

“Suspicion of Disloyalty”

Silas Totten, Beleaguered University President, 1859–1862

by Anne Beiser Allen

“THE DAY was one of the dark days of November. The rain fell at intervals while the fog ran along on the ground obscuring the prospects on every side. What we could see was a wash of corn stubble and corn shocks at the side of the road. At last we reached the open uncultivated prairie the *beautiful* prairie so much praised by tourists. But its beauty had departed. Here and there were patches of dried grass, but the greater part had been lately run over by the prairie fires and was the very blackness of desolation. The leaden clouds the drizzling rain the foggy atmosphere bounding the vision and the blackened surface of the ground presented a scene of gloominess, the influence of which it was impossible to resist. That day the world looked dark before us. Our spirits were depressed and in that condition we entered Iowa City on the 20 November 1859.”

In these words, taken from his memoirs, the Rev. Dr. Silas Totten describes his arrival in Iowa City to assume the presidency of the State University of Iowa. The dreary aspect of that scene, with its overtones of foreboding, seems to have symbolized for him his entire subsequent relationship with the state of Iowa and its new university (today known as the University of Iowa).

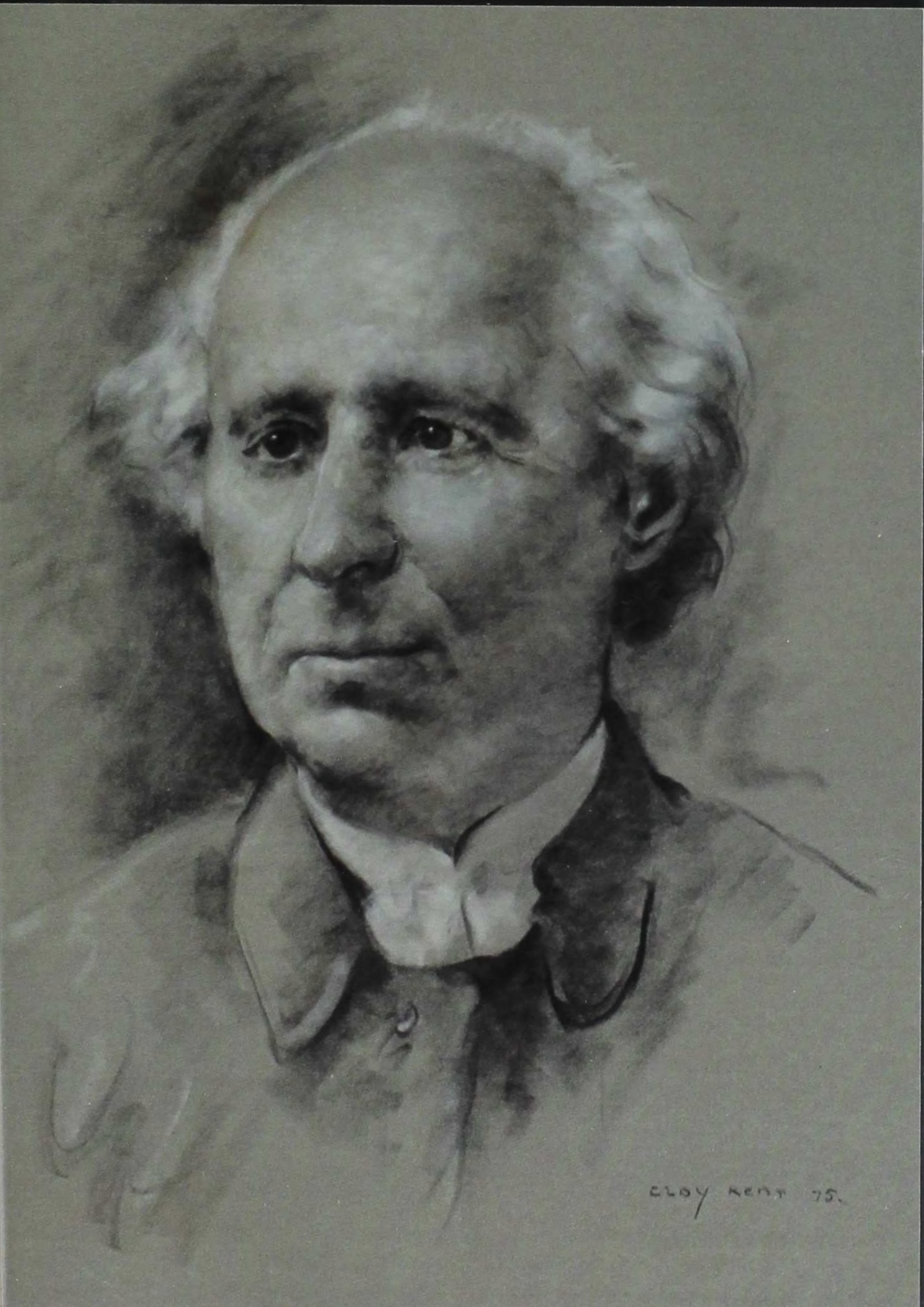
Provision for a state-funded university had

been made by Congress in 1840, two years after the Territory of Iowa had been established. Certain lands were reserved in 1846 to provide funding, and a board of trustees was appointed in 1847. Although Iowa City was originally designated as the site of the new university, various other sites were also proposed, and it was not until March 1855 that the first classes were held. The first president (or chancellor, as he was then designated) was a prominent law professor from Albany, New York, Amos Dean.

