The Palimpsest

VOLUME 55 NUMBER 5 SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 1974

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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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L. Edward Purcell, Editor

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EARLY ARCHITECTURE IN DUBUQUE

by
Loren N. Horton

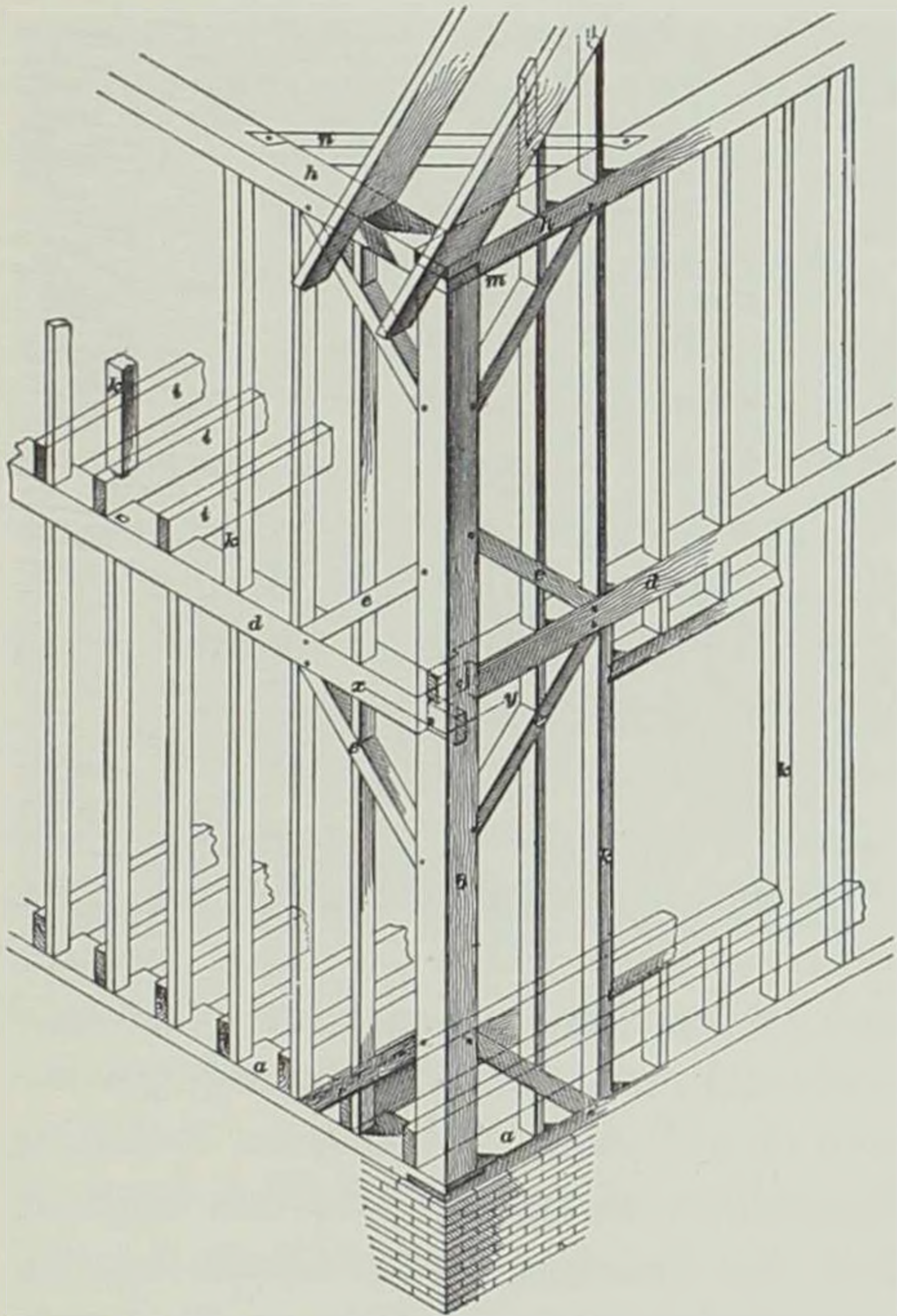
"*We commenced the erection of a commodious edifice.*" The expression seems quaint and colorful in 1974, when we would more likely say that we began to build a roomy house. In the mid-nineteenth century, however, this phrase was the standard way of announcing a new architectural enterprise. Just as speech was quaintly colorful in those days, so too were the buildings which our forebears "commenced erecting."

Building a new house in early Dubuque —or anywhere else on the frontier—was not a matter to be taken lightly, because a person could be confident of spending his life in the "edifice." Teeming hordes swept across the land during the nineteenth century migrations, but millions more stayed put. A building did not quickly become obsolete. Like the Europeans, whose buildings from the Middle Ages were still in use, the Americans built for future centuries. The houses were solid and, even if cramped and small, could still proudly be described as "commodious" in the frontier town of Dubuque.

By the time Dubuque was founded, there had been more than two centuries of experience in adapting buildings to the North American continent. Styles and methods of construction still imitated European precedents, but there was no longer total dependence upon the techniques of the Medieval, Renaissance, or Baroque Periods. Continued immigation from Europe produced some interesting carryovers in communities with a heavy ethnic population, and architects still relied upon builder plan books from England and Italy. However, along with the political independence in the eighteenth century had come some measure of independence in architecture as well.

In the 200 years since the settlement of America, building technology had changed. Log cabins, a common type of early frontier building, began to disappear as the line of settlement passed beyond the heavily forested regions. After the introduction of steam sawmills in the early 1800s, sawed lumber was plentiful and cheap and made possible a new method of building, called "balloon framing." Timber framing, the system common before 1833 when the balloon frame was invented, relied on hewn structural members and weight-bearing outer walls. The balloon frame instead supported the roof beams with a thin, skeleton-like system of inner walls. Sawed studdings, joists, and rafters created a thin, but sturdy frame. Wall coverings were attached to the frame and did not bear any weight.

By 1850, wrought iron and cast iron pillars, beams, and decorations were available to builders. Entire fronts of buildings were cast of iron and erected in pieces, bolted or joined together like a giant jig-



An example of balloon framing. [illustration from A Treatise on Building Construction, *II (Scranton: Colliery Engineering Co., 1900), 34.]*

saw puzzle. Cast iron fronts were used most often for commercial buildings and can be identified today by the undeviating regularity of the window placement. Iron was used in all types of construction, both as ornament and for support.

Even though materials and advanced techniques were available in Dubuque, trained architects were scarce. There were some men considered by their peers to be architects and others who made their livings solely by designing buildings, yet few in the Midwest could boast of formal training. The alternative to an architect was the carpenter-builder. These men were skilled craftsmen who were able to construct almost any type of building, drawing only on their experience, a plan book, or the patron's rough indication of size, shape, material, style, and funds. The widespread activity of carpenter-builders explains why so few buildings constructed before 1850 can be attributed to a particular architect. Contemporary accounts were careful to name specifically the carpenter, the mason, the bricklayer, the plasterer, the painter, or any others involved in work. Presumably, the patron or one of the craftsmen provided general supervision in many cases.

The sparcity of architects did not limit the use of the latest styles for buildings. Many builders' plan books were published in England and the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. So important and frequently used were these plan books, that actual buildings have been found which reproduce almost exactly a sketch from a pattern book. A patron simply pointed to a page in a book and told a carpenter to duplicate it as nearly as possible.

Use of plan books also led to what might be called regional eclecticism. Either patron or builder chose details to suit taste, whim, or pocketbook, resulting in a strange mixture of styles that was not quite consistent enough to be a new style in itself. No one thought it odd or in poor taste to have a Greek doorway, Roman

columns, Italian Renaissance windows, and a Gothic tower all on the same house. The house might involve the use of both hewn and sawed lumber, stone, brick, and stucco. Such picking and choosing of what was deemed attractive or desirable led to conglomerate buildings which are the bane of architectural historians. Even though labeled eclectic, such buildings lend a great deal of charm and variety to the towns of the western two-thirds of the United States.

Because these styles penetrated to the interior valleys in such close succession, because the population stemmed from such varied backgrounds, and because of the common use of carpenter-builders and of plan books, it is difficult to make meaningful generalizations about architecture except in a specific place at a particular time. Because of cultural lag or slow communication, two or three styles, which were fashionable years apart in Europe or on the eastern seaboard, appeared simultaneously in a frontier community.

Americans had at their disposal in the early nineteenth century a knowledge of all prevalent styles, a wide variety of building materials, and sufficient constructional skills and techniques. Examples of a specific style may easily be found. But they are evident mostly because they are atypical. Individual taste led to mixing of styles and materials, and almost no effort was made to coordinate or group buildings into an ensemble. Each structure usually stands alone and must be studied and judged on its individual characteristics. Few neighborhoods, and even fewer towns, were uniform in either style or materials, which is not to say that it would have been desirable for them to be uniform. However, most of them were not even remotely complementary. In the interior of the United States it is almost as if all the factors bearing upon architecture were poured together and instead of coming out a reflection of Europe, or a clearly identifiable American modification or style, they came out hash.

The site of Dubuque had been known to white men earlier than almost any other portion of Iowa. Julien Dubuque operated lead mines there as early as 1785 and received a grant from the Spanish government of well over 100,000 acres, including "The Mines of Spain." After his death in 1810, the claims to the land passed to the heirs of Auguste Chouteau in St. Louis, but extensive lead mining in the adjacent areas of Illinois and Wisconsin kept knowledge of the old site vivid. Indeed, illegal entry by miners occurred in 1829, 1830, and 1832. In each case United States Army troops forced the squatters out, but mines were opened, and cabins and smelters built. After the Black Hawk Cession Treaty of 1832 extinguished the Indian title to this land, anxious miners camped on islands in the Mississippi River to await the legal opening of the area, which was set for June 1, 1833.

A "Lead Rush" took place during the summer of 1833, and probably as many as 1500 people were living at the site by

The William Newman cabin, of the dog-trot variety, existed by 1833 and is now preserved in Eagle Point Park, Dubuque. A dog-trot cabin was simply two single cabins joined together by a continuous roof, creating a breeze-way between them.

1836. With the economic base of lead mining to support the population the town continued to grow rapidly, and after the lead ore gave out, the business life of the community shifted to an equally lucrative base of lumber milling and related commercial woodworking enterprises, as well as to a variety of other industries. A community of 15,957 people existed by 1857, making it the largest city in Iowa.

The first buildings in the Dubuque Mines area were crude structures, thrown up in haste to provide temporary shelter for the miners. Patrick J. Quigley, one of the earliest inhabitants, recalled that the cabins and shanties were so few in the summer of 1833 that for two or three months he was obliged to sleep out-of-doors more than half the time. Hewn logs of native timber were the commonest building material, and both single and dog-trot cabins were constructed, perhaps as many as 100 by 1833.

