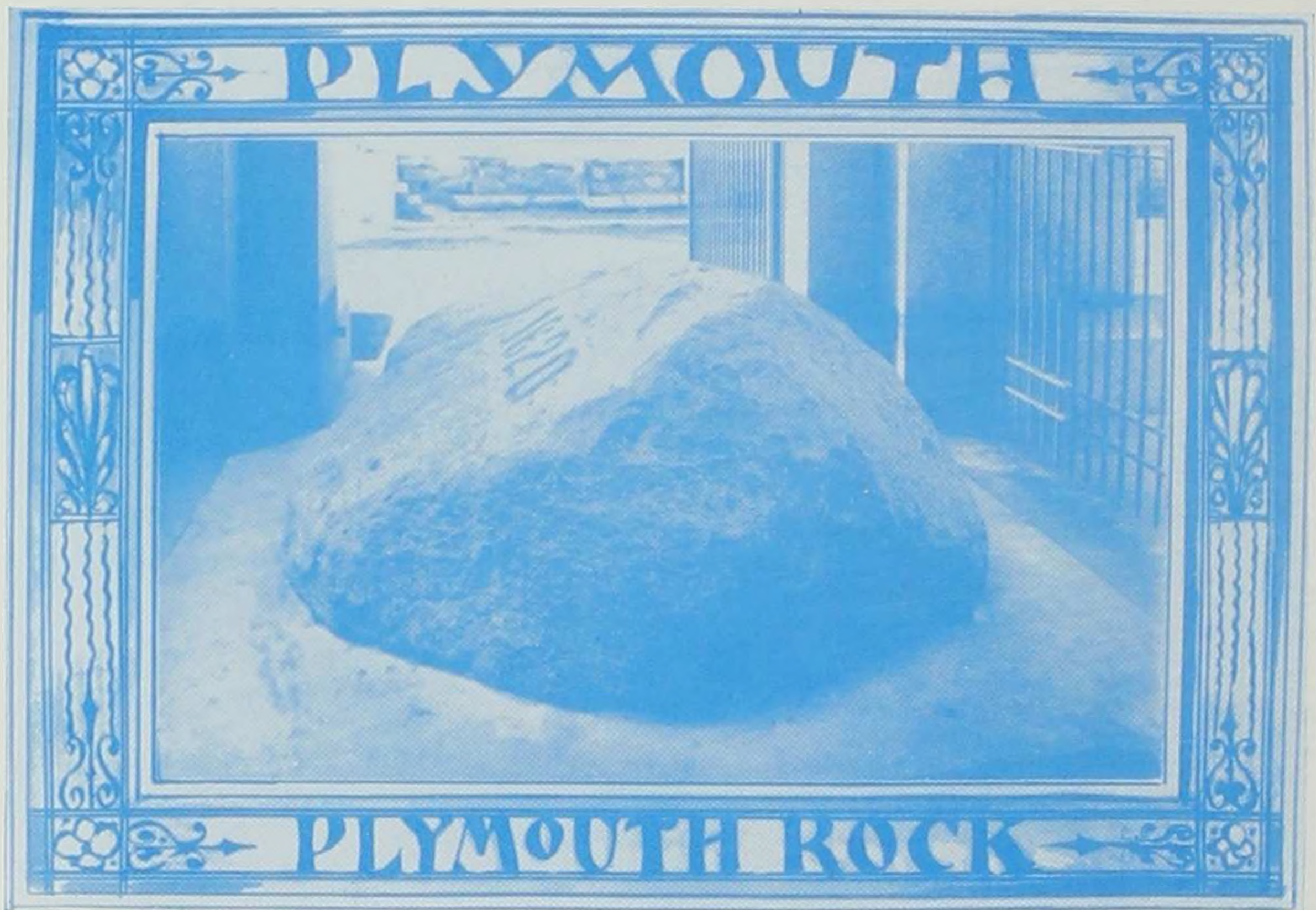
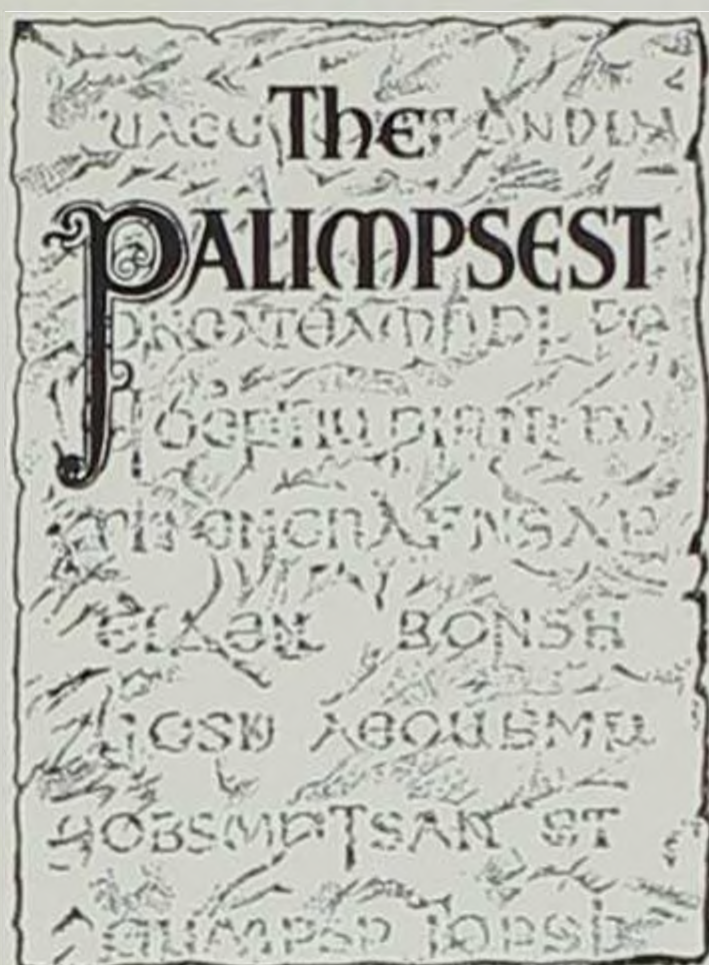