During the three years of Dean's tenure, a course of study had been developed, and a preparatory department and a normal school (for the training of teachers) were established. When in 1857 the state capital was transferred to Des Moines, the unfinished capitol in Iowa City was given to the university for classrooms and offices. In the spring of 1858, growing friction between Chancellor Dean and the Board of Trustees came to a head when Dean suggested closing the university for two years, until funding improved and a suitable means of screening prospective students' academic credentials could be devised. While Dean's complaints centered on the poor quality of

Right: Silas Totten, beleaguered president of the University of Iowa in the early 1860s. (Portrait by Cloy Kent, from an early photograph.)

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incoming students, and the resultant necessity of spending large amounts of money on the preparatory department (which he felt had no place in the university structure), the trustees objected to Dean's insistence on governing the university in absentia from his home in Albany. In August 1858, Dean was asked whether he intended to move to Iowa and "enter personally upon the duties of his office" when classes resumed in 1859. He refused. Therefore, at the February 1859 board meeting, trustee Maturin L. Fisher was instructed "to open a correspondence with a view to finding a suitable person" to take Dean's place.

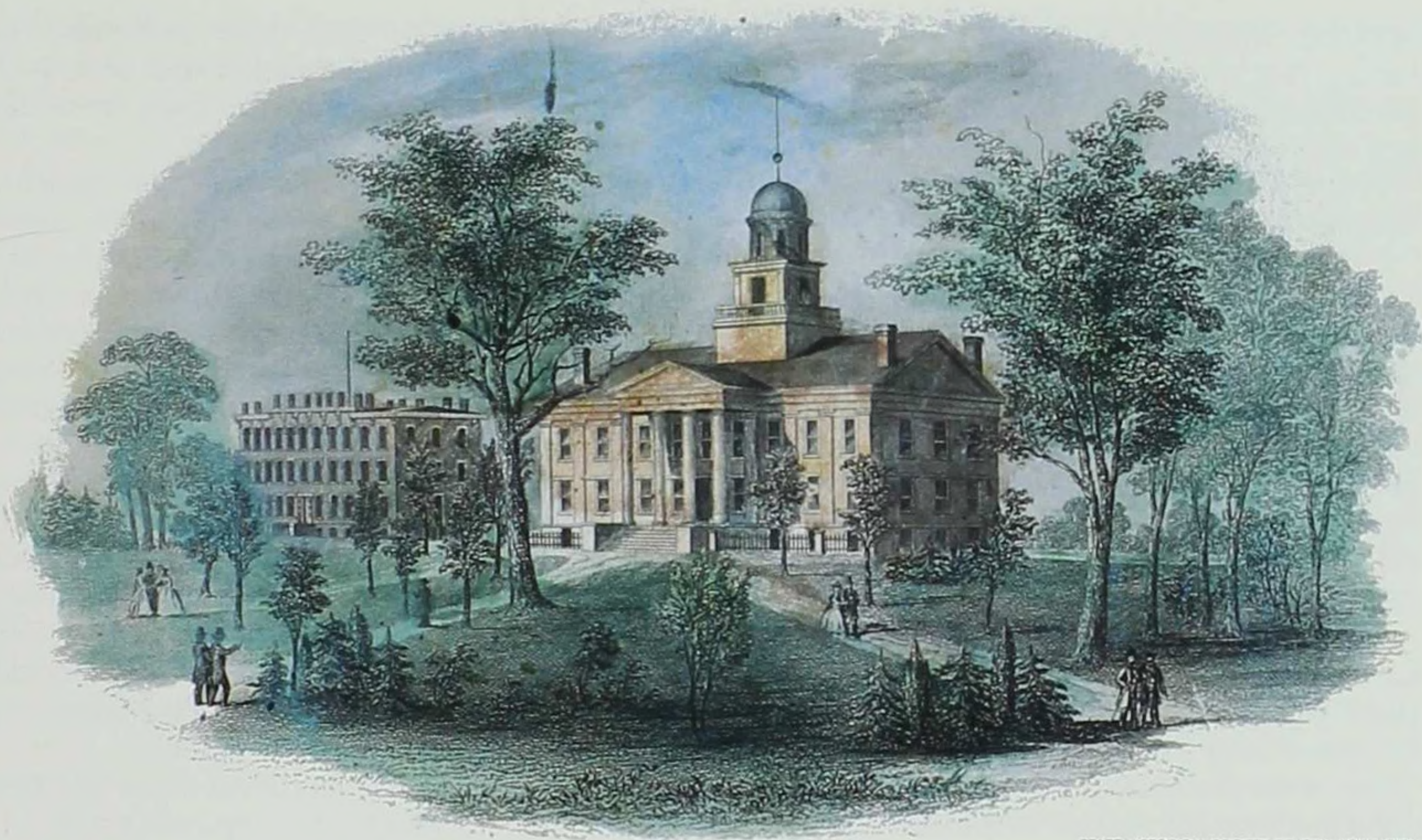
Fisher's choice fell upon the Rev. Dr. Silas Totten.