When a raft of lumber from Wisconsin was brought downriver by William Lockwood in 1833, a new and more abundant sort of building material was made available. General Warner Lewis built the first frame house in the vicinity in November 1833, and in December, Peter Lorimier built the second. These two frame houses were used by George W. Harrison as fixed points for his unofficial survey. In 1834, a more ambitious building, the Bell Tavern, was erected, partially of hewn logs and partially of sawed lumber. Some houses were huddled together near the tavern while others were scattered up and

down the coulees at random.

The first public building in Dubuque was commissioned in 1834 by local residents of the Methodist congregation. Local donations and contributions from St. Louis raised the $225 necessary to build a church. P. Smith and William Clark were the builders. The contract specified the building to be built of hewn logs, one story, 20 by 26 feet, and ten feet high "in the clear." When completed on September 3, the church had a shingled roof, one batten door, four 20-pane windows and one 12-pane window. The cracks between the logs were pointed with a mortar made of lime and sand. This was probably a typical sort of building, larger perhaps than the residences, and impressive mainly for its shingled roof and the number of windows. The cost was also probably representative since it was built entirely by contractors, rather than by the donated labor of the congregation.

During the same summer, a stone warehouse was built on the river bank, and for many years it was the principal steamboat landing and storage facility. This was the first recorded use of native limestone as the major construction material for a Dubuque building, although earlier buildings undoubtedly had native stone foundations, fireplaces, and other peripheral parts.

By 1836, when Iowa's first newspaper, *The DuBuque Visitor*, began publication, the town's commercial needs were served by 60 stores and groceries, four taverns, and an undetermined number of mechanic shops and trading establishments. There were approximately 1000 inhabitants in the town itself, but no record remains of the number of residences.

The Visitor commented in its first issue on May 11, 1836: "Artisans of almost every description are needed at DuBuque, and would find immediate employment and good wages; particularly brick-makers and masons." Clay suitable for firing into brick was plentiful in the bluffs behind the community, but skills and time for brick-making were scarce. LeRoy Jackson erected the first brick house in 1836, and probably paid the mason $2.50 to $3.00 a day—higher by 15 or 20 per cent than carpenter's wages.

A lack of local lumber also retarded the pace of construction. Buildings needed or wanted by the community were delayed, and many emigrants returned downriver for lack of houses. Even though David Sleator had established a steam sawmill in 1836, the quality of lumber and construction was not high. Many of the 55 houses constructed that year were evidently ramshackle and temporary. Lum-

Note on Sources

The Dubuque newspapers, city directories, county histories, censuses, and various monographs and secondary literature about Dubuque were basic references for this article. Of special help were Mrs. Kenneth Mercer and John Baule of the Dubuque County Historical Society who made available the materials in the Ham House Museum Library, and who also gave me many clues unavailable elsewhere. Mr. John M. McDonald, Mr. Edward Langworthy Chalmers, and Mr. Frederick E. Bissell were also helpful, as were the personnel of the Wahlert Memorial Library at Loras College, the Carnegie-Stout Public Library, the Dubuque County Court House, and the Dubuque City Hall.

Specific source materials deserving special mention are: The Josiah Conzett Papers, a typed translation of which is located in the Ham House Museum Library; The Langworthy Papers, in the archives of the State Historical Society of Iowa; Betsy H. Woodman, "John Francis Rague: Mid-Nineteenth Century Revivalist Architect (1799-1877)," unpublished Master's Thesis, The University of Iowa, 1969; Sister Maria Michele Armato and Sister Mary Jeremy Finnegan (trans.), *The Memoirs of Father Samuel Mazzuchelli* (Chicago: The Priory Press, 1967); John Calvin Holbrook, *Recollections of a Nonagenarian* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1897).

ber floated down the Mississippi from Wisconsin eventually helped the materials shortage. Oak, which was scarce near Dubuque, was cheaper than pine, which was almost unlimited in supply even though pine had to be rafted from the north. Rents remained high and housing scarce due to the rapid influx of population.

The lack of progress in construction seems to have continued through the early 1840s. The few buildings which existed outside of Main Street and "Dublin" (a fairly crowded residential area), were so scattered as to barely make the appearance of a street. Larger and more elaborate buildings were few in these early years. The only brick commercial building by 1840 was the Jesse P. Farley and Company store. Solon Langworthy remarked that a traveler debarking on the steamboat landing in 1840 could see no buildings better than "Hewen logs."

Despite continued growth and prosperity during the decade of the 1840s, Dubuque residents continued to build in a haphazard fashion. The local lead mines lent a boom-town atmosphere which may have added to the carelessness and general lack of concern for architecture. By the 1850s this began to change. Prosperity—at least until the Panic of 1857—sparked an increase in building. The editor of *The Daily Miner's Express* in 1852 drew a neat correlation between aesthetic consciousness and economic advantage:

> We take advantage of the opportunity which this notice affords us, to throw out some hints on the subject of architectural style and variety in building. There is no subject perhaps, in which we could touch, that is more appropriate to new and rising towns than this. There is no feature in the exterior of a town or city, which so clearly speaks the taste and character of its inhabitants as the architectural tone and style of their dwellings and public improvements. Shew [sic] us neatness, elegance and taste in the style and symmetry of a dwelling, and we will form a very accurate idea of the taste and character of its inmates. The striking effect of the influence produced upon our estimate of the inhabitants of any place, from the style and appearance of their dwellings, is matter of almost everyday experience to us all. . . . It is not therefore, the expense of a house, that we have reference to when we speak of the taste and character of its inmates. It is simply the style. . . . In speaking of style, we cannot withhold the opinion that, our western towns, pay too little attention to variety. It should be the study of every resident to make himself useful to the community in which he lives, as well as to consult his own and his family's interest and convenience. When a citizen makes up his mind to build, he ought also to make it a point to try and have something different from the general custom either by improving upon it or introducing something entirely new. Nothing contributes so much to the beauty of any place as an emulous and chaste variety in the tone and style of its public improvements and private residences . . . . Nothing will more readily win the admiration of the stranger or visitor, and nothing more certainly decide the mind of him who is in search of a new and pleasant home.

During the middle decade of the century, the wealthier citizens of Dubuque were attracted to the bluff area behind the town as a residential site. Soon, a bluff mansion became the status mark of economic and social success. As one editor noted:

> The bluffs in the rear of the city are becoming dotted all over with new residences, which seem, from the points below, to be springing up out of the earth as the result of magic. It may be some trouble for the

> residents to get up to them, but then they are amply repaid for all their toil by the beautiful views and the exhilarating breezes which continually are wafting o'er them.

Since these bluff sites were in newly platted additions, it behooved the proprietors to make the area attractive. The sale of lots depended on it.

A building boom hit during the 1850s, and the vacant lots of the commercial districts began to disappear as larger and more elaborate buildings went up—many of them constructed of brick. In 1854, a total of 333 new buildings were constructed; in 1855 a total of 471; and in 1856 a total of 502. The total cost of construction in 1856 was $1,167,145—$245,825 going for 117 buildings on the bluffs. More than 1000 buildings were planned during 1856, although not all were completed. Many old houses were moved to vacant lots and rented, while the owners built new and more substantial homes on the old sites. The number of brick business blocks built that year was three times greater than any previous year.

By 1857, business buildings covered a four block wide area from First to Seventh Streets. Supplies of building materials were also more plentiful. The J. L. Dickinson Planing Mill was capable of turning out 10,000 feet of planed lumber, 40 doors, and 1200 lights per week. It employed 34 hands and was only one of several productive saw and planing mills. The rise in building construction brought with it some attempts by the city government to regulate the quality of buildings. An ordinance was presented to the City Council in 1856 by the City Attorney, ". . . prescribing the manner in which large buildings should be constructed, with a view to prevent them from falling down." At about the same time, it was forbidden to build houses with bow windows which extended more than two feet from the facade. Apparently the motivation for this was not so much the safety of the building as the fact that projections obstructed free passage on the sidewalks and streets. The general appearance of the new buildings in Dubuque brought an accolade from the local editor:

> The buildings that are going up in the various parts of our city are of a superior character, much surpassing those constructed in previous years; and should the balance of the great number already under contract prove to be of the same description, they will greatly enhance the beauty of our city, and will challenge comparison with the architecture of any city of the West.

The shortage of skilled craftsmen in the building trades had eased by the 1850s, although many people did the less complicated woodworking for themselves and called on outside assistance only for the brick and stone work. The census rolls, city directories, and newspaper advertisements indicate that there were many craftsmen on hand for these tasks.

Architects were, of course, much less common on the Iowa frontier than were craftsmen. Not until an area was populous and prosperous could an architect make a living solely by drawing plans for buildings. Many had to rely on alternate sources of income such as surveying, map drawing, or related tasks. Many architects acted as superintendents of construction for buildings they had designed.

The first identifiable architect in Dubuque was Father Samuel Mazzuchelli, who designed the first St. Raphael's Church, built in 1835-36. Father Mazzu-

Father Samuel Charles Mazzuchelli

chelli was an active missionary for the Roman Catholic faith in the Upper Mississippi Valley and the designer of at least ten churches. He also acted as superintendent of construction for his projects and often had to use volunteer labor. Harrassed by indifferent workmen and a busy schedule, the priest saw to the erection of the church and then, in 1839, the Bishop's House, adjacent to the church. Even the indefatigable missionary must have been taxed by the labor. He alluded to the problems in his third person memoirs:

> Where everything has to be done and where the facilities one has in populous places are lacking, anyone who wishes to build must himself be architect and superintendent. Therefore the priest, although obliged to celebrate the Mass and preach every Sunday in the church at Galena, went to Dubuque every Monday to attend to the building of the episcopal residence during the week.

By 1852, more persons in Dubuque could afford to have their house plans drawn by a specialist, and this demand produced a greater supply of architects. Joseph C. Jennings referred to himself as a civil engineer and architect, and advertised "Designs and Building Drawings made to order." No buildings have been found which were specifically attributed to his design, but he did offer for sale several town and lot maps of Dubuque which he had drawn. At the same time, John Hill, architect and builder, offered his services, with "Particular Attention given to Designs and Building Drawings with all their details and specifications on the most reasonable terms." Hill drew the plans for the residence of Alexander Simplot, the store building of Mr. Wilde, and the Methodist Episcopal Church. In partnership with L. Horr, he designed the William Joshua Barney office building, and declared the firm to be skilled in all the various styles of architecture. This was the period when the Classical Revival was being replaced by Gothic Revival, and presumably Hill and Horr wanted prospective customers to know that they were competent to execute plans and specifications in the traditional styles, as well as the new fads.

The number of architects increased, and by 1857, 13 men listed themselves in the business directory as architects. Of these, six were cross-listed as builders. John D. Abry first advertised in April 1856 and was followed in September by John Francis Rague and John N. Moody. By October 1857, they had been joined by William Allardyce, William Baumer, S. Y. Brad-

A view of Dubuque in 1846.

street, F. G. Brandt, Edward Harris, William Longhurst, John Mullaney, George W. Osborn, W. H. Drake, and L. L. Wood. The only other man who may have been an architect in Dubuque prior to the Civil War was Robert Schmid, who advertised as "Architect and Superintendent, formerly of Burling and Schmid, Chicago."

