

In Lee and Henry Counties

John Carl Krehbiel's memoirs indicate that he arrived at Fort Madison, Iowa, on November 1, 1839, the first Mennonite to settle in Iowa. Descendant of a Swiss Mennonite family, his ancestors had bought land in the Palatinate in 1709. John Krehbiel came to America with his brother in 1833, but he returned to Germany two years later where he was married in 1837.

From 1837 to 1839 John engaged in the cooper-age business with his brother in Butler County, Ohio, before moving on to the Territory of Iowa by wagon with his young bride and their one year old son. Their second child, Johanna Maria, was the first Mennonite child to be born in Iowa, on November 26, 1839. She became the wife of Daniel Hertzler and the mother of Dr. Arthur E. Hertzler of Halstead, Kansas, the author of the popular *Horse and Buggy Doctor*. Krehbiel bought the northeast quarter of section 19 in West Point Township, Lee County, where he lived until he moved to West Point in 1857.

By 1845 enough Mennonites had bought land between West Point and Franklin to make possible the organization of a church but the murder of their preacher John Miller in May postponed

this action. In 1849 families by the name of Berghold, Gram, Roth, Krehbiel, Deutsch, Herstein, Blum and Goebel organized a church and selected pioneer John C. Krehbiel as their preacher. After meeting in homes for a few years, the congregation in 1850 erected a log church one and one-half miles east of Franklin, the first Mennonite church in Iowa. Because it was located in the woods, it was known as the "Busch Church." In 1863 a new church was dedicated in West Point. When members began to move to Kansas and other places, the membership declined and eventually the church became extinct. Krehbiel was the last minister, preaching up to his death in 1886.

In the meantime Mennonite families from the Palatinate, Germany, settled in Franklin Township, Lee County, about eight miles from West Point, in the spring of 1851. Among the family names of those who organized a church that fall were Ellenberger, Krehbiel, Galle, Eyman, and Weber. Other Mennonite families joining them in 1852 included those by the name of Rings, Kaegy, Schowalter, Loewenberg, Hirschler, Schnebele, Ruth, and Krehbiel.

The 1852 migration came from various points in Germany by way of New York, Albany, Buffalo, Toledo, Chicago, Peoria, and Burlington. Their first church, two miles northwest of Donnellson, was dedicated in 1855, a second church was built in 1880, and the present Zion Mennonite Church,

in Donnellson was dedicated in 1909. For more than forty years (1861-1905), Christian Schowalter served as the pastor of the church and largely determined the character of the congregation. In 1958 Zion Church had 209 members, with Harold Thiessen as its pastor.

In 1868 the Mennonites living in the vicinity of Franklin decided that the Zion and West Point churches were too far away for convenience and therefore built the Franklin Mennonite church in the town of Franklin. Two decades later the members began to move away and the church became extinct in the 1890's.

Between 1861 and 1875, over a dozen Mennonite families from Lee County, including Steiners, Desters, Rupps, Galles, Webers, Krehbiels, and Schmitts, settled in northwestern Washington County near the present town of Wellman, where they organized the Evangelical Mennonite Salem Church. Beginning about 1865, the largest membership was attained in 1876 when thirty-one participated in the communion service. At about that time the Kansas wheat lands attracted the members of the community. The last business meeting of the church was held in November, 1880, and after that the congregation became extinct.

The two Mennonite churches of Lee County, Zion and West Point, had held a joint conference in 1853 in which they agreed to work together in harmony. In a second conference held in 1859,

they agreed to invite other Mennonite churches to join their union in a conference to be held the following year. The purpose of the union was to promote united missionary endeavors. Daniel Krehbiel, who was born in the Palatinate and moved to Iowa in 1856, was the chief leader in this union movement. From it came the General Conference Mennonite Church, the second largest Mennonite group in America, having grown to 51,378 members by 1958. Part of the centennial program of this denomination to be held in 1959-1960, is a conference-wide study session in the Donnellson Zion church. Here the historic beginnings of their general conference are to be reviewed.

At the same time that the Mennonites were settling in Lee County, members of the Amish brotherhood located in the West Point-Franklin-Charleston area. When they first arrived here is not definitely known but it may have been as early as 1840.

Among the early Amish settlers were families by the name of Rogie, Kinsinger, Werey, Hauder, Raber, Schwarzentruer, Reese, Augspurger, Fordemwalt, and Goldsmith. Christian Raber, an Amish preacher, some of whose descendants were living in Lee County a century later, was among the very earliest. The most influential member of the Amish colony was Elder Joseph Goldsmith who brought his family to Iowa from Butler County, Ohio, in 1846, and immediately became the

leader of their church, a position he held until his migration to Henry County in 1855. The largest membership was fifty, the figure reached by 1855, at which time the family names of Haundrick, Wagler, Schantz, Lehman, Schrock, Musser, Schlatter, Klopfenstein, Miller, King, Bechler, and Roth were represented in the community. Questionable land titles held by those Amish living in the Lee County Half-breed Tract helped bring about the dissolution of the settlement. Their church became extinct before 1870.

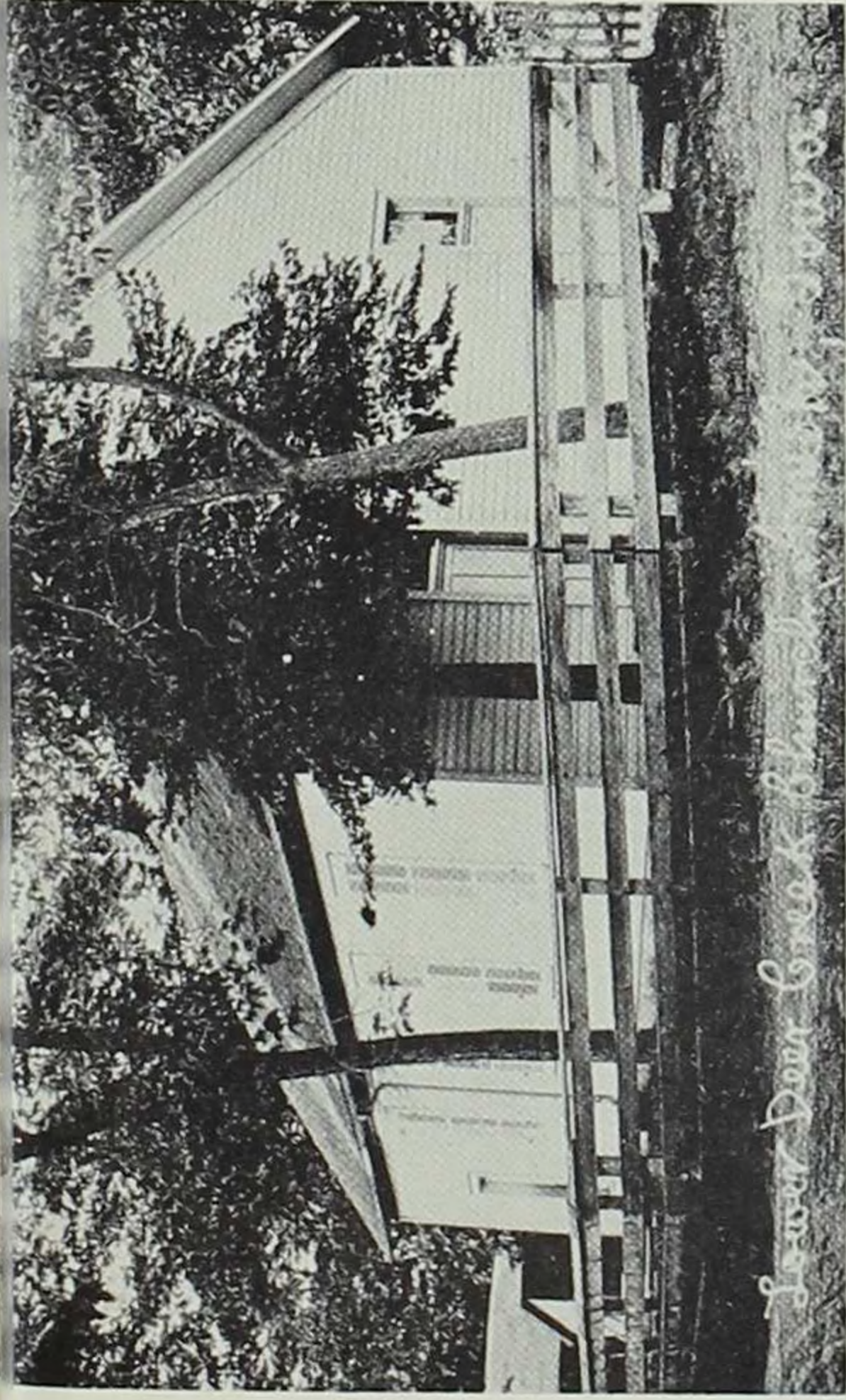
Many of the Amish who left Lee County settled two counties west, in Davis County, where government land was to be had for \$2.50 an acre. The first of the Amish to settle there was the Peter Miller family of Ontario, Canada. Miller purchased land in Bloomfield Township in 1854. Jephthah J. Plank of Lee County, considered to be the founder of Pulaski, purchased land in the vicinity of the present town of Pulaski a month later. By 1860 nearly fifty Amish families had purchased land in Davis County. Among them were these families: Augspurgers, Tschantz, Dieffenbachs, Fordemwalts, Kings, Waglers, Kinsingers, Schlatters, Conrads, Baughmans, Kropfs, Bloughs, and Swartzendruvers. Some had come from Davis County but others had come from Indiana and Wayne County, Ohio.

Although religious meetings were held occasionally, no church was organized in the early

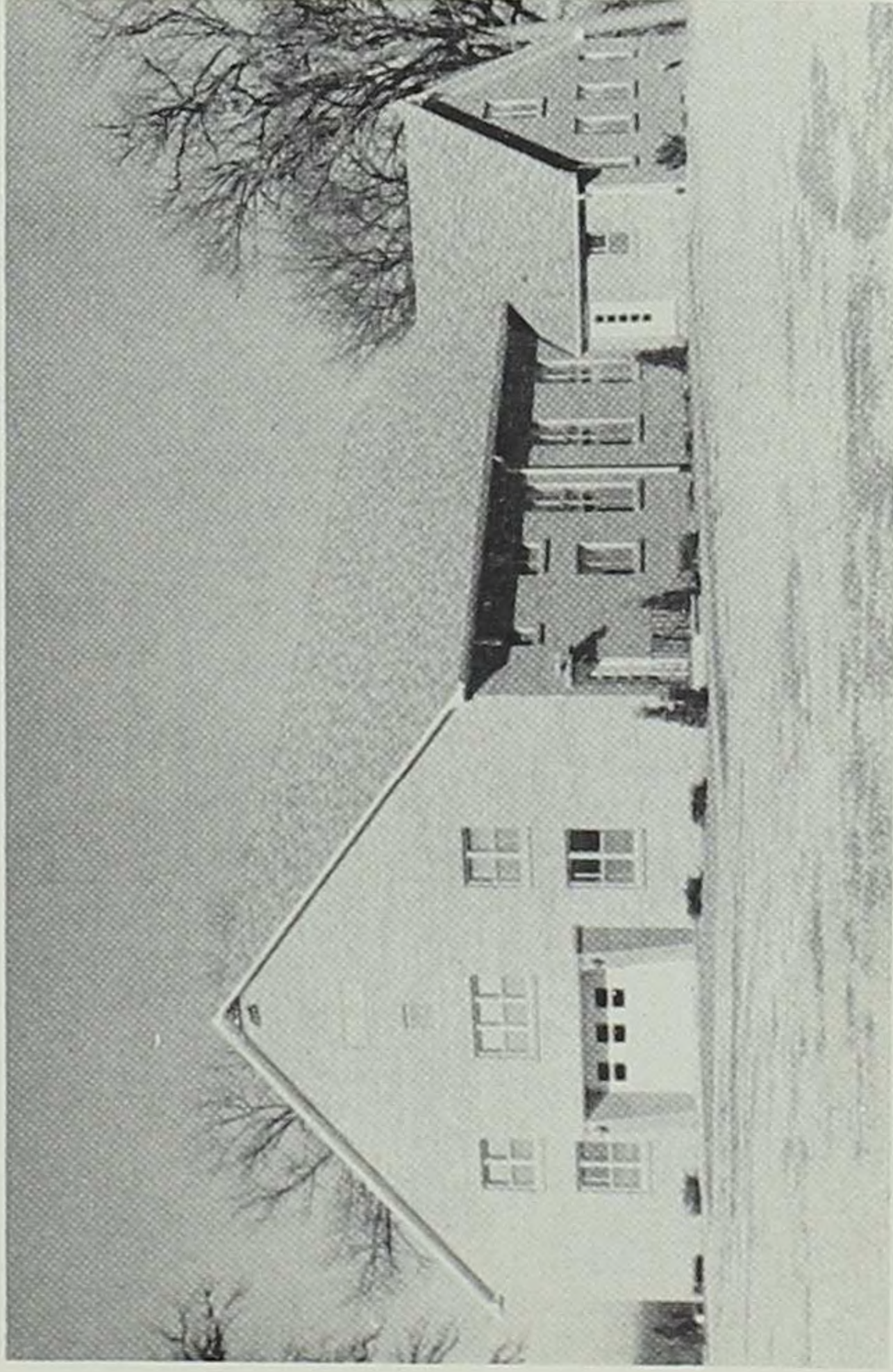
years of the settlement because of the absence of a preacher. Visiting ministers established an organization in 1861 at which time two preachers were chosen, Christ Kropf and Christ Sharp, who however withdrew with about half their members to organize an Apostolic Christian Church in 1866.

At about that time Christian Brenneman was called to preach, which he did until 1869, when Philip Roulet of Butler County, Ohio, became their preacher, a position which he held for twenty-eight years, moulding the character of the church in an unusual manner. Although the church was Amish, it was more progressive than most churches of that brotherhood and under the leadership of Roulet followed an independent course but eventually joined the General Conference Mennonite Church, perhaps in 1892. Earlier many of the Amish practices had been dropped and strong Sunday school and missionary programs were emphasized. During the ministry of Roulet the word "Amish" had been dropped from the name of this Amish Mennonite Church.

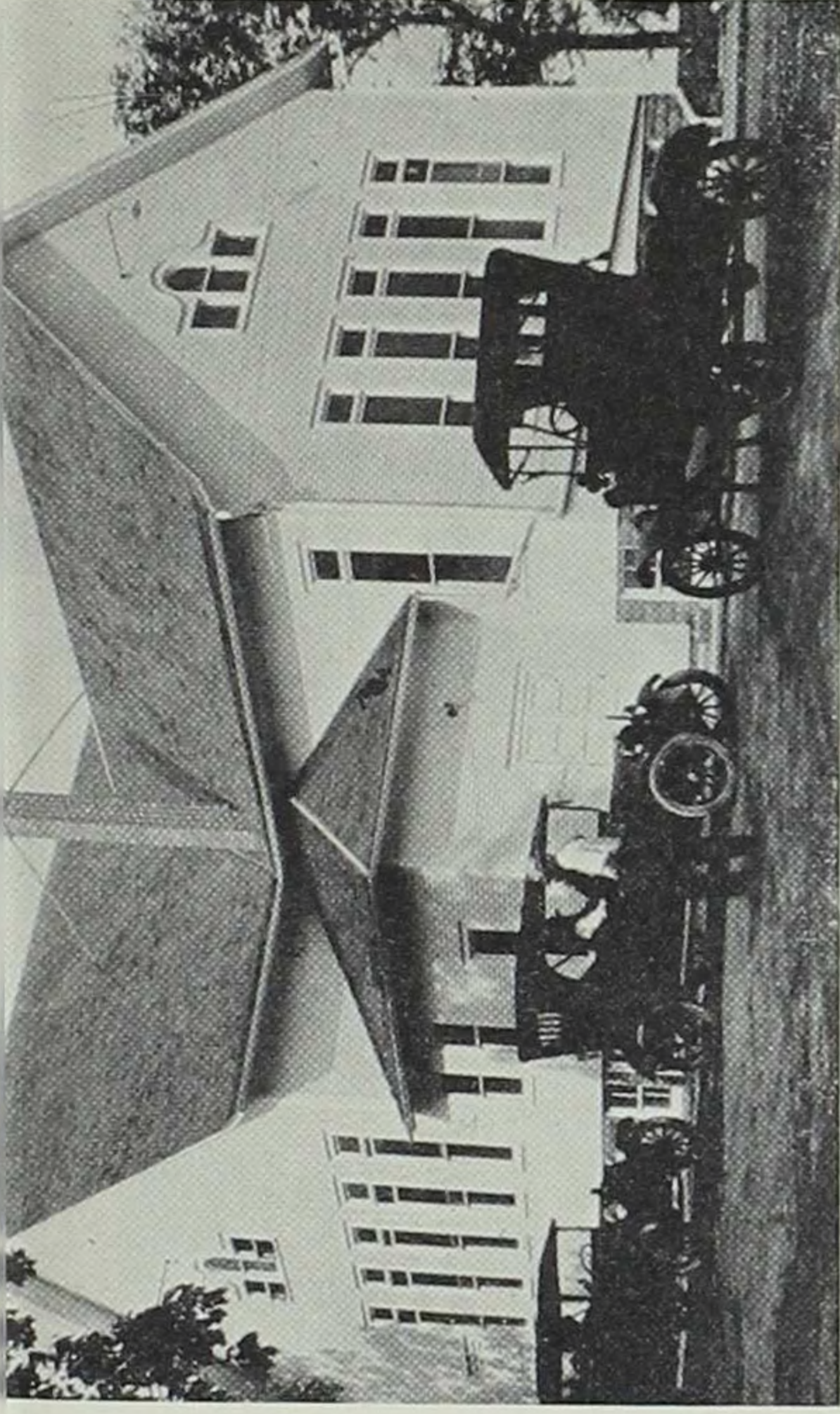
A Civil War experience long remembered by the members of the community was Jim Jackson's raid in October, 1864, when a group of Missourians wearing Federal uniforms rode through Davis County, raiding homes and capturing men who had served in the Union army. Stopping at a number of Amish homes, as well as others in the county, they helped themselves to money and



