

Church Organization

The Methodist Episcopal Church was well organized for work on the frontier. Under the watchful eyes of the bishops the country was divided by the General Conference into conferences whose members were the ordained elders and deacons. Each conference held an annual meeting, presided over by a bishop, who read the list of appointments for the year. On the following Sunday each minister was expected to preach in his new charge. Each annual conference was subdivided into districts, consisting of a number of circuits made up of churches, classes, preaching stations, and missions.

Methodist ministers were usually recruited from the ranks. When a young man felt the call, he was given a license to preach for a probationary period. If he qualified, he was ordained first as a deacon and then, after further preparation, as an elder. He was then admitted into a conference by vote of the members, and was ready for appointment as a traveling preacher. The 1784 Conference had fixed the circuit rider's annual salary at \$64; this figure was raised to \$80 in 1800 and to \$100 in 1816. Some allowance also was made to the preacher for his wife and children. In 1804 a

rule was adopted limiting to two years the time that a preacher might serve the same congregation, but this period was increased to three years in 1864 and to five years in 1888. In 1900 the time limit was removed.

The charge to which a member of the conference was appointed might be a station, a circuit, or a mission. A station was a community where the minister resided and preached regularly. A circuit consisted of several settlements where preaching services were held more or less regularly. Some circuits required the preacher to travel from fifty to two hundred miles or more. Beyond the regular circuits was the mission field. Each church was expected to carry on the usual Methodist activities — preaching, prayer meeting, Sunday school, and class meeting. It was also the preacher's duty to visit all the members and to reclaim those who had "fallen from grace." Four times each year the presiding elder visited each charge in his district, held quarterly conference, heard reports, preached, and conducted the communion service. In the early days, a two-day revival might be held at the time of the quarterly conference meeting.

The Methodist Episcopal Church sent its first worker into the Iowa area in the autumn of 1833, when Peter Cartwright sent the Reverend Barton Randle to Dubuque. In southeast Iowa, the Missouri Conference for a time competed with the

Illinois Conference for the supplying of this mission field; but in 1839 the Iowa area was made a district in the Illinois Conference. A year later, when the Illinois Conference was divided, Iowa became part of the Rock River Conference, with the Iowa District and the Burlington District. In 1843 the Rock River Conference met in the new Wesleyan Centenary Church at Dubuque, at which time a third district, the Des Moines, was created.

Two of the four delegates selected to represent the Rock River Conference at the General Conference of 1844, which met in New York, were from Iowa — Henry W. Reed and Bartholomew Weed. It was at this General Conference that the Iowa annual conference was organized. Its first session was held at Iowa City, August 14-19, 1844, with eleven members and fourteen candidates for ordination present. At that time Iowa Methodism reported 5,504 members, including 69 lay preachers. Seven men were ordained as deacons by this conference and three as elders.

The population of Iowa was increasing rapidly. In 1856 the Iowa Conference was divided: that part lying north of a line running from Davenport to Iowa City, thence up the Iowa River to the south line of Benton, Tama, and Marshall counties, and thence due west to the Missouri River was organized as the Upper Iowa Conference. Its first meeting was held at Maquoketa, August

27-September 1, 1856, with Bishop Edmund S. Janes presiding. The Reverend Landon Taylor, an outstanding frontier preacher known as "weeping Taylor" because of his great earnestness, was elected as the Conference secretary. In 1860 the western part of the Iowa Conference was organized as the Western Iowa Conference. Four annual meetings were held; but for some reason, not shown in the *Minutes*, this arrangement was discontinued in 1864, and the entire western half of the state was set up as the Des Moines Conference with six districts. By 1872 settlement in the northwestern area had increased and the Northwest Iowa Conference was established, with Dakota included in its jurisdiction.

For sixty years Iowa Methodism was grouped in these four conferences. By 1932, however, automobiles and better roads had cut the measure of distance, encouraging consolidation. In that year the two southern conferences were united to form the Iowa-Des Moines Conference, and in 1949 the Upper Iowa and Northwest Iowa conferences were united as the North Iowa Conference.

An interesting sidelight on the above divisions is found in the career of the Reverend Bennett Mitchell, one of Iowa's great clergymen, who was born in Indiana at the time of the Black Hawk War. Coming to Iowa in 1852, he received a license to preach and was ordained by the Iowa Conference three years later. When the West-