The
PALIMPSEST



Published Monthly by
The State Historical Society of Iowa
Iowa City Iowa

M A Y 1 9 5 1



The Meaning of Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest 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 records 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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CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIANS IN IOWA

FREDERICK I. KUHNS

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Cover

Front — Plymouth Rock, traditional site of landing of the Pilgrims, 1620.

Back — Inside: *Left*, Denmark Congregational Church; *right*, Tabor Congregational Church.

Back — Outside: *Top*, Men's dormitories, Grinnell College; *bottom*, Rededication service, Herrick Chapel, 1949; *inset*, Iowa College at Davenport about 1855.

Pictures — Credit to Pilgrim Society for Plymouth Rock; Pilgrim Press for Asa Turner, A. L. Frisbie, John Todd, Mrs. J. F. Hardin, Mrs. T. O. Douglass; 'Ing-John, Greenwich-Stamford,' for Mrs. E. A. Read; Harvard Studio for Mrs. J. E. Fiebiger, F. T. Meacham; Blackstone Studios for H. P. Douglass.

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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

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More Truth and Light

Not many Englishmen knew about Robert Browne. Yet he was a Cambridge man and writer of books attacking Queen Elizabeth's doctrine of "supremacy" and "uniformity" in religion. In two of them, *A Treatise of Reformation without tarrying for any* and *A Book which Sheweth the life and manners of all true Christians*, he had "set out quite clearly the fundamental principles of Congregationalism." For this the Bishop of Norwich had him jailed. Browne fled England in 1581, but came back, re-entered the Anglican Church, preached, and died in 1633.

The hangings of Henry Barrowe and John Greenwood in 1593 — both Cambridge graduates — make a better landmark of nonconformity. They died for writing *A True Description out of the Word of God, of the Visible Church*, and for saying: "This church . . . consisteth of a companie and fellowship of faithful and holie people gathered in the name of Christ Iesus, their only King, Priest, and Prophet, worshipping him aright. . . ."

The "Barrowists" were more numerous than the "Brownists." There had been a few churches like this but the queen would not tolerate them.

Some of the queen's subjects — "Puritans" — were uppish about a "scriptural" way of church government, leaving bishops out. In 1603 Elizabeth was succeeded by James I. Greeted by the Puritans with a call to reform the Church, the king appointed a Bible commission, which issued the King James Version in 1611. But the Puritans continued to use the Geneva Bible, printed in 1560.

The Separatists, though having some Puritan sympathies, formed in knots by themselves. They cared less for the Church of England "purified" than for a church in agreement with Scripture and comprising only the elect. The king threatened: "I shall make them conform themselves, or I will harrie them out of the land, or else doe worse." But the Separatists went on forming churches, notably at Scrooby and Austerfield; William Brewster of the former and William Bradford of the latter are well known, as is their pastor, the Rev. John Robinson, a brilliant Cambridge graduate. But those who stole off to such meetings had to leave for Holland in 1608, and Robinson himself fled. In Leyden, his church counted 300 souls; Brewster, covertly printing Separatist books, was elected as the church elder.

The Leyden exiles obtained a patent for the "Northerne parts of Virginia" and signed an

agreement for ships and supplies. As Bradford wrote: "... but they knew they were pilgrimes. ... " Two ships were hired, and "all other things gott in readines." Edward Winslow wrote that Robinson "was very confident the Lord had more truth and light yet to breake forth out of his holy Word." After prayers, the *Speedwell* embarked from Leyden. At Southampton, "lying ready, with all the rest of their company," was the other ship, of 180 tons burden — the *Mayflower*. But she had to sail alone with her 102 passengers on September 6. Blown far off her course, she was brought off the point of Cape Cod, where in her cabin on November 11, 1620, the Mayflower Compact was signed by forty-one of the men.

THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT — 1620

In y^e name of god Amen. We whose names are underwritten,
the loyal subjects of our dread soueraigne Lord King James
by y^e graco of god, of great Britaine, France, & Ireland King
defondor of y^e faith, &c.
Hauing undertaken, for y^e glorio of god, and aduancement
of y^e Christian, and honour of our king & countrey, a voyage to
plant y^e first Colonie in y^e Northernd parts of Virginia. Do
by these presents solemnly & mutually in y^e presence of god, and
one of another, Couenant, & combine our selues together into a
Ciuill body politick, for y^e better ordering, & preservation & fur-
therance of y^e ends aforesaid; and by vertue hereof to enacte,
constitute, and frame such just & equall Lawes, ordinances,
Acts, constitutions, & offices, from time to time, as shall be thought
most meete & conuenient for y^e generall good of y^e Colonie: vnto
which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness
whereof we haue herevnder subscribed our names at Cape
Codd y^e 11. of Nouember, in y^e year of y^e raigne of our soueraigne
Lord King James of England, France, & Ireland y^e eighteenth
and of Scotland y^e fiftie fourth, An^o Dom. 1620.]

William Bradford's Of Plimoth Plantation
(Courtesy of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts)

On going ashore on December 21 at Plymouth Rock, the Pilgrims erected a rude shelter and fort where they also had church. Had the Indians, who visited them in the spring, not been friendly, the colony might not have survived. Let Bradford tell:

But that which was most sadd & lamentable was, that in 2. or 3. moneths time halfe of their company dyed, espetially in Jan: & February, being ye depth of winter, and wanting houses & other comforts; being infected with ye scurvie & other diseases, which this long vioage & their inacomodate condition had brought upon them; so as ther dyed some times 2. or 3. of a day, in ye aforesaid time; that of 100. & odd persons, scarce 50. remained.

Yet, when the *Mayflower* left for England in April, the remnant stayed.

With summer, conditions improved, and there was a good harvest. "But it was ye Lord which upheld them. . . ," said Bradford, who, as the new governor, called on everybody to celebrate the first American Thanksgiving with venison and turkey. Elder Brewster led prayers, as the colony had no minister. John Alden and Priscilla Mullins were both there, as were Captain Myles Standish and many Indians.

These were the Congregational FOREFATHERS. Many churches keep the day — December 21 — to mark the progress of religious liberty.

Pilgrims and Puritans

Not Plymouth but the Boston area knew the deep impress of the 20,000 Puritans who from 1630 to 1640 departed out of Old England for New England. Governor of Massachusetts Bay Company was wealthy John Winthrop, who sailed to Boston in 1630 with 800 colonists and with the Charter itself. Foremost theologian and teacher of the First Church in Boston was the Rev. John Cotton, who wrote a catechism, *Spiritual Milk for Boston Babes*, and who first called the churches of New England "congregational."

Most of the ministers were Cambridge scholars, formerly Anglican priests, and "set apart" in America by the laying on of hands. Closely related, church and state formed an oligarchy, though the ministers did not hold office. The General Court, however, limited the franchise to church members, and the ministers decided whom to admit; the churches also regarded the civil authorities as their "nursing fathers." Thus, "town meeting" in church or "meeting house" was of great importance to the colonies. For the churches holding the "New England way," the most important early meeting was the Cambridge Synod of 1648, which drafted the *Platform of Church*

Discipline, defining Congregational polity. In matters of faith, the *Westminster Confession* was agreed upon, "for the substance thereof."

The Puritans provided for the higher education of "posterity" and for the perpetuation of a learned ministry; Harvard College dates from 1636, and Yale from 1701. Dartmouth, Williams, Amherst, and other New England colleges belong in the tradition of Puritanism. Andover Theological Institution was established in 1808 as a "protest," after the appointment of a Unitarian theological professor at Harvard. Other schools had started by 1647, being operated by the towns or by the ministers. Printing was introduced at Cambridge, the first publication, in 1640, being *The Whole Booke of Psalmes*.

In the earliest years, the carrying of the gospel to the Indians was of great importance in New England. Forming an epic in itself is the fifty-eight year ministry of the Rev. John Eliot of Roxbury, whose Bible translation (1661) was the first printed in the colonies.

Though Plymouth colony grew slowly and the Bay settlements rapidly, and though the former was poor and the latter wealthy, there was more tolerance at Plymouth. It was unfortunate that four Quakers were hanged in Massachusetts, yet, considering the times (1661), those in authority were unusually fair-minded as regards the administration of the laws. Similarly, as to the witch

episode at Salem in 1692: Judge Sewall stood up in church to admit the error of his way in sending twenty of these poor creatures to their deaths.

The "Great Awakening" in New England (1734) revealed the churches' greatest theological mind — the Rev. Jonathan Edwards of Northampton, later president of the College of New Jersey (Princeton). Prominent later (1769) and among the first to denounce the slave trade was the Rev. Samuel Hopkins of Newport, Rhode Island, who had learned from Edwards, and whose theology of "disinterested benevolence" and "general atonement" struck at privilege.

The Congregationalists were "patriots," serving with distinction both in the pulpit and in the army during the Revolution; but the country had reached low tide spiritually by the time hostilities were over. Though they formed the largest and most influential group in the United States, the Congregationalists had no central, unifying organization—a disadvantage at a time when thousands were settling west of the mountains. But they organized many missionary societies. Could they meet the competition from other denominations and hold their own in the West?