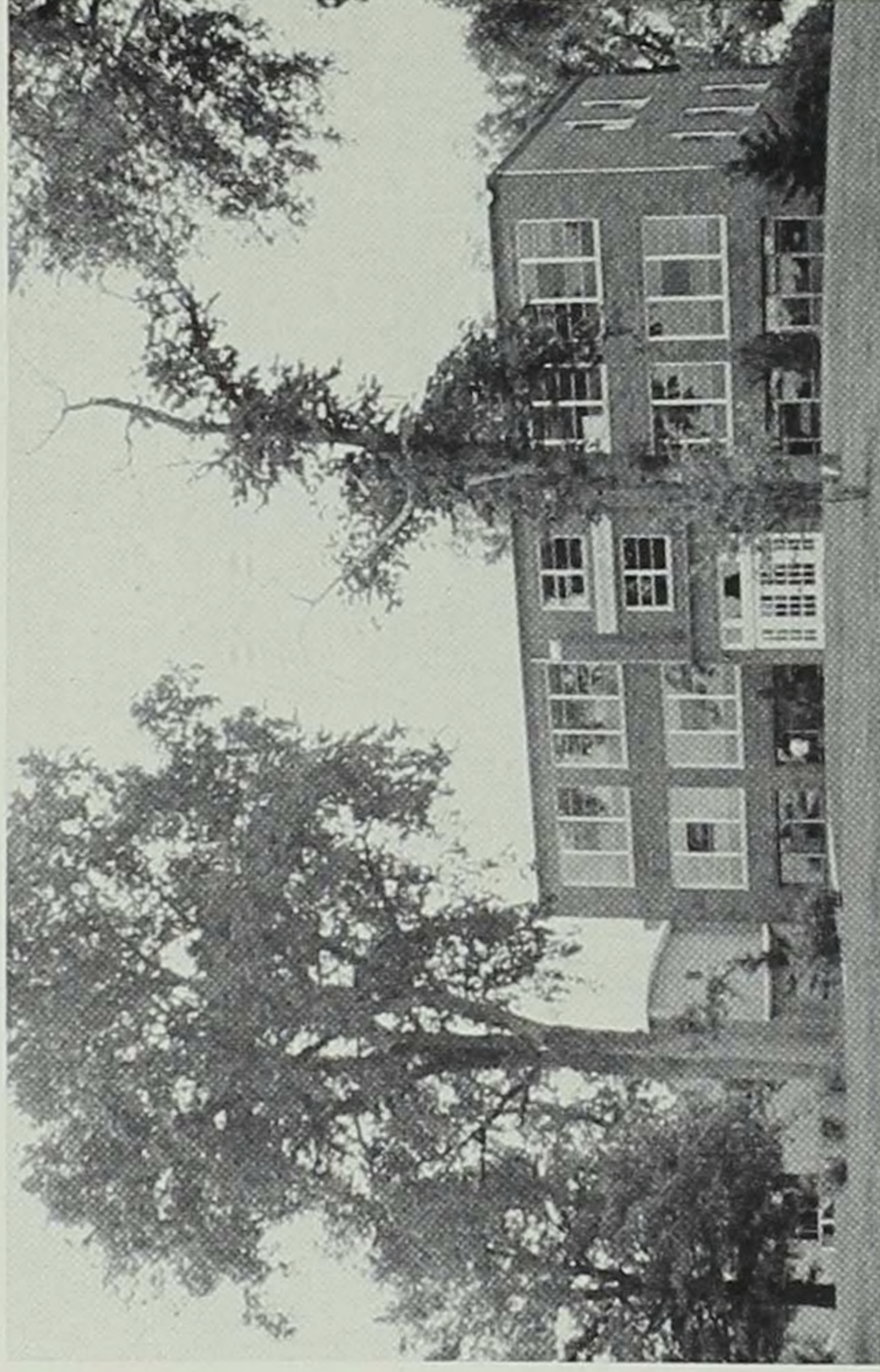
First Lower Deer Creek Amish Mennonite Church. Built in 1890.



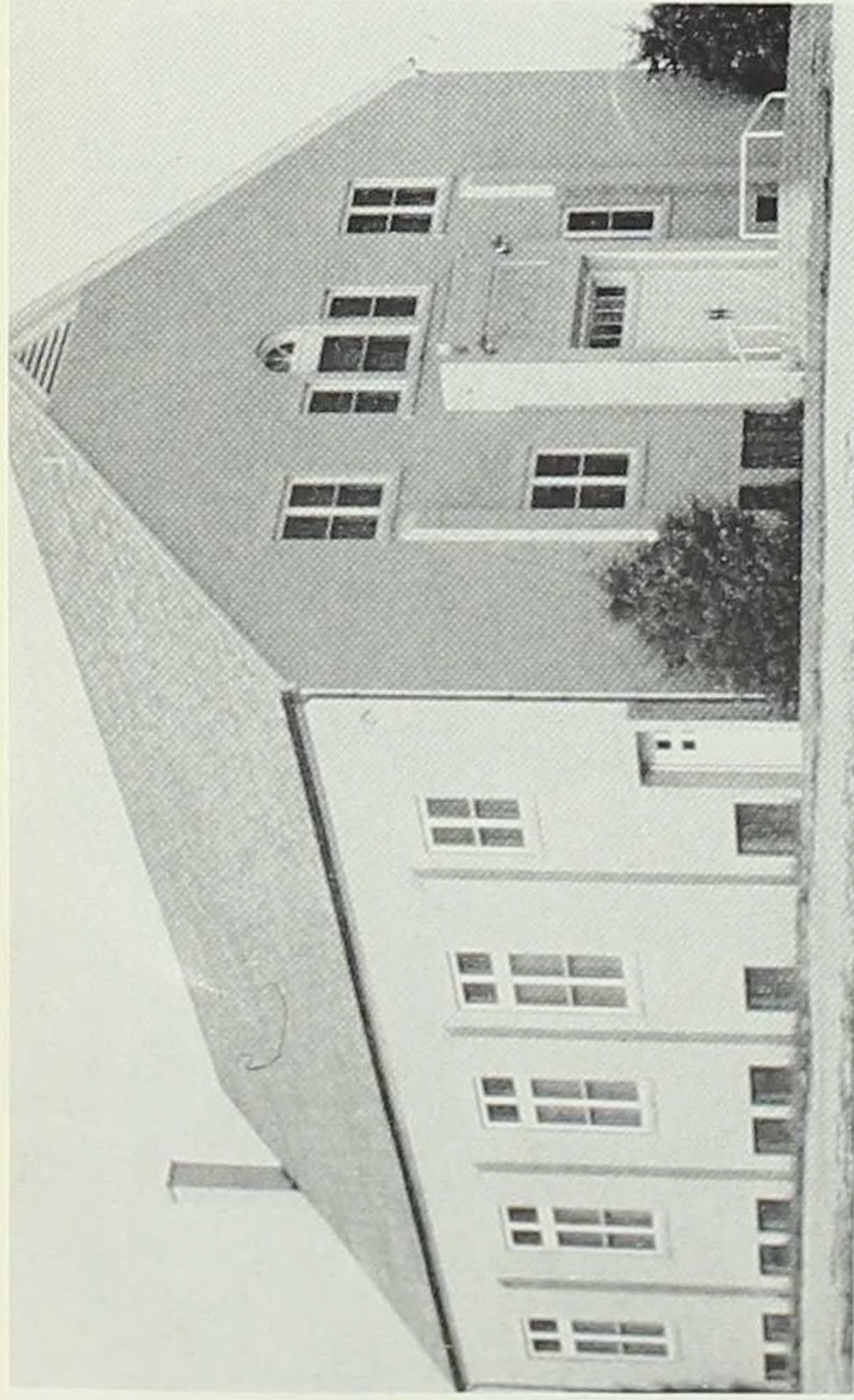
The third Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church. Built in 1956.



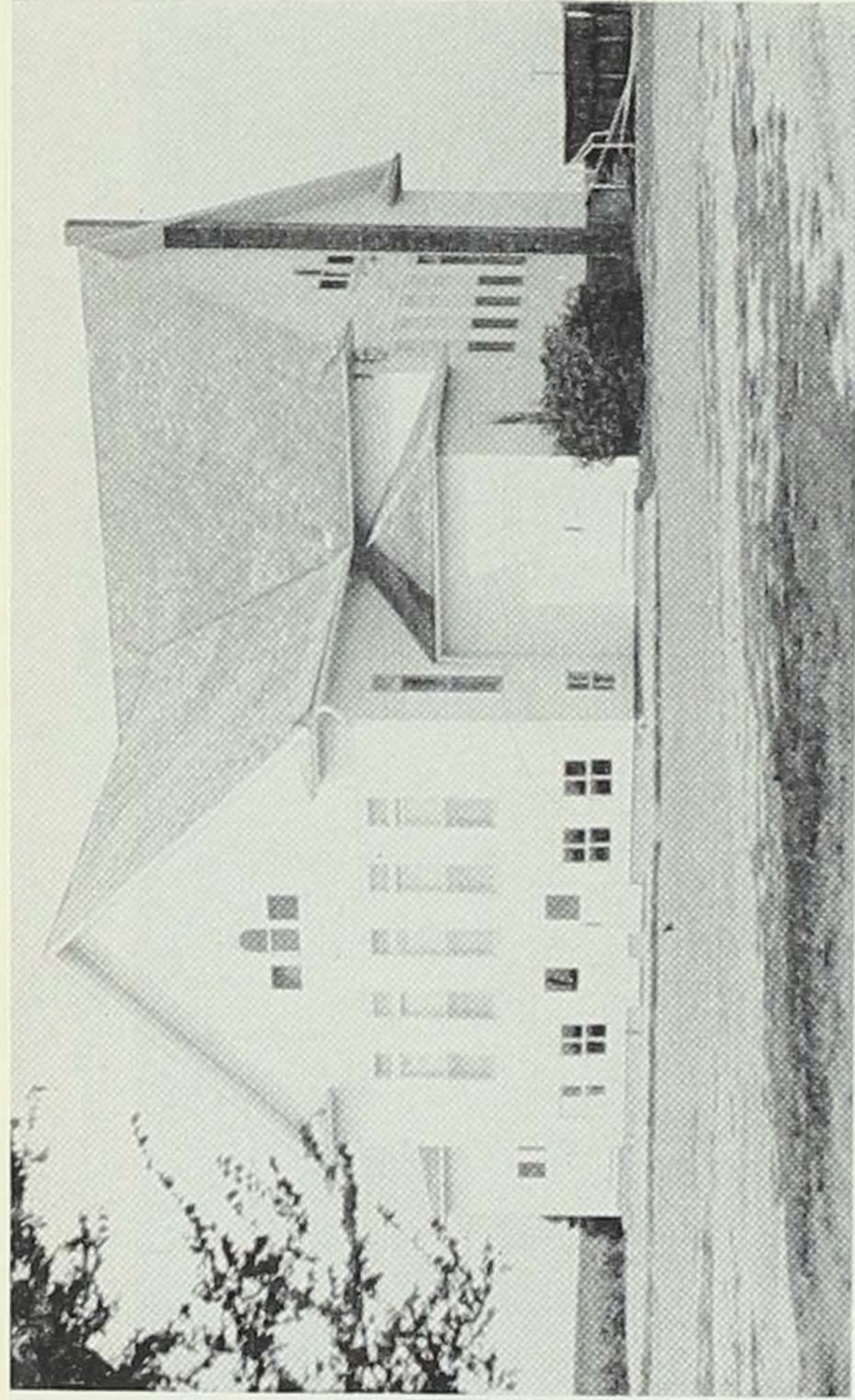
The second Lower Deer Creek Amish Mennonite Church. Built in 1917.



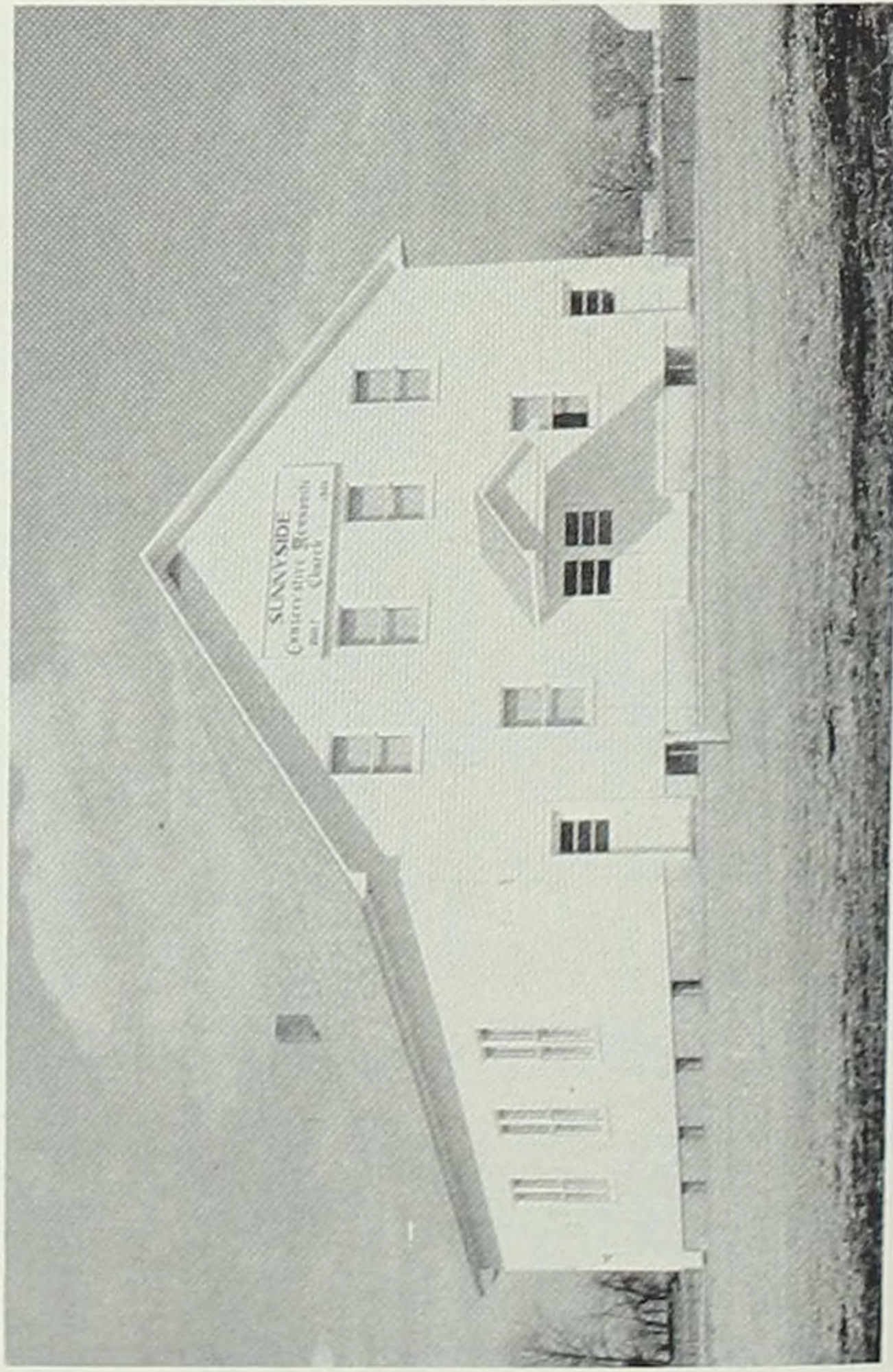
Iowa Mennonite Parochial High School founded in 1945.



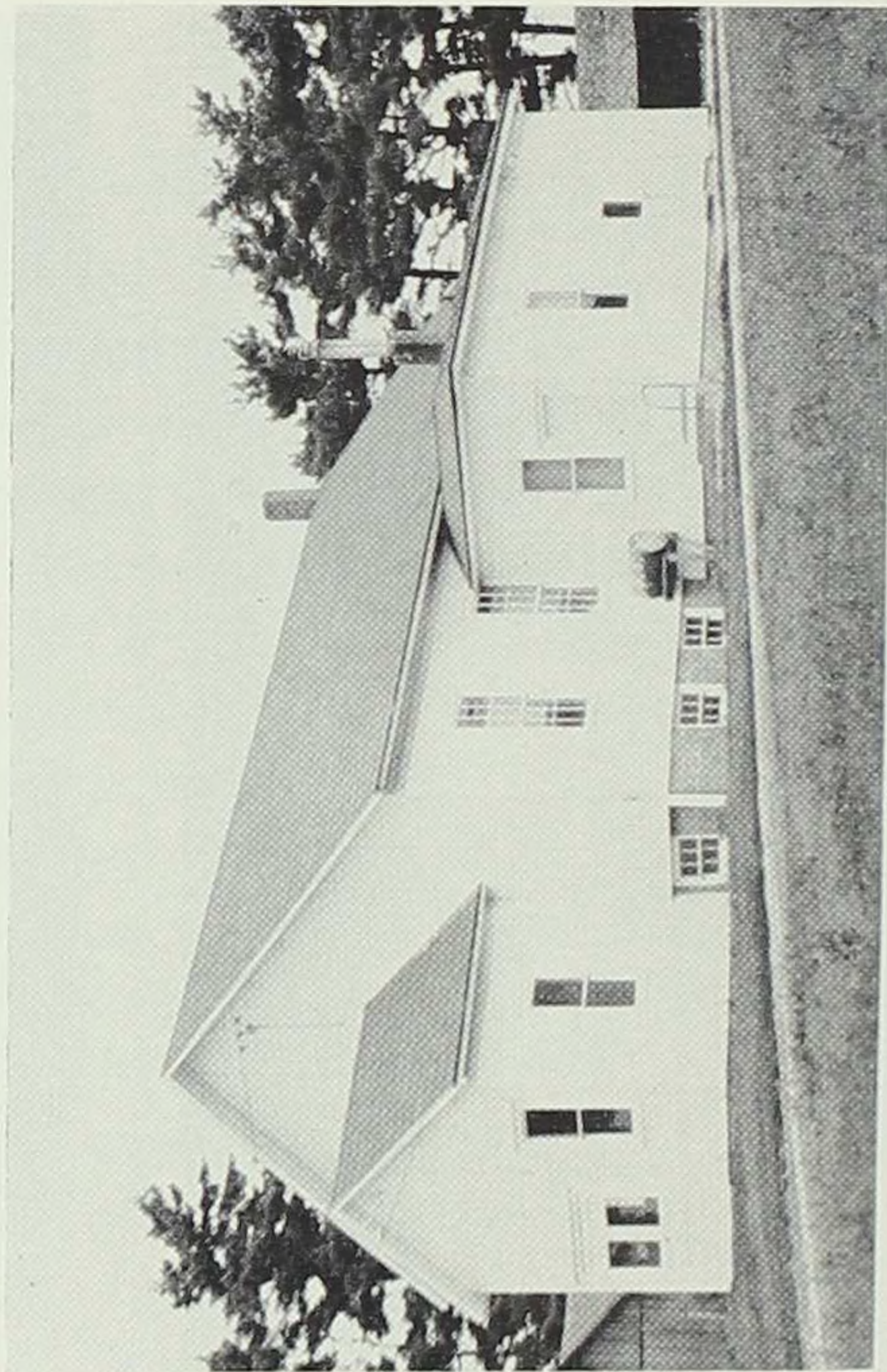
Wellman Mennonite Church, Built in 1940.



