The PALIMPSEST

Volume 73, Number 1 IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE Spring 1992 $4.50

Inside —

DES MOINES REGISTER (APRIL 14, 1940)

To celebrate the Iowa Arts Council's twenty-fifth anniversary, we continue to explore the arts in Iowa's history. Inside, discover artist Lowell Houser's glass murals for the Bankers Life building in Des Moines, built in 1940.

The Meaning of the Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest (*PAL´/imp/sest*) 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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COVER: Friendly Lucas, the wife of Iowa Territorial Governor Robert Lucas, is profiled in this *Palimpsest*. Little has ever been written about Friendly Lucas, and this article presents a slice of her world. The photo, by Chuck Greiner, shows artifacts from the Lucas family or relatives. The porcelain fruit bowl, made in France, belonged to Friendly and Robert. Son Edward's children are pictured in the daguerreotype. Below the family Bible is a marble doorstop, carved with the name of daughter Mary. The red silk shawl belonged to daughter-in-law Phoebe Clark Lucas; the tortoise shell calling card case with mother-of-pearl inlay, to Phoebe's sister, Jane Clark Kirkwood.

The

PALIMPSEST

IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

Ginalie Swaim, Editor

VOLUME 73, NUMBER 1 SPRING 1992

To our readers: Thanks to all of you who have sent in your thoughts about the magazine's name. We appreciate your views and hope to share them in a future issue.

—The Editor

Great Names and Rattling Skeletons

A CAUTIONARY TALE

by Richard Acton

IN HIS 1895 "Inaugural Lecture on the Study of History," the British historian Lord Acton — my great-grandfather — said: "Guard against the prestige of great names; never be surprised by the crumbling of an idol or the disclosure of a skeleton." When researching Iowa history, I did not dream that the first session of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Iowa in 1838 would be an excellent illustration of his warning.

I had become interested in Iowa's pioneer lawyers and wanted to learn about the first meeting of the territorial supreme court. I did not think that this research would be particularly difficult or particularly exciting. In the event, I found myself in an enthralling maze. At length I arrived at answers to my original questions, only to discover that fascinating further questions arose about supreme court cases throughout the territorial period.

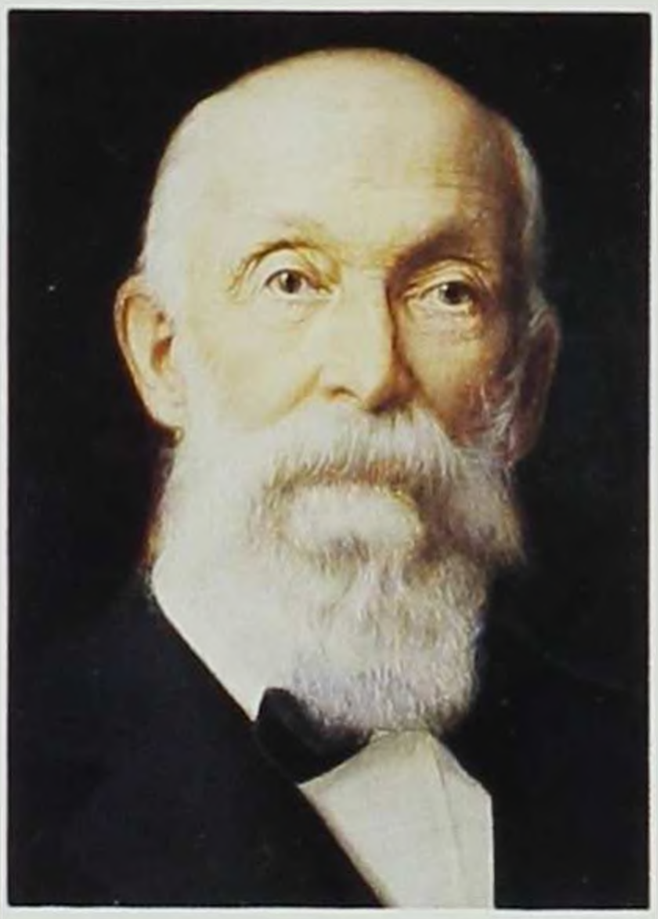
I thought an obvious place to seek information about the beginning of Iowa's supreme court was a weighty 1916 tome by Edward Stiles called *Recollections and Sketches of Notable Lawyers and Public Men of Early Iowa*. In it I found an account in 1882 by the ubiquitous Theodore S. Parvin, who would figure prominently in my quest. "The first term of the Supreme Court . . . was held at Burlington on the 28th of November, 1838," Parvin wrote. "James W. Woods was the senior member of the bar. . . . He had the only case before the first Supreme Court. . . . I was the youngest of the twenty [lawyers] admitted at that first session, and the case was called immediately after our admission, and because I was the youngest Woods came up and tendered me the honor, as was customary for many years, of making the argument. I made the argument and won the case — the first speech made in the Supreme Court of Iowa. After announcing its decision, the Court adjourned," Parvin continued, "and the Judges came down and congratulated me on my maiden effort."

Theodore S. Parvin (1817–1901) had a remarkable career. Private secretary to Iowa's first territorial governor in 1838, he served also as district attorney, county judge, corresponding secretary of the State Historical Society of Iowa, and editor of *The Annals of Iowa*. His greatest contribution was to Freemasonry. Grand secretary for many years, he founded the superb Masonic Library in Cedar Rapids.

Every aspect of Parvin's career qualified him as a highly credible witness to Iowa's first supreme court session. But one feature in his story puzzled me. What on earth was this business of the senior member of the bar honoring the junior by letting him make the argument, "as was customary for many years"? No doubt early Iowa had its own quaint legal customs, but would clients *really* have tolerated employing senior lawyers at considerable expense only to find an inexperienced junior arguing their case? Parvin had not related what his case involved, nor where it was heard. I

decided I must do more research.

I found that in 1886, Parvin had given another account of the first court session in an "Address at the Bar Re-Union at Des Moines." He confirmed the date of the session as "that early morn of November the 28th," 1838. The court appointed a clerk and court reporter and admitted the twenty attorneys. Parvin related that the "one case before the court. . . . was a case of larceny (for stealing a rifle)." Parvin again stated that Woods, the senior member of the bar, had invited him to argue the case. "We were successful and cleared the rascal," Parvin wrote, "and while the court and bar were congratulating us upon the success of our maiden effort at the bar, the defendant made off, and with him the stolen rifle, which was to have been [Woods's] fee." He recorded that the court had convened "in a small room of a dwelling house."



Attorney Theodore S. Parvin

In "The Early Bar of Iowa" (1894), Parvin gave a similar account — the date, the number of lawyers admitted, and the case of the stolen rifle are the same. But a new puzzle developed — about the meeting place — when I read his words, "The first session of the Supreme Court met in the parlor of a tavern." Two years later, in his *Who Made Iowa*, Parvin wrote that "*the Supreme Court* . . . held its first session in the parlor of one of the pioneers, the good lady having put her house in order for the purpose." While it is possible by a strained construction to reconcile all three of Parvin's descriptions of the first meeting place, it seemed more likely that these discrepancies showed Parvin to have a fallible memory. I dismissed the inconsistencies and accepted the rest of his story.

Later I happened to be reading "Statesmen and Politicians in Early Iowa" in *The Annals of Iowa* (1945) by the Reverend Charles E. Snyder. Snyder could not have been a greater Parvin fan, for he wrote: "Theodore S. Parvin. . . . said that the two greatest men in Iowa history were Charles Mason and James W. Grimes. I submit that Parvin's name must be added for a third. Parvin was a large part of the history of Iowa." As Mason was chief justice throughout the territorial period and laid the foundation of Iowa law, and Grimes was an immensely distinguished governor and senator, including Parvin in this company was high praise indeed.

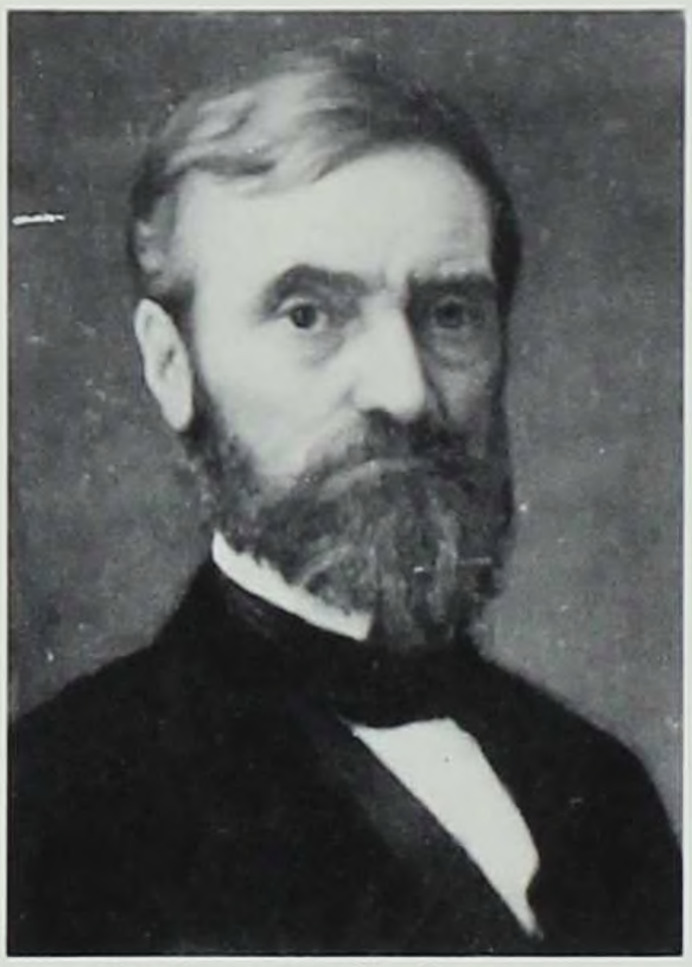
A sentence later in the article made me sit up with a jolt: "The Supreme court held its first session at Burlington, November 26, 1838, the only business being an order for a writ of error . . . and the admission of twenty young lawyers to practice." November 26 was two days before the date Parvin repeatedly had given as the opening of the supreme court. Furthermore, a writ of error did not sound like the criminal appeal of the stolen rifle that Parvin insisted had been the first and only case. Why had such a devotee of Parvin contradicted him so? Clearly I needed to dig deeper.

Next I turned to an article in a 1939 *Palimpsest*, "The Supreme Court in Session." It made two points about the date that apparently showed Parvin right. According to the article, Parvin had recorded the supreme court meeting as November 28 in his 1838 diary. Furthermore, the Iowa legislature had passed a law that provided: "the first session of the supreme court of the Territory shall be held at the city of Burlington, on the twenty-eighth day of November one thousand eight hundred and thirty eight." The article also mentioned that the *Iowa Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser* of December 1, 1838, had reported that "twenty members of the bar had been admitted to practice," but that "no further business seems to have been transacted."

November 28 thus appeared to have been the date. But now there were three different

versions of what had been before the court — Parvin's rifle case, Snyder's writ of error, and "no further business."

Under the gaze of Theodore S. Parvin, whose portrait dominated the library of the State Historical Society in Iowa City, I reached for the *Iowa Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser* of Saturday, December 1, 1838. It reported: "In accordance with an act of the Legislature recently passed, the Supreme Court of Iowa Territory met in this place on Monday last." The article named the judges, officials, and the lawyers admitted. No case was mentioned. Saturday, December 1 . . . Monday last. I did some hasty arithmetic — that meant the supreme court met on Monday, November 26. That couldn't be right. If it was "in accordance with an Act of the Legislature recently passed," as the newspaper had reported, it *had* to be November 28 as the law had ordained. Newspapers can be wrong. The next place I had to look was Parvin's diary.



Chief Justice Charles Mason

The Masonic Library in Cedar Rapids keeps the diary. Parvin's entry for November 28, 1838, read: "Court — P.M. the Supreme Court of the Territory organized. Judge[s] Mason Williams and Wilson present. Bayless app[ointed] Cl[er]k & Weston Reporter — 20 Lawyers admitted I among the number." But why was there no mention of his great rifle larceny triumph?

It was the entry for the very next day, November 29, that was really disturbing. "Court, prisoner trial I assisted in the defence — my first criminal case — Jury brot in a verdict of guilty of larceny." Across the margin of November 29 Parvin had written, in different ink: "First Case — Iowa." If there was a jury, this must have been a district court trial. To assist in losing a larceny case in the district court could hardly be further from personally winning a larceny appeal in the territorial supreme court. Surely no lawyer would describe a district court case as "my first criminal case" or "First Case — Iowa" if he had already won a criminal appeal in the supreme court.

I was completely confused. Then I learned that in Des Moines the State Archives of the State Historical Society holds the original handwritten *Supreme Court Order Book: 1838–1853*, covering the entire territorial period. I rushed to Des Moines.

Page 1 of the *Supreme Court Order Book* began: "At a Supreme Court of the Territory of Iowa begun and holden at the Court House in Burlington in and for the Territory aforesaid, on, Monday To wit the 26th day of November AD 1838." The three supreme court justices were present. Twenty lawyers including Parvin "were duly admitted . . . according to law." The court appointed a clerk and reporter. Finally, in a civil case later reported as *Gordon and Washburn v. Higley*, the court granted a procedural writ of error. The lawyers who appeared were Rorer and Starr. Immediately below the entry about the writ of error was written: "Ordered that this Court adjourn sine die," signed "Charles Mason Chief Justice." Page 2 of the *Supreme Court Order Book* commenced "the first day of July AD 1839."

Thus the official record of the supreme court gave November 26 as the date of its first session. The chief justice had signed under that date. The Burlington newspaper corroborated that date. I could only conclude that Parvin's private diary entry was wrong. Furthermore, there was no rifle larceny case at the first session, and Parvin did not make the first speech.

Parvin undoubtedly was a very important man. The memories of the important and unimportant alike can play tricks, and fifty years later old men can forget. No doubt the

young Parvin was a busy secretary to the governor, Robert Lucas. Presumably he made the entry in his diary for November 28 sometime after the supreme court sat. The law had specified November 28 as the date for the first term. Parvin must have assumed the court had indeed sat on the specified date and entered this in his diary accordingly.

But the contemporary records showed he assumed wrong, which raised awkward questions. As the supreme court met two days before it should have by law, where did that leave the writ of error it ordered? And far more importantly, what about the twenty lawyers admitted to practice "according to law" two days before the law specified? Why had Chief Justice Mason, another of the great men of early Iowa, anticipated the correct date by two days?

The bill fixing November 28 as the date for the first session of the supreme court was passed by the House of Representatives on Saturday, November 24, and by the Council of the Legislative Assembly on Monday, November 26. The governor did not approve the bill until the morning of Wednesday, November 28 — the day the supreme court was supposed to sit. Did Chief Justice Mason *assume* the governor had signed the bill on November 26, *assume* the bill specified November 26, and then just go ahead and hold the first session on the twenty-sixth? Why on earth didn't he double-check? Furthermore, when the court sat on the wrong day, at least two of the lawyers present could have pointed out Mason's error. One of the lawyers was the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee — none other than the young James Grimes, the third of the Reverend Snyder's great men of early Iowa. As chairman, Grimes must have known the date in the bill. The other was the governor's private secretary — none other than Theodore S. Parvin — who surely knew the governor had not yet signed the bill. It seems that Chief Justice Mason, at the very least, made a glorious muddle.

But it may have been much more than that. Besides fixing the date of the first supreme court session, the bill had one other important feature. Before a lawyer could appear in the supreme court, he had to "upon motion, be qualified and admitted." By being admitted to practice *before* the appointed day, all twenty lawyers may have been admitted to practice unlawfully. Does that mean that every single case won by each of these lawyers in the supreme court might have been successfully challenged — on the grounds that the winning lawyer had not conformed with the law requiring his admission to the supreme court? Should all the lawyers have been readmitted? To avoid doubt, should a special statute have been passed by the legislature to ratify their admission retrospectively?

One hundred and fifty years later, these questions probably are of greater significance to historians than to lawyers. For the former, Theodore S. Parvin has shown feet of clay, while Charles Mason seems to have brought forth a rattling skeleton. Indeed, this saga illustrates another saying of my great-grandfather, Lord Acton, about the study of history:

"No trusting without testing." □

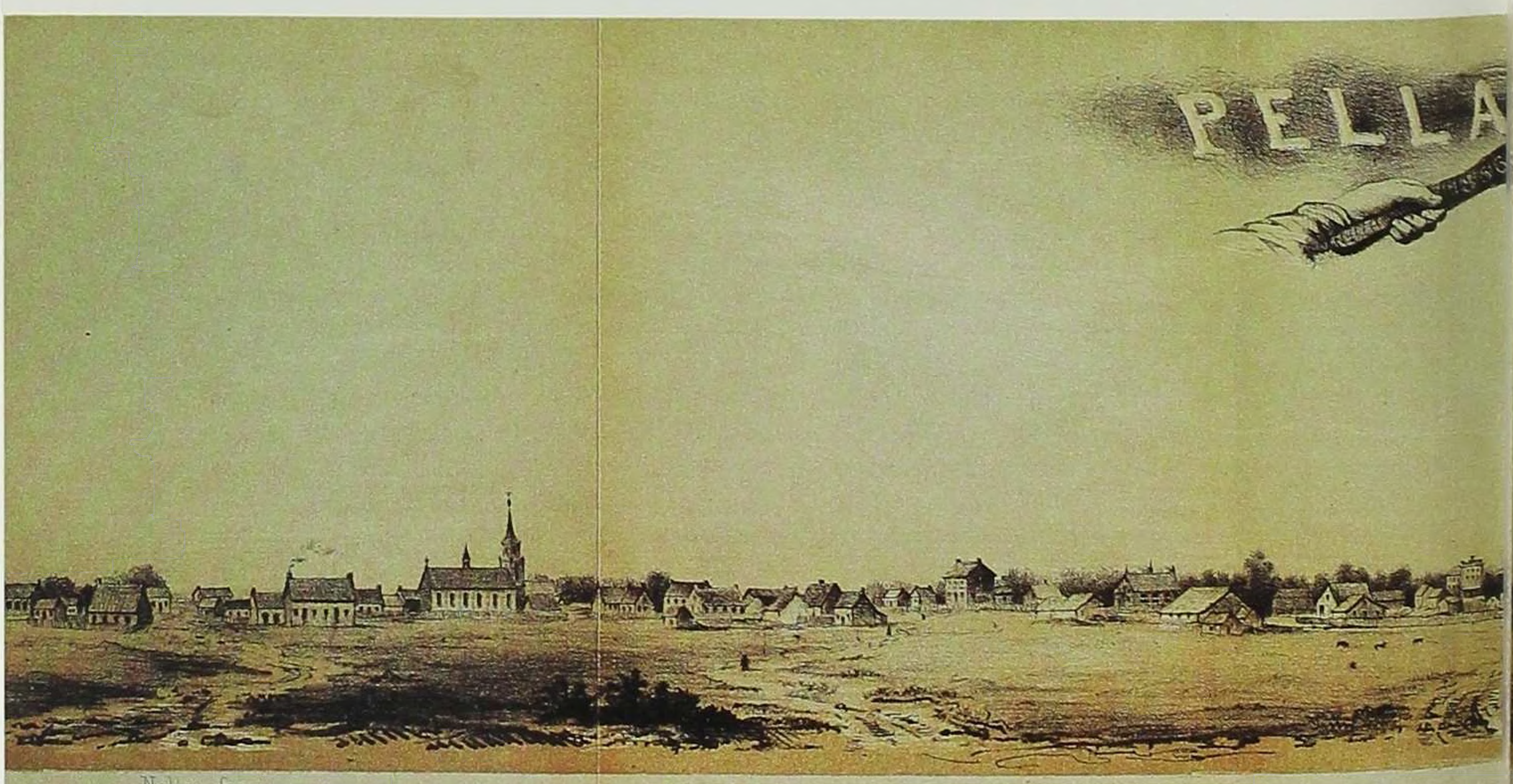
NOTE ON SOURCES

Lord Acton's quotations are from his "Inaugural Lecture on the Study of History," *Lectures on Modern History* (New York, 1912). Sources by Theodore S. Parvin are "The Early Bar of Iowa," *Historical Lectures Upon Early Leaders in the Professions* (Iowa City, 1894); *Who Made Iowa?* (Davenport, 1896); and "Thomas S. Wilson," *Iowa Historical Record*, 10–12 (1894–96). Other sources include "An Act to Fix the Time for the First Session of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Iowa . . . ," *Laws of Iowa, 1838–39* (Dubuque, 1838–39); "An Act to Divide the Territory of Wisconsin and to Establish the Territorial Government of Iowa," Benjamin F. Shambaugh, *Documentary Material Relating to the History of Iowa*, 1 (Iowa City, 1897); Morris Reports, 1 (1838–46); *Journal of the House of Representatives of the First Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Iowa, 1838–39* (Dubuque, 1839); "Laws of Iowa 1838-39," vol. 1, H.R. File No. 8 (State Archives, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines); Benjamin F. Shambaugh, *Executive Journals of Iowa* (1838–41) (Iowa City, 1906); John C. Parish, *Robert Lucas* (Iowa City, 1907); *Supreme Court Order Book: Vol. 1, 1838–1853* (State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines). Sources cited in this article include Edward H. Stiles, *Recollections and Sketches of Notable Lawyers and Public Men of Early Iowa* (Des Moines, 1916), 560-66, 569-70; "Hon. T. S. Parvin's Address at the Bar Re-Union at Des Moines, June 8th, 1886," *Iowa Historical Record*, 1-3 (1885-87), 305, 309-10; Rev. Charles E. Snyder, "Statesmen and Politicians in Early Iowa," *Annals of Iowa*, 27 (1945-46), 15-36; Jack J. Johnson, "The Supreme Court in Session," *The Palimpsest* (1939), 191-95; *Iowa Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser*, Dec. 1, 1838. Complete citations are in the *Palimpsest* production files, State Historical Society of Iowa.

Crossing C

Moves by Two Families from Pella to the Amana Colonies in the 1860s

Left: George Henckler and his wife (name unknown) left Pella for the Amana Colonies in 1864. No image of his friend Gottfried Höning has been located. Below: An 1856 panoramic view of Pella (lithograph by G. J. Thieme). The large building is Central University.



Colony Lines

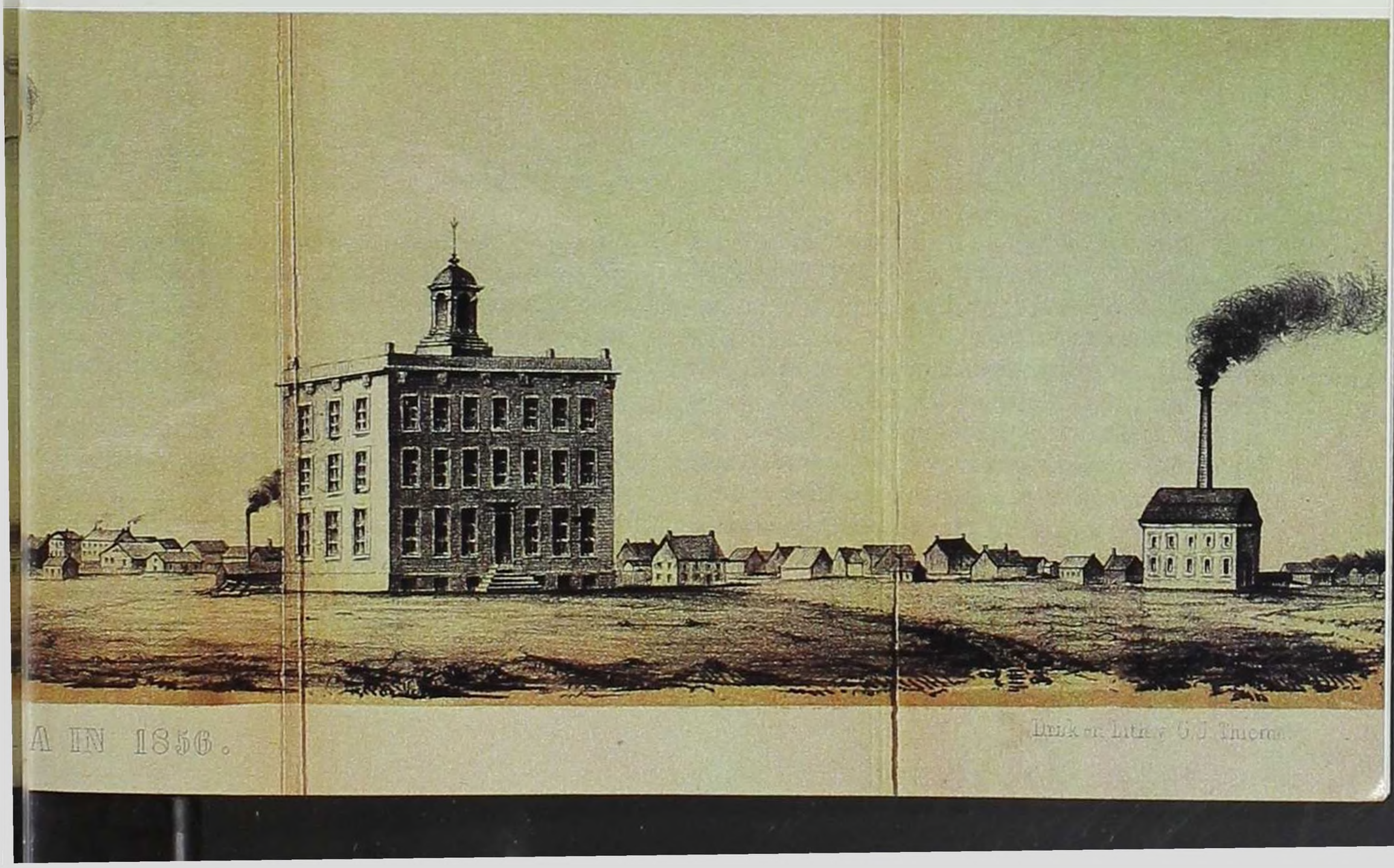
by Philip E. Webber

ALTHOUGH AMANA of the nineteenth century was a communal religious society settled by a Pietist sect, the eastern Iowa community nevertheless attracted German-Americans of diverse backgrounds. One intriguing episode in the mid-1860s involved two families drawn to the colonies from the Dutch-American community of Pella in central Iowa. The surviving evidence concerning these individuals, and their decision in 1864 to relocate, adds to our understanding of cross-cultural experiences in Iowa a century ago — and today.

On the surface, the episode appears deceptively easy to explain. Gottfried Heinrich Höning and George Henckler were natives of Germany who had been living for several years in Pella. It would hardly seem unusual to the casual observer that Höning and Henckler would wish to seek closer ties with other individuals sharing their German background, such as they would find in the Amana Colonies. However, as is so often the case when the explanation of historical events appears simple and straightforward, there is far more than first meets the eye.

Our fullest data on Gottfried Heinrich Höning (or, Hoening) comes from the obituary notice published on his death in 1877 in the Amana Colonies. Born February 18, 1812, in Elberfeld, Germany, Höning came to the United States in 1847 with his wife, Henrietta Johanna (elsewhere, Johanna Henrietta) and several of their children. Traveling up the Mississippi River from the Gulf of Mexico, the Höning family found a new home at Gravais Settlement near St. Louis. At least one child, Heinrich, was born in the settlement. In 1855, the family came by stagecoach to Pella. Höning was a furniture maker, and appears to have practiced that trade throughout his working life, both in Pella and in Amana.

A noticeably younger man of elusive biographical detail, George (or, Georg) Henckler



A IN 1856.

Lith. of Litho. C. J. Thorn

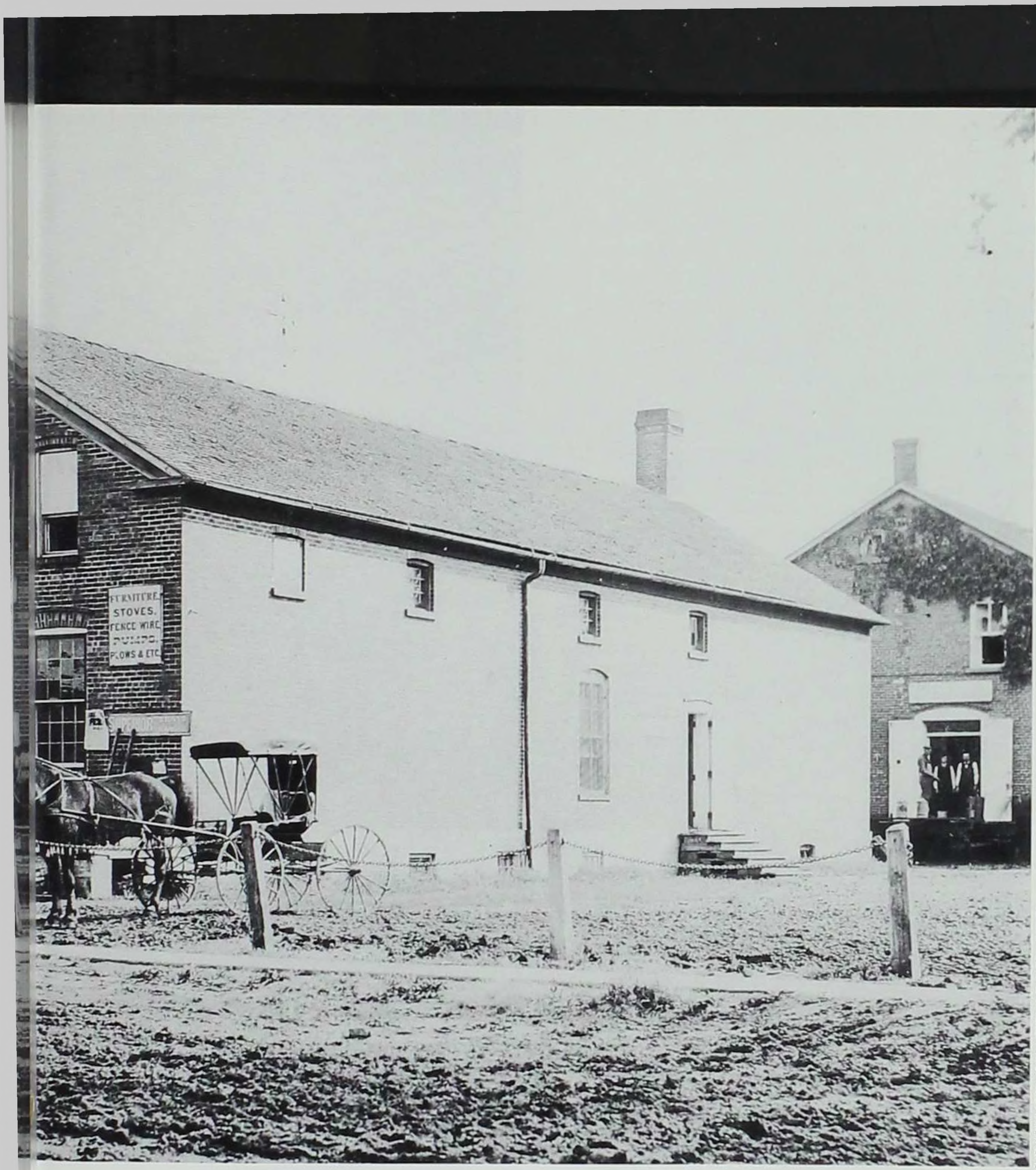
was born in Weisparde, Germany (date unknown), and moved to Pella in 1853. We know that he was married, but have only sketchy data on the number and ages of his children. He appears to have enjoyed entrepreneurial talents, and along with two other German-Americans situated in Pella, E. F. Grafe and F. W. Waechter, constructed and operated the Washington Roller Mills. Among the finest of its kind at the time, Washington Roller Mills was frequently operated around the clock, preparing flour for delivery to destinations as far away as St. Louis. Henckler was also active in the stove and tinware business. Of his death we know little more than the fact that he died a few years after leaving the Amana Colonies in 1865.

THE TOWN OF PELLA was founded in 1847 by some eight hundred Dutch immigrants led by Hendrick Peter Scholte. Though Scholte himself favored rapid acculturation to the new homeland, many of his followers, and especially subsequent waves of immigrants, preferred the life of a fairly homogeneous Dutch enclave somewhat apart from other communities of the region. Historians of Pella have made a special point of noting that the town nevertheless boasted a prosperous and well-integrated German-American citizenship almost from the start, and many of the descendants continue to enjoy prominence in the community today. Still other non-Dutch constituencies made their home there during the nineteenth century. There is no reason whatsoever to believe that being German was itself any reason to think about leaving Iowa's major Dutch-American settlement.

Like every other Iowa community, Pella suffered from the impact of the Civil War. Nevertheless, at the time of Höning's and Henckler's departure in 1864, Pella was on the verge of being connected to Iowa's growing railroad network. And even though Höning complained of a depressed real estate market, the overall picture of Pella's economy seems to have been one of venture and brisk business

activity. The churches of the town were active, with both new congregations and physical facilities appearing every few years. There was, in other words, no immediate urgency at this time that would prompt an established resident of nearly a decade to leave Pella.

Some eighty miles to the northeast, the Amana Colonies were also on the verge of noteworthy growth, though for another reason altogether. When the Community of True Inspiration (the so-called "Amana Church") decided in 1855 to make its new home in Iowa — away from worldly influences — only a part



SHSI (IOWA CITY), JOAN LIFFRING-ZUG COLLECTION

A store in Homestead, the Amana colony where the Höning and Henckler families settled in 1864.

of the communal religious society moved west from Ebenezer (near Buffalo), New York. With seven villages, communal housing, and work assignments established, preparations were under way in 1864 to bring the remaining faithful to Iowa. Records kept by the Inspirationists tell us that at the end of 1863 (prior to relocation of the Ebenezer co-religionists), the population of the seven villages of the Amana Colonies totaled 1,027 souls; this jumped by the end of 1864 to 1,228, and then in 1865 leveled off at 1,240.

Although always receptive to seekers of the faith, the Inspirationists have never had a tradition of proselytizing or recruiting, and this would certainly have continued to be true in the face of a major influx of the fellow-faithful from the east. The original migrations from Europe had taken place less than a generation before, and the mystic Pietists of the Inspirationist sect were eager to enjoy the quiet and undisturbed practice of their faith. Just as there was no obvious and pressing reason for Höning

and Henckler to leave Pella, there was also no clear motivation for the community at Amana to induce these two men and their families to move to the colonies.

EVIDENTLY Höning had had the conviction since childhood that he would one day be called to a community whose focus on personal piety would satisfy his deep individual spiritual needs. Late in 1863, Höning (then in his early fifties) read about the Amana Colonies in a newspaper article. He initiated correspondence with the Inspirationists and received an invitation to visit their community and learn more. On December 29 of that year, despite bitter cold and deep snow, he and his younger friend George Henckler arrived after a trip of some eighty miles (probably by rail and then by sleigh or on foot) for a stay of more than one week.

During this time, Christian Metz, who served as both spiritual and secular leader in the colonies, delivered two inspired testimonies (revelations) directly to the visitors. Höning, physically weakened by travel and inner turmoil, entered a state of intense personal conflict, and eventually confessed to Metz with tears that the Amana community and the Inspirationist faith offered just what he sought. Rather less is said in the Inspirationist chronicles about Henckler, and it would appear that his reaction, though positive, may have been more measured.

Early 1864 marked a period of intense and frequent correspondence between Höning (back in Pella) and Metz, and it was not long until Metz began wondering why Höning's friend Henckler did not care to correspond. Several letters from Metz to Höning touch upon Henckler's evident reluctance to make a firm commitment to the Inspirationist faith.

Within a month after Höning's visit to Amana, he liquidated the stock of his store. By late January, he asked to be released from the obligations of his membership in Pella's First (Dutch) Reformed Church, where he reportedly served as an elder. Although regret was expressed at Höning's decision, the testimony of Höning and of the Reformed governing consistory agree that the parting was relatively amicable. True, there were occasional harsh words about Höning's choosing to leave the Reformed fold, but these seem to have come from isolated individuals, and evidently subsided as Höning's resolve and good will became fully evident.

If there was anything that preoccupied Hön-

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Residents of the Amana Colonies worked communally. Above: sorting onions.

ing at this time, it seems to have been his fear of financial loss resulting from the sale of his house in a recessed market. He fretted in letters to Metz that he would lose some of the estimated thousand dollars he had invested in his house and in improvements.

On January 31, Metz wrote Höning again. His letter gives a unique insight into Höning's situation. At the same time the letter affords a rare, personal recollection of an inspired revelation by one of the Amana community's spiritual leaders. The vision took the form of a "visit," as it were, to Höning's home. In the

letter, Metz recounted his vision to Höning: "I was much involved with you in spirit. Three nights before your [last] letter arrived, I was visiting you in Pella. I looked for lodging, but could find none. Indeed, though there were large houses and inns there, they did not receive me, for it was already night. Then someone came and showed me a house, not so large, standing rather alone. When I entered, it was your house, but you were not present. I came into the parlor, and your wife lay in bed and was in a conflict that had not yet been resolved. I had important things to say to her and challenged her to come immediately to a firm conclusion or decision, for which she did not yet have the strength or resolution. Then I handed her a rather large pure silver coin, at which point I was removed [conveyed] to the opposite room. There your children lay asleep in two beds. In the first bed lay two of your daughters; one, who lay toward the front, was very restless. She was dreaming of her lover and was speaking [in her sleep] about it. I sensed that she was completely caught up in this physical love. The others lay quietly, and none noticed that I was there. Everything was topsy-turvy; things were supposed to get packed, but there was no appropriate plan to it all. I would gladly have rested with you, but I could find no proper place of repose, and so I awoke and knew that I had been at your place, and was greatly concerned because I understood that this all meant something. There is still much struggle and doubt on the part of your loved ones. I would have been glad to make a firm covenant with your dear wife, but she was still caught up in much struggle and uncertainty. Your dear children lay asleep and didn't notice or sense that I was there. And because everything was so topsy-turvy and there was not yet any order, I could find no place of rest."