Western Congregationalism

With every company of New Englanders hurrying westward, Congregationalism was advancing beyond its original habitat. Yet by comparison it was losing out nearly everywhere. But why?

Congregationalists generally were consolidating their western missions with those of the Presbyterian Church. The "mutual forbearance and accommodation" enjoined by the Plan of Union of 1801 found a welcome among the settlers, who could thus be fellowshipped in the same church and choose their minister from either denomination. Soon, hundreds of new churches had been formed, and untold thousands of the unchurched reached. Scores of missionaries were kept busy, the principal agency being the American Home Missionary Society, organized in 1826.

Where circumstances required "accommodation," the Congregationalists watched their identity disappearing in a church type which some, liking it, called "Presbygationalism" and others, possibly lacking in "forbearance," did not like. The Presbyterians were more aggressive, too, yet the majority of the Congregationalists joined their churches. Recent studies have shown that upwards of 500 Congregational churches (the nation over)

were received into Presbyterian church bodies previous to 1846. Yet few leaders were willing to see home missions conducted in any other way.

But talk was getting around of a "revolt." Certain Presbyterians — the more liberal wing, the "New School" group — were for fellowshiping the Congregationalists; others were not. These latter formed the "Old School" bloc, believing that the "very fearful crisis" could only be broken by "a thorough-going work of reformation." In 1837 the Old School outvoted the New School in the General Assembly, thus purging the Presbyterian Church of "Congregational influences." The New School Presbyterians continued to work with the Congregationalists until 1861.

In 1838, on the eve of organizing the first Congregational church in Iowaland, there were more than 100 Congregational churches in Ohio, 20 in Michigan, 36 in Illinois, 6 in Indiana, and 4 in Wisconsin Territory. West of the Mississippi River two had been formed, but only one was now in existence. Everybody anticipated that Congregationalism eventually would become resurgent, and that is what happened. Even now, New Englanders were settling in the "Black Hawk Purchase," where Illinois Congregational ministers had done some prospecting. What if they should be invited to come over and form a church in Iowa?

The Iowa Mission

First to work among Iowa Congregationalists was the Rev. William P. Apthorp, who preached at Fort Madison, West Point, and Denmark in 1836 and 1837. Earlier, the Rev. Asa Turner and the Rev. William Kirby had toured over the "Black Hawk Purchase." Following Apthorp's good work, the people at Denmark were ready when Turner, aided by the Rev. Julius A. Reed, came to form a church. On May 5, 1838, thirty-two persons assented to the Articles of Faith at the meeting held in a "shanty sanctuary" measuring 20x24 feet; ten years later this was Iowa's largest Congregational church with 123 members. Soon, other missionaries came, including Reuben Gaylord, Oliver Emerson, Charles Burnham, and John C. Holbrook — all known as the "Iowa patriarchs" — and these organized many additional churches, as well as the Congregational Association of Iowa (on November 6, 1840), the first such body west of the Mississippi River.

The most significant event concerned the coming of the "Iowa Band" for ordination at Denmark on November 5, 1843. Trained at Andover Seminary under the distinguished Professor Leonard Woods, the "Band" included Harvey Adams, Ed-

win B. Turner, Daniel Lane, Erastus Ripley, James J. Hill, Benjamin A. Spaulding, Alden B. Robbins, Horace Hutchinson, Ephraim Adams, Ebenezer Alden, and William Salter, the oldest being thirty-four and the youngest twenty-two. Hutchinson, the organizer, from Sutton, Massachusetts, was the first of the "Band" to die (March 7, 1846) on Iowa soil. "Every thing Christian felt at once the impulse of his sanctified enthusiasm and his kindling powers of speech." His place at Burlington was filled by Salter, who remained on this field until his death in 1910. Together in 1843 the "patriarchs" and the "Band" established Denmark Academy; three years later Iowa College was organized at Davenport, under Ripley's charge.

Until 1882, Iowa, like other western states, depended largely upon New England for her ministers, "missionary barrels," and subsidies for churches and parsonages. Good agents were in the field: Asa Turner, Julius A. Reed, Jesse Guernsey, and Joseph Pickett. Ephraim Adams, one of the "Band," oversaw this work from 1872 to 1882, when Iowa decided to "go it alone." While in office, Adams wrote the notable book, *The Iowa Band* — the first authentic account of Iowa Congregational origins. He was followed by the Rev. Truman O. Douglass, who served most ably until 1907, writing *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, a sweeping account of developments up to 1911. His son, H. Paul Douglass, born at Osage, has been associated

both with the American Missionary Association and with research and survey commissions for the Congregationalists and for the Federal Council of Churches. The grandson, Truman B. Douglass, born at Grinnell, is Executive Vice-President of the Board of Home Missions and (1951) Lyman Beecher lecturer in Yale University. Likewise effectual in securing the independence of Iowa Congregationalism were the Iowa Congregational Home Missionary Society (1872), and the Iowa Branch of the Woman's Board of Missions for the Interior (1876). Later, the Woman's Home Missionary Union (1886) helped to keep it on a self-supporting basis. Since 1883, *Congregational Iowa* has served as an inspirational news medium.