While the professional status of many of these men may be in doubt, some of them have the design of specific buildings attributed to them. Mullaney is credited as the architect of St. Raphael's Cathedral, one of the largest and most impressive of all Dubuque buildings. The Lawrence Block was designed by C. C. Roberts, cited in the description of the building as a local architect, but he did not advertise in the newspapers nor did he list himself under any professional category in any of the city directories. John D. Abry designed the cupola for the Central Market and City Hall.

By far the most productive architect was John Francis Rague, whose reputation was well established before he came to Dubuque. Rague designed the Illinois and Iowa capitol buildings, and various schools, business blocks, and residences in Wisconsin and Illinois. He moved to Dubuque after he was already renowned for his work. While in Dubuque, he was retained to draw the plans and specifications for the Central Market and City Hall, the County Jail, the First, Third, and Fifth Ward Schoolhouses, an addition to the County Court House, the Bissell-Babbage-Andrew house, and the octagonal residence of Edward Langworthy. For some of these buildings he also acted as superintendent of construction. With such an impressive list of buildings to his credit, Rague must be accounted as Dubuque's leading architect prior to the Civil War.

As style of buildings grew to be more elaborate, and as larger buildings were

erected, different materials became more common. By 1856, the Dubuque Cut Stone Yard was in full operation, although the use of stone never achieved the popularity of wood and brick. By the summer of 1856, Keys and Jackson opened a yard on the bluff above 13th Street to make pressed brick, and A. Biles and Company did an extensive business supplying bricks to major contractors. The Dubuque Steam Brick Works of Mahony and Crangle manufactured pressed bricks for fronts of buildings, as well as paving and common building bricks.

An entirely new technique in materials used in building construction was developed in the east shortly before the middle of the nineteenth century. The new material was cast iron and the new technique was to use cast columns for support units and cast ornaments and fronts for the facades of buildings. The new process moved west rapidly. By 1852, a foundry in Dubuque, The Iowa Iron Works, was advertising ". . . window caps and sills, columns, and iron castings of every description." John Francis Rague became an agent for cast iron material and advertised:

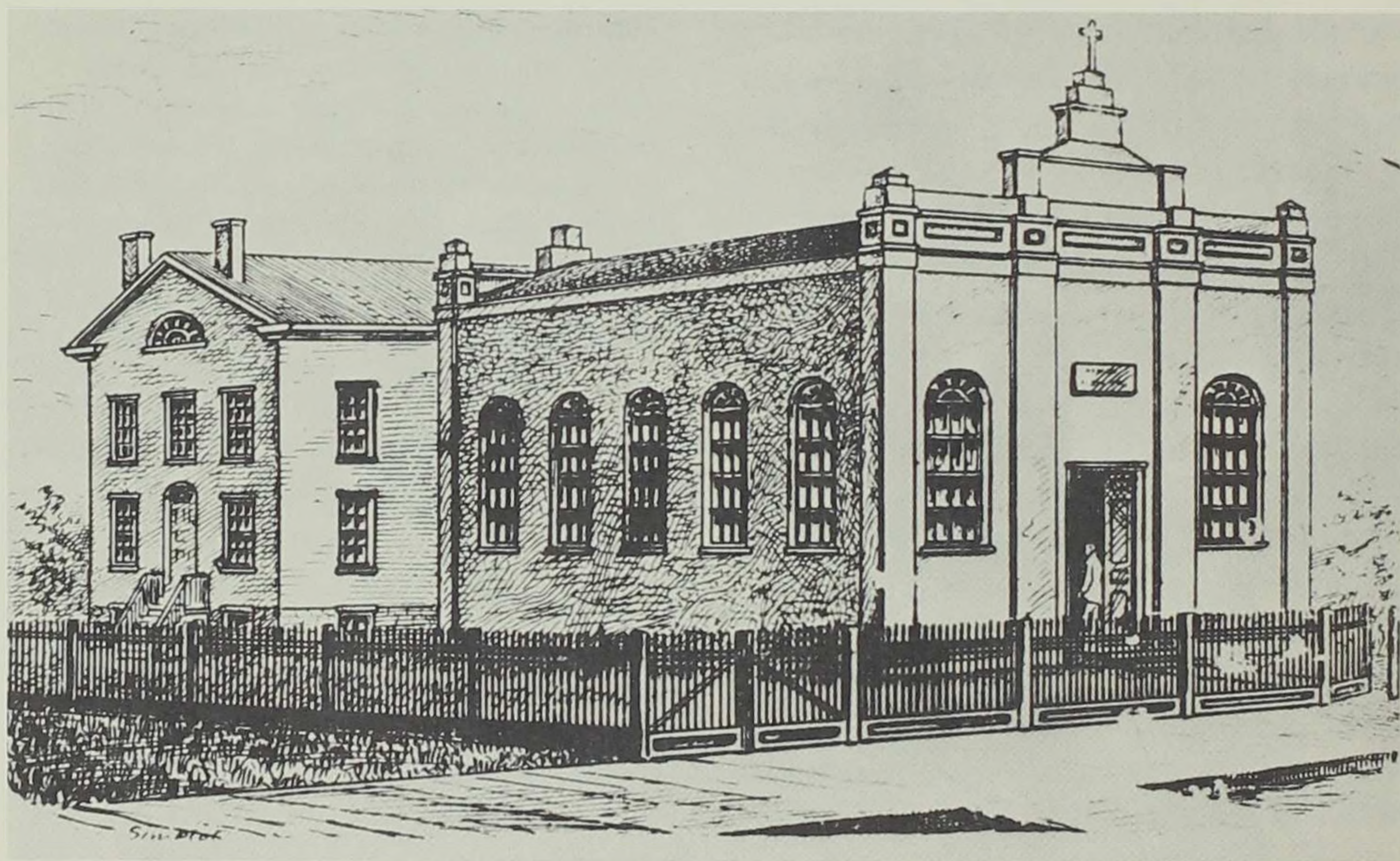
> Entire Iron Fronts For Business Houses. These Fronts are Architecturally beautiful, and of the latest styles, and handsome as any in the United States. If desired they are fitted up with Burglar and Fire Proof Rolling Iron Shutters.

Evidently appearance, as well as function, was important to Dubuque residents in their decade of prosperity. The Editor of the *Express and Herald* commented:

> We had the pleasure yesterday of examining in the office of Mr. Allardyce, architect, a number of drafts and cuts of caps, brackets, etc., for building purposes, of the most beautiful designs and proportions. Several of these fronts are the same in feature with those magnificent ones erected in Chicago during the past summer, and are really a credit to the designer and foundrymen who got them up. . . . Iron fronts are becoming very popular in the East and also in large Western cities, they are represented to be less costly and they are certainly more durable and beautiful than any other for public buildings and business blocks, now in use.

These editorial comments indicate a number of things about life and attitudes in Dubuque at that time. Local foundries had knowledge of methods and designs used in Chicago and other cities further east. Communication with the east about cultural and aesthetic matters was apparently common. Even more important, because it was fashionable in eastern cities to use cast iron fronts and ornaments, then Dubuque should also use them. Civic pride demanded that Dubuque keep up with other cities. Economics supported the use of cast iron architectural details, because they were cheaper and more durable. This nice mixing of a sense of getting their money's worth, and at the same time doing things to create the best possible impression of "civilization" seems to have typified Dubuque during its first three decades. Indeed, it is similar in this respect to many other towns, both on the frontier and elsewhere. By the 1850s, style was important.

Commercial buildings in Dubuque probably followed a rather common trend in styles. Since few photographs or engravings exist from before the 1850s it is difficult to be precise about the earlier buildings. Most commercial buildings were undoubtedly eclectic in style and not unusual enough to provoke comment. The newspapers, which normally were diligent chroniclers of new houses, failed to com-



St. Raphael's Church was surprisingly sophisticated for its frontier setting. More elaborate than most of Mazzuchelli's designs, its paneled dome, parapeted wall, unembellished pilasters of the facade, and the geometric frieze supporting the flattened tower were highly decorative. The Bishop's House, built three years later, was less interesting, and the main ornaments were the fan-shaped tympanum grill in the attic gable and multi-paned square windows, a contrast to the Romanesque arches of those in the Church.

ment on commercial buildings.

More evidence is available for the 1850s. In 1855 and 1856, the Odd Fellows Lodge built a business block on the southwest corner of Bluff and 8th Streets. Other commercial buildings of note were the Lorimier House hotel built in 1857-58 and the Julien House in 1854. These, along with most other commercial buildings, combined architectural styles, adding details from several periods and mixing, for example, Classical with Italianate and Romanesque.

Public buildings in Dubuque, on the other hand, showed an astonishing variety of styles. They contrasted sharply with the bland similarity of the commercial buildings. Beginning with the construction of St. Raphael's Church in 1836, more different architectural styles were used in the design of public buildings of Dubuque than in any other town in early Iowa. Father Mazzuchelli chose the Italian Renaissance Revival mode for his church. He was a native of northern Italy and probably imitated the styles familiar to him from childhood. The church, built of native stone, was amazingly sophisticated for the Iowa frontier at the time.

The first Dubuque County Court House was built in 1839. The architect is variously given as Samuel Wilkings or Joseph Ogilby, but it is likely that Wilkings drew rough plans (for which he was paid $8) and Ogilby supervised the finishing touches on the drawings. The building was a massive structure of brick and reminded the viewer of the Romanesque

The Egyptian Revival Style was part of the Classical Revival, and used Egyptian motifs instead of Greek and Roman. It was probably inspired by the publication in 1802 of Baron de Denon's archaeological research done during Napoleon's Egyptian campaign. It seems to have gained popularity during the Romantic Era because of its novelty and its antiquity. The high point of its American phase was reached in the 1830s, but there were never many examples constructed. Most of the uses of this style were for prisons, medical colleges, or cemetery dependencies. The Dubuque County Jail illustrates the style by its ornamentation, the tin cavetto cornice, winged sun disks on the cavetto lintels with human faces substituted for the sun orbs, and simulated papyrus bundles as columns flanking the main entrance. The walls illustrate the massiveness characteristic of this style, and are constructed of large blocks of limestone laid in a running ashlar bond, extended blocks acting as the quoins. The Jail marks a delayed reaction to a minor style that was used two decades earlier along the eastern seaboard.

churches of early Medieval Europe. An addition was made to the building in 1856, by John Rague, but apparently it simply doubled the length with no change in style. It is impossible to tell just where Rague began his addition.

Perhaps the most exotic example of architectural style in early Dubuque was the Dubuque Female College. Catherine Beecher of the famous New England family offered the town $20,000 in cash, $1000 worth of books and equipment, and four faculty members if the townspeople would erect a building and recruit students. The school was incorporated in 1853, construction began in 1854, and classes opened in the fall of that year. Even though the building was not complete until 1857, the Female College held classes from 1854 until 1859 when the school closed. There is no record of the architect, but the result was a pseudo-Byzantine or Florid Gothic palace. The bizarre-looking towers and the uneven heights of the facades gave the building an arresting appearance. It still survives, minus towers, battlements, and decoration, as the Our Lady of Lourdes Home.