Höning seems to have interpreted the account of Metz's "visit" rather literally, yet also as a spiritual admonition. In his response to Metz he admitted that although not all the details of the vision were objectively accurate, things stood pretty much as Metz had reported them. During February, however, Höning's wife agreed to the move, and preparations began in earnest.

AT THE SAME TIME, Henckler, whose exact religious background remains unclear, wrote Metz of his doubts about the Inspirationists' failure to practice water baptism. Metz responded in one of the most complete (and never-before-published) statements available on the Inspirationist stand on this matter. Though representative of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German Pietism, the statement is a rare find in Inspirationist documents.

Among many points, Metz observed: "In 1714 and the years following, there was a great awakening and out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, and not only among the Inspirationists — a multitude of God's witnesses received the prophetic gift of the Holy Spirit and heralded the departure from Babel and false Christianity. . . . They established many prayer communities and a separation from the dead works and ordinances of the churches, such as baptism, the pulpit, the [communion] cup and the altar — idols that were an abomination to the Holy Spirit. Thus it was that many souls were moved to come to repentance, and prayer associations were formed. . . . The Spirit made it evident among them that they should no longer receive or touch the sacrament of baptism, which had been desecrated to being the sign of the Beast, nor the token of communion, which belonged to a false worship; He [the Lord] himself would baptize them with another baptism of faith, and true penance [leading] to sanctification and reconciliation with God."

About a week later, Metz clarified that this should not be taken as inflexible dogma. This time writing to Höning, Metz stated that while physical baptism benefits the individual no more than circumcision of the physical foreskin, he clearly understood that it might wound the conscience of some to forgo water baptism. Those who feel compunction to do so might submit to water baptism, Metz explained, though he and his co-religionists felt called to an inner and more lasting form of the sacrament.

Höning, for his part, moved ahead with resolve, sold his house for a thousand dollars (at a loss of about four hundred dollars), and on

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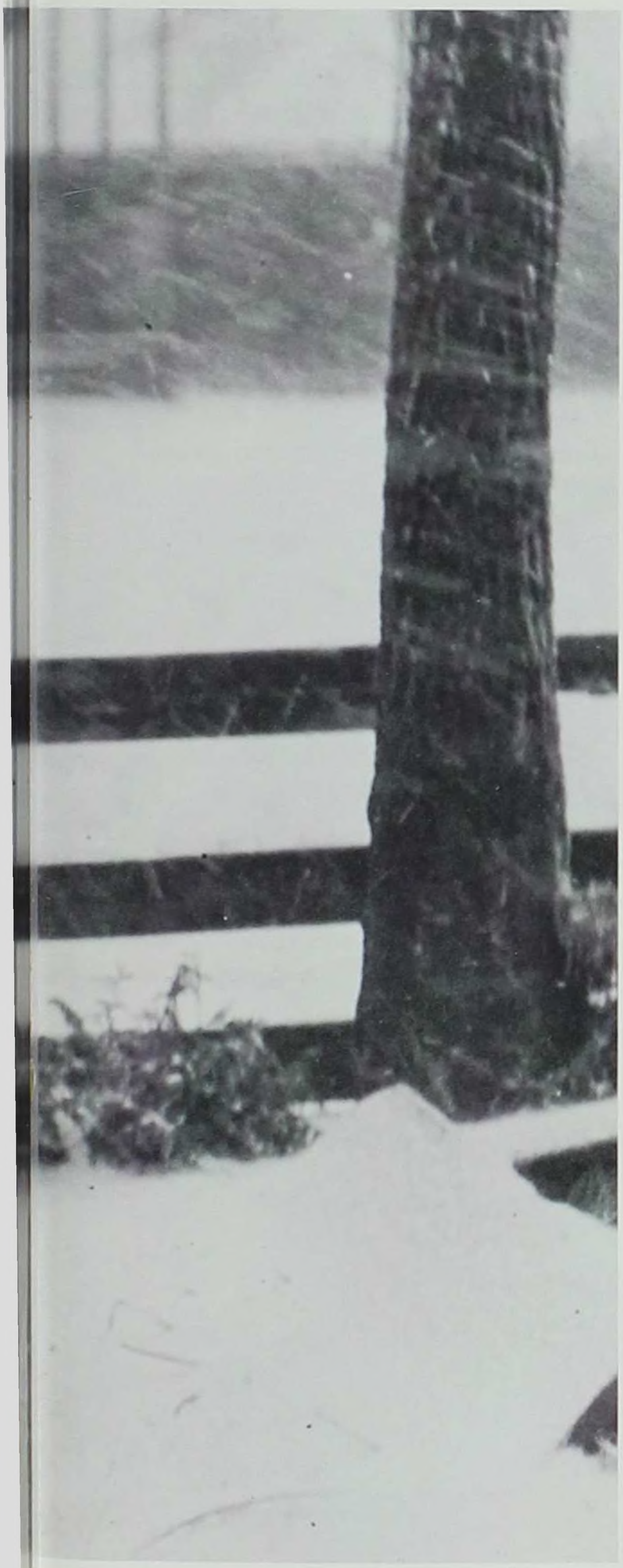
An Amana wedding procession, led by bride and groom Christine Gernand and William Foerstner. Photographed in 1907, the image portrays aspects of the religious communal society Höning and Henckler entered in 1864.

March 23, 1864, arrived in the Amana Colonies with his wife, five daughters, and one son. Metz had other concerns: he was burdened by the need to arrange payment for the release of young Inspirationists from military duty in the Civil War, and by the impending relocation of the Ebenezer faithful. Nevertheless he noted in the Inspirationist chronicles that he found it



SHSI (IOWA CITY), JOAN LIFFRING-ZUG COLLECTION

"an anxious matter [to contemplate] how this [Höning] family would acclimate and melt in," yet felt "that God was involved in the matter, and . . . would continue to lend His help."

TWO MONTHS LATER, in May, Henckler again visited the colonies, this time with his aged father and evidently in the company of his wife and several German-American women from Pella. By late June, Henckler had decided to submit to the promptings of the Spirit and to the authority of the Inspirationist leadership at Amana. He began casting plans for a move in September from Pella to the colonies. Henckler proved to be straightforward and compliant with Inspirationist expectations regarding disclosure of his financial standing. He was also generous in offering, of his own free will, to support the relocation efforts of the Inspirationists in Ebenezer, New York. Every indication was that Henckler wished to participate in the communalism of the Amana Colonies. In a kind but open manner, Henckler also begged understanding for his wife. By nature of a physically weaker constitution, she evidently was exhibiting anxiety about the rigors of relocation, while nevertheless declaring herself ready to follow her husband to Amana.

In the next two months, a number of letters passed between Henckler and Metz. Metz issued a clear warning that life in the seven communal colonies would be crowded, with less privacy and personal living space. Yet he pledged all necessary help for Henckler, and sensitive understanding for Henckler's depressed wife. Henckler sent money on ahead to the colonies, in part as an act of voluntary charity; Metz was careful to note receipt of the funds, and to explain how they were to be handled. In late August, Metz wrote to George

In the Amana Colonies, food was prepared and eaten in community kitchens. Those with small children or who were ill or elderly received baskets of food. In Middle Amana, Dr. Christian Herrmann photographed his mother carrying a food basket on a winter day in 1915.

Henckler's father, F. G. Henckler, explaining governance of the colonies, the trustee system, financial matters, and possibilities for residence in an apartment of the house assigned by the community to the Hönings. Finally, on August 19 the seven members of the Henckler family arrived in the Amana colony of Homestead. A short time after August 19, Henckler's father and a nine-year-old grandson arrived.

While it might have been unusual for a Pella resident to move to Amana, the Höning and Henckler families were not alone in coming from the outside. Of some 220 persons who came to the Amana Colonies in 1864, between 30 and 40 were *von ausserhalb*, "from outside," that is, from outside Inspirationist circles. These "outsiders" ranged from transients, to immigrants with family or friends in the Amana Colonies, to members of religious sects who were seeking a new affiliation.

ONLY A LITTLE more than a year later, in early October 1865, Henckler and his family (including his father) left the Amana Colonies. Of the several accounts of Henckler's departure, no mention is made of disagreement on points of doctrine (such as baptism), of Henckler's wife's health, or of any desire for greater material opportunity outside the colonies. The consistent account, admittedly from the perspective of the Amana Inspirationists, is that Henckler was a *Vielwisser*, "a know-it-all," and a *Buchstäbler*, "one fixated on the letter [rather than the spirit of issues]." As one account put it, "he would have liked to have been, and to have meant, something." Needless to say, such attitudes set Henckler on a collision course with Amana's sense of communal interdependency and egalitarianism.

At about the same time that Henckler departed, Höning became an elder in the Inspirationist church, something not at all usual for a newcomer to the colonies and to the Inspirationist faith. All in all, Höning appears to have been a beloved and supportive member of the Amana community.

Some of Höning's children married into Inspirationist families, others chose to go back to Pella, and some stayed in the colonies for a period of time but later left. Descendants may be found in Pella, in the Amana Colonies, and in surrounding communities.

The conclusion to be drawn is not without implications today. Feeling at home in a community with a strong ethnic focus is not merely a matter of national origin or of native language. Both Höning and Henckler appear to

Huge loaves of bread were baked in Amana Colony bakeries.

SHSI (IOWA CITY), JOAN LIFFRING-ZUG COLLECTION

COURTESY THE AUTHOR

The interior of the Amana church has changed little since Höning and Henckler moved to the Amana Colonies.

have been well-accepted and productive citizens of Pella, without any stigma associated with their status as German-Americans. In addition, Höning was an active member of a Dutch Reformed congregation. Both, however, seem to have wanted something more, and the Amana Colonies appeared to offer what was desired.

Within the next year or so, however, one man had been vested with a position of leadership, and one had left. The difference, of course, lay not in outward indicators of ethnicity, but rather in matters of attitude. One readily accepted the values of the new community, and was in turn embraced by its residents. The other evidently chose to stand apart from the norms of communal society, and thereby separated himself from the reciprocal support that is the true key to any individual's well-being in a social setting. □

NOTE ON SOURCES

Completion of this work was made possible through the cooperation of my collaborators: Arthur Selzer and Peter Hoehnle (of Homestead), Ruby Hoekstra and Evelyn Joosten (of Pella), Melissa Morris (formerly at Central College in Pella), and Madeline Vanderzyl (Archivist, Central College, Pella).

The information presented here is based heavily on the manuscript and printed chronicles of the Community of True Inspiration. Copies of all sources may be found at the Museum of Amana History, Amana. An expanded version of this paper with complete footnotes and a transcript of all pertinent German texts is on file in the *Palimpsest* production files at the State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City). Much of the material in these files has been noted for the first time, and scholars choosing to work with these resources are asked to give due credit to this work in any resultant papers and publications.

from Your most Affectionate

Friendly A Sumner

Friendly's Frontier

Images from the Life of Friendly Lucas, Iowa's First 'First Lady'

by Anne Beiser Allen

AS THE STEAMBOAT drew up to the wooden dock of the raw, youthful Mississippi River port of Burlington, Territory of Iowa, on an early summer day in 1840, forty-four-year-old Friendly Lucas may well have heaved a deep sigh. The rough-hewn buildings, the muddy streets so new that they were still dotted with the stumps of recently felled trees, the noise and chaos caused by large numbers of people passing through — all this was not unfamiliar to her. She was a daughter of the frontier herself. Her childhood had been spent in northern Vermont, and she had moved to Ohio in 1812 as it was beginning its transition from a sparsely settled forest region to what was now the nation's most productive farming state.

Unlike this new Iowa Territory that Friendly was now entering, Ohio was "civilized" in 1840, boasting the third largest population of any state. She had seen log cabins give way to more spacious and comfortable dwellings of brick, stone, or milled lumber. A network of roads and canals tied the fast-growing communities together, and the first railroad lines were being laid. As the wife of a veteran state legislator who had served two terms as Ohio's governor, Friendly Lucas had enjoyed widespread acquaintance and respect among the state's leading citizens. Her home in Piketon, Ohio, was described as "an elegant mansion . . . one of the finest country residences in the state."

Friends, relatives, a well-loved home, the graves of her two sons — all of those things tied Friendly firmly to Ohio. It would not be surprising to find her reluctant, in her middle years, to abandon them all to start life over again on the Iowa frontier. Attracted by the possibilities of the new territory, her husband, Robert, now in his second year as Iowa's territorial governor, had preceded her in 1838. And now it seemed that Friendly's oldest daughter, Abigail, who had been serving as her father's hostess in Burlington, intended to marry and settle permanently in Iowa.

Friendly had decided that it was time to see for herself what it was about Iowa that her family found so attractive. Packing her bags, she had left her house in the care of relatives and boarded a steamboat for the long journey down the Ohio River and up the Mississippi to Burlington, Iowa's territorial capital.

BORN ON MAY 25, 1796, in Peacham, Vermont, Friendly Ashley Sumner was a member of a New England family whose forebears arrived in Massachusetts from England in 1636. Among her cousins was Charles Sumner, the radical abolitionist senator from Massachusetts, who would become leader of the extremist Reconstruction element in Congress following the Civil War.

Friendly's father, Edward Culver Sumner, had served in the Revolutionary army, attaining the rank of captain. When the war ended, he and his wife, the former Abigail Clark, took advantage of the government's veterans' land

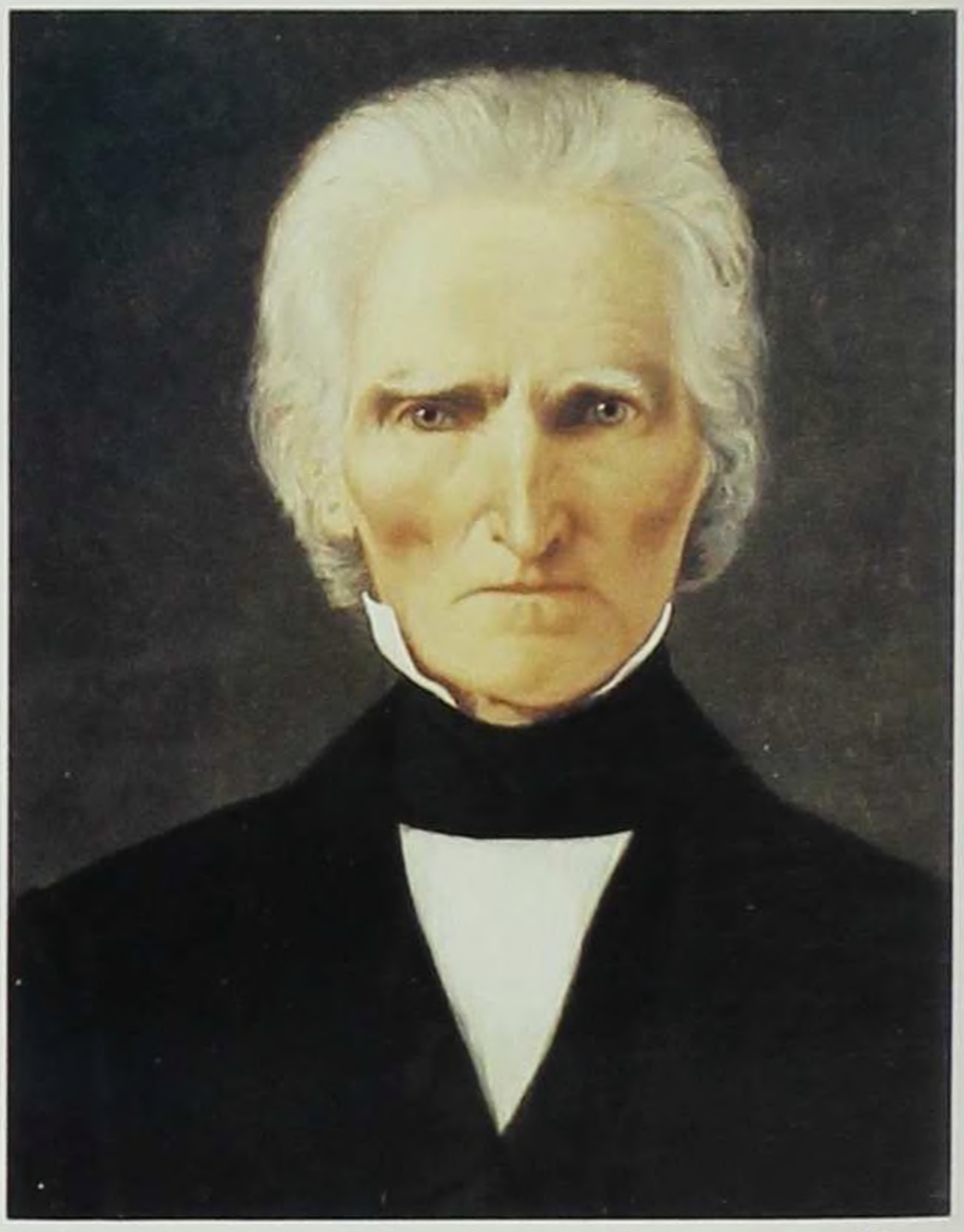
PHOTO COURTESY JOHN AND IRENE RICE

SIGNATURE FROM LETTER IN LUCAS PAPERS

grant program to purchase a farm in northeastern Vermont. But farming in Vermont's granite hills proved neither easy nor profitable. The family moved several times — from Peacham to Barnet, Vermont, to Haverhill, New Hampshire — before deciding in 1812 to try their luck in the Ohio Valley. With their six children (aged four to twenty-six) and all their household goods, they undertook the long overland journey through New York and Pennsylvania and down the Ohio to Portsmouth. There, in the area called the French Grants, Edward Sumner and his family finally found the rural prosperity they had been seeking.

Friendly was a lively girl of sixteen, barely five feet tall, with dark hair and regular features in an oval face. Later commentators speak of her sparkling eyes and ready wit. She seems also to have possessed the physical and mental stamina, basic good health, and strong sense of humor demanded by frontier life. We don't know how much formal schooling (if any) she received, although the one existing letter in her hand suggests, from the quality of the handwriting, grammar, and spelling, that she must have received an adequate basic education. In this letter, written in 1815 to her future husband, nineteen-year-old Friendly apologizes for what she calls her "very ill" writing style, remarking that "the learned women are very valuable, but give me leave to observe, that the industrious women generally make the best wives."