Churches holding centennials during the 1930's include Denmark, Burlington, Clinton (Community), Danville, Davenport (Edwards), and Dubuque (First). Those attaining their hundredth milestone in the 1940's are Farmington, Mount Pleasant, Brighton (Clay), De Witt, Maquoketa, Muscatine (First), Oskaloosa, Keosauqua, Eddyville, Anamosa, Columbus Junction (Welsh), Edgewood, and Specht's Ferry (Durango). Certain German, Swedish, Dano-Norwegian, and Bohemian (Czech) Congregational churches, formed earlier, are now assimilated to English-speaking groups. Still functioning, however, though on a limited basis, are the two Welsh churches of Iowa

City and Columbus Junction, the Swedish church in Ottumwa, and the Czech church at Vining.

The mission period from 1836 to 1882 saw Iowa Congregationalism increasing from 3 churches in 1838 to 234 in 1880, served by 185 ministers, and composed of 15,512 members. When in 1854 the Congregational Association of Iowa held its fifteenth annual session, there were 63 churches, 53 ministers, 2,296 members, and 2,528 Sunday school pupils in the 5 local associations. Between 1840 and 1880, while Iowa's population rose from 43,112 to 1,624,615, many new settlements soon had Congregational churches. Thus, in 1853, the church at Council Bluffs was formed, where the Rev. George G. Rice preached for sixty years. Decorah followed, in 1854, and the "Little Brown Church in the Vale" at Bradford (Nashua) the next year. Others were organized at frontier points, such as Fort Dodge and Algona in 1856; Sioux City, 1857; Osage and Mason City, 1858; Cedar Falls, 1860; Atlantic, 1869; Spencer, 1872; Sibley, 1873; Shenandoah, 1877; Galt, 1883. Denominational advancement came, too, with the planting of the colony and church at the heart of Iowa in 1855. According to the Rev. Josiah B. Grinnell, the founder, there was "not a Christian of any denomination to dispute occupancy with prowling beasts and coiling reptiles."

The churches were also aroused by the slavery controversy, Iowa Congregationalists being active

in the activities of the Underground Railroad, some churches serving as way-stations — from Tabor to Keokuk and up the Mississippi River from Keokuk to Dubuque. They also played the decisive part in 1856 in demanding a change in the policy of the American Home Missionary Society, securing the discontinuance of the subsidies granted to churches whose members were slaveowners.

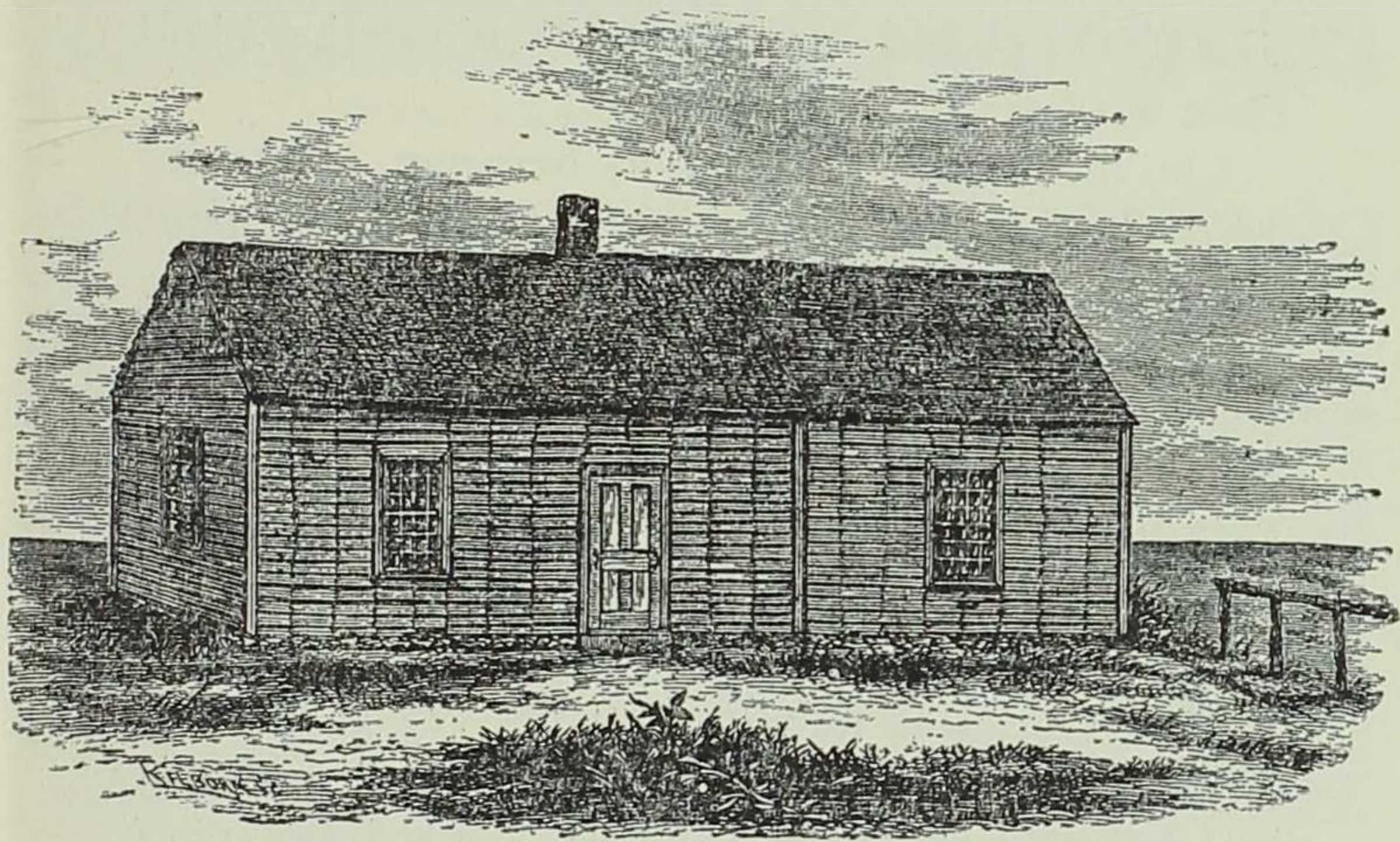
Iowa Congregationalists proposed the church and parsonage building program adopted by the Albany Convention of 1852 and by the American Congregational Union the next year; the firm hand of the Rev. Asa Turner was in both actions. Turner, for thirty years pastor of the Denmark church, also carried a major responsibility in connection with the establishment of the Chicago Theological Seminary in 1855, while other Iowa Congregationalists deliberated over denominational affairs at Boston in 1865, at Chicago in 1870, and at Oberlin College in 1871, where the National Council of Congregational Churches was formed.