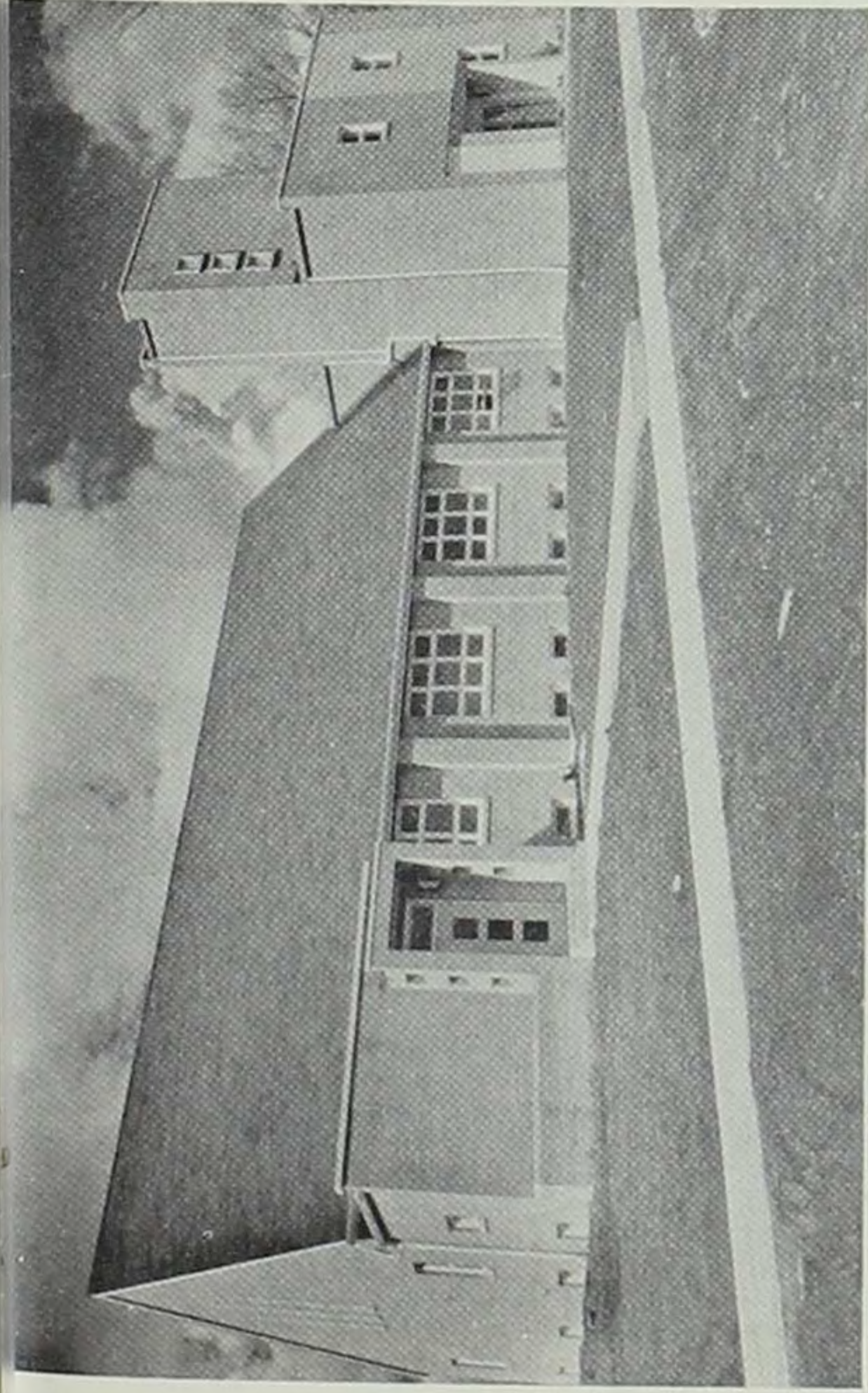
West Union Mennonite Church in Iowa County. Built in 1917.



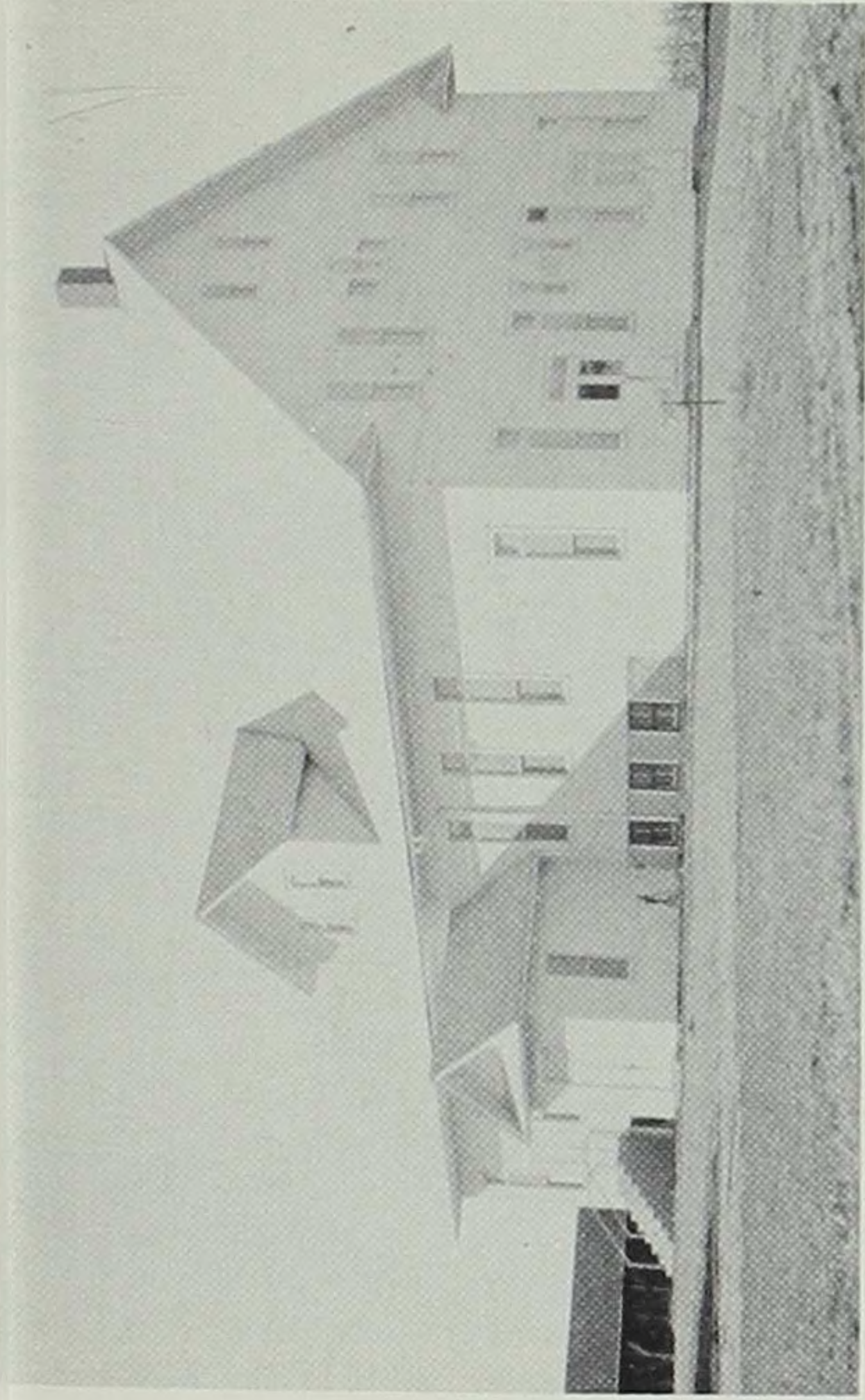
Sunnyside Conservative Mennonite Church, Built in 1956 near Kalona.



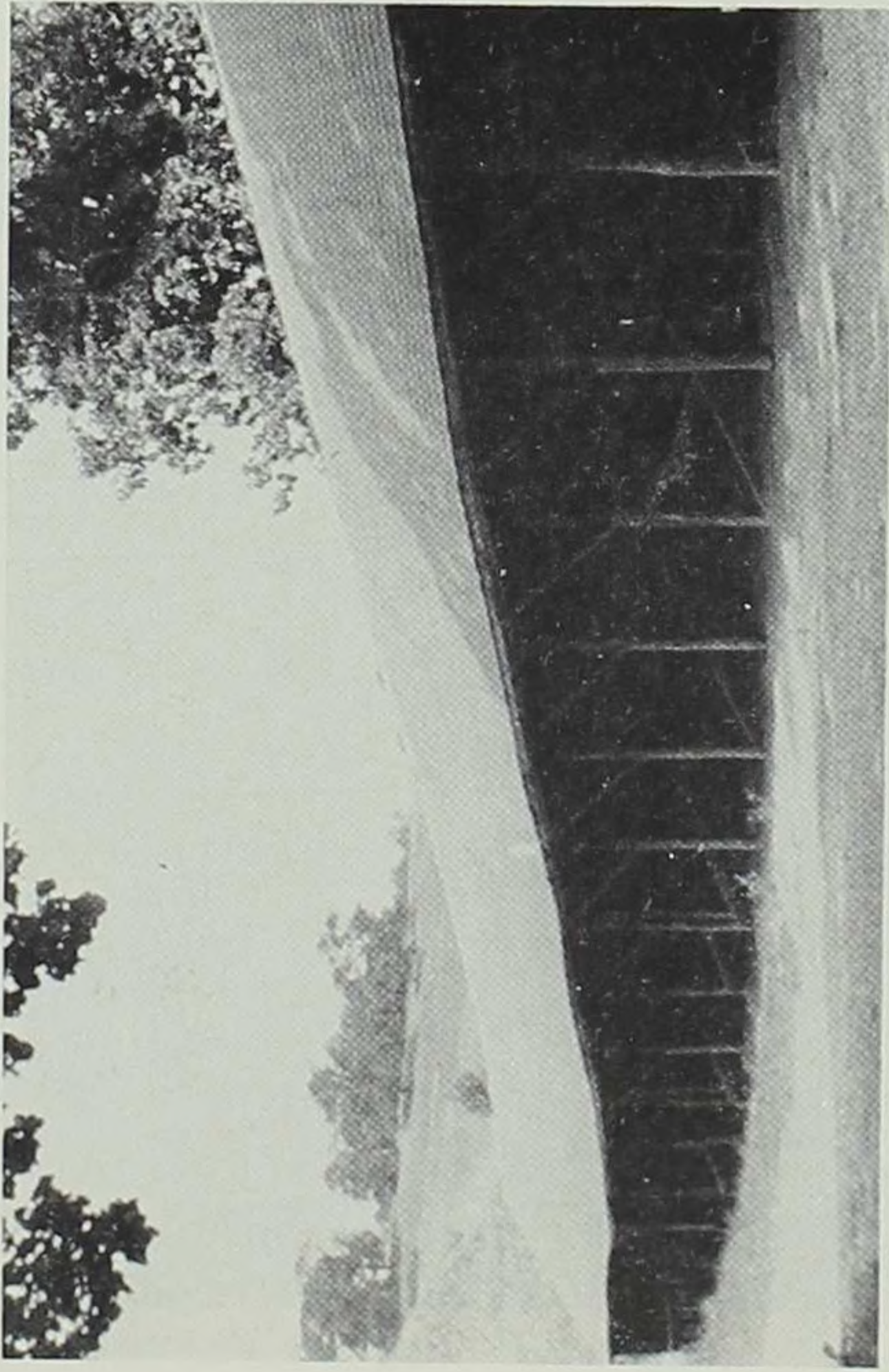
Upper Deer Creek Mennonite Church. Built in Iowa County in 1890.



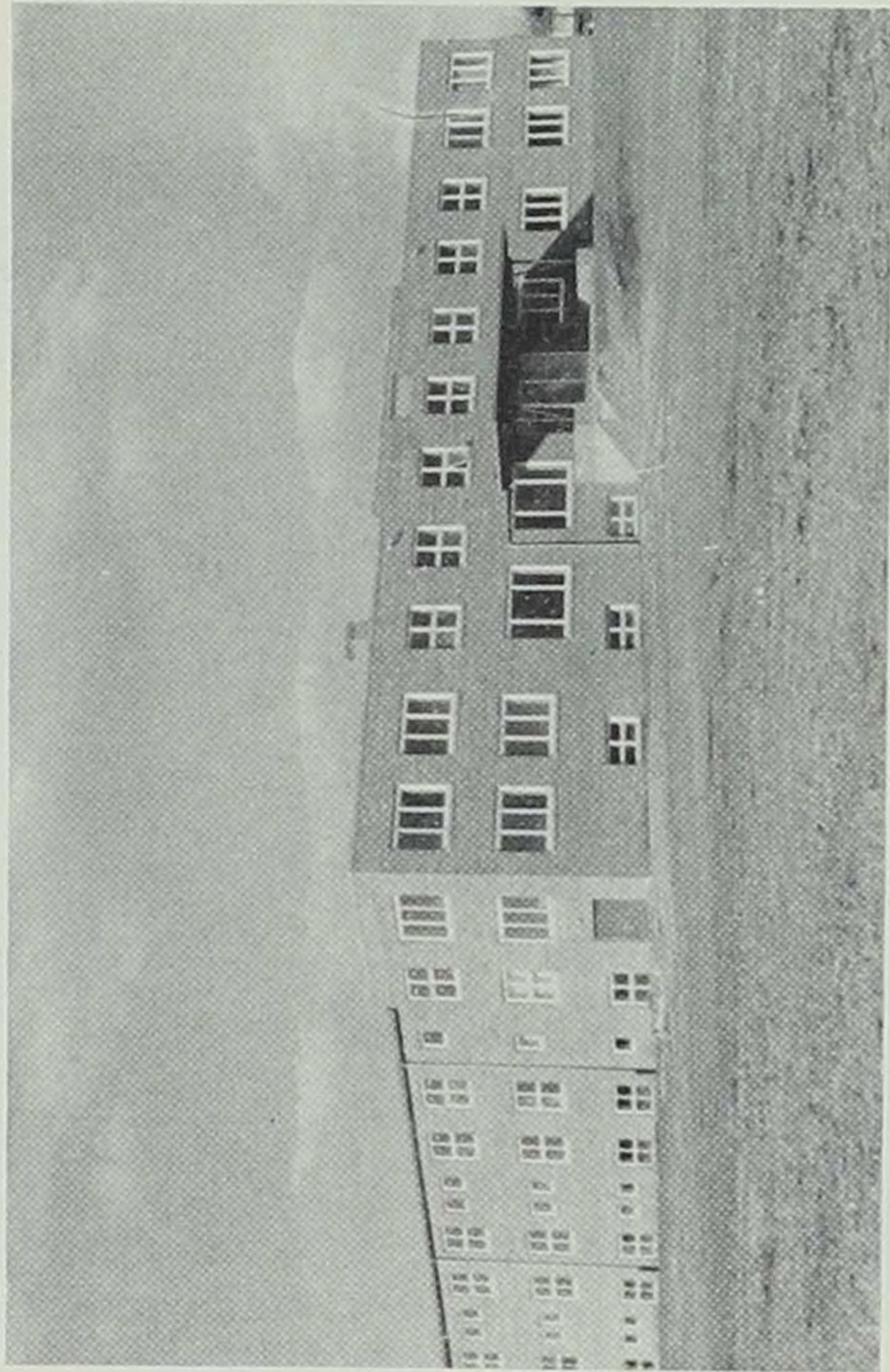
Manson Mennonite Church, in Calhoun County. Dedicated in 1957.