Another exotic building was the Dubuque County Jail, designed by John Rague, and built in 1857. It was in the Egyptian Revival style, a relatively rare occurrence in the region. The building was constructed of massive limestone blocks and was distinguished by the ornamented tin work of the roof, cornices, and windows. Winged sun disks atop the windows had human faces in the place of the sun; some of these still exist. The columns flanking the door were carved to resemble papyrus, and along with the walls, appear to be tilted inward, a characteristic of the Egyptian style.

Rague left his mark on many other public buildings of early Dubuque, including three schools. The First, Third, and Fifth Ward schools were all built to his identical design. All were three-story, brick structures. Another of Rague's designs was the Central Market House and City Hall, built in 1857-59. Also a three-story building, the structure was supposedly inspired by the design of the Fulton Street Market in New York and Faneuil Hall in Boston. It is still used as the City Hall today and is in relatively good repair.

One interesting feature of the Central Market and City Hall was the windows. They were 11 feet high and had massive limestone slab sills. These window sills were the height of a wagonbed to facilitate the loading and unloading of goods through the openings.

Inside the building, the first story ceiling was supported by 30 cast iron columns. The second story was divided into Council Chamber, Court Room, and city offices. The third floor was a Town Hall, the entire dimension of the building, 49½ feet by 150 feet, left unobstructed by post or pillar. The basement contained the police offices, the City Jail, and two saloons, one of which was leased to Henry Heel, a member of the City Council.

Dubuque was designated a Port-of-Entry by the federal government in 1856. To accommodate the new role, a Customs House was begun in 1857 and finally completed in 1866. The stone for the building was quarried in southern Illinois and shipped to Dubuque, even though local stone

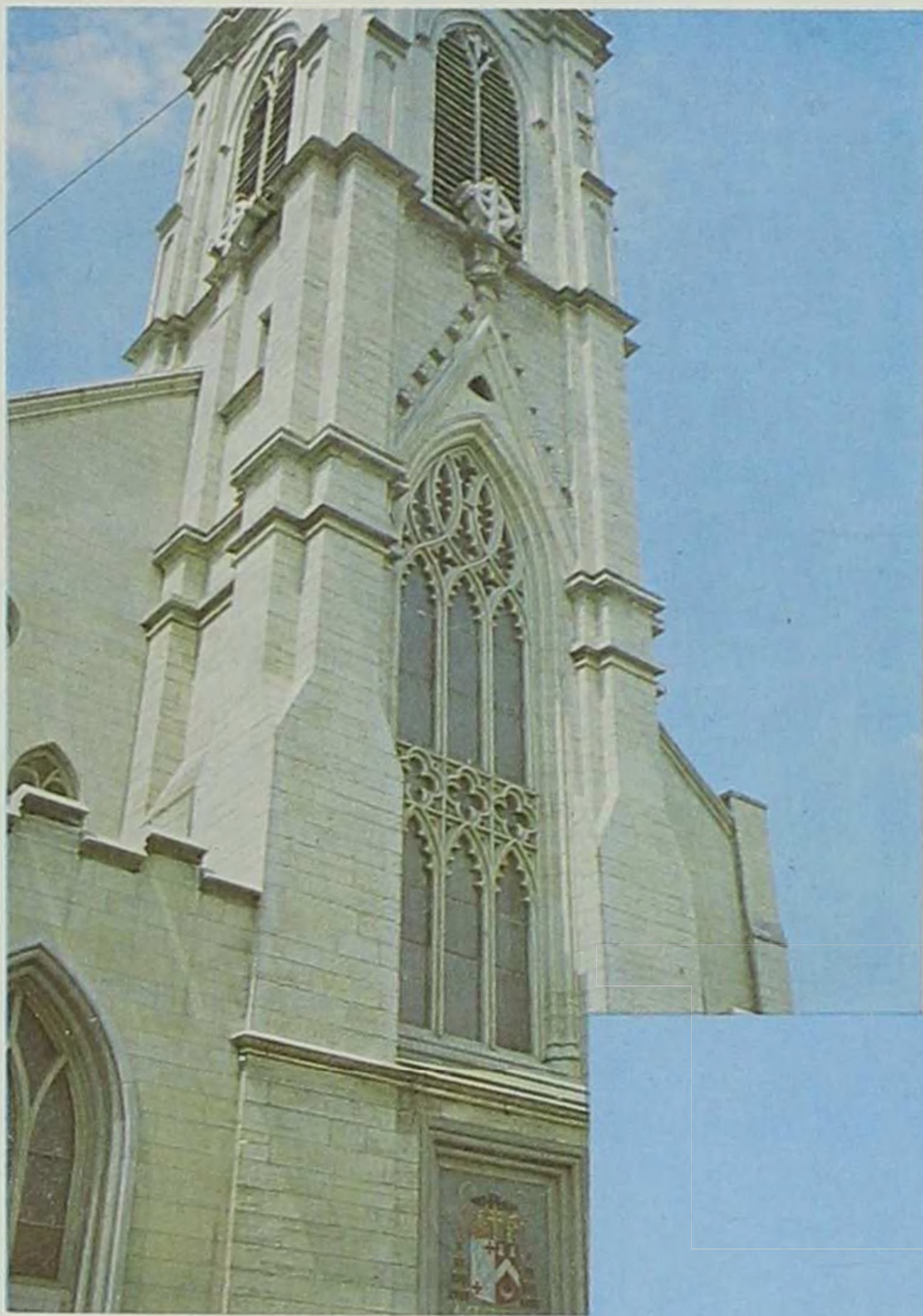
The Dubuque Female College is attributed to no architect and combines a number of styles in its basic mass and in its decorations. The building, located on 17th Street at the head of Iowa, illustrates exotic "onion" domes (ogee-arched caps on the octagonal towers) as well as a "Great Hall" or mock Rose Window in the facade, topped by a molded lintel in a lancet arch design. A battlemented parapet trims each wing and is repeated as the crest for the gable. Hooded lintels, segmentally arched tower windows, pinnacles, and an unusually high water table all combine to add to the strange architectural appearance of this building. The conjectural drawing (right) shows two one-story wings, which add a note of symmetry, but in the photograph of the actual building (above) it will be seen that the south wing was constructed as two stories and the north wing only one, giving the building an off-balance appearance, made even more noticeable because of the slope of the bank on which it was erected. (courtesy of the Dubuque County Historical Society)

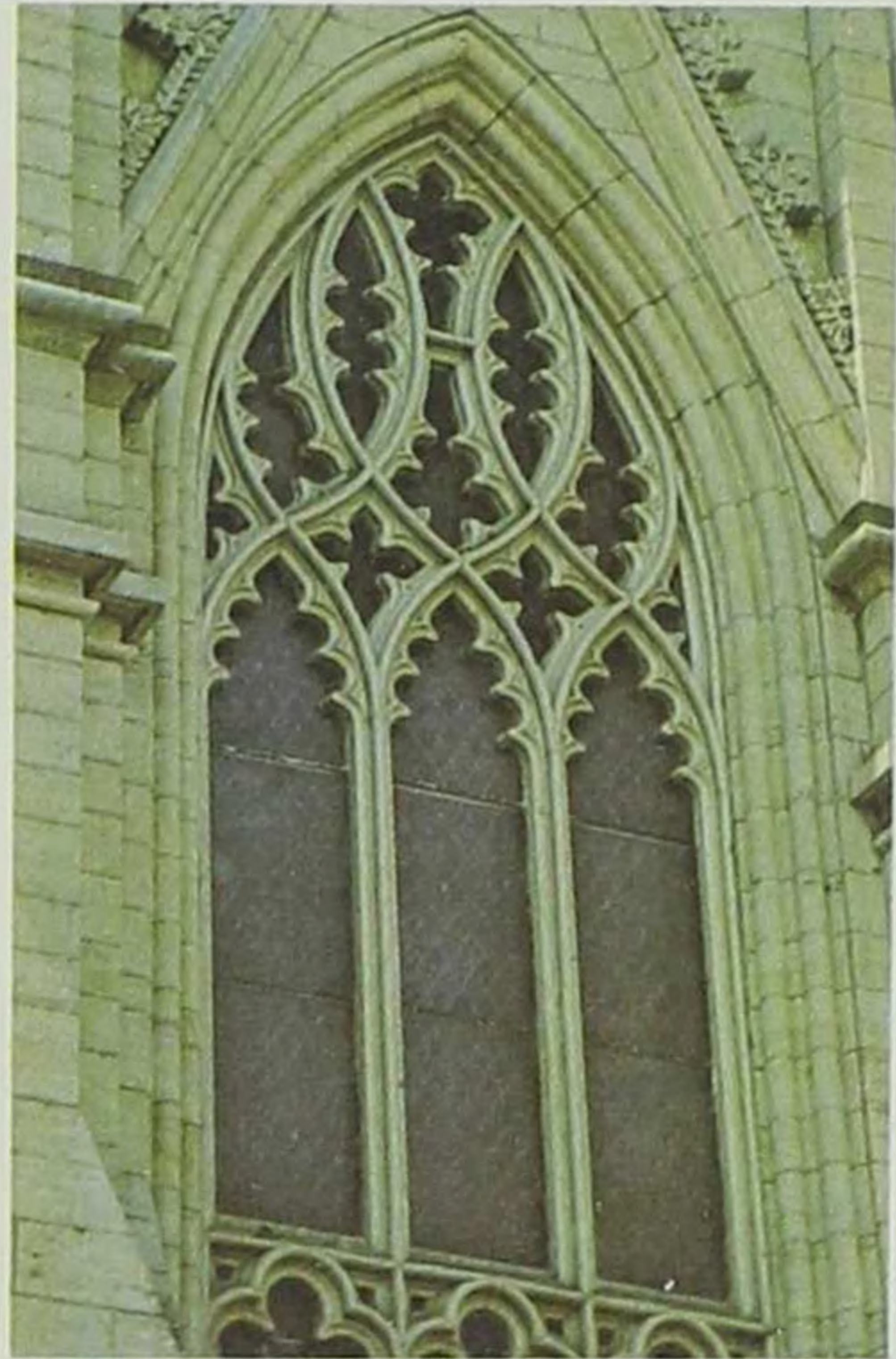
The Central Market and City Hall, built in 1857-58. This late nineteenth century photo shows the use of the windows as loading docks for produce wagons. (courtesy of the Dubuque County Historical Society)