BORN ON MARCH 26, 1804, in Schoharie County, New York, Totten had taught with some distinction in eastern schools. The youngest of five sons of a pioneer family, he had originally intended to become a farmer, but when his leg was permanently injured in a farm accident, he turned to teaching. He left home at the age of nineteen, with only five dollars and his parents' blessings to sustain him, a humble beginning that he later felt had helped to teach him the true value of material possessions. Eventually, he earned enough (from carpentry work, teaching, and promoting a spinning machine invented by his brother) to put himself through Union College in Schenectady, New York, graduating with honor in 1830. After three years on the faculty at Union, he went to Hartford, Connecticut, to become professor of mathematics and natural philosophy at Washington College. He continued teaching there after being ordained a minister in the Episcopal church in 1836, and was awarded a doctorate in divinity from Union College in 1838.

Totten was senior professor at Washington College when he was elected its president in 1837; it was during his tenure that the college changed its name (in 1845) to Trinity College, by which it is known today. Although not officially connected to the Episcopal church, Trinity was, in fact, largely controlled by Episcopalians. During this period, the Episco-

pal church was sharply divided between those who sought to restore the elegant liturgies and ceremonials of the pre-Reformation church (the High Church party) and those (Low Churchmen) who regarded any compromise in matters of vestments, candles, or altar ornamentation as contrary to the church's Protestant tradition. Though Totten, whose religious journey had begun in the Dutch Reformed and Baptist traditions, tended toward the Low Church party, his strong aversion to religious extremism of any sort led him to attempt to steer a middle course in the controversy. This resulted, as often happens, in his being attacked by both sides, and in 1848 he left Trinity College, resigning his presidency.

The next few months were anxious ones for the Totten family. Totten had married Mary Isham in 1833, the same year that he began teaching at Trinity College. They had five children: Helen (born in 1835), Anna (1840), Richard (1842), Mary (1846) and Alfred (1848). To support his family, Totten worked for a time with the eccentric Episcopal bishop of Illinois, Philander Chase, helping him to found Jubilee College near Peoria. However, Totten found Bishop Chase too difficult to work with, and returned to the East to try to secure financial support for a school of his own in New York. His financial resources were running low when he was approached by Bishop John Johns (assistant to the Episcopal Bishop of Virginia) and invited to join the faculty of the College of William and Mary, of which Johns had just been elected president. Founded in 1693, this venerable college had fallen on hard times by 1848, due to dissension between the faculty, its governing board of visitors, and the townspeople, and to strong competition for students from other colleges in the area, particularly the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. (Founded by Thomas Jefferson, the University of Virginia was now enjoying the patronage of many of the socially prominent First Families of Virginia, from whose ranks William and Mary had previously drawn the majority of its student body.) During Totten's eleven years at William and Mary, the school began to recover, though it remained relatively small; its student body during this period ranged from 20 to 82, with a faculty of 6. (By comparison,



STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA (IOWA CITY)

This hand-tinted lithograph (1869) presents a romantic image of the University of Iowa a few years after Totten presided. Old Capitol is flanked by South Hall on the left. It is doubtful that the campus was this genteel; until the mid-1860s livestock, as well as students, cut across campus.

the University of Virginia had 645 students at this time, and the University of Richmond, 161. Harvard University had 361 students enrolled in 1856/57.)

AS A PRECONDITION of his employment by the College of William and Mary, Totten had been asked to provide a written statement of his views on the "peculiar institution" of slavery. In his memoirs, he summarizes his statement in this way: "I stated in explicit terms that I did not approve of the introduction of negro slavery. That it was a system begun in ignorance or disregard of human rights, and that nothing now remained but to conduct it in such a way as would tend to the best good of both master and servant. That I did not believe that any good could be done by the immediate abolition of slavery or that prospective measure could now be taken looking to emancipation in time to come, and that as a good citizen I should deem it my duty [to] use any influence I might pos-

sess to make the condition of the slave as good as the circumstances would allow."

While this rather moderate (for the times) position was acceptable to the southern college's governing board in 1848, Totten's northern origin eventually brought him under suspicion by the Virginia press, and in 1853 the *Richmond Examiner* accused him of harboring abolitionist opinions. His students rallied to his support, passing a resolution and writing to the newspaper to deny the accusation. Bishop Johns had led Totten to believe, when he was hired, that he would recommend Totten as his successor when he stepped down from the presidency of the college in 1854. It was clear, however, that public opinion would not support the appointment of a northerner like Totten, and he was passed over in favor of Professor Benjamin S. Ewell, a scion of an old Virginia family.