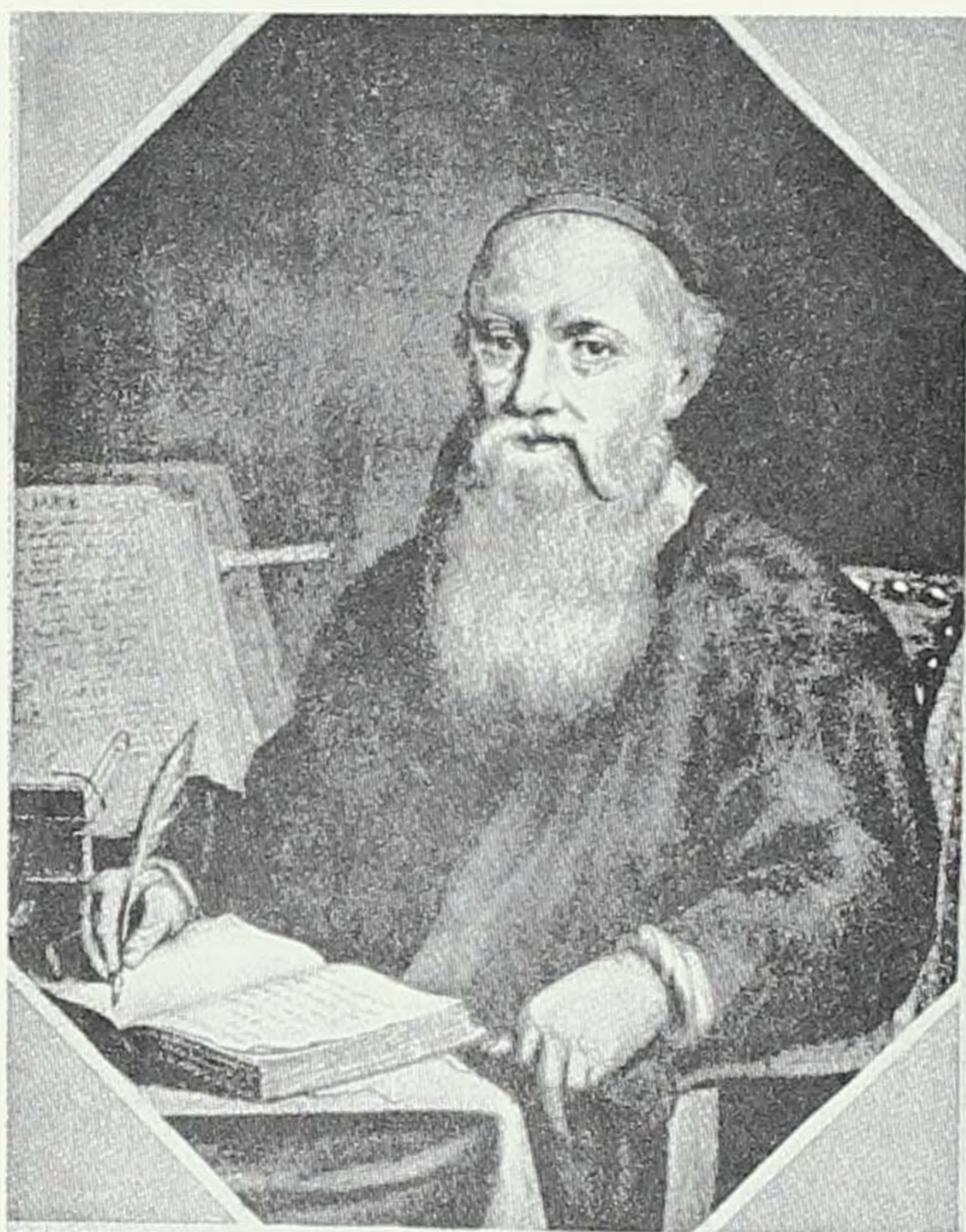
East Union Mennonite Church, north of Kalona. Built in 1922.



"Buggy Sheds" at the Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church.



Pleasantview Home for the Aged, in Kalona. Opened in 1958.

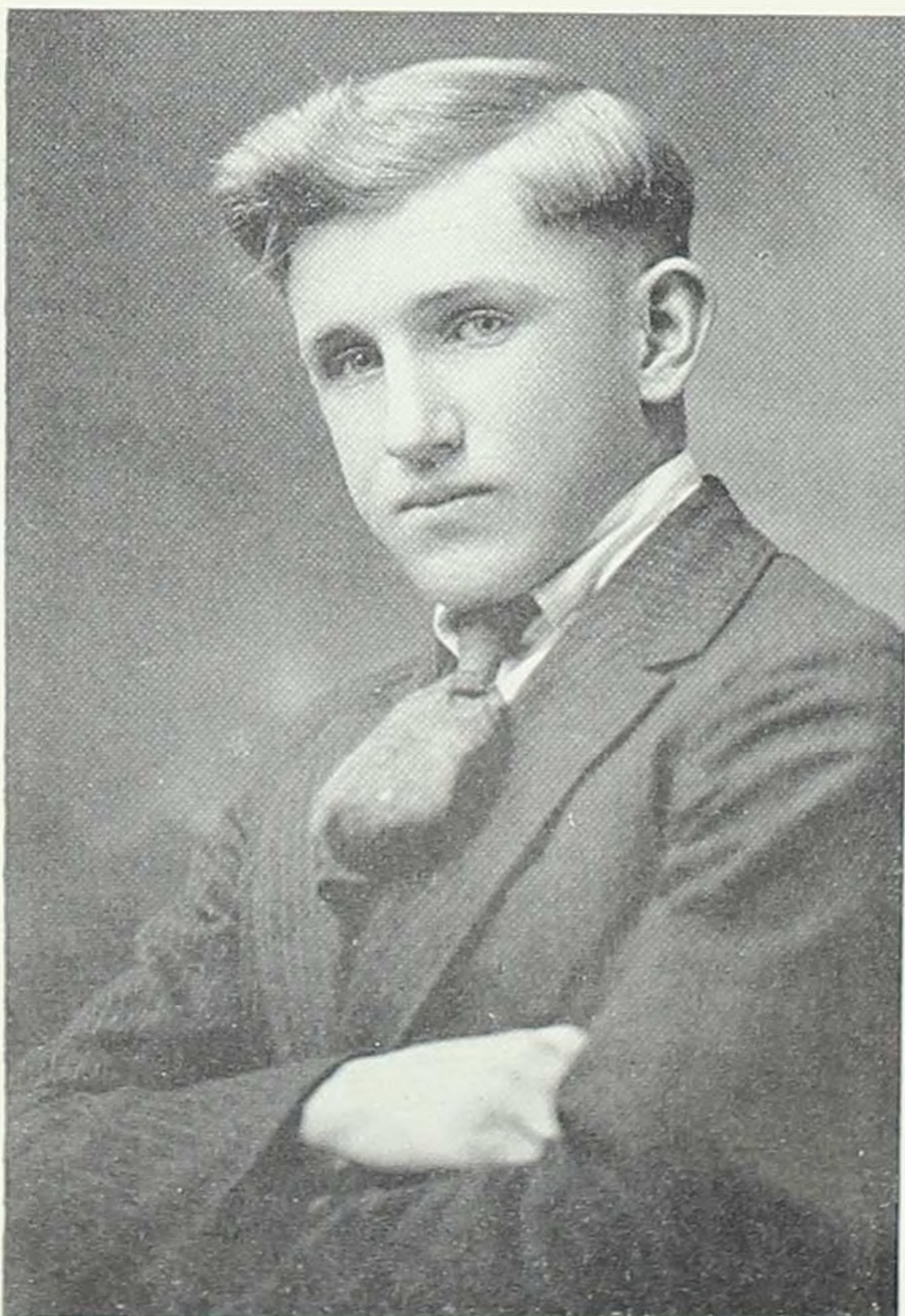


Menno Simons.

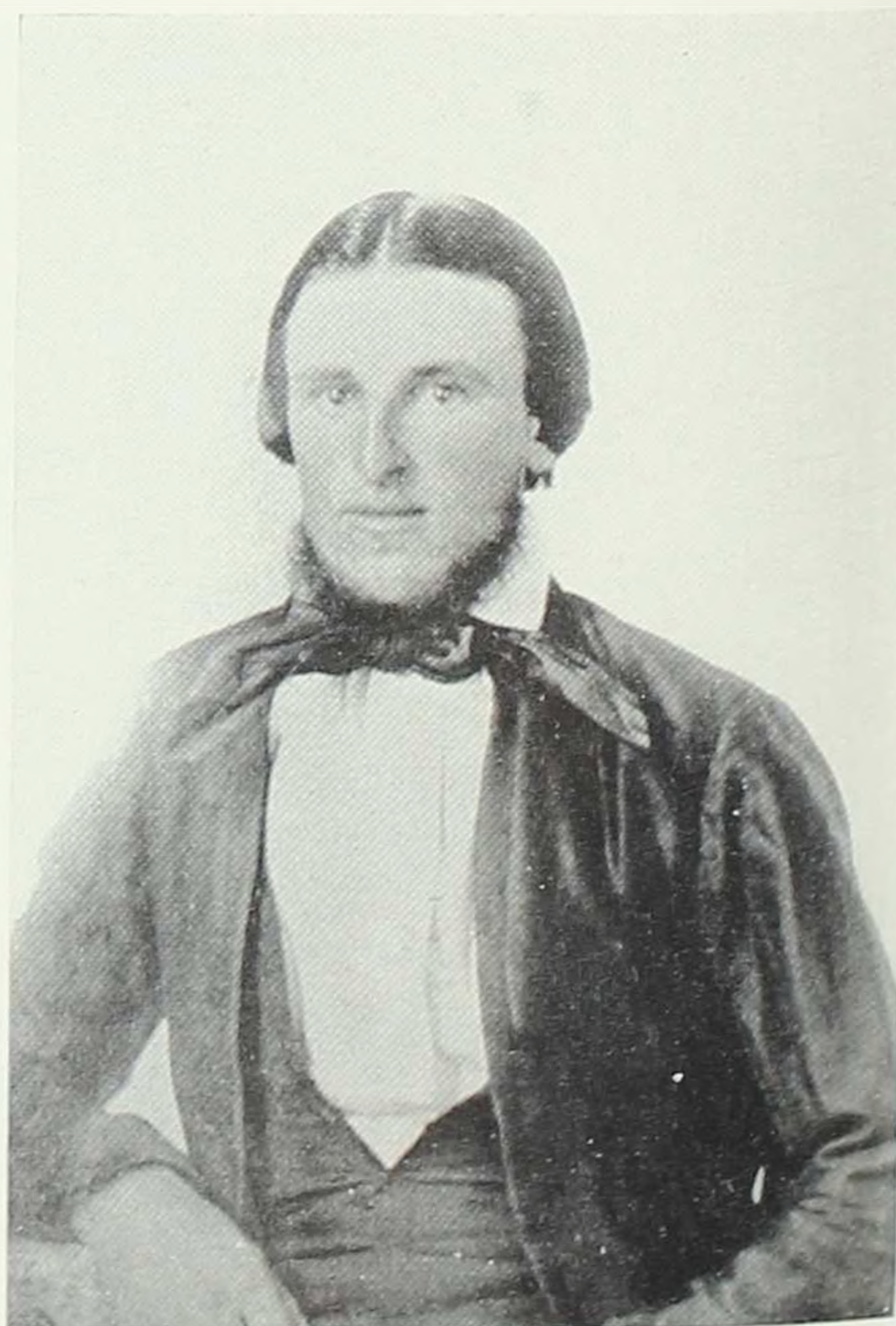
Painting of Menno Simons (1496-1561).



Alsatian Amish couple, ca. 1815, by Lewicki.



Melvin Gingerich — Mennonite Historian.



Joseph J. Gingerich (1840-1916), Kalona.



Six sons and daughter of Joseph Gingerich (about 1914).



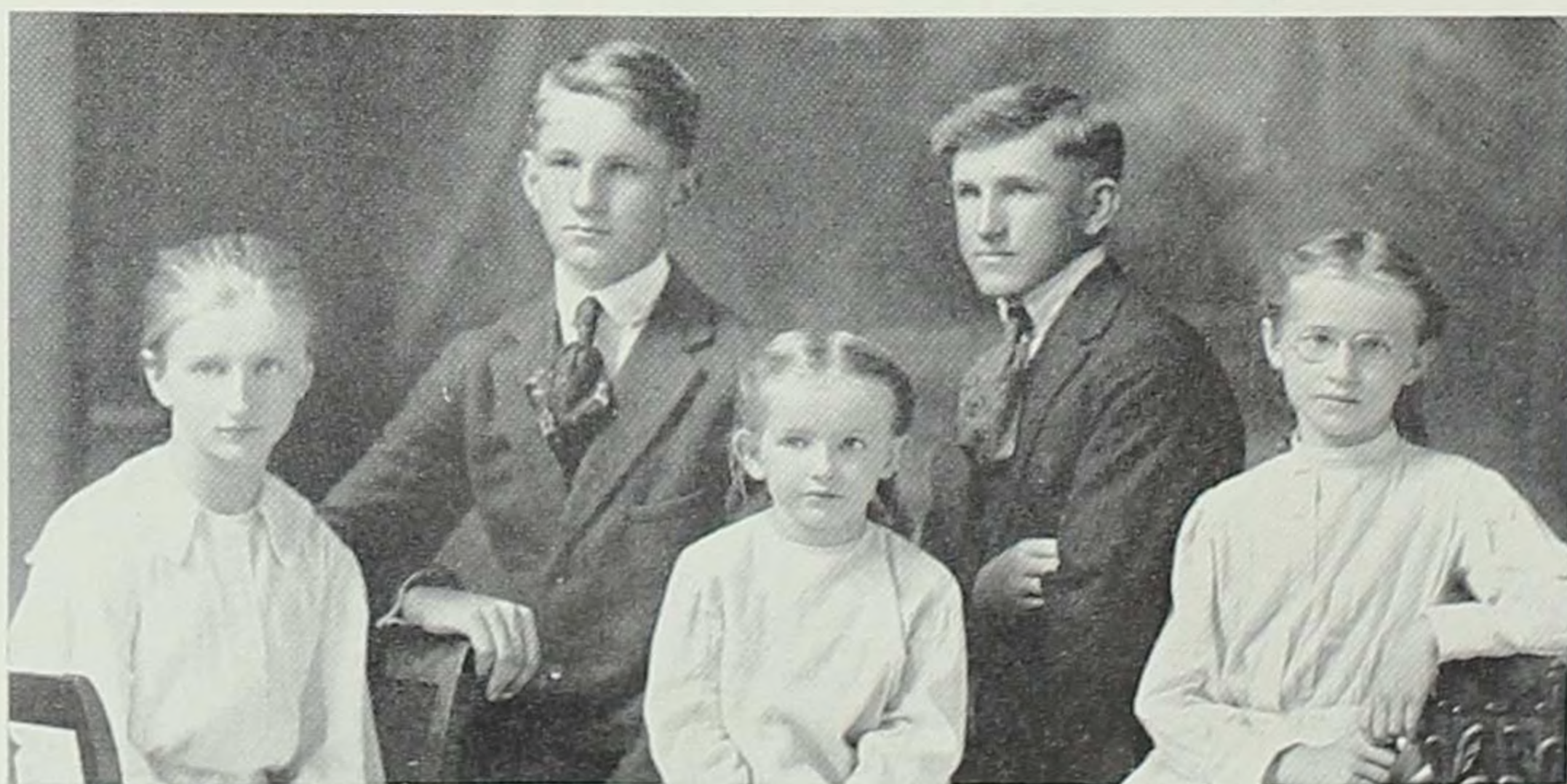
Family Gathering: Twenty-nine first cousins, children of the above brothers and sister.



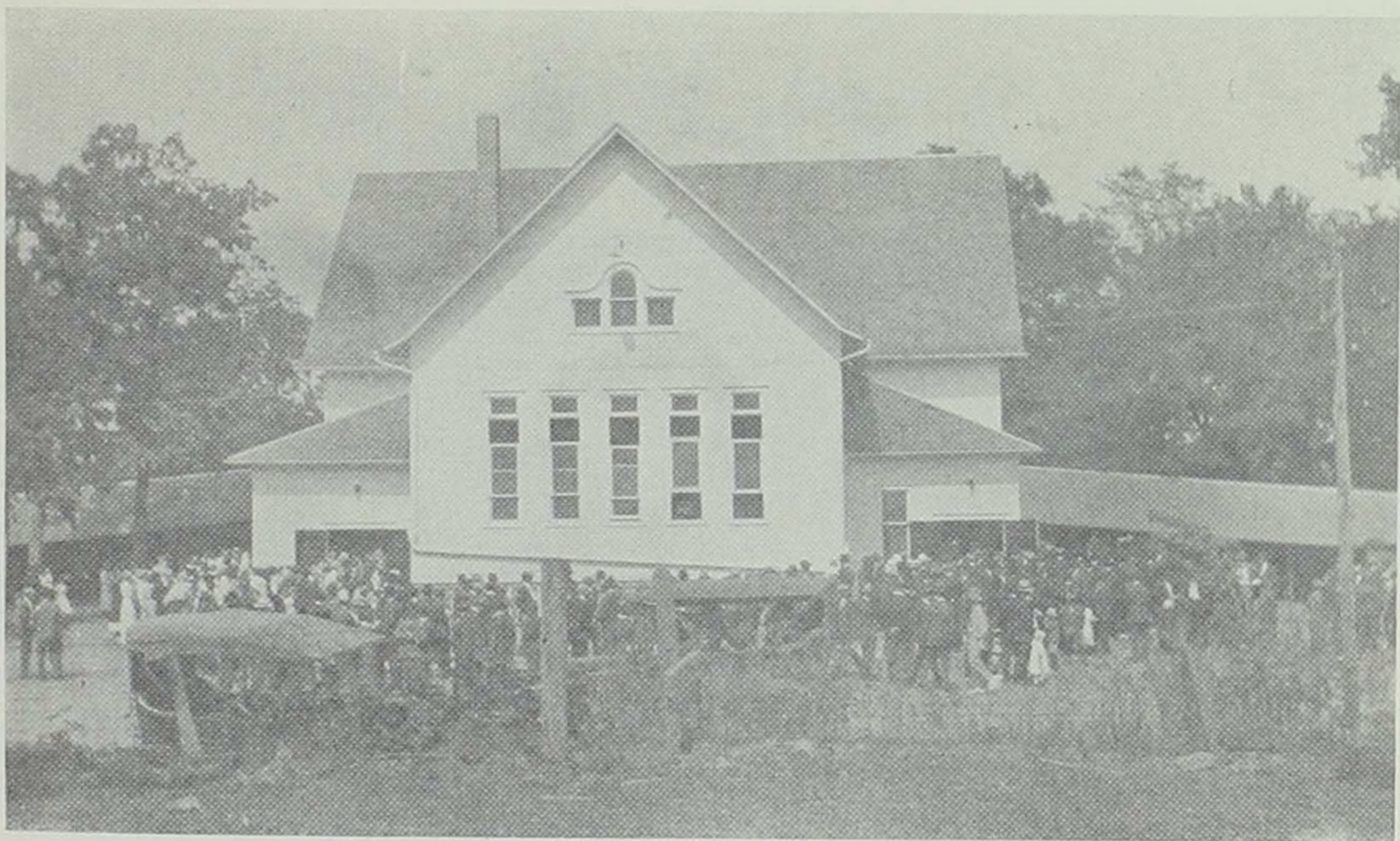
John and Lydia (Reber) Gingerich — Parents of Melvin.



