

The
PALIMPSEST

Volume 68, Number 2

IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

Summer 1987



Inside —



Photographs such as this one — of farmers with horses and equipment in front of barns or farmhouses — reveal pride in accomplishment and ownership and give valuable clues to work methods and equipment used at that time. Starting on page 36, farming changes are traced through three generations of an Iowa family in Jefferson County. (Above: Bernard Graber of Lockridge, 1924.)



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.

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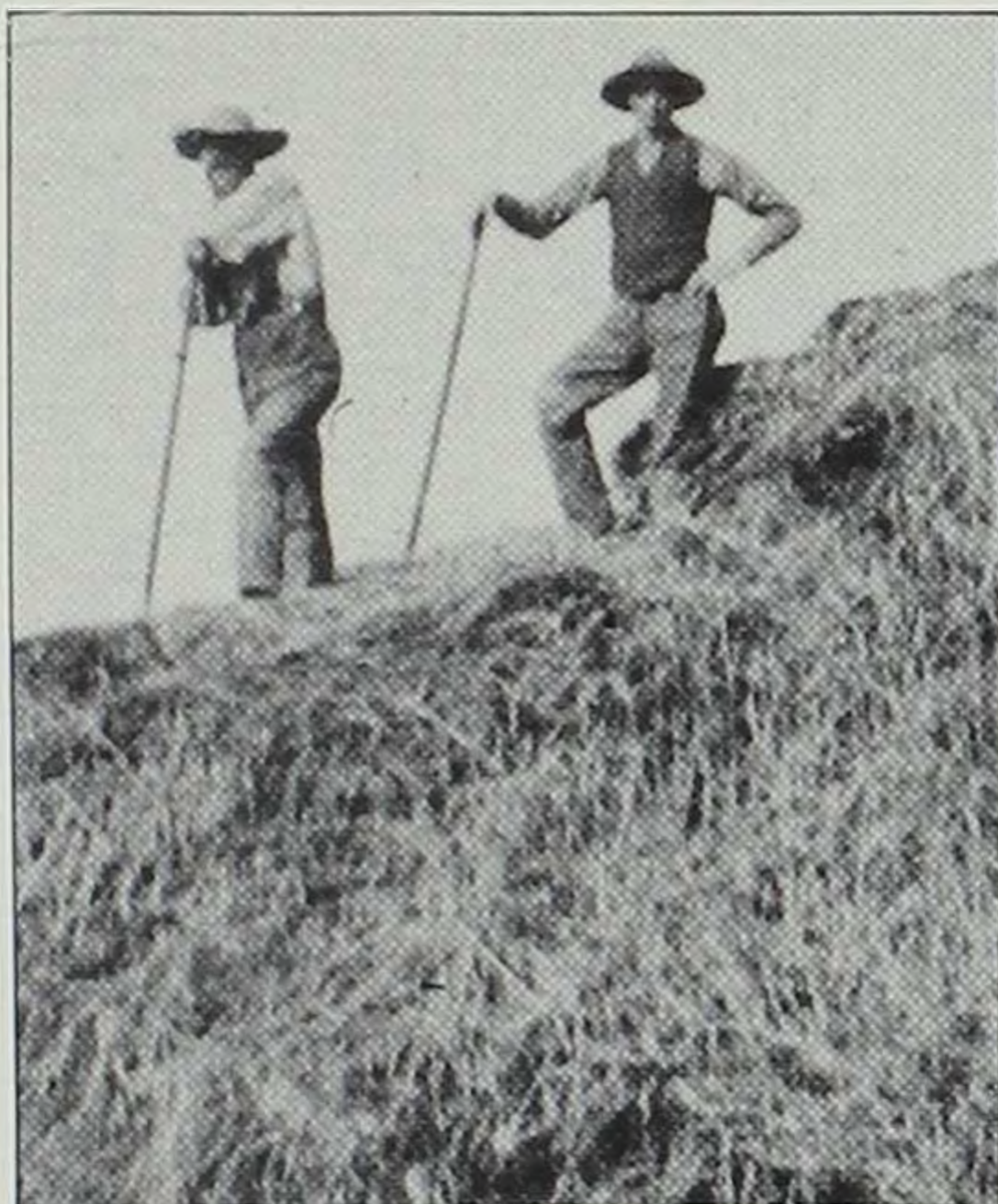
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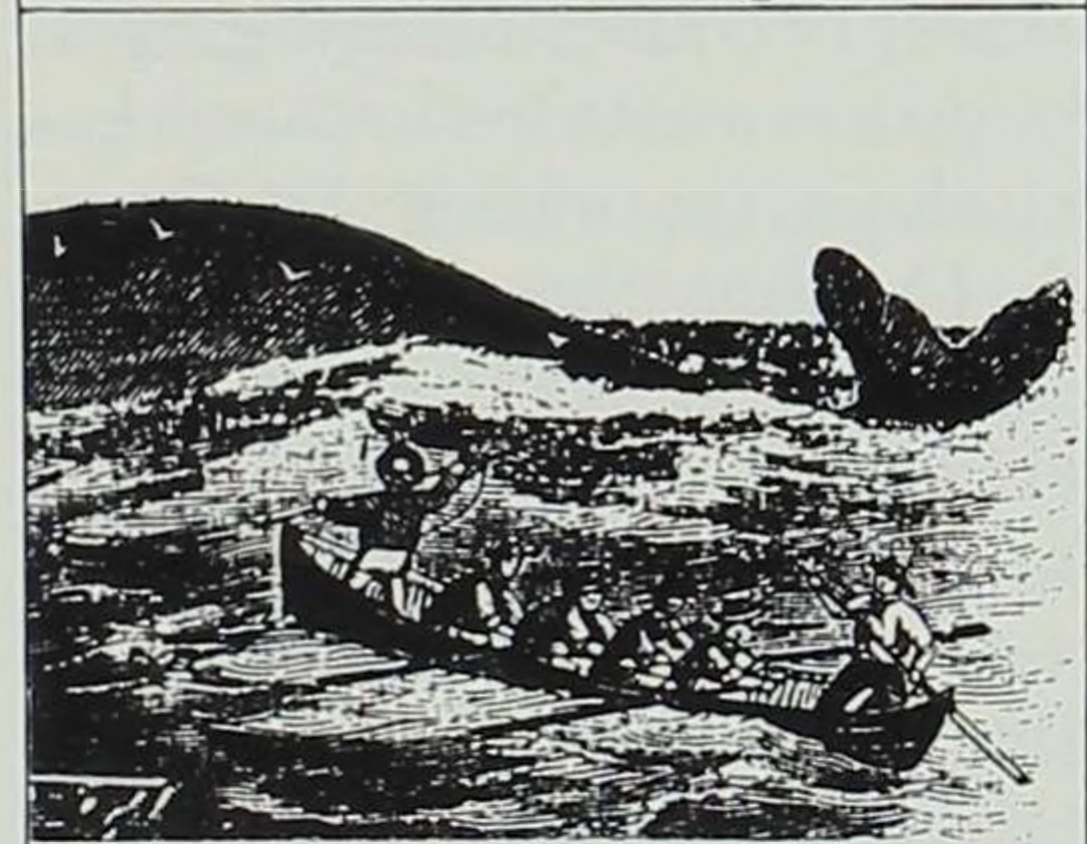
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Six decades of farming 84



Iowa's whale tale 50



Presidential library 60

COVERS: Photographer Fred Kent captured the exuberance of his friends' summertime antics (front), as well as the stillness of summer's end (back), when he worked at Lake Okoboji as a college student in 1913 and 1914. A gallery of early Kent photos begins on page 72.

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Ginalie Swaim, Editor

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SUMMER 1987

50 A Whale for Iowa
by Will Thomson

Zoology professor Charles Nutting was delighted when 4,400 pounds of whale bones arrived at the Iowa City train depot. The dilemma was to find exhibit space in an already overflowing museum. A look at turn-of-the-century curators, collectors, and whalers.

60 A Simple Little Building
by Kevin Boatright

It all started when Lou Henry Hoover wanted to give her husband a present for his fifty-fourth birthday — his birthplace. She failed, but the idea gained momentum and support and eventually evolved into a national historic site and a presidential library-museum.

72 Pantatorium Summer
by Debby J. Zieglowsky

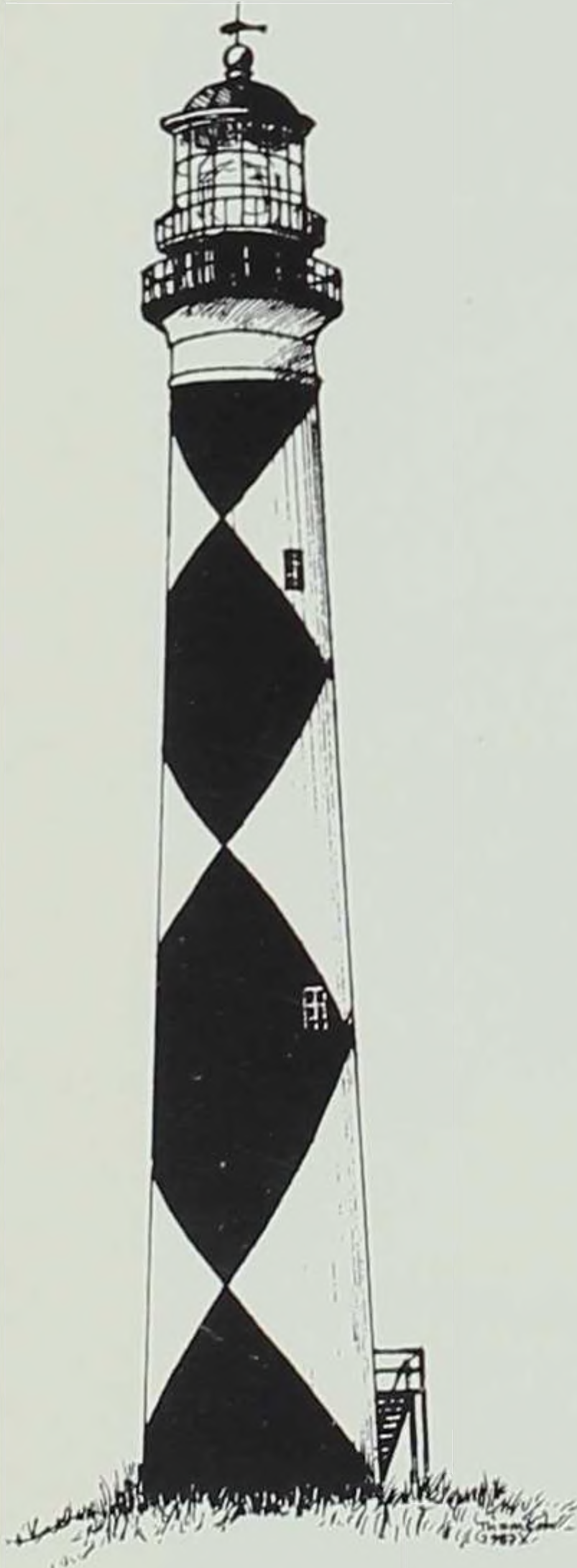
Tourists at Lake Okoboji and Arnolds Park wanted spotless clothes and vacation photographs. In 1913 an enterprising college student named Fred Kent provided both — as he launched his lifelong career in photography.

84 A Farm Family Enters the Modern World
by William Bernard Graber

Across three generations the farm expanded, the work methods changed, but the core of the operation — the family — remained constant and strong. A story about Iowans Dan and Jennie Graber, their children and grandchildren.

A WHALE FOR IOWA

by WILL THOMSON



VISITORS to the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History in Iowa City look with awe at the forty-five-foot skeleton of a whale suspended above them in Mammal Hall, yet few pause to consider how this enormous marine mammal became an exhibit in a midwestern museum. The story of its journey in the late 1890s from an ocean home half a continent away from Iowa provides insight into the resourceful energies and interests of our early naturalists. It encompasses the

scientific endeavors of those individuals and touches on the history of the lost American subculture of whaling. And it explains how this particular whale got to Iowa.

Now the rarest of Atlantic great whales, the North Atlantic right whale, *Eubalaena glacialis*, was once abundant along the east coast of the United States. Because it was easily captured and floated when killed, it was called the "right" whale. Rich in oil and baleen (commonly known as "whalebone"), right whales were a preferred catch for nineteenth-century whalers. Yet today, despite this once-active commerce in whaling, few whale skeletons are on display in American museums because of the immense size of the skeletons and the difficulty of preparing them for display.

In the waning decades of the nineteenth century, several naturalists and curators actively gathered and prepared specimens for

museum collections. One of these men was to make whales his specialty. Herbert H. Brimley, with his brother Clement, had developed a small business of collecting and preparing specimens for other museums to purchase, which led to Brimley's appointment as curator of the North Carolina State Museum in Raleigh.

At the University of Iowa, already established as a major center of museum activity, Herbert Brimley's counterpart was Charles Cleveland Nutting, professor of zoology. In 1886 Nutting, at the age of 28, had been named laboratory assistant and curator of the natural history museum when the museum was moved from Old Capitol to Science Hall and when collections were expanding rapidly. That year the naturalist William Temple Hornaday donated his collection of birds and mammals, including Australian marsupials. In 1887 D. H. Talbot of Sioux City gave his collection of several thousand bird skins. Promoted to full professor of systematic zoology by 1888, Nutting continued to actively solicit specimens for the museum. His speeches and narratives of his expeditions, often written in a semipopular style for nonscientific audiences, generated public and private support and financed several expeditions.

The collections in Science Hall continued to grow. Nutting's own expeditions in the early 1890s to the Bay of Fundy and the Bahamas added seabirds, seals, and marine invertebrates to the collection. Graduate student Frank Russell's three-year expedition to the Far North brought back caribou, musk-oxen, and mountain goats. By 1892 the exhibit space was filled. Boxes of specimens were piled high in the basement and attic. Then in March of

1898 Nutting heard from his colleague Brimley about a particular specimen, and despite the severe lack of exhibit or storage space, Nutting was keen to acquire this unusual addition.

ON THE WINDSWEPT coast of North Carolina, at the eastern tip of a slender twelve-mile-long barrier island called Shackleford Banks, was the town of Diamond City. In the late nineteenth century, Diamond City was a relatively thriving fishing community. The inhabitants were descendants of English stock who had settled on the Outer Banks two centuries earlier.

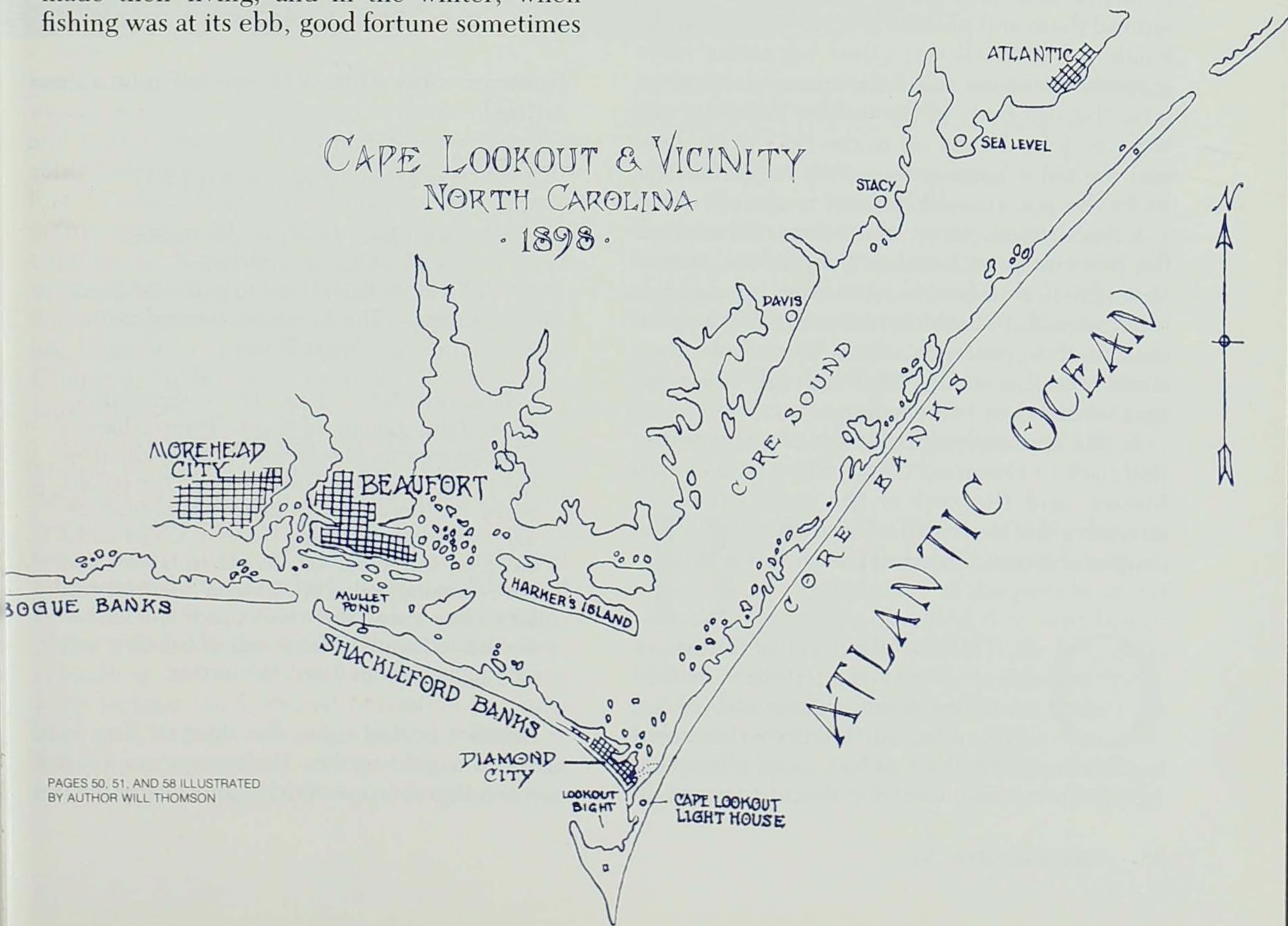
To the east of Diamond City lay the southern tip of Core Banks and Cape Lookout. The town had been named for the black-and-white diamond pattern painted on the Cape Lookout Lighthouse, which warned navigators away from the cape's treacherous shoals. It was in these waters that the people of Diamond City made their living, and in the winter, when fishing was at its ebb, good fortune sometimes

sent whales migrating southward past their shores.

On the morning of February 14, 1898, a low plume of mist was sighted on the horizon — the sure sign of a whale. Cries of "Whale!" stirred adults from their chores and sent children clambering over the dunes to catch a look. As the town came to life, the local men of Captain Tyree Moore's Red Oar Crew scrambled for their tackle.

Within a half-hour of the sighting the crew shoved their six twenty-four-foot open boats into the surf. With a man at each bow, four to six men-at-oars, and a steersman, each boat plowed into the breakers and made to the southeast in pursuit of the leviathan.

After over an hour of steady rowing, the Red Oar Crew pulled in close. The whale, a large female North Atlantic right, was making for open water south of the hook of land called Cape Lookout. The crew was tired, but the



prospect of adding such a catch to their meager winter incomes spurred them on. Harpooners stationed in each bow prepared for action.

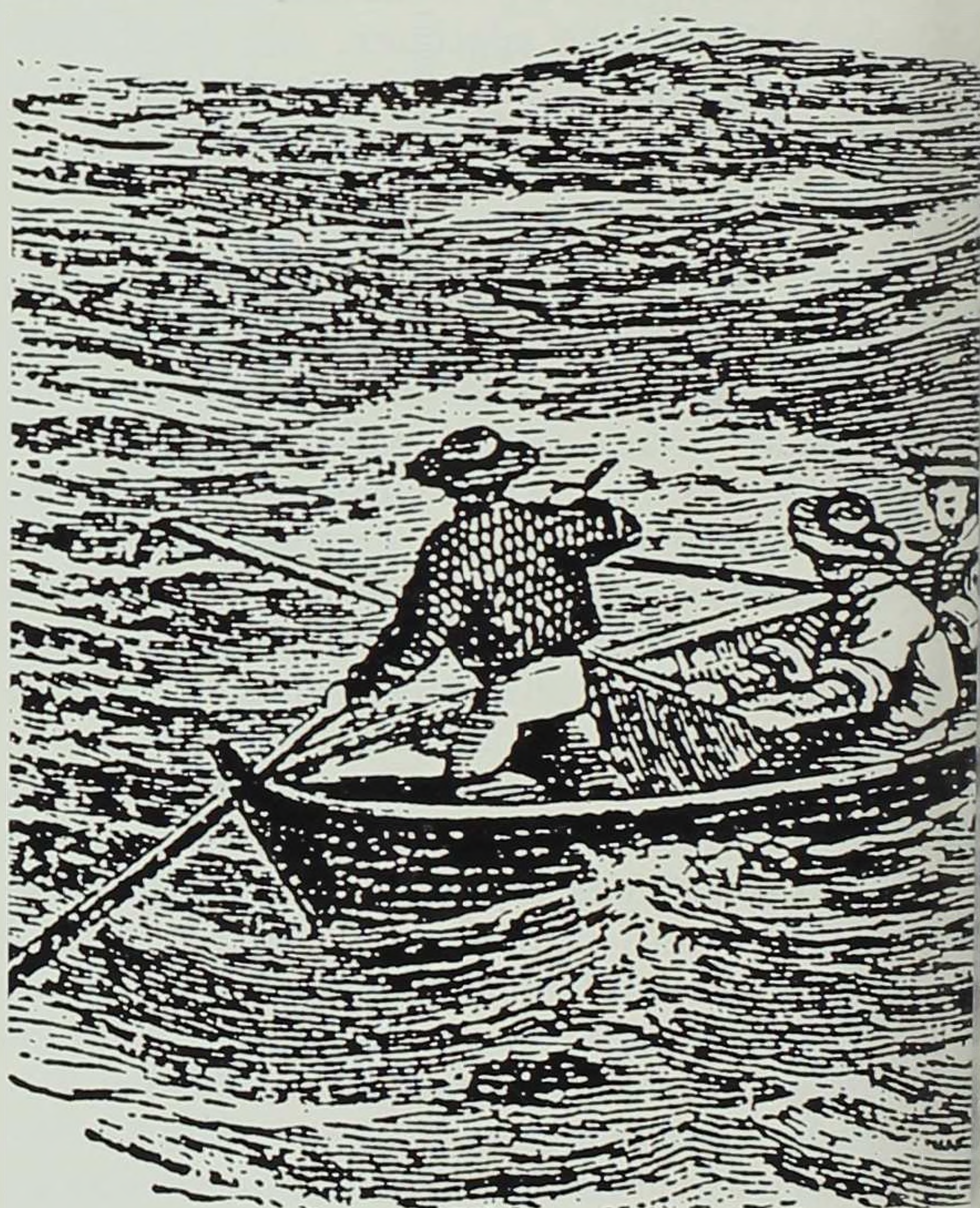
In one boat, John Lewis readied his harpoon and, at the whale's next breach, plunged it into the whale's back. Rowing furiously, the crews kept pace with the animal until it began to tire. Surfacing more and more frequently, it turned from its course as it tried to shake off its pursuers. As the boat pitched beneath him, Lewis hefted the heavy whale gun to his cheek and waited to fire. More like a small cannon with a shoulder stock, the gun was a heavy iron affair capable of driving an exploding harpoon deep into the whale, close to its vital organs. When the huge brow of the whale lifted out of the water directly in front of him, he quickly tugged the gun tight against his shoulder and fired.