It is not surprising that Robert Lucas, a thirty-four-year-old widower recently elected to the Ohio senate, should have concluded that "there is none whose character and person has so much attracted my attention as you my *Lovely Friendly*." Born on April 1, 1781, in Jefferson County, Virginia (now West Virginia), Lucas had immigrated to Ohio with his parents in 1800. He had been a surveyor, a justice of the peace, a soldier (both in the 1803/05 Indian wars and the Detroit campaign of the War of 1812), had served in the state legislature in 1808/09 and had in 1814 begun the first term of what would be fifteen years as a state senator. In 1810 he had married Elizabeth "Betsy" Brown, whose father owned the tavern in Portsmouth where Lucas boarded. Their daughter, Minerva, was born in 1811,



Robert Lucas, Iowa's first territorial governor and husband of Friendly Sumner Lucas.

and in 1812 Betsy had died of consumption.

Robert Lucas was a tall, sparely built man with a high forehead, prominent cheekbones, black hair, and burning, deep-set blue eyes. He had an impetuous, outspoken, uncompromising disposition, and while his friends and family found him genial and kind-hearted, his opponents complained that he was blunt, stubborn, tactless, and lacking in wit or humor. A fervent if unpredictable Jacksonian Democrat, he took readily to the rough-and-tumble of frontier politics. He was also a devout Methodist, a Mason, and a staunch advocate of the temperance movement.

He courted Friendly with the greatest propriety, writing formally to her parents to assure them "if there should be any objection with either of you against my union with your daughter . . . I will in such case respectfully withdraw all further pretentions." There was good reason for this circumspection on his part. Shortly after his marriage to Betsy Brown, another young woman had filed a lawsuit against him, claiming that he was the father of her child. Lucas vehemently denied the

charge, threatening violence against the sheriff, the coroner, and the clerk who issued the writ — all of whom resigned their posts rather than take on the angry young militia captain and his friends. New officials were appointed, however, and the writ was duly served. Lucas, his common sense returning as his temper receded, "compromised the matter" and, once he had paid the penalty, was released. The scandal continued to circulate, however. (It would be revived many years later during a political campaign, when some injudicious letters written by Lucas, asking for help from his fellow militiamen against the sheriff, were construed by his opponents to mean that Lucas advocated the occasional use of military force to subvert the law.)

Hoping to secure Friendly's hand in marriage, Lucas assured his future in-laws in 1815 that "for a number of years past I have endeavored as far as my judgment would admit to conform my conduct as near as possible to the path of rectitude." Apparently the Sumners found this attitude acceptable, and on March 7, 1816, Robert and Friendly were married.

THE COUPLE settled in Piketon, twenty-five miles upriver from Portsmouth, from which Robert commuted a further seventy miles by stagecoach for meetings of the legislature in the new capital at Columbus. For a time, Robert operated a general store in Piketon in partnership with his brother-in-law, William Kendall. Kendall and Lucas didn't see eye-to-eye on politics, however, and eventually Robert sold his interest in the store and purchased a 437-acre farm on the outskirts of Piketon. There in 1824 he built the stately house that would be called Friendly Grove, in honor of his wife.

Set in a grove of hardwood trees and surrounded by fields and orchards, Friendly Grove was an impressive residence. The L-shaped two-story house of soft red brick faced south, to take the best advantage of the winter sun. Abbotsford ivy climbed the walls between multi-paned windows. Over the central doorway of the main wing was a limestone lintel, on which was carved the motto "Virtue, Liberty, Independence," along with the name "R. Lucas" and the date "1824." Inside was a central hall flanked by a sitting room and formal parlor, where built-in cupboards displayed family treasures. The rooms were spacious, and each one had its own fireplace. Lucas's contemporary James Keyes says in his *Pioneers of Scioto County*, "Mrs. Lucas, being a woman of taste, decorated [the house] with all the care and skill she could bring to bear upon it." Among the furnishings (later transported to Iowa) were a horsehair sofa, a cherry highboy, a cherry spool bed, and a mantel clock made in Bristol, Connecticut. The surrounding farm provided a bountiful supply of fresh meat, grain, fruits and vegetables, which Friendly prepared with consummate skill; she was

"Sneak up on plums. . ."

Plum Butter

In 1963 Margaret Lucas Henderson, a great-granddaughter of Friendly and Robert Lucas, sent this recipe to William Petersen, then superintendent of the State Historical Society of Iowa. Apparently Petersen had inquired about Friendly's plum butter, and Henderson tracked down this family recipe. This is how Henderson recorded it:

"Plum butter or jam. Sneak up on plums & get as many as you can. Wash well (a few worms give it a meaty flavor so do not be squeamish). Cover with boiling water & cook till tender. Take potatoe masher & mash — skins & all. If you are short of plums & want to use all the bulk available — put skins & all into a collander — use potatoe masher & mash mash mash. Take pits out by your fingers.

"Put through as much of the skins as you can. For each cup of pulp you have use ⅔ cup of sugar. I cook mine in oven — slowly — testing for consistency. A small portion in a saucer — put in refrigerator will tell you when the jam or butter is just right.

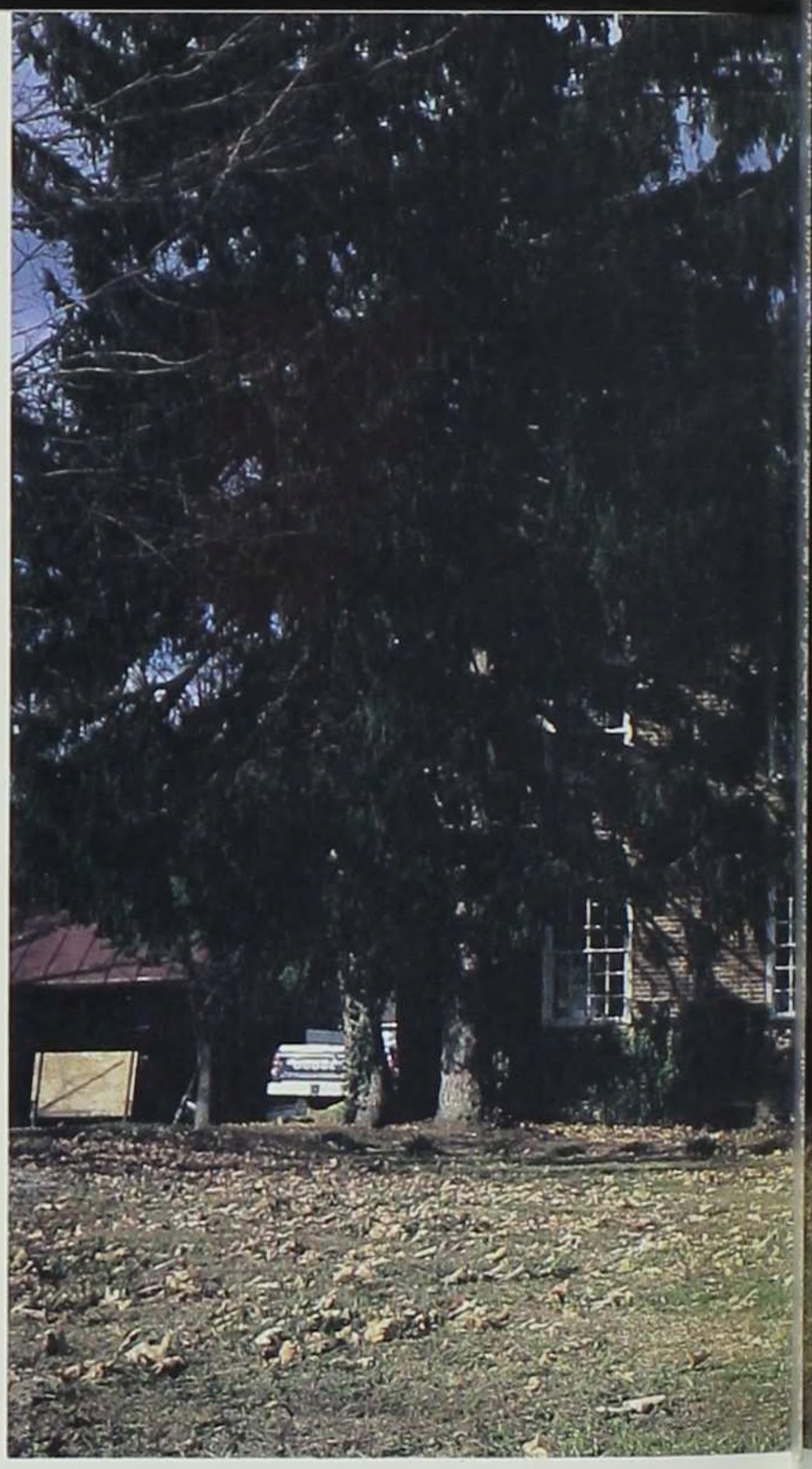
"Put in jars & seal. Call an armoured truck & take to your safe deposit box before anyone becomes aware that you have such a treasure as plum butter in your possession."

In a second letter from her home in California, Henderson added: "If anyone wants to increase the bulk of the plum pulp, add apples. The plum taste will not be obliterated. They are called Potowattami plums. Wish they were available in Calif."

famous for her currant pies and fruit preserves. Robert Lucas's biographer John Parish paints a vivid picture of Friendly riding to Piketon to do her weekly marketing, mounted on her favorite black horse, Nig, and carrying a shopping basket over the pommel of her saddle.

IN 1825, the Ohio Central Canal was completed, running alongside the west bank of the Scioto River past the Lucas property. One source suggests that Lucas brought political pressure to bear to ensure that the canal would pass close by his farm. The improved transportation undoubtedly benefited the Lucas farm, making it easier to transport their produce to eastern markets by way of Lake Erie and New York's Erie Canal. Although Robert's personal activities must have taken a good deal of his time, he was an enthusiastic and knowledgeable farmer who personally supervised the farm's operations. The 1820 census figures indicate that he had hired live-in laborers to help with the work while his sons were small. Given her strong character and the fact that she managed the farm during Robert's absence from 1838 to 1840, Friendly may well have had a good deal to say about the farm's day-to-day operations.

Friendly seems to have had a good deal to say about many things, although her failure to commit her thoughts to writing makes it necessary to reconstruct her thoughts second or third hand. Many commentators remark on her ready tongue; one of her descendants referred to Robert as "poor old hen pecked grandpa." In 1846 a niece wrote to Lucas's sister, "Does Aunt still wear the *pants* as the saying is?" A letter written in 1918 recounted a family story concerning a time when Robert brought home some of his political cronies unexpectedly, and asked Friendly to prepare a "light supper" for them; Friendly set out the candles on the dining room table, lit them, and informed her husband that this was his "light supper." Still another source tells of her lack of enthusiasm for entertaining the traveling Methodist circuit riders whom her husband frequently welcomed into their home.



Robert and Friendly's marriage seems to have been reasonably happy. The Lucases had seven children, Sumner (born in 1817), Abigail (1818), Robert (1820), Susannah (1823), Edward (1825), Mary (1827), and Robert Sumner (1832). The two oldest boys died, Robert in 1821 at the age of one year and Sumner in 1831 at the age of fourteen. They were buried at Friendly Grove. The other children, however, were apparently all strong, healthy, and active. Friendly's stepdaughter Minerva also lived with them, and in January 1829 married Friendly's younger brother, Horatio Nelson Sumner.

There were plenty of other relatives to visit in southern Ohio. In addition to Friendly's parents and siblings, there were all the Lucas connections (Robert was one of twelve children, all but two of whom had moved to Ohio

PHOTO BY JAN NASH

with their parents in 1800). There would have been a great deal of visiting back and forth, and Robert's political activities would have brought many of his Democratic colleagues to the house, giving Friendly plenty of scope for her hospitality and fine cooking — so long as she was given adequate notice!

Friendly Lucas was apparently reluctant to leave her home near Piketon, Ohio, when Robert was appointed as Iowa's governor. Above: 1991 photo of Friendly Grove.

DESPITE — or perhaps because of — his tendency to meet controversy head on, Robert's political career prospered. In 1829 he was elected speaker of Ohio's senate, and although his 1830 bid for governor failed, he was asked in 1832 to preside over the Democratic party's first national convention in Baltimore, Maryland, when Andrew Jackson was nominated for president. Riding on Jackson's political coattails, Lucas was elected governor of Ohio in 1832. He served two consecutive two-year terms, during which time he secured victory for Ohio in a boundary dispute with Michigan over access to the Lake Erie port of Toledo.

After 1836, however, Lucas's political career began to falter. The Jacksonian Democrats, under pressure in the Ohio legislature from the newly formed Whig party, declined to nominate him for the United States Senate that year, and in 1837 he failed to be elected to his old seat in the state senate. Political pundits were beginning to refer to the fifty-seven-year-old Lucas as a has-been when, to Lucas's

immense satisfaction, President Martin Van Buren in 1838 appointed him governor of the newly organized Territory of Iowa.

BECAUSE of a growing population and complaints about the distance to the seat of government, the Iowa District had been separated from Wisconsin Territory in 1838 and granted its own territorial status. Of this large area (all of present-day Iowa, and much of Minnesota and the Dakotas), Robert Lucas would be governor. Whether or not Friendly shared her husband's pleasure in this new appointment as territorial governor we do not know. Letters from Robert's relatives suggest that she did not. Nor did she accompany him on his 1838 journey to Iowa.

In Burlington, the six-year-old Mississippi river port that was now Iowa's territorial capital, Lucas threw himself into the business of organizing his new territory. Over the next several months, counties were drawn up, federal land offices opened, a legislature elected, parleys held regarding the removal of the Sauk and Mesquakie (Fox) tribes from the area, and plans considered for a new capital (which was eventually laid out as Iowa City, on a wooded bluff overlooking the Iowa River). In a replay of events from his tenure as governor of Ohio, Lucas even found himself negotiating a boundary dispute with Missouri.

Friendly remained in Piketon at Friendly Grove. In 1839 her daughters Abigail (twenty-one) and Mary (twelve) joined their father, traveling by steamboat in the company of their cousin William Reed. Several other Lucas relatives had moved with their families to Iowa, settling around Bloomington (later renamed Muscatine), a pleasant river town some forty-five miles north of Burlington. They included Robert's nephews Joseph and Samuel Lucas, his sister Lavisa Steenbergen and her daughter Joanna, and Lavisa's married daughters Mary Jennison and Lavisa Kincaid. Later the same year, fourteen-year-old Edward Lucas traveled by horseback across Indiana and Illinois to join his father and sisters. (He later bragged that the trip only cost him $23.37 ½!) By steamboat or horseback, it was a long journey involving at least two weeks' travel through land that was sparsely settled. Friendly must have had some anxious moments before she finally received word that her children had arrived safely at their destination.

As governor, Robert Lucas attended the official founding of the proposed capital at Iowa City on July 4, 1839, giving a speech and laying the cornerstone of the future capitol building. He and his two daughters slept in the loft of a large log cabin that served as the undeveloped city's hotel. The following year he purchased land in the Iowa City area, including a block (with a mineral spring) in the town itself.

During the year that followed, Abigail (with Mary's help) served as her father's hostess in Burlington, living with him in the Burlington House hotel, while Edward went to school in Bloomington. Friendly, with Susannah (seventeen) and Robert (seven), remained in Ohio to look after the farm. But in the spring of 1840 it appears that Robert sent word home that Abigail was contemplating marriage, and within a few weeks, Friendly and her two remaining children were on their way west.

On October 7, 1840, Abigail Lucas married Charles Nealley (a young leather-goods merchant from New Hampshire) at the Burlington House hotel. Reporting the event, the *Hawkeye & Iowa Patriot* noted that with the wedding announcement it had received "a good sized pound cake, handsomely frosted à la mode;" the Whig newspaper expressed its hearty thanks, along with the hope that the young couple's politics would not continue to reflect those of the bride's father!

BURLINGTON in 1840 must have reminded Friendly a good deal of her early days in Portsmouth, Ohio. Houses and shops were going up right and left. The streets were packed with immigrants from the east, all their worldly goods in untidy piles along the riverbank, waiting to be loaded into wagons. The land office was filled with unruly crowds, all eager to purchase the best farmland available at the lowest price. Hotels were overflowing; tents were set up in empty lots on the edge of town; purveyors of livestock, farm supplies, and wagons did a roar-

PHOTO BY CHUCK GREINER

English Chelsea serving plate and sauce dish, owned by Friendly and Robert Lucas. The coin silver spoon is inscribed with Friendly's initials. (More Lucas family artifacts appear on the front cover.)

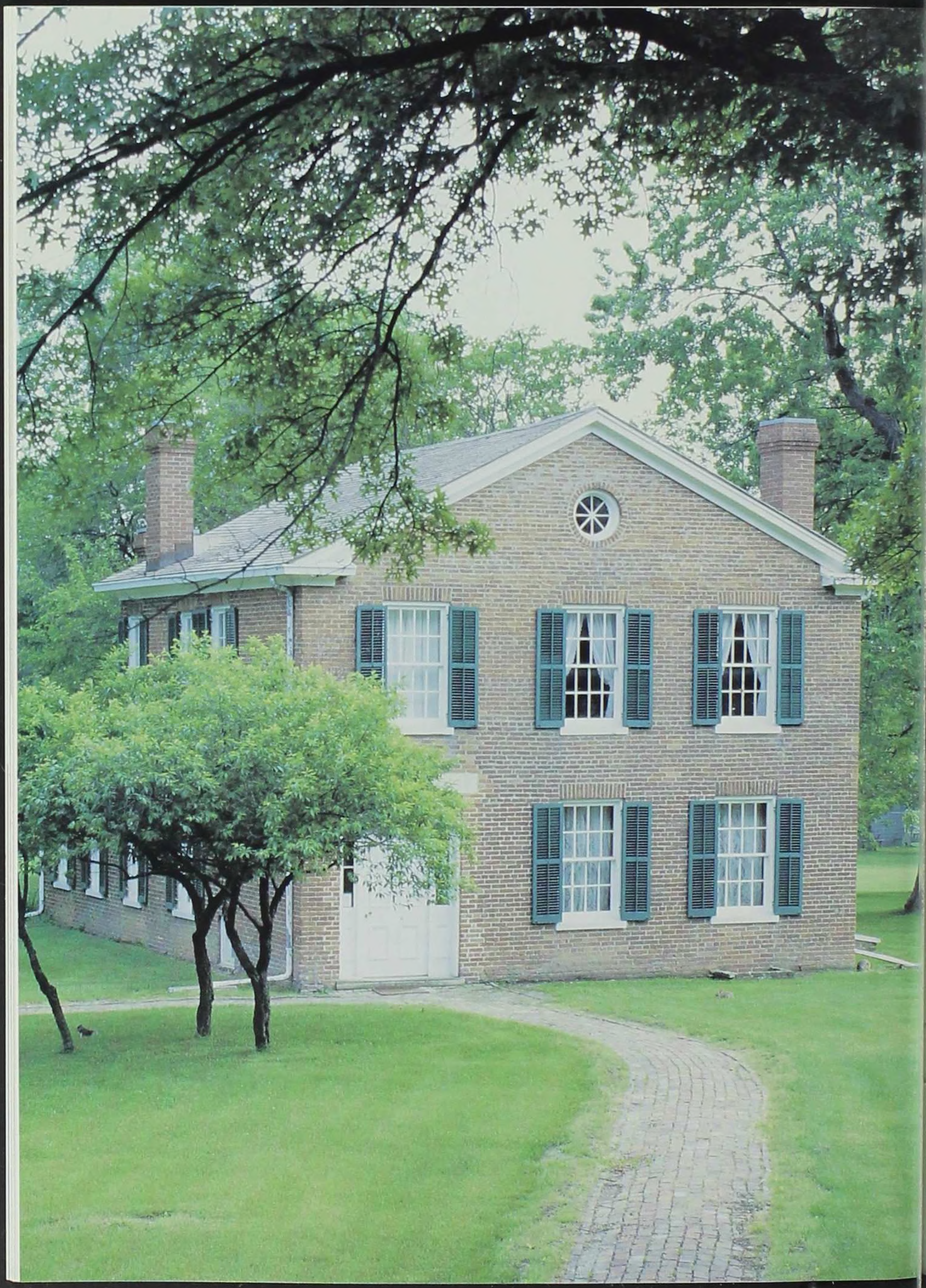
ing business. Land speculation was rampant and profitable.