After sustaining this disappointment, Totten continued to teach at the college, but with growing dissatisfaction. When a fire destroyed the college's main building in early 1859, Totten's proposals for its replacement were

rejected, which seems to have reinforced his feeling that his opinions were not respected by his colleagues. He undertook the task of replacing the college's library, which had been destroyed by the fire, but he also began to seek another post elsewhere.

CAREER dissatisfaction was only one factor in Totten's decision to leave the state of Virginia. The climate in Williamsburg was not considered healthy; during their years there, the Tottens spent their summers either in the North or in the mountains to escape the fevers that were prevalent in the coastal region. (In fact, Totten was not initially attracted to the idea of moving to Virginia for this reason; "If I had not been so poor," he says in his memoirs, "I would have hesitated long before accepting the office.") There were financial considerations as well; in 1859 the board of visitors at William and Mary voted to reduce tuition fees, from which a portion of faculty salaries were drawn. Totten felt he could no longer support his family of seven at this level of pay. The increasing tensions of the times played their part as well; civil war seemed increasingly likely, and Totten was concerned for his family's safety.

In 1858, Totten had received a letter from Chancellor Amos Dean, inviting him to teach in Iowa, and although at the time he had declined, the notion of Iowa as an alternative to Virginia was becoming increasingly attractive. In the spring of 1859, he wrote to Iowa's Episcopal bishop Henry Lee, inquiring whether there might be a church post available in his diocese. Bishop Lee replied that there was a missionary station vacant in Iowa City, and that there were still professorships available at the new university there. He suggested that Totten might like to visit Iowa City to look the situation over.

In July 1859, Totten spent a week in Iowa City, investigating the situation at the university and talking with the vestry of the Episcopal congregation (who were so eager for a rector that they offered him the extravagant salary of \$1000 per year, twice their available funds). Learning that the university presidency was open, Totten applied for that post, as well as for

a professorship. He then returned to Williamsburg, having decided that no matter what position he was offered in Iowa, he would accept it.

His decision was based in large part upon his concern for his family's welfare. In 1845, one of his daughters had been seriously injured in a train accident, and throughout his journals Totten makes frequent reference to the health of his children, which was always of great concern to him. Their education was also important to him; Helen and Anna had been sent away to school in Schoharie, New York, while the family lived in Connecticut. Richard, who had attended the College of William and Mary from 1857 to 1859, could continue his studies at the University of Iowa, where Mary (who had taught herself to read at the age of three) could also be enrolled. Alfred would take classes in the university's preparatory school.

Despite Iowa's obvious advantages, the Totten family left Williamsburg on August 10, 1859, for their customary summer vacation in upstate New York "with sad hearts," knowing that they would not return to Virginia. (With characteristic caution, however, Totten did not notify the William and Mary administration that he was resigning until October, when he felt reasonably sure that the Iowa plan was going to succeed.)

AT ITS OCTOBER 25, 1859, meeting, the University of Iowa's board of trustees selected Totten from a field of three candidates (the other two were a Dr. Lillie and a Dr. Bushnell). The new president was directed to prepare a plan of organization for the university and hire the appropriate professors (one of whom, it was stipulated, should be Theodore Parvin, a former trustee who had been serving as curator since the university had suspended classes in 1858). Totten was to go to Des Moines in January 1860 to address the legislature, explaining his educational philosophy and describing his general plans for the university. His annual salary of \$2000 would not begin until June 1860, at which time he would officially enter upon his duties; until then he would be reimbursed for any expenses he incurred on the university's

behalf, but he would have to support his family from his own resources. To fill in the gap, Totten accepted the rectorship of Trinity parish on an interim basis.

The university that Totten was to head had been closed now for nearly two years. Most of the former faculty had left the Iowa City area. Former trustee Parvin, as curator and librarian, had taken charge of the university's small library and geological "cabinet" (a collection of rocks and other items for use in the natural science courses). The physical plant consisted of the former capitol (still in need of a good deal of work) and the roughed-in structure of a three-story boarding hall (South Hall) under construction just south of the old capitol. The normal school, which had continued to hold classes in the old capitol, was beginning its second full year; it had added a model (primary) school, to allow its students some practical experience in teaching.

Totten worked hard during the next several months. He planned to organize the university into six departments, on a design similar to that used at William and Mary; students could either follow a preset classical curriculum (such as Chancellor Dean had established), or select a course of study in one of the various departments, each of which could determine its own courses and qualifications for admission (in effect, an elective system, which was something of an innovation in the realm of higher education at the time). There was a heavy stress on classical subjects, which the eastern educational establishment (heavily influenced by the clergy) felt were an essential component

of higher education, but modern sciences were also included.