The deafening report thundered above the roar of the sea. Lewis was tossed backwards by the recoil of the gun and landed amidships with a thud. The great beast rolled away from them, twisting and thrashing. The water boiled around them and plumes of spray drenched the whalers. After all the other harpoons were thrown, the crew fell back apace and waited until the still body of the animal drifted at the surface. John Lewis sat in the bow of his boat and nursed a large gash on his nose. He was lucky the gun's recoil had not broken it.

Several hours later, the exhausted men of the Red Oar Crew beached the fifty-ton carcass on a spit of sand beside a brackish pond at the western end of Shackleford Banks. As it was the custom to name each whale they took, they christened this whale "Mullet Pond," from the spot where they came ashore.

In the approaching darkness, word was carried back to Diamond City. John Lewis, Tyree Moore, and the rest of the crew sat down around a fire and joined in weary smiles of congratulations; a hard day's work was done.

ON THE MORNING of February 15, Herbert H. Brimley settled into his breakfast chair and, taking a sip of tea, rattled open the morning edition of the *Raleigh News and Observer*. All of the recent news of political tensions in



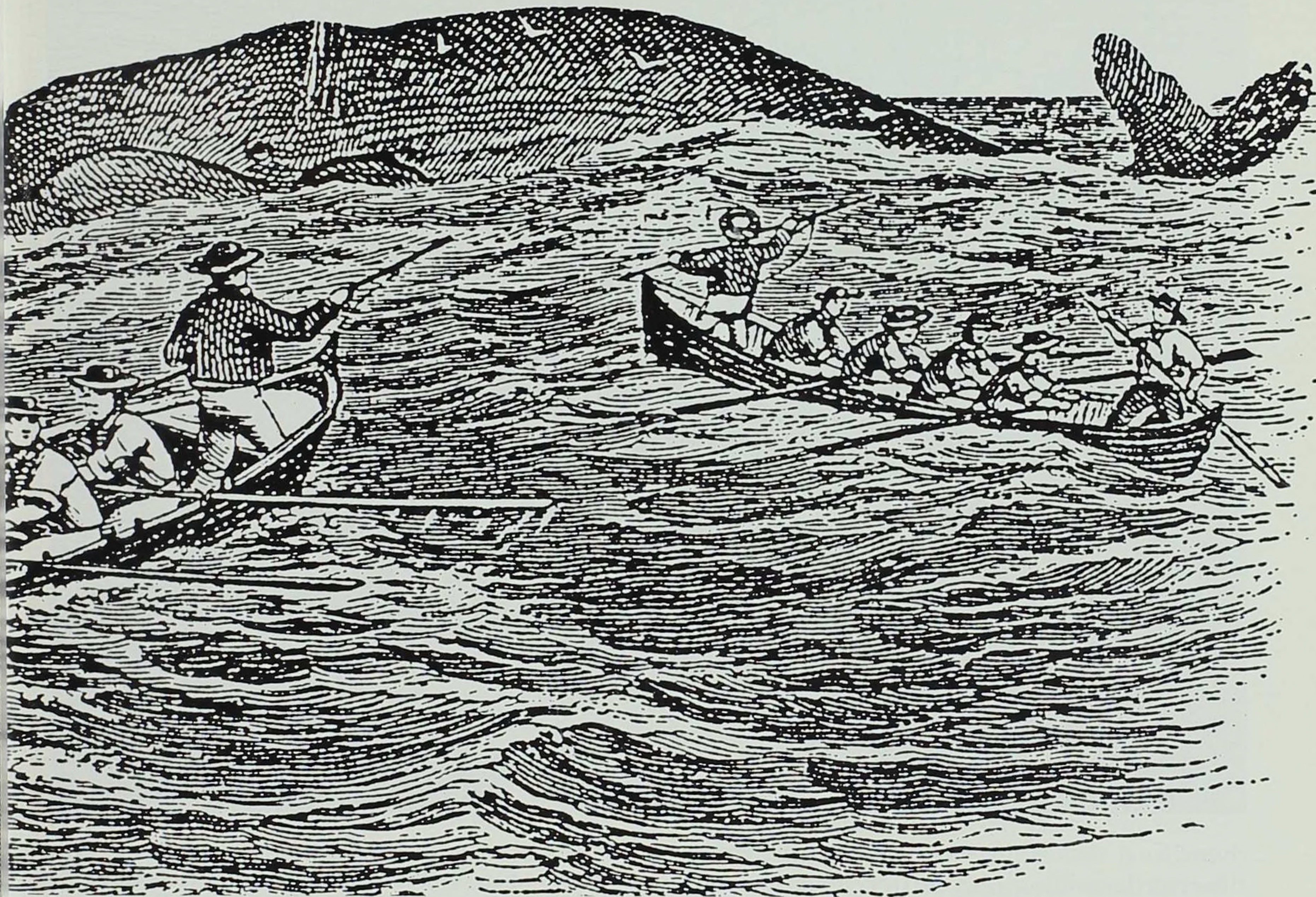
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AN \$1,800 WHALE KILLED

Captain John Lewis of the Beaufort
Fleet Lands a Monster.
Will Yield 65 Barrels of Oil and is 60 Feet
Long — The Largest Captured in
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Beaufort, N.C., Feb. 14 — (Special) — Capt. John Lewis, of Capt. Tyree Moore's whaling crew on Shackleford's Banks killed today at twelve o'clock, near the bar, the largest whale captured here in many years, measuring sixty feet long, bone [baleen] seven and a half feet, will make sixty five barrels of oil and [an estimated] value of eighteen hundred dollars. They towed the whale inside the harbor and landed it at Mullet Pond, where they will commence trying it out to-morrow.

Brimley seized upon the item as if it were news of a gold strike. If the newspaper was correct, this was one of the biggest right whales



ever, and there was no time to waste in securing its skeleton. Pulling out a sheet of paper and a fountain pen, he hurriedly scribbled a cable to his friend in the seacoast town of Beaufort: "Potter: Offer \$25 Banks or \$35 depot. Letter tomorrow. H.H.B." Brimley had no time to spell out the details; Potter would understand. With that, he grabbed hat, coat, and message and headed for the door, reminding himself to stop off and notify his brother Clement on his way to Raleigh's Western Union office.

Herbert and Clement Brimley had immigrated to North Carolina from their native England in 1880, and as young men in their twenties they had taken to their new country quite well. After a false start farming and attempting to teach school on the outskirts of Raleigh, in 1882 Herbert Brimley read a pamphlet titled *Taxidermy Without a Teacher*, rekindling an old interest in natural history. Both lacking much formal education but brilliant and largely self-taught, the brothers by 1884 were operating a respectable trade as "Brimley Bros., Collectors and Preparers." In

A harpooner stands ready in a whale hunt depicted in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*.

1895 Herbert was appointed curator of the North Carolina State Museum. As collectors their travels took them to the Outer Banks of North Carolina, where they discovered a world of wonders, including the great whales. Before the end of his career, Brimley would collect six great whales and several smaller marine mammals. The "Mullet Pond" whale would be their third undertaking, and its final destination would surprise the salt-bitten men of the Red Oar Crew.

BY THE MORNING of February 16 the rendering of the great whale — or "trying-out," as the people of the Outer Banks called it — had begun in earnest. Large iron kettles called try-pots had been set up on the sand near Mullet Pond, and fires burned below them. Even in the cold February weather, the odor of the operation was penetrating. Crews carved large chunks of blubber from the whale's body and carried

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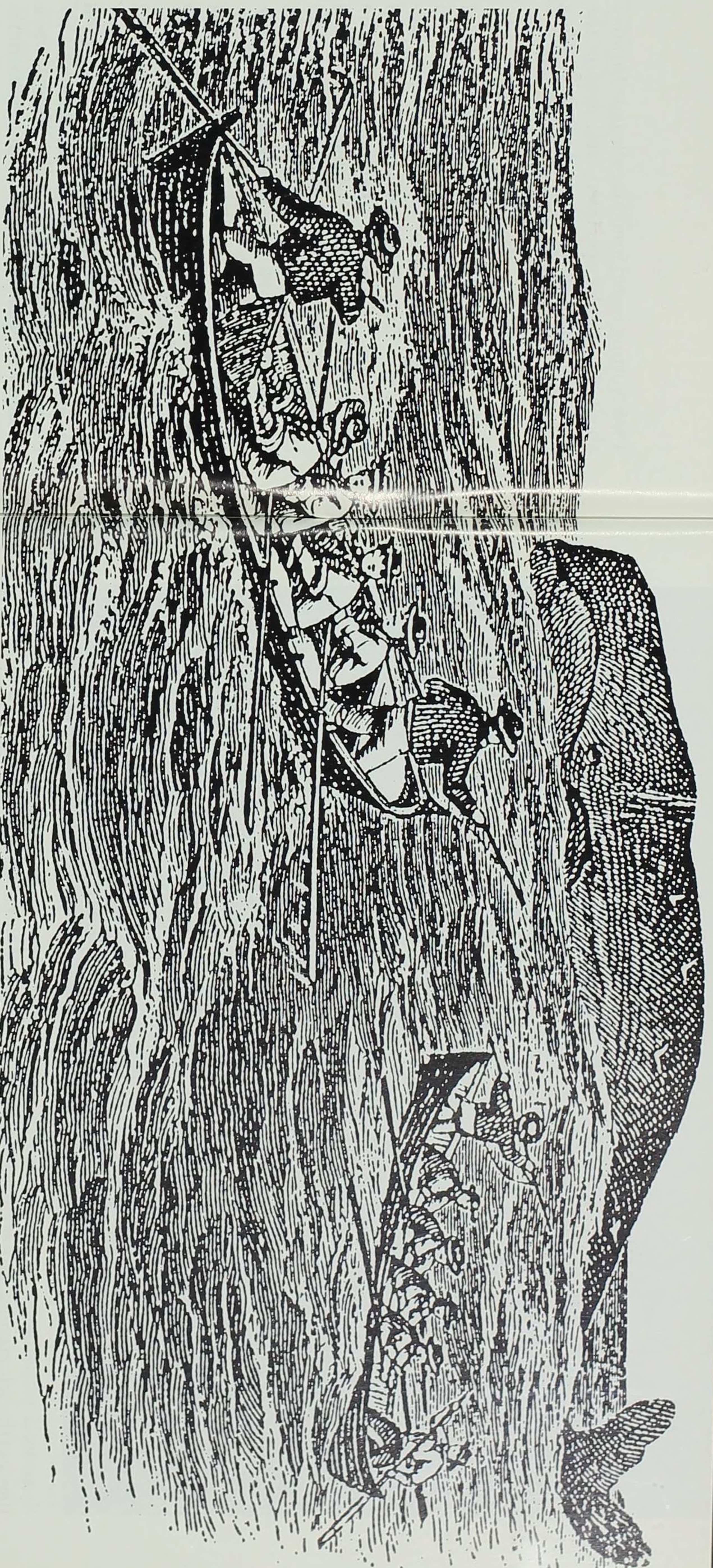
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COURTESY NORTH CAROLINA STATE MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES

them to a makeshift wooden trough. There they cut the salmon-pink fat into strips with old scythe blades and tossed the strips into the try-pots. As the whale oil melted off, the remaining crisp, oily residue was fed to the fires.

While one crew worked on the rendering, other men removed the huge sheets of baleen from the whale's mouth and stacked it to be cleaned and weighed. Tough, flexible, and fibrous, the hornlike substance of baleen would be sold and manufactured into buggy whips, umbrella ribs, corset stays, and dress hoops. "Mullet Pond" would yield over 750 pounds of baleen (some in sheets over six feet long and worth nearly two dollars a pound) and over thirty barrels of whale oil (at twenty-five cents a gallon). The profits from the work would be divided according to a system of shares long followed on the Outer Banks: two shares to each gunner, one to each boat owner, one to each participating crew member, two-thirds of a share to each owner of a full set of tackle, the other third to each harpooner and steersman, and a fee of five gallons of oil to the owner of each try-pot.

Meanwhile, across the sound in Beaufort, the fellow named Potter received Brimley's cable from Raleigh. This time the hard, smelly

Specimens on perches and in jars surround Herbert H. Brimley in his North Carolina taxidermy laboratory.

work of the Diamond City whaling crew would pay off with an unexpected bonus.

TWO DAYS LATER, Potter received a follow-up letter from Brimley concerning the bones of the Mullet Pond whale. Prepared to offer twenty-five dollars — or thirty-five if Potter got them to the nearby Morehead train depot — Brimley outlined what conditions the bones must be in for exhibit purposes. "If quite perfect, that is including all small bones, I will add \$5.00 to each of above prices," Brimley bargained. "Bones to be sufficiently clean of flesh not to be offensive. . . . I beg to offer sincere congratulations on its capture as it is a good one if newspaper articles are to be believed. In writing please give me any dimensions you can & any information about its capture you can, while the matter is still fresh."

The matter was indeed still fresh, Brimley discovered, when he traveled the 150 miles to Beaufort to view his potential investment and conclude the arrangements. Though an experienced naturalist and veteran of other whale-collecting adventures, Brimley never grew

accustomed to the atmosphere of a rendering. "The combination of odors from a smelly whale carcass on the beach," Brimley wrote, "with the sickening effluvia of boiling oil, together with the aroma of burning grease from the fires, is hard to beat from an olfactory standpoint!" Later he described the odor as "approaching that of a fertilizer factory that had been turned into a home for unexpurgated skunks."

Brimley managed to find a silver lining in this cloud of offensive fumes — cheaper freight rates. The cost of shipping 4,400 pounds of whale bones might have been exorbitant. But Brimley secured a much lower rate by shipping the bones as fertilizer material, and the scent emanating from the crates, as they traveled on March 16 by rail to Raleigh, certainly proved ample testament to that commodity.

Once a storage site in Raleigh was found, Herbert and his brother Clement began the search for a buyer for their disarticulated and somewhat odiferous prize. Although the Brimleys had been in the specimen trade for years and had an established clientele, over two tons of unassembled whale was another matter altogether. Then Herbert Brimley happened to think of his acquaintance Charles Nutting, curator of the Museum of Natural History at the University of Iowa. Perhaps the people of Iowa would like to have a whale of their own.

A THOUSAND MILES from coastal Carolina, in land-locked Iowa City, Charles Nutting had his hands full. The university's Museum of Natural History was bursting the seams of Science Hall. Nutting was campaigning hard for a new, more modern facility which would unite the museum and the departments of natural sciences — geology, zoology, and botany. In particular he envisioned a strong zoology department built around a "study" museum, where students would observe diverse collections of specimens arranged in systematic order. When Nutting heard Brimley's offer, he quickly realized that obtaining a whale skeleton was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity — but that opportunity came at a time when there was no storage or exhibit space available. Confident that his dream of a new building would

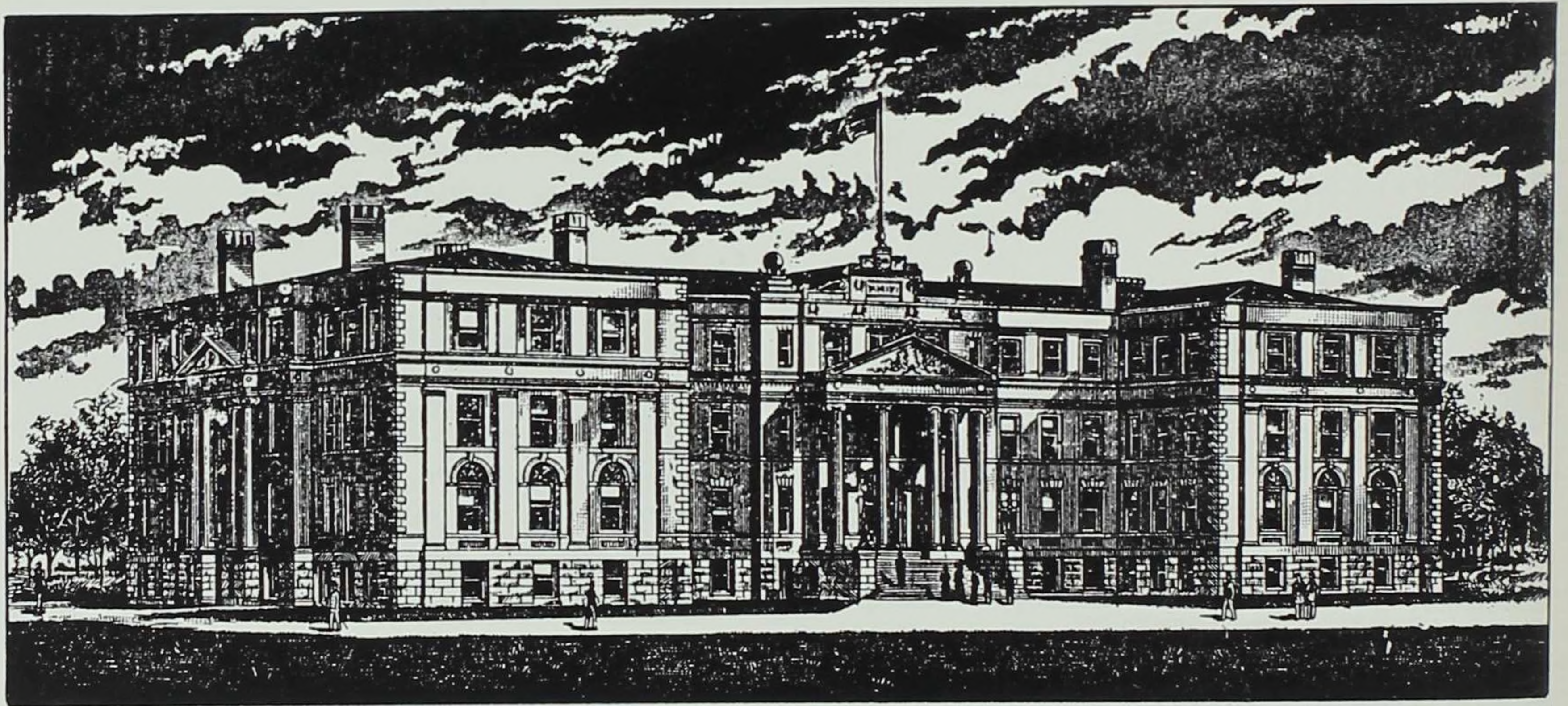
come to pass, Nutting made a decision for the future. Within six weeks Nutting got approval for purchase of the skeleton, and on May 7, 1898, an authorized purchase order for \$250 was on its way to Brimley.

It took the better part of a month for Herbert Brimley to secure the freight rate to Iowa that he desired. Negotiations had to be reopened with Southern Railways, which had first shipped the bones to Raleigh, and on June 20 Brimley received a bid at \$1.62 ½ per hundredweight. This was a much better rate than the University of Iowa had secured from the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific line, who bid at \$2.94 per hundredweight. During these negotiations, university president Charles A. Schaeffer became involved, and on June 21, following word from the Brimleys about Southern's rate, Schaeffer cabled them to accept the lower rate and to await shipping instructions from Nutting. Nutting's cable followed immediately: "H. H. & C. S. Brimley: If you have not shipped whale accept \$1.62 ½ if you can do no better and ship. Answer. C. C. Nutting." Brimley received the telegram and replied,

COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF IOWA ARCHIVES



Charles Nutting acquired the whale skeleton and eventually a new natural history museum in which to exhibit it and other extensive collections of specimens.



The proposed Hall of Natural Science (now known as Macbride Hall) appeared in the March 23, 1904, *Daily Iowan*.

“Have received shipping order from President. Whale leaves this week.”

And so, on June 23, 1898, the bones of the “Mullet Pond” whale began the journey, packed in seven crates and bound by rail for Iowa.