The period was likewise one in which serious concern was voiced both for Sabbath observance and for temperance. From 1868 to 1872 Governor Samuel Merrill, a member of Plymouth Congregational Church in Des Moines, held his Puritan ground in the fight for temperance legislation.

Iowa Congregationalists also shared in the work of the American Board of Commissioners for For-

eign Missions; between 1856 and 1910 over sixty Iowa-born men and women served in China, Japan, Ceylon, South Africa, and elsewhere. Many also taught in colleges of the American Missionary Association in the South.

The mission period provides many a precedent for social action and inter-church cooperation. Burlington-born Rev. Thomas B. Keehn serves in this field as Legislative Secretary of the Council for Social Action, at Washington, D.C.



DENMARK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH — 1843

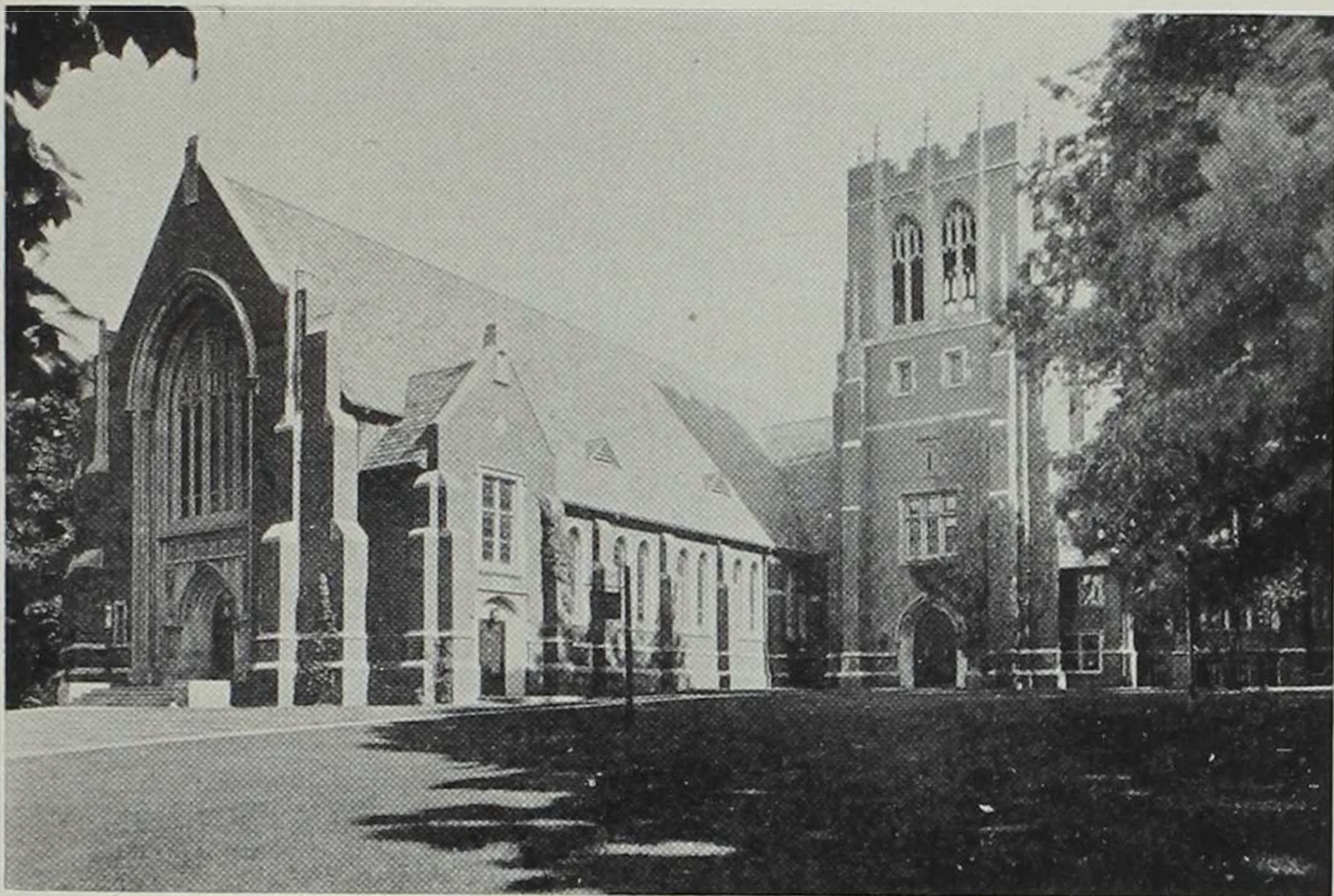
Years of Maturity

The vote for the independence of Iowa Congregationalism had scarcely been announced when a fearful cyclone tore its way through Grinnell on June 17, 1882, the eve of Commencement, killing thirty-nine persons (three of them college students), and destroying the college buildings. Not appalled by this experience, Iowans gave \$100,000 to build four structures where there had been but two.

On the whole, the period between 1882 and 1931 showed progress, though it was not without its serious losses; but all of Iowa was experiencing losses due to population shifts. If "Congregationalism rode into Hawarden on the cow-catcher of the first train" in 1883, it was also true in 1910 that "at the last Iowa picnic in Los Angeles thirty-five thousand Iowans were present."

Congregationalism was not moving into Iowa as fast as it was moving out. Heavy migrations from Iowa — to Canada, the Dakotas, Oregon, but particularly to California — were "playing havoc with scores of weaker churches and affecting both the large and the small." During the superintendency of the Rev. Truman O. Douglass (1882-1907), a total of 137 new churches had

