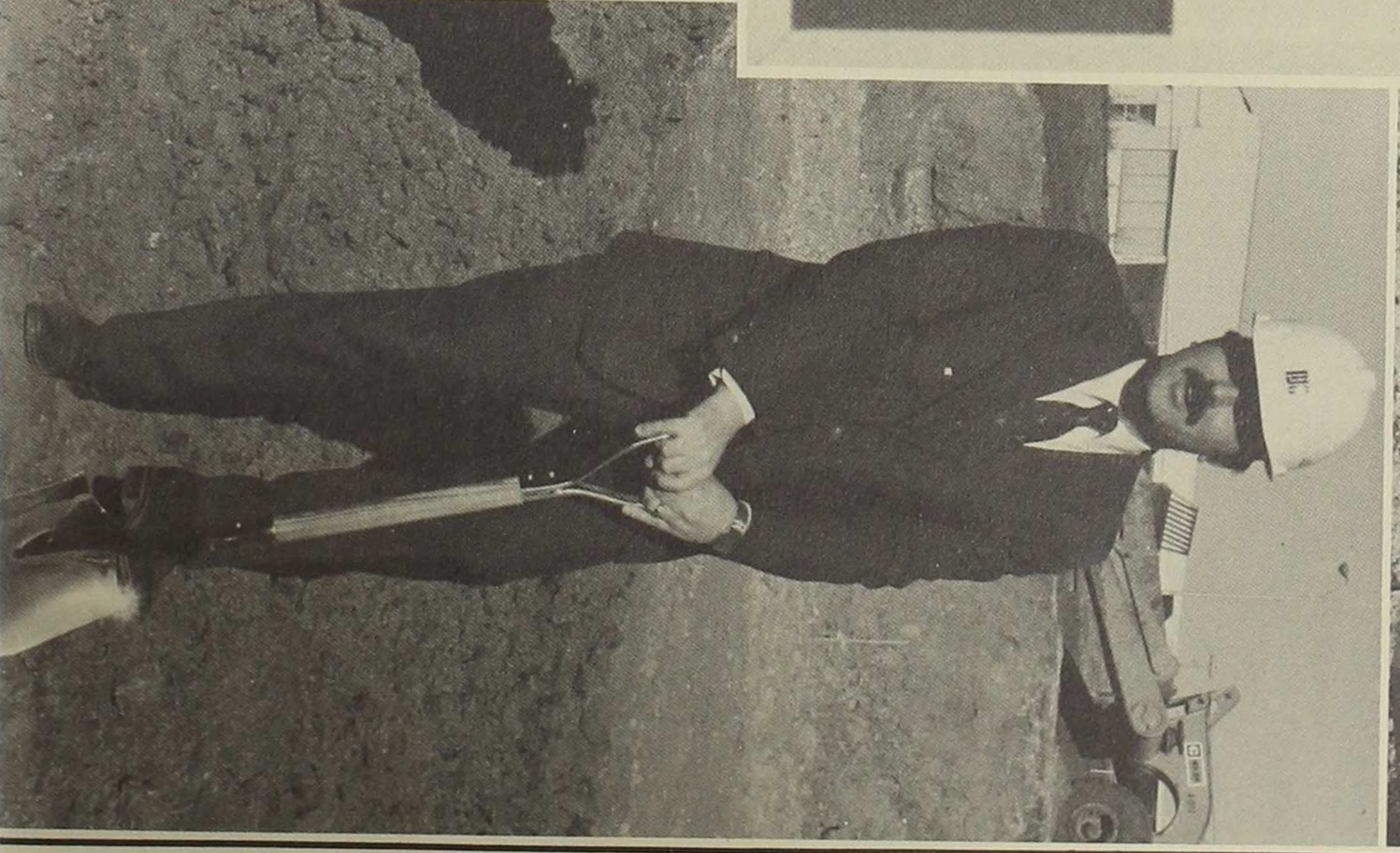