IT IS ALMOST a certainty that there were some serious doubts about the wisdom of the purchase when 4,400 pounds of smelly whale bones arrived in Iowa City, addressed to the university’s natural history museum. Due to their condition and inadequate storage space, the bones were kept outside for several months, until they had been properly cleaned and at least partially cured of their odor.

Five years later the November 23, 1903, *Daily Iowan* mentions the bones in the museum’s attic, in a story designed primarily to encourage support for a new museum building: “How many students aside from those who are admitted to study it, are aware that we have the skeleton of a large whale stored in the darkness of an attic along with thousands of other specimens?” asked the writer in the university newspaper. “Small wonder that the extent of our collections is not appreciated when they are packed away in odd corners exposed to constant danger from fire and mould. In time

when this part of the University is properly housed, the people may know what our museum is.”

The news story may have had some effect: in January 1904 the Board of Regents approved plans for a new building, and Charles Nutting saw his dream at least partially begin to take shape. In the summer of 1905, the three-story brick Science Hall was gently jacked up onto rollers, and workers moved the building to another campus site 150 feet away. The effort — which moved the building no more than seventeen feet a day — was so smooth that equipment and exhibits were kept in the building and summer classes were held in the classrooms and labs during the move.

This feat of strength and maneuvering, which rivalled the beaching of a fifty-ton whale, left space for the new Hall of Natural Science (later renamed Macbride Hall in 1934). Part of the building was allotted to an auditorium and the university’s library (the library building had burned down in 1897). These changes in plans meant that there was not enough space for the geology and botany departments; they would stay in Old Science Hall (today known as Calvin Hall). But Nutting’s zoology department and the museum moved into the new Hall of Natural Science in late 1907. At last Nutting had space for many new exhibits — including the “Mullet Pond” whale skeleton, long stored in the attic of Old Science Hall.

Creating new exhibits largely fell into the

capable hands of Homer R. Dill. As a youth Dill had sought out William T. Hornaday himself for inspiration and direction in his chosen career. Dill came to the University of Iowa from Maine's State Museum in 1907 and was appointed taxidermist and exhibit preparator for the newly quartered museum. Dill would be responsible for filling two large galleries on the third floor with exhibits. He would design and install exhibits, mount specimens, and create new habitat groups, which were scenes composed to represent the reality of an animal's environment, including a painted background scene. Whereas Nutting's devotion to the museum was constantly interrupted by his duties to his research and to the zoology department, Dill could devote his entire energies to the new building.

Dill set to the task of mounting the whale skeleton in late 1909 in the third-floor Mammal Hall gallery. A spacious freight elevator in the building brought the whale bones, freshly cleaned and dried, up to the exhibit gallery floor.

By January 9, 1910, Dill was well along with the assembly, noted a short article in the *Daily Iowan*. Assembling a whale was indeed a learn-

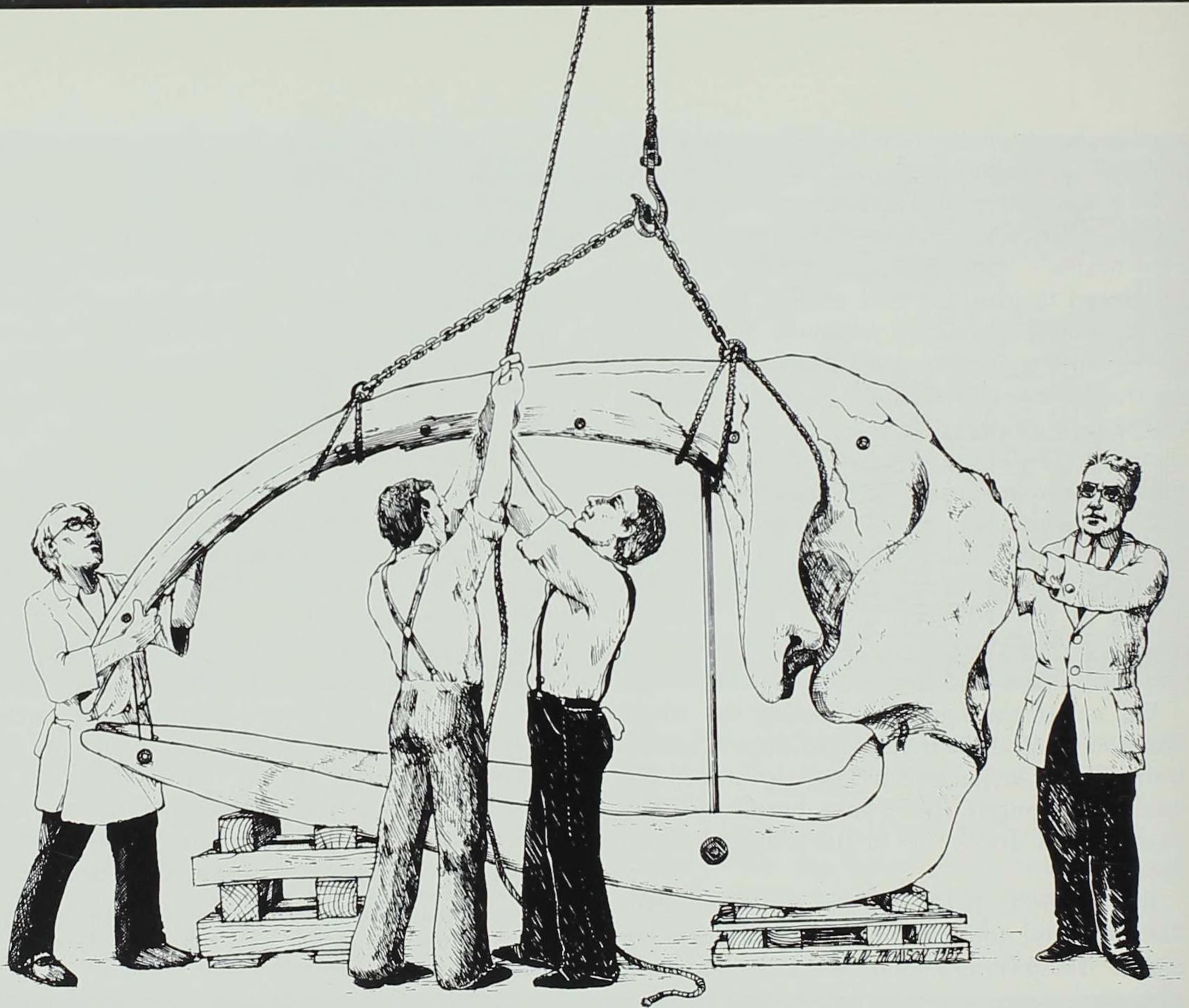
ing experience. At that time there were probably fewer than a dozen articulated skeletons of that size anywhere. Undoubtedly Dill enlisted his students to help him. Dill had already initiated coursework in museum training. By 1910 or 1911 the coursework was formalized — making it today the oldest continuously offered museum program in the nation. Although no record of Dill's exact procedure has been located, it is reasonable to assume that Dill followed a plan recommended by Brimley. A procedure later published by Brimley closely matches the specifics of the Iowa whale exhibit. The steps reveal what a herculean, yet intricate, process the assembling of two tons of whale bones could be.

Dill's first step was to lay the 140-odd parts out on the gallery floor. Tackling the huge skull first — which was over a fourth of the entire skeleton's length — Dill positioned and adjusted each part for fit, then clamped or blocked them in place until most of the skull was aligned. Because the skeleton had been in storage for eleven years, some of the bones had

Homer Dill (standing, with glasses) supervises students in taxidermy and plastic arts. Dill no doubt enlisted student help in mounting the whale exhibit.



COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF IOWA ARCHIVES



undoubtedly warped or become distorted, thus requiring corrections. Using long auger bits and a strong arm, the assembler drilled holes through the very hard outer bone and then bolted the skull together with long carriage bolts. Difficult sections were bridged together with iron pieces hammered out on an anvil. The fit of each part was gradually adjusted until all the parts came more or less in line. Once assembled, the massive skull was as tall as Dill.

The fifty or so vertebrae (each weighing about thirteen pounds) were strung together on a long iron beam the length of the spine. The beam passed through the spinal canal, and thick wooden disks were fashioned and added between each vertebra to form the intervertebral disks. The disks were covered with a plaster veneer and painted.

Next, four threaded steel rods were passed down through the ceiling from steel beams in

Dill (right) and assistants hoist the whale skull, as interpreted here by author/illustrator Will Thomson.

the attic. With several sets of block and tackle — and several measures of steady faith — the assembled skull and then the spine were hoisted up, attached to the rods, and then connected to each other.

A trussed frame of strap iron and rods was constructed to hold the tall, arching ribs in place, and the ribs were wired to the appropriate vertebrae and bolted to the frame. A sternum was fashioned and wired into place, and the two massive shoulder blades were bolted to the flanks of the rib cage. The five-foot-long flippers, which in a skeleton closely resemble gigantic hands, were assembled and bolted into place. With this final step, the completed whale skeleton hung suspended in Mammal Hall. This four-thousand-pound, forty-two-foot collection of bones had become a graceful, delicate thing on a massive scale.

DURING THE FOLLOWING years Dill and Nutting continued to procure outstanding specimens for the natural history museum — largely through expeditions. In 1911 Nutting planned and Dill directed the expedition to Laysan Island in the Pacific to gather data and collect specimens. In 1914, based upon the expedition, Dill completed the Laysan Island habitat group, one of the first cycloramic habitat groups to be developed in the museum world. In the 1920s Dill directed expeditions to Hawaii, Mexico, and Wyoming for birds and mammals. He developed new exhibit techniques and methods of mounting and preserving specimens. Nutting led expeditions to Barbados and Antigua, New Zealand and the Fiji Islands, and served as director of the museum and head of zoology until he resigned in 1926. Nutting died the following year, and Dill served as museum director from 1927 until 1949. Herbert H. Brimley continued in museum work until his death in 1947, along the way writing many reminiscences of his collecting days and coauthoring with Clement (who had become state entomologist in 1919) and Gilbert Pearson the 1942 edition of *Birds of North Carolina*.

Today in coastal North Carolina the unusual Elizabethan speech of the English who settled on the Outer Banks still echoes in the voices of the local people of Carteret County. But the fishing village of Diamond City on Shackleford Banks was abandoned after a storm in 1903. Only a cemetery remains in a grove of live oak behind the windswept dunes. The epitaph of the great whales was also very nearly written,

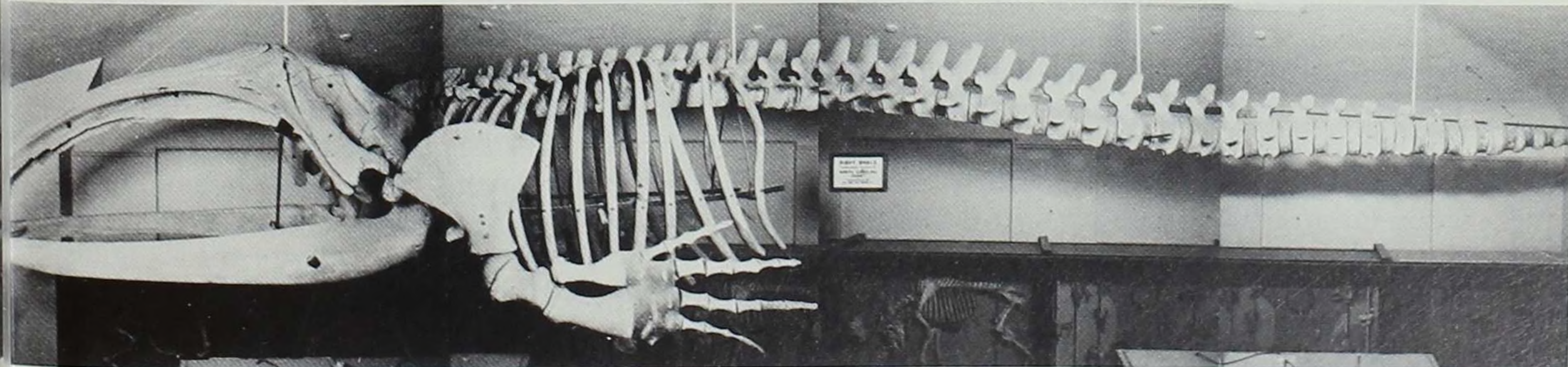
Forty-five feet long, the skeleton stretches nearly the entire length of the gallery alcove and dwarfs nearby exhibits. Restoration and relighting of the exhibit are now under way.

but the decline of the whaling industry and eventual measures to protect whale species have given the whales a new lease on long-term survival.

And what of “Mullet Pond,” the fifty-ton North Atlantic right whale that swam off Cape Lookout ninety years ago? The skeleton still hangs below the vaulted ceiling of Mammal Hall. Because of the Red Oar Crew’s whaling skills, Herbert Brimley’s quick action, Charles Nutting’s persistence and vision, and Homer Dill’s painstaking assembly, the people of Iowa still have a whale of their own. □

NOTE ON SOURCES

Herbert H. Brimley’s personal papers at the North Carolina Department of Archives and History yielded much information: a description of a whale hunt (from a Brimley manuscript quoting a letter from an old-time whaler in the 1930s); an unpublished radio script by Brimley, “Old-Time Whaling in North Carolina”; Brimley’s letters; and a manuscript describing mounting procedures (later published by Brimley as “Do What You Can Now With What You Have,” in the American Association of Museum’s *Museum News* (Nov. 15, 1930). Other sources were Eloise F. Potter, “H. H. and C. S. Brimley: Brother Naturalists,” in the Carolina Bird Club’s *The Chat* (Winter 1986); telegrams in the archives of the North Carolina State Museum of Natural History; Frederick W. True, *The Whalebone Whales of The Eastern North Atlantic* (Smithsonian Institution, #1404 North Atlantic, 1904); U. S. Department of Interior — National Park Service, *A Survey History of Cape Lookout National Seashore* (1-30-1968); and articles in *The Raleigh (North Carolina) News and Observer*. Much of the Iowa story was found in the following sources: the personal papers of H. R. Dill (University of Iowa Archives, Iowa City); Homer Dill, “The University Museum of Natural History,” *Palimpsest*, 33 (Feb. 1952); the *Daily Iowan*; and J. W. Rich, “The Moving of Science Hall,” *Iowa Alumnus*, 3 (Nov. 1905). Three M.A. theses (all written at the University of Iowa) yielded more background: Wilson Lewis Taylor, “Charles Cleveland Nutting and His Work” (1937); Francis J. Kohler, “History of the State University of Iowa: Scientific Expeditions, Collections and the Museum of Natural History” (1944); and Katherine V. Bates, “History of the State University of Iowa: Aspects of the Physical Structure” (1949). Special thanks to Charles McNeill and the staff at the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort, North Carolina.



COURTESY WILL THOMSON

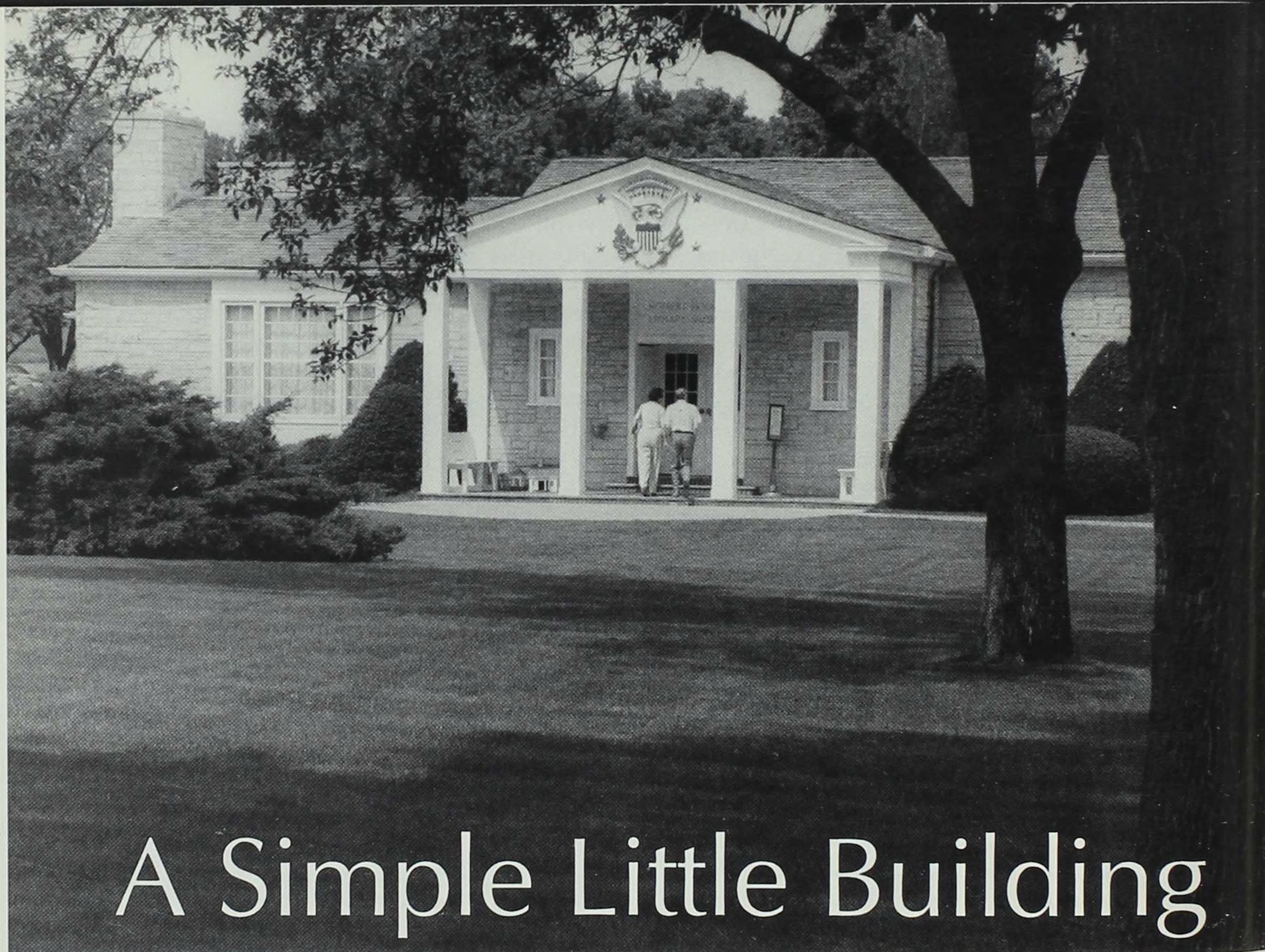


PHOTO BY KEVIN BOATRIGHT

A Simple Little Building

by Kevin Boatright

THE ELEVEN-YEAR-OLD BOY who left town an orphan in 1885, shunted off to an uncertain future in Oregon, came home to West Branch, Iowa, on August 21, 1928, a national hero. "Bert" Hoover was the Republican nominee for president of the United States.

This homecoming, steeped in the glitter and schmaltz of a political campaign, proved to be much more than a whistle stop for Herbert Hoover. It was the beginning of a lifelong relationship with West Branch that would renew his love for Iowa and would, in 1964, bring him back forever to the land where he was born.

While Hoover's one-day visit was an occasion for nostalgia on his part, it was motivated by politics. Midwestern support for Hoover and the Republicans was uncertain, a reflection of the candidate's opposition to the McNary-Haugen Bill and similar solutions to the 1920s

farm crisis. At the convention in Kansas City, for example, Hoover received the votes of only seven of Iowa's twenty-nine delegates. The speech he was to give in West Branch, before an enthusiastic crowd of fifteen thousand, was devoted to farm policy, and was one of only six major addresses he would make during the campaign.

The wealthy, Stanford-educated Hoover was also eager to remind voters of his humble midwestern origins. He was the son of a West Branch blacksmith and a Canadian-born Quaker minister, but before serving as secretary of commerce under Harding and Coolidge, Hoover had been a prominent international mining engineer. During and after World War I, his leadership of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the U.S. Food Administration, and the American Relief Administration had earned him the praise of

Left: The east facade and public entrance of the Hoover Presidential Library-Museum in West Branch.

such diverse figures as John Maynard Keynes and Franklin Roosevelt. Although he was comfortable in the company of kings and presidents, Hoover wanted the American public to think of and accept him as one of their own.

There was no better place to do this than West Branch. On "Hoover Day," the candidate ate breakfast in the cottage where he was born (which had since been turned ninety degrees and attached to the back of a larger house). He posed for photographers while holding ears of Iowa corn, and reminisced in his speech about a boyhood spent "in the swimming hole, fishing in creeks [and] hunting for prairie chickens and rabbits in the hedges and woods. It is the entry to life which I could wish for every American boy and girl."

While the occasion was political, the sentiments were genuine. Hoover retained a fondness for West Branch and for Iowa throughout his life, even though his homecomings were few. Lou Henry Hoover, herself an Iowa native, knew this about her husband. For his fifty-fourth birthday in 1928, she looked into the possibility of purchasing the house where he was born. The owner, Jennie Scellars, wanted to consult her children, but since she could not do so until after Hoover's birthday, nothing came of the inquiry.

THE WARM RECEPTION given Hoover in West Branch was reflected at the polls in November. In the largest local turnout up to that time, Hoover received 528 votes in West Branch, to just 46 for Democrat Al Smith. Hoover was elected president in a landslide.

