

# Friendly's Frontier

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

by Anne Beiser Allen

**A**S 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.

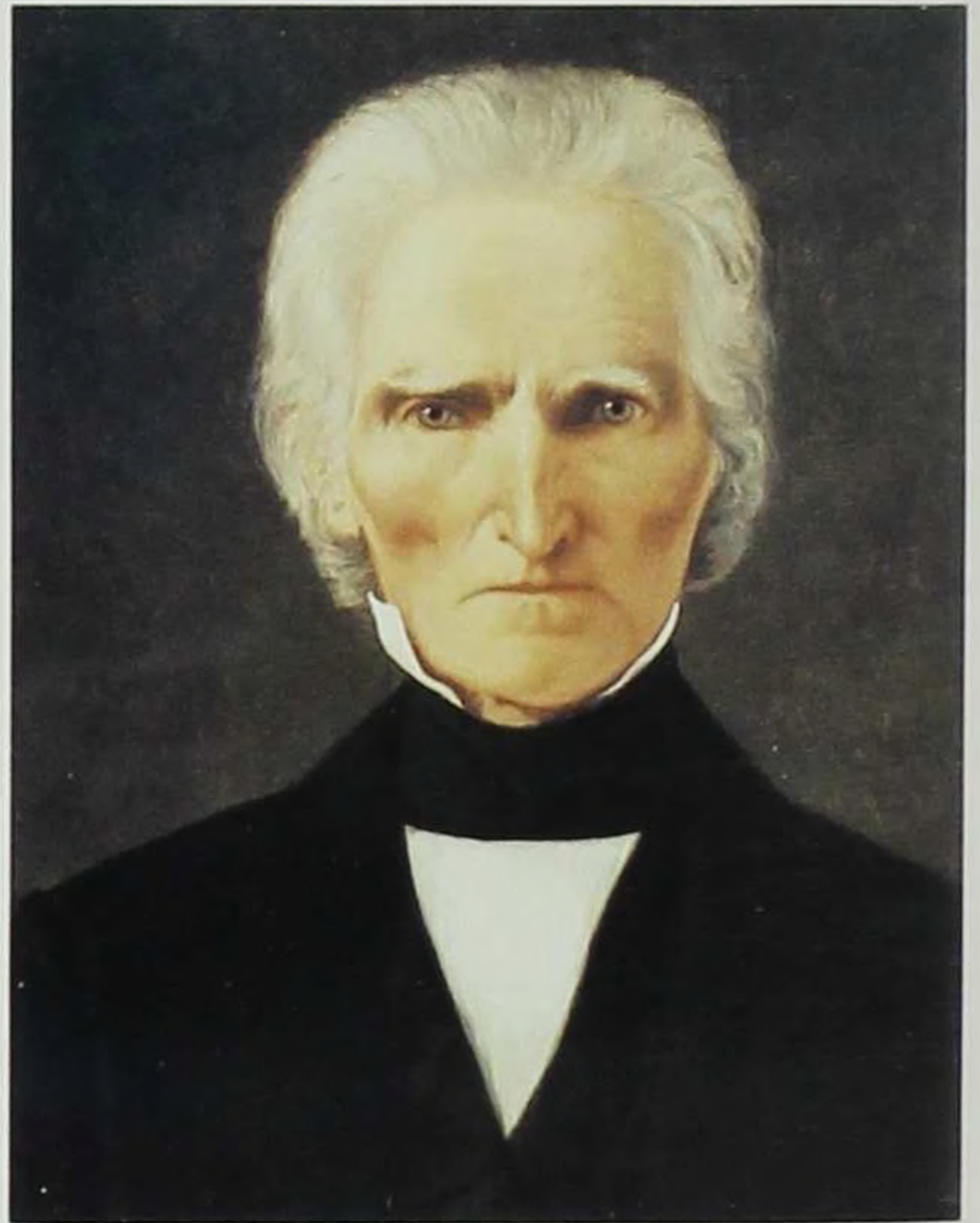
**B**ORN ON MAY 25, 1796, in Peacham, Vermont, Friendly Ashley Sumner was a member of a New England family whose forebears arrived in Massachusetts from England in 1636. Among her cousins was Charles Sumner, the radical abolitionist senator from Massachusetts, who would become leader of the extremist 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

grant program to purchase a farm in north-eastern 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 pretensions." 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.

**T**HE 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  $\frac{2}{3}$  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.