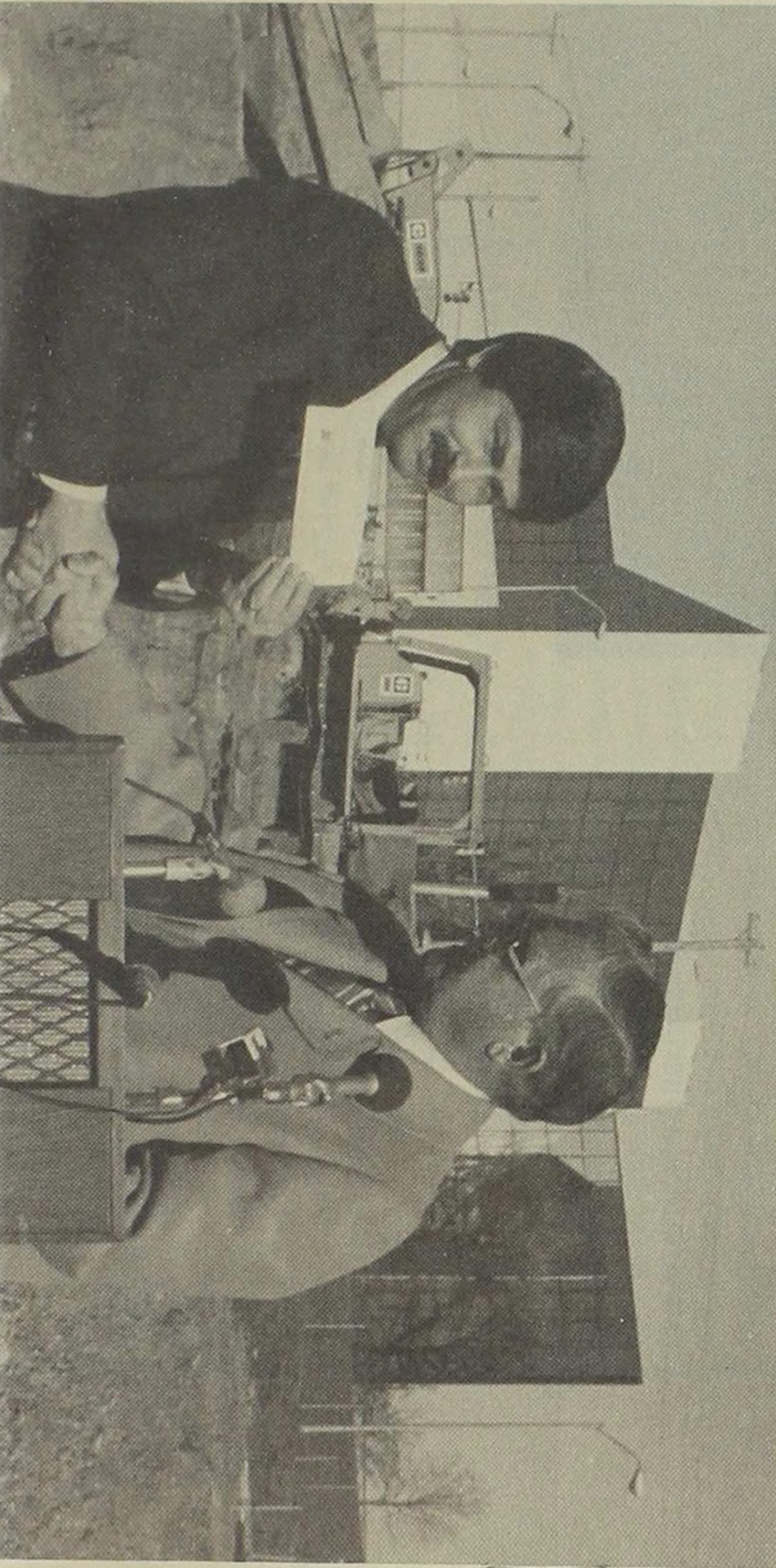