Local supporters quickly formed a Hoover Birthplace Committee, an outgrowth of the partisan Cedar County Hoover Farm Club that had been formed that April. The Birthplace Committee organized an excursion train, the "Hoover Birthplace Special," to transport a contingent of Iowans to the March 4, 1929,

inaugural in Washington. It purchased buttons and banners for the occasion and sought funding to send the Coe College ROTC Band to Washington. Committee president T. A. Moore, speaking to a WOC radio audience about the trip, reflected West Branch's pride in its native son when he said: "We of West Branch . . . have no fears that the blast of the furnace, the roar of industrial machinery, the whir of the spindle or the pandemonium of the Stock Exchange, will ever drive from [Hoover's] life's dearest memories the lowing of the cattle on the prairie, the squeal of the mortgage lifter, or the Thump, Thump, Thump of the corn against the barn board."

Throughout Hoover's four years as president, West Branch followed the ups and downs of his administration with special interest. Although Iowa and the nation voted for Roosevelt in 1932, West Branch remained loyal to Hoover by a margin of 450 to 156.

During Hoover's presidency, interest in his birthplace naturally increased. Jennie Scellars opened her home to visitors, who signed her guest register in ever-growing numbers. By the summer of 1931, more than 34,000 people had been escorted through the cottage wing, representing every state and several foreign countries. Two marriages were even performed there in 1929, and a replica, built for the Iowa State Fair by the Des Moines Better Homes Committee, proved to be one of the most popular attractions of the 1930 fair.

Scellars, who lived in the house with her son Earl, charged ten cents admission to visitors. This steady income was one reason why she resisted renewed overtures in 1930 to sell the building to the Hoover family.

That inquiry was made discreetly and indirectly. Working through *Des Moines Register* cartoonist J. N. "Ding" Darling and a West Branch friend of Hoover's, Fred Albin, the president's secretary, Lawrence Richey, tried to ascertain whether Scellars was more willing to sell the property than she had been in 1928. In a letter to Richey on the condition of the

By the summer of 1931, more than 34,000 people had been escorted through the cottage wing.

house, Darling reported that it "is kept in apple-pie order; the yard is well sodded, and flowers around the house make it very attractive to the eye." A purchase price of \$2,500 was discussed but after consulting with her children, Scellars again declined to sell the house.

Those who wanted to purchase the house seem to have been motivated by fears that it would be exploited commercially. The 1930 inquiry quieted that concern. Darling reported that "there are no refreshment stands either on the premises or near it, and Mrs. Scellars, herself, conducts the job of showing the visiting tourists through the house with fine dignity and sympathetic affection."

Others were also interested in acquiring the building. Edgar Harlan, curator of the State Historical Building in Des Moines, looked into obtaining the property by purchase or through condemnation. The state lacked the funds to buy the house, and condemnation would have been an embarrassment to the president. Satis-

fied that the house was in good hands, neither the state nor the Hoovers took any further action while Hoover was in office.

ON OCTOBER 22, 1933, the former president rekindled the question with a note to Fred Albin: "I am sorry that Mrs. Scellars is not in humor to sell her house. Mrs. Hoover would have liked to have had it. The day may come, however, when [Scellars] will be anxious to have a patron, in which case, you are authorized to go ahead."

Scellar's death, in June 1934, brought matters to a head. The heirs contacted the Hoovers in California, offering to sell the house in West Branch. Hoover responded to Albin on February 27, 1935, that "they wanted a good deal too much and I don't want to be known in this transaction. Mrs. Hoover wants you to buy the house. Would you open negotiations in your



The smaller house in which Hoover had been born had been pivoted and added onto a two-story house. This rear view was taken August 21, 1928, when Hoover campaigned in West Branch.

Restoration "isn't my idea," said Hoover. But it "would please Mrs. Hoover."

own name and get a week's option at the lowest price possible?"

That price proved to be \$4,500 for the house and its twelve lots of land. The purchase took place on July 29, 1935, in Albin's name. On October 1, he transferred the title to Allan Hoover, the president's younger son, who had been handling arrangements for his parents.

With the house finally acquired, the problem remained of what to do with it. A memo of October 7, 1935, believed to have been drafted by Lou Henry Hoover, spelled out two possible alternatives:

Project 1. To restore the house and lots to about 1880 condition with [the statue of] Isis as a feature.

Project 2. To remove the house entirely and create a small park or children's playground.

The statue of Isis, given to Hoover by the children of Belgium in gratitude for his World War I relief work, was in temporary storage in California. The author of the memo described the house as "probably not in condition to last much longer." It needed a new roof and foundation and would have "to be rebuilt to a considerable extent, to turn it into a passable monument."

If the house was to be restored, as the memo suggested, it would have to be maintained and kept open for visitors. If the house was torn down, and a small park given to West Branch, the community might possibly "use the site for a town hall or a fire house in a few generations." Regardless of which option was chosen, the author of the memo noted that a historical association "is probably the best custodian."

The question of the house's fate had been settled by June 11, 1937, when Hoover visited the site accompanied by an attorney, Harrison Spangler, and an architect, Bruce McKay, both of Cedar Rapids. Hoover acknowledged that the house was to be restored, based on his recollections and any other available evidence.

Restoration "isn't my idea," said Hoover,

since "the old place looks all right to me just the way it is." But, he added, it "would please Mrs. Hoover."

To accomplish this, the Scellars house would be torn down except for the cottage wing, which would be turned ninety degrees and moved back to its original location on a new foundation. Once the work was completed, according to the *West Branch Times*, the Hoovers hoped to turn the site over to "the Iowa Historical Society or a similar organization for preservation."

Architect McKay recommended that the "Birthplace Cottage," as it came to be called, be enclosed within a larger protective structure. Lou Henry Hoover rejected this idea. Instead, she suggested that a caretaker's house be built to the west and attached by a covered walkway. This would provide security for the cottage against vandalism without compromising its rustic appearance.

Meanwhile, Lou Henry Hoover sought recollections from family members concerning the original appearance of the house. This information guided McKay in the restoration work that began in June 1938.

Funding for the project came directly from the Hoovers, who were kept informed of progress by McKay and Fred Albin. "We are getting along fine with the work on the cottage," wrote McKay in August. "Mr. Albin is sending you some pictures and from them you will get a good idea as to how it's going to look. The hand-split shakes on the roof, with the board and batten sides, really do look just right for such a place."

As the restoration proceeded, attention again turned to management of the finished site. Lou Henry Hoover asked Harrison Spangler to look into the legality of forming an organization to be responsible for the cottage and grounds. "We should like very much to have an association set up," she wrote. "I am wondering if it would be possible to have trustees and members of the association, the members to be anyone who wanted to join, and the trustees to be comprised of some representatives of the

“We should like to have an association set up,” Lou Henry Hoover wrote. “I am wondering if it would be possible to have trustees and members.”

members. . . . If this could be worked out, Allan and I will transfer to the Association the property when its reconstruction is complete.”

Spangler responded by drawing up articles of incorporation for an organization whose object “shall be to acquire, take care of and preserve the cottage, and its surrounding grounds.” At a March 22, 1939, meeting at the cottage, thirty local citizens discussed and signed the articles of incorporation of the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Society. Fred Albin was elected president, with William Anderson as vice-president and Frank Pearson as secretary-treasurer.

THE NEW SOCIETY set to work preparing a budget that would cover insurance, upkeep of the house, lawn mowing, a pedestal for the statue of Isis, furnishings, and the caretaker’s \$60-a-month salary. The Hoovers transferred the deed to the “Birthplace Cottage” to the Birthplace Society on December 1, 1939. Allan Hoover, acting for the family, made it clear that the society would be in charge of the site, with funding whenever needed from the Hoovers. All he asked for was an annual budget, which should be as simple as possible. He wrote to Albin that “I do not believe the Society should develop the house and yard into a ‘show place,’ but should maintain it in appearance and to keep it running as one would logically have expected it to look at the time of my Grandfather — in good repair and with neatness, to be in general keeping with the surroundings of West Branch.”

The society had instructions to ask Allan Hoover for any money it needed, but it was reluctant to do so, often waiting until a check had bounced before requesting funds. Early on, the society hoped to relieve the Hoovers of the burden of supporting the West Branch group, and the Hoovers did not object. Should an admission fee be reinstated, asked Allan?

Could “outsiders” contribute money to the society, asked Pearson? Could the society accept tax-deductible gifts of cash and real estate? All of these questions in their correspondence pointed to a mutual desire for the society to be self-supporting.

Herbert Hoover himself made the first substantial gifts to the society: two farms, one in Missouri and the other near LeGrand, Iowa. The farms, eighty acres each, were eventually sold for \$25,000.

Other interested persons were also free to make contributions. The family’s willingness to let others help support the site did not mean the Hoovers wanted out. “Our own interest is in no way diminished,” wrote Allan in a letter to Frank Pearson. Reflecting the growing awareness of the site beyond West Branch, he added: “I am quite surprised that the restoration has attracted so much attention. Now that the work has been practically completed, I think that the acceptance of a voluntary offer, without solicitation, would ensure a permanent and wider interest, outside of that of our small group and the town of West Branch.”

The Iowa legislature also began, in 1941, the first of a series of appropriations in support of the site. This appropriation, coupled with other funding sources, effectively relieved the Hoovers of responsibility for the day-to-day expenses of the society.

The rather limited scope of the society in its early years changed drastically in 1945. In January, Hoover’s elder son, Herbert Jr., outlined to Spangler an ambitious proposal: “Some friends of my father’s, with whom I would join, wish to secure forty to fifty acres adjoining the little house in West Branch; they would like to improve it into a park and present it to the West Branch people.” Up to \$20,000 could be spent to buy the land, with another \$20,000 to develop the park.

This project was undertaken in some secrecy to avoid driving up land prices, and was not

completed until March 1946. Included in the transactions were two houses, five lots, three half-acre tracts, a fifteen-acre farm, and a storage building.

AS THE SIZE of the site began to grow, so did the society's thinking regarding future possibilities. One of these took shape in 1948, when William Anderson, the society's new president, invited Herbert Hoover to celebrate his seventy-fourth birthday in West Branch. After considering the invitation for nearly two months, Hoover accepted. His appearance on August 10 was reminiscent of the reception he received in 1928. An audience of more than twenty thousand was present to hear the former president, who had returned to public prominence after 1945 as coordinator of President Truman's Famine Emergency Committee and as chairman of the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government, the first "Hoover Commission."

In his remarks, Hoover reminisced about his West Branch childhood and about his life. "Within the soul of America is freedom of mind and spirit in man," said Hoover. "Here alone are the open windows through which pours the sunlight of the human spirit. Here alone is human dignity not a dream, but an accomplishment."

The response to Hoover's first visit to West Branch in eleven years energized the Birthplace Society under its new leader, Anderson. The 1948 celebration brought the society national recognition for the first time. It also gave its leaders an opportunity to discuss with Hoover their ideas for the expanded park, including a small museum, extensive landscaping, and other improvements.

Subsequently, the society constructed a driveway through the park, with a stone gate at its entrance. Two picnic shelters were erected near the Birthplace Cottage, and on June 30, 1952, the entire area was dedicated as "Herbert Hoover Park."

The success of the 1948 birthday party, and the park development that followed, led the society to consider another invitation: Would Hoover return to West Branch for his eightieth birthday, on August 10, 1954? The Iowa legislature endorsed the idea in March 1953, when both houses unanimously passed a resolution to that effect. Hoover accepted, setting in motion six months of frantic preparation.

This time, the celebration lasted two days instead of only a few hours. The National Guard provided an honor escort, and Hoover's speech was televised. As he looked out over his hometown, a crowd of fifteen thousand well-wishers, and a national audience, Hoover closed his remarks by saying: "Eighty years is a long time for a man to live. As the shadows lengthen over my years, my confidence, my hopes, and dreams for my countrymen are undimmed. This confidence is that with advancing knowledge, toil will grow less exacting; that fear, hatred, pain, and tears may subside; that the regenerating sun of creative ability and religious devotion will refresh each morning the strength and progress of my country."

Clearly, the two birthday celebrations had done much to cement Hoover's feelings toward his birthplace. Writing to Anderson on August 12, in one of his few handwritten letters, Hoover said that "the affection which the people of West Branch and the people of Iowa showed to me is more than a precious memory."

IN RESPONSE TO Hoover's speech, the number of requests for information about the Birthplace Society grew. Spurred by this interest in what was still a largely local club, a group of trustees met twice to review the birthday celebration and to plan for the future. These meetings led to a decision to expand the scope of the society.

What they envisioned was a state or national organization that could promote and pay for the development of the West Branch site. With the approval of the Hoover family, a new organiza-

"I am quite surprised that the restoration has attracted so much attention," remarked Allan Hoover.

“It looks like we’re off to a good start,” wrote one trustee. “With the time and work you have put into it, it just can’t miss.”

tion, the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Foundation, was created on December 1, 1954. Its primary objective was to “aid in the preservation of the birthplace of Herbert Hoover at West Branch, Iowa, and the advancement of the principles for which he has stood.”

Admiral Lewis Strauss, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and a longtime friend of Hoover’s, became the first chairman of this foundation, which coexisted with the Birthplace Society. The three vice-chairmen were Allan Hoover, Herbert Hoover, Jr., and William Anderson. They were joined by more than fifty other trustees selected from across the country, many of them prominent figures in government or business.

“It looks like we’re off to a good start,” wrote Anderson to John Henry, a trustee and director of public affairs for the *Des Moines Register*. “With the time and work you have put into it, it just can’t miss.”

Under the new arrangement, the society managed and maintained the park in West Branch, while the foundation generated outside funds to develop the site. It took time for the foundation to find its proper role. An early suggestion that it fund scholarships raised the possibility that such a drive might compete with Hoover’s efforts to raise money for the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

Arguing against scholarships, John Henry wrote that the foundation ought not to try “to get more students into the State University of Iowa. (Our problem is how to handle the ones already there.)” Even though Henry had originally proposed the scholarship idea, he suggested a resolution “to the effect that we are *not* in the scholarship business. . . . Maintaining the Birthplace park on through the future certainly can be a job enough for one foundation.”

The society’s next project was one that Herbert Hoover originally opposed: reconstruction of his father’s blacksmith shop. No one knew what the actual building looked like, and some thought it might detract from the Birth-

place Cottage. Eventually the Hoovers changed their minds. The blacksmith shop was completed in May 1957, but was located west of its original site in deference to the Birthplace Cottage. Trustee Fred Maytag presided over the June dedication ceremony, using an anvil for his lectern and a hammer for his gavel. That ceremony, marking the completion of a ten-year spurt of activity in West Branch, was in fact only a prelude to the even more ambitious work that followed: the creation of a Hoover museum.

A letter from Neil MacNeil, a friend of Hoover’s, to William Anderson in May of 1958 launched the project. In it, MacNeil quoted Hoover as saying: “I will give you [MacNeil] an idea to pass on to the boys in West Branch if you wish to do so. It is a simple little building in some part of the park remote from the cottage itself in which we can display a lot of so-called Hoover memorabilia.”

Less than a week later, Hoover wrote Anderson directly to propose a museum, adding that “such a collection would come under the provisions of the law providing for support from the Federal Government, such as is now being done for the Truman and Roosevelt collections.”

Hoover had attended the 1957 dedication of the Truman Library in Independence, Missouri. This event no doubt stirred Hoover to think about a similar museum of his own, to complement his archives at the Hoover Institution. The final spur to action, however, may have been two films, “Birthday Goddess” and “This is Worth Remembering,” that were sponsored by the Birthplace Foundation and shown to Hoover in March 1958.

“Birthday Goddess” documented the development of the park in West Branch. “This is Worth Remembering” was a film about the eightieth birthday party. MacNeil wrote to Anderson that “Mr. Hoover was deeply touched” when he viewed the films. “When I say he was touched,” he wrote, “I mean exactly



Foundation president William B. Anderson breaks ground for the library-museum on May 4, 1959. The birthplace cottage is the small white building in the distance. Behind Anderson (from left): William Smith, construction firm superintendent; L. D. Vickers, administrative assistant to Fred Maytag; Fred Maytag, trustee; William Weber, of Weber Stone in Stone City; John M. Henry, trustee; Paul M. Jensen, vice-president of Viggo M. Jensen construction company; Floyd Fawcett, R. B. Figge, Ralph Evans, L. C. Rummells, and John Thompson, all trustees; and Rev. L. E. Bauman, who gave the invocation.

that — in fact, he was moved to tears and had to wipe his eyes with a handkerchief. I don't, of course, want this advertised."

Anderson and a small group of trustees considered Hoover's museum proposal in confidence and announced their willingness to undertake the project. They arranged for temporary storage of the memorabilia in Cedar Rapids, and the first shipments began to arrive.

To prepare for the enormous undertaking, the Birthplace Society and the Birthplace Foundation finally merged in November 1958. One of the first acts of the united organization was the formation of a land acquisition committee. To build the museum and to ensure its

protection from commercial exploitation, the park needed to expand to the south, toward the future route of Interstate 80. Between the park and the highway stood the John and Pauline Kofron farm, and negotiations began toward purchase of this property.

Confident that the adjacent land would be acquired soon, the foundation broke ground for the museum building on May 4, 1959. The New York firm of Eggers and Higgins was chosen as architect, with local oversight by William Wagner of Des Moines and construction by the Coralville firm of Viggo M. Jensen Company.

The groundbreaking took place under a

"I will give you an idea to pass on," Hoover said. "It is a simple little building in which we can display a lot of so-called Hoover memorabilia."

cloud of uncertainty, caused by speculation that Hoover was considering moving his papers to West Branch, as well as his memorabilia. It had been assumed that the Hoover Institution would be the repository for Hoover's personal and official documents, but his dissatisfaction with the leadership and direction of the institution during the mid-1950s had led to strained relations with his alma mater. The appointment of W. Glenn Campbell as director of the institution in 1959 brought a reconciliation, but the question of the papers remained unresolved.

Uncertainty concerning the ultimate size and function of the building, coupled with difficulty finding solid footings in the soft soil next to Wapsinonoc Creek, held construction in limbo during 1959 and 1960. Convinced that more space would be needed for memorabilia than the original 5,000 square feet would accommodate, the foundation decided to expand the museum by 2,050 square feet while construction was underway.

THE EXTENT OF THE MUSEUM was not determined until June 1960, when Franklin Floete, director of the General Services Administration, notified the Birthplace Foundation that the National Archives (then a part of General Services) was ready to operate the facility whenever it was completed. Hoover had finally agreed to this arrangement. At a foundation meeting in Des Moines on December 13, Chairman Strauss was authorized to offer all of the foundation's West Branch facilities to the federal government "for the purpose of creating, maintaining, and operating a Presidential archival depository."

Two days later, Hoover wrote Floete to confirm the foundation's action and to offer "all of my collected presidential papers, wherever they may now be housed, as well as papers accumulated by me prior to my presidency and those accumulated since leaving the White House." Access to these papers, which were still Hoover's personal property, would be subject to certain conditions. Excluded from the gift would be "the 'war and peace' documents gathered since World War I" which had

already been given to the Hoover Institution.

Thus, Hoover resolved the Stanford/West Branch dilemma. About half of his personal and public papers would be deposited in Iowa in the care of the National Archives. The Hoover Institution would retain those Hoover papers related to the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the United States Food Administration, and the American Relief Administration, all of which related closely to the institution's core mission as a center for the scholarly study of war, revolution, and peace.

With the ultimate purpose now clarified, the foundation turned its full attention to completing the expanded building and purchasing the Kofron farm. The State of Iowa had already purchased 27.1 acres of the farm for interstate right-of-way for only \$27,200, but the Kofrons wanted between \$1,500 and \$2,000 an acre for the remaining 108 acres, plus \$20,000 for their house. The Birthplace Foundation was willing to pay \$60,000 for the 87.5 acres west of Downey Street between the park and the interstate. An agreement was never reached. The 87.5 acres were eventually sold in 1962 to Greater Iowa Development Corporation for \$106,000.

The object of purchasing this land had always been, in Allan Hoover's words, "to prevent a Knott's Berry Farm or Disneyland being hatched next door." This did not happen. Greater Iowa Development ultimately resold the tract to the federal government in 1969 for \$250,000. This tract was later reconstructed as a prairie preserve, reminiscent of Iowa in the 1870s.

As construction of the "Library-Museum" progressed, Hoover decided that one building should hold everything, memorabilia *and* papers. This meant that yet another addition would be necessary even as the original expanded structure was nearing completion.

With the end in sight, plans were formulated for an elaborate library-museum dedication ceremony. William Anderson, who had resigned as foundation president in 1961 to become curator of the museum, was given a leave of absence to organize the event, scheduled for Hoover's eighty-eighth birthday on August 10, 1962.

For many, the most memorable part of Her-



COURTESY HERBERT HOOVER PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY

bert Hoover's final visit to West Branch was the presence at the dedication of his longtime friend, Harry Truman, who had announced that he would attend "if not dead."

On August 10, a caravan of cars brought Hoover and Truman from Cedar Rapids to West Branch. More than 25,000 people were present, including Governor Norman Erbe, Senator Bourke Hickenlooper, and Archivist of the United States Wayne Grover, representing President Kennedy. All made remarks in Hoover's honor, but none moved the crowd

Crowds surround Hoover and Truman at the library-museum dedication, August 10, 1962. Lewis Strauss, chairperson of the Birthplace Foundation, is on Hoover's left.

like Harry Truman, who said: "The presidency . . . is the most important office in the history of the world. And you don't get it by inheritance, you don't get it by any other way except by the people wanting you to be President . . . and then you have the greatest responsibility in the history of the world. Nobody knows that better than I do and I've had one hell of a time

"I'm here," Truman said, "because I think he's doing the right thing in turning his documents over to the public here in this library."



The Walnut Library exhibit in the library-museum honors Lou Henry Hoover (shown in a painting above the fireplace).

with it, I don't mind telling you."