Robert Lucas was never a wealthy man, although he was generally able to support his family in relatively comfortable circumstances. As governor of Iowa, he was paid $1500 a year, plus an additional $1000 for his duties as Superintendent of Indian Affairs to the Sauk and Mesquakie (Fox) tribes (although he had frequent disputes with the Department of the Treasury over expenses involved in carrying out these duties). The farm in Ohio surely contributed to the family treasury, and Lucas had purchased some two thousand acres in Muscatine County. (This land was registered jointly in Robert's and Friendly's names. Whether this fact reflects something about the nature of their relationship, Friendly's interest in financial matters, or territorial laws pertaining to married women and property, we do not know.) One of these farms, consisting of 348 acres, was given to Abigail in June 1840, perhaps as a wedding gift; in January 1841 two additional parcels (of 341 acres and 320 acres) were deeded over to Minerva and Susannah, respectively. The remaining 900-plus acres may have been sold to Lucas relatives, since by 1844 there was no longer any record of Friendly and Robert owning property in Muscatine County.

In 1841 the Lucas family suffered a change in circumstances. The Democrats had lost the 1840 presidential election, and the new president, William Henry Harrison, took the opportunity to appoint his old friend, John Chambers, as governor of Iowa Territory. Because of the difficulties in communications at that time, and the confusion accompanying Harrison's untimely death only a month after his March inauguration, it was mid-June before Lucas received the official notice of his replacement, although Chambers had arrived in Burlington on May 12 to assume his duties.

Lucas accepted the change-over without protest, but for the next several years he continued to carry on a lengthy correspondence with the federal government as to just when his tenure had ended (in March, when Chambers was appointed; in May, when Chambers assumed his office; or in June, when Lucas finally received official confirmation of his replacement) and whether or not he should be expected to pay back that portion of his salary that he had collected during the period under dispute. Eventually a compromise settlement was reached.

If Friendly expected the family to return to Ohio, she was disappointed. Instead, they moved to a two-story brick house in Bloomington, where Robert continued to interest himself in the development of the territory. The Democratic party was strong in Iowa, and



he appears to have had hopes of being elected governor once statehood was achieved. He served on various government committees and maintained his contacts with key political figures in Iowa City and Washington, D.C.. Friendly busied herself with family matters: Abigail (whose husband, Charles Nealley, was one of Bloomington's more prominent merchants) was expecting her first child. While Robert's daughter Minerva had five children already, little Clara, born in 1842, would be Friendly's first grandchild.

MEANWHILE, Susannah (or Susan, as she was generally called) had fallen in love with a young doctor from Baltimore, William L. Smith. He and Susan were married on October 17, 1842, but the marriage was not a success. Within six weeks, Susan had returned home. According to the Lucas family genealogist, Smith was ruled insane by a court presided over by Theodore Parvin, a close family friend and former secretary to Robert Lucas. Smith was sent back to Maryland for treatment early in 1843. A few months later the Lucas family returned to Ohio, taking Susan with them, and in August, Susan gave birth to a daughter, whom she named Florence Ashley Smith.

Ohio in 1843 was in an uproar over the banking issue, and Robert — ever a foe of banks and paper money — decided to reenter the Ohio political scene, running for Congress. His defeat seems to have confirmed his previous belief that his future lay not in Ohio, but in Iowa. In 1844 the Lucas family moved again to Iowa, selling their Ohio property — including Friendly Grove.

What Friendly thought of this decision, and what part if any she played in its making, we have no indication. It is possible, however, that during the hectic months of their final sojourn in Piketon she realized, as her husband did, that too much had changed in the four years they had been away. It would be impossible now to resume their old life; the time had come to move on. Aside from a short trip to Cincinnati in 1845, neither Robert nor Friendly (if she accompanied him at that time) appears to have visited Ohio again.

When they reached Bloomington, the Lucases discovered that William Smith was back in town, his "insanity" supposedly cured. Outraged to learn that his wife had gone to Ohio with her parents, he was suing her for divorce, blaming all their marital difficulties on her father's interference. Before the case could come to trial, however, Smith died (at age twenty-eight) of "congestion of the brain." His obituary in the *Bloomington Herald* of August 30, 1844, describes him as a "highly estimable citizen, kind and generous to a fault" — a judgment that his twenty-one-year-old widow and her parents must have questioned.

FROM Bloomington, the Lucases moved in 1844 to Iowa City, where the deeds to the 461-acre farm they had purchased earlier were officially registered in Friendly's name. Why this was done is a question no one but Friendly and her husband could answer. It may have been another instance of her strong-mindedness; in 1977 her grandson Edward Lucas speculated that she might not have trusted her husband to manage his own affairs. Or perhaps it was Robert's way of compensating her for the loss of Friendly Grove. Land speculation doesn't seem to have appealed to him much; most of the land that records show he purchased was eventually sold to his children or other family members for a nominal fee. The mineral spring on his town lot was never developed, and Friendly would sell that property nine years after his death. As a hard-money man, with little trust in banks, Lucas may have looked on land as the safest form of investment. Certainly his daughter Susannah appreciated the income from her Muscatine property, which enabled her to maintain a semblance of financial independence following her husband's death, even though she continued to live with her parents. It is even possible that Lucas, now in his sixty-third year, preferred to have the property registered in the name of his forty-eight-year-old wife, rather than go to the trouble of writing a

Opposite: Plum Grove in Iowa City. The Lucases built this home after Robert Lucas's term as territorial governor. Today, the home is a historic site.

PHOTO BY WARREN PARIS/PARIS CONCEPTS

PHOTO BY JAN NASH

Front parlor of Plum Grove in Iowa City. The Late Empire sofa (walnut veneer and horsehair upholstery) is believed to have belonged to Robert Lucas. Other furnishings also date to pre-1853; the rosewood melodeon, to 1840.

will (his will is not on file in the Johnson County courthouse).

ROBERT AND FRIENDLY Lucas built a small brick house on their new farm near Iowa City. Although it was less imposing than Friendly Grove, having only seven rooms in all, the house was comfortable and well-constructed in a vernacular version of the popular Greek Revival style. Because it was located in a grove of plum trees, it was eventually called Plum Grove. The farm prospered, and Robert continued to occupy himself with political affairs. In 1844 he served as a delegate to Iowa's constitutional convention. Although he was disappointed in failing to win his party's nomination for governor when Iowa became a state in 1846, he served on a number of important committees, including a stint from 1851/53 as vice president of the Board of Trustees of the proposed state university.

Friendly's life at Plum Grove would have followed the usual routine of a prosperous farm wife of her time; cooking, processing food (her daughter Abigail in 1850 wrote to request "some of Ma's fall butter for winter"), sewing, washing and ironing clothes for the family, cleaning house, and entertaining visitors. In Ohio, census records suggest she may have had hired help, but there is no mention of such a luxury at Plum Grove. With both Susan and Mary living at home she probably didn't need additional help, and Plum Grove, with its three small bedrooms, must have been crowded enough with just the family. There were frequent visits back and forth to Muscatine with Abigail's family, and with Minerva and Horatio and their children, who had moved to Iowa in 1844. Schooling for Mary was a concern; her cousin Laura Boyington wrote to Mary in 1846 that "I should like to be attending school with

you in Iowa City but that cannot be," and in 1850 Abigail sent Mary some information about a school she knew of in Muscatine. Friendly's "wonderful reputation as a cook" was reflected in her figure; "Aunt Friendly Lucas" would be remembered as "a large woman . . . she weighed perhaps two hundred pounds [with] a florid complexion and an ever ready tongue, an unquenchable fund of spirits and vigor."

Her sons were growing up. Edward worked in Iowa City as a clerk for Ezekiel Clark, who would become one of Iowa City's leading entrepreneurs, dealing in land, flour milling, meat packing, and banking. Soon Edward would be traveling to Des Moines as Clark's agent. In 1850 the youngest son, eighteen-year-old Robert Sumner (called "Bob") went to Muscatine to work for his brother-in-law, Charles Nealley.

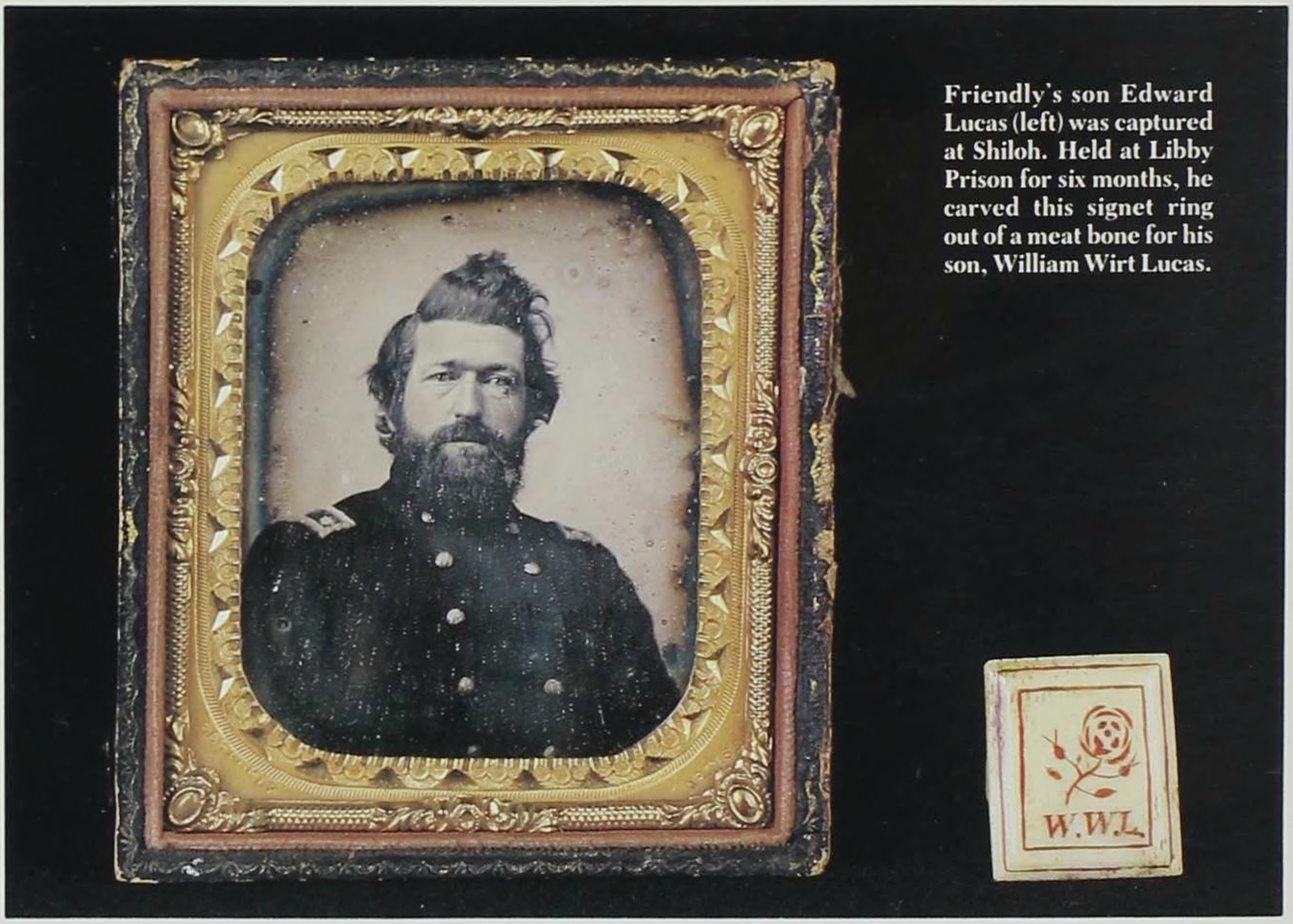
The year 1851 was a sad one for the Lucases. Their oldest daughter, Abigail, died in February following the birth of her fourth child. The baby died six months later. Robert wrote an acrostic poem to express his grief (combined, the first letters of each line spelled the grandchild's name). We can only guess at Friendly's feelings.

Edward married his employer's sister, Phoebe Clark, in 1852. Perhaps as a wedding gift, his parents transferred a third of the family farm to him in March of that year. Clarke made him a partner in the firm.

ROBERT Lucas died at home on February 7, 1853, at the age of seventy-one. After his death, Friendly continued to live at Plum Grove with her two daughters, her granddaughter Florence Ashley Smith, and her son Bob. In 1854 she

A Plum Grove bedroom. The walnut commode is believed to have belonged to the Lucases. The bed and various other items belonged to the family of Robert's sister, Lavisa Steenbergen. Furnishings suggest a pre-1853 decor.

PHOTO BY JAN NASH



Friendly's son Edward Lucas (left) was captured at Shiloh. Held at Libby Prison for six months, he carved this signet ring out of a meat bone for his son, William Wirt Lucas.

PHOTO BY CHUCK GREINER

deeded to Bob a second third of the family farm, including Plum Grove. Iowa City was growing rapidly; by 1856 the southern city limits would extend to Wyoming Road, which ran along the northern edge of the Lucas family property. This rapid urban growth may explain a remark in an 1854 letter by Friendly's sister, Rhoda Boyington, who reminded Friendly that "living in the City, it's not as if you lived on a farm."

Edward built a house on his portion of the farm in 1855 and settled down to farming. Apparently he shared his mother's love of horses, and was a prominent stock breeder; one of his horses, Ginter, was a famous race horse. In December 1855, Friendly transferred much of her remaining property to Mary, keeping for herself only a small eight-acre lot near Wyoming Road. Mary, who never married, continued to live with her mother and apparently rented or sold her farmland as circumstances dictated. Bob, who was married in 1857 to Ada Woods, sold off much of his land piecemeal. He platted out a section of the farm in 1856 as the Lucas Addition, and disposed of almost all of it over the next nine years. Whether Friendly approved of this or not is hard to say.

Friendly apparently moved out of Plum Grove in the late 1850s to a smaller house on her eight-acre lot that she shared with Mary; in the 1860 census, Friendly and her youngest daughter occupied one dwelling unit, while Bob with his family, his sister Susan and her daughter occupied another (probably Plum Grove). A rental agreement between Bob and his mother in 1864, concerning the eight-acre lot (the "same premises where [she] now resides"), refers to "two houses on the premises." This agreement reserved Friendly's right "to choose which one of the said two houses she will occupy from time to time as she may think fit," and set the rent at $50 per year, plus one third of the fruit, wood, fodder for one cow, and free access to the produce of the gardens for her private use.

THE CIVIL WAR affected the Lucas family as it did almost every other family in the nation. Edward served as a lieutenant colonel in the 14th Iowa Infantry regiment, was captured at Shiloh, and spent six months in Libby Prison. There is no record of Bob's serving in the army, but a letter to his wife from "camp" in Moscow, Tennessee, in November 1862 suggests that he may have seen some duty.

The postwar years brought more changes to Friendly's life. She was now almost seventy years old. Her generation was passing; her sister Rhoda had died in 1861, and Lavisa Steenbergen, the last of Robert's eleven brothers and sisters, died in 1865. Of Friendly's siblings, only Horatio is known to have outlived her. In 1865 Bob, too, left Iowa for Nebraska, later joined by his family. He wrote his mother an irritable letter from Omaha in August 1865: "I rec'd your letter today am very sorry your younger son [referring to himself] is so much trouble to you . . . if I had a few hundred dollars I could get along . . . I would like you to let my wife sell the house of mine to somebody that will move it off and record the deed you gave the children. You will have the place then without *molestation* if that will meet with your approbation I will not trouble you any farther . . . if I did not need the money so bad I would let the house remain and you might have the rent of it." The house referred to may have been Plum Grove, which was sold in August 1866. At that time, Friendly purchased a house near the center of Iowa City, in the 400 block of Jefferson Street, where she would live for the remainder of her life.

It is especially difficult to reconstruct Friendly's final years. Her son Edward continued to farm his land south of Iowa City, serving as the city's postmaster under the Johnson administration. Susan's daughter, Florence, married Augustus L. Clark in 1868, and Susan went to live with them. Samuel Kirkwood, Iowa's Civil War governor and brother-in-law of Edward's wife Phoebe, built a house just east of the Edward Lucas home. Friendly must have been welcome in all these places. She would have grieved with Edward and Phoebe at the deaths of their only daughter, ten-year-old Isabelle, in 1867, and their youngest son, nine-year-old Willie, of diphtheria in 1870. She may have corresponded with Bob and his growing family in Nebraska, and with Horatio and Minerva and their children, now spread from eastern Iowa to Missouri to Colorado. She would have enjoyed the increasingly urban life of Iowa City as it made the transition from territorial and state capital to busy commercial center to, later, university community. But no record of her activities after 1866 remains.

On December 18, 1873, the *Iowa City Daily Press* reported that "Mrs. Lucas, consort of Governor Robert Lucas and mother of Col. E. W. Lucas, died at her residence on Jefferson Street at nine this a.m. after a short illness." She was survived by four children, fifteen grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, her brother Horatio, her stepdaughter Minerva, and numerous nieces and nephews.