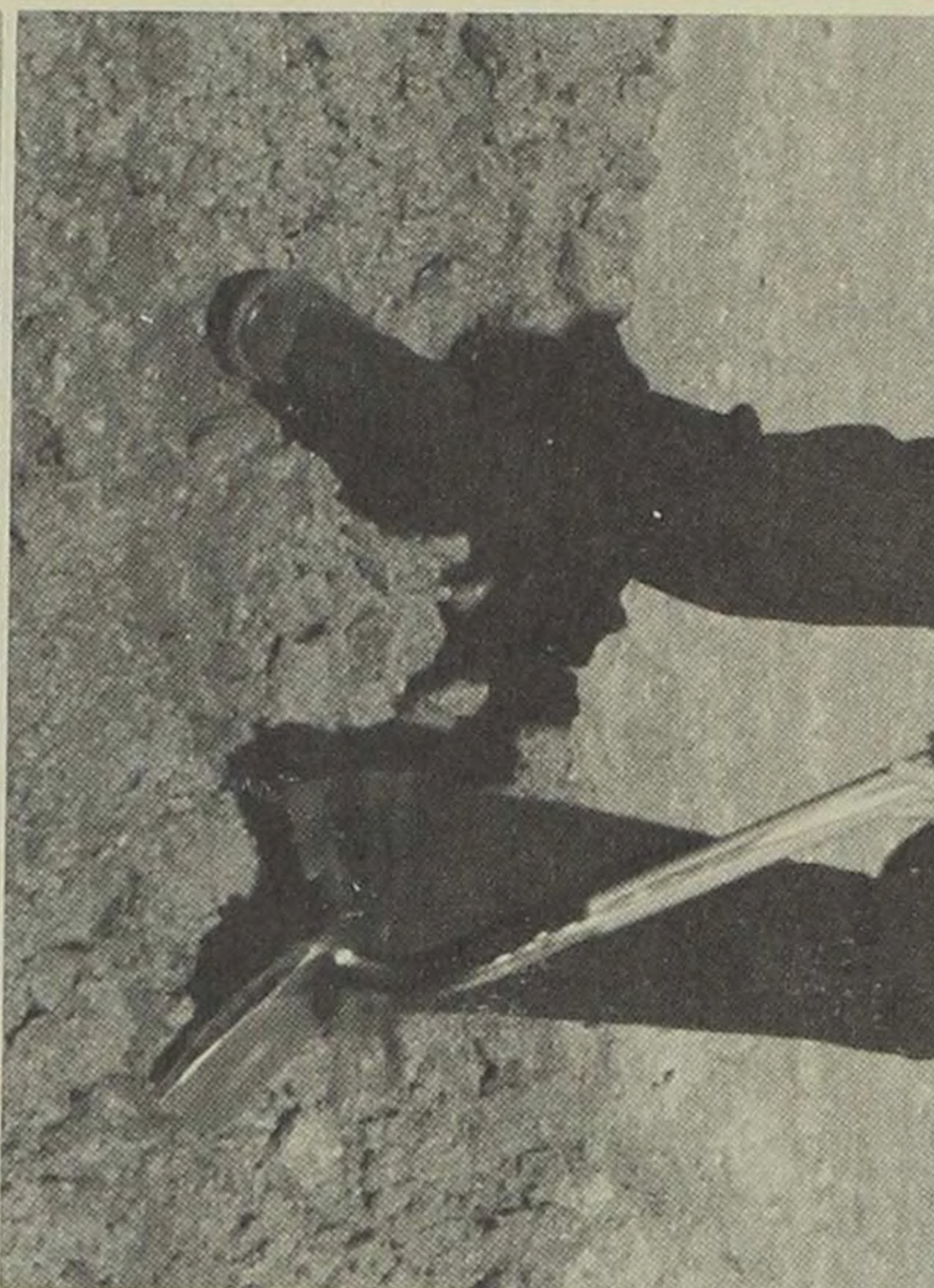
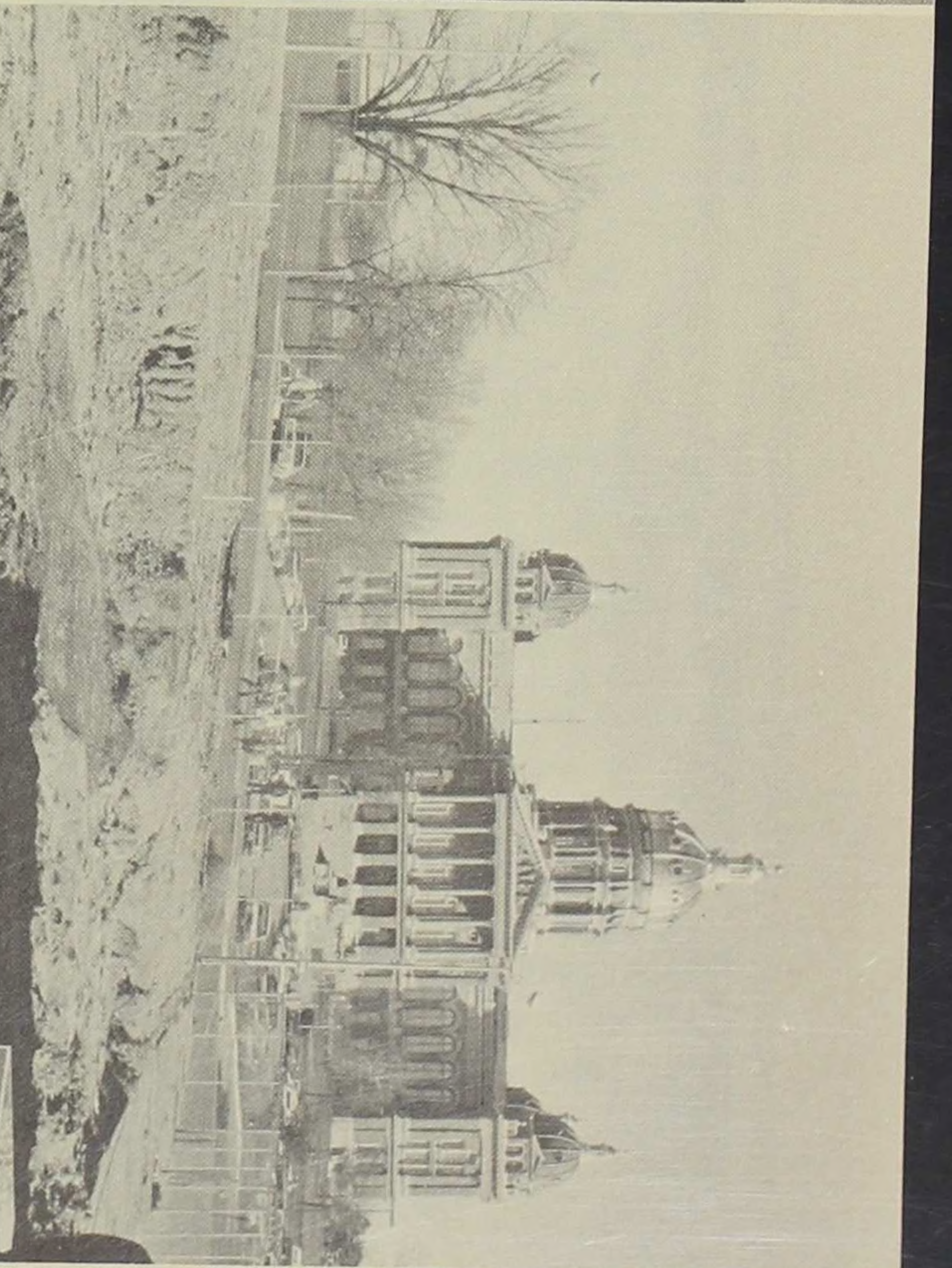