Referring to Hoover, Truman said: "I've always been fond of him, and of course after he saved all of those people from starving [after World War II] I feel that I am one of his closest friends and he is one of my closest friends and that's the reason I'm here. I am here because I like him. I'm here because I think he's doing the right thing in turning his documents over to the public here in this Library."

In his own remarks, Hoover reviewed his life as an example of what was possible in America. He also spoke on the theme of world peace, and how it might best be achieved in a divided world. He closed by saying "to the boys and girls of America that the doors of opportunity are still open to you. Today the durability of freedom is more secure in America than in any

place in the world. May God bring you even more blessings."

It was Hoover's final public address. He did not return again to West Branch until October 25, 1964, when he was buried on a knoll overlooking the Birthplace Cottage after a private funeral in New York City and a lying-in-state at the Capitol in Washington, D.C.

Along the route of the funeral cortege from Cedar Rapids to West Branch, an estimated 100,000 people gathered to pay their respects. One week later, the body of Lou Henry Hoover, who had died in 1944, was reinterred at West Branch, next to that of her husband. Hoover's decision to be buried in West Branch had been made several years earlier but never publicized. In 1963, fearing that a hog lot might be established in the general area of the grave-

site, the foundation purchased the adjacent 4.8 acres from Greater Iowa Development for \$5,000, and secured an easement on 16.5 acres to the west and north so that it would be "forever free and open."

THE DEDICATION in 1962 and the burials in 1964 did not end the development of the historic sites in West Branch. Over the course of the next twelve years, three separate additions were constructed onto the library-museum to provide archival space, offices and exhibit areas, a reading and conference room, and an auditorium. The total cost when completed was approximately two million, with most of the money provided by the foundation and other private sources.

The entire site was formally deeded to the federal government on August 10, 1964, and the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site was created by Congress one year later. Today, the library-museum is staffed and operated by the National Archives and Records Administration, while the surrounding 186-acre park and its buildings are managed by the National Park Service.

Once the job of constructing buildings and buying land was accomplished, the Birthplace Foundation did not cease to exist. A lawsuit led to a new name and a new mission. In 1962, the president and trustees of the Belgian-American Educational Foundation (BAEF), which had been created with funds left over from the Commission for the Relief of Belgium in 1919, voted to distribute \$900,000 of its assets to the Birthplace Foundation to pay for the archives addition to the library-museum. Two years later, two BAEF trustees filed suit against the BAEF and the foundation, charging that the BAEF officers and board had exceeded their authority in making the gift.

After seven years of litigation, the courts finally dismissed the suit. To continue work in the meantime, a new organization, the Hoover Presidential Library Association, was established. In 1972, the foundation was merged into the association, which continues to function in West Branch as a private, nonprofit agency in support of the purposes and mission of the library-museum, while furthering schol-

arly and public interest in Herbert Hoover. The association provides research grants and promotes visitation, and is funding George Nash's multivolume, definitive biography, *The Life of Herbert Hoover*.

The library has helped generate a scholarly reassessment of Herbert Hoover. Since the opening of his papers in 1966, that reassessment has often been more favorable and less partisan than was earlier the case. Through 1986, more than 1,600 researchers have used the library. The results of their work have included more than 1,000 books and articles, 400 theses and dissertations, and 300 course papers. In addition, more than 1.8 million visitors, from the United States and many foreign countries, have toured the museum. An even larger number have toured the Hoover National Historic Site.

None of this would have happened had "Bert" Hoover been a blacksmith, like his father. Instead, he grew up to become the thirty-first U.S. president. Today, twenty-five years after its dedication, the Hoover Presidential Library-Museum is more than a memorial. It is a reminder of a privately funded effort to increase public knowledge, appreciation, and critical understanding of Hoover and the times in which he lived.

Along with the national historic site, the library-museum is also the final chapter in the story of a man's birth, education, work, worship, and death. It is the legacy Hoover may have envisioned in 1951 when he donated his Iowa Award plaque to the Birthplace Society. "In that way," he said, "the people can see that the fellow who was born there came to a good end. . . . There is no point in having a memorial telling how a fellow started out without knowing how he finished." □

NOTE ON SOURCES

The principal source for this article is a 42-chapter manuscript history of the Hoover Presidential Library Association, completed in 1983 by the late Frank Nye, a former assistant editor and political writer for the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*. The manuscript will be published in its entirety by the association during 1987. Nye's sources included personal interviews, transcripts of oral histories, public records, correspondence, newspaper accounts, minutes of meetings, published works, government documents, and other publications at the Hoover Presidential Library.



Pantatorium Summer

by Debby J. Zieglowsky

FRED W. KENT — photographer, naturalist, historian, conservationist, and, to many, a very special Iowan. During his six-decade career as a photographer at the University of Iowa, he chronicled the history of the university, the bloom of Hawkeye athletics, and the growth of Iowa City. The following collection of photos records an early stage in this remarkable man's career of service. Kent took the photos when he was a college student.

Kent came to the University of Iowa in 1911 with a scholarship in his hand and a passion for nature and photography in his soul. Photography had been his avocation since 1908 when he had purchased his first camera (a Brownie) in his hometown of DeWitt, Iowa. On campus he quickly developed a reputation as a photographer. But it was a summer job in 1913 that was pivotal for him.

Like most college students then and now, Kent was looking for a summer job. Like many college students then and now, he was drawn to northwest Iowa, to the Lakes region, a naturalist's dream. Such a popular resort area as Arnolds Park and Lake Okoboji needed extra hands catering to the needs of the thousands of tourists who flocked there every summer. Ingenious students, not afraid of hard work, could profit from such a summer's labor. Fred Kent never lacked ingenuity; he turned his summers at Lake

Okoboji into something special.

He and his friend Arndt Syverud built a shack near Arnolds Park and named it the "K-S Pantatorium." Here they cleaned and pressed the tourists' summer finery. They slept in a tent behind the shack, swimming and canoeing every available minute and having "a wonderful time."

Of course, Kent took his camera with him everywhere. Photography was as natural and as necessary as breathing. Before the summer of 1913 was over, he added a tiny darkroom to the pantatorium where he could print his own photos.

Those photographs from the beginning of Kent's career offer hints of what was to come. He was remarkably gifted at capturing a mood, whether it was his friends' hijinks in a canoe or the waves lapping gently on the rocks at Pillsbury Point. Each photograph was composed with a clear purpose, to tell a story. As historical records, the photographs are extraordinary.

Kent returned to Lake Okoboji in the summer of 1914. Again he worked in the pantatorium. Again he explored the lakeshore in his canoe, birdwatching. He photographed the natural beauty

of Iowa's lakes — as well as the university professors and students at nearby Iowa Lakeside Laboratory, and the tourists at the amusement park and beaches.

After graduating in 1915 and serving in World War I, Kent returned to the university as its official photographer. Besides the many portraits of professors and coaches that he produced, he photographed many university events, such as former president Thomas J. Macbride striding down the street with his successor Walter A. Jessup, Nile Kinnick returning to campus in triumph with the Heisman Trophy, and the Hawkeye football team trekking to their first Rose Bowl.

Beginning in the 1940s Kent headed the university's Photo Service, where he continued to work after his retirement in 1962. He combined his love of nature with his photographic skills and conservationist efforts. He died in 1984, leaving a remarkable legacy of thousands of photographs, meticulously labeled and preserved — so many years after those two crazy summers of pressing clothes and taking photographs at Lake Okoboji.

"You Should Worry"

If Your Clothes Need Pressing
Take Them to the

**K-S PANTATORIUM,
Arnold's Park, Iowa**

Left: Arndt Syverud and Fred Kent (with pipe). Right: Business card.

Editor's note: In 1979 Fred Kent's granddaughter Janet interviewed him as they looked through several personal photo albums. Excerpts of the tape-recorded interview

accompanying photos from his 1913–1914 Okoboji albums appear here through the courtesy of Kent's daughter, Barbara Buckley, of Iowa City. The photo essay presents Lake

Okoboji and Arnolds Park from the perspective of a fun-loving college student who needed a summer job and who also happened to already be a very gifted photographer.



Fred Kent: I got acquainted with a guy named [Arndt] Syverud. . . . He was in dental school. He cooked an idea up that we go to Okoboji. So we went to Okoboji and bought lumber and built a shack near Arnolds Park and started a pantatorium.

Janet Kent: What is a pantatorium?

Fred Kent: [A place for] cleaning clothes. We'd get jobs from that hotel next door, nearby, and other places. And we had a pan out in the backyard with gasoline in it, and we'd dunk the stuff in it, clean and press them, and take them back. I finally built a little cubby-hole in it to do photographs, so I started taking pictures, processing film — and stayed all summer and had a wonderful time. . . . The next summer [my friend] Jim Gurney went too.

Janet Kent: "K-S" Pantatorium?

Fred Kent: [For] Kent-Syverud. [Here we are] hard at work inside, pressing. Had an old kerosene heater with a big old sad iron. . . .

We got some doozies from the hotel — fancy clothes we didn't know what to do with.

Janet Kent: Any disasters?

Fred Kent: Probably.

Three pantatorium scenes — pressing and dry-cleaning. Jim Gurney on bottom right.





Fred Kent: I got a job there with a fellow [L.F. Williams or Williamz?] who had a photographic shop. I spent most of the summer processing films and making postcards. Jim got a job at an eating place. [We would get] up in the morning and take a swim. And "Syv" had an old eighteen-foot, and we used that a lot. I got one picture with twelve people in it.

Janet Kent: Surprised it didn't sink.

Fred Kent: Well, we tipped it over on purpose.

We went over to Miller's Bay where the Iowa Lakeside Laboratory has their summer classes. I took quite a few pictures there and sold them to them.

By the end of the summer Jim Gurney and I and Little Jim decided to go for a trip, and we got the sail up in the canoe. We sailed in a southwest wind clear to the other end of the lake, five or six miles, and went just whewwwwwww, and it took us all day paddling against the wind to get back. Couldn't sail back in the canoe because there's no keel on it.

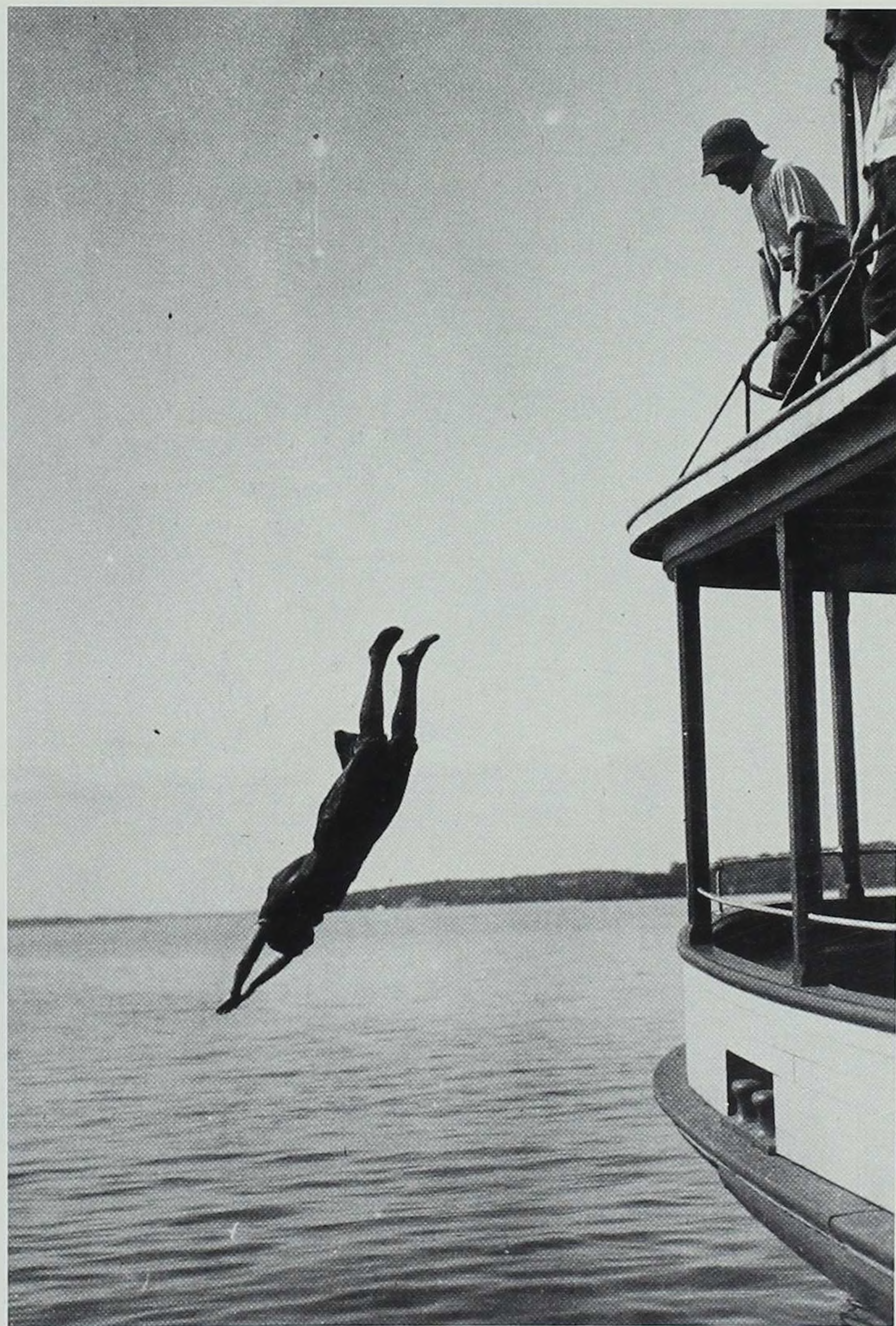
Oh, we had a wonderful time up there. We'd go out in the evening in the canoe and go over outside the inn and listen to the dance band playing. So I spent two summers there. . . .

I worked for [Williams again] the next summer. He had the negatives, and I printed them by the hundreds. . . .

See, here's the gang in that canoe.

Janet Kent: Two, four, six, eight, ten, fourteen people — a little low in the water!

Fred Kent: Yeah. There's where they tipped it over.



Upper left: Kent and a friend head back toward their tent. (Kent often included himself in photos by using a cable release.)

Lower left: At Scrogg's Landing.

Above: Diving off the deck.