When he presented his plan in Des Moines, Totten was gratified by the reception it received from the legislators. He felt he would have strong support from Governor Samuel Kirkwood, who mentioned the university favorably in his January 11, 1860, inaugural address. There were, however, a few disquieting moments during Totten's January sojourn in Des Moines; some legislators took him aside during his free time to quiz him on his views of slavery and conditions in the state of Virginia. They refused to believe him when he assured them that, contrary to rumors they had read in newspapers, there had been no recent slave insurrections in Virginia.

Totten later observed that he had made a mistake in returning to Iowa City before the entire legislature had passed the bill he had recommended, which through a series of mishaps was delayed until after the session ended. However, the legislature did vote enough



Totten's faculty included (left) Theodore Parvin, (below from left) Nathan Leonard, Oliver Spencer, and D. Franklin Wells. Totten's appraisal of his colleagues ranged from excellent to eccentric to conceited.



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money to complete the necessary repairs to the old capitol and to place a roof on the new dormitory building before winter.

ON SEPTEMBER 19, 1860, classes were resumed. At first, there were only nine students (of whom Totten remarked that only his son Richard, who had completed two years at William and Mary, was properly qualified). The six departments were headed by five professors: Totten himself taught moral and intellectual philosophy and belles lettres, as well as history and political economy, for which he had not been able to find a professor. The mathematics department was headed by Nathan R. Leonard, former president of Yellow Springs College in Kossuth (a now-abandoned town near Mediapolis in Des Moines County). Ancient languages was first headed by Dr. James Lillie, a Scottish-born homeopathic physician, and chemistry and natural philosophy by Oliver Spencer, a Methodist minister and former president of the Xenia Female Academy in Xenia, Ohio; before the year ended, however, Lillie and Spencer exchanged chairs. Theodore Parvin headed the natural history department. One professor later recalled, "We were strangers to each other, and with the exception of Professor Parvin, were strangers to the people of Iowa City. Two of us were beyond the meridian of life, one about 40, the other two below thirty. All, save the eldest, Dr. Lillie, had more or less experience in college work."

Totten's own assessment of his staff was lukewarm at best; Leonard he thought "excellent," but Spencer he described as a "writer" who knew little of either of the subjects he had been hired to teach. Lillie he considered "eccentric" and better qualified in ancient languages than in chemistry, but more qualified in the latter than Spencer; and Parvin (whom he had had no choice in hiring) he described spitefully as "a small man, physically, intellectually and morally" who knew little of science and operated on tact, charm, and intrigue. D. Franklin Wells, principal of the normal school since it opened in 1856, Totten considered "a half-educated man trained in the nor-

mal school of the state of New York [who] had learned just enough to be conceited." But this was not Harvard, nor even William and Mary; a fledgling university in a frontier state had to make the most of the personnel available.

THINGS BEGAN well enough. With a few minor adjustments to the entrance requirements, the student body of the academic departments was increased to twenty-one (three of whom were women). It was decided to reopen the preparatory department in January 1861 (fortunately, E. M. Guffin, who had directed the preparatory department from 1855 to 1858, was still available, and willing to resume that position). This added 31 more students, and with the 120 students in the normal school, by the end of the spring term the university could claim a grand total of 172 students, half of them women. In 1861/62 enrollment rose to 254, and continued to climb steadily from that point.

Although his primary profession was that of an educator, Totten did not neglect his religious duties as an ordained minister. In June 1860, the university's board of trustees ruled that no member of the university faculty should be permitted to exercise his profession for pay. Totten agreed with this rule, which was intended to prevent members of the learned professions (including ministers, physicians, and lawyers) from neglecting their teaching duties. He resigned his rectorship of Trinity parish, although he continued to serve the church without pay through the winter of 1861, until they found a new rector. He frequently preached at the church, as well as conducting (in turn with his colleagues) Sunday chapel services for the students at the university. One of these sermons, preached in January 1861 and reported in the local press, urged a peaceful settlement of the sectional quarrels then disturbing the nation.

It was his deep moral conviction that war was not an appropriate means of settling political questions that eventually forced Totten to resign from the university. With the fall of Fort Sumter in April 1861, war fever swept the nation, and Iowa quickly became a bastion of Union sentiment. While it was undoubtedly a



HARPER'S WEEKLY (FEBRUARY 28, 1863)

Pro-South Copperheads threaten the Union in an 1863 political cartoon. In Virginia in the 1850s and Iowa in the 1860s, Silas Totten fell victim to the growing conflict between the North and the South.

source of great satisfaction to Totten when the College of William and Mary granted him an honorary doctorate of law in 1861, his eleven years in Virginia had become a political embarrassment. Although he did not make an issue of his pacifist views, his clear lack of enthusiasm for the war led to suggestions in Iowa City that he secretly supported the rebel cause.

The Civil War was noticeably affecting the university population. Although overall enrollment at the university was growing, the number of male students began to fall significantly as young men enlisted in the army. In 1860/61, the ratio of male to female students was 86 to 86; in 1861/62, it was 118 to 136; in 1862/63 it had dropped to 101 to 187.