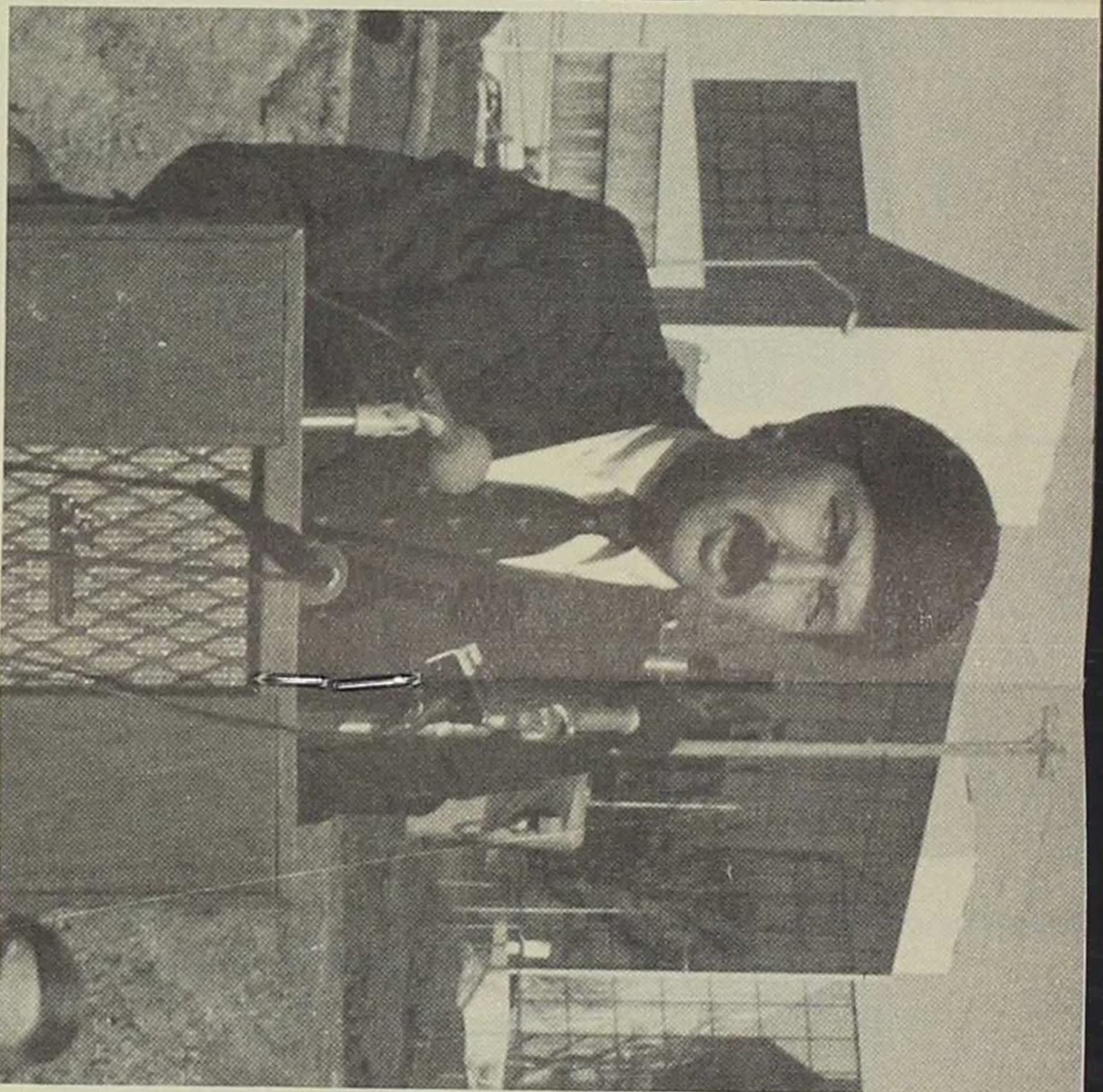