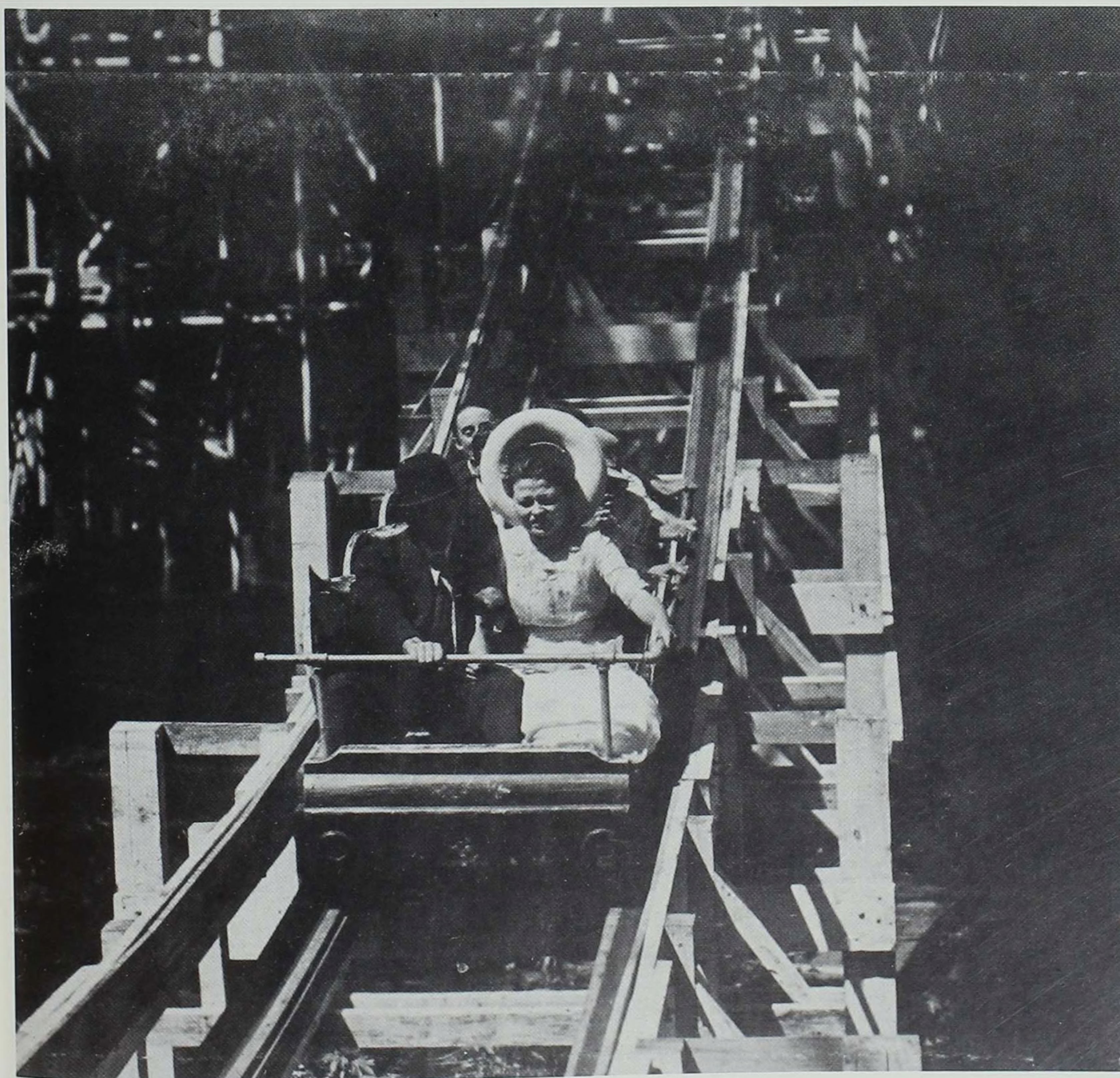


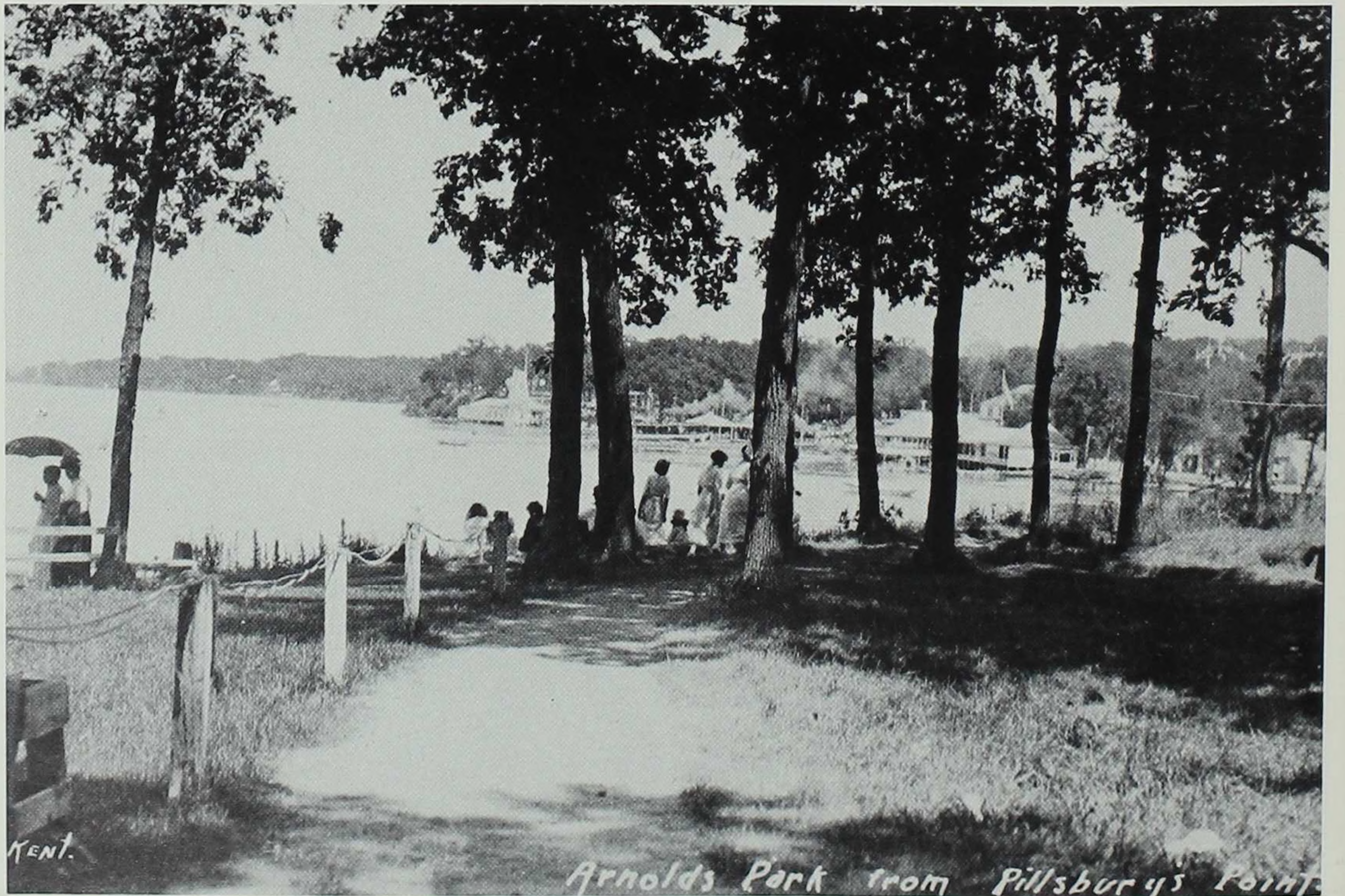
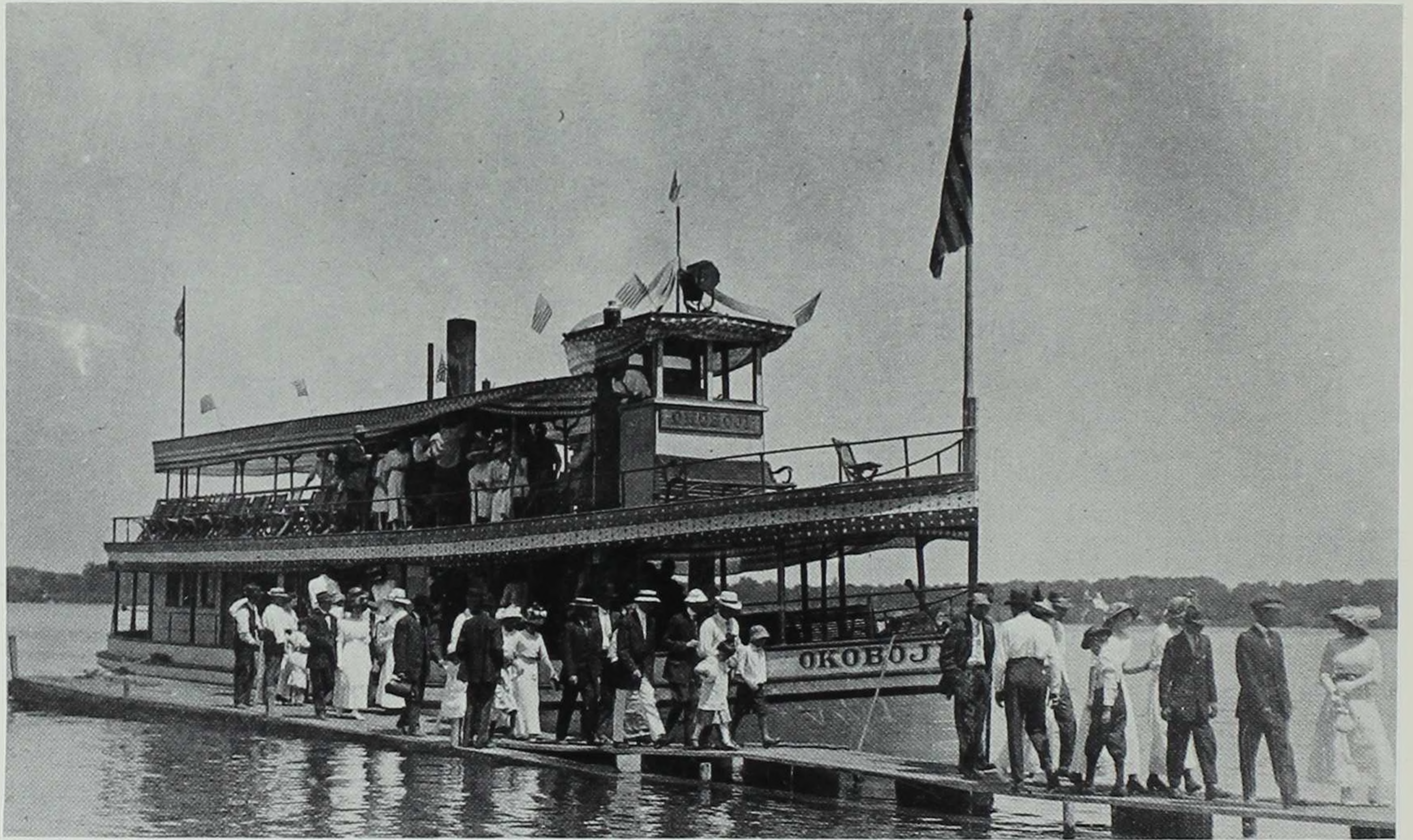
Fred Kent: Muskmelons, watermelons. Oh, yes, there was an ice cream factory next door [to the pantatorium]. I suppose I ate a lot of it. The barrels [were used for carrying] the ice cream around to places. They would make them up in containers, and make the ice in the wintertime.

. . . I was into taking pictures — anything to make a change. The roller coaster out back of us made a hell of a racket. Listen to it!

Far left: Melons and ice cream.

Below: Amusement park roller coaster.





KENT.

Arnolds Park from Pillsbury's Point.

Fred Kent: There were three boats that operated, the *Okoboji*, the *Queen*, and the other one. Way at the other end of the lake they made contact with the *Orleans* where the Rock Island Railroad let people off. They'd get on these boats and come down to these various places. They were great fun.

Janet Kent: What's this, a slide to slide into the water? Pillsbury Point?

Fred Kent: Yes, and [Pillsbury Point] — beautiful spot. It had a rocky point and the waves would break over it. Beautiful lake.

Top left: Arriving on the *Okoboji*.

Bottom left: Arnolds Park from Pillsbury Point.

Below: Water slide and bath house.

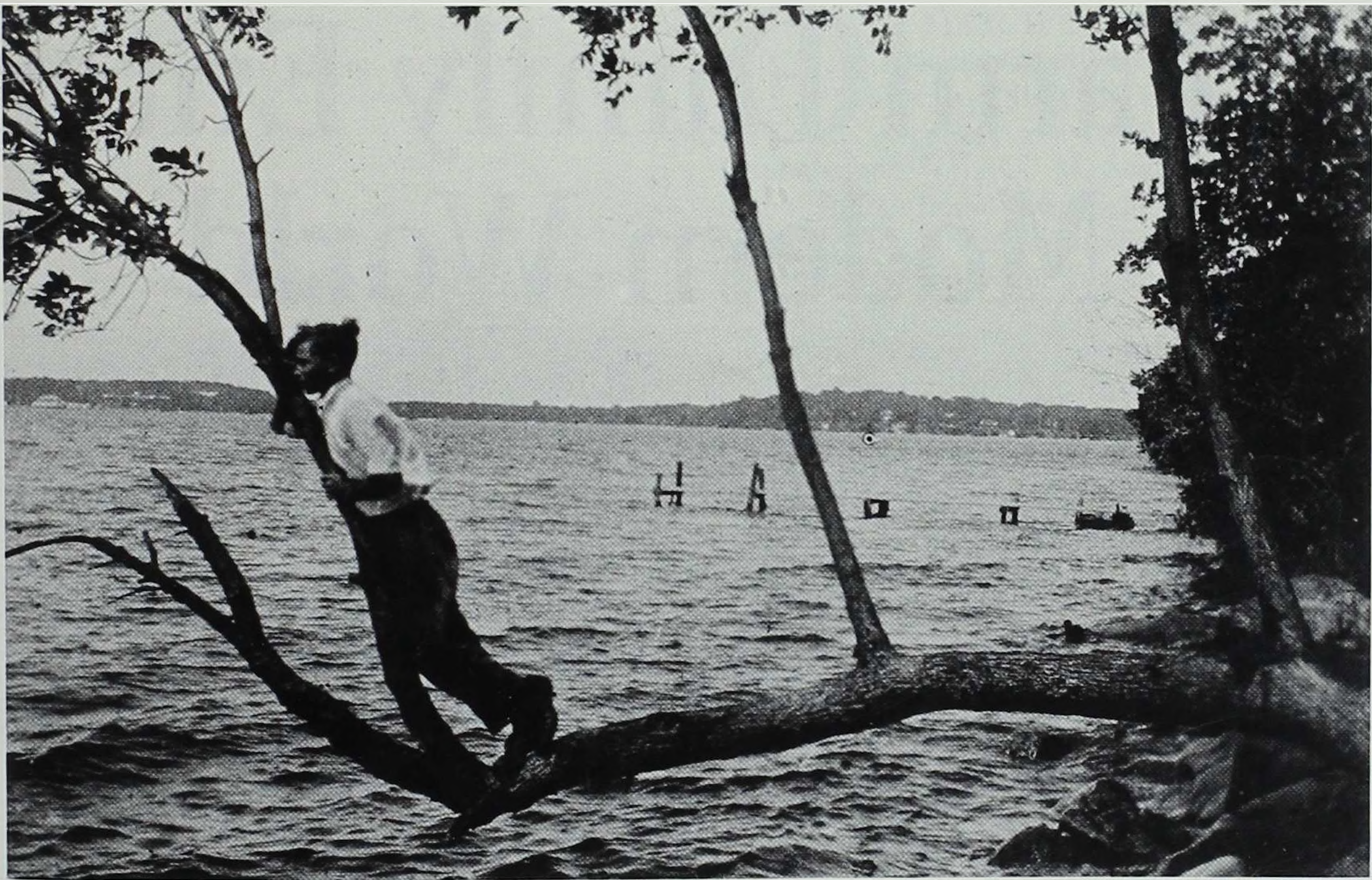




Photo Kent

*Arnolds Park
from
Pillsbury's Point*





Janet Kent: Now the next book: Arnolds Park. Did you go over there and ride very much?

Fred Kent: No. I liked taking pictures of water and sailing pictures. Nice compositions. I finally got a postcard-sized camera. Can't remember how much money I made in a summer or how many postcards I sold. □



Upper left: Arnolds Park from Pillsbury Point.

Above and far left: Otto (Arndt Syverud's nephew).

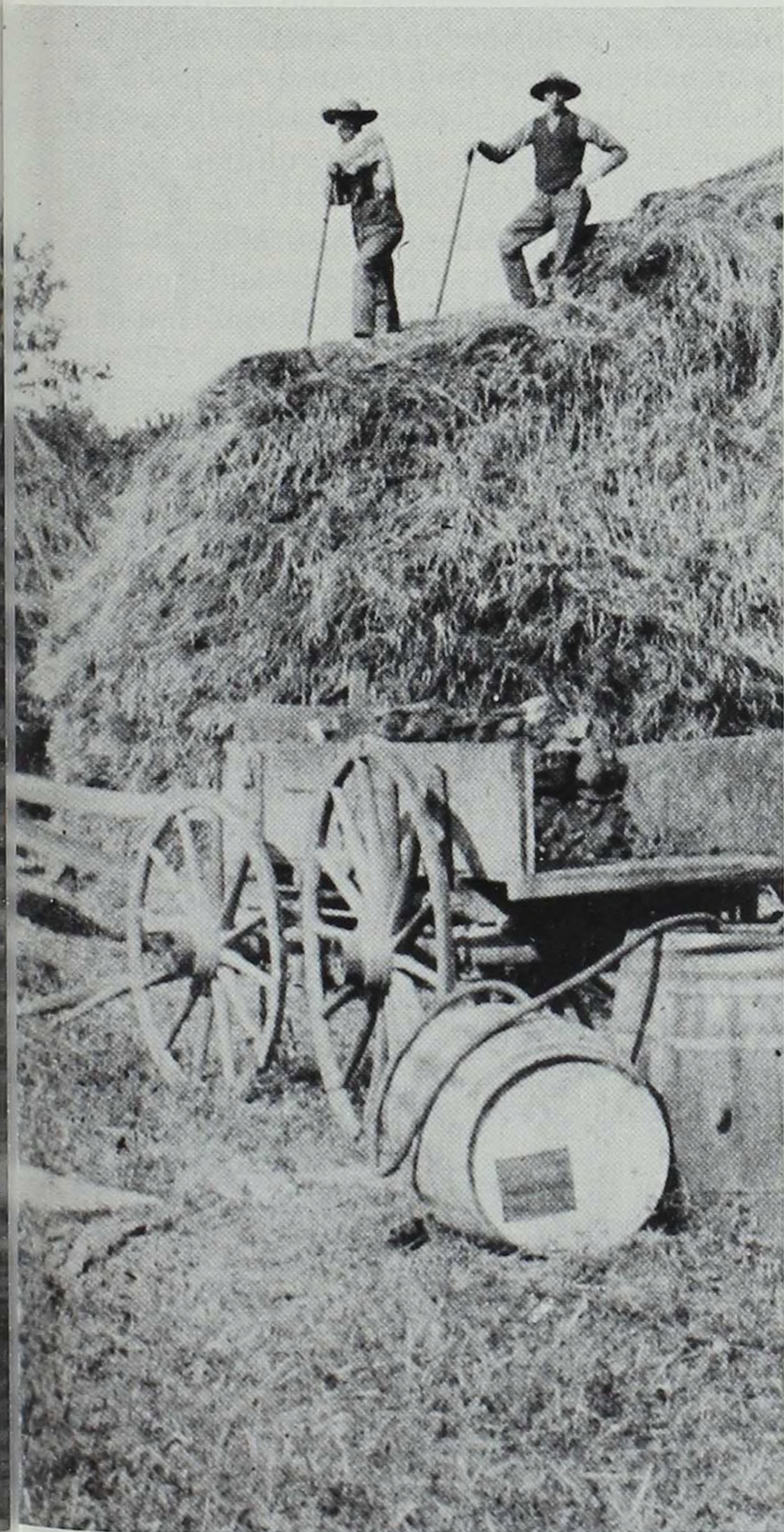
Left: Fred Kent.

A Farm Family Enters the Modern World



ALL PHOTOS FROM GRABER COLLECTION, SHSI (IOWA CITY); ORIGINALS OWNED BY HAROLD GRABER

by William Bernard Graber



Threshing on the Christian and Fannie Graber farm in the 1880s near Lockridge, Iowa. In the next several decades neighborhood farming practices would change substantially.

ON MARCH 10, 1892, some forty friends and relatives gathered for the wedding of Daniel Benjamin Graber, age twenty-three, and Hannah Jane "Jennie" Maxwell, twenty-one, at the pioneer home of the bride's parents near Glendale, Iowa. The Methodist ceremony was performed by the Reverend Samuel T. Horton (a relative of Jennie's), and was followed by a "bountiful" supper. The couple received various practical gifts, including dishes, silverware, tablecloths, quilts, furniture, and a mantle clock for use in their rural home.

The wedding, a simple one in terms of ceremony and celebration, symbolized greater complexities under the surface. Dan Graber's marriage to Jennie Maxwell set into motion a series of changes that would be felt in their generation and the next two generations. The marriage represented an important step in a shift that was already occurring in the Graber family — from traditional ethnic-religious isolation to modern American mainstream. As a southeastern Iowa farm family, Dan, Jennie, and their descendants would face much change during the sixty years from 1892 to 1952.

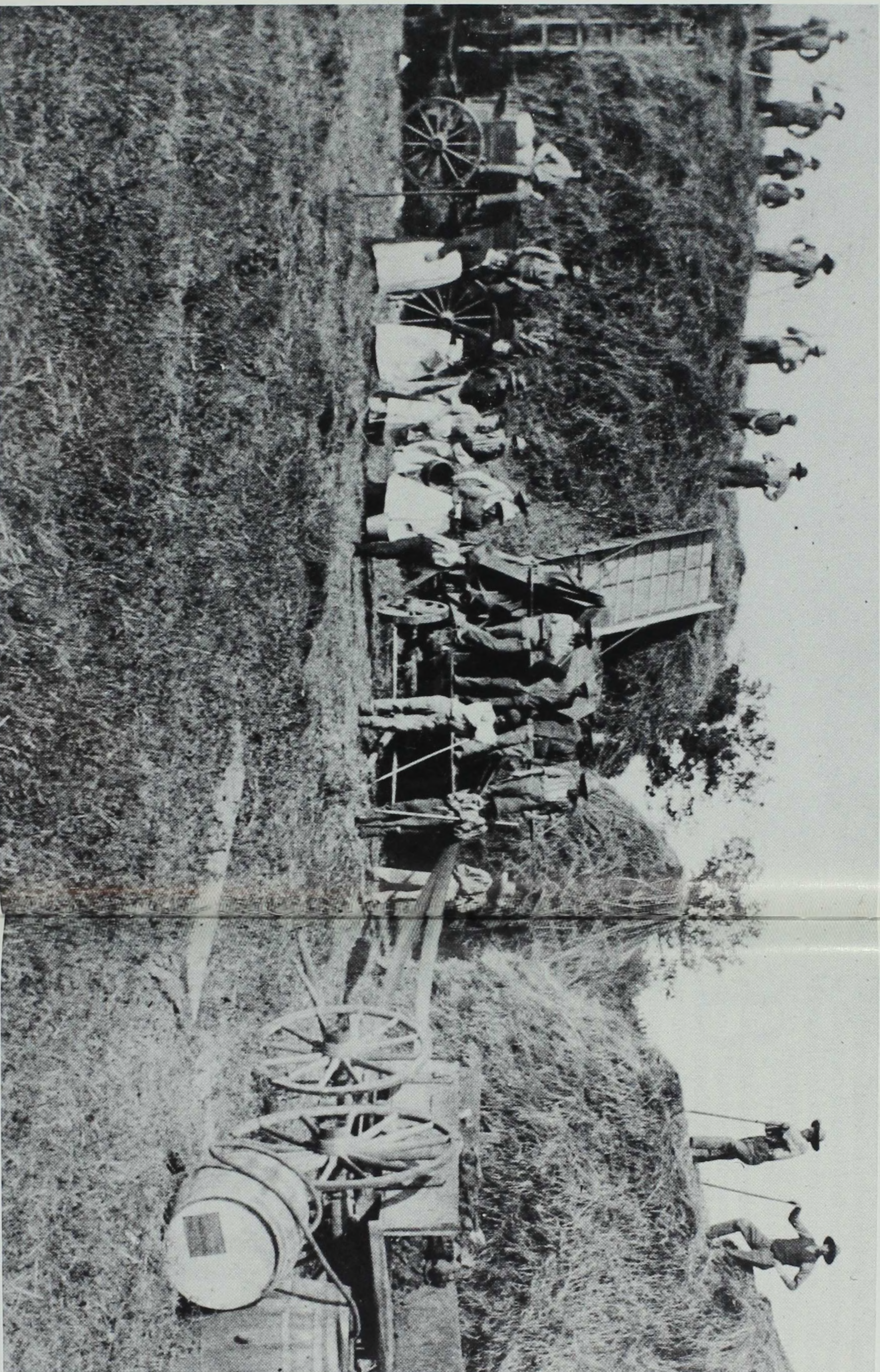
Dan and Jennie set up housekeeping in a small one-story frame house with log sills. Dan had purchased the house the previous autumn with wages earned for a season's work in the Mystic coal mines. Their three-acre homesite was across the road from Dan's forty-acre farm and just half a mile from the farm of Jennie's parents. Jennie's family would have a strong influence on the couple.

Jennie's father, Isaac Maxwell, came from a relatively old line of immigrants with a strong record of military service. Two of his great-grandfathers had fought in the Revolutionary War. The Scottish clan had farmed in Pennsylvania and Indiana for a century before loading the wagons for Jefferson County, Iowa, in 1849, when Isaac was three. His father and two brothers had volunteered to fight in the Civil War.

The Maxwells, like many other volunteers, were die-hard Republicans who would "vote the way they shot" — straight Republican ticket. Though Dan and Jennie tended in later life to vote for the individual candidate rather than the party, their identification with the

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Grand Old Party, as with other traditions, was likely influenced by the Maxwells.

In contrast to the Maxwell tradition of voluntary military service, Dan's grandparents and parents had fled Europe to escape military service that conflicted with their religious beliefs as Mennonites. When grandparents John Sr. and Catherine (Roth) Graber left their rented farm in the French province of Alsace in 1830, they were part of a wave of Germanic emigrants of many faiths to migrate following the Napoleonic Wars. The Grabers spent nine years raising children in their faith in the Mennonite communities of Wayne County, Ohio, before John Sr. and his eldest son trekked to Iowa in 1839 to purchase an initial six hundred acres in eastern Jefferson County. An elder in the faith, John Sr. helped found a Mennonite farming community in Lockridge Township as his family, who arrived in Iowa in 1842 or 1843, was joined by other families in that decade. As with the Maxwells, farming was an integral part of the Grabers' lives. But in other ways they differed: the Grabers voted Democratic, and they chose to partake as little as possible in the world outside their immediate community.

The Mennonite community in Lockridge Township prospered for some twenty years. Gradually, many of its members left for the larger Mennonite settlements across the Skunk River near Trenton and Wayland or were converted by Methodist circuit preachers such as Uriah Horton (whose son would later marry Dan and Jennie). The lack of a church and the early death of leader John Sr. about 1851 had weakened the incentive for Mennonites to stay in the diffuse Lockridge Township settlement; several of John Sr. and Catherine's children, too, left for Henry County. Though Dan's parents, Alsatian-born Christian and Fannie (Wyse) Graber, resisted both these tendencies — to move or convert — circumstances would eventually cause their own children to leave the faith and the community. These circumstances would affect Dan and his retention of the family's traditional culture.

Mennonite marriage customs and their consequences were one such circumstance. Following the Mennonite practice of men marrying late but still fathering many children, Christian was forty when Fannie bore their

first child in 1851. She bore him seven more children over the next eighteen years. Dan, the youngest, was nine when his mother succumbed to an early death in 1879. As Christian's health failed, young Dan was put into the care of a female relative and sent from the family's huge, patriarchal brick home in Jefferson County to live for three years in a bleak sod hut near Ogallala, Nebraska. The early death of his mother, failing health of his father, and geographical distance from relatives who could teach him the faith all contributed to the weakening of Dan's ties to the religion of his ancestors.