For some students still enrolled, the focus shifted from academics to war. Students gathered in the Athenaeum building at Clinton and Market streets "for war exercises"; several of them volunteered in May 1861 with Company B of the First Iowa Regiment; and by the war's end some 124 young men had enlisted directly from the university. In October 1861 it was suggested that the university create a professorship in military tactics and civil and mili-

tary engineering (although due to lack of funds this suggestion was not adopted). Vigorous debates were held under the aegis of the Zetagathian Society (a student organization of which Totten's nineteen-year-old son Richard was a founding member) on such subjects as "Resolved, That our present national difficulties can never effectually be settled by compromise" and "Resolved, That it is wrong to condemn and oppose acts of the president which have a tendency to close the war."

The war had a financial effect on the university as well. The high cost of raising and equipping military regiments meant that it was necessary for the state to cut back expenditures elsewhere. Funds for all aspects of university administration were shrinking and often delayed. Totten's salary was cut from \$2000 to \$1500 and then to \$1200 (only slightly higher than the \$1000 salary paid an ordinary professor). Although he was given permission to share with the other professors in an equal division of tuition fees (which had also been lowered, from \$4 per course ticket to \$2), Totten was distressed. On his departure from the College of William and Mary, he had observed

that he could not support his family on a salary of \$1300; once again, he felt himself to be tottering on the brink of financial disaster.

TOTTEN WAS also increasingly concerned about the situation with regard to his older son. While some sources state that Richard Totten was one of the young men expelled from the Zetagathian Society in early 1862 for "copperhead" (or pro-South) sympathies, subsequently forming a new society of southern-sympathizers called the Ciceronian Society, there is little hard evidence to support this allegation. Zetagathian Society records list Richard Totten as president for the spring semester of 1862, and a society report dated September 26, 1862, states that "Mr. Totten, as chairman of a committee to obtain a new Hall for the society, reported that he had obtained one on the following conditions, viz: All furniture, books, etc., in the room to be left undisturbed, and *no filthy habits to be allowed.*" These references seem to suggest that Richard Totten was still a member in good standing in the fall of 1862.

Nevertheless, Richard Totten was regarded with suspicion by those who felt that every able-bodied Iowa youth ought to be bearing arms. On an evening in early August 1862, a rally was held at University Square (now known as the Pentacrest), at which speeches were made by such prominent figures as Governor Samuel Kirkwood, standard-bearer of the Iowa Republican party. In his memoirs, Totten recounts that a few days later when Richard was downtown, he was asked if he intended to enlist, and when the young man gave an evasive answer, the rumor spread that he had said "only a d—d fool" would enlist. The town marshall advised him to slip quietly away from the business district, but after he did so, a crowd of drunken revelers went to his home to look for him.

In a letter, sixteen-year-old Mary Totten describes what happened next: "It was a moonlight evening [and] my Sister and I sat down in the parlor . . . about ten o'clock Alfred [Totten's younger son, then fourteen] came running in from the gate and locking the door behind him called for a light. He then loaded

his guns and meanwhile told us that there was a mob approaching the house coming after Richard. R. had gone away and had escaped them, but they not knowing it were running toward the house with frightful shouts, drunk evidently, and drink-crazy — suddenly they stopped — when within about twenty feet of the gate — for the space of fifteen or twenty minutes they remained standing there, occasionally surging about as if about to press on anew. As near as I could judge, peeping through the blinds, there were about two hundred at the least. We were much frightened. Sister, who had been sick most of the day, was seized with a nervous trembling, which she could not control. . . . And now as I looked from the window the crowd with shouts and cries of a different nature was pouring off towards the town, leaving behind them my Mother, of whose presence among them we had not before been aware. . . . We ran out to her and . . . obtained [the following] account . . . Richard had found [Mother] and Father at a friend's and on telling them in what a situation he was the three started for home. They reached the outer gate just as the mob was coming. . . . Sending the others back my Mother came on alone. Stepping in front of the crowd, she said, waving her hand, 'Stop here! come no farther! what is your business here? what do you want?' The foremost, a burly looking Irishman with a large hammer in his hand, replied with an oath, 'We're lookin' for a secessionist, one Totten.' 'There is no such person here,' said she. 'that is my name and all of *my* family are loyal people. you've come to the wrong place, there's no secessionist here.' Then she flattered them a little, shook hands with one of them, ridiculed them and finally scared them with hints of firearms and of determined resistance & legal punishment. 'The Governor'll pardon us,' said one. 'Yes, but can the Governor bring you to life again after you're shot dead?' After a few more words — some well disposed person said, 'Come away, boys, let's leave the lone woman to herself. Hurrah for a treat!' And so they went away. When they reached the corner they set up a shout, 'Here he is — we've got him.' We thought then that R. was in their hands — that was a mistake — it was Father whom they had

met. Their drunken leader cried out, 'Here's Mister Totten, he's a good Union man.' 'Yes,' said Pa. 'Hurrah for the Union.' With that they gave three cheers for the Union — and shortly afterwards scattered. R. did not return home till the morning."