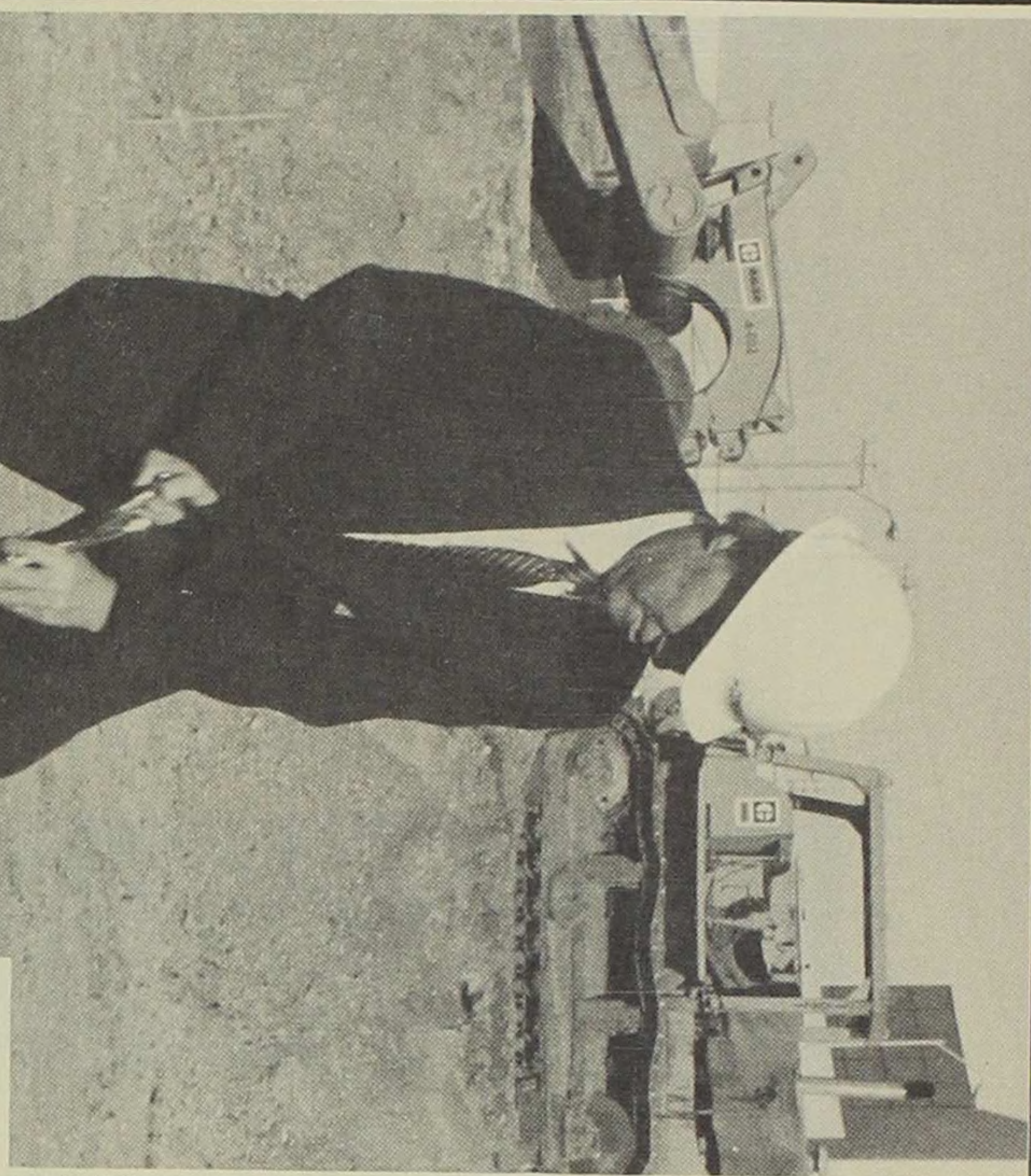