SOME HISTORIC LEADERS AND SOME MODERN BISHOPS



JOHN WESLEY



CHARLES WESLEY



THOMAS COKE



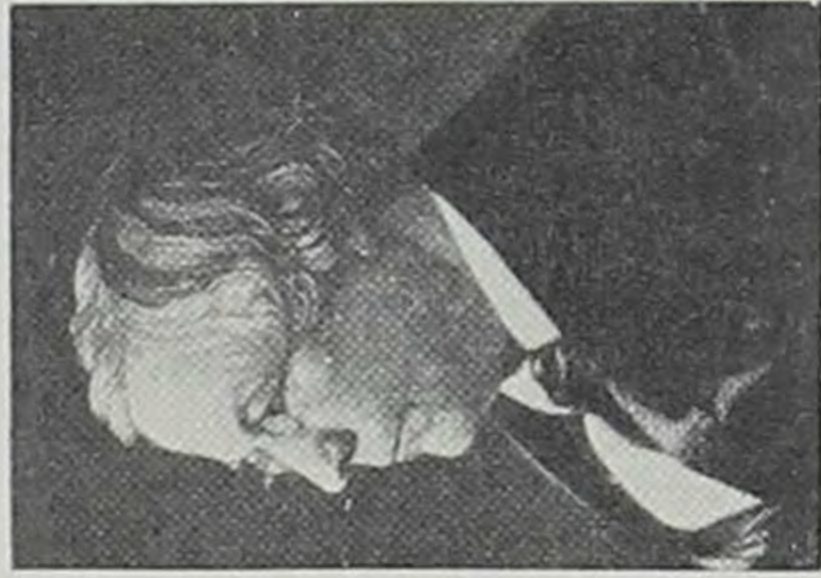
FRANCIS ASBURY



EDWIN H. HUGHES



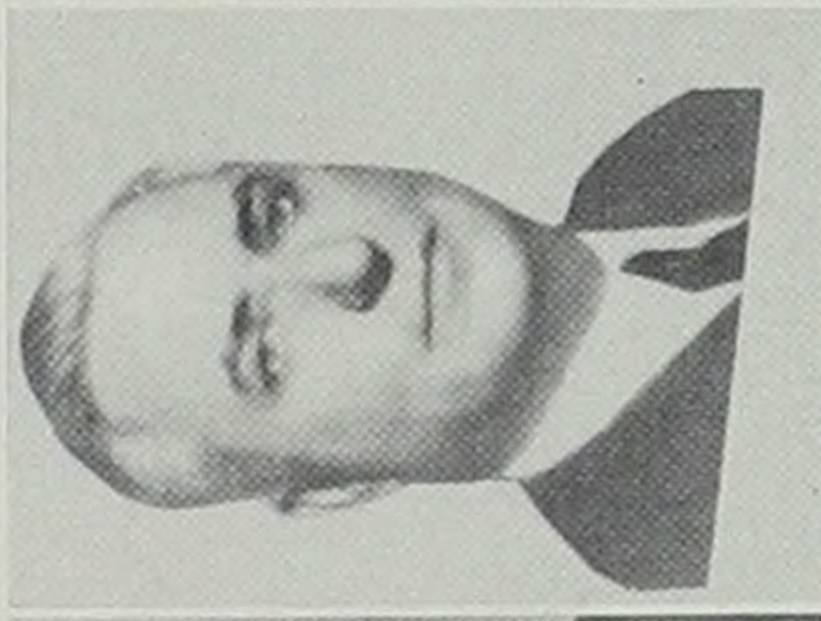
RICHARD C. RAINES



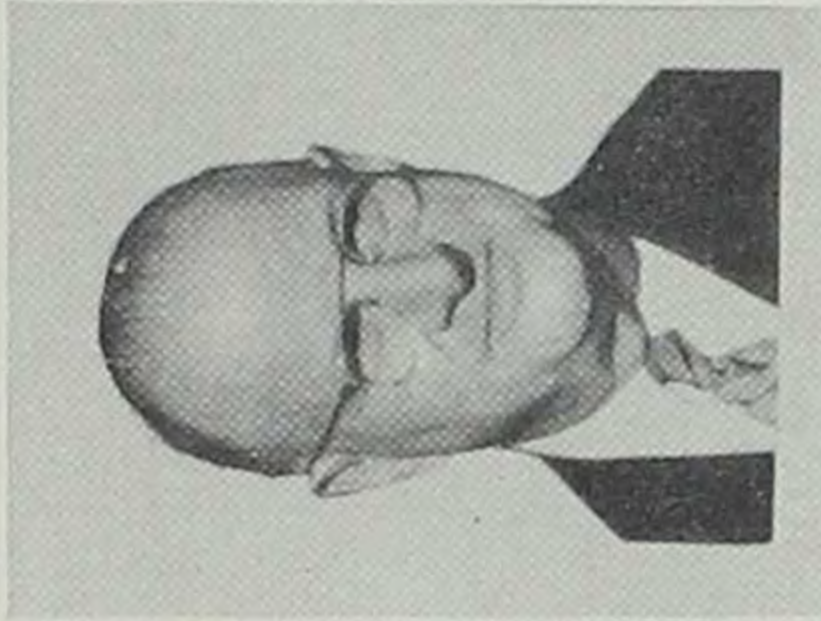
T. A. MORRIS



E. G. ANDREWS



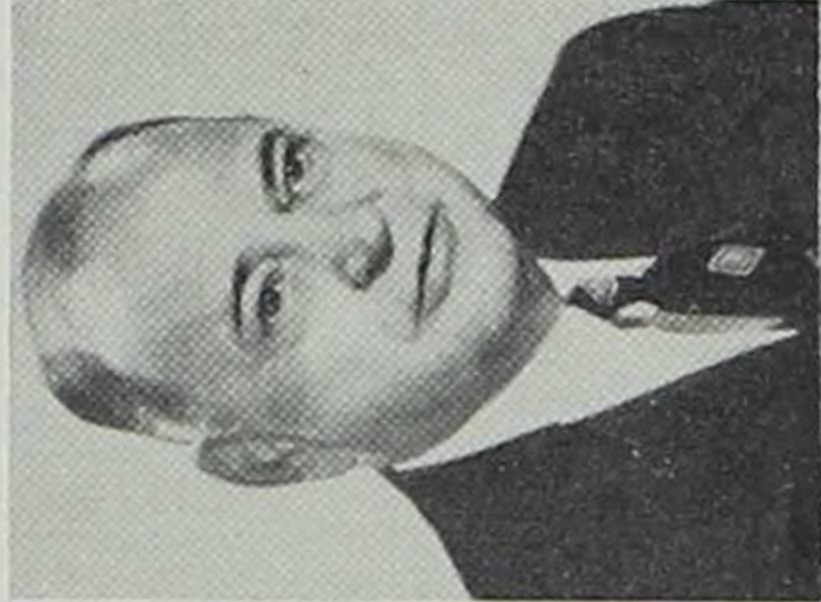
EDWIN F. LEE



J. RALPH MAGEE



TITUS LOWE



C. W. BRASHARES

SOME CIRCUIT RIDERS



GEO. B. BOWMAN
Iowa Conference



BENNETT MITCHELL
N. W. Iowa Conf.



LANDON TAYLOR
Upper Iowa Conf.