In 1941 the state of Iowa acquired her old home, Plum Grove, and has restored it as a historic site. Today a visitor can stand in the door of Friendly's kitchen and imagine her bulky figure leaning over the cast-iron stove, her face flushed with the heat, stirring a pot of her famous plum butter and proclaiming her opinions with vigor and animation. □

NOTE ON SOURCES

Primary sources consulted for this article include the Robert Lucas Papers (State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City); period Iowa newspapers; cemetery, marriage, and land records; Iowa and Ohio censuses; and city directories. Other sources include Betty P. Hall, *Governor Robert Lucas, His Ancestors and His Descendants* (La-Verne, CA, 1989); Betty Hall, comp., *Personal Letters of Robert Lucas, Governor of Iowa, and of his sister Lavisa Steenbergen*, 1809–1863 (Chino, CA., 1990); John Parish, *Robert Lucas* (Iowa City, 1907); James Keyes, *Pioneers of Scioto County* (1880); scrapbook compiled by National Society of Colonial Dames in Iowa (held at Plum Grove); "Charles Mason Comments on Candidates for Iowa's Governorship, 1845," intro. by Homer L. Calkin, *Annals of Iowa* (Summer 1981), p. 5; *The Palimpsest* (Jan. 1948); Division of Historic Preservation, *Plumb* (sic) *Grove: The Governor Robert Lucas Home* (Iowa City, 1977); Margaret Keyes, *19th Century Home Architecture of Iowa City* (Iowa City, 1966); Carl Witte, ed., *History of the State of Ohio*, vol. 3 (Columbus, 1941–44); and various Iowa histories. An annotated copy of this manuscript is held in the *Palimpsest* production files in the State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City).


Public
Use Center

Lowell Houser's Poetic Glass Mural in Des Moines

by Mary L. Meixner

IN A DECADE when the Great Depression and the threat of war created an austere and cautious economy, it was uncommon and courageous for a private corporation to construct headquarters that were state-of-the-art in efficiency and aesthetics. At 711 High Street in Des Moines, the Bankers Life Company did just that. Among the innovations was a new molded material called "poetic glass." Iowa artist Lowell Houser would use poetic glass to create enormous yet intricate murals. The concept would draw upon untapped American subject matter, encouraged by the 1930s mural movement; the medium, upon techniques developed by the scientists and glassmakers at the Corning Glass Works in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The design and symbolism would draw upon Houser's artistic interpretation of Native American mythology.

Born in Chicago in 1902 and raised in Ames, Lowell Houser left Iowa in 1922 to study at the Art Institute of Chicago. There he met artist Everett Gee Jackson, who became his lifelong friend. In 1923 they made their first visit to Mexico, a trip that would significantly influence Houser's art. Jackson's *Burros and Paintbrushes: A Mexican Adventure* chronicles their four years in Mexico. Soon settled in Chapala, an "overlooked paradise," Houser and Jackson began to paint and draw this "visual world of magic" and its "beautiful, happy, smiling, friendly people." Attracted to the native cultures in Mexico, Jackson wrote, "We felt that they were in touch with something eternal. . . . We had come to Mexico only to visit the Indians."

Houser and Jackson developed a deep respect and affinity for native culture, particularly that of the ancient Mayans. Jackson, in fact, remarked upon Houser's resemblance to an ancient Mayan — his profile sloped back like the distinctive Mayan profile (an elongation artificially induced in infancy). An Indian friend observed the same: "That one there," the Indian said, pointing to Houser, "in the high shoes, as you can see for yourself, has a head formed like those *idolos*" on nearby ruins. Jackson later wrote, "It was in this way that Lowell and I seemed to have acquired an Indian heritage, and I must admit, that on that day, as never before, we felt like Indians."

In 1927, Houser was invited to join the Carnegie Institute's archaeological team at the ancient Mayan monuments at Chichen-Itza in Yucatán. There, Houser joined artists Ann

Left: One panel of the three-part glass mural, created in 1939 for the Bankers Life building (now Corporate Square of The Principal Financial Group). Crowning the lobby entrance, the mural is visible (under the skywalk) at 711 High Street in Des Moines.

PHOTO BY CHUCK GREINER, FRONT PORCH STUDIO

Lowell Houser: "I am a little sorry to move out of the Maya field . . . it is so darned rich and so well suited to the round corners of your building."

Axtell Morris and Jean Charlot to record the art of the stone stelae as they were unearthed at the Temple of the Warriors. Tracing and transferring the designs, Houser was immersed in motifs and symbolism of the Mayan civilization. In a 1927 letter to Jackson, Houser reflected, "When I came I thought Maya art was primitive, now I think it is the most civilized that I know. In the collection of a rich family in Merida there is a Maya vase which dates probably to 400 or 600 A.D. in the period of the Old Empire of Guatemala, the earliest period by far, and the most perfect."

TWO YEARS EARLIER, in 1925, Houser and Jackson had been drawn to Mexico City to see the government-sponsored murals that Mexican artists Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco were painting on public buildings. Jackson admitted that his own "innocent impression was that they were like funny-paper drawings, only much more refined." But for Houser, the murals were significant and exciting. Certainly many other artists would agree. The vitality of the Mexican mural renaissance would bring many American artists to Mexico to study art, among them Glenn Chamberlain, who would be Houser's fellow artist for the Bankers Life project.

The Mexican mural movement of the 1920s fueled the surge of American mural art in the next decade. In early 1933, artist George Biddle wrote to his old classmate, President Franklin Roosevelt, "There is a matter which I have long pondered and which someday may interest your administration. The Mexican artists have produced the greatest national school of mural painting since the Italian Renaissance. Diego Rivera tells me that it was only possible because [Mexican president] Obregon allowed Mexican artists to work at plumber's wages in order to express on walls of the government buildings the social ideal of the Mexican revolution." Biddle's subsequent prospectus, "A Revival of Mural Painting," set the stage for the first United States government programs in the arts. Implemented by artist and Treasury Department official Edward Bruce, the important but short-lived Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) began to employ artists in late 1933. Early efforts were focused on embellishing public buildings.

Lowell Houser had returned to Iowa in time to become involved in the PWAP. He was part of Grant Wood's team of artists employed under a PWAP grant to create nine murals for the new library at Iowa State College in Ames. Houser worked on three panels depicting engineering. Despite Houser's technical engagement in these works, he cannot be regarded as a disciple of Wood. His fervor for mural art had already developed in Mexico.

In 1938 Houser installed his own mural project in the Ames post office. This mural was created through another government program, run by the Treasury Section of Fine Arts. In the mural Houser linked the images of an ancient Mayan cultivating corn and of a twentieth-century midwestern farmer. (See "The Ames Corn Mural, *Palimpsest* [January/February 1985].) Certainly Houser's monumental figures, space planes, and Mayan motifs in the post office mural reflect his earlier immersion in Mexican and ancient Mayan culture. These elements would also be revealed in his work for the Bankers Life building.

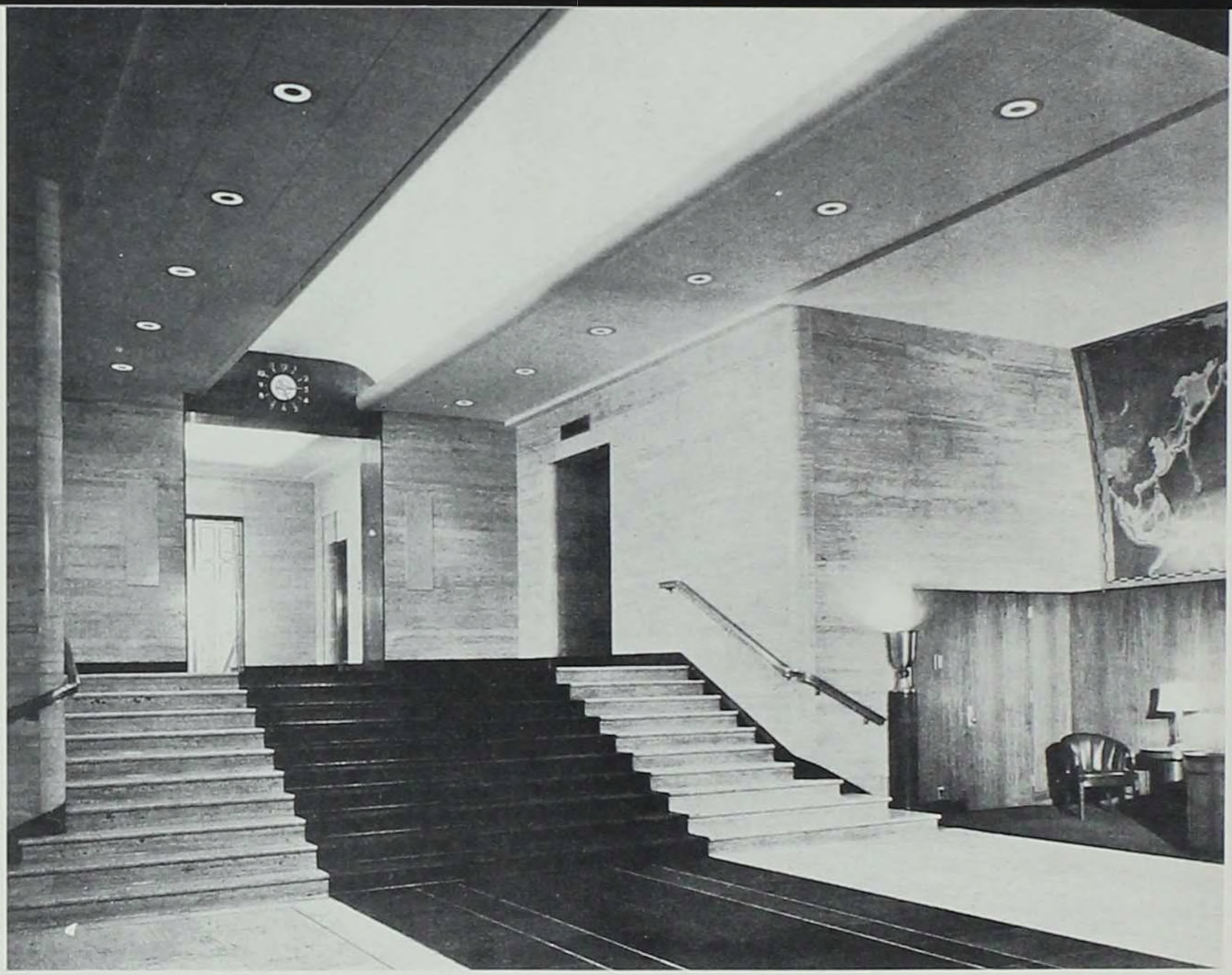
COURTESY THE PRINCIPAL FINANCIAL GROUP

Rounded corners, strong lines, and rectilinear shapes mark the building. The three glass murals (over each door) are recessed in a sheathe of rainbow granite. A walkway has since been built over this entrance.

THE NEW HOME OFFICE of Bankers Life Company (since renamed The Principal Financial Group) may well have been America's largest commercial building in 1939 under construction with private capital. Costing two million dollars, the insurance headquarters would be recognized for its technical innovations and its modern, Art Deco elements.

Leland A. McBroom was the head architect. The Des Moines firm of Tinsley, McBroom and Higgins had produced many modern structures in that city, among them the Des Moines Armory Building. Although McBroom was a popular residential architect in the 1920s in Des Moines — he designed many of the large revivalist-style homes south of Grand Avenue — he proved himself well-versed in modern design of public structures.

For Bankers Life, McBroom planned a building of aesthetic quality as well as spaciousness, efficiency, and adaptability. *Archi-*



ARCHITECTURAL RECORD (JUNE 1940)

Architectural Record **noted "the subdued but harmonious surface treatment" of the main lobby, designed for "minimum cross traffic and conflict." Bronze designs for doors and elevators were by Houser and Chamberlain.**

tectural Record would later report, "Special attention has been given to proper acoustics, color, atmosphere, etc., for employee efficiency." On five of the seven floors, unusually large, open workrooms spanned up to 235 feet; no interior columns broke up the rooms. Coffered light fixtures kept the ceilings uncluttered. Natural illumination entered through casement windows surrounded by glass block framed in bronze. Most interior walls were removable steel panels rather than plaster, built at one-fifth the cost. Rooms had rounded corners for efficient housekeeping. Centralized air-conditioning was combined with perimeter warming and cooling systems, especially planned for Iowa's temperature extremes. Two inches of cork insulated the outer walls. An innovative foundation accommodated the sandy soil of Des Moines; the spread footing and reinforced basement wall worked together, in essence, as a beam. The staff of nearly six hundred could enjoy special facilities — a clubroom, a kitchen, a gymnasium, and rooftop gardens and terraces above the auditorium. There was also an RCA sound system for the entire building, and a pneumatic tube system would whisk documents from one department to another.

Inside and out, the building was a prime example of Art Deco, forgoing naturalism for rectilinear, clean-cut, unsentimental lines. Geometric in ornamentation, its sleek severities made use of smooth surfaces such as polished granite, and materials such as steel, chromium, Vitralite, hollow glass block, rubber tile, and architectural glass.

McBroom had found a prototype for these innovations in an outstanding example of modern architecture in New York City. Constructed from 1931 to 1947, Rockefeller Center was quintessentially Art Deco. Covering thirteen acres, this city within a city included fourteen buildings — offices, retail stores, entertainment, a studio, restaurants, and a public

skating rink. Museum-quality artworks, by thirty outstanding artists, conveyed the theme "New Frontiers" throughout the complex.

Rockefeller Center's artwork included murals and molded friezes of a new medium pioneered by Frederick Carder. This material was marketed as "PC Architectural Glass" by the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company, of which Pittsburgh-Corning was an affiliate. Carder's fame as a glass designer and technician spanned eighty years. A co-founder of Steuben Glass Works, he had joined Corning as its art director when Steuben became a division of Corning. In 1933 the company was reorganized with more emphasis on creating original, fine art glassworks.

In 1932 the architects at Rockefeller Center asked Carder and his associates to plan works for their RCA Building. Carder had already experimented with glass casting in ceramic molds and, with Eugene C. Sullivan, had invented Pyrex (which they used for a two-hundred-inch reflecting telescope disc at Mt. Palomar).

The glass used for the frieze on the RCA Building was clear Pyrex. Carder then developed Number 712 "Carder soft Pyrex," which gave an appearance of onyx since it was more translucent than transparent. The glassmakers called it "poetic glass." It was first used in works designed by Italian sculptor Attilio Piccirilli and can still be seen in a massive mural at the Fifth Avenue entrance of the International Building of Rockefeller Center.

In Iowa, McBroom's desire to embellish the Bankers Life building with glass murals was inspired by the effect of this handsome material, as well as by the theme of New Frontiers, which used figurative art in the mural tradition. Today, buildings on Fifth Avenue in New York and on High Street in Des Moines preserve the only poetic glass artwork to survive the Art Deco period.

ARCHITECT McBROOM had envisioned the Bankers Life mural as recessed over a bronze-fitted entrance and illuminated from within. The design would call for mural-sized relief sculptures, with the added intrigue of

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD (JUNE 1940)

No columns or walls broke up spacious workrooms.

using the new glass as the material. McBroom sought out two gifted, young artists with proven mural experience. His wife knew well the work of artists Lowell Houser and Glenn Chamberlain. Louise Garst McBroom was a painter active in Des Moines art circles. She was chairperson of the Art Student's Workshop's Executive Committee and had hired Houser to teach life drawing from 1934 to 1936. (At the same time, Houser began teaching in the engineering department at Iowa State College.) In 1937 Louise McBroom was the state art director for professional projects of the WPA and had awarded Glenn Chamberlain and George Grooms a mural commission for Callanan Junior High School in Des Moines.

A Missouri native, and graduate of Roosevelt High School in Des Moines, Glenn Chamberlain was well aware of mural art and federal artists' programs. He had spent a summer at Stone City in Grant Wood's artist colony, and had taken Art Workshop classes in Des Moines taught by Houser and Adrian Dornbush (a prominent Iowa painter who had also been at Stone City). Chamberlain was only nineteen when Eleanor Roosevelt chose his watercolor "Country Road" to hang in the White House. He had spent a summer at Kansas State Park as

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD (JUNE 1940)

Des Moines architect Leland McBroom: "The building was designed to be the most efficient building to house an insurance company that we could conceive."

one of one hundred artists in the nation selected for enrollment in the Civilian Conservation Corps. He was invited to the Bankers Life project while studying with American sculptor William Zorach in New York.

Houser's design would be the chief exterior feature at the south main entrance. The mural would comprise three twelve-foot high panels. These would portray American Indian gods of nature, and human figures applying the gifts of nature to modern technology. Complementing Houser's mural would be Chamberlain's pair of six-by-six-foot glass octagons. Set above the side entrances, Chamberlain's design would celebrate the human family unit. He would also design a large limestone relief panel above the auditorium.

Both Houser and Chamberlain responded to McBroom's theme in the spirit of the 1930s mural movement. Artists involved in the movement were expected to make visual statements about America — its people, its work ethic, and its technology. As public art, most murals were representational in subject matter. Classic European sources for themes were discouraged; American artists did not want to borrow or derive ideas from another tradition. Houser's theme, which had been suggested by the insurance company, would honor Native American Indians, and American workers engaged in diverse industries.

For Houser, assigned to depict the Plains Indian, there would be considerable research. In Yucatán, Houser had developed styles strongly influenced by the ancient Mayan art and by daily interactions with the native people. Although Houser would retain his stylistic devices, his search for American Indian mythology would center on material largely written by white men. These sources have been credited for preserving Indian culture, but their limitations are recognized today. Although the subsequent mural design reflected contemporary awareness and understanding of American Indian culture, Houser's artistic interpretations of the Indian gods reflect power, dignity, and a physical presence that should not today be equated with any intent to stereotype.

A CACHE OF LETTERS between McBroom the architect and Houser the artist chronicle the design and production of the glass mural from September 1938 to April 1939, during which time Houser had begun to teach at San Diego State College under his old friend, Everett Gee Jackson, head of the art department. The letters affirm Houser's disciplined creative process, his reluctance to send work with which he was not thoroughly satisfied, and yet an easy-going acceptance of burdensome changes. They also reveal details of the collaboration between artist, architect, and insurance executive.

Houser's first design concept for the mural depicted a Mayan Indian. McBroom was fully in accord — but not the executive committee of Bankers Life. From the first, Bankers Life president Gerard S. Nollen and vice-president and actuary E. M. McConney had wanted American Indian mythology as a theme. McBroom explained to Houser, "I don't think we would go so far wrong with their suggestion. Mr. McConney has been going into the matter

of the American Indian folklore and symbolism with his usual thoroughness and has found very many interesting myths and symbols . . . he has had a photostat made of a great many Indians in costume showing the beartooth necklaces, head decorations . . . and of their hieroglyphs and their meanings. There is also enclosed [Carl] Milles' Indian in the St. Paul City hall. I rather think they would get away from the extreme grotesque of this head. You can see that Milles has been rather free with his use of symbols, particularly in the headdress of the crouching Indians. Knowing your thoroughness, I feel sure you will get all this information." (Even though Carl Milles's design, installed in 1931, had received national acclaim, it is not likely that McBroom or Houser knew that the Swedish sculptor had first consulted Frederick Carder at Corning Glass Works about casting a free-standing Indian figure on a rotating base. This would have been the largest free-standing glass monument in the world. But although a St. Paul delegation approved Milles's and Carder's preliminary work in molded glass, the work was later assigned to Minnesota artists, who carved the thirty-five-foot figure out of Mexican onyx.)