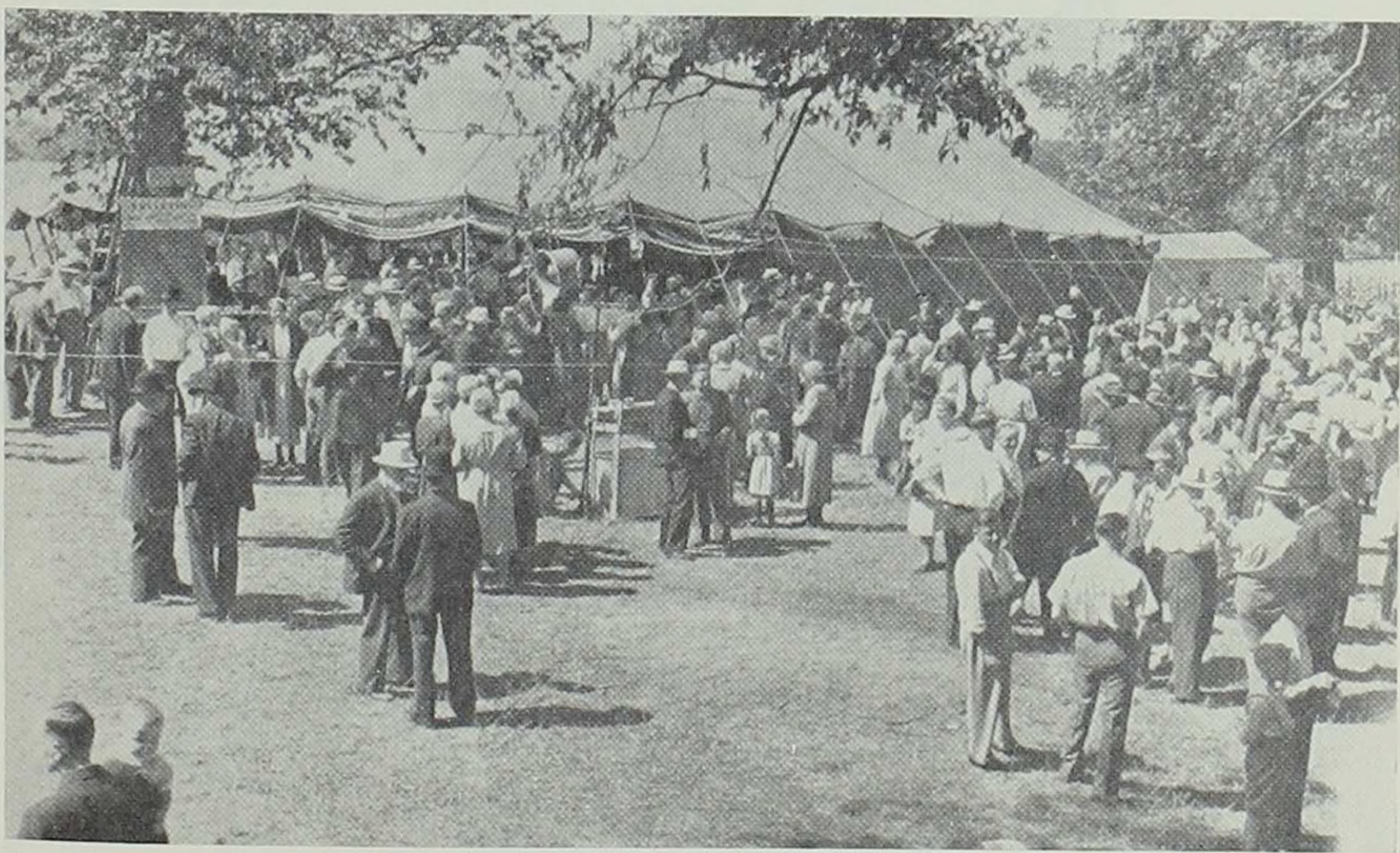
Author Melvin Gingerich on his pony: brother, cousin, and two sisters.



Young Melvin (right) with his brother and sisters.



Day of Dedication (August, 1917), Lower Deer Creek Church.

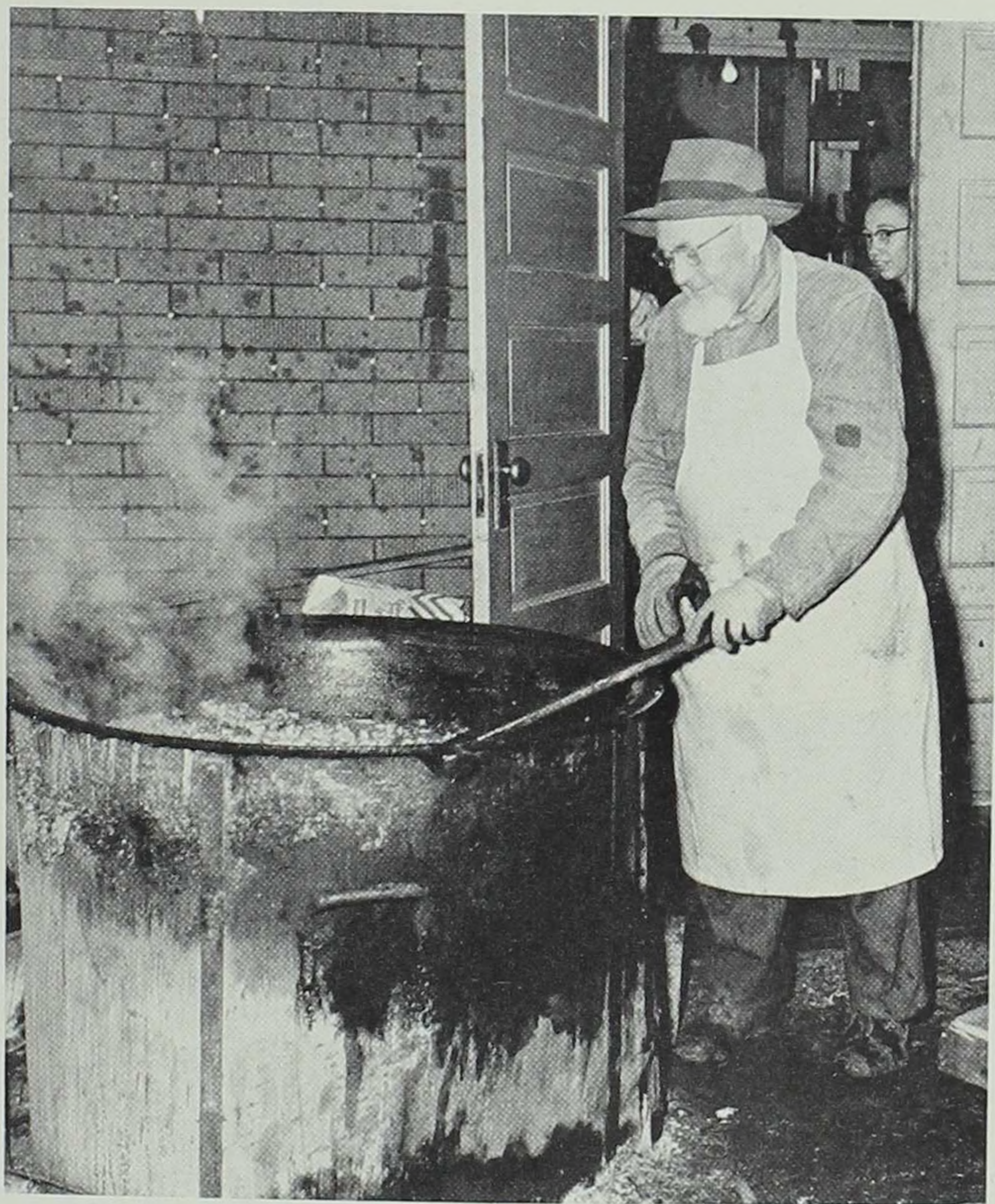


General Conference (1941) Lower Deer Creek.



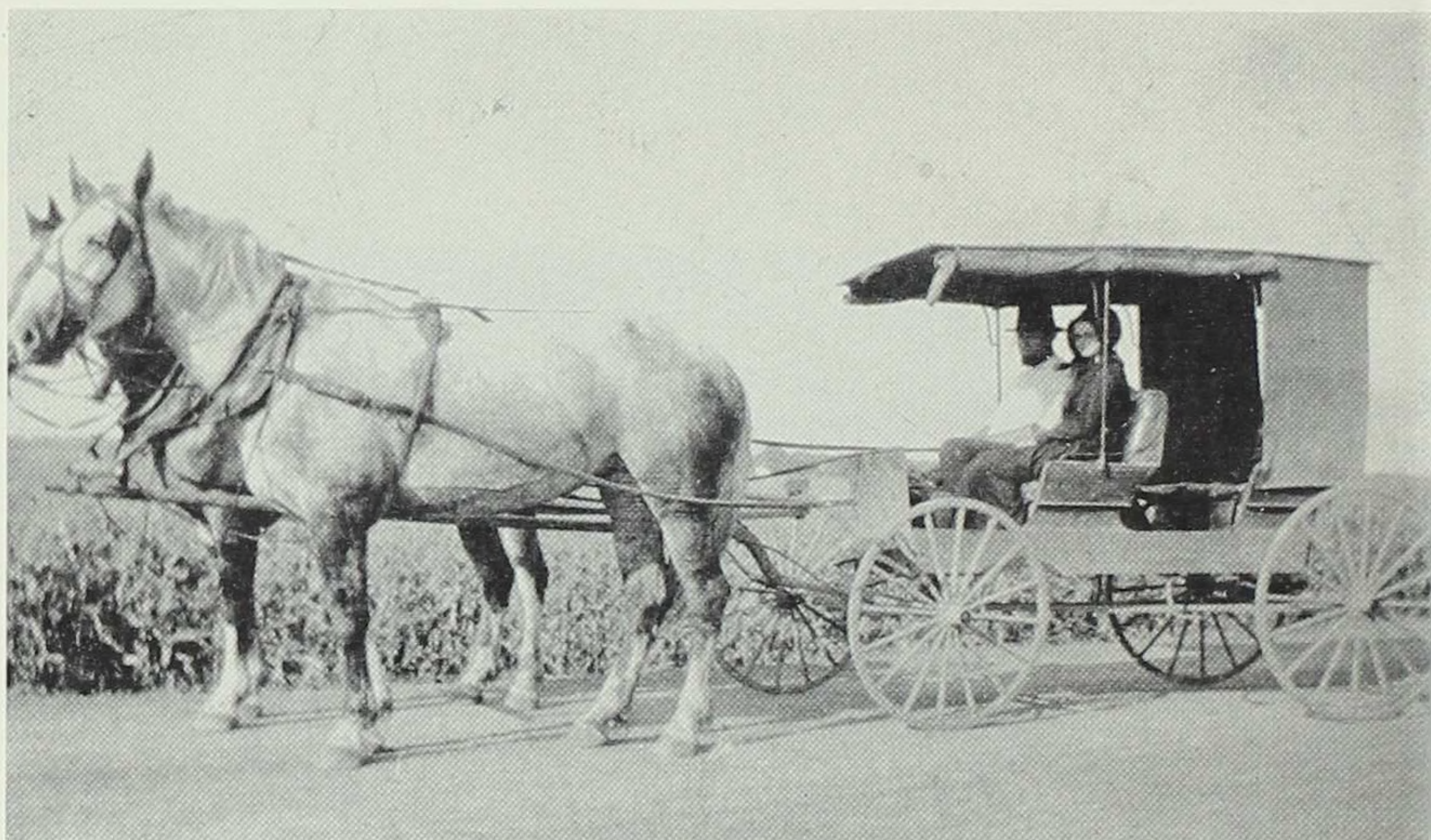
Iowa City Press-Citizen Photo.

Mennonites sealing 2,300 cans of lard and pork in one day for worldwide relief. In addition to pork, soup, relish, jelly, apples, corn, tomatoes, catsup, sauerkraut, and peaches make up the 20,000 cans of food processed by nine Mennonite churches.



Iowa City Press-Citizen Photo.

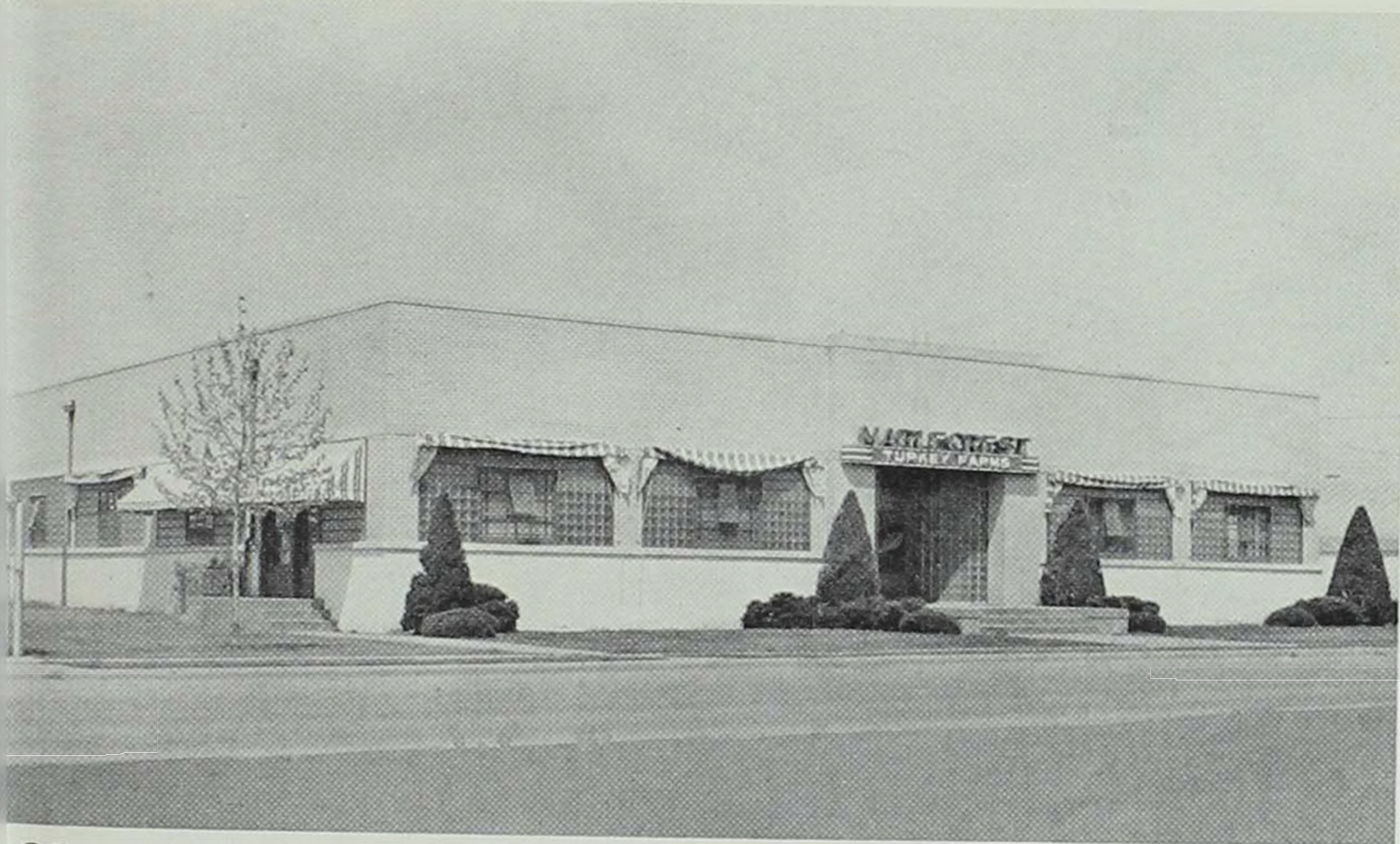
Dan G. Gingerich stirs a vat of pork fat from which lard was produced. About two-fifths of the 2,300 cans of pork put up in a single day in November, 1956, was lard.