PETER CARTWRIGHT
Illinois



BARTON CARTWRIGHT
Burlington



BARTON RANDLE
Dubuque

SOME MODERN PREACHERS



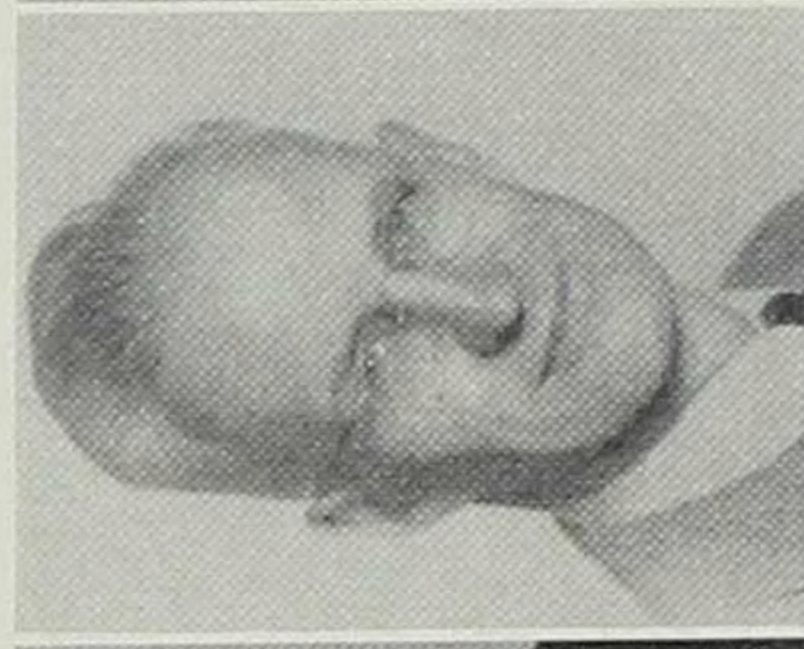
RAOUL C. CALKINS
Des Moines



JOHN P. HANTLA
Sioux City



MARVIN B. KOBER
Cedar Rapids



L. L. DUNNINGTON
Iowa City



JOHN D. CLINTON
Des Moines



L. A. GUSTAFSON
Mason City

SOME LAYMEN OF EARLY DAYS AND SOME OF TODAY



ROBERT LUCAS
Iowa City



WM. S. BEARDSLEY
New Virginia



ANNIE WITTENMYER
Keokuk



LOUISA H. HUGHES
Bloomfield



ROBERT L. LARSON
Iowa City



JOHN R. MOTT
Postville



J. L. PETERSON
Webster City



RALPH L. JESTER
Des Moines



MRS. F. G. BROOKS
Mount Vernon



MRS. R. C. ARMSTRONG
Cedar Rapids

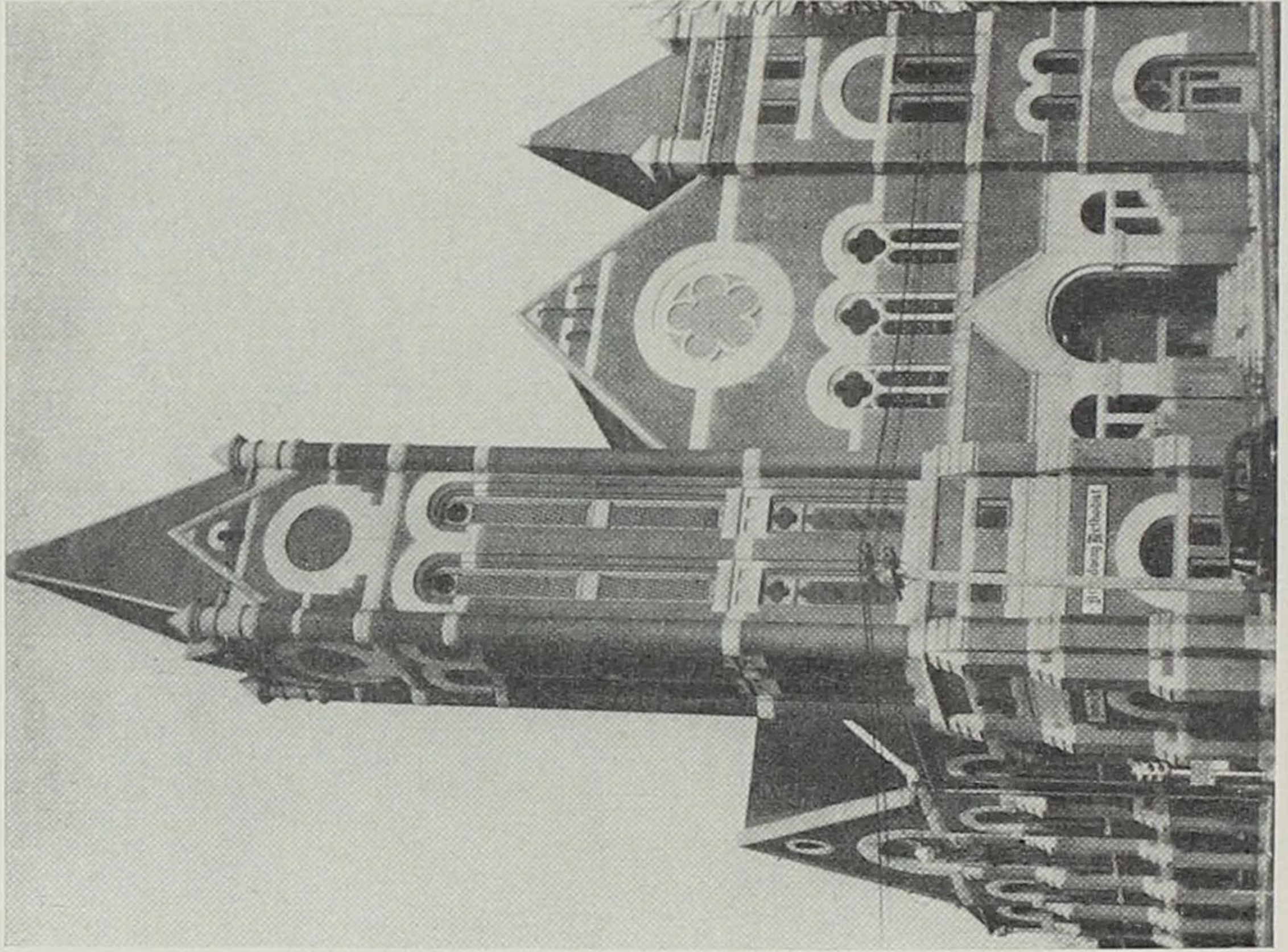


B. O. GAMMON
Des Moines

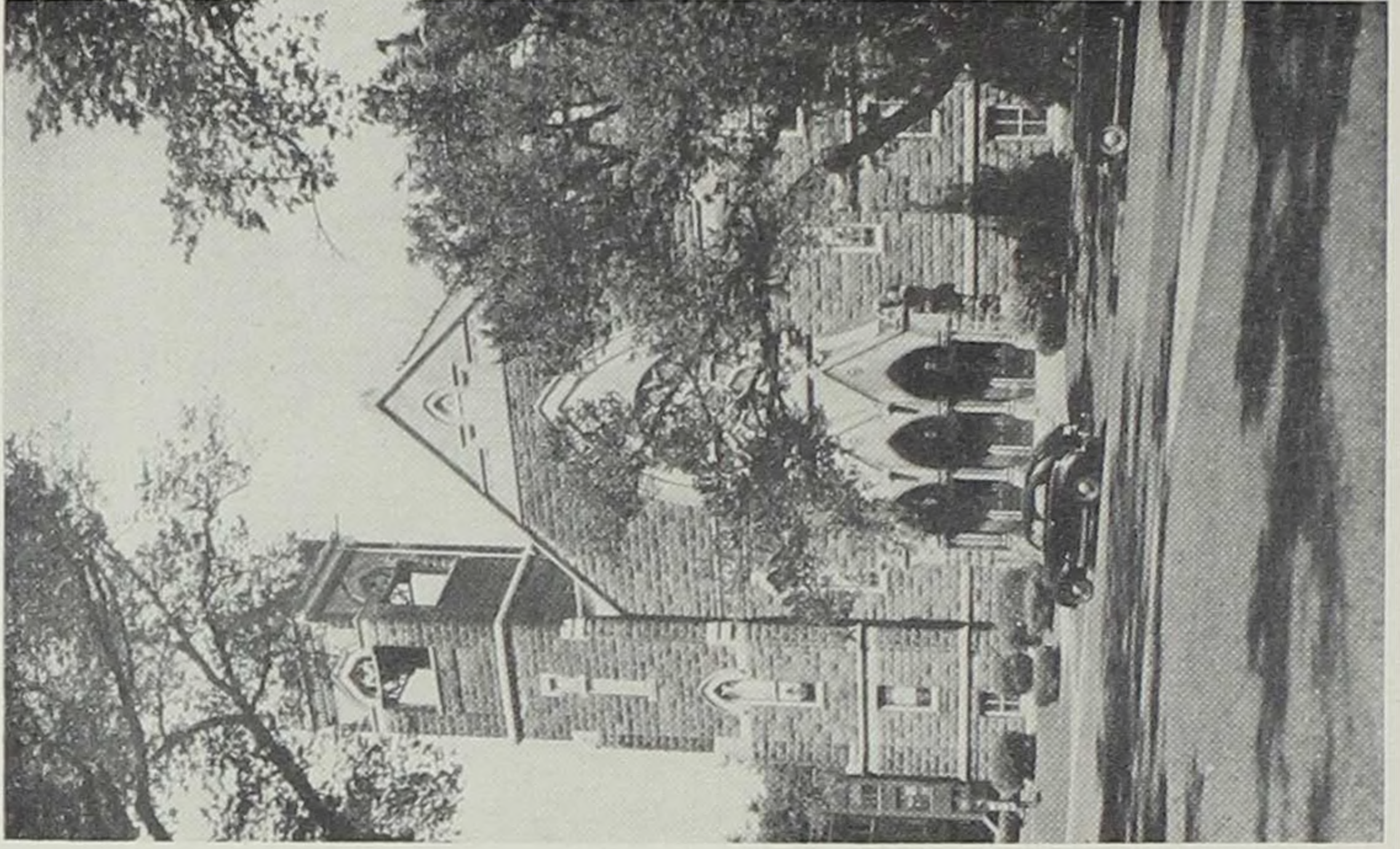


EARL ELIJAH
Clarence

SOME IOWA CHURCHES

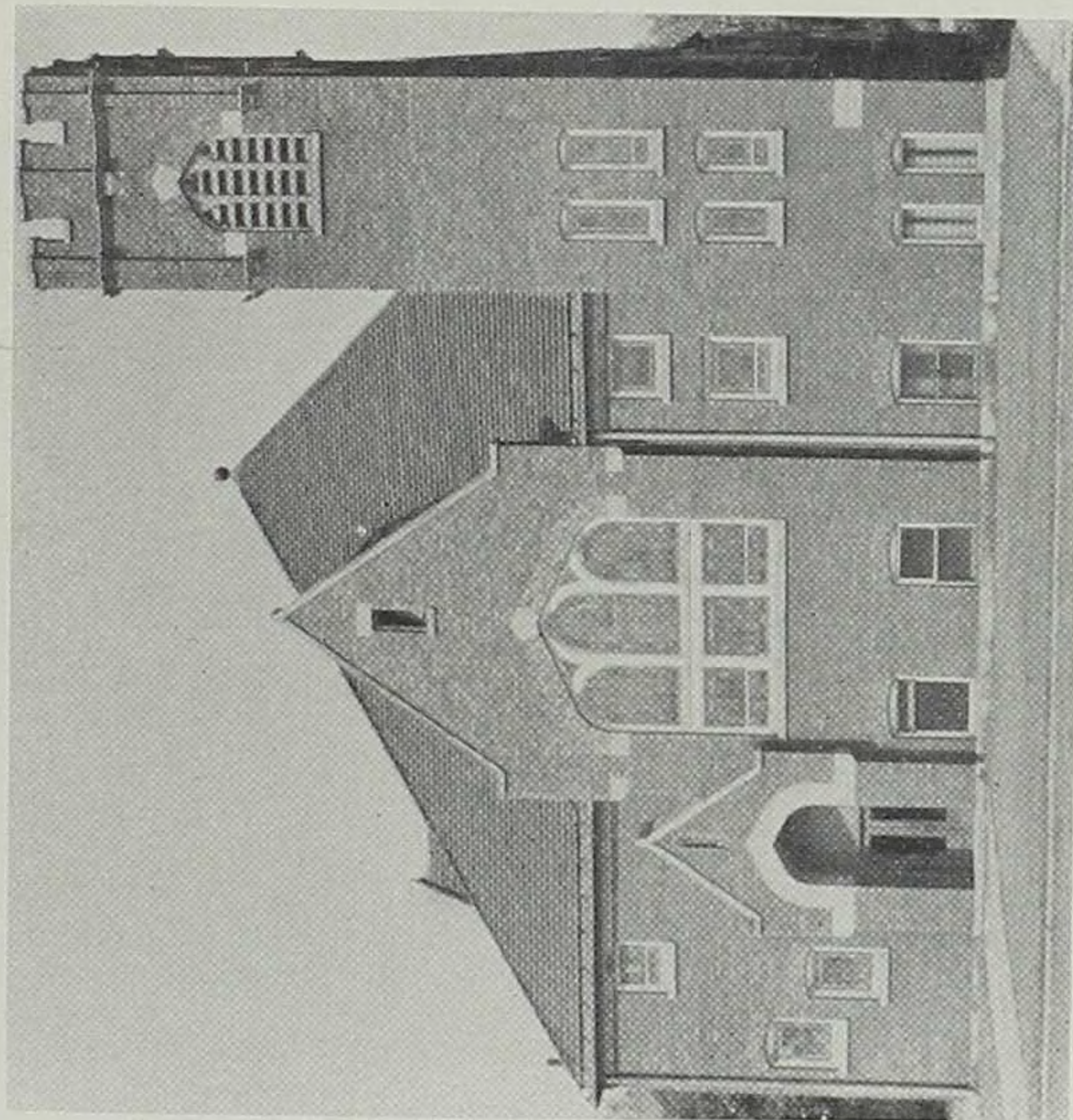


Broadway Methodist, Council Bluffs

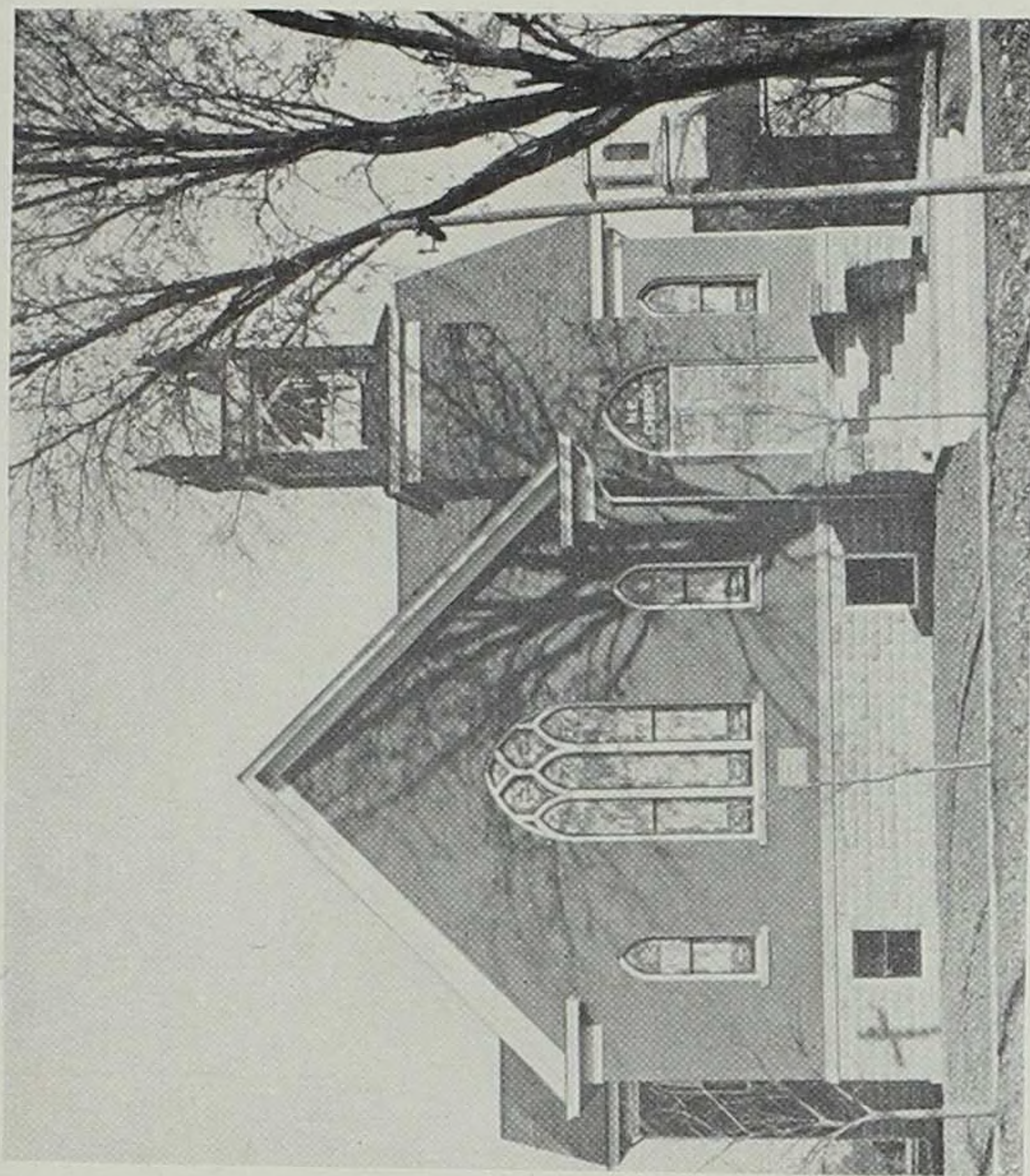


First Methodist, Iowa City

SOME IOWA CHURCHES

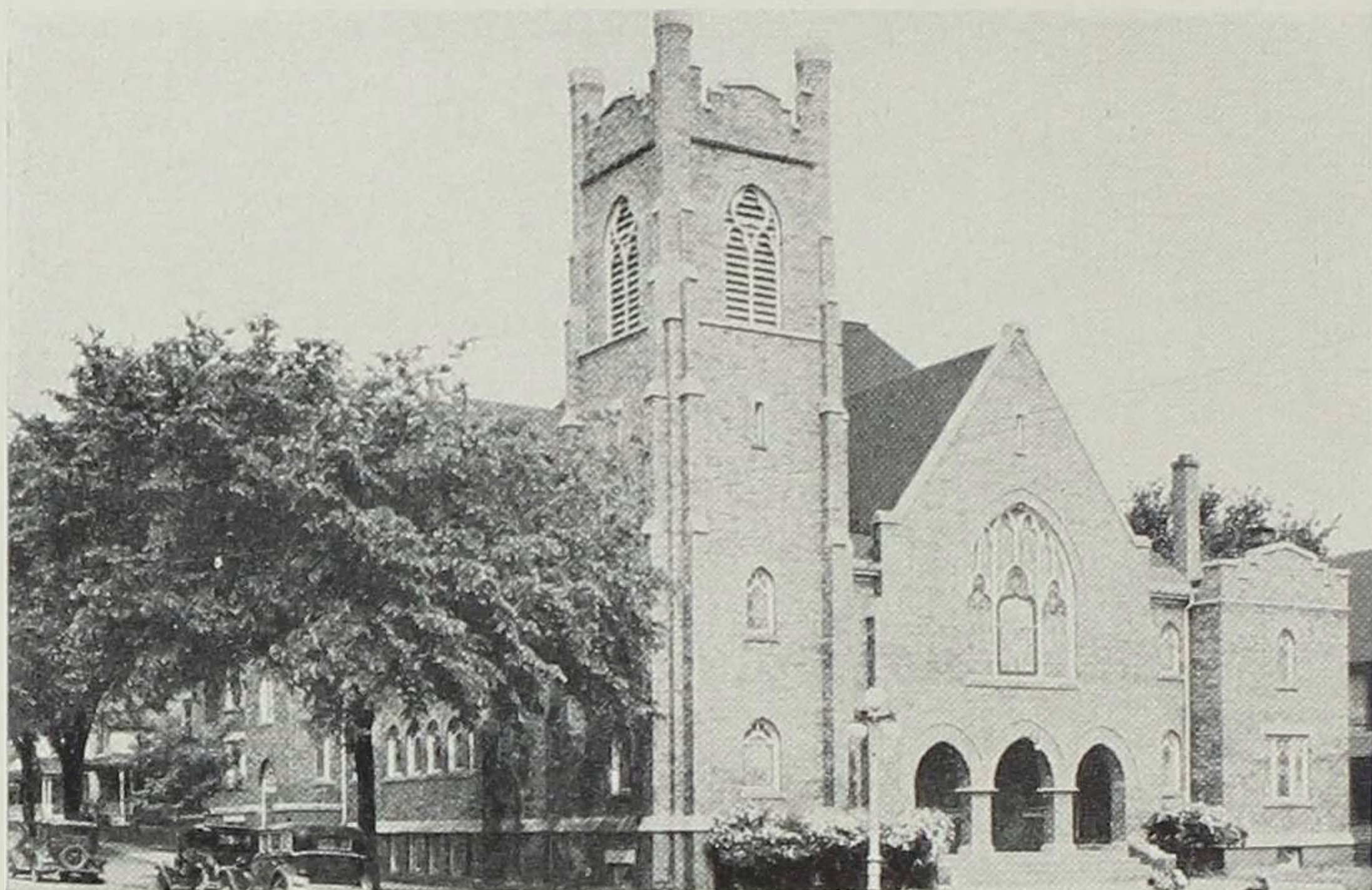


First Methodist, Marengo

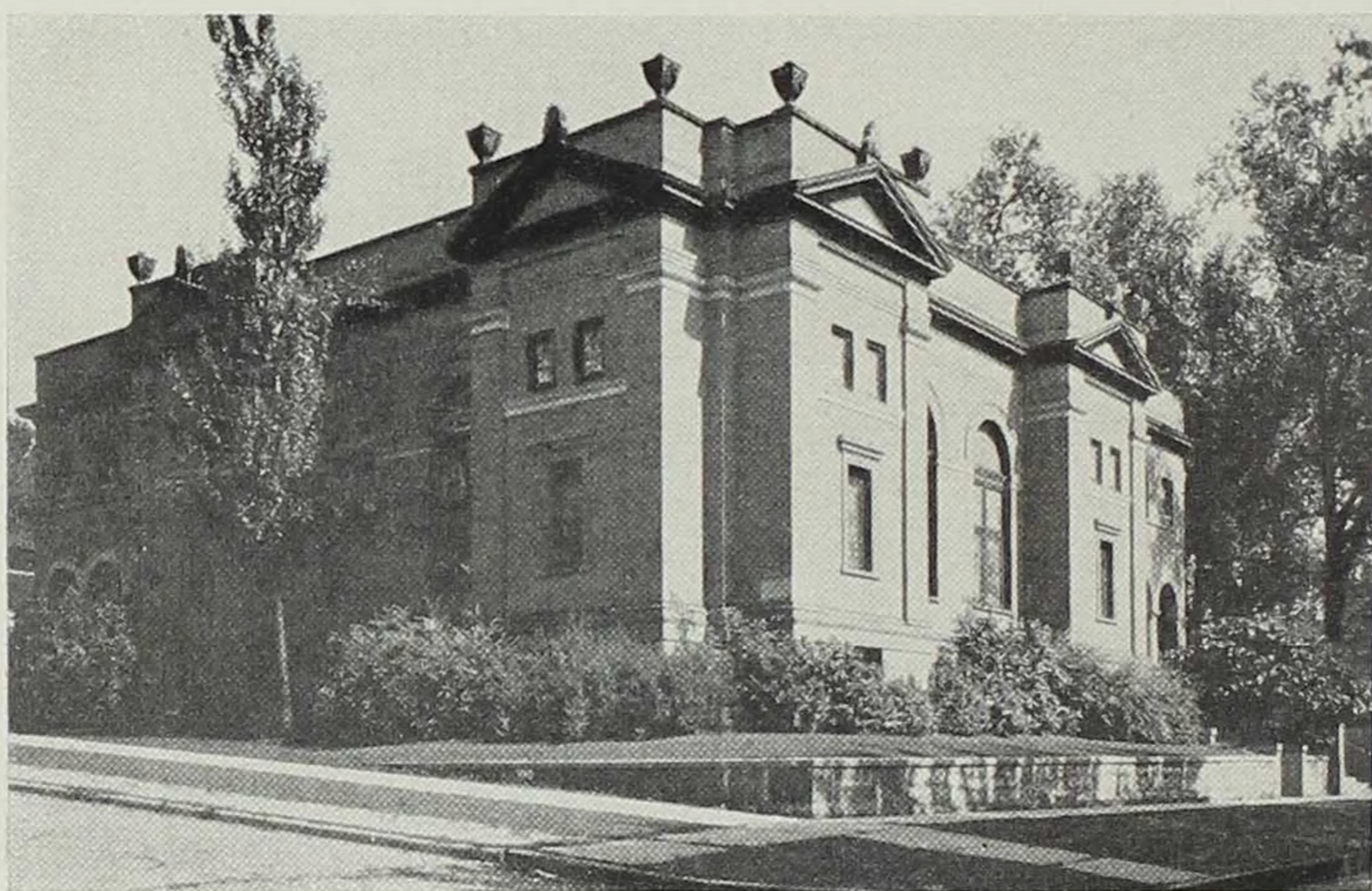


First Methodist, De Witt

SOME IOWA CHURCHES



First Methodist, Webster City



First Methodist, Red Oak

SOME PRESIDENTS OF IOWA METHODIST COLLEGES

IOWA WESLEYAN — MOUNT PLEASANT



A. J. HUESTIS
1842-49



JAMES HARLAN
1853-55; 1869-70



J. R. CHADWICK
1950-

SIMPSON — INDIANOLA



ALEXANDER BURNS
1868-78



EDWIN E. VOIGT
1942-

CORNELL — MOUNT VERNON



WILLIAM F. KING
1865-1908



JOHN B. MAGEE
1939-43