IOWA HISTORICAL MUSEUM

A place for Iowa

On 7 December 1984 a ground breaking ceremony was held for the new Iowa Historical Museum. Participants in the ceremony included: Governor Terry Branstad (top center and bottom right); Des Moines Mayor Pete Crivaro, who presented the governor with a check for one million dollars (bottom left); and Joseph Walt, chairman of the Iowa State Historical Department's State Historical Board (top left).



On 7 December 1984 a ground breaking ceremony was held for the new Iowa Historical Museum. Participants in the ceremony included: Governor Terry Branstad (top center and bottom right); Des Moines Mayor Pete Crivaro, who presented the governor with a check for one million dollars (bottom left); and Joseph Walt, chairman of the Iowa State Historical Department's State Historical Board (top left).

Visit the Mamie Doud Eisenhower Birthplace in Boone, Iowa



Mamie Doud Eisenhower, the wife of Dwight D. Eisenhower, thirty-fourth president of the United States, was born in Boone, Iowa, on November 14, 1896. Her birthplace has been restored and is now open to the public for tours.

The home in which Mamie was born was originally located at 718 Carroll Street in Boone. The First Baptist Church owned the building from 1962 until 1975. Needing the land for expansion, the church, in 1974, offered the house to a local birthplace committee provided they move it to a new location. In the fall of 1975 the house was moved to its present site at 709 Carroll Street, almost directly across the street, on land donated by local businessman Warren J. Kruck.

Restoration of the home took five years. Architect William J. Wagner of Des Moines, well known for his work with historic projects, did the research that enabled the house to be restored to its original 1890s structural form, complete with summer kitchen. Early photographs of the house were studied to determine the original structure. Then period carpets, wallpapers, and drapes were added to the interior. Furniture of the 1890s was used to complete the restoration.

Mamie's family in Boone dated back to 1868, when her maternal grandparents, Carl and Maria Carlson, arrived from Sweden in that year. Carl Carlson worked on a farm, and later in a flour mill, purchasing the mill in 1890. He built a new mill in 1892. Their daughter, Elivera, married John Sheldon Doud, a meatpacker, in Boone on August 10, 1894. The Douds had four daughters. The second was Mamie Geneva, who was born in November 1896, while the family resided at 718 Carroll Street.

The Doud family moved from Boone in 1897, and Mamie grew up in Cedar Rapids and Denver. In 1915, while Mamie was vacationing with her parents in San Antonio, Texas, she met 2nd Lt. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was stationed at Fort Sam Houston. They were married in Denver on July 1, 1916.

Throughout Ike's long and illustrious military career, his brief stint as a university president, and his eight years in the White House, Mamie Doud Eisenhower remained ever gracious and popular. Upon completion of his second term they retired to their Gettysburg home, the only home they ever owned. Dwight David Eisenhower died eight years later in 1969.

During the 1970s Mamie continued to reside at the Gettysburg farm, returning often to Boone, Iowa, to visit her Uncle Joel Carlson, then in his nineties, a retired banker. When the birthplace restoration project finally began in 1975, Mamie was apprised of the project, and showed great interest in it, donating many personal items to the committee and arranging for the loan of original master bedroom furniture from the Colorado Historical Society Museum. Family furniture and other items were made available to the birthplace foundation from her Uncle Joel Carlson's home after his death.

When the house was moved in 1975, a full basement was added, making room for a museum and library. The museum includes a chronology of Mamie's life in pictures, clippings, and memorabilia. There are many items of Eisenhower memorabilia in the museum: family items, photographs, campaign and inaugural materials, commemorative plates, letters, medals, awards, and philatelic covers. There is also a reference library of several hundred volumes on Mamie Doud and Dwight D.

Eisenhower, their families, and the history of the Eisenhower years.

The dedication of the home was held on June 22, 1980, before a crowd of more than five thousand, with longtime family friend Bob Hope on hand to deliver the featured address. Iowa Governor Robert D. Ray also spoke. It was a memorable occasion, with members of Mamie's family present, including her sister, Mrs. G. Gordon Moore, several nieces and nephews, and Mrs. John S.D. Eisenhower, Mamie's daughter-in-law.

The birthplace museum and library is interested in acquiring additional campaign and inaugural items, as well as books, letters, photographs, and other memorabilia of the Eisenhower era. Free brochures about the birthplace and other places of interest in the Boone area are available from the Mamie Doud Eisenhower Birthplace, P.O. Box 55, Boone, Iowa 50036. Or phone (515)432-1896.

The birthplace is located at 709 Carroll Street in Boone, four blocks west of the downtown business district. Visitors may tour the birthplace between 1:00 and 5:00 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday, and by special arrangement, April through December. The home is closed on Mondays, and between January and March, except by appointment. — *Larry Adams, Curator, Mamie Doud Eisenhower Birthplace Museum and Library*

The Iowa Newspaper Project Needs Your Help

The Iowa Newspaper Project is the most ambitious project ever undertaken to locate, catalog, and preserve the state's newspapers, past and present. And it needs *your* help.

Part of a nationwide program sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to catalog, inventory, and preserve United States newspapers, the Iowa Newspaper Project has received \$350,000 in funding from the NEH, the Iowa State Historical Department, Iowa State University, the University of Iowa, the Iowa Newspaper Association, and the Iowa Library Association. Yet the project needs your help and financial support. An additional \$25,000 must be raised to cover the expenses of specially-trained catalogers as they travel to each one of the ninety-nine counties in the state to locate and inventory Iowa's newspapers. The \$25,000, when raised, will be matched with funds from the NEH. Only \$251 must be raised in each county to meet the \$25,000 fund-raising goal. Only \$25 from ten individuals or organizations in each county. (Surprising, perhaps, is the fact that the largest contributions to the project thus far have come from people living outside of Iowa — from Hawaii and New York, specifically — and from local Iowa groups).

Newspapers are a very rich source of information about local people and events. Often they provide the *only* clues about how Iowa towns, cities, and counties developed — socially, economically, and politically. Yet newspapers are perhaps the most fragile resource available to genealogists, librarians, and historical researchers. Your support of the Iowa Newspaper Project will help preserve the heritage of Iowans, through this remarkable historical resource, for generations to come.