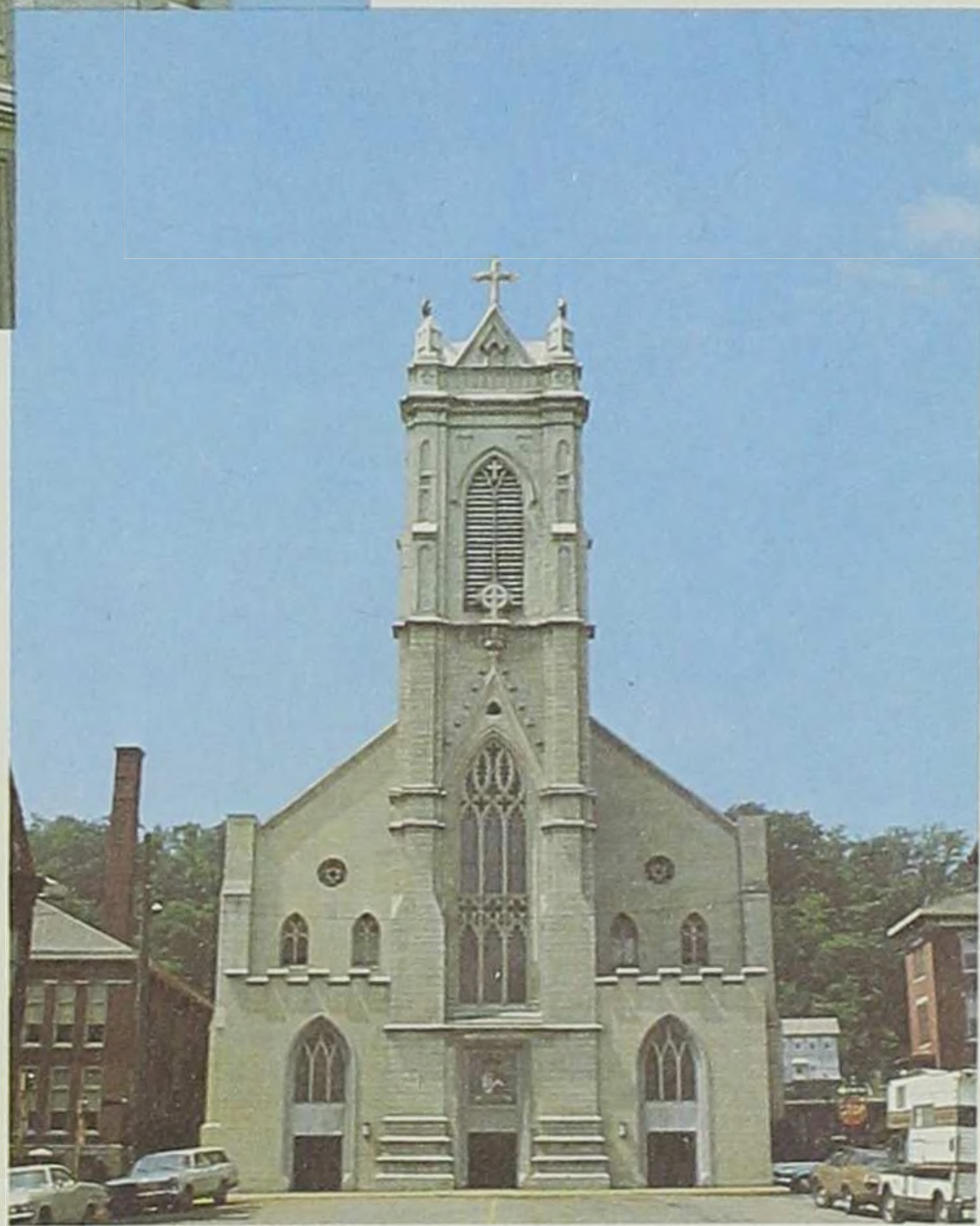
of acceptable quality was available. It is a fine example of Italian Renaissance Revival style. The building was later used as the U.S. Post Office and was not razed until 1933.

Perhaps the most striking public building in Dubuque of the 1850s was the St. Raphael's Cathedral (not to be confused with Father Mazzuchelli's earlier St. Raphael's Church), designed by John Mullaney and built between 1857 and 1859. Located dramatically at the foot of the bluff at the head of 2nd Street, the Gothic Revival building's tower reaches 243 feet. The windows and arches of the facade form a beautiful ensemble. The Cathedral was the largest in Dubuque at the time and is still used as the Archdiocesan Cathedral.

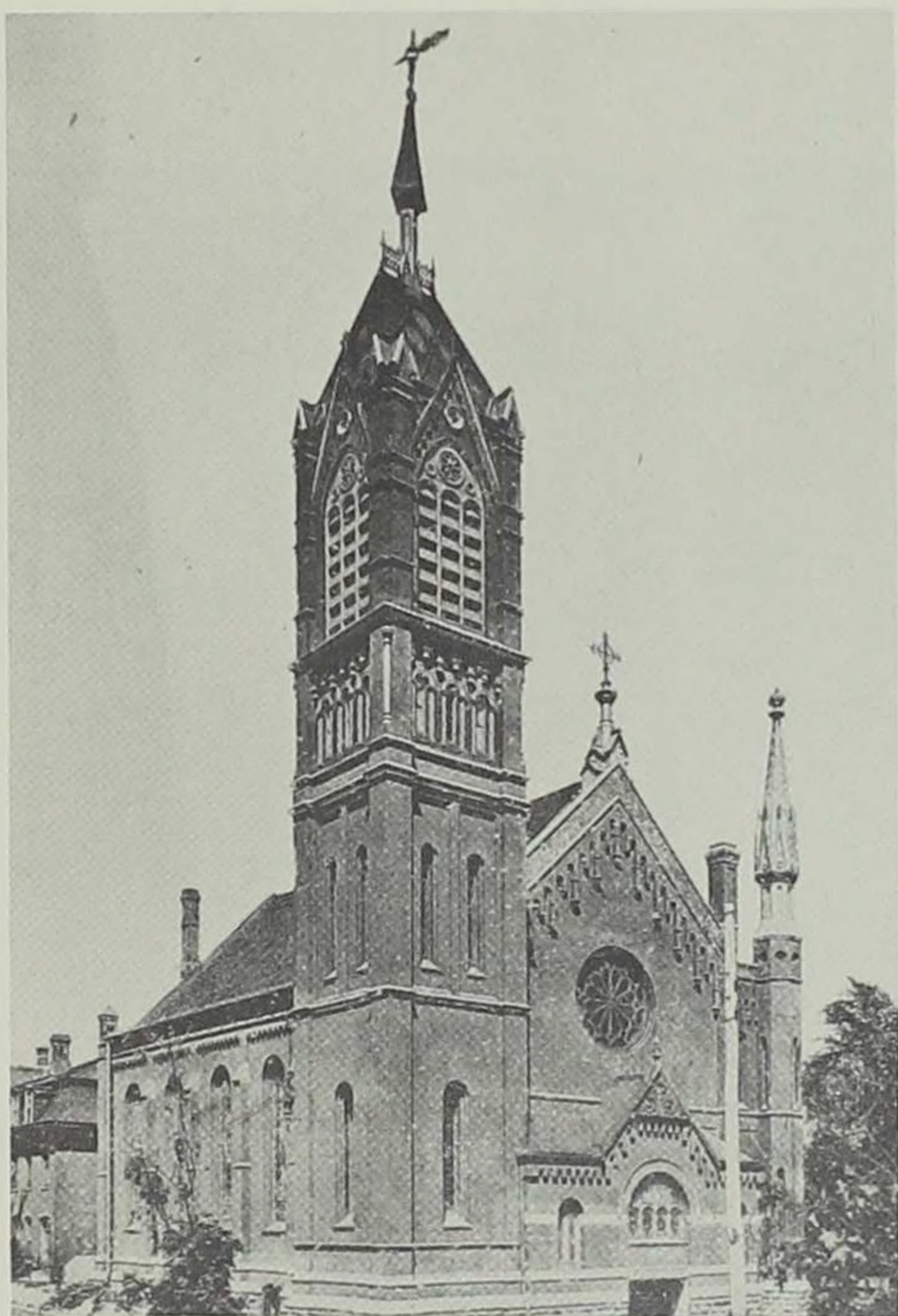
Another impressive public building was the Congregational Church, probably designed by David Jones and built in 1857-58 at a cost of $40,000. It was a brick structure in the Norman Revival style. Notwithstanding its Gothic ancestry, a massive Romanesque arch of moulded brick and stained glass formed the main entry. Boasting two towers, the building was replete with decorative touches. It still serves the Congregational denomination, but has been simplified on the exterior. The traceried Rose Window still exists and, at 13 feet in diameter, is the largest in Dubuque.







St. Raphael's Cathedral is 84 by 163 feet in dimensions, with a 243 foot tower centered in the front of the facade gable. Within the tower the most outstanding feature is the enormous stained glass window, traceried with lancet arches, elaborately carved quatrefoil cusps, and a reverse dentil crested crocket topped by a Celtic cross. Trefoil cusped bullseye windows flank the tower, and the lancet arch windows are repeated in the entrances and the nave windows. Battlemented towers decorate each corner of the building, engaged columns act as quoins for the tower and are surmounted by pinnacles. St. Raphael's is a fine example of the early Gothic Revival style and resembles the many eastern examples of this period designed by the most famous of the ecclesiastical architects, James Renwick, Jr. and Richard Upjohn.



The Congregational Church in a late nineteenth century view. (courtesy of the Dubuque County Historical Society)

Taken together, the public buildings in Dubuque prior to the Civil War did not fit neatly into any stylistic pattern. The Egyptian Revival and Byzantine Revival buildings were the only examples of these styles anywhere in Iowa before 1861. Indeed, they were never common styles anywhere in the United States at any time. No purely Classical Revival public buildings have been found in Dubuque for this period, although this style was popular nationally. Many examples of Gothic Revival and Italianate, and a major example of the continuing popularity of the Georgian style of the 18th century were found there. Individual preference and the availability of an architect or of commercial plans seem to have been the major determinants of what styles were used. It is interesting to note that the County Jail was built in Egyptian Revival style not because that is what Rague demanded, but rather because when the bids were taken, the County officials specified that the plans had to be in that style.

Houses in Dubuque during the period were of the same style as the commercial and the public buildings. The first brick residence in Dubuque, as mentioned, was the home of LeRoy Jackson, built in 1836. A mixture of Jacobean, Georgian, and Classical Revival styles, the home was very large and quite professionally done, but no architect was referred to and local brickmakers and craftsmen must have been responsible for its erection. It was apparently the first of a group of three similar brick homes which were erected along Main Street that year.

Mathias Ham, the contractor for the erection of the Customs House in 1857, found that some of the stone brought in from Illinois was not of high enough quality for the federal building. He used the rejected stone to build an addition to his small farm house. The original portion of this house was built in 1839 by Ham of native limestone. Though originally in the town of Eagle Point, by 1857 the area had been annexed by Dubuque, so the new mansion was within the larger town, on a bluff at the intersection of what is now Lincoln and Shiras Avenues. The structure now houses the Dubuque County Historical Society Museum.