An inheritance dispute also affected the Graber siblings' ties to the family and community. Before the first field work of 1882 could be done, Christian sold 650 acres of his 892½ to his children for no more than the assumption of small mortgages. The division, however, was not equal. Although thirteen-year-old Dan and two unmarried sisters each received forty mortgage-free acres of timber for the sum of one dollar, and the middle siblings received somewhat larger amounts, the two eldest sons split 320 acres of the best land and squabbled over the 242½ acres retained by their aged father. The dispute ran so deep throughout the family that decades later two brothers who remained in the area and lived only one mile apart did not socialize warmly together. Only the eldest of the eight siblings remained a Mennonite his entire life; most of the others converted to Methodism and four moved away permanently. Not only did the "land grab" chafe family ties, as Dan related to his descendants years later, but it hastened the migration of family members to other communities.

Dan's marriage to Jennie in 1892 continued this shift of the Grabers away from traditional ethnic-religious isolation toward modern American mainstream. Dan was a first-generation American, and also a member of a generation that in Jefferson County married predominantly outside the traditional Mennonite community. After childhood he used little of the German dialect that his father continued to speak. His identification as a fully assimilated American was strengthened by his marriage to Jennie, whose ancestors had farmed in American since 1673.

Furthermore, the religious fervor of Jennie's mother, Sarah (Logsdon) Maxwell, herself a Mennonite who had converted to Methodism early in life, helped sustain Dan's new identification. Though Dan maintained warm relations with the two of his three siblings who remained in Jefferson County and occasional contact with Mennonite cousins in the neighboring county, his wedding appears to represent less the induction of Jennie into the Graber-Wyse family than it represented Dan's induction into the Maxwell-Logsdon family.

BY THE TURN of the century Dan and Jennie were a fairly typical example of a successful young Iowa farm family. Dan had enlarged the farm to eighty acres with the purchase and mortgage of thirty-seven adjoining acres from Jennie's relatives. He continually supplemented farm income with seasonal labor in the coal mines near Coalport, a mile away. Jennie raised chickens and sold eggs at Glendale and Lockridge, two rural communities on the

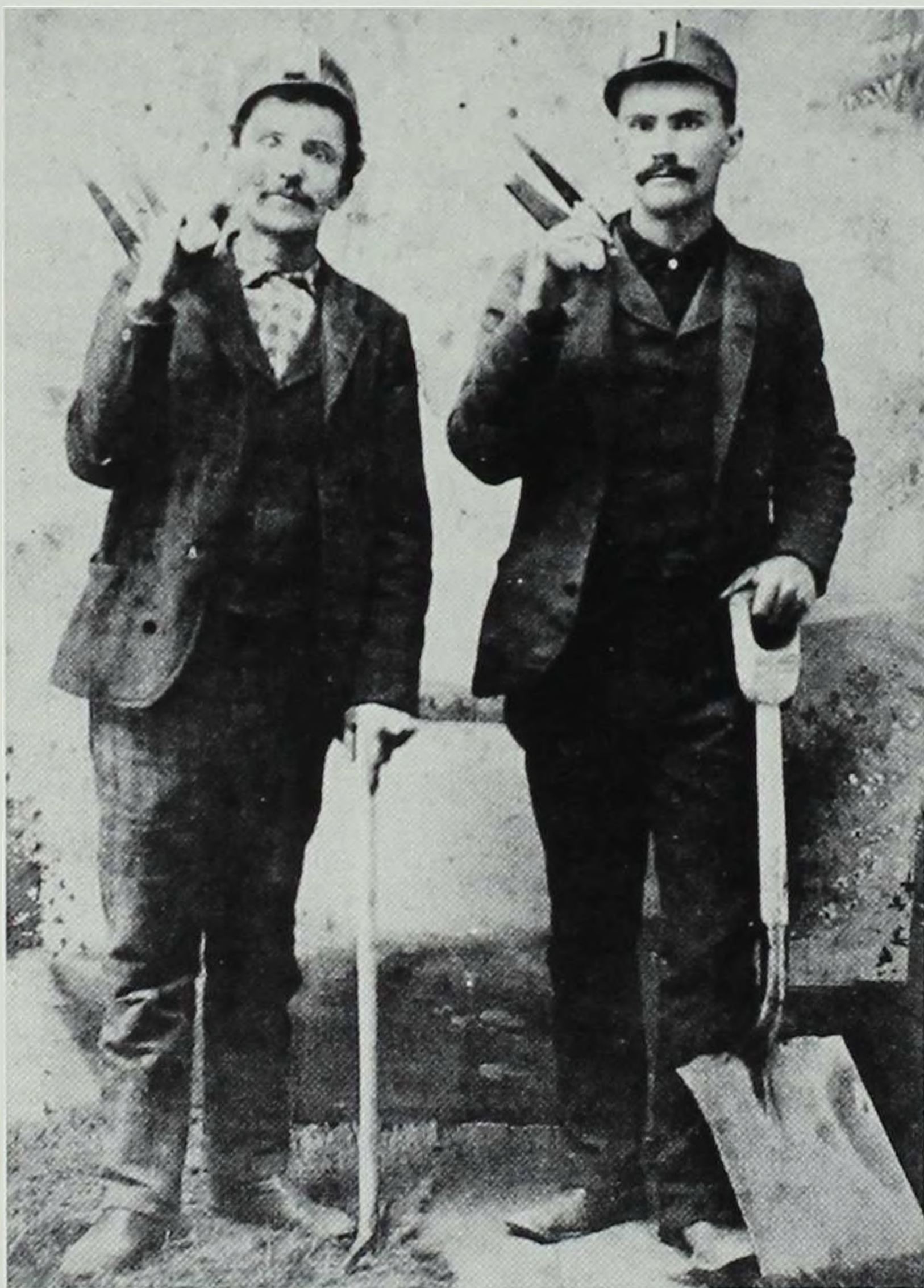
nearby Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad. A large vegetable garden, sheep, hogs, and Shorthorn cattle (a beef-dairy mix) provided a variety of meals for them and their children (Zelta Mae, born 1894; Bernard, 1899; and Elda, 1903). Dan and Jennie sought to provide for the family's economic welfare and to raise their children to be good citizens and farmers. Their actions seemed to emphasize two traditional themes — the family and local community (often one and the same), and the work ethic.

To Dan and Jennie, the extended family was the focal point of their social world. Jennie's relatives were spread across Lockridge, Round Prairie, and Buchanan townships. Her brother and sister both farmed within a mile of Jennie and Dan. Early on, Jennie's mother, Sarah, may have had some influence on Dan and Jennie's efforts to space births and to limit the size of the family to three children, the same number she had had, thus giving each child greater opportunities considering the family's limited means. Starting in 1911 Sarah lived



Christian and Fannie Graber's children: (left) Nancy, Fannie, Mary, Lydia, John, Christian, Peter, and Dan.

Dan Graber (right) often added to his farm income by mining coal at nearby Mystic or Coalport. Above, he and brother-in-law Billie Bankhead pose with mining gear.



with Jennie and Dan for fourteen years (following the deaths of Sarah's husband and father). Grandma Sarah contributed to the children's perception of family by taking them to visit "shirt-tail cousins," whose kinship might have been otherwise forgotten. Under Grandma Sarah's guidance, "Sundaying" with relatives was a frequent event, and family contacts were strengthened.

Although most of Dan's siblings had left Jefferson County in the years following his family's land grab, Dan and Jennie did maintain close contact with his sister and brother-in-law, the Bankheads of Coalport. (Billie Bankhead and Dan had worked together in the coal mines at Mystic, and Billie later hired Dan to work in a Coalport mine.) They also remained close to Dan's brother, Chris, even after he and his family moved away. Nevertheless, most of the families between Glendale and Lockridge were relatives of either Jennie or Dan, and it was this broad swath of farms along the railroad

tracks that they considered their rural neighborhood.

Throughout the 1910s and 1920s Dan and Jennie were fairly active in this rural neighborhood. They socialized at the Coalport Free Methodist Church, of which Sarah's father was a pioneer charter member, until about 1912. But when the coal mines began to decline (because of a deadly fire in 1904 in the main mine and increased competition from more economical mines in central Iowa), so did Coalport and its Free Methodist Church. At Sarah's instruction Dan and Jennie transferred west to Parsonville Methodist Episcopal Church, another long-time prestigious church, at the cost of an extra one-and-a-half-mile trip. Sarah always expressed strong Methodist convictions and Jennie sometimes declared herself a Methodist to the census takers, but Dan never expressed a religious preference. To Dan, church — when farm work and weather permitted — was for socializing.

This alludes to the other traditional theme that Dan and Jennie passed on to their children — the work ethic. The farm provided a good, honest living and taught the children the importance of hard work and cooperation. To Dan, the farm was less of a business than a way of life. He and Jennie were fairly typical examples of successful middle-class farmers in Iowa in the early twentieth century. Although Dan did not have the seven to eight hundred acres by now owned by his older brothers, he had purchased a sister's forty acres in 1913. Dan and Jennie's assets were about average (a 120-acre, \$12,000 farm in 1915), their debts relatively low (\$2,200 mortgage), and the small number of offspring cut down on expenses and assured that the family farm would not be split into inconsequential pieces when the parents died. A modest income (\$600 in 1914) allowed the family to purchase in Glendale or Lockridge the clothes and few foodstuffs not produced at home. Dan's average-sized farm provided plenty of field work for one man and his only son. (Oldest child Zelta Mae had died in 1908, leaving only Bernard and Elda.)

Though Dan had never fully accepted Mennonite religious beliefs, he did retain throughout his life some of the Mennonite cultural aspects, and these help to explain his strong

sense of self-sufficiency and resistance to change. In the Mennonite tradition, self-sufficiency on the farm was a way of life. The farm provided sustenance for the family and food for their livestock. Fruit trees, gardens, beehives, butchering their own livestock, and hunting provided variety to their meals. A farmer needed only enough surplus for taxes and a few goods that could not be produced on the farm.

Yet Dan may have recognized that farmers' ability to be self-sufficient was declining and that farmers could be much affected by the fluctuations of commodity markets. Dan valued cash earned in the marketplace for the security it could give his family, and his operation was in important respects also a commercial one that produced more than his family needed. He normally raised about fifty hogs a year, but by the time winter came in 1914, he had reduced his livestock holdings by selling those ready for market. His barn was filled with

hay, oats, and unshelled corn to feed what remained — about fifteen hogs, fourteen cattle, and seven horses (for labor and transportation). Egg production from Jennie's two hundred chickens decreased with the cold weather, but she still had extra eggs to sell in Glendale or Coalport. Dan had a blacksmith shop on his farm, mostly for his own needs, but he also did blacksmithing jobs for neighbors.

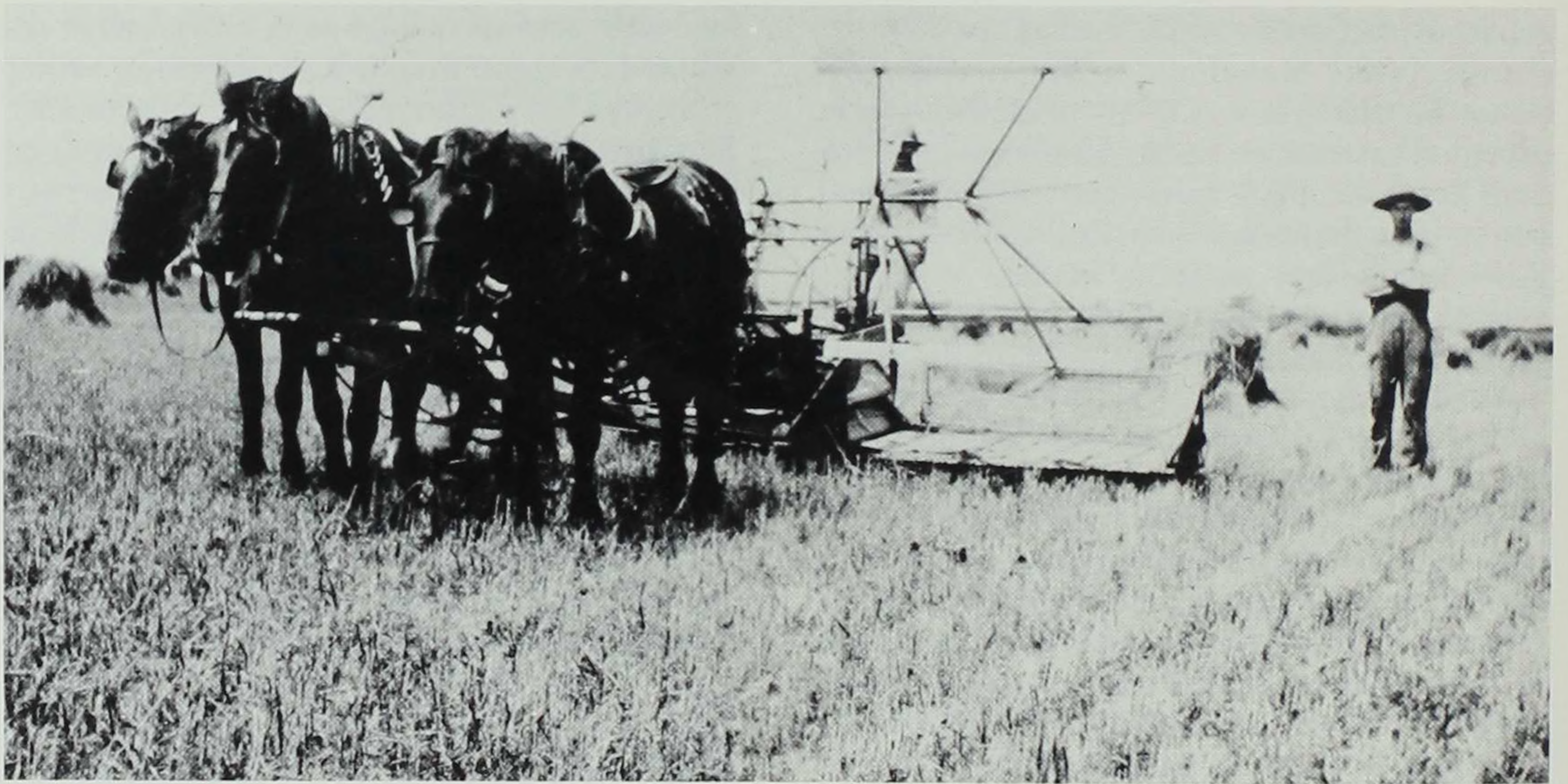
By now their son, Bernard, was growing up. That winter, as a graduate of eighth grade, the fifteen-year-old worked in the Coalport coal mines with his dad. Bernard and Dan felt fortunate to have the extra work. In addition to a small wage, they received free coal for Jennie's kitchen stove, the only source of heat in the home.

MEANWHILE THE TWENTIETH century was bringing many changes to America. In the cities, waves of new immigrants sought jobs in burgeoning factories. New forms of transportation allowed urbanites greater access to a city's central business district and cultural attractions. A shortened workweek and the proliferation of movie theaters heightened interest in new leisure activities. Rural areas, too, were changing, albeit at a slower pace. Increasingly, agriculture was becoming a commercial enterprise (as Dan was learning), expanding in response to strong market demands and suffering in periods of slack demand. Many of the young were no longer satisfied with farm life and fled in droves to the cities. Rural neighborhoods weakened, while seasonal laborers for hire became scarce.

This weakening of rural neighborhoods could be seen in population trends in Lockridge Township. In 1870, the year after Dan Graber was born, the township population had peaked at 1,680. By 1900, it had plunged twenty-seven percent, to 1,227 — despite the growth of the town of Lockridge, the largest town between Mt. Pleasant and Fairfield, the county seat. By 1915 the township population was barely one thousand. Improved machinery and altered methods of farming account in part for the decrease in rural population. New jobs in Fairfield, which grew about fifty percent between 1870 and 1915, also drew on the rural



Sarah Maxwell (left) strengthened kinship ties by encouraging daughter Jennie Graber (right) and her family to maintain contact with Maxwell relatives. Middle: Sarah's grandson, Bernard.



population. Except for perhaps a slight aberration in the early 1930s, rural depopulation in Jefferson County would continue throughout the first half of the century.

The effects of rural depopulation were varied. It meant the decline of the farm service centers of Wooster, Four Corners, New Sweden, Beckwith, Parsonsville, and Glendale. As businesses left these small towns (which had sprung up in the nineteenth century to serve an immobile local market), farmers had to travel farther to sell produce and purchase goods. The mining service center of Coalport also declined and was overtaken by an expanding Lockridge a half-mile east. Depopulation closed rural schools and, combined with aging congregations, closed churches such as Sarah's Coalport Free Methodist. A side effect of declining population was higher local taxes, as fewer taxpayers remained to share the burden. Many of Dan's neighbors bought land on credit, which would have grave effects when farming soured.

Still, the 1910s were sweet years for farming. A steady rise in crop prices after the 1890s had been accompanied by a threefold increase in local land values, between 1880 and 1910, to \$95 per acre. World War I brought desperate shortages of meat and grain that led to a further jump in crop prices and a doubling of land values by 1919.

But the effects of World War I in Jefferson

Dan Graber, here on a horse-drawn reaper, passed the work ethic on to son Bernard (left), who would add tractors and cars to their farming operation.

County went beyond rising land and crop prices. The *Lockridge Times* in 1917 reported that "there is such a great call for active participation in the matter of providing food [to the soldier at the front], that those who are left at home in charge of this work have a responsibility placed upon them fully as great as has the man at the front." Its pages were saturated with articles on preserving eggs, milking practices, stock breeding, and pleas to farm more land. The paper also published draft numbers and spoke of an "anxiety" as local boys were sent to the trenches.

Three months after the United States declared war on Germany, the newspaper carried the story of a Joseph Graber who was arrested in Pennsylvania on charges of being a German agent. Despite their German-sounding name, the Grabers, it seems, experienced little wartime discrimination, perhaps because they had come from France, lived among neighbors and relatives of British descent, and appeared fully assimilated into the local culture. Dan was too old to be drafted, and Bernard, though initially too young, may later have received an exemption as the only son of a farmer. He volunteered in 1919 but was never called up to serve. The family demonstrated their patriotism through Bernard's volunteering, a large victory garden,

and diligent farming to help win the war through food production.

THROUGHOUT his life, Dan tended to believe that the outside world had rather limited effects on him and his family. Tradition put great emphasis on the family, the farm, and the local community. Even the Great War had only limited, primarily economic effects on his family. Dan would never have electricity, running water, nor indoor plumbing. The one major invention to grace his home before the New Deal was the telephone, which he got about 1900 when he and a dozen neighbors supplied "homegrown" telephone poles for the cooperative. He never bought a car, truck, nor tractor.

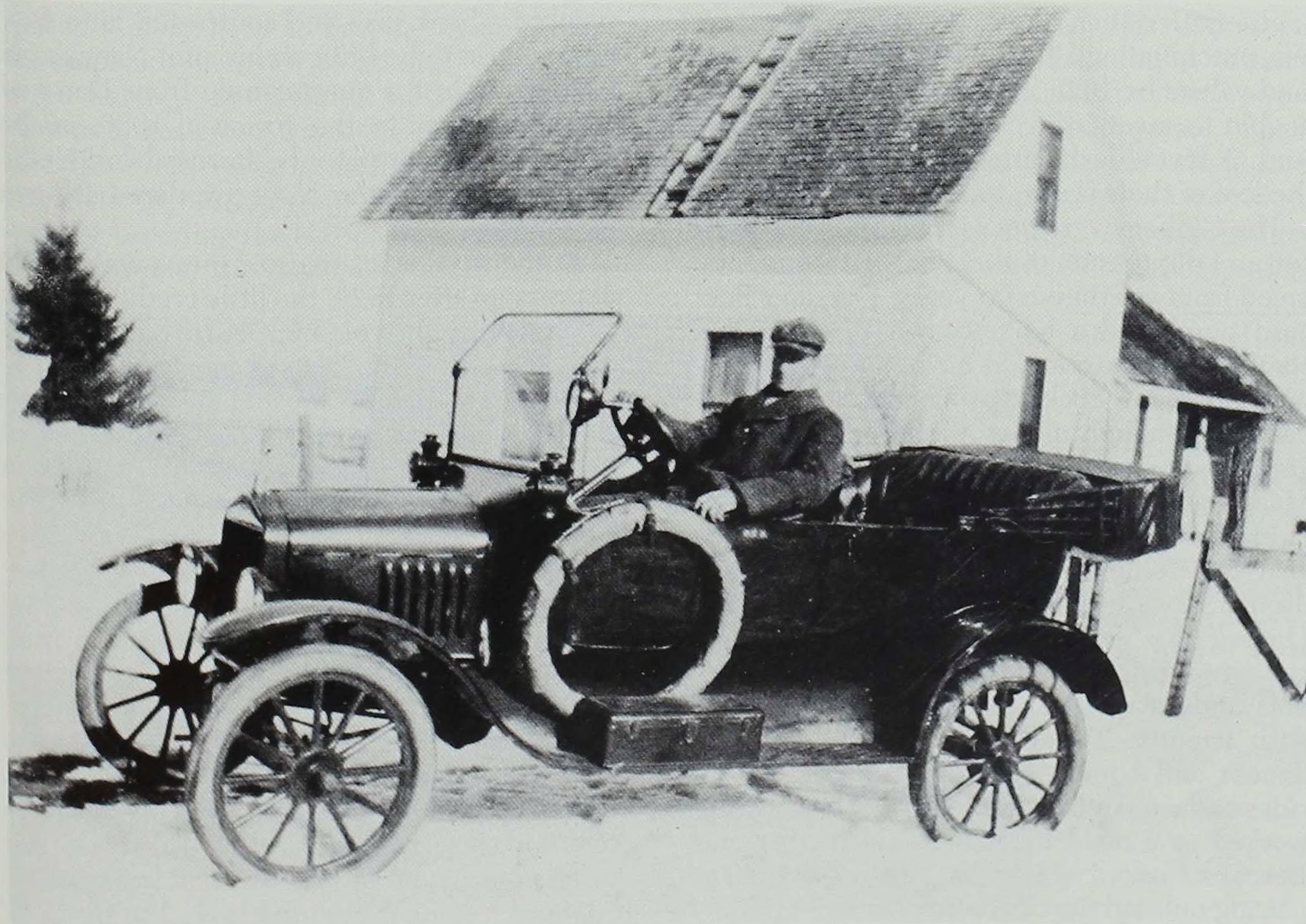
In contrast, his son Bernard saw the importance of joining the modern world. Bernard's first love was carpentry, but he felt obligated to keep the family farm. Demonstrating the work ethic learned from his parents, Bernard held a series of jobs while farming as a partner with his father. He and his sister Elda switched from

the prestigious Parsonsville Methodist Episcopal to the Lockridge Baptist Church, which had a more active young people's group.