Houser studied the research and wrote back, "The material seems very good and I think we are going to get a design that in the end we will all like . . . I am getting pretty interested in the Algonquin slant on things. Is it alright to go on with the general idea of big god figures behind the little men doing things? If it is I can be working at studies of the men while I'm absorbing the material to use for the god figures."

By studies, Houser meant he would create the poses needed by drawing from live models and using his thorough knowledge of anatomy. His draftsmanship was based upon the only requisite for drawing, an understanding of form. Although drawing today is more broadly defined, Houser was a traditionalist in using form to create an illusion of reality.

That summer, while still in Iowa, Houser had asked an architecture student, Karl Winkler, to be a model for the mural design. "I posed for all the figures done by Lowell for the glass castings above the main south entrance," Winkler recalled. "[This] was during a period of 3-4 weeks generally on Saturdays in Ames. I think there were a dozen different poses used in the glass relief. Some were like twisting a pipe with a pipe wrench or pulling or pushing. I remember posing, motionless, for fifteen minutes, then having a five minute break. I remember Lowell even continued to make sketches as I rested. They were done quickly and superbly."

BY THE END of September the committee had approved eventual payment of six thousand dollars for Houser and Chamberlain. Some of this would pay for clay, models, an assistant, and other supplies. "Before entering into a final agreement," McBroom explained to Houser, "they would like to see your modified design using the American Indian motif in place of the Mayan . . . show the change in the heads only and send them out to us."

At the construction site, a huge modeling studio had been built, "25 feet high with block and tackle to raise and lower the models, north light, and all that sort of thing," as McBroom described it. He also outlined a procedure to accommodate Houser's teaching duties in California to the construction schedule in Des Moines. "What I had in mind," McBroom detailed, "was for Glenn to go ahead with his two octagonal panels in the full-size model. In the meantime you can be working on your full-size cartoons [the working drawings] . . . Glenn can work on the study for the stone carved sculpture over the auditorium and then will be on the three main entrance panels," creating a clay model from Houser's cartoons.

In San Diego, Houser continued studying Plains Indian mythology and revising the design. "In the end," he wrote, "it might be best to not particularize too much on any tribe — but make the god figure sort of generally Indian." But he insisted that the Mayan civilization was the primordial source for all Indian mythology. "I am a little sorry to move out of the Maya field, because I think it is so darned rich and so well suited to the round corners of your building. And if the building committee only knew it, it has a real meaning for their

COURTESY GLENN CHAMBERLAIN

midwest building because it was the fountainhead of all Indian culture, as the Greek was of most European. . . . But don't get me wrong, I don't mind moving out to the 'provinces'."

By October McBroom and the artists were anxious for a proof that would reveal surface detail and show how the panels would look in light-refracting glass. But a proof made of glass was unfeasible at this stage. The solution arose when Russell Cowles, a former Des Moines artist then working in New York, visited the studio. He suggested that lime gelatin might work. So buckets of green Jell-o gelatin were poured into the wood-framed mold to produce a glassy — if perishable — proof. Chamberlain later acknowledged that "the jello casting did give us a fair idea of how the glass cast would look."

A month later, McBroom prodded Houser for rough sketches. Houser reluctantly sent a drawing: "But I hate to let it go — as you know I always thought of the thing as a very flat and blocky construction. But it seems I always have to go through this naturalistic style before I can get to see the thing in the way I want to . . . I hope you can see thru the naturalism to the design that I hope is under it. I went easy on the Indian cast of features but if they want more of the buffalo nickel Indian, o.k. I can supply it — as you can see I changed the whole Indian figure a good deal. It seemed to me that I had to. At first I thought I would just sketch a different type of Indian face on the old setup but when I did he seemed to be wearing a mask!"

The committee was pleased, but not McBroom. "I do not like it nearly so well as I did the Mayan head," he wrote Houser. "I think the symbolism in its arrangement is swell, but the Indian is too much of an individual Indian, Big Chief Blackhawk, or some other guy, rather than an impersonal god figure, dispensing forth his good and bad to the people who use his gift. That is my principal criticism."

He continued, "I realize how difficult it is to do a creative thing having someone tell you what to do and how to do it. More particularly I would like to see the head more that of a god than an Indian . . . I realize that the Indian of the northern part of the U.S. did not represent his gods in human form so it might be difficult . . . would it be possible to make the human figures larger and have the shoulders of the Indian sort of grow out of the glass as from a mist eliminating the feet and the lower part of the body, then filling the space to some better advantage, between the verticals and the beginning of the small figures?

"Glenny is getting along famously with his study of the stone carving and his other panels," McBroom added. "We had some difficulty with the proper kind of clay but we soon had that corrected."

Houser valued McBroom's innate aesthetic sense. "I was not at all pleased with what I sent you," Houser wrote back. "But I was confused by several ideas that didn't seem to fit together — your taste for the architectural qualities and that of the fellow on the board who showed me a nickel so that I could see how Indians really looked."

In a temporary studio, Chamberlain (in photo) made clay molds of the designs Houser sent from San Diego.

BY FEBRUARY McBroom needed the full-scale art. He decided to take the train out to Los Angeles to meet with Houser over a long weekend. McBroom planned "to work like the devil to bring things to a point where the sketches meet with your approval, mine, and the Bankers Life Committee." The session was successful, and all appeared well.

But all was not well. Back in Des Moines, McBroom hung the drawings in the big temporary studio on view for staff and visitors. A murmur of objection began to grow. McBroom sent Houser a telegram announcing a "great furor" over the twelve naked men in the mural.

Houser responded, "I just now got your wire about the pants. And they go on at once! I know this must be some unexpected angle. Tell me about it. A 'great furor' sounds like much excitement. It's too bad that we didn't know about it sooner. We could have saved an awful

(Article continues on page 44. On next page: Houser's symbolism.)

Houser's Symbolism

Houser's working drawings for the three murals.

Houser's panels depict a Native American fire god and water god flanking a center pair, earth mother god and sky god. The unifying element of a vertical core of fire, earth, and water descends from the godheads to two levels of human figures, which portray earth's contributions to the welfare of humans, their debt to the fire god and dependence on water. Houser's summary follows:

"The Indians thought of the natural elements — fire, sky, and running water — as masculine in character. The earth was considered feminine. Fire and sky had to do with war, and earth and water with peace.

"There was a cosmic marriage between earth and sky, and birds were the messengers between them. The earth mother was called 'Nakomis' by the Algonquins. The corn spirit was the daughter of the earth.

"In the center panel the earth holds in her hands the symbols of fruits and flowers, and wears a necklace of 'mountain' designs, and of butterfly designs (symbol of everlasting life).

"The sky holds between his hands at the top, the symbol of the milky way, under it, the rainbow, then the cloud serpent, and under that, the sky band.

"The small figures represent at the bottom left, mining, at bottom right, petroleum production, above at left, agriculture, and at right, forestry.

"In the panel on the left hand side, the fire god wears a necklace of bear teeth and a hunter's headdress of deer hair and antlers. In Iroquois myth, Ioskeha or 'Light One' wears the horns of a stag, and he and Michabo, of the Algonquins, as gods of light and fire are great hunters and fight with the west wind, darkness.

"Behind the fire god is his symbol, the sun design, and he holds in his hand the water spider that first brought fire to man.

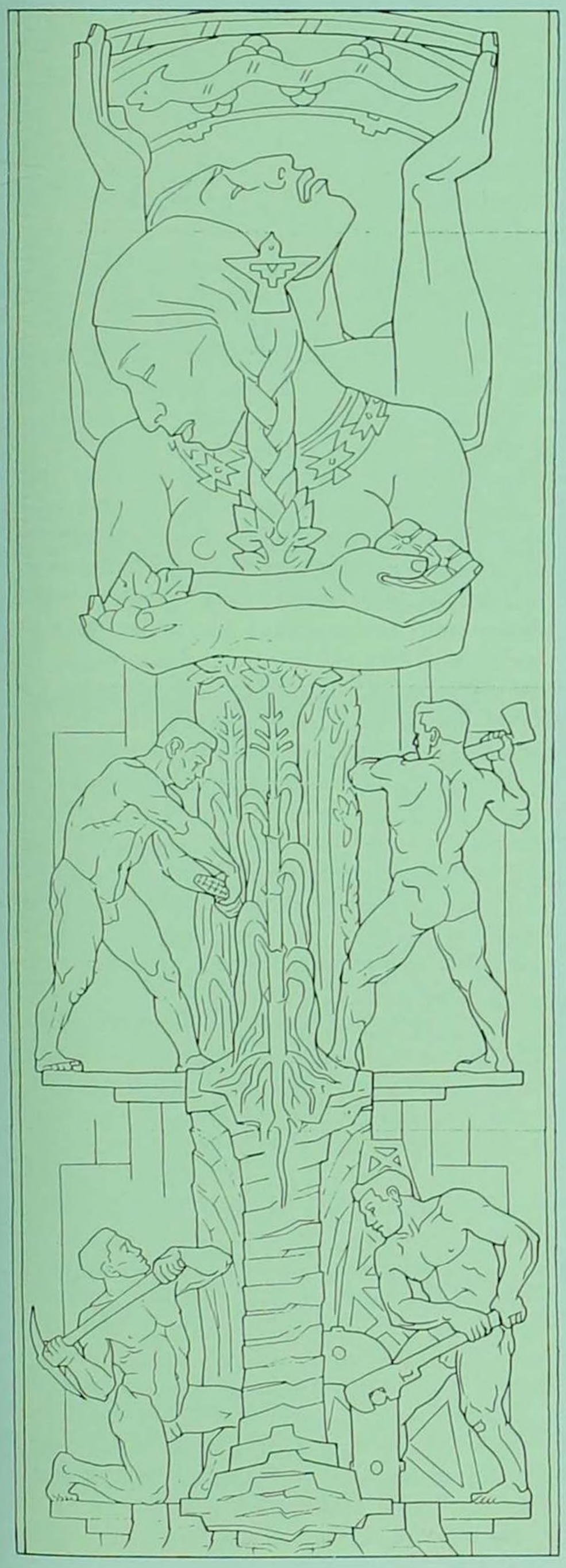
"The small figures represent at the bottom left, man using heat for power, the Diesel engine, at the bottom right, the vulcanizing of rubber for tires, combined with man's use of combustion engines for transportation. Above left, man uses heat for manufacturing metal objects, and at right to warm himself.

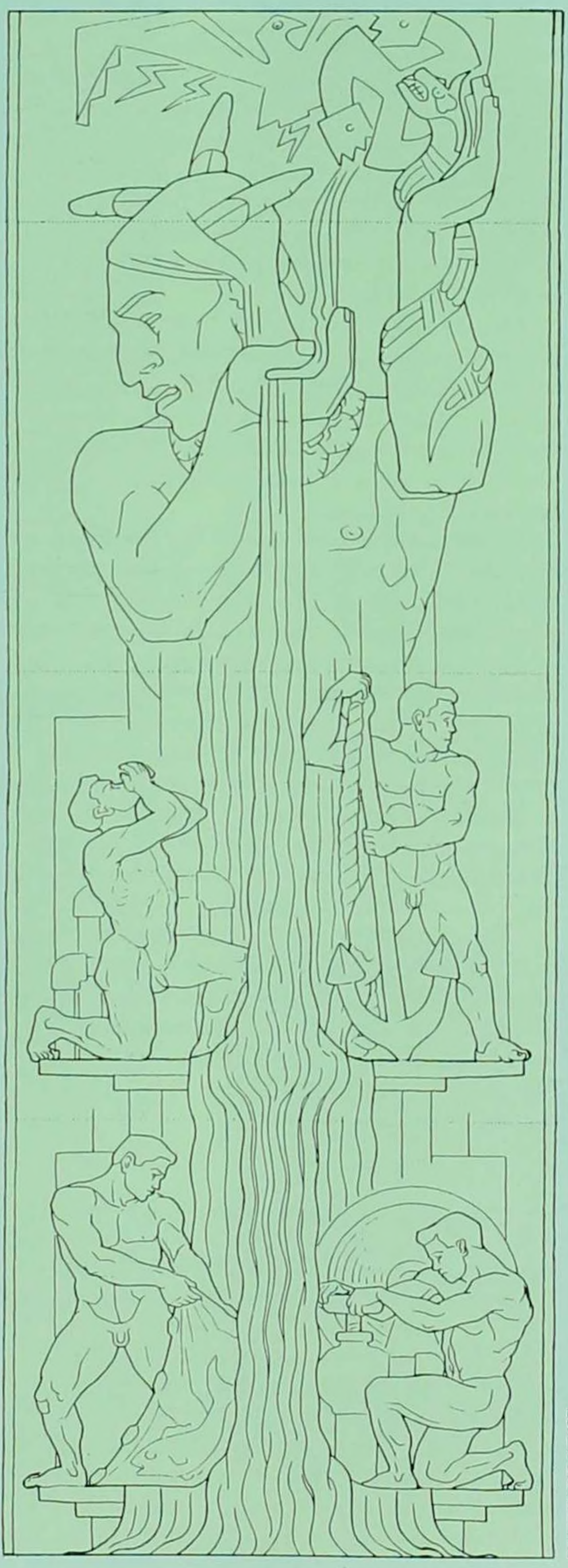
"In the panel on the right hand side, the water god wears in his hair the four feathers symbolizing the four winds which the Indians use in their prayers for rain. Over his arm crawls the serpent, symbol of water. The Algonquins believed that 'the horned prince of serpents' lived in the Great Lakes.

"Behind the serpent's head is the sign 'Avany,' giver of water and the thunder bird appears above the four feathers of the winds. The Indians believed that the water god and the thunder birds were in constant strife which caused the weather changes which accompany the different seasons, and that from this struggle came the rain.

"The small figures represent, at the bottom left, fishing, at the bottom right, water for power, and above left, water to drink, and above right, navigation.

"The Indian types used in the panels may be found in 'The Mound Builders' by Henry Clyde Shetrone, the 'Blackfeet Indians' by Winold Reiss, 'Indians of the Plains' by Clark Wissler, American Museum of Natural History, NY." [Houser also cited Hartley Burr Alexander, Herbert J. Spinden, Lewis Spence, George Catlin, (?) Olcott, and an illustration from E. M. McConney.]





COURTESY THE AUTHOR

(*continued from page 41*)
lot of time and some money. Overalls are a lot easier to draw than anatomy and the models are cheaper. I just happened to think, that this puts us in a class with Michelangelo — in one respect, anyhow! I think he ran into the same difficulty!" (Michelangelo's free-standing, colossal David wore a fig leaf for several centuries until the sculpture was restored to its original modeling.)

Houser asked McBroom to tell the insurance executives "that I am eager to do whatever they want, but in this respect, I'd like to do it just once." It was April by now and not a welcome time for changes; Houser was working with his students to create a mural for the San Francisco world's fair that year.

McBroom tried to clarify the problem for Houser: "You probably think we are crazy out here, but some of the men thought that we should put pants on the workers, because some of the old maids at the company made a fuss about the appendages on the men. When word got back to the directors they felt that the designs you made were so beautiful that it would be almost criminal to spoil them. I agree with them absolutely . . . I have never seen designs which are so universally accepted as beautiful by both people whose background has been art and by laymen.

"The committee feels as I do, that the design is too beautiful to be destroyed because of silly ideas that might be in the minds of people, but if you can in some way exercise some concealment it would help the situation . . . the idea is not to ruin the design."

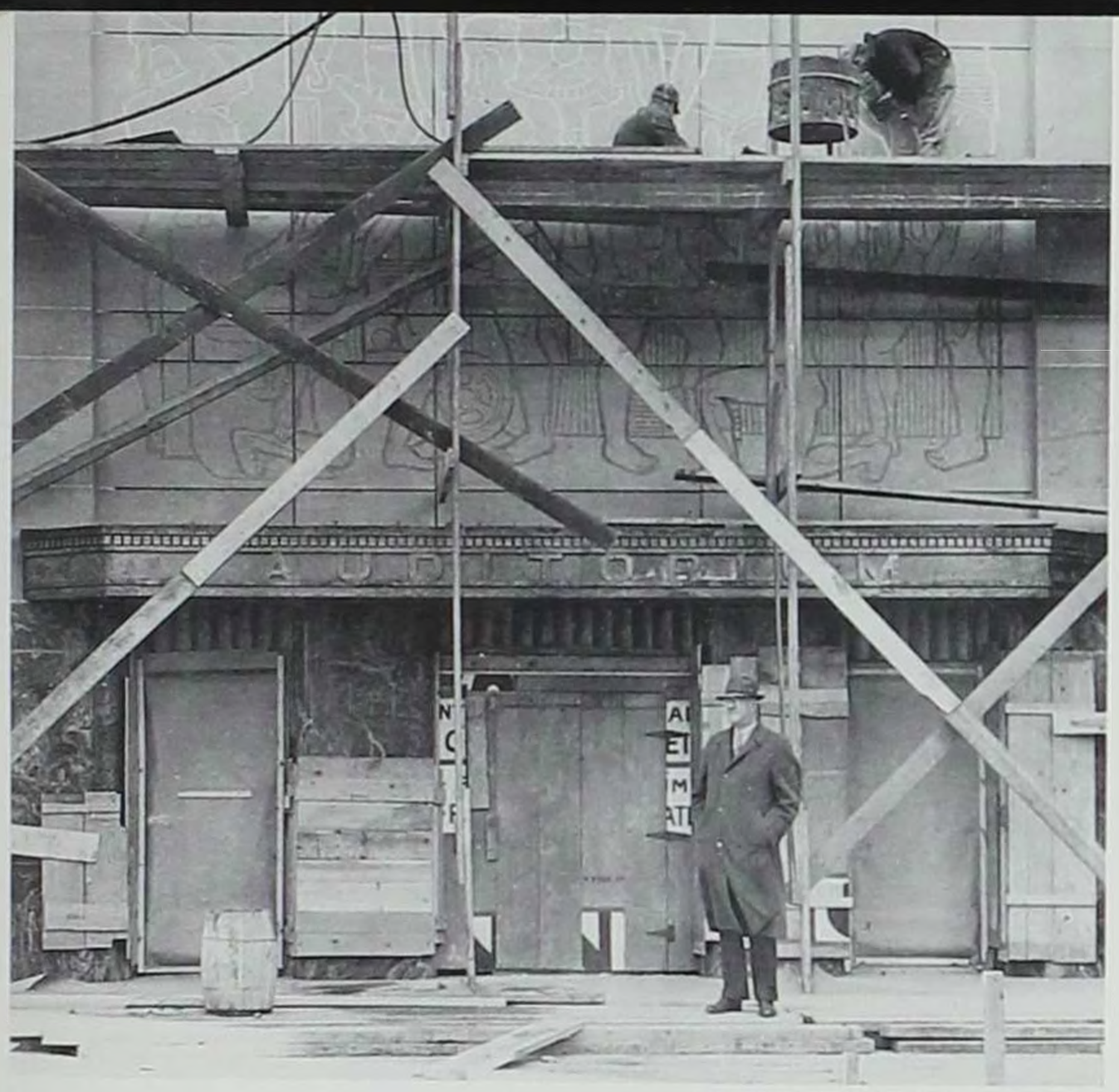
HOUSER HAD EXPLORED ways to enlarge his three panel drawings to their full height of twelve feet. Even the smaller figures would be four feet tall in the finished mural. A photostatic enlargement to that size would distort the image. A process using glass plates was prohibitive in cost, and Houser was running out of cash. Using a proportional grid was tedious but accurate. McBroom recommended the last option: "Regarding your method of blowing them up, I think the good old hand method is the best, even though it does represent some extra time and care. As soon as you get your full-size cartoons Glenn can start. I think the first thing to do would be the center panel. Keep in mind in making the full size that the model shrinks ½ inch in every 4 foot. Your drawings should be overscaled to that degree."