RUSSELL D. COLE
1943-

MORNINGSIDE — SIOUX CITY



GEORGE W. CARR
1894-96

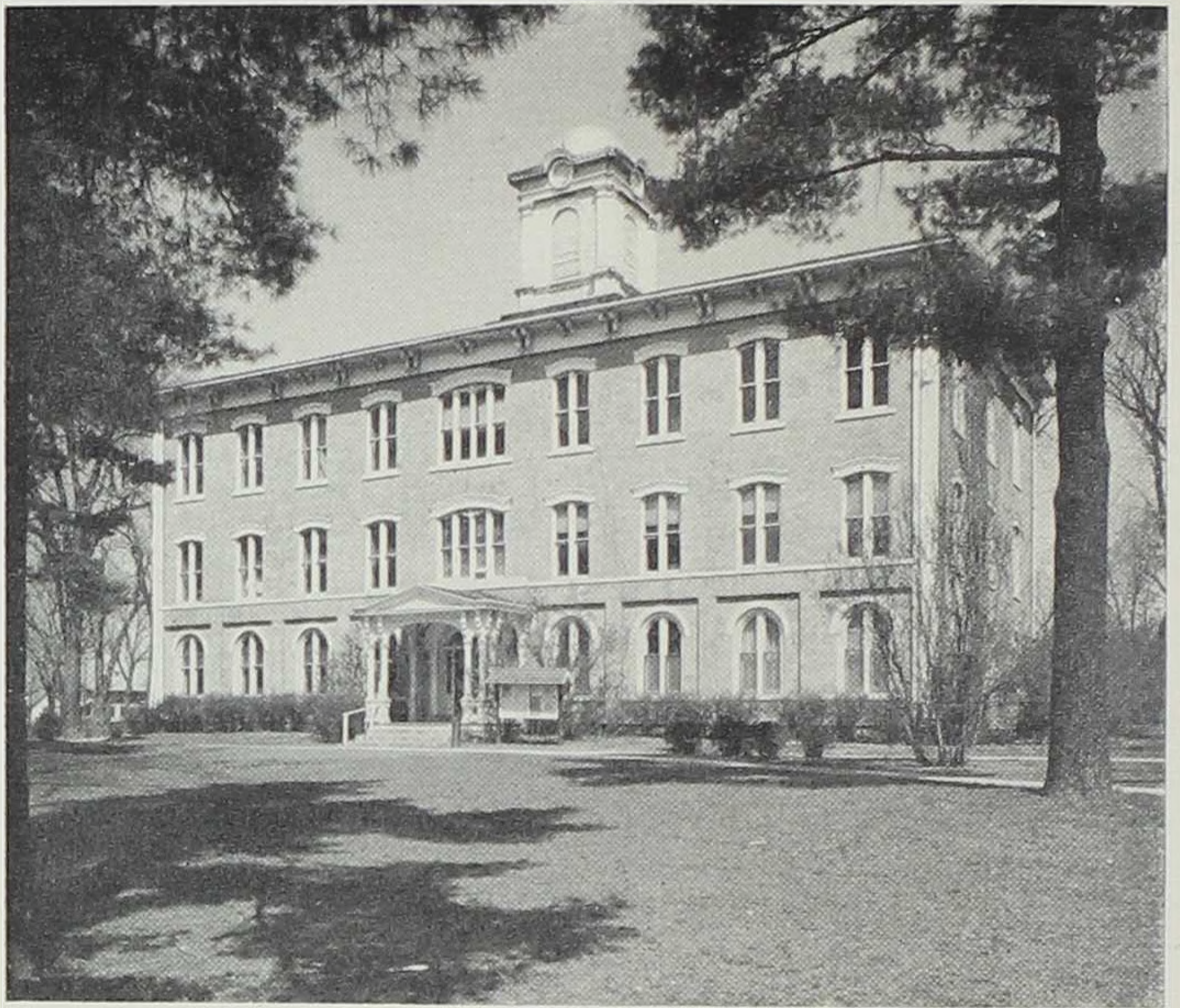


WILSON S. LEWIS
1897-1908



EARL A. ROADMAN
1936-

IOWA METHODIST COLLEGES

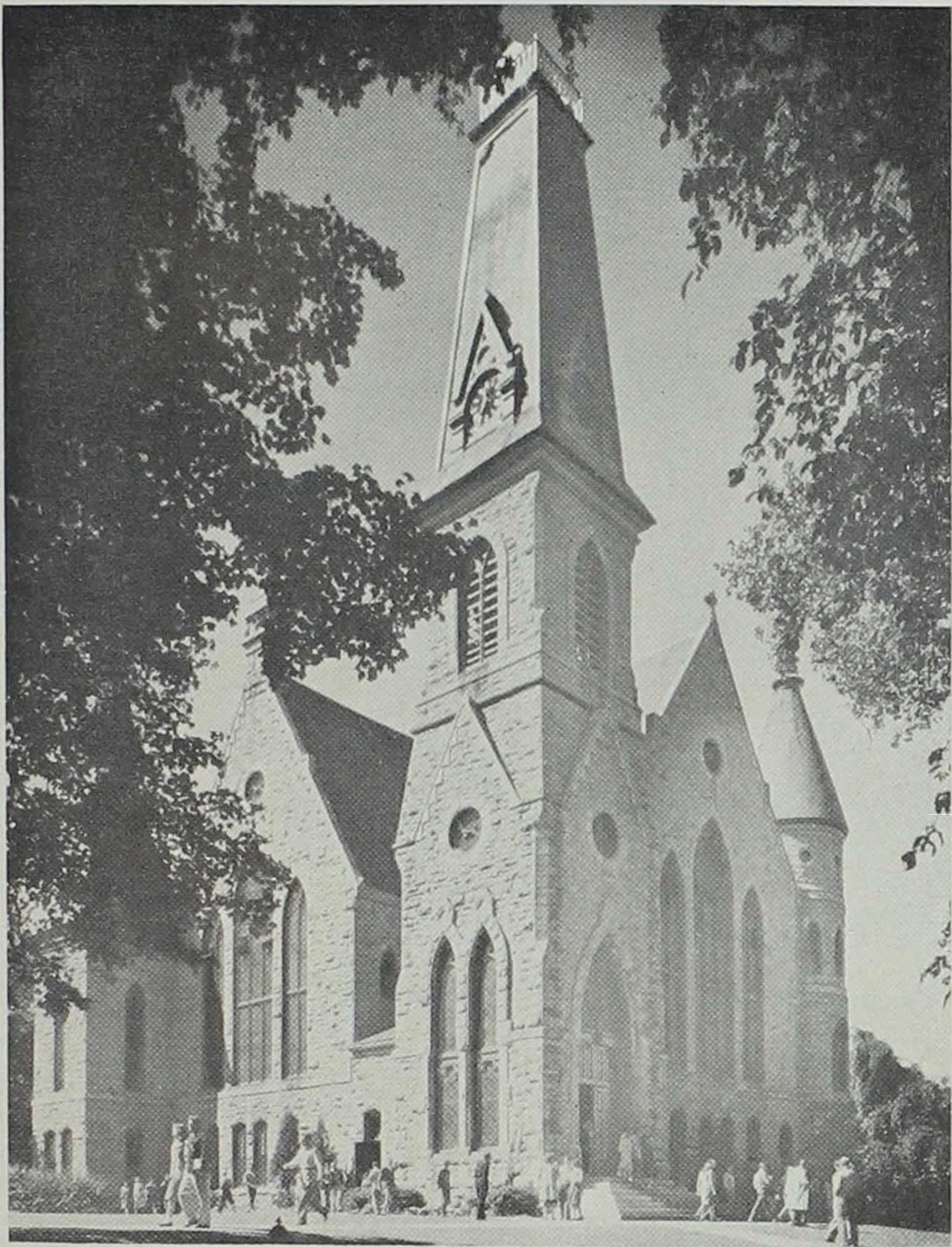


"Old Main" — Iowa Wesleyan College

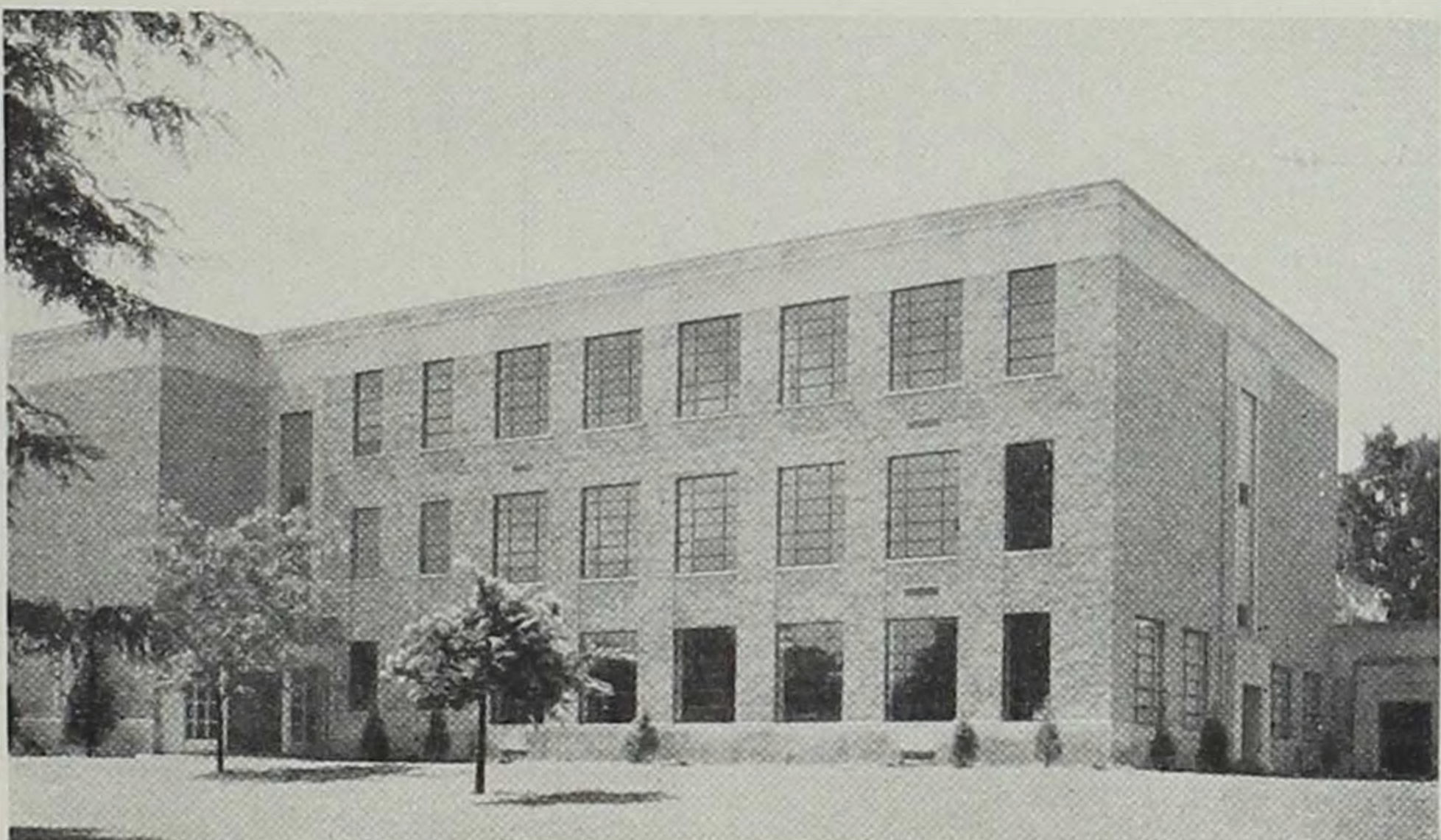


Administration Building — Simpson College

IOWA METHODIST COLLEGES



Chapel — Cornell College



A. W. Jones Science Building — Morningside College

FOREIGN MISSIONS
ST. PAUL'S METHODIST CHURCH, CEDAR RAPIDS



Woman's Society of Christian Service



Clothing for Overseas — Young Adult Sunday Evening Club

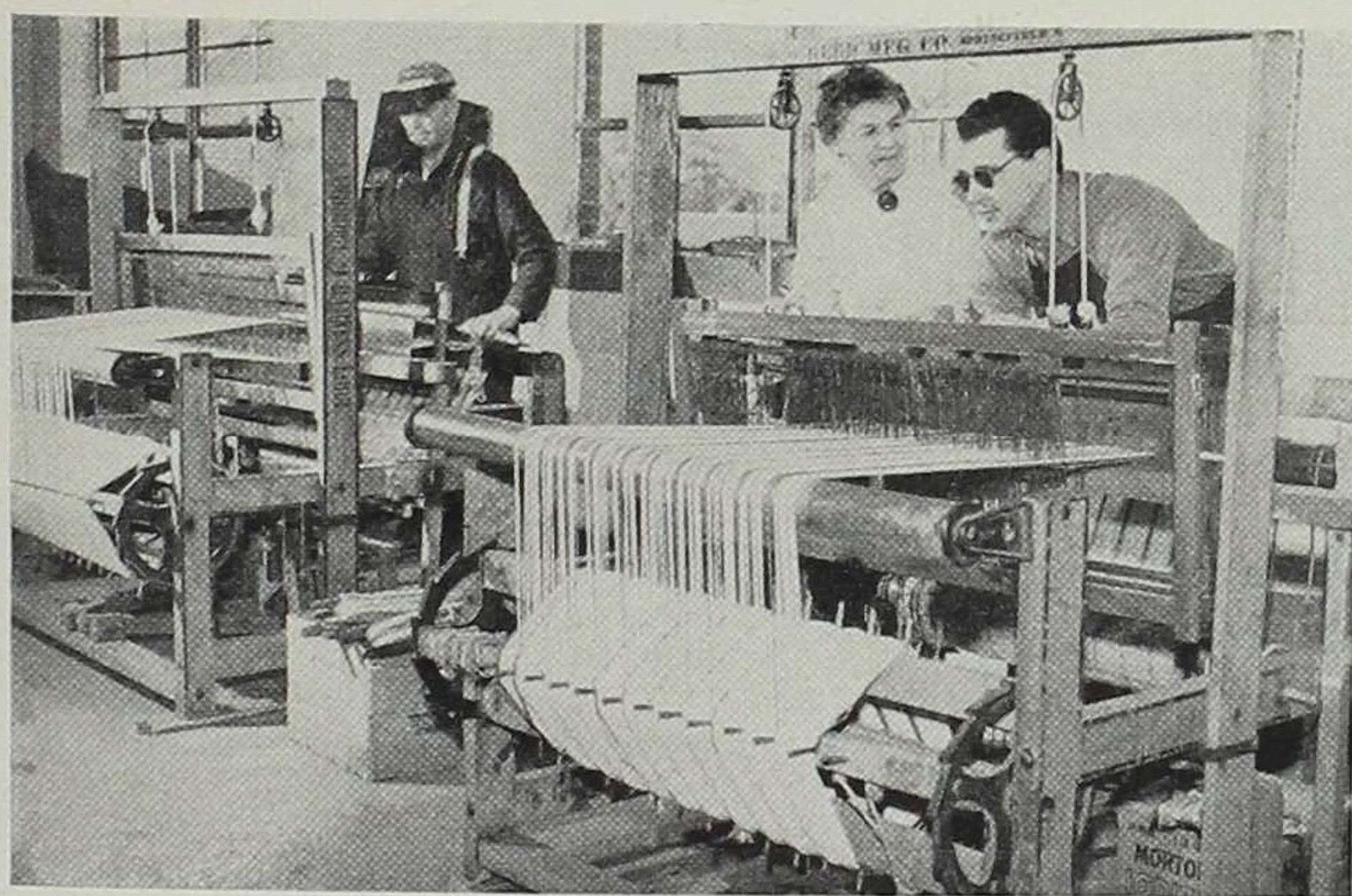
WALL STREET MISSION IN SIOUX CITY



Church of All Nations — Good Will Industries

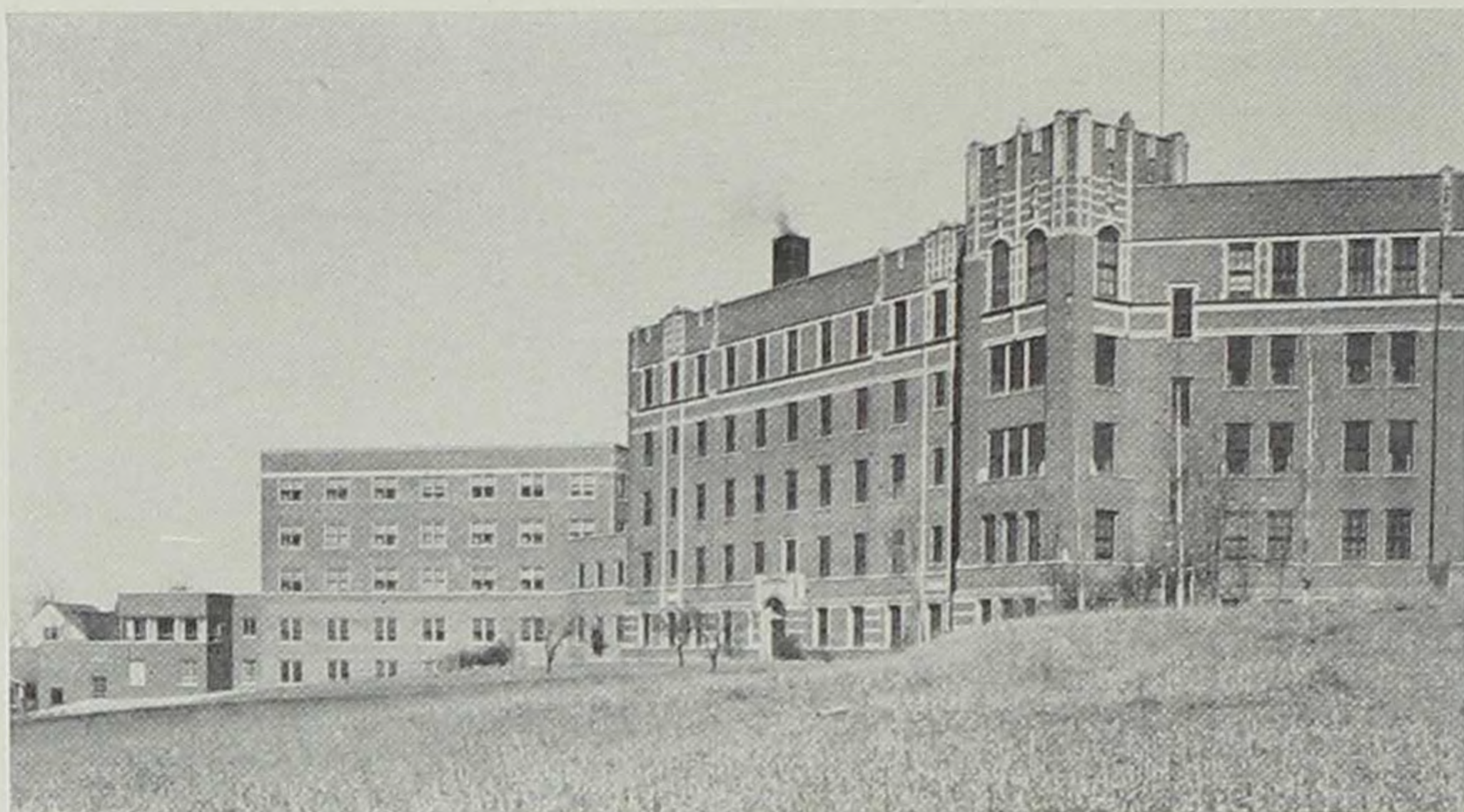


Harriet Ballou Day Nursery



Blind Weavers at the Good Will Industries

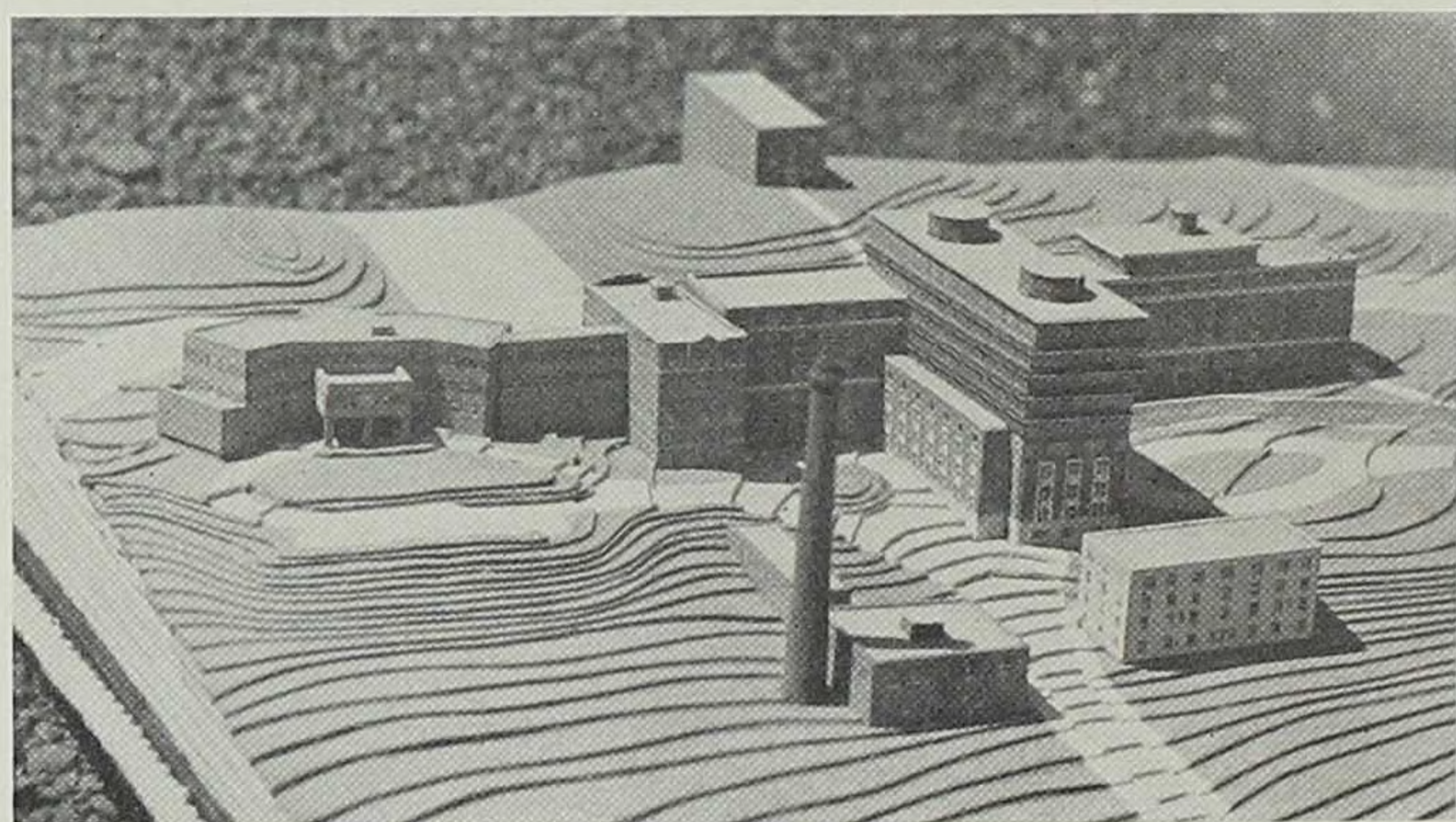
IOWA METHODIST HOSPITALS



Methodist Hospital — Sioux City



St. Luke's Methodist Hospital — Cedar Rapids

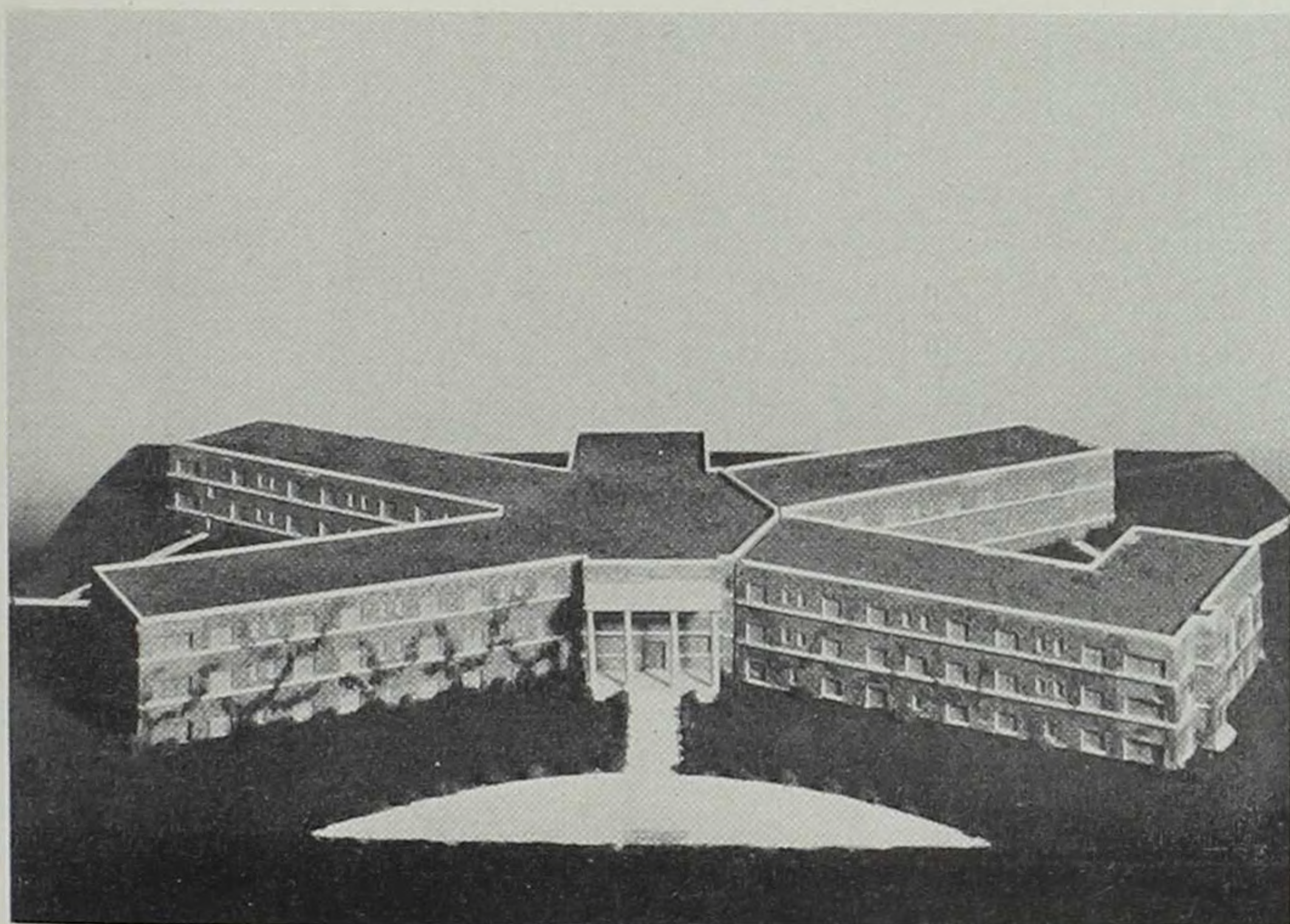


Iowa Methodist Hospital — Des Moines

HOMES FOR THE RETIRED AND THE AGED



Wesley Acres — Des Moines



Friendship Haven — Fort Dodge

TWO METHODIST PROJECTS

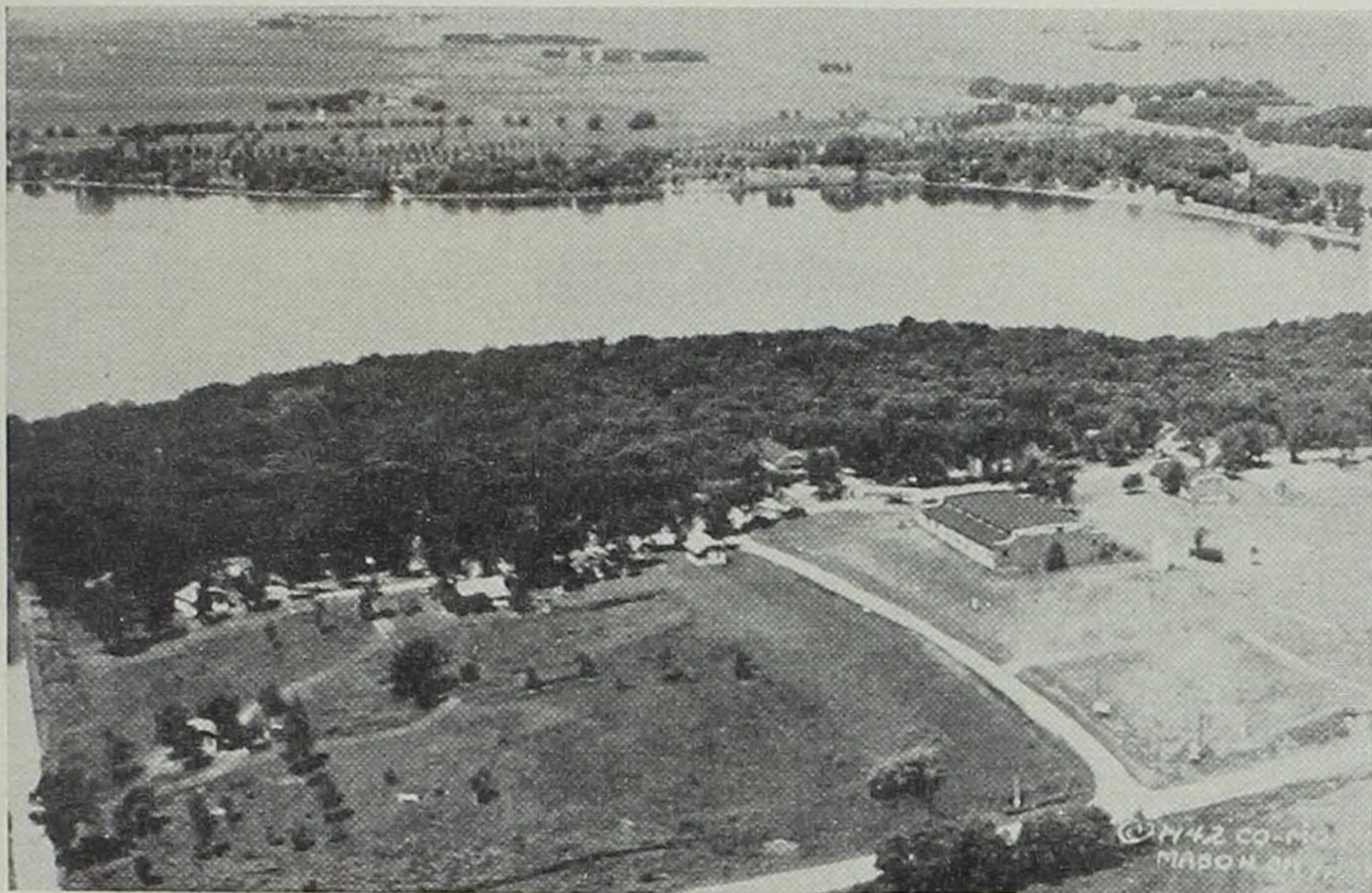


Hillcrest Baby Fold — Dubuque



Iowa National Esther Hall for Employed Girls — Des Moines

YOUTH AND FAMILY CAMPS

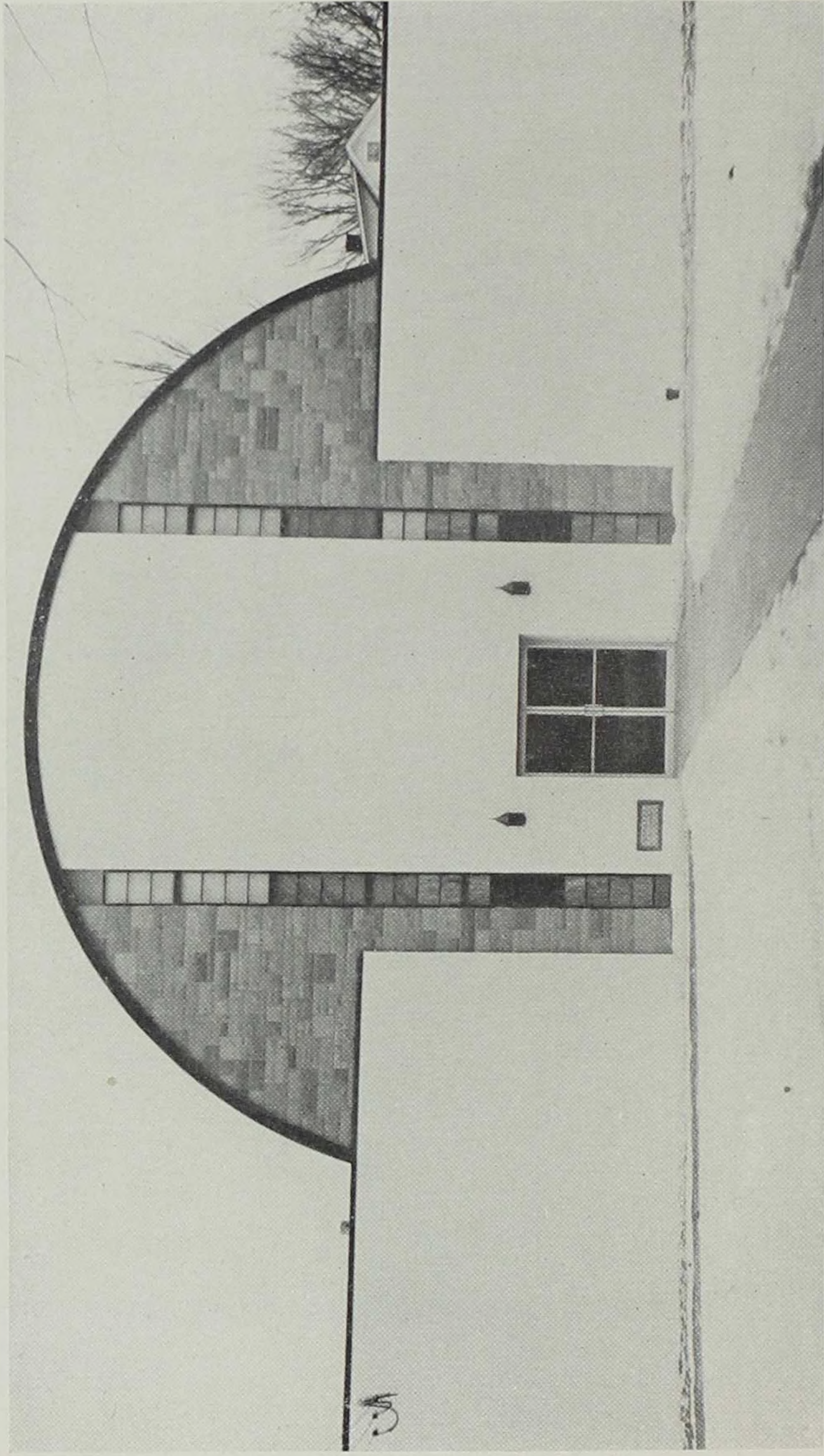


West Lake Okoboji



Clear Lake

THE FIRST NEW METHODIST CHURCH IN IOWA IN FIVE YEARS