One of the most unusual homes was built by Edward Langworthy who retained J. F. Rague to design a new mansion for him to be built on the bluffs back

of Third Street. In 1857, the octagonal brick house was completed and occupied. The two story dwelling is surmounted by an octagonal tower and captain's walk. All of the extremities and decorative features are correlated to the octagonal shape: the front porch repeats this shape, the projecting bay windows of the first floor do the same, and the belvedere is carefully proportioned to repeat the overall pattern.

Frederick E. Bissell built a Gothic Revival mansion in 1857, but because of the nationwide financial Panic, it was sold to R. A. Babbage, who then sold it to William Andrew. The mansion was also designed by Rague, and it occupied a half-block on 11th Street between Locust and Bluff. This building was the earliest and most elaborate example of the florid Victorian phase of the Gothic Revival style found in Iowa. It led the way, stylistically, towards the "gingerbread" motif that became so common in Dubuque after the Civil War. It was unusual for the early date of 1857.

Descriptions of individual buildings do not indicate the visual ensemble created by these same buildings when they were observed next to each other along streets. With the limited evidence available, the inescapable conclusion is that buildings of all kinds were simply erected as needed, as they could be afforded, and in the styles preferred by the owners. No effort

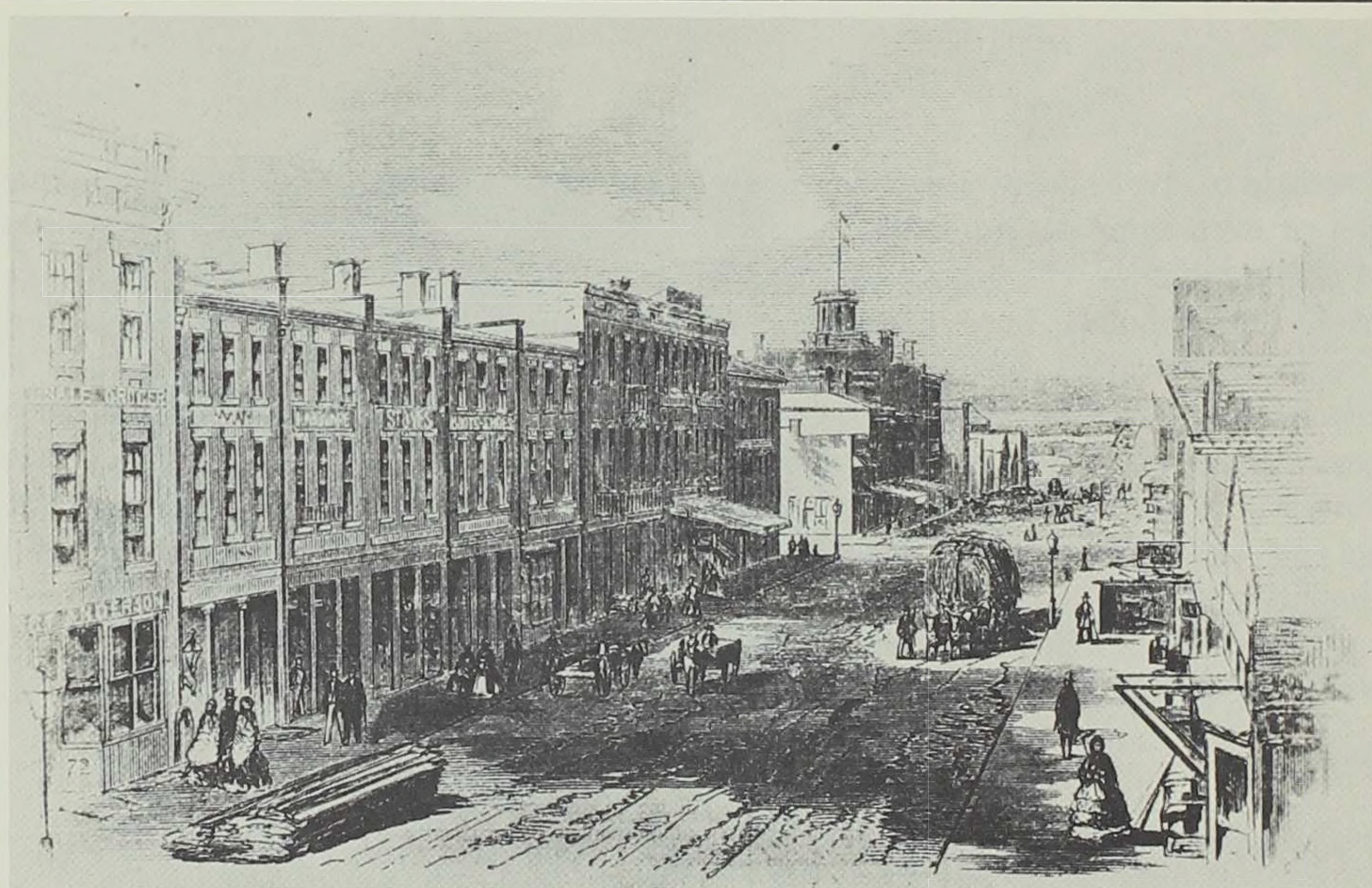
The LeRoy Jackson House, the first brick residence in Dubuque. The photo probably dates from before the Civil War. (courtesy of the Dubuque County Historical Society)

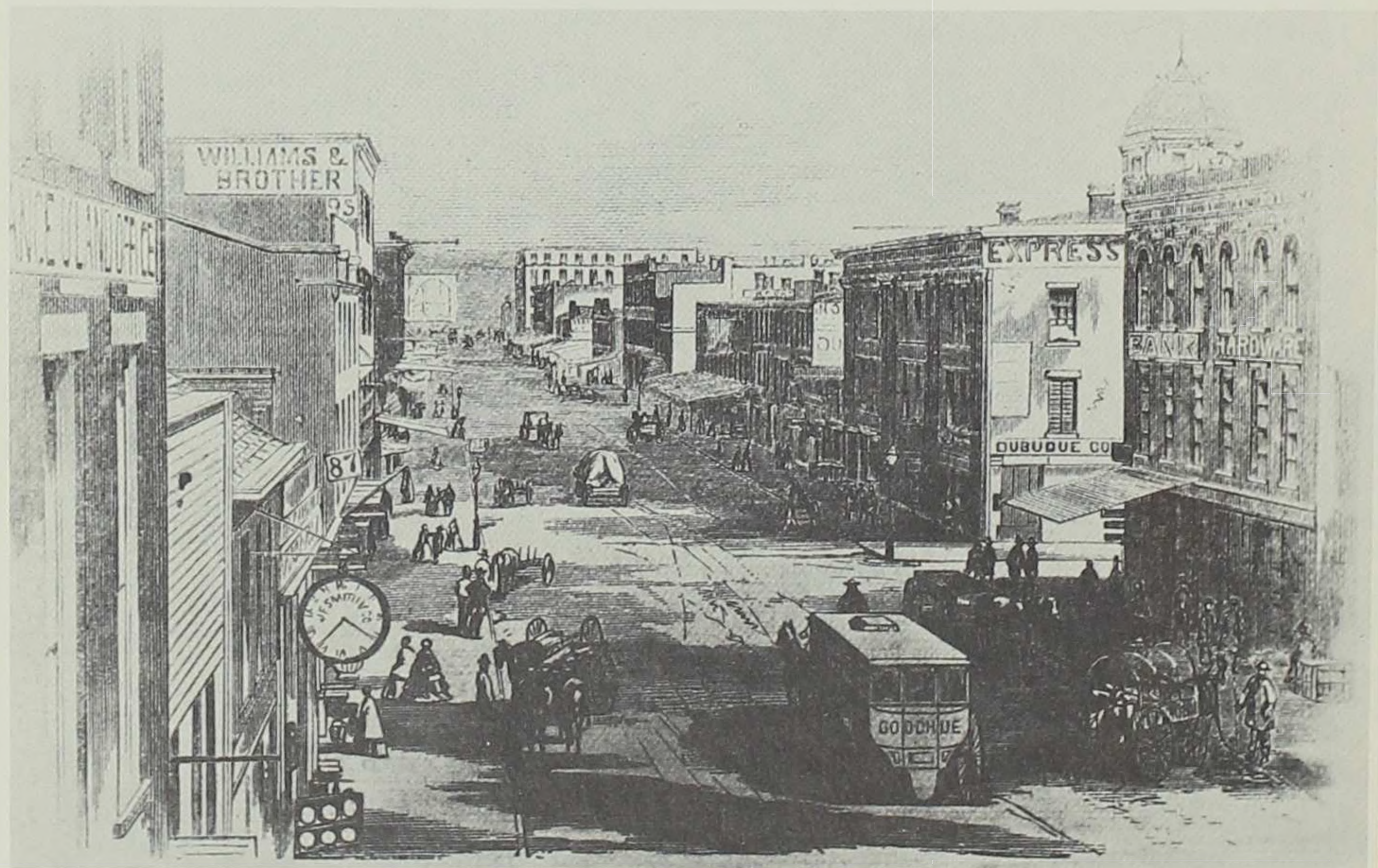
Ham House is actually two buildings, the earlier one being the original farm house built in 1839. The much larger addition in 1857 was constructed of limestone rejected from the contract for the federal Customs House being built at the same time. The octagonal belvedere, the veranda, and the wide overhanging eaves supported by an elaborately carved double corbel course mark the mansion as being in the Italian Villa style. The Tudor arched portico is a deviation from this style and is an example of the mixing of the "pure" styles by the tastes of the builder.

was made to create facades that were uniform or even sympathetic. Brick mansion sat cheek by jowl with frame cottage or hovel. Fancy hotels were situated next door to the meanest sort of craft shop. This tendency can be seen in two 1857 engravings of the commercial buildings along Main Street. Looking downtown, the east side of the street shows some attempt to coordinate styles and roof lines in some of the buildings. But looking uptown, the variety of roof lines and styles as well as size and value is bewildering. Views of Dubuque from the river also give some impression that the architectural pattern of the town was one of confusion rather than regularity or order. In this, Dubuque simply followed the usual frontier condition. Height, style, purpose, topography, or aesthetics were rarely considered in relation to surrounding buildings.

The life of a people may be studied in

The Bissell-Babbage-Andrew House, from a photo about 1880. (courtesy of John M. McDonald)





Downtown and Uptown views of Dubuque's commercial district in 1857. (illustrations from Ballou's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion, *October 31, 1857)*

many ways. The physical surroundings which people create for themselves offer clues to what was thought important, necessary, or desirable. The social and aesthetic values of the past can be seen in the way towns were planned and buildings constructed. Architecture is a relatively permanent, visible expression and record of the origins, traditions, and resources of the people.