"I had known that people called me secessionist but I did not regard it," Totten later recalled. "Now the rabble had caught it and made it dangerous."

A FEW DAYS LATER, when the board of trustees convened for its August meeting, Totten had made his decision. He knew that he had lost the support of Governor Kirkwood, who preferred to have a university president whose views were more in line with the Republican administration's policies. There had been recent changes in the board's membership; most of the trustees were now strong supporters of the Republican party, and one of them had indicated to Totten that the recent "clamor" against him, whether based on truth or not, made it expedient for Totten to resign, for the good of the university. Totten himself believed — though there is no indication that he was correct — that there was a plot afoot among the Methodists on the board to replace him with Professor Oliver Spencer, a Methodist minister and outspoken supporter of the war effort.

Concerned for his family's welfare, financially insecure, and convinced that he had lost the confidence of the majority of the board of trustees, Totten on August 23, 1862, submitted his resignation. "Gentlemen," he wrote, "It appears that the condition of the funds of the University is such that it becomes necessary to reduce its expenditures. For this reason, and for private reasons not necessary to mention here I hereby tender to the Board of Trustees my resignation of the office of President of the State University of Iowa. I am gentlemen with great respect Your Obedient Servant, Silas Totten."

The board accepted his resignation, voting "unanimously to express their high appreciation of the diligence and ability with which Dr. Totten has discharged the duties of his Office during his brief connection with our

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Totten's letter of resignation referred to "private reasons not necessary to mention here." He submitted the letter soon after a local mob questioned the Totten family's loyalty to the Union.

institution and their regret at the existence of circumstances which constrain him to tender his resignation." They voted to grant Richard Totten the degree of bachelor of arts (upon application of Silas Totten and recommendation of the faculty). Then they elected the Rev. Oliver Spencer president of the university.

By resigning his university position, Totten had solved one of his problems, but the others remained. He needed to find another job, quickly, as he had not yet received his salary for the year. (A month later he would finally receive the \$1100 owed to him, plus \$56 for "expenditures made about the premises occupied by him" and \$2 for "cutting down weeds.") Also Totten was still concerned about Richard's future. There were rumors that a draft was imminent, and Totten (like many another father in his position) worried that his son might not be "constitutionally fit to go to the camp." He wrote to Bishop Lee, asking if there were any parishes vacant in the diocese. Lee replied that the best he could do was to arrange for Totten to serve as delegate to the

church's national convention in New York, and afterwards to engage in a fund-raising campaign for Griswold College in Davenport, which had closed due to lack of funds. Totten was not sanguine about his ability to raise the amount of money necessary, but he agreed to try; as the bishop's agent, he was entitled to a percentage of the funds raised as his fee. He arranged for his family to move to Davenport, presumably to escape further harassment, and then he boarded the train for the convention in New York. Meanwhile, he began writing letters to various acquaintances, inquiring about a possible teaching position for Richard — preferably in Canada. (After the war, Richard Totten would follow his father into the Episcopal ministry, attending seminary at Berkeley Divinity School in Middletown, Connecticut.)

TOTTEN'S attitude toward the war was fairly representative of that of many of the Episcopal clergy. Although Bishop Leonidas Polk was serving as a Confederate general, most of his fellow bishops felt, with Totten, that "the church ought not to meddle with the affairs of this world, not at least in its organized capacity." The specter of a divided church was deeply disturbing to those charged with its supervision. The Rev. Phillips Brooks, then a young minister, wrote of the 1862 convention, "it was ludicrous, if not sad, to see those old gentlemen sitting there for fourteen days, trying to make out whether there was a war going on or not, and whether if there was it would be safe for them to say so." The convention eventually passed three resolutions on the matter, which in effect stated, first, that the church should respect the civil authority and continue to offer prayers for the government; second, that while not condemning those who supported the rebellion, the church regretted the discord which their rebellion had brought about; and third, that the church would pray for a "speedy and complete success" of the war, and a "restoration of our beloved Union." (This cautious attitude served its purpose; the Episcopal church was one of the few major Protestant denominations that did not split into northern and southern factions — divisions that have carried over well into the latter part of the twentieth century.)

The convention over, Totten applied himself to fund-raising for Griswold College, and while he "found the business exceedingly disagreeable," he succeeded by March 1863 in raising the stipulated amount. He returned home by way of Decatur, Illinois, and in September he and his family settled in that city, where Totten accepted a call as rector of St. John's Church. There he is said to have also established a school for young women, assisted by his wife and two older daughters, which was moderately successful.

Three years later, the family moved to Lexington, Kentucky, where under the auspices of the Diocese of Kentucky he opened another school for young women, Christ Church Seminary, which would operate successfully until 1884. During this period, Totten also served the Diocese of Kentucky as a missionary-at-large, conducting services at various locations around the state. It was on such a journey, in October 1873, that he suddenly became ill. Although he reached the parish to which he was headed, he was unable to officiate. He died on the 7th of October.