SOME IOWA CHURCHES

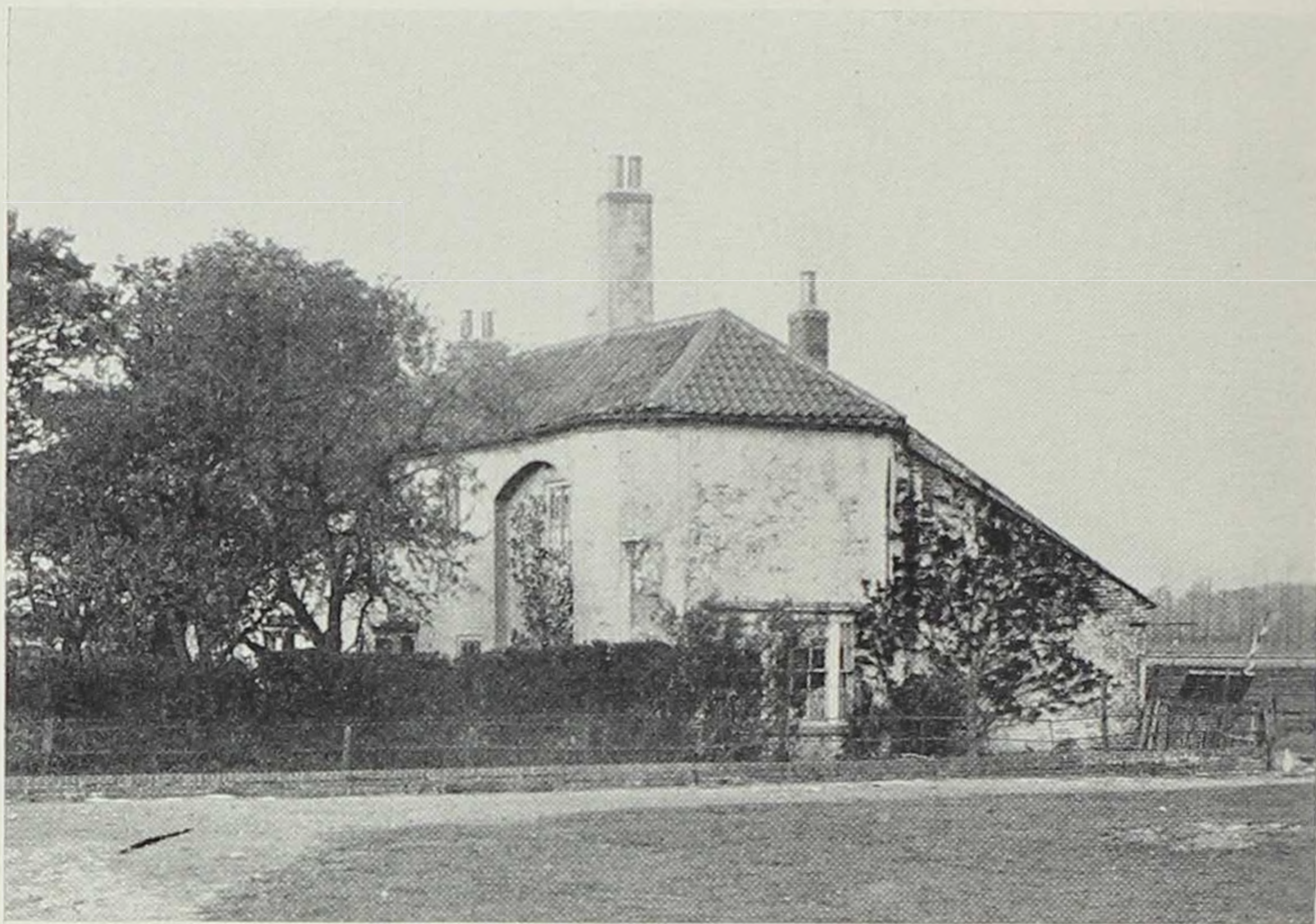


Plymouth Congregational Church, Des Moines



Immanuel Congregational Church, Dubuque

SOME HISTORIC SCENES