Such clues can be read in the history of Dubuque, where the elaborate mansions of the 1850s contrasted vividly with the smaller and plainer homes of the 1830s. This contrast illustrated the increased wealth and leisure of the builders, who could afford in the later years this conspicuous expenditure. In a similar way, the increasingly elaborate and impressive public buildings showed a community emerging from the first stages of development into an era of expansion and prosperity. The public buildings erected in Dubuque in the 1850s reflected a pride not demonstrated during the period when shelter from the elements was the major goal. By 1860, the frontier mining camp had matured into a confident city. □

"DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:" THE HOOVER-TRUMAN CORRESPONDENCE

by

Benjamin Rogers

Harry Truman, like most Presidents, wrote a great many letters during his life, and among the most pleasant and charming are those he wrote to ex-President Herbert Hoover. Mr. Hoover's replies were warm and friendly, and the correspondence between these two political leaders, one a Republican and one a Democrat, illustrates a chapter of American history during the period following World War II.

When Herbert Hoover stepped down from the Presidency in March 1933, he had few admirers among the American people, and incoming President Franklin Roosevelt was not one of them. As a result, Mr. Hoover's long career of public service which had started during the first World War came to an abrupt halt. During Roosevelt's presidency the advice of Herbert Hoover was not asked, and the White House doors were closed to him.

Hoover's public service resumed as the result of a telegram which he sent to President Harry Truman on April 12, 1945, as Truman assumed office on the death of Franklin Roosevelt: "All Americans will wish you strength for your gigantic task. You have the right to call for any service in aid of the country."

Within a week President Truman replied, "Please accept my thanks for your message of the twelfth. I need not assure you that your good wishes are deeply appreciated," and added a postscript in his own hand, "I assure you that I shall feel free to call upon you. Thanks for the offer." More than a month passed before President Truman decided how best to use the services of his Republican predecessor, and on May 24, he penned an invitation to Mr. Hoover:

> My dear Mr. President:-
>
> If you should be in Washington, I would be most happy to talk over the European food situation with you. Also it would be a pleasure to me to become acquainted with you.
>
> Most sincerely,
> Harry Truman

President Hoover responded affirmatively, arranged an appointment with one of the White House secretarial staff, and journeyed from New York to Washington to meet with President Truman at 10:30 on the morning of Monday, May 28. Thus began a fruitful collaboration which restored President Hoover to the ranks of public service and which resulted in a lifelong friendship between the two men.

During Harry Truman's tenure in office his correspondence with ex-President Hoover was almost entirely concerned with the business of the Federal government, but it was always pleasant and cordial. Mr. Hoover offered his services and President Truman put to good use the boundless energy of his Republican predecessor. On request of the President, Mr. Hoover set aside other activities and devoted his time to the project at hand. President Truman's pleasure at Mr. Hoover's prompt assistance is evident in his many expressions of gratitude. Hoover's services included the planning of world

food distribution in the wake of World War II and the gigantic task of reorganizing the executive branch of the United States government undertaken by the Hoover Commission from 1947 to 1949.

Within two days of Mr. Hoover's first visit to President Truman in May 1945, the White House received four detailed memoranda on the subjects they had discussed: The European Food Organization, The Domestic Food Organization, The Creation of a War Economic Council, and The Japanese Situation. Apparently President Hoover felt that his task had been completed, for he concluded his covering letter, "I trust you will command me in any further service."

President Truman appreciated Mr. Hoover's quick response. He put Hoover in charge of all planning in the area of food relief for the post-war world and sent him on a 35,000 mile tour to study the world food situation. Hoover was asked to make plans for transporting available surpluses to areas in danger of famine.

Hoover's recommendations were followed, and by November 1946, the famine emergency seemed under control. President Truman wrote to express his gratitude:

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 24 45

My dear Mr. President:-
If you should be in Washington, I would be most happy to talk over the European food situation with you.
Also it would be a pleasure to me to become acquainted with you.
Most sincerely
Harry Truman

Hon. Herbert Hoover,
New York City.

Truman's letter to Hoover requesting assistance on the world food problem. (courtesy of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa)

> Yours was a real service to humanity. Without your efforts . . . the suffering abroad would have been much greater during those dread months last spring and summer when so many nations had exhausted their own food supplies. In expressing my thanks, I also express the appreciation of all those who were benefitted by your efficient service.

President Truman left the door open for another call to service: "I know that I can count upon your cooperation if developments at any time in the future make it necessary for me to call upon you again."

Only two months had passed when the President wrote Mr. Hoover, noting that world conditions that year were "not nearly as threatening" as they had been in 1946 and added:

> . . . a serious shortage in food still exists in certain areas. . . . I believe a food survey by you of these areas would be of great benefit to us in determining our policy in supplying food or funds for its purchase . . . . I should, therefore, like to ask you to undertake this mission and report to me upon it.

President Hoover's reply was mailed the next day. He "did wish to be of service," he stated, but he urged that the mission be "somewhat broadened out." Calling attention to the fact that it would "come as a great shock to our people that the American taxpayer for a second year must expend huge funds to provide food for the enemy peoples," he suggested that the mission inquire into the steps necessary to enable those nations to become self-supporting, and that it report "when charity can be expected to end." President Truman was willing to go along with Mr. Hoover, and a new draft of the original letter of January 18 replaced his final paragraph with the following:

> I should, therefore, like to ask you to undertake this economic mission as to food and its collateral problems, and report to me upon it. It is hoped that methods can be devised which will release some of the burdens on the American tax payer. Please accept my sincere thanks.

While most of Mr. Hoover's energies in the early years of President Truman's administration were devoted to world food problems, he had long been interested in the desirability of reorganizing the executive branch of the Federal government and in October 1945, had indicated this to President Truman. The President's response was instantaneous:

> As you so wisely observed, the overlapping, waste and conflict of policies between executive agencies have been a scandal for the whole thirty-five years during which six successive Presidents have recommended this reform.

When Congress passed a law in 1947 providing for the establishment of a Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government, President Truman asked Mr. Hoover to serve as chairman. Hoover accepted, and the work of the Commission got under way immediately. In order to keep it out of politics, Congress had provided that no reports were to be made until after the election of 1948. As a result, although the task was of great significance, the Hoover Commission received little publicity, doing most of its work behind closed doors.

Note on Sources

Aside from the standard biographies of the two principals of this article, the major source was, of course, the correspondence between Herbert Hoover and Harry Truman. This correspondence is housed at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library at West Branch, Iowa. Also helpful were pertinent issues of national magazines such as *Life* and newspapers such as the *New York Times*.

President Truman and ex-President Hoover meet at the White House on June 20, 1946 after Hoover had completed a tour of South America to observe the food conditions. (courtesy of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa)

An interesting footnote to American political history is presented by the relations between Mr. Hoover and President Truman during the summer of 1948. Campaigning for re-election, Mr. Truman had much opposition from within his own party and was forced to carry his message directly to the American people. His "give-em-hell" campaign was directed primarily at the "good-for-nothing" Eightieth Congress, but he did not neglect Mr. Hoover in his abuse of the Republican party. On several occasions, he laid the blame for the Depression squarely on the former President.

While President Truman was attacking his Republican predecessor from the stump, Mr. Hoover was devoting most of his time to the work of the Commission on Organization. Moreover, when Herbert Hoover addressed the Republican convention, President Truman wrote him in longhand: "Your speech to the Republican Convention was the utterance of a statesman. May I presume to congratulate you upon it." To which Mr. Hoover replied: "That was a touching note. I do want you to know how deeply I appreciate it."

As the campaign reached fever heat in August, Mr. Truman found time to send

his friend "Hearty congratulations and best wishes for a happy birthday." And when President Truman on November 3 upset the pollsters with a victory over Thomas Dewey, Mr. Hoover was in the vanguard of those with messages for the press: "All Americans will rally unitedly to President Truman's support that we may have peace and prosperity for our country."

The election was hardly over when President Truman wrote from Key West on November 12 to Mr. Hoover:

> The country is fortunate that a Commission, composed of men whose capacity in this field has been forged by experience has devoted so much time and thought to the tremendous problems involved .... its recommendations will go far to make sound and effective organization possible.
>
> If at any time the Commission's work can be facilitated by action on my part, you have but to let me know.

Further evidence of Truman-Hoover collaboration in the business of governmental reorganization was jotted down by Mr. Hoover on April 7, when the President called on the telephone. Mr. Truman asked for Hoover's help. He wanted the ex-President to speak to Republicans in the Senate about passing the government reorganization bill.

"That will be fine," replied Mr. Hoover, "I will come down on Monday and see what we can do from our side."

Although all of the recommended measures were not passed at that time, the result of this cooperative effort was the passage of the Reorganization Act of June 20, 1949, shortly before Mr. Hoover's seventy-fifth birthday.

Herbert Hoover had told the press that this would be his last venture into the area of public service. However, when the Communist government of North Korea launched its attack on the South in June 1950, he was again in communication with the White House. "Dear Mr. President," he wrote in longhand, "I need scarcely write to you that I will be glad to be of any service within my limitations at this time." And Harry Truman penned in response, "Dear Mr. President:—I appreciate most highly your letter of the 1st. . . . If events require, you may rest assured that I will want your help and advice. I pray that peace may come."

Five months later, in November 1950, the President again requested assistance from Mr. Hoover:

> There has been a great deal of talk [he wrote] about the infiltration of communists in the government, particularly in the State Department. I've decided to appoint a bipartisan Commission consisting of all parts of the population of the United States—some churchmen, both Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish, some outstanding men from the legal fraternity, from business and from labor. I would personally appreciate it if you would be willing to act as Chairman of that Commission. . . .

For the first time Mr. Hoover's response was in the negative. "Despite the encroachments of advancing age," he wrote, "I do not wish to ever refuse service to the country." But there were some aspects of the question which troubled him and which he wished to lay frankly before the President:

> First. I doubt if there are any consequential card-carrying communists in the Government, or if there are, they should be known to the F.B.I.
>
> Second . . . I suggest that the current lack of confidence arises from the belief that there are men in Government (not Communists) whose attitudes are such that

they have disastrously advised on policies in relation to Communist Russia . . .

Third. Without a widespread inquiry into the past and present of such men and the facts, the answer to this problem could not be determined. . . .

Fourth. The Congress itself is likely to be engaged in such investigations anyway.

Therefore it seems to me that any inquiry as to "Communists in the Government" by an informal Commission would not be likely to satisfy the public or to restore confidence. I dislike indeed to respond in terms of declination to any request of yours as I would like greatly to be helpful to you in these troublous times.

Although President Truman was understandably disappointed with Mr. Hoover's refusal to serve, he answered the ex-President's letter at some length on December 7. Thanking Mr. Hoover again for freely giving "of your time and energy to your country," and indicating that he still intended to name a commission which was "above all political partisanship," he explained carefully exactly why he thought his action was necessary and requested the support "of the leaders of the country."

Harry Truman did not ask for Herbert Hoover's services again, but many years later, in December 1962, Mr. Hoover, in reflecting on his activities during the Truman administration, wrote to his old friend thanking him for a book which Truman had sent him:

This is an occasion when I should like to add something more, because yours has been a friendship which has reached deeper into my life than you know.

I gave up a successful profession in 1914 to enter public service. I served through the First World War and after for a total of about 18 years.

When the attack on Pearl Harbor came, I at once supported the President and offered to serve in any useful capacity. Because of my varied experience, during the First World War, I thought my services might again be useful, however there was no response. . . .