A symbol of the modern crusading spirit of Methodism is revealed in Windsor Methodist Church in Des Moines. Under the direction of Rev. John D. Clinton, Area Crusader, a brand new congregation was formed and a brand new church built within two years. Dedicated by Bishop Brashares November 5, 1950.

ern Iowa Conference was organized in 1860, Mitchell was an original member of that annual conference. In 1864 he was included in the new Des Moines Conference and in 1872 in the Northwest Iowa Conference, always without a personal transfer.

One matter of church policy which has arisen during the years has been the participation of laymen in the councils of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Methodism was always democratic in extending the offer of salvation to all, rich or poor, respectable or of bad repute. It was, perforce, democratic also in its use of unordained and often unlettered preachers. As Andrew Jackson contended that any voter was qualified to hold office, so the Methodists held that any devout man who was "called" to preach was, after a period of training, to be accepted as a worker in the field.

But the Wesleyan movement in England and to a lesser extent in America was "the lengthened shadow" of John Wesley, and he was a benevolent autocrat. When Francis Asbury became the dominant leader in American Methodism he followed Wesley's example. The authority of the new church was vested in the bishops and to a lesser extent in the elders, but was not shared with the laymen. The ministry was self-perpetuating and all-powerful.

The growth of American democracy called attention to this lack of lay representation in the

Methodist Episcopal Church. There came a demand for the participation of laymen in the decision of church matters and for a curb on the dictatorial powers of the bishops. In 1830 the Methodist Protestant Church was formed by those who wanted a congregational form of government or at least some participation by representatives of the congregations. The Methodist Protestant Church built the first church building in Iowa City, and for a time it was active in a number of Iowa communities. Its lack of centralized control, however, seems to have been a disadvantage, and most of these congregations died out.

Not until 1872 were laymen admitted to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. From 1871 until 1931, in each Iowa conference, lay electoral conferences were held every four years to choose representatives from Iowa. In 1932 the General Conference made laymen's meetings a regular part of each annual conference, and joint meetings of laymen and ministers were held to discuss finances as well as social and educational problems.

Since the 1939 consolidation, lay delegates have been an integral part of the annual conferences, except for the executive sessions of the ministers. Also, in the election of delegates to the General Conference, the two orders ballot separately.

Another problem which concerned the government of the church was the status of women.