We are printing below a project contribution form for the convenience of any individual or organization that might be interested in contributing to this most worthy cause. — *Brenda Todaro, Public Relations Intern, Iowa Newspaper Project*



IOWA NEWSPAPER PROJECT
Iowa State Historical Department
402 Iowa Avenue
Iowa City, Iowa 52240
Telephone (319) 338-5471

I want to help preserve Iowa's heritage.

Here is my donation of \$_____ to support the Iowa Newspaper Project.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zipcode _____

County _____

____Please send me more information about the Iowa Newspaper Project

Contributors of \$20.00 or more will receive a free copy of *The Pageant of the Press: A Survey of 125 Years of Iowa Journalism, 1836-1961*, by William J. Petersen, published by the State Historical Society of Iowa in 1962.

Society Publications Donated to Terrace Hill



At its 27 October 1984 meeting, the members of the State Historical Society of Iowa's Board of Trustees voted to donate one copy of each available Society publication to the Terrace Hill Authority for display at Terrace Hill. In a 16 November 1984 ceremony, Governor Terry Branstad and his wife, Chris, accepted the Society's donation of over one hundred books from George McDaniel, president of the Board of Trustees (far right), and Margaret Keyes, member of the Board of Trustees and member of the Terrace Hill Authority (far left).

New Hours Announced for ISHD's Des Moines Library Facilities

The Iowa State Historical Department announces new service hours for its library facilities in the State Historical Building, East 12th and Grand, Des Moines. Effective October 1, 1984, the historical library, newspaper library, and state census library shall maintain service hours from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. The museum will continue to be open as usual, 8:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., seven days a week.

Thank You for Your Support and Donations

The Iowa Newspaper Project staff would like to extend their special thanks to the following fine people and organizations:

Extra-special, enthusiastic assistance has been received from:

LaVern Velau, who has been a speaker for the Iowa Newspaper Project at several local genealogical society meetings. He also helped us staff our information booth at the annual Iowa Genealogical Society Conference in October 1984.

Ruth M. Umbarger, who sent us background information on the *Rockwell Phonograph*, including holdings information, a county history, and background information on the dog-powered treadmill once used to power the presses.

Allen Wortman, who wrote a lengthy article about the newspapers missing in Mills County and had it published in a local paper.

Generous donations have been received from:

Scott County Iowa Genealogical Society

Mary A. Fullbright Memorial Fund

Iowa City Genealogical Society

Crawford County Historical Society

Mills County Genealogical Society

Hancock County Historical Society

Poweshiek County, Iowa, Historical and Genealogical Society

Sigma Delta Chi — ISU Chapter, Society of Professional Journalists

Monona County Historical Society

reflects the shape of stele, the earliest square monuments of Guatemala, but the round sun shield behind it is Aztec.

Mayan priestly ceremonies, prayers, and symbols attended the mysterious and important process which kept life going, made the rain come, the sun rise, and the maize grow. The second depiction in a sphere is a Chac, or god-impersonator, often called a long-nosed god. The mask is surmounted by a serpent. The suborbital and over-eye plaque decorate the face, and the nose piece shows bones which

were likely to be human. The lolling tongue and jagged teeth are more pronounced, indicating great age as does the steeply sloping peaked skull even when covered by the elephant mask. The gods were called upon as needed to aid the priest in celebrations and took on impersonator guises of both animal and human types.

Above the patch of gray rainfall a lightning lizard darts from the heavy clouds to invoke the jungle rain. That a god could appear as a reptile, as water, as the south wind, as a teacher,





priest, king, or wise person, was all possible for Quetzalcoatl, the serpent god. The lord of the mountain could appear on his mountain's shoulder as a great serpent or as the lightning riding the storm to bring the rain.

The color throughout the panel was modified to give a frieze-like monochromatic appearance in ochre and coppery tones. In the frescoes of Chichen-Itza, a copper-tan color was used for preliminary outlining. Houser used it in outlining the white pyramid. However, the Mayan palette is not yet well understood. Earl Morris, in *The Temple of the Warriors*, described what chemical analysis of the colors found at Chichen-Itza had revealed:

samples of every color found in the frescoes in the Warriors complex have been examined . . . and found without exception to be of mineral origin. Red clay, composed principally of iron oxide, is plentiful . . . in the limestone everywhere about Chichen, but most of the greens, blues and yellows must have been drawn from far sources.

Of the medium . . . in which the pigments are mixed nothing of a positive nature can be said. Commonly the wall paintings have the flat surface and clear transparency of water colors, but in some cases . . . the different pigments, when applied, had a viscosity as of oil paint. Indubitably the medium used there was of syrupy consistence. Presumably it was some sap or other organic liquid, the

dried residue of which has been so broken down by time that it is not recognizable to the chemists.