SILAS TOTTEN was a man whose fate it was to never be properly appreciated for the diligence and capabilities he brought to the positions he held — a fact of which he was himself all too aware. His memoirs, written with a clear eye for detail and for the unexpected humor sometimes to be found in a situation, are filled also with the bitter complaints of one who time and again found his best efforts rejected by those whom he tried to serve. His dedication to the principle of compromise does not seem to have carried over into his dealings with people; a fellow clergyman who knew him well said, "With an intellect as cold and as clear as an icicle, there was yet a soul within [Totten], which I verily believe, would have taken him to the block, or to the stake, in witness of the truth of his convictions." Yet he was not a dour personality; during that stress-filled spring of 1861, when young male students spent more nights practicing their military drill than their Latin verbs, they could often cajole "good old Dr. Totten" into telling stories in class instead of quizzing them on their studies.

Totten's educational philosophy, which he explained in his plan for the University of Iowa and in other writings, contains many elements with which modern educators would agree: "The ability to read," he contended, "is the key with which [a person] may unlock the storehouse of knowledge." He supported universal access to education: "I would no more turn a youth out of College for poverty of intellect than for poverty of purse. Let him have an opportunity to make the most of the talent which he possesses, whether it be great or small." He identified three stages of education: reception, cultivation, and acquisition; the state, he contended, has a particularly strong interest in the first, in which general knowledge is spread through the common school, and the third, in which the bounds of knowledge are extended through original research in the university setting.

He was a firm advocate of formal education for women, preferably in a coeducational setting. "The sexes," he wrote, "are a mutual restraint upon each other in the family and in society generally and it would be strange if their association in the same school under proper restrictions would be injurious." He felt that corporal punishment in a school was ineffective; results came, he said, not from the severity of the punishment but the firmness, kindness, and consistency with which it was administered. Although he was a minister himself, he believed that a university "is for all religious denominations [and] can therefore teach the creed of none."

Totten published two books, *A New Introduction to the Science of Algebra for Use in Colleges and Academies* (1836) and *The Anal-*

ogy of Truth, in Four Discourses: Together with a Discourse on the Connection between Practical Piety and Sound Doctrine (1848). He also produced occasional pamphlets on religious and educational themes.

BECAUSE TOTTEN was not, as his eulogist the Rev. J. S. Shipman noted, "a man of salient points [or] showy peculiarities," historians have tended to dismiss him as a weak administrator, a man who was not up to the challenges he faced. Yet, as one writer remarks of Totten's years at Trinity College, "in view of the sweeping changes" that took place at the school during his tenure, "and assuming that the changes were for the better, the Totten Administration must be regarded as one of the most dynamic decades in the College's history. And it would be hard to believe that all of this progress was made in spite of President Totten. Certainly some of it must have been *because* of him."

The same judgment may be made of his influence on the University of Iowa. Although his presidency lasted only two years, he succeeded where Amos Dean had failed in placing the school on a viable footing. His departmental organization, though it was abandoned under the pressure of rising enrollments in 1865, is not too different in concept from the modern university format. He established a solid framework upon which the university has continued to develop. To dismiss him, as many writers seem to do, as a mere time-server with dubious political credentials, would be unfair to the memory of a man who could legitimately claim to have been one of the founders of the University of Iowa. □

NOTE ON SOURCES

The phrase "suspicion of disloyalty," quoted in the title, appears in Mary Totten's letter describing the mob in August 1862.

Primary sources consulted include the Silas Totten Papers (University Archives, Swem Library, College of William and Mary); University of Iowa catalogs, Zetagathian Society records, and minutes of the University of Iowa Board of Trustees (University of Iowa Archives, Iowa City); and material provided by Robert M. Chapman, a descendant of Silas Totten. Other sources include Thomas H. Benton, *1867 Commencement Address* (Davenport, IA, 1877); Vernon Carstensen, "The State University of Iowa: The Collegiate Department from Its Beginning to 1878" (University of Iowa diss., 1936); Anne W. Chapman, "The College of William and

Mary, 1849-1859: The Memoirs of Silas Totten" (The College of William and Mary thesis, 1978); Josiah Pickard, *Historical Sketch of the State University of Iowa* (reprinted from the *Annals of Iowa*, April 1899); J. S. Shipman, *In Memoriam: An Address Delivered in Christ Church, Lexington, Kentucky, Sunday Morning, October 12, 1873* (Lexington, KY, 1873); Theodore Waner, *History of the Zetagathian Society of the State University of Iowa* (Iowa City, 1911); Samuel Watson, "Silas Totten, DD, LLD," from *Iowa Historical Record* (Oct. 1895); Glenn Weaver, *The History of Trinity College* (Hartford, CT, 1967); and various other documents and sources regarding the early history of the University of Iowa. An annotated copy of this manuscript is held in the *Palimpsest* production files in Iowa City.