When you came to the White House within a month you opened the door to me to the only profession I knew, public service . . . .

For all of this and your friendship, I am deeply grateful.

Mr. Truman's reply was in longhand:

Dear Mr. President:-

You'll never know how much I appreciated your letter of Dec. 19, '62. In fact I was overcome, because you state the situation much better than I could.

I'll quote you, "For . . . your friendship, I am deeply grateful."

Most sincerely
Harry Truman

There is no indication in the correspondence of these two ex-Presidents that they ever engaged in any partisan controversy. Perhaps their approach to politics was best expressed in a letter President Hoover wrote President Truman in August 1960:

I received the great honor of the Presidency of the United States from the Republican Party. I will naturally vote for its ticket. And I have no doubt my good friend President Truman will vote the Democratic ticket!

Birthdays invariably brought letters or telegrams of congratulation. In 1958, Mr. Hoover, unable because of illness to attend a birthday luncheon for President Truman in Kansas City, wrote a letter to be read at the celebration. Mr. Truman expressed deep appreciation and a desire to see Hoover the next time he was in New York and added in longhand, "I'm reading your biography of Wilson and I like it." On Hoover's eighty-ninth birthday in August 1963, Mr. Truman wired him, "Congratulations on another birthday tomorrow. You must reach one hundred as

DOMESTIC SERVICE
Check the class of service desired; otherwise this message will be sent as a full rate telegram

FULL RATE TELEGRAM	X
DAY LETTER	
NIGHT LETTER	

$ S E

WESTERN UNION
Telefax Telefax
W. P. MARSHALL, PRESIDENT

INTERNATIONAL SERVICE
Check the class of service desired; otherwise the message will be sent at the full rate

FULL RATE	
LETTER TELEGRAM	
SHIP RADIOGRAM	

PLEASE DO NOT FOLD. TYPE OR WRITE MESSAGE PLAINLY WITHIN THE HEAVY LINE BORDER
USE DARK INK OR PENCIL

CHECK	CHARGE TO THE ACCOUNT OF	DATE	TIME FILED

TO

Honorable Harry S. Truman October 14, 1964
Harry S. Truman Presidential Library
Independence, Missouri

BATHTUBS ARE A MENACE TO EX-PRESIDENTS FOR AS YOU MAY RECALL A BATHTUB ROSE UP AND FRACTURED MY VERTEBRAE WHEN I WAS IN VENEZUELA ON YOUR WORLD FAMINE MISSION IN 1946. MY WARMEST SYMPATHY AND BEST WISHES FOR YOUR SPEEDY RECOVERY.

Herbert Hoover

The famous telegram sent on the occasion of Truman's bathtub fall. (courtesy of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa)

I intend to do." Hoover, ill with cancer, was unable to reply, but his son Allan answered for him:

> My father wants you to know how deeply he appreciated your gracious and encouraging birthday greeting. He says he'll race you to that hundred!

There are in the Truman-Hoover correspondence many invitations, some accepted and some not. There are letters concerning their respective Presidential libraries, honorary chairmanships of organizations, and relations with the press. But perhaps most touching of all was Mr. Hoover's last communication with his friend, a telegram sent on October 14, 1964 when President Truman had fallen in a bathtub and broken two ribs:

> BATHTUBS ARE A MENACE TO EX-PRESIDENTS FOR AS YOU MAY RECALL A BATHTUB ROSE UP AND FRACTURED MY VERTEBRAE WHEN I WAS IN VENEZUELA ON YOUR WORLD FAMINE MISSION IN 1946. MY WARMEST SYMPATHY AND BEST WISHES FOR YOUR SPEEDY RECOVERY.

Within less than a week, President Hoover suffered a massive internal hemorrhage and died at the age of ninety. Harry Truman grieved as he wrote to Allan and Herbert Hoover, Jr.: "I was deeply saddened at the passing of your father. He was my good friend and I was his. . . ."

So we have a glimpse of a warm human relationship. Also important, however, is the demonstration that Harry Truman made great use of Herbert Hoover. As he wrote in his reminiscences: "Only a man of Hoover's talents, with the very important experience he had as President, could have achieved so difficult a task with such marked results." □

COMMENTARY

A State Agency and a Non-Profit Corporation in Transition

Located in the Centennial Building in Iowa City, the State Historical Society of Iowa maintains and services an ever-growing collection of library materials. The Society encourages research in these and other sources and disseminates historical information in several ways. There is a long-standing tradition of scholarly publications; since 1920, the Society has also published a magazine of popular history, *The Palimpsest.* During the 1960s, the Society began acquiring and administering outlying historical sites. Financial support for these programs comes from state appropriations, from gifts and grants, and from dues paid by the 8,400 members.

According to a state law enacted last spring, the Society is now one of three divisions of the Iowa State Historical Department. The new law, which provides for a State Historical Board to make policy for the entire Department, came as a jolt to the Society and its Board of Curators. In August, Governor Robert D. Ray took measures to facilitate a smooth transition when he appointed four former Curators to the new governing body. His six appointees are listed inside the front cover of this magazine.

The 65th General Assembly, recognizing the traditions and experiences of the state's oldest historical institution, assigned to the members of the State Historical Society the permanent responsibility of choosing half of the State Historical Board. A committee is now preparing election procedures and a slate of candidates. Society members will soon elect six Board members, one from each congressional district.

After the election takes place and the new Board convenes, this body must face some fundamental questions about the Society. One of the most basic will be to differentiate the state agency known as the State Historical Society from the nonprofit corporation of the same name. The 65th General Assembly demonstrated no hostility to the corporation when it encouraged the Society (presumably the corporation) to elect officers and to conduct affairs "subject to the approval of the board."

The nature of the Society has changed over the years. When the Society was founded in 1857 it was neither an arm of state government nor a corporation. Public spirited Iowans simply associated to collect historical materials. In addition to receiving facilities from the University of Iowa during the early years, the Society also received dues and gifts from its members and a small legislative appropriation. In 1867, the Society became a corporation, "not for pecuniary purposes." This status expired in 1887. Incorporation procedures of 1892 and 1942 extended corporate existence until 1992.

Because of steadily increasing support from legislative appropriation in recent decades, the Society's 1915 denial of state agency status and its exclusive posture as a "private eleemosynary corporation" is no longer realistic nor is it acceptable to legislators. But it is unwise to terminate the corporation and operate exclusively as a state agency. A corporation can administer the gifts and bequests entrusted to the Society, solicit additional support, identify and finance special projects, and provide continuity that transcends biennial budgets.

Legal minds must ponder the details, but an arrangement between the corporation and the state institution similar to that between the state's three universities and their supportive "foundations" is desirable. Such corporations support indispensable programs but do not set policy.

The corporation of the State Historical Society should continue its existence, but it must be brought into harmony with recent legislation and current institutional needs.

P.T.H.

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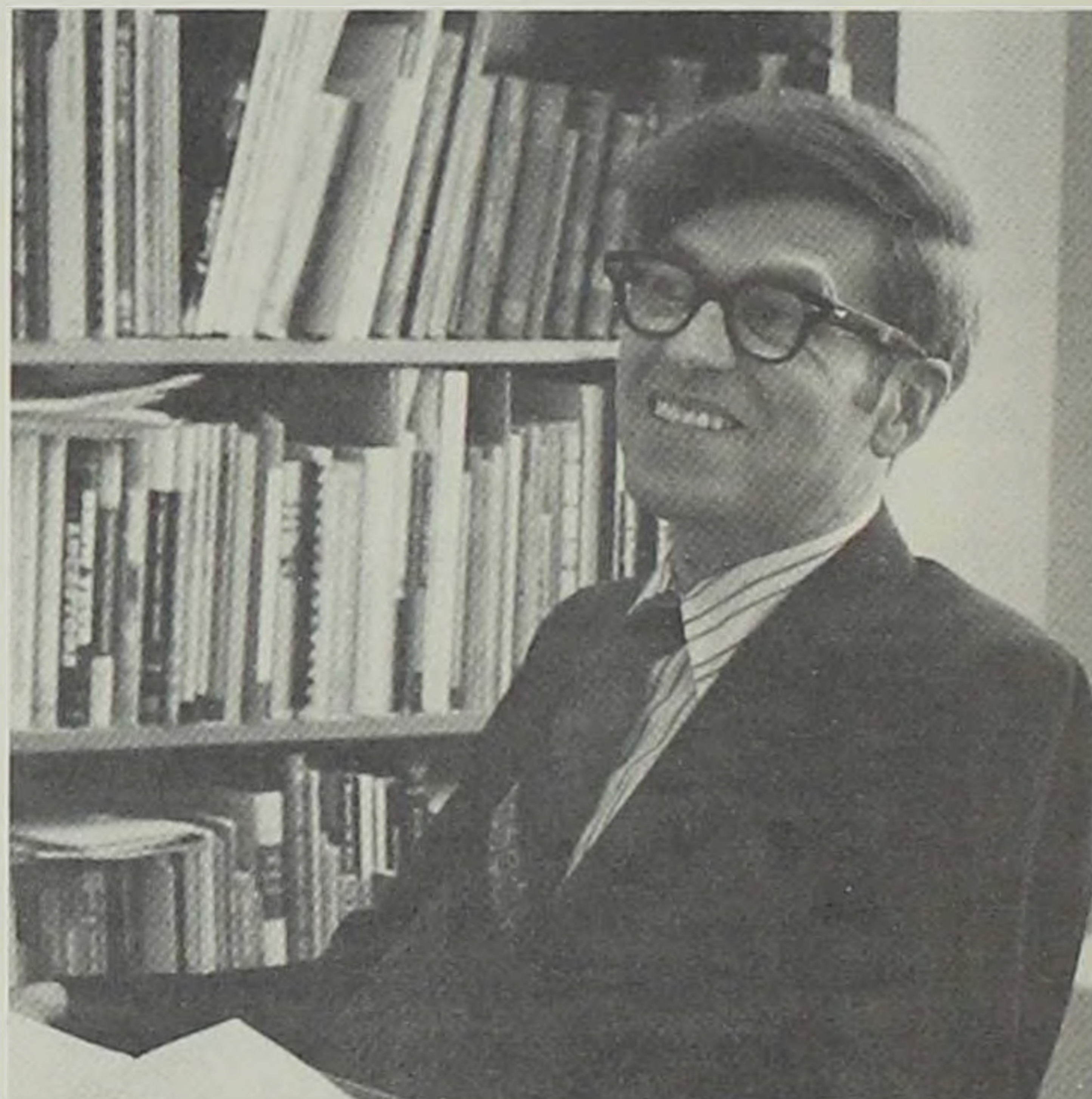

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The State Historical Society of Iowa is a Division of the Iowa State Historical Department, a state agency created by the Sixty-fifth General Assembly. Along with the Society, the Department includes a Division of Historical Museum and Archives (formerly Iowa Department of History and Archives) and a Division of Historic Preservation.