* * *

The right section of the mural is more easily read for it depicts a twentieth century mid-western farmer harvesting feed corn. The farmer of the 1930s is husking the corn without the aid of modern sophisticated machinery. He wears a work shirt and denim overalls, perhaps by Oshkosh B'Gosh. He picks the corn while wearing white cotton canvas work gloves. In his pocket is a red bandana handkerchief. He wears an engineer's visored cap. On his feet are a stout pair of work shoes.

In the triangular shape of the right border which parallels the seated Corn God of the Mayan section, there is a large microscope. It is the type used by biologists of the time. The contrast of ancient folklore to modern science was thus dramatized. Houser explained:

The idea of this panel, of course, is to make a sort of modern hieroglyph of the present explanation of the sun and rain, and I would try to do it with as much quality of design and dignity as the Maya panel on the left side. In style it would repeat the same Maya forms.

Ticker tape cascades the vertical length of the panel with symbols from the grain markets of 1935. The letter B indicates a bid on CK,

May corn. The last trade on the tape for the day is numbered 109, July wheat, WN, selling at 122, or three dollars a bushel. Corn held a good price in 1935 when 80,479 workers were on relief in Iowa.

In the depression years, Houser often would have seen railway boxcars with men "riding the rails," a common practice of the unemployed. The small figure on the boxcar is a counterpart to the two small seated forms at the base of the pyramid who may well have been Indian workers at rest. Behind the railway cars is a grain elevator. One stood along the tracks in downtown Ames. Two Iowa State College landmarks are shown — the water tower which stood behind Marston Hall, and the central campus campanile with its lancet windows in the bell tower. A ribbon holds the signature, LHOUSER, 1937, and two sets of initials: JEJ, for Ellsworth Jones of Ames; and SDP, for Professor Dale Phillips, a colleague in the Department of Architecture (then in the College of Engineering) at Iowa State. At the base of the large microscope are the initials FJL, for Frank Linn of Shelby, who was captain of the Iowa State College wrestling team in 1937-38.

In shapes roughly similar in size to the Mayan gods in the sky, the right portion holds a whirling sun superimposed upon a series of concentric rings of metal representing a telescope. The sun is crossed by a band of black lines varying in width and colors which represent the Fraunhofer absorption spectrum. To the left of the sun, in contrast to the lightning lizard of the Maya, is a hygrometer, a gauge with a wet bulb and a dry bulb used to measure humidity.

To the right of the sun, a series of fat arrows curve upward. Within each the symbol H_2O is formed. These arrows signify water moving upward to form clouds by transpiration. One arrow then turns downward as the return of rainfall into a gray patch of sky.

The metal rings symbolize measurement. The inmost ring at 9.07 is radiant flux at the

sun's surface, a temperature near 6,000 degrees, the number inscribed on the third ring. The second ring marks elements concerned with photosynthesis, essential to plant growth. These are Ni, nitrogen; Fe, iron; Mg, magnesium; Ca, calcium; C, carbon; and O, oxygen.

The palette of this section reverses from warm to cool contrasts. Here the warm ochre tones illustrate the corn harvest, opposite the cool green growing corn of the Maya. The ticker tape and the microscope echo these tones. The Mayan Indian was copper-toned against the green corn, but the American farmer appears in gray costume against the tawny stalks. The sun, in soft yellow to grays, is surrounded by the silver gray arrows and the deeper-toned metallic gray rings. A play of gray to white flows across the entire mural's surface as seen in the white garments of the Mayan and the white pyramid. Yet these neutrals magnify the colorfulness of the mural, bringing out the richness of more primary colors into vibrancy when fully lighted.

This distinguished mural, which the Treasury applauded as excellent, was carefully composed in depth by the artist. In an October 1937 letter to Edward Rowan, superintendent of the Section, Houser carefully described his plan for depth:

I am working out the values and forms by an underpainting in transparent color in five fundamental earth colors [Houser used umber, ochre, Venetian red, earth green, and black]. Then, in the overpainting in body color, I will introduce more color variety and changes. . . . I wanted to arrange the colors and values so that the design would have depth, but so control the depth that while the wall plane was definitely modified, it would in no way be lost. I would like to explain the plan for depth . . .

Beginning at the center panel, I wanted the ear of corn to be on the picture plane



in front, and to be a bulging form set in an alcove or concave space. Then on either side of the alcove the first corn stalks are to be brought out to the picture plane and are very light. They interlace with the rest of the corn stalks, which are set back far enough to allow each figure to swing from

its back foot, set a little ahead of the corn stalks, to its shoulders and arms which are on the picture plane.

At each end of the panel, the corn god and its leaf background and the microscope and its tickertape [sic] background will also be on the picture plane, while the



buildings on either side and the buildings in the sky will be set on receding planes. These sky forms and distant objects would be arranged in an order somewhat like the inside of a bandshell [sic]. Thus the figures arch forward from a wide flat concave curve and the hollows bounded by

the chests and front of legs of the figures would repeat the bandshell [sic] idea in a smaller and more broken way.

I have made careful studies from nature for the figures and the objects, plants, etc. in the picture.