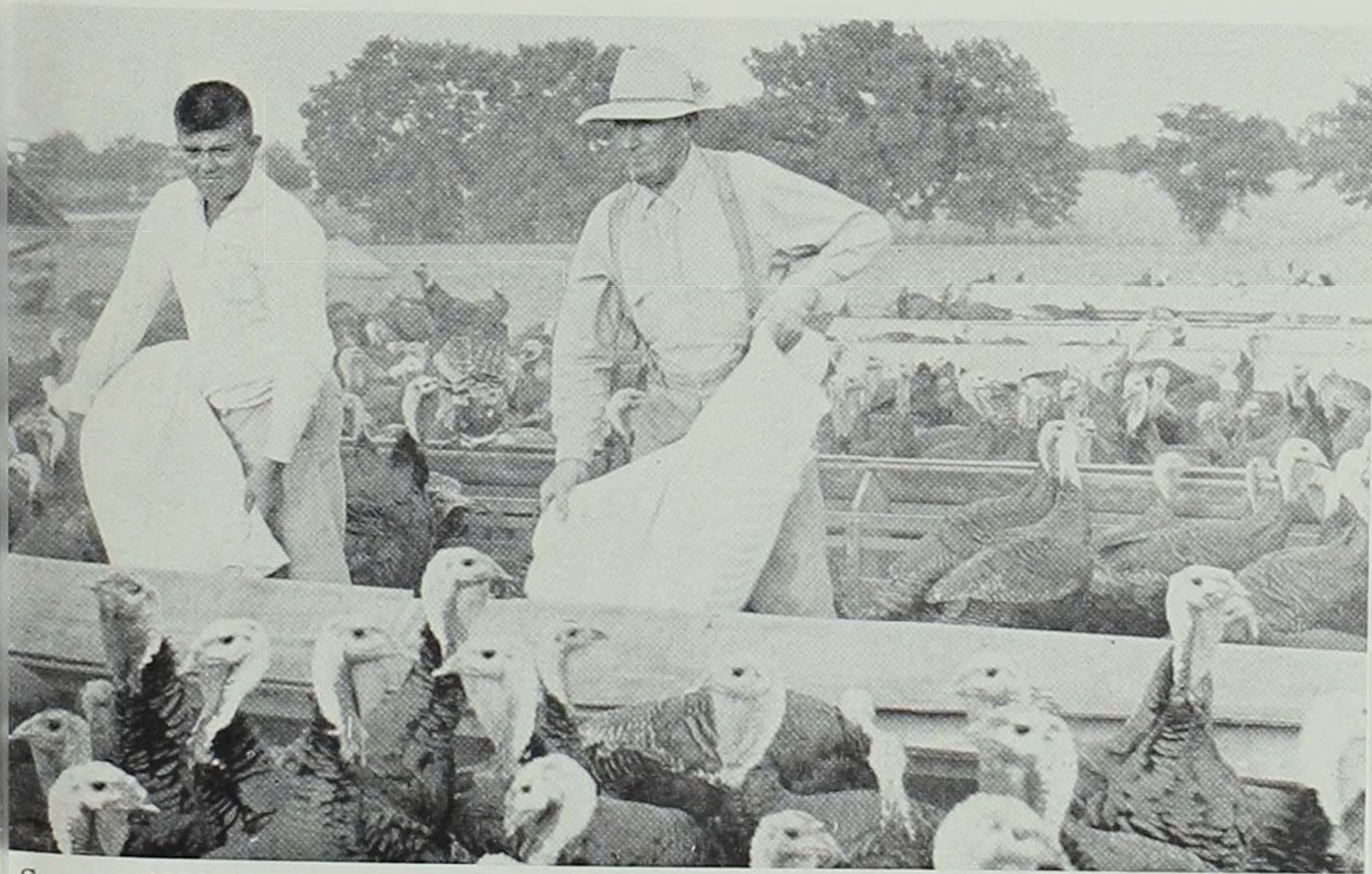
Amish Mennonite couple, Thomas and Ruth Miller of Kalona, in their two-seated buggy.



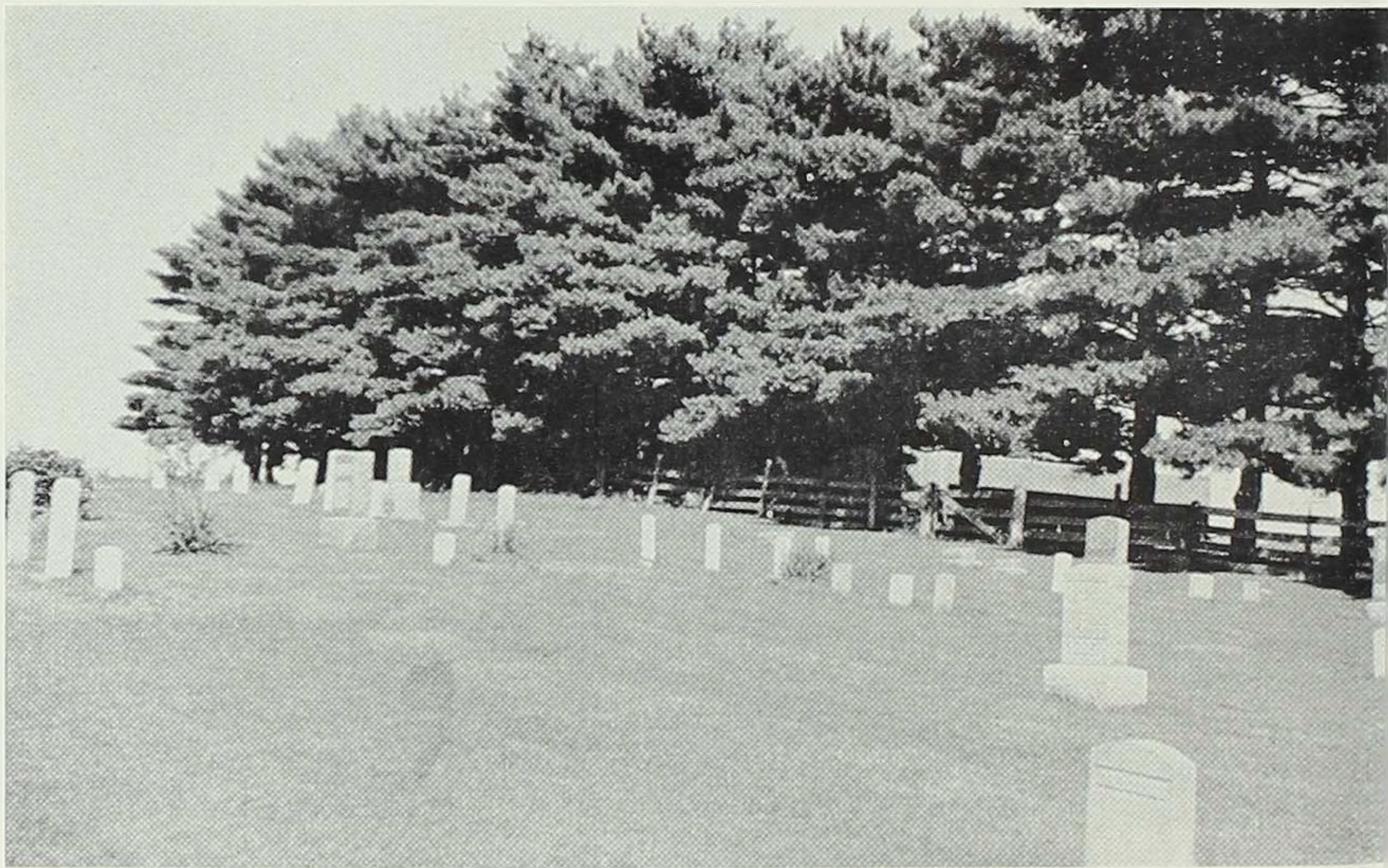
Amish Mennonite school children with their teacher and horse — June 17, 1910.



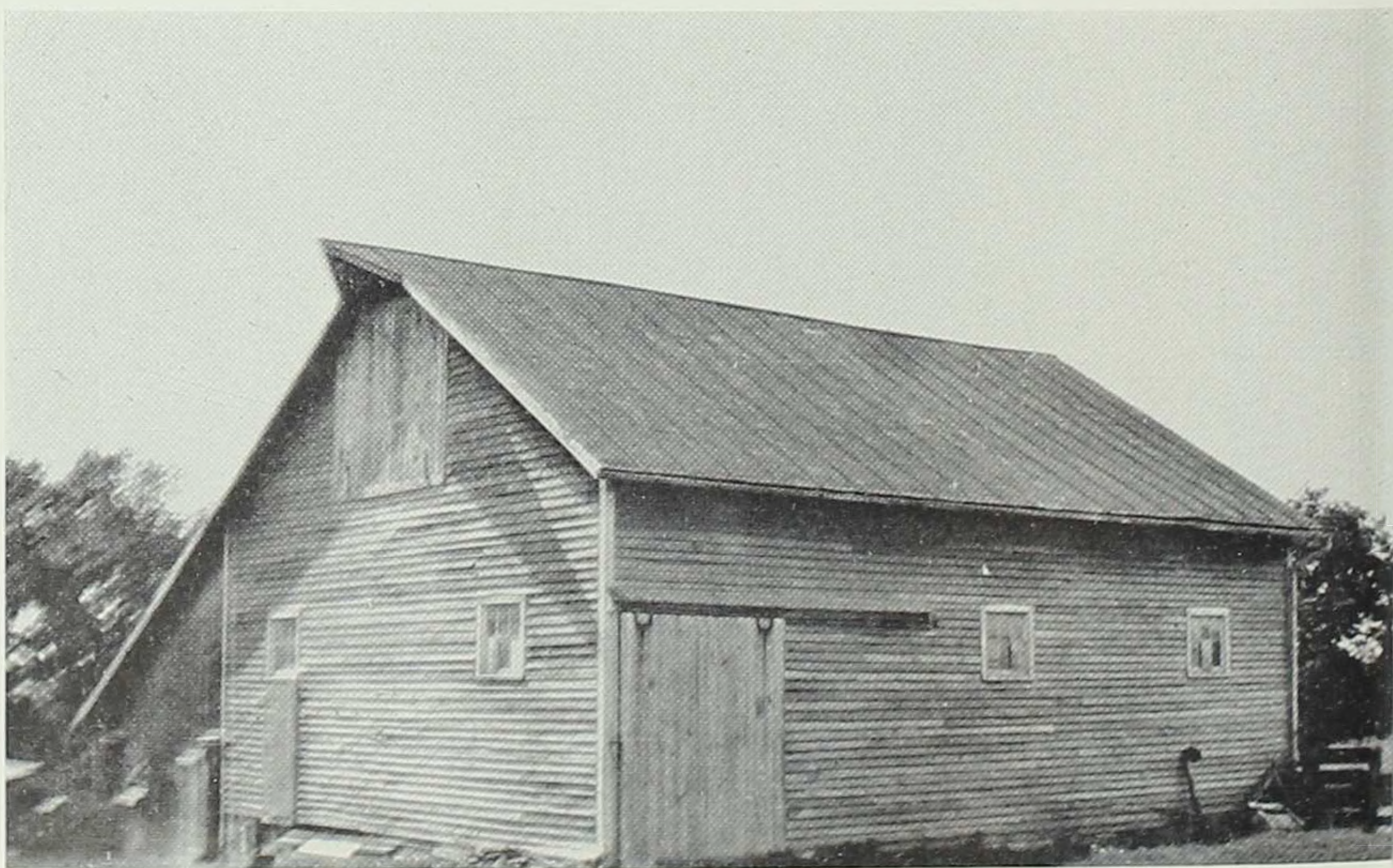
Office of the famous Maplecrest Turkey Farms started at Wellman by a Mennonite — A. C. Gingerich.



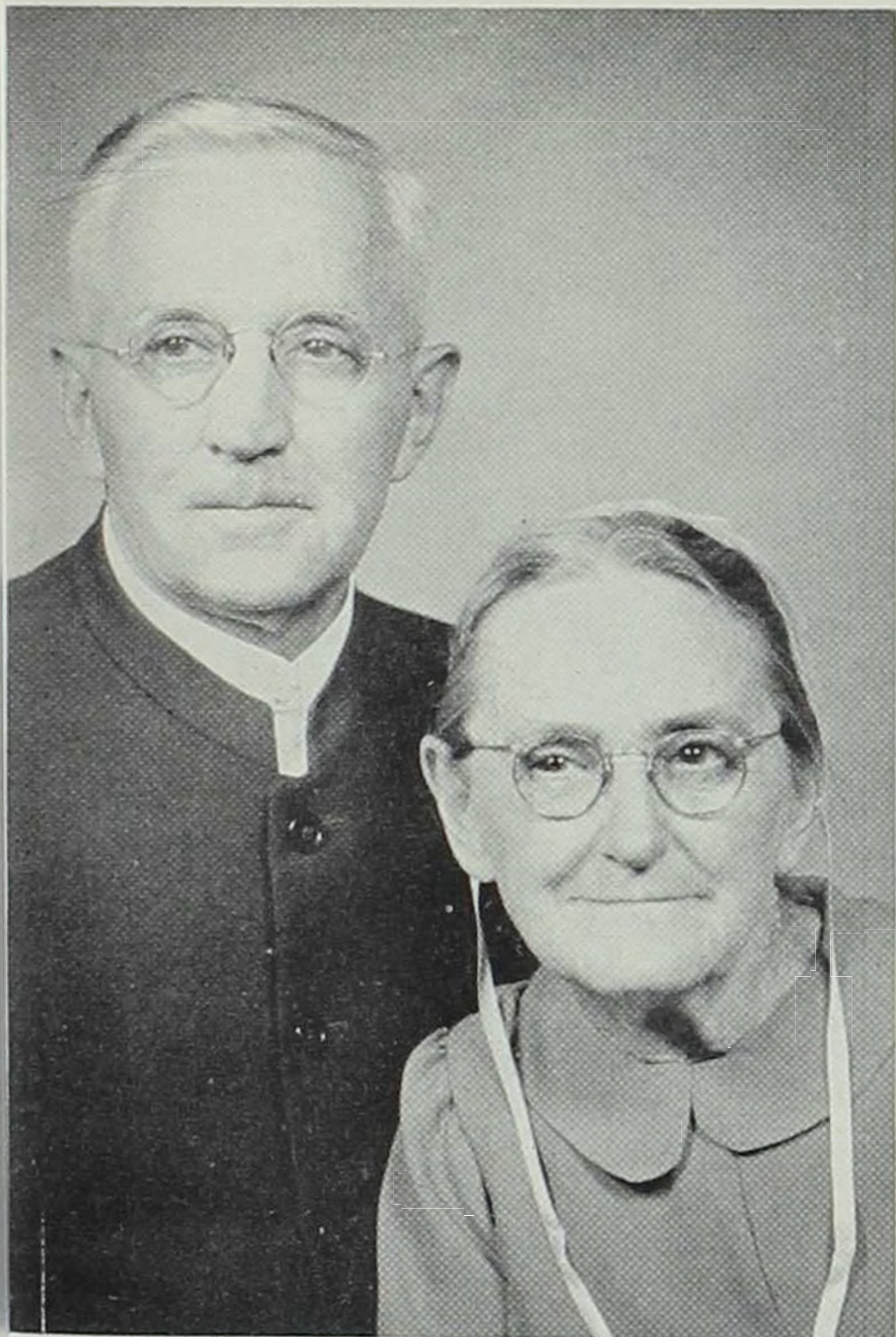
Scores of Washington County farmers, like these Mennonite farmers, raise turkeys for the Maplecrest Farms.



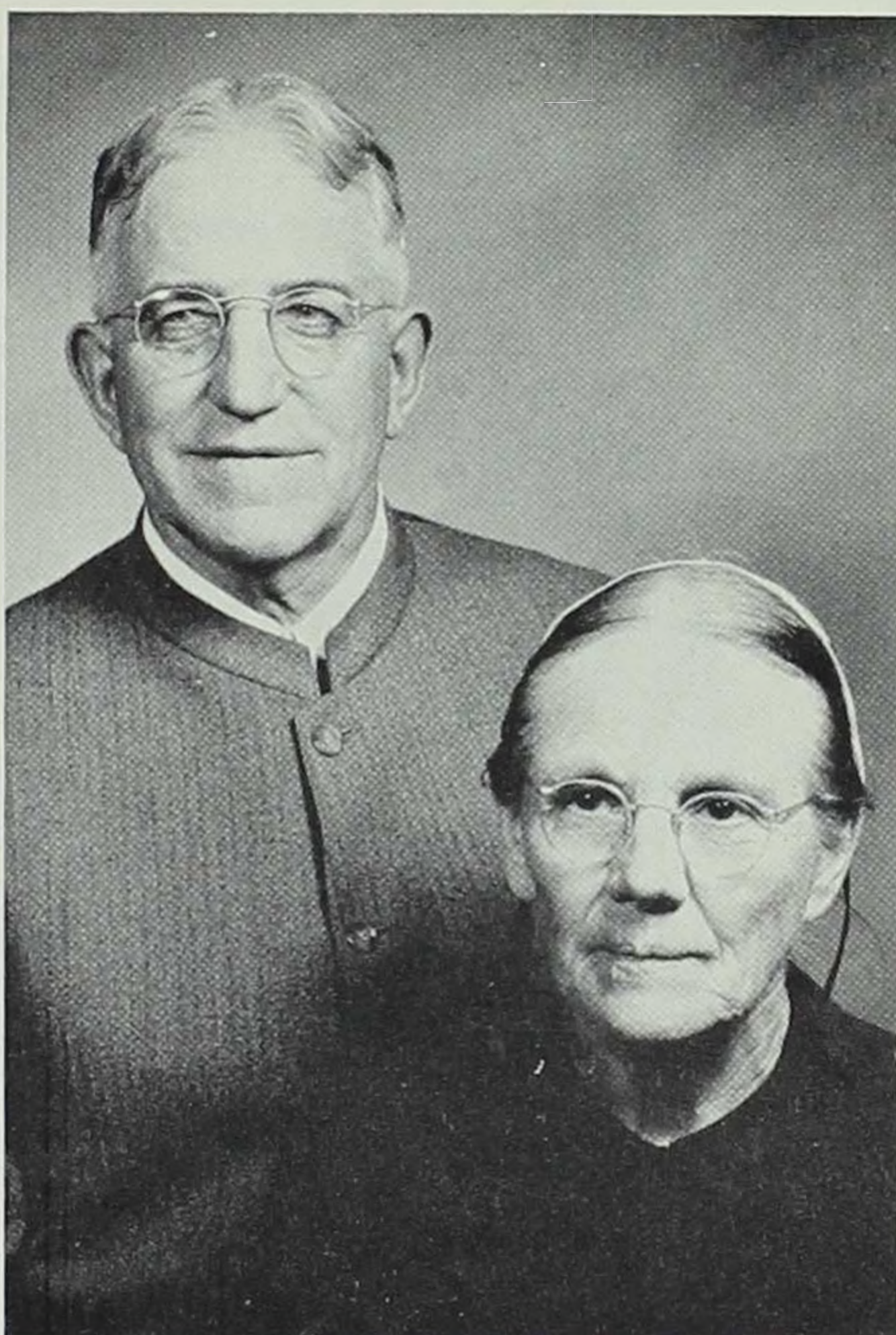
Upper Deer Creek Cemetery.