McBroom detailed a final payment plan, more rewarding than the original. "You will be sent immediately $120.00 which will repay you for your time and models to date," he explained. "You will keep time on the work you do and be paid on the work out there on the basis of $30. a week based on a 35 hour week. Glenn will be paid here on the same basis, in summer, $30. a week. The Bankers Life will pay all costs and expenses incurred in the work, including clay, frames, easels, place to work, plaster; and minor items like tools, pencils, models will be paid by you and Glenn. At the end of the work you will receive between you $5000 and if you need money, that can be drawn upon before the work is completed."

He added, "I realize that if some man no more able than you and Glenn have shown yourselves to be but with a well-known reputation were to do the work, his charges would be considerably more than this sum. On the other hand, the value to you as placing you in that position for future work would seem to be considerable."

Delighted with the new terms, Houser and Chamberlain signed their contracts. Houser felt he should pay for enlarging the drawings: "I would be glad to do that, just as I probably should stand for the expense of the models. But no got cash . . . I was surprised when I figured it up at how much it had been. I went through all my sketches of action figures from the model and estimated how much time I had spent on each. I started with those I had made weekends when I was home last summer . . . a lot of those were of actions that we didn't use, and some of them I had to duplicate because they were the first drawings I sent in to you from out here."

Later he wrote, "I don't think the Bankers Life should pay for the [architectural] renderings that Karl Winkler made unless they particularly want to. It was all my idea to hire him.

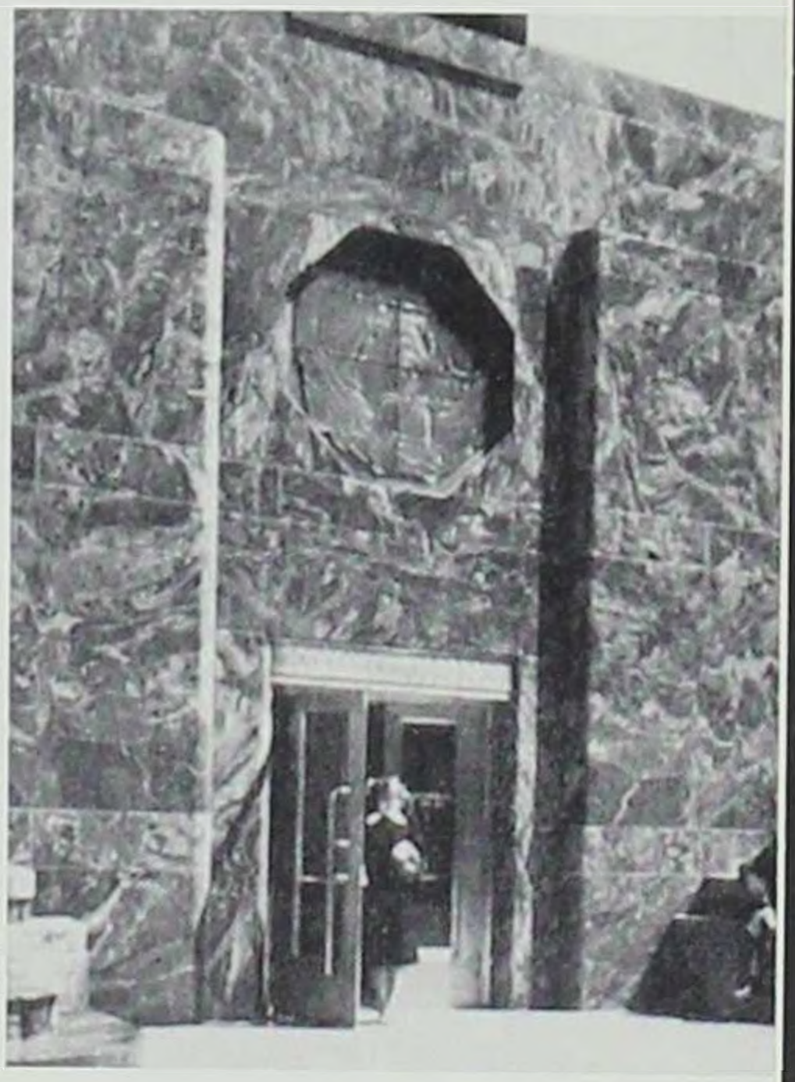


COURTESY THE PRINCIPAL FINANCIAL GROUP

COURTESY GLENN CHAMBERLAIN

COURTESY THE AUTHOR

Glenn Chamberlain (above) designed a family grouping for two octagonal poetic glass murals over the east and west entrances (bottom right). Shown in the mold (bottom left), the design depicts the theme of protecting and nurturing — "the nature of insurance," Chamberlain explained. Top left: Scaffolding hides Chamberlain's emerging limestone carving over the auditorium entrance. The massive carving, stored since a 1975 addition, has been reinstalled over an interior auditorium entrance.



ARCHITECTURAL RECORD (JUNE 1940)

But in case they want to know I paid him $35.00 for the job."

Winkler, the Iowa State architecture student who had also posed for Houser, remembered his first day on the job with Tinsley, McBroom and Higgins: "The studio was very tall because of the height of the work and had large, high windows along the north wall. The place was a conglomerate of scaffolds, tables, canvas and I remember a pedestal, supporting a block of stone which Glenn was carving — titled 'Love' [an independent work]. My job was to produce a rendering of the front of the building, south elevation, which would show the relation of Lowell's work to the architecture of the building."

DURING THE SUMMER of 1939, Houser returned to Des Moines to work with Chamberlain, whose role had been to execute Houser's design and to create his own designs for the glass octagons and the limestone carving. Chamberlain wrote later of his own figurative work: "The theme [in the octagons] is simply the family and the nature of protection and nurturing — which implies the nature of insurance. The limestone carving [over the auditorium entrance] has the rather grandiose theme of agriculture and industry, science and invention." Here, the central figures are a woman with a scythe and a man with a wrench. Two children look up toward an airplane and a bird. They are flanked by two figures carrying lumber and tools.

"As to Lowell's designs," Chamberlain later explained, "I transferred his large drawings onto two-inch deep panels of smooth Plasticine and then carved and modeled the designs. I then made plaster casts of the finished Plasticine models and sent them to Corning Glass."

At Pittsburgh, fine-grained cast-iron molds would be made from the plaster casts. Heated to six hundred degrees centigrade, the molds would be ready to receive the molten glass treated with chromium compounds to achieve the green color. This poetic glass, a special form of Pyrex, was not poured mechanically from a feeder channel, but was "hand-gathered" from pots. Pot furnaces held a series of carefully prepared clay pots, into which the raw material was shoveled and melted. The molten glass was then gathered on an iron rod with a ball-shaped end and was run off into the mold in small amounts. Small imperfections and bubbles were allowed to break up the clearness of the Pyrex base; this gave a sense of fluidity and movement and a hand-molded look.

Resistant to heat, chemicals, and electricity, Pyrex glass has a low coefficient of expansion to resist sudden extremes of temperature without cracking or exerting undue pressure on a surrounding framework. Since depth of the molding could vary from three to seven inches, the annealing, or cooling, process, was a critical step for murals. Because the surface cooled first, it could crack or explode. A special process had been developed that spread a heat-insulating material over the surface to keep the casting hot until a uniform temperature was maintained.

The molds could be no larger than four feet by four feet. Each of Houser's three twelve-foot panels was therefore poured in four sections, and Chamberlain's two identical octagons were poured in four sections each. The final step, therefore, was to join the sections of each work with a special transparent synthetic resin made by Du Pont that had nearly the same refractory power as the glass — thus creating an illusion of a huge, unbroken span of glass.

Molding poetic glass was a costly art form. Chamberlain recently estimated that the Bankers Life murals cost perhaps ten thousand dollars in 1939. (In comparison, Piccirilli's mural at Rockefeller Center cost sixteen thousand dollars.) The cost of the process made it a phenomenon of the Art Deco period.

DURING THE SUMMER when the murals were cast, Houser's personal life was in turmoil. Working overtime on the Bankers Life project, he lived in a hotel with his father, who had suffered a paralytic stroke. His mother had been operated on for cancer. At the end of the summer, he was faced with closing their house in Ames and moving both parents out to San Diego.

The new building was designed with the employees' welfare in mind. Unusual for its day, Bankers Life provided for its workers this sleek, colorful clubroom, as well as a kitchen, gym, and locker room.

Although he had been sought out for more federal post office murals (one in Waterloo, Iowa, and one about the Mound-Builder Indians in Piggott, Arkansas), he acknowledged that these projects were beyond him now. He wrote Edward Rowan of the Treasury Section of Fine Arts, which awarded mural contracts, "All of the time that I have outside my teaching job at the college has gone into keeping things going at home."

After that summer, little documentation exists about the completion or installation of the glass murals. (A film made during the glass pouring has not been located.) The Bankers Life building seemed to be progressing well, judging from McBroom's comments to an editor at *Architectural Record*. In February 1940 he wrote, "I have never seen a piece of architecture which seems to meet with such universal approval by all types of people. Needless to say, it gives us quite a kick." Set in place above the entrance, Houser's murals complemented the rounded edges of the polished rainbow granite that sheathed the base of the building, further softening the bulk of its cubic mass.

In late March of 1940 Bankers Life employees moved into the building, and in mid-April the public was invited to a three-day open house. Two hundred guides were available to give tours of the building, but still only four thousand visitors could be accommodated. In opening remarks at the weekend dedication, the president of Bankers Life extolled, "There is much in the building which is sheer beauty . . . the entrance is of striking impressiveness." A newspaper story echoed these thoughts: "the entrance to the building, too, is of a striking impressiveness which harmonizes with the importance of one of the nation's greatest insurance companies." The *Des Moines Sunday Register* devoted half of a special twenty-page rotogravure section to the building. The national magazine *Architectural Record* devoted over twenty pages to a four-part presentation on the building. "Perhaps every decade or so," the editor wrote, "a farsighted and fortunate architect finds an equally farsighted client with whom he is able to work

in so unhampered and constructive a way that the resultant building actually sets a new standard and serves as a challenge to all concerned with architectural progress. . . . The exterior architectural treatment here is no sentimental wrapping superimposed on and disguising the structural and functional features of the building. The beauty of the finished structure, rather, derives from and grows out of the highest respect for these features."

SOON AFTER the completion of the building in 1940, and faced with ill health, McBroom and his wife sold their home, possessions, and art collection and began a year-long cruise in the Caribbean. They were venturing to the Pacific when McBroom was called to active duty. As a lieutenant colonel, he designed an air-conditioning system for the Pentagon. He served also in England for eighteen months, where he directed large-scale army building operations.

Houser was in the infantry for a brief time during the war, entering the army at age forty. Having worked in New York City in 1929 and 1930, he returned there to work in 1945. Writing to a former student in Rhode Island in 1945, he noted, "I would like very much to come up your way, too, but I am pretty busy working two jobs, and a very good friend from Des Moines is in the hospital at Governor's Island in New York, Colonel McBroom, and I go to see him most of my spare time." That fall, while on a convalescent leave, McBroom died at Fort Des Moines Army Hospital.

Houser returned to San Diego State to teach print-making. He retired in 1957 because of heart problems. He designed a studio, built on the plantation of his brother, Theodore, in Fredericksburg, Virginia. He made four more trips to Mexico and the Mayan ruins, his last in 1962 with his old friend Everett Gee Jackson. Houser died in 1971. His artwork, acclaimed for both its Mexican and Haitian subjects, appeared in the recent exhibition, "100 Years of Art in San Diego."

For Glenn Chamberlain, the Bankers Life project was followed by his pilgrimage to Mexico to study in a free, government-sponsored art school, and then to the Minneapolis School of Art. In the fifties, he was again in New York, instructing at the Sculpture Center, a nonprofit arts cooperative that provided studio and exhibition space as well as instruction for young artists. (Two other Iowans active in the center were sculptors Barbara Lekberg and Harry Stinson.) In 1952 Chamberlain joined the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan as resident sculptor. A 1954 exhibition catalog at Cranbrook noted that the "sensitivity and integrity of his aesthetic vision shows clearly." He taught also at the Des Moines Art Center, Bard College, and the University of Colorado. Today he resides in Boulder, Colorado.

Throughout their careers, both artists proved their versatility as designers. Chamberlain made the models for industrial designer Russell Wright's china ware and furniture, as well as models for Samsonite furniture. In New York, Houser designed a square bathtub, illustrated children's books, and experimented with theater seats on runners.

Artists Lowell Houser and Glenn Chamberlain, as well as architect Leland McBroom, should not be lost to Iowa art history. Each managed to practice his art in the financially troubled 1930s, enriching the built environment with the elegance of Art Deco architecture and design. The rare, gleaming panels over the entrances of the old Bankers Life home office (now Corporate Square of The Principal Financial Group) are a testament in poetic glass to the vision and talents of these three men. □

NOTE ON SOURCES

The major source behind this article was correspondence between Leland McBroom and Lowell Houser. The author also corresponded with Glenn Chamberlain, Karl Winkler, architect Gerald Griffith, and artists James Clark, Leonard Good, and Josephine Allen. Important archival material was made available by The Principal Financial Group (Des Moines), Corning Incorporated and the Corning Public Library (both in Corning, NY), and Rockefeller Center (New York). The adventures of Houser and Everett Gee Jackson are recounted in Jackson's *Four Trips to Antiquity* (San Diego State University Press, 1991) and in his *Burros and Paintbrushes* and *It's a Long Road to Commandu* (Texas A&M Press, 1985 and 1987; permission to quote granted). Development of poetic glass is detailed in Paul Gardner, *The Glass of Frederick Carder* (1971). *Architectural Record* (June 1940) and the *Des Moines Register* (special section, April 14, 1940) give lavish coverage to the Bankers Life building. An annotated version of this article is in the *Palimpsest* production files (SHSI, Iowa City).

CONTRIBUTORS

Richard Acton is the fourth Lord Acton. He divides his time between Cedar Rapids, where he is a writer, and England, where he sits as an independent member of the House of Lords. For the *Palimpsest* he has written about Steward Taylor, Ann Raley, the origin of the state nickname "Hawkeye," and the Case of Ralph in early Dubuque.

Anne Beiser Allen was born in Fort Lewis, Washington, and earned a B.A. in history from Middlebury College in Vermont. After many years of traveling through the United States, Europe, and Japan, she settled in Iowa City in 1969. She has always been fascinated with the uncommon people who occupy obscure corners of history. She writes biographical sketches, poetry, and fiction.

Mary L. Meixner, an emerita professor at Iowa State University at Ames, has written of Lowell Houser's Corn Mural for the *Palimpsest* (Jan./Feb. 1985). The poetic glass murals hold special interest for her: her maternal family background spans three hundred years of the glass manufactory Heinz, still located in the Lauscha region of Germany. She has recently published an article focused on the cultural influence of Olgivanna Lloyd Wright on the Taliesin Fellowship.

Philip E. Webber is professor of German at Central College in Pella, Iowa. An earlier version of his *Palimpsest* article was presented at the 1991 Congress of Historical Organizations (COHO). His studies in ethnicity in Iowa include chapters in *Passing Time and Traditions* and *Take This Exit;* the book *Pella Dutch: The Portrait of a Language and its Use in One of Iowa's Ethnic Communities;* and a recently completed book-length manuscript on language in use in the Amana Colonies.

SUBMISSIONS

The editor welcomes manuscripts and edited documents on the history of Iowa and the Midwest that may interest a general reading audience. Submissions that focus on visual material (photographs, maps, drawings) or on material culture are also invited. Originality and significance of the topic, as well as the quality of research and writing, will determine acceptance for publication. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced, and follow *The Chicago Manual of Style* (13th edition). Please send two copies. Standard length is within ten to twenty manuscript pages, but shorter or longer submissions will be considered. Although the *Palimpsest* presents brief bibliographies rather than footnoted articles, footnotes should appear in the original submission. When using newspaper sources, please cite page as well as date of issue. Include a brief biographical sketch. Because illustrative material is integral to the *Palimpsest,* the editor encourages authors to include photographs and illustrations (or suggestions). Please send submissions or queries to Ginalie Swaim, Editor, *The Palimpsest,* State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

LETTERS FROM READERS

Cultural diversity

I was intrigued with David Brose's article "Ethnographic Crossroads" [Winter 1991]. The article illustratively displayed Iowa's rich ethnic heritage with photographs of cultural contributions by Native Americans, German-Americans, Dutch-Americans, Norwegian-Americans, Czechoslovakian-Americans, Mexican-Americans and Southeast Asians. However, I am disappointed that the cultural contributions of African-Americans were not cited nor illustrated. . . . Buxton, Iowa, is one of many examples in which African-Americans played an exceptional role in Iowa's development as a state. . . .

Inga Bumbary-Langston
Executive Director, Iowa Civil Rights Commission

Author's response

. . . My article was indeed a short sampler of Iowa traditions. It was never intended to be an all-inclusive statement. I ask Ms. Bumbary-Langston, as well as all readers, to embrace the holistic meaning of the article and its celebration of cultural diversity, not to single out those many ethnic groups that could not be represented due to time and space constraints.

David Brose, John C. Campbell College
Brasstown, North Carolina

The *Palimpsest* welcomes letters. Published letters may be edited for clarity and brevity. Write: *Palimpsest,* 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

COURTESY THE PRINCIPAL FINANCIAL GROUP

In 1940 the new home office building of Bankers Life Company in Des Moines was hailed nationally for setting new standards in architectural progress. Three enormous glass murals crowned the High Street entrance. Created by Iowa artist Lowell Houser, the murals depicted traditional Native American symbolism in an innovative material — "poetic glass." Inside, the story behind this achievement in glass artwork.

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