Since early Christian times women have been workers and martyrs in the Church. Susanna Wesley may well be called "the mother of Methodism," for it was she who stood beside her famous son on that day when he broke with precedent by preaching in the fields to the needy and degraded. Women welcomed the early Methodist movement not only because it offered hope for their own salvation, but also because of the good effect it had on their homes.

Yet Wesley and the early Methodist leaders in America took the Apostle Paul's advice and denied to women official positions in the church. When Methodism came into Iowa, for example, women could be class leaders and Sunday school teachers, but not deacons or elders. They could pray and sing, but not serve on the governing boards of churches as stewards or trustees. They could give their testimony, but they could not preach.

Women, however, found other ways to serve. Like Martha, they became the housekeepers of the church, "helpmeets" to the church and the pastor as well as to their husbands. Before the Civil War, they timidly formed societies known as the "Ladies' and Pastors' Christian Union." During the war public-spirited women formed "Aid Societies" to help care for wounded soldiers and for the families of soldiers. The Ladies' Aid Society continued as an auxiliary and soon became

the standard organization of the churches, putting on dinners, bazaars, and quiltings, organizing charities, and helping to raise the church budgets. The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was organized in 1869 and was formally approved by the General Conference three years later. Ministers welcomed representatives of the society into their pulpits. In 1880 the Woman's Home Missionary Society was organized, and much later (1921) the Wesleyan Service Guild — a society of business women interested in home and foreign missions — gained status as a church organization. With Methodist unification, the various women's organizations were combined in the Woman's Society of Christian Service. Currently the national president of this organization is Mrs. Frank G. Brooks of Mount Vernon, Iowa.

The admission of women to official positions in the church has been a slow process. When lay representatives were admitted to the General Conference in 1872, women were not specifically disqualified; but when five of them, including Frances E. Willard, appeared as delegates in 1888, the General Conference refused to seat them. This same General Conference, however, created the order of deaconess. In Iowa, no woman was chosen during this period.

In 1904 the doors of the General Conference were opened to women. The laymen's conferences were open to both men and women after 1932.

In this same year the General Conference authorized the ordination of women as deacons and elders, but excluded them from enrollment as traveling preachers. In effect, this rule permits such women to preach, to baptize, and to perform marriage ceremonies, but leaves them still outside the circle from which the regular appointments are made.