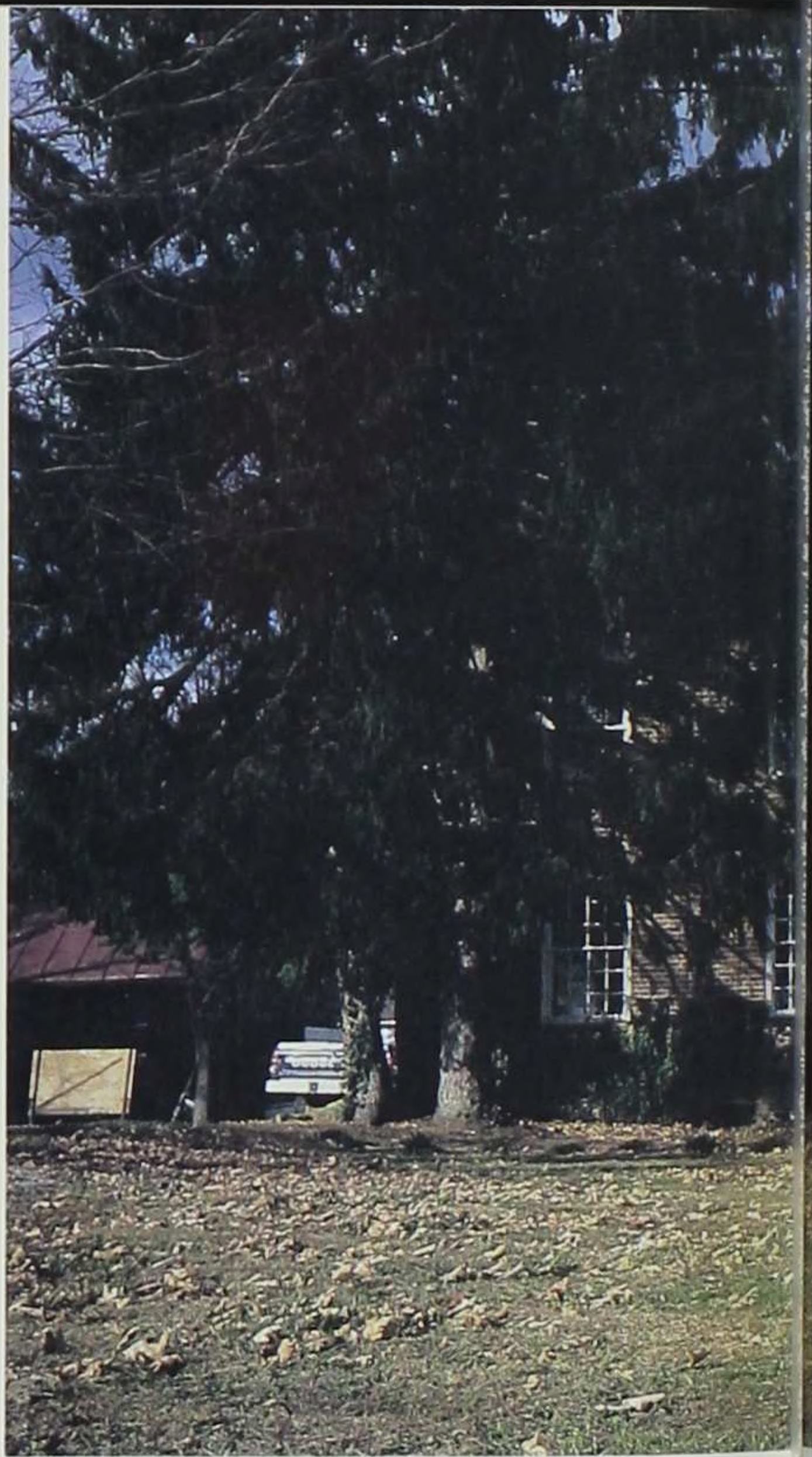
“Put in jars & seal. Call an armoured truck & take to your safe deposit box before anyone becomes aware that you have such a treasure as plum butter in your possession.”

*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.

**I**N 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!

**D**ESPITE — 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 pres-

**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.**

ident. 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.

**B**ECAUSE 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 Lavis Steenbergen and her daughter Joanna, and Lavis's married daughters Mary Jennison and Lavis 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 1/2!) By steamboat or horseback, it was a long journey involv-

ing 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!

**B**URLINGTON 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-



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.