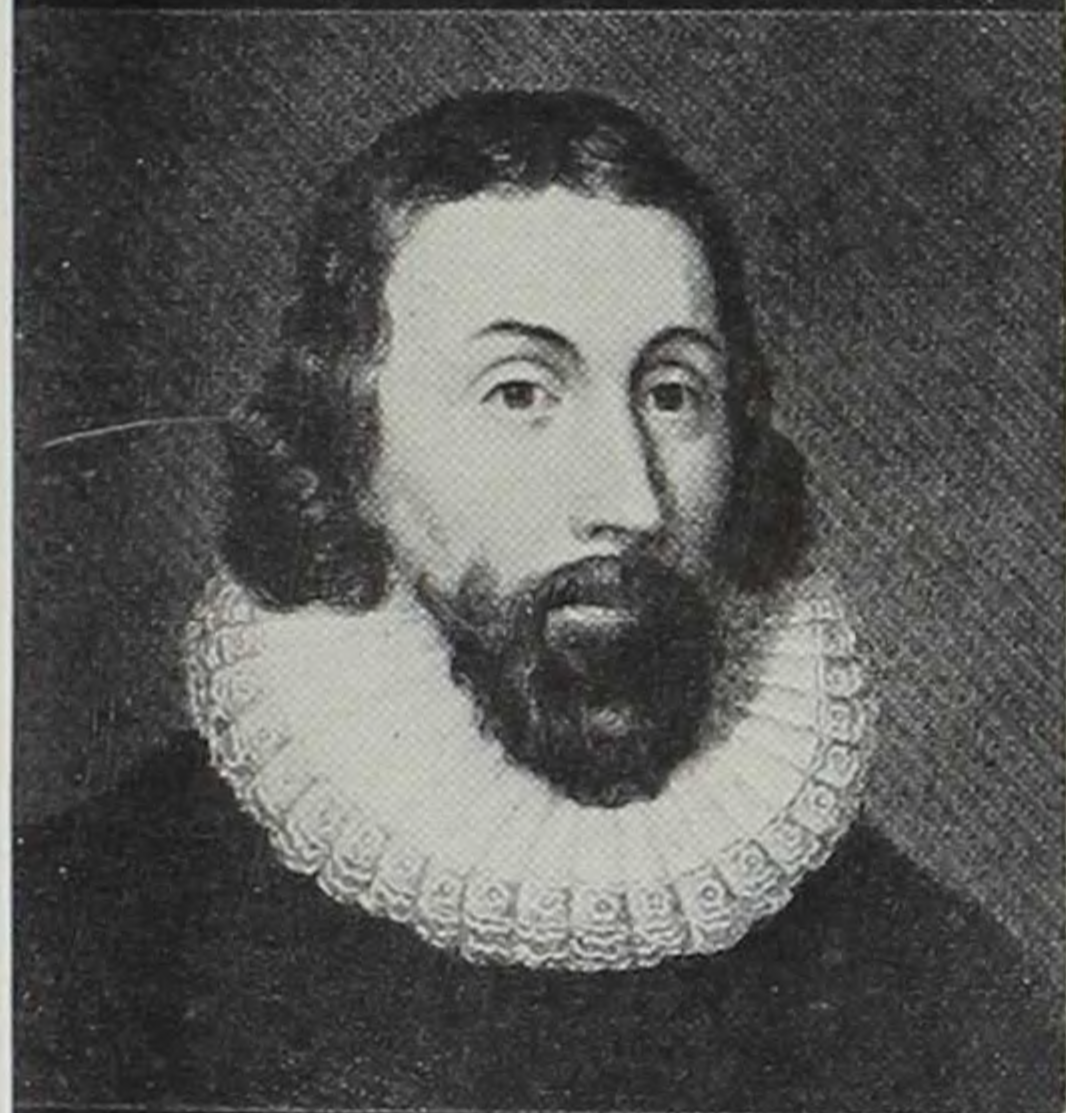
Scrooby Manor — England
Home of Elder William Brewster



Plymouth Rock Enclosure, Plymouth, Massachusetts

(Courtesy of the Pilgrim Society)

SOME COLONIAL LEADERS