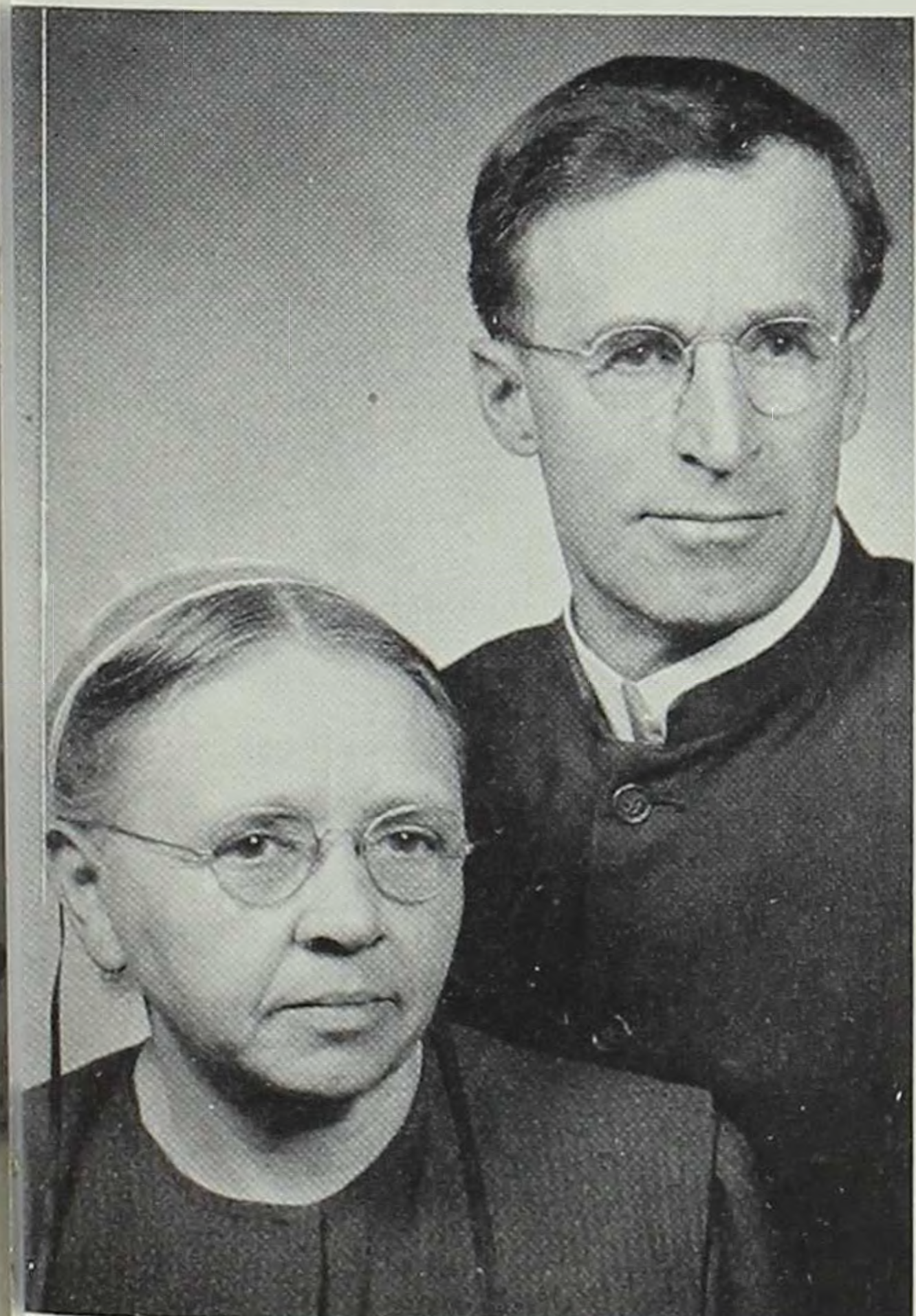
The building which was the first Eicher Church.



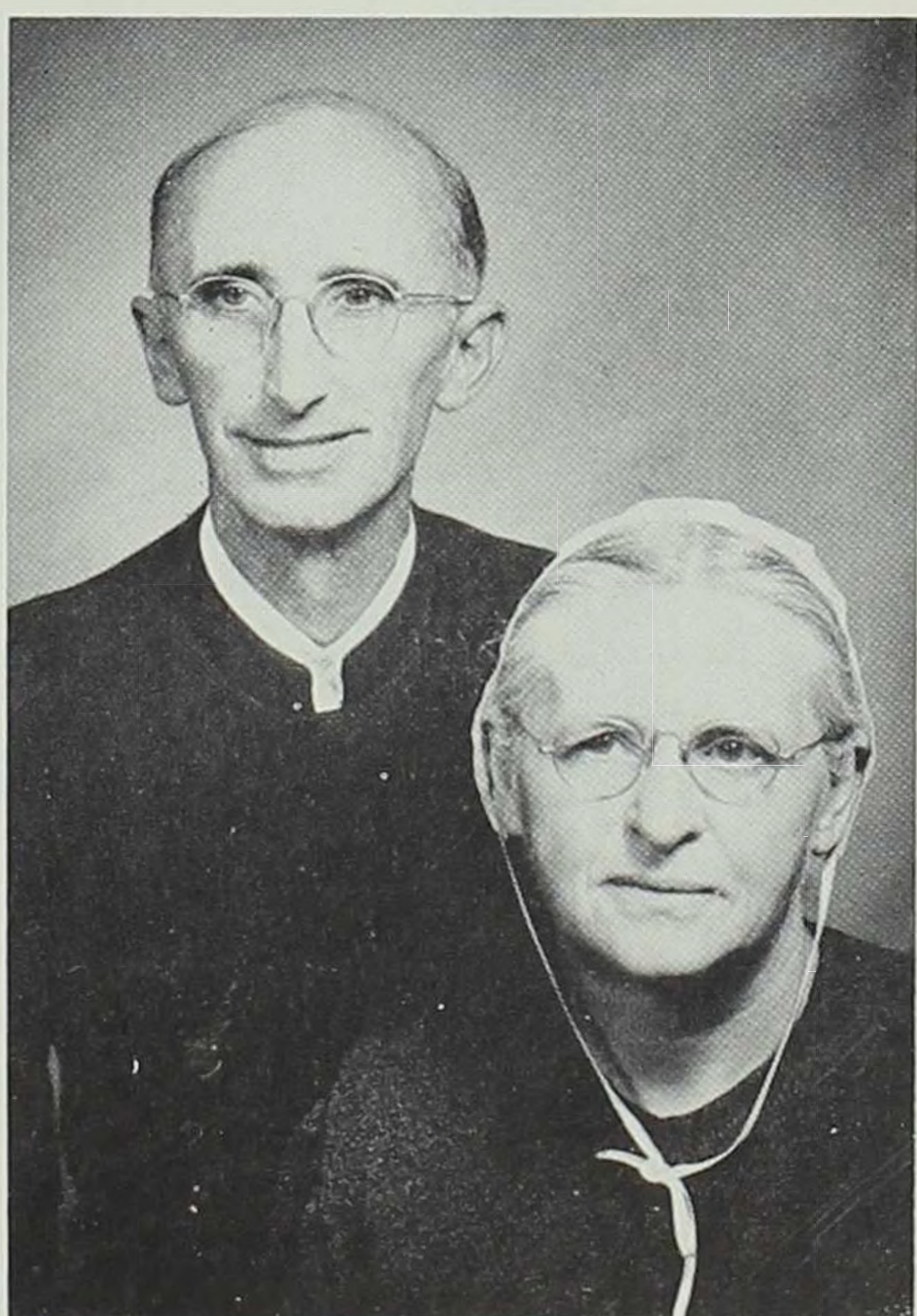
BISHOP and MRS. DANIEL J. FISHER
East Union Mennonite Church



BISHOP and MRS. SIMON GINGERICH
Wayland Sugar Creek Mennonite Church

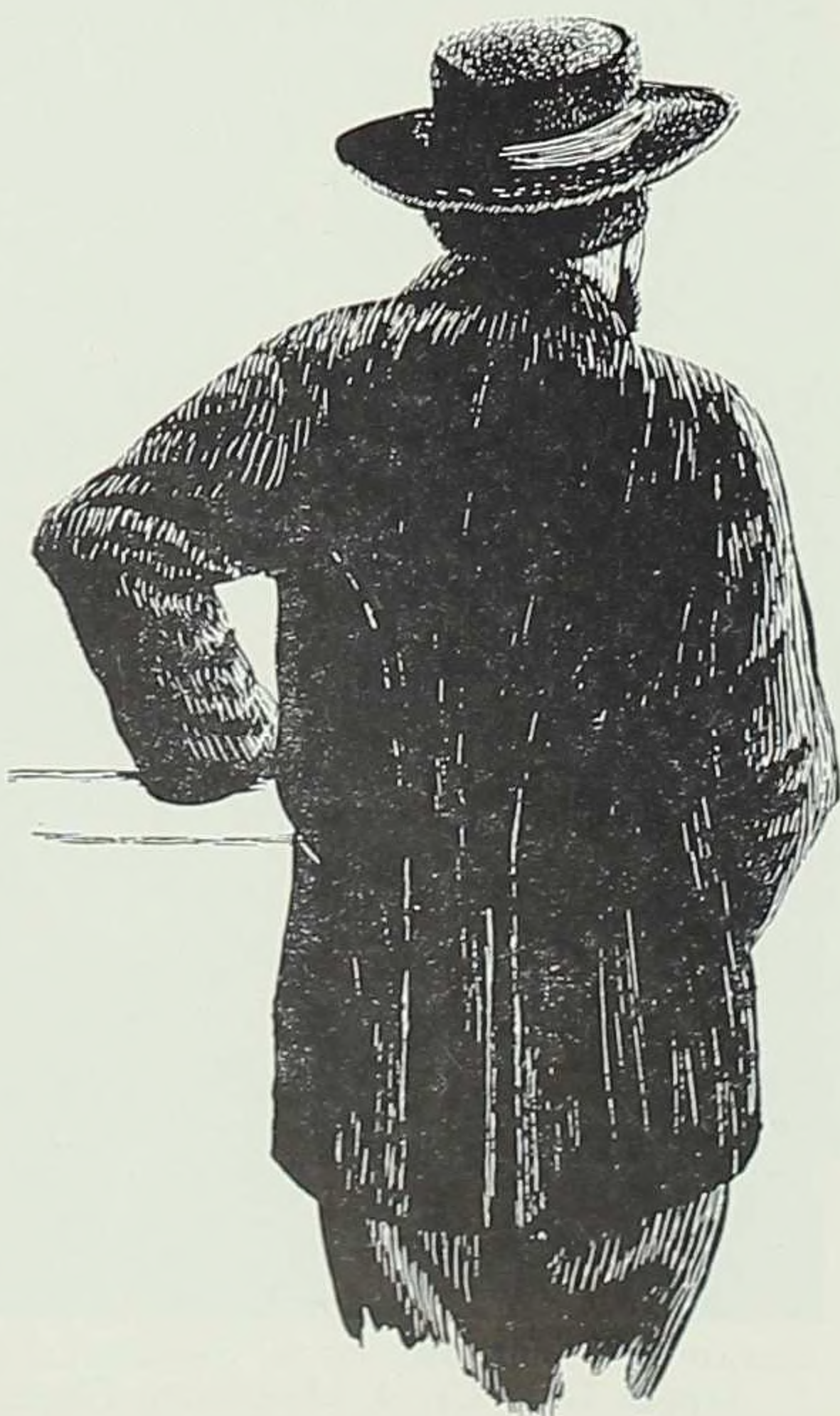


BISHOP and MRS. JOHN Y. SWARTZENDRUBER
Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church

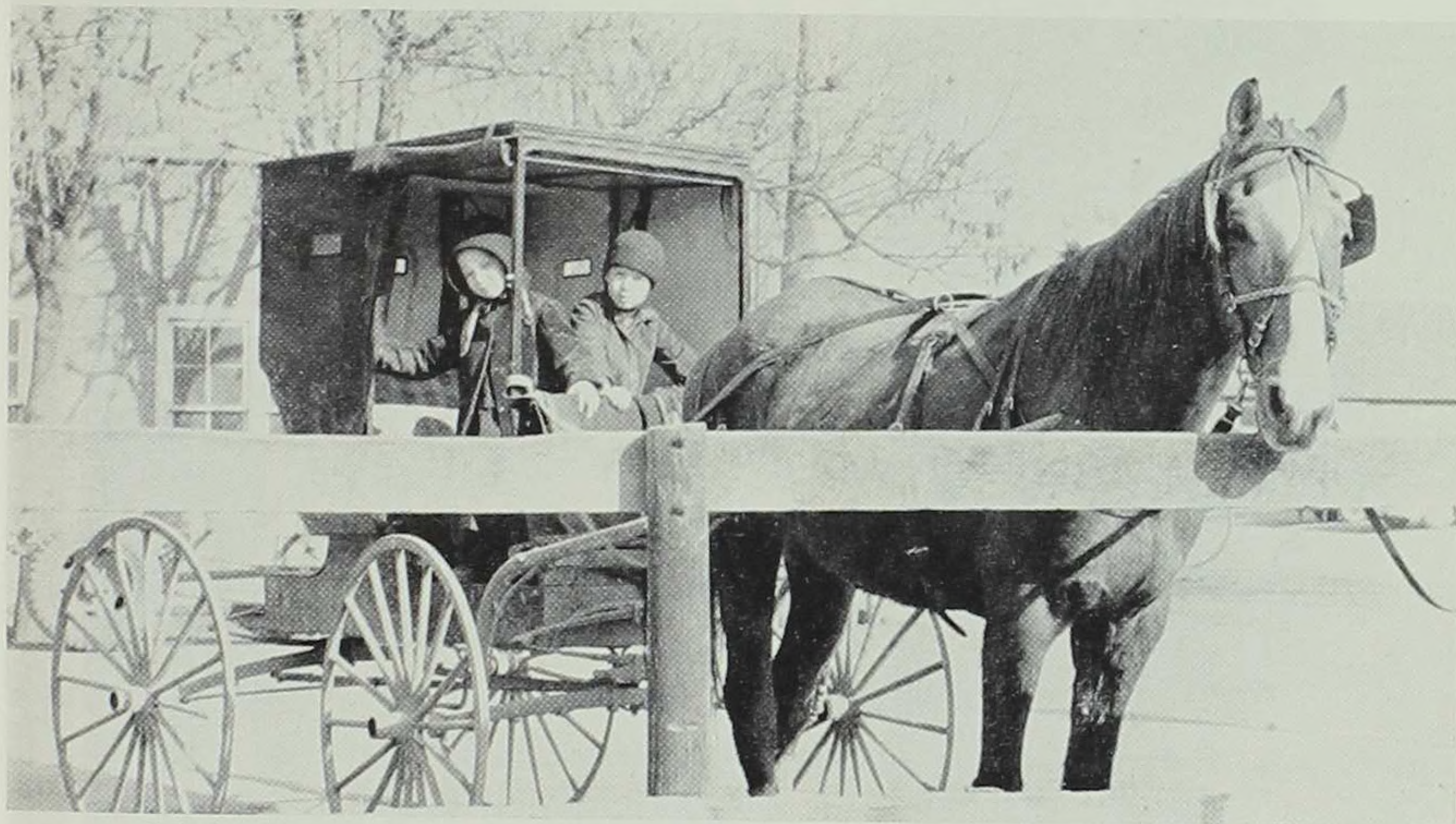


BISHOP and MRS. ELMER G. SWARTZENDRUBER
Upper Deer Creek Mennonite Church

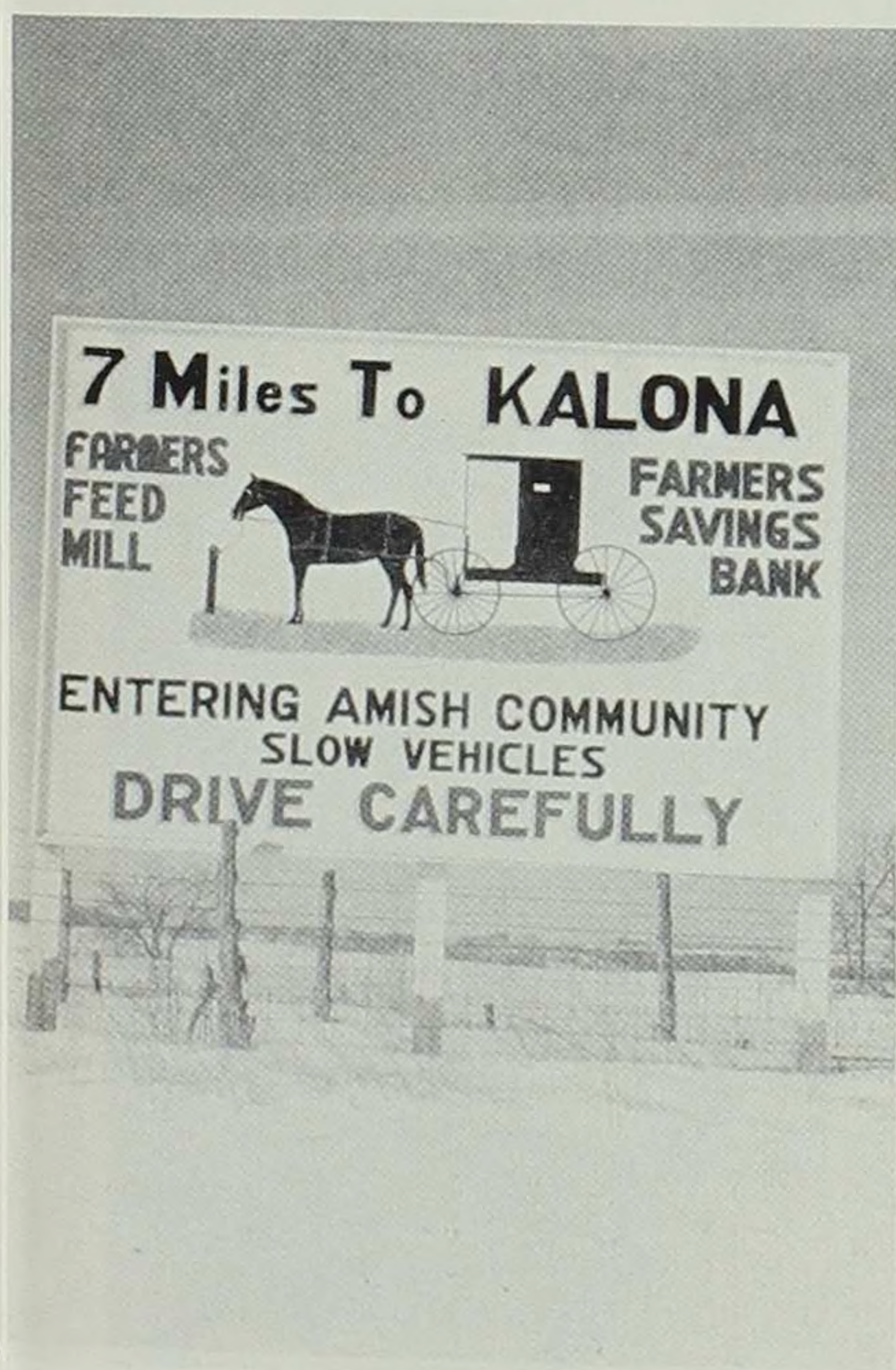
AMISH COSTUMES *ca.* 1950



From J. A. Hostetler, *Amish Life*.