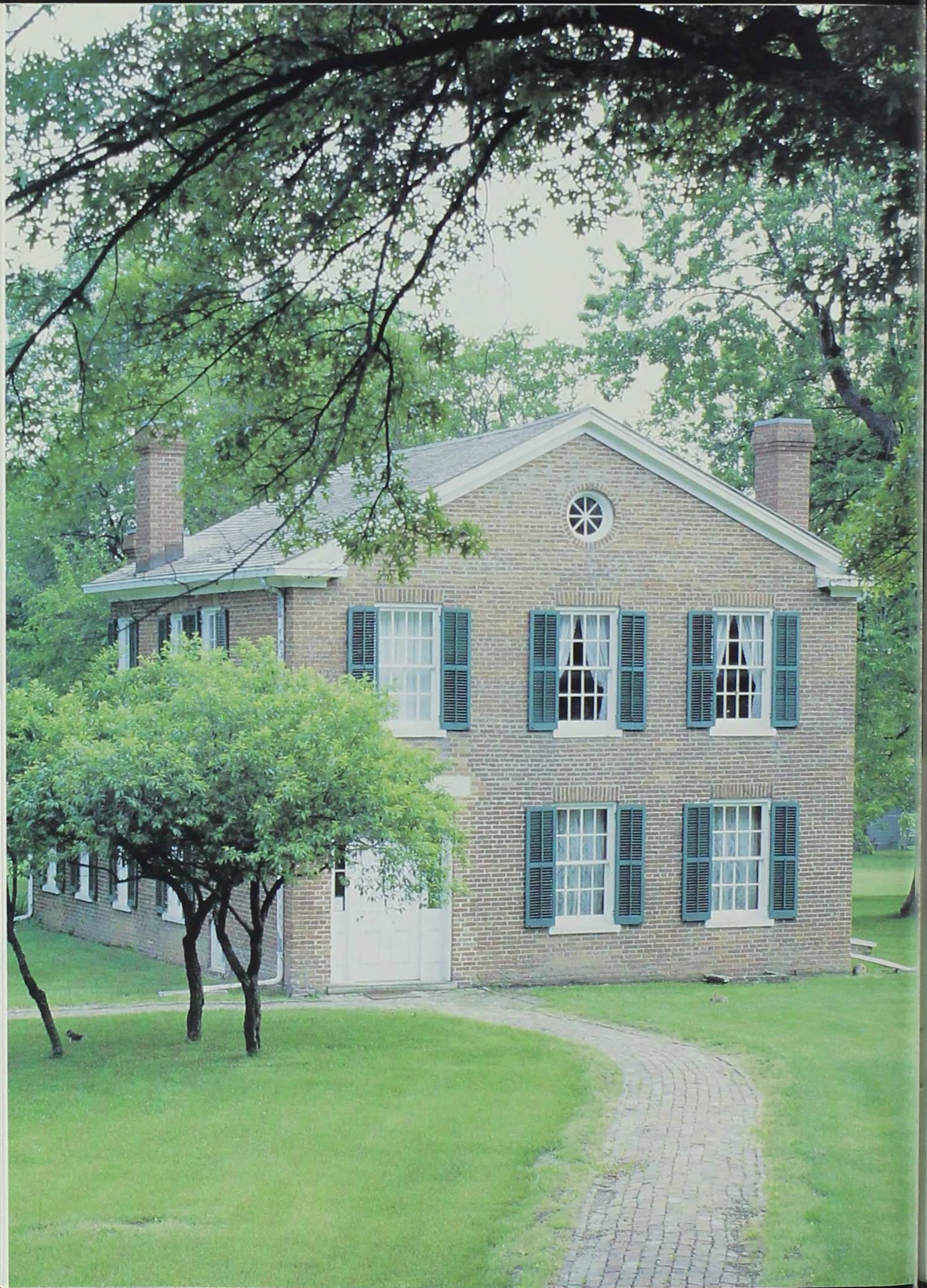
Robert Lucas was never a wealthy man, although he was generally able to support his family in relatively comfortable circumstances. As governor of Iowa, he was paid \$1500 a year, plus an additional \$1000 for his duties as Superintendent of Indian Affairs to the Sauk and Mesquakie (Fox) tribes (although 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.

**M**EANWHILE, 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

**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.**

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.

**F**ROM 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



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).

**R**OBERT 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 Febru-

ary 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.

**R**OBERT 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, Lavisia Steenberg. 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.



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 Lavisia 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 young-

gest 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* (Laverne, CA, 1989); Betty Hall, comp., *Personal Letters of Robert Lucas, Governor of Iowa, and of his sister Lavisia 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).