Through part-time jobs mining coal he helped support his family and kept himself in spending money, enjoying the luxury of buying a camera for himself. In 1917 he bought a Model T Ford and, with great pride of ownership, took local damsels on drives through the country. The car was an important factor in the family's joining modern America, because it gave them ready access to Fairfield and Mt. Pleasant, eleven and fourteen miles away. (Dan, however, never learned to drive a car.) Along with Bernard's switch to Lockridge Baptist, the car strengthened Bernard's ties to Lockridge (the nearest supply of gasoline). These ties would remain strong throughout his lifetime.

The end of the Great War in 1919 and replanting of European croplands brought eco-

As Jennie Graber watches from the farmhouse porch, her son Bernard ignores winter weather to show off his new Model T with the top down, around 1917.



Bernard (middle) supplemented the family's income through jobs on the CB&Q railroad and in area coal mines.



nomic depression to midwestern farming communities such as Lockridge. Crop prices fell, precipitating a thirty percent drop in local land values by 1925. Some local farmers were unable to meet loan payments and lost their land. A few elderly farmers, despondent over the loss of their farms, took their own lives.

The Grabers were not so hard hit by the agricultural depression of the 1920s. With money saved from wartime crop years, Dan and Bernard purchased a horse-drawn thresher and combine. Dan expanded his home and deposited money at Lockridge Savings Bank. Bernard had enough money to drive to Missouri and Davenport, as well as to Fairfield and Mt. Pleasant, to visit relatives.

In 1919 Bernard had begun courting fifteen-year-old Nellie Hollander, one of seven children of a Swedish insurance agent from Salina. During this seven-year on-again, off-again courtship, Bernard and Nellie dined with parents and relatives and drove in the country with friends. Together they went to barn dances and county fairs and enjoyed sleigh rides and ice skating. In the early 1920s, Nellie worked as a maid for a Fairfield banker and Bernard worked seasonally on the CB&Q replacing railroad ties. In anticipation of his mar-

riage and with the railroad wages, Bernard secured a bank loan and contracted for a five-room house to be built on his aunt Nancy's old forty acres just a quarter-mile from Dan and Jennie's home. In the spring of 1926, in the presence of their parents, Bernard and Nellie were married in the New Sweden Lutheran parsonage.

As the rural crisis merged into a nationwide depression after 1929, the little credit available to rural areas shriveled up. Farm bankruptcies (primarily affecting second mortgages) led to the demise of the uninsured Lockridge Savings Bank in 1931. Dan and Bernard lost several hundred dollars. They nearly lost their farm too. Their problem was compounded by the custom of cosigning loans for relatives. When a brother-in-law could no longer keep up payments, creditors started to foreclose on the Graber farm as well. A short-term loan from Nellie's father bought time to refinance through the Federal Land Bank in Omaha. Several nearby farmers lost considerable amounts of land — one to two hundred acres. Others were able to bail out by selling for a fraction of their investment. Most who stayed on the land lived on the brink of bankruptcy.

Many American farmers looked to the gov-

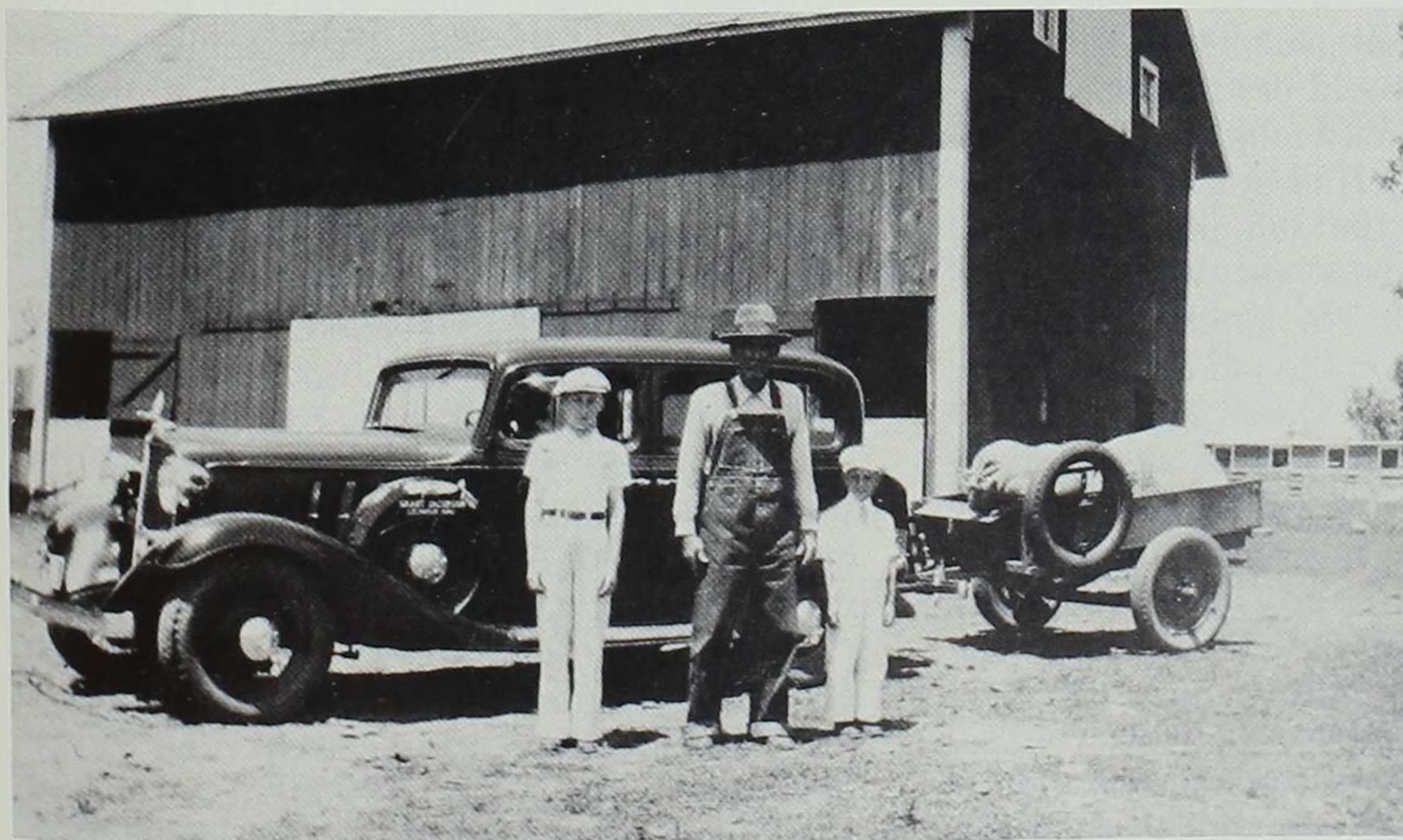
ernment for relief. In 1932, even though Franklin D. Roosevelt carried President Hoover's home state, Dan and Bernard could not quite see themselves voting for the New York Democrat — and didn't. They tended to vote for the individual candidate, but identified mostly with the Republican party. Yet in 1936 and 1940 they may have grudgingly cast their ballots for the Democrat who had helped them so much. (Judging from their lifestyle and machinery purchases in the mid-to-late 1930s, they surely benefited from the Agriculture Adjustment Acts of 1933 and 1938.) At the local level, however, their party loyalty held fast, and in the 1940s they would again vote Republican on the national level.

Over the years, as Bernard had watched yields and crop prices rise and fall, he had sought stable income — first in the coal mines, then with the railroad, next through diversification and carpentry work. In the 1920s he had expanded his father's small flock of sheep to sell wool. Near the end of the decade he worked on a local carpentry crew. About 1930 he purchased a dairy herd to provide income when the croplands were not profitable. When Lockridge Savings Bank failed in 1931 and the custom of cosigning loans for relatives nearly cost the Grabers their farm, their livestock helped keep them solvent. Though they sold or kept for breeding the cattle and hogs normally slaughtered for the mealtable and relied more

than ever on the garden, Bernard's far-sighted business move helped keep the family farm in the family.

By 1935 family snapshots show Bernard and Nellie Graber's pride in what they had accomplished. Sons Harold, eight, and Carl, four, pose in their Sunday best with their parents before driving to services at Lockridge Baptist Church. Their house is neatly painted with a white fence in front and a cement sidewalk leading to the front door. The lawn is trimmed and accented with rose bushes, peonies, and tulips. Bernard had just bought a black 1933 sedan and soon would buy a steel-wheeled Fordson tractor. Bernard and Nellie used the car to take dressed hens and eggs to sell in Fairfield and to pull a two-wheeled cart loaded with hogs to Burlington two or three times per year.

Neither Dan and Jennie nor Bernard and Nellie had electricity (it wouldn't reach this part of Jefferson County until 1946), but Dan purchased a battery-powered radio in 1936 and Bernard followed in 1938. The children would sit in the parlor in the evenings with their parents and grandparents listening to "Fibber McGee and Molly," "Mr. District Attorney," and "I Love a Mystery." Finding time to participate in the community, Bernard supported the Farm Exchange Cooperative in Lockridge, belonged to the Farm Bureau, and served on the local telephone board. The Grabers were



Right: Grandsons Harold (left) and Carl flank grandfather Dan as their mother, Nellie, prepares to drive a cart of wool to market. Nellie's husband, Bernard, expanded livestock holdings and diversified farm income, which helped keep the farm in the family through hard times.

successfully sailing the rough seas of the Great Depression.

THE DEPRESSION BROUGHT many changes in the way Americans thought. The powers of the federal government expanded as Americans believed it was the duty of the government to take a greater role in the welfare of its citizens. Labor unions became stronger as Americans realized the importance of collective bargaining. For a time, the tenets of "cultural democracy" flourished as Americans sought to enrich the common culture with art, music, and literature. The Depression also brought greater appreciation of the value of an education.

Bernard was more interested in the work ethic, however, than in education. But his views were tempered by his wife, Nellie, who had completed the twelfth grade. Young Harold and Carl received support at home and were encouraged to work hard in school (the same country school their father had attended, and later the two-story brick high school in Lockridge). Although Carl Dean was more intrigued by machines than books, Harold was a particularly eager student who especially enjoyed geography and mathematics. Education, Nellie assured her sons, could open a whole new world.

By 1940 the world outside the Lockridge community was not the placid one in which the boys had spent their childhood. In the *Lockridge Times* they read of panzers, blitzes, and Dunkirk. Soon they would read of Pearl Harbor and kamikaze. Bernard took the boys to the Lockridge Community Hall in the winter and to circuit tent shows in the summer on ten-cent Wednesdays to see movies, many of which related to World War II. The family listened to FDR's Fireside Chats on the radio and bought war bonds. Beginning in March 1941 Bernard worked during most of the war at the Iowa Ordnance Plant in Burlington, for what he considered an incredible starting wage of sixty cents per hour. Although the wages were good, the risk was high: several local men who worked there suffered injuries and a brother-in-law was badly burned.

As the Grabers followed the war news in the *Lockridge Times* they also watched grain prices

rise throughout Jefferson County. In World War II higher crop prices did not lead to new automobiles or farm machinery because steel consumer goods were difficult to obtain and maintain. But Bernard used his increased income from the farm and wages from the Iowa Ordnance Plant to retire his mortgages. He also bought war bonds and built a bank account at the insured Iowa State Bank in Fairfield.

Rationing had relatively minor effects on the Grabers. As rural dwellers they had sufficient land to grow a large garden full of tomatoes, strawberries, and vegetables. They raised meat for their own table and sold more to neighbors, thus bypassing the need for meat ration coupons. They used little chemical fertilizer at the time, preferring to spread nature's own. Even gas rationing did not affect them all that much. Bernard was entitled to a "C" gas card (allowing almost unlimited mileage) because of his defense job in Burlington, thirty-five miles east. The family did eliminate or decrease trips to visit relatives in Davenport and Missouri, and they likely had difficulty finding extra rubber tires for the Farmall F-20 tractor (its steel wheels had been converted to rubber just before the attack on Pearl Harbor). Yet for the Grabers rationing led only to inconveniences and minor changes in lifestyle.

After high school graduation in May 1944, Harold worked the summer with a roguing crew, weeding out mutant stalks in the cornfields near Durant, Iowa. That fall, he started as a stockboy at the Loudon Machinery Company in Fairfield, manufacturer of automated feeder barns and monorail conveying systems for assembly lines. He did not necessarily expect to forge a career at Loudon; he was more interested in enlisting in the U.S. Navy as soon as he turned eighteen — and did, a year later. Trained at Great Lakes Naval Station in Chicago, Harold eventually was based at Jacksonville, Florida. Though he had entered the service too late to engage in combat in Europe or the Pacific, he did train in the Caribbean and western Atlantic for antisubmarine warfare.

Entering the Navy, Harold later said, was about the best thing he ever did. Harold lived and trained with men from all over the United States and of various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. As a young man who had never



Bernard (above) passed on his fascination with carpentry and metalwork to sons Harold and Carl.

previously been more than one hundred miles from home, he traveled to Chicago, Boston, Florida, Bermuda, and Guatemala. The Navy introduced Harold to new cultures and broadened his view of the world outside his home community.

During the war years the family lost the two whose union had triggered the shift toward mainstream America. In 1943, a week before their fifty-first wedding anniversary, Jennie died. Dan died two years later. Eighty acres of the farm had previously been transferred to Bernard, and Nellie used her inheritance from her own father's will to purchase the remaining forty acres. Bernard began building a beef herd and after the war traded in the old Farmall tractor for a newer Allis-Chalmers from a Lockridge dealer. The dealer was also his brother-in-law, evidence that the family network was still in operation.

Carl, still in high school, acted on his interest in machines by working part-time as a mechanic at the same dealership. He continued to work with metal and machinery in addition to farming the land. He later moved

into Dan and Jennie's old place and, in 1952, married Florence Stewart. (In the coming years his job experience at the dealership would give him a start in establishing his own farm-related business.)

In 1946 Harold was mustered out of the Navy (though he would serve in the reserves for the next eight years). He returned to Jefferson County and his old job as a stockboy with Loudon Machinery Company. He attended Parsons College part-time and moved up into office work, eventually becoming head of the billing department at Loudon. In 1950 he met Grace Conrad and they married a year later.

DURING THE SIX decades following 1892, Dan and Jennie Graber and their descendants were fairly typical examples of successful middle-class farmers in the Midwest as they moved from rural isolation toward greater participation in the outer world. The Grabers expanded their farm early in the period, resisted further expansion during speculative times, carried low debts, and fought the Great Depression with diversification and jobs off the farm. They shunned active participation in political movements, preferring to socialize in their rural community and to farm unbothered by the winds of politics. They did not see themselves as isolated; local concerns were of greater importance to them. It took a second world war for them to realize fully the importance of the outer world.

Dan was the son of immigrants who sought happiness through a lifetime of hard work both on and off the farm. Conservative boyhood traditions taught him to resist change and to be skeptical of attempts at modernization. Like many farmers of his generation, he never bought a tractor, car, nor truck and continued farming in the way of his parents. His greatest contributions to the eventual modernization of his family were his successful marriage to a Maxwell and the farm partnership with his son, Bernard.

Bernard carried the family further along the path of modernization with his relative openness to change and his treatment of the farm as a business. He had a strong desire for the inventions of the outside world that could ben-



efit the farm: cars, tractors, and farm machinery. He changed the farm from little more than subsistence level to a profitable, diversified business, one that could withstand even the Great Depression. He emphasized hard work and closeness to the earth over education, but married a woman who believed in the importance of a formal education for their children.

Bernard's oldest son, Harold, benefited from the broadening experiences of the Navy and travel but chose to settle in Fairfield after the war, working his way up through the ranks of a local industrial equipment firm. He shared his father's love of carpentry and remodeled older homes in Fairfield before eventually building his own home in the country.

Bernard's younger son, Carl, followed in his father's and grandfather's footsteps with the farming business, expanding to some five hundred acres over the quarter century after World War II and starting a tractor dealership and service center on his farm.

Although Dan and Jennie were not there to see all this, their family had entered the modern world. □

Evidence of continuing strong family ties: In 1945 Bernard and Nellie moved their farmhouse a quarter-mile to a site just across the road from Dan and Jennie's farmhouse. A 1953 aerial shot shows Bernard and Nellie's farmyard.

NOTE ON SOURCES

"When I began this project," the author notes, "I did not realize that I would be able to piece together so much information about a husband and wife who began their lives together nearly three-quarters of a century before my birth." Family photo albums, scrapbooks, and genealogy records were extremely valuable in reconstructing the rural neighborhood and lifestyle of the Dan and Jennie Graber family. The *Fairfield Tribune*, *Fairfield Daily Ledger*, and the *Lockridge Times* expanded the author's understanding of the era. The author consulted county histories, courthouse records, plat maps of Jefferson County, and state and federal township censuses and census manuscripts for Iowa. Other particularly useful secondary sources included *The Mennonites in Iowa* by Melvin Gingerich (Iowa City, 1939); various years of the *Iowa Yearbook of Agriculture* and the *Iowa Agricultural Census; A Fair Field* by Susan Fulton Welty (Detroit, 1976); and *Three Generations in Twentieth Century America* by John G. Clarke et al. (Homewood, Ill., 1982). This article was developed from a paper written for a University of Iowa undergraduate history seminar directed by Ellis Hawley, chair of the history department, whom the author thanks for his inspiration and detailed suggestions. The author also thanks his father, Harold D. Graber, and uncle, Carl D. Graber, for interviews, interest, and excellent recall.

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William Bernard Graber, son of Harold and Grace Graber, was born in 1963 in Fairfield, Iowa. In 1976 he moved to a farm north of Lockridge that had been originally homesteaded by his mother's great-grandfather, a Mennonite. Graber graduated with highest honors from Fairfield High School in 1982 and received his bachelor's degree in history and political science with a minor in Latin American studies from the University of Iowa in 1986. He worked as an intern in Special Collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa (at Iowa City) in the fall of 1986. Graber recently married Diane S. Tipping of Cedar Rapids and is currently working on graduate studies in history at the University of Iowa.

Since 1982 **Will Thomson** has been an exhibit design artist and adjunct instructor with the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History. From 1974 through 1981 Thomson was curator of exhibits at the North Carolina State Museum of Natural History. He has edited and illustrated publications, won design awards, and created exhibits appearing in several museums. He holds a B.A. in biology from North Carolina Wesleyan College. Thomson's parents live on North Carolina's Outer Banks, and Shackleford is "an old haunt" of his. When he discovered through his museum work that Brimley had brought the whale from Shackleford Banks, Thomson's affinity with the area led him to research and write this article.

Debby J. Zieglofsky grew up near Washington, Iowa, where her parents own a farm. She received

field training at the York Archaeological Trust in York, England, in the mid-1970s. She graduated from the University of Iowa in 1977 and joined the staff of the Office of the State Archaeologist at the University of Iowa in 1979. She is treasurer of the Iowa Archaeological Society and has served as a trustee of the State Historical Society of Iowa. Her article "Thomas Macbride's Dream: Iowa Lakeside Laboratory" appeared in the March/April 1985 *Palimpsest*. This summer she will assist in a field archaeology course taught at Iowa Lakeside Laboratory on West Lake Okoboji.

SUBMISSIONS

The editor welcomes manuscripts and edited documents on the history of Iowa and the Midwest that may interest a general reading audience. Submissions that focus on visual material (such as photographs, maps, drawings) or on material culture are also invited. Originality and significance of the topic, as well as the quality of research and writing, will determine acceptance for publication. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced, and follow *The Chicago Manual of Style* (13th edition). Although standard length of a *Palimpsest* manuscript is twenty double-spaced, typewritten pages, the editor nevertheless is interested in reviewing shorter or longer submissions for possible publication. Include a list of sources used and a brief biographical sketch. Because illustrative material is integral to the *Palimpsest*, the editor encourages authors to include photographs and illustrations (or suggestions). Please send submissions or queries to Ginalie Swaim, Editor, *The Palimpsest*, State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

CORRECTION

An error appeared in the caption on page 15 of "Men Were Too Fiery for Much Talk: The Grinnell Anti-Abolitionist Riot of 1860" (Spring 1987 *Palimpsest*). Congressman James Ashley's speech, to which the caption refers, was an antislavery speech (not anti-abolitionist) and Grinnell abolitionist Samuel F. Cooper was agreeing with it (not attacking it) when he reprinted portions in his newspaper. The editor regrets the error.



"The Last Day"
(Cover photos by Fred Kent, Summer 1913, Lake Okoboji)

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