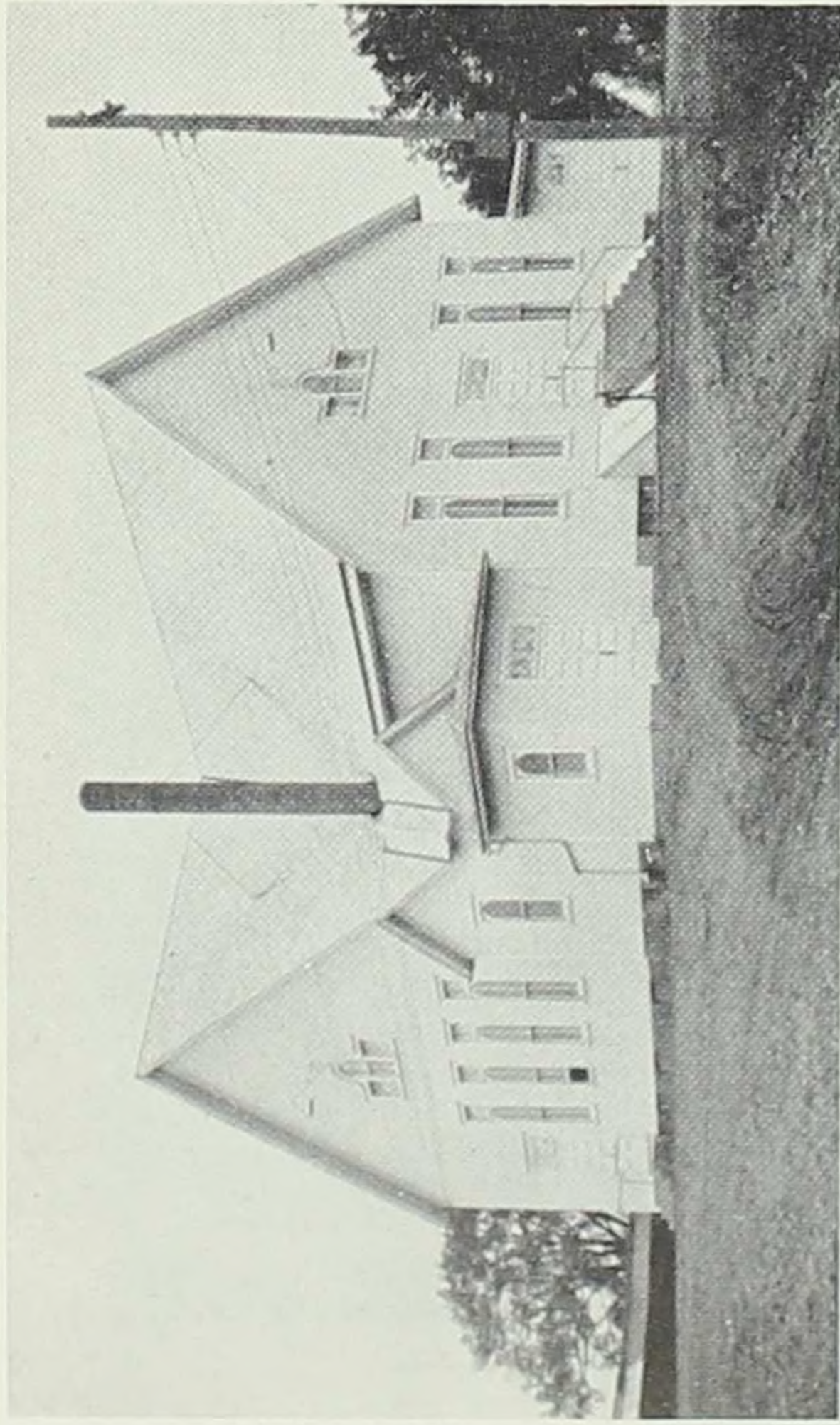
Amish buggy and children, Kalona, 1958.



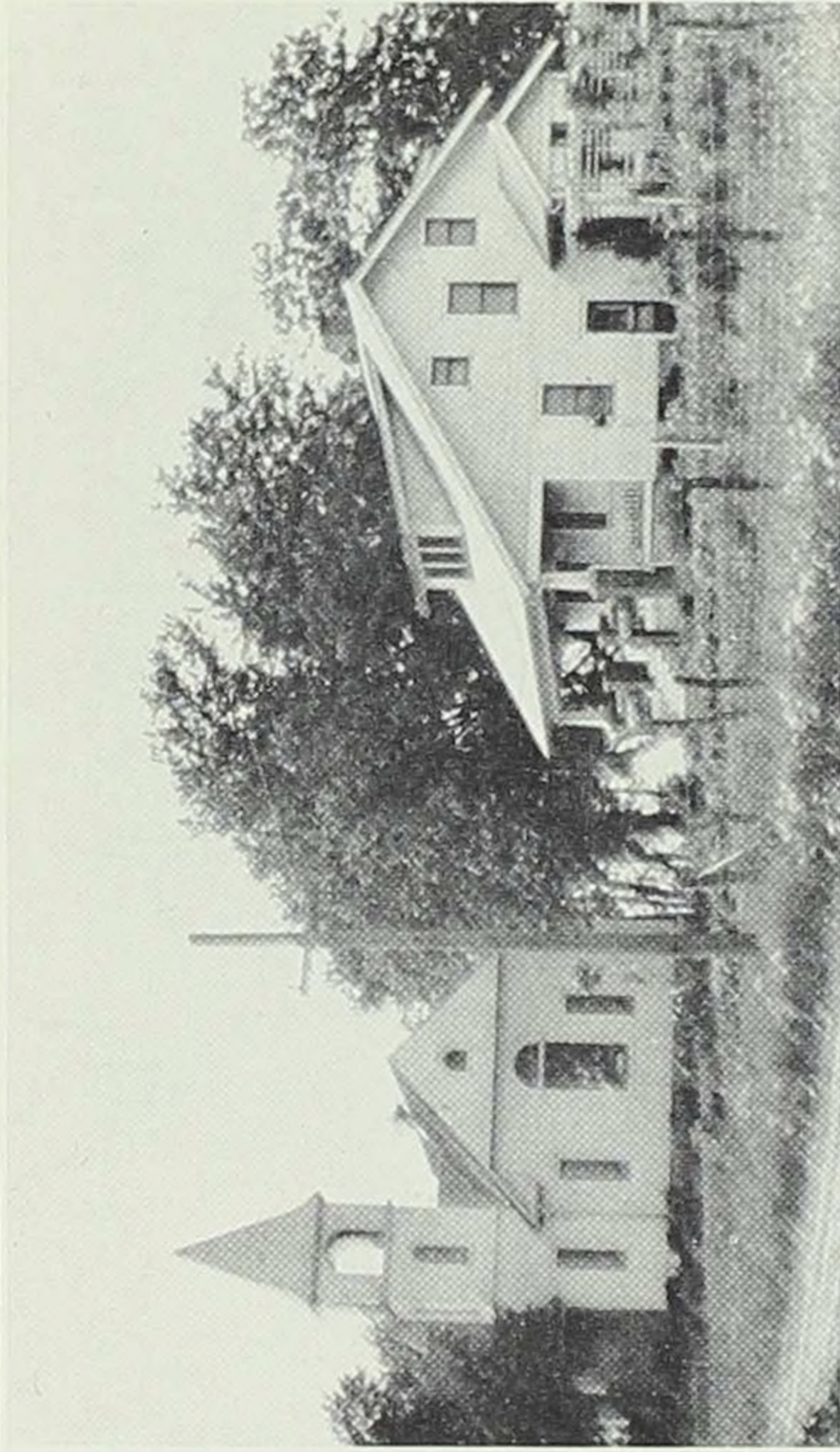
Road Sign on Highway 1 between Iowa City and Kalona.



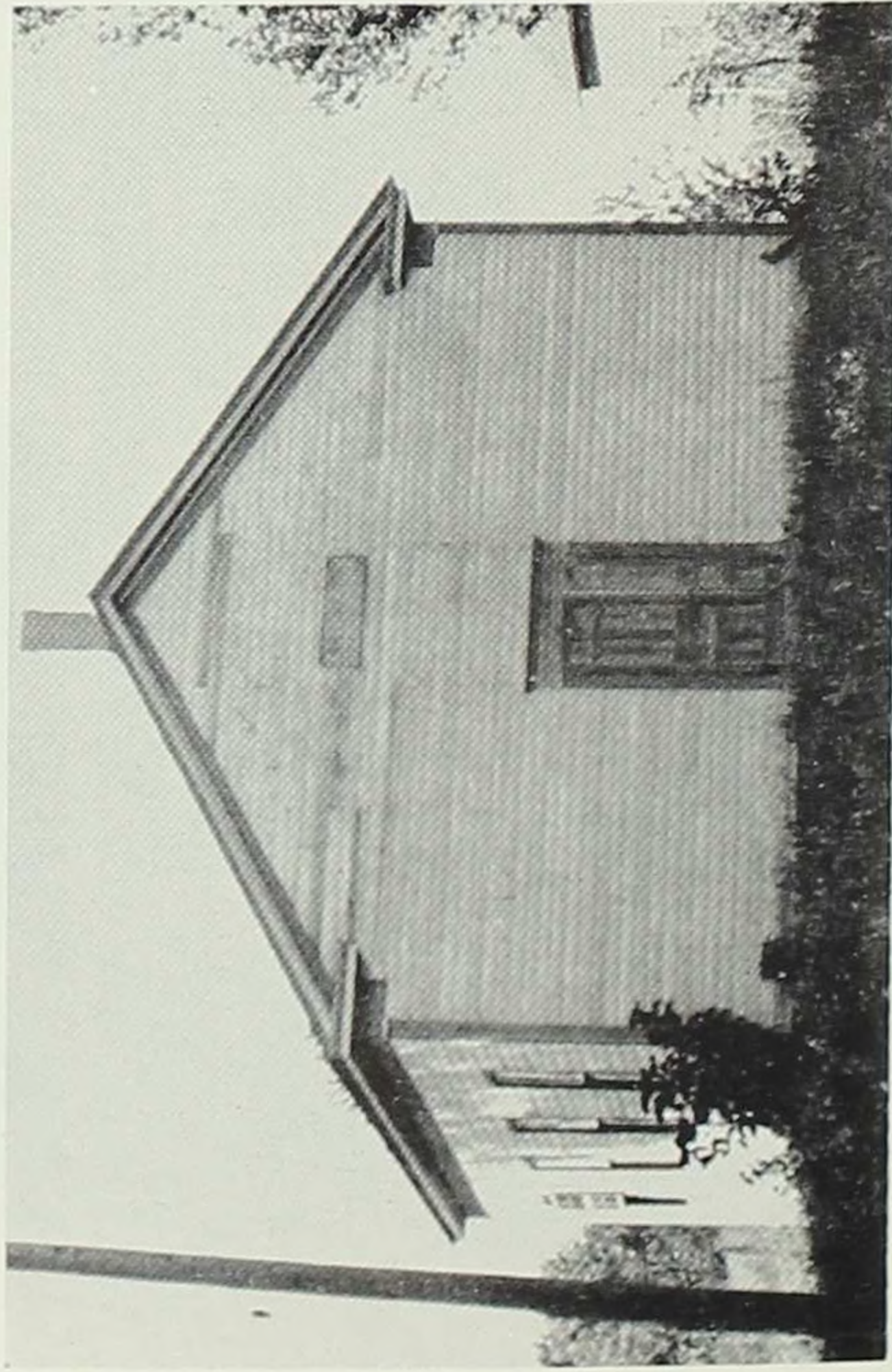
Dolls in authentic Amish children's costumes. Dressed by Mrs. Paul Snyder, Kalona.



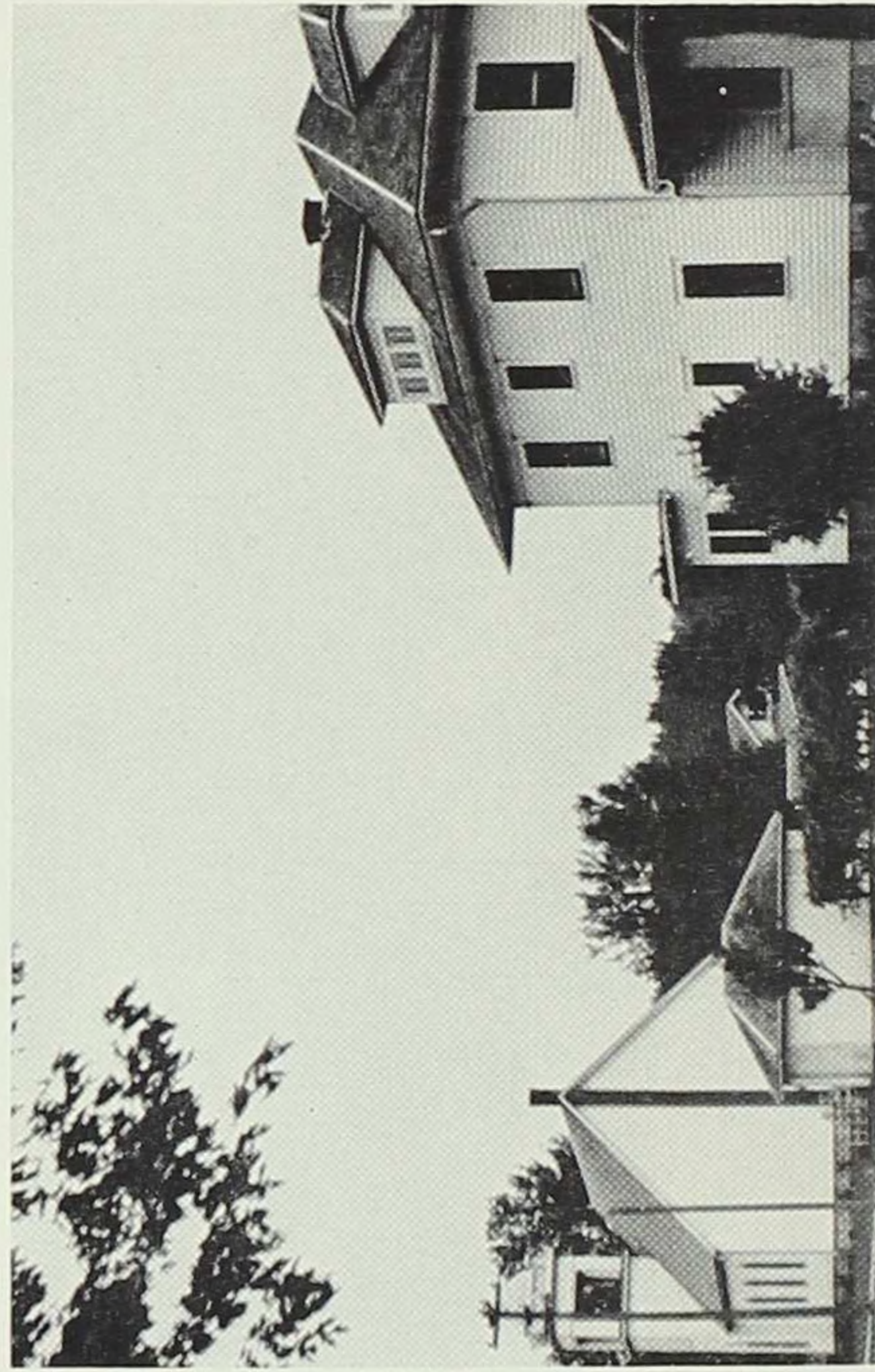
Sugar Creek Mennonite Church near Wayland.



Eicher Emmanuel Mennonite Church and parsonage near Wayland.



Abandoned West Point Mennonite Church in Lee County. Built—1863.



Zion Mennonite Church in Donnellson. Parsonage in foreground.

whatever else caught their fancy. More than a half century later the old settlers were still relating the incidents connected with Jim Jackson's raid.

For more than three-quarters of a century the Swartzendraver family was prominent in the life of the Pulaski Mennonite Church. Other well known names in the church community were Baughman, Ramseyer, Augspurger, Bachman, and Dieffenbach. In 1959 the church had 154 members, with Kenneth Shelly serving as its pastor. One of four General Conference Mennonite churches in southeastern Iowa, the Pulaski Mennonite Church met annually with the other three in fellowship occasions. Why this community has not grown as rapidly as the Henry and Johnson County settlements is not easily explained. The defection of 1866 is part of the answer. Later a contingent of Amish left the Pulaski community to establish a settlement at Goodland in Sherman County, Kansas, where they built a sod meeting house in 1889.

MELVIN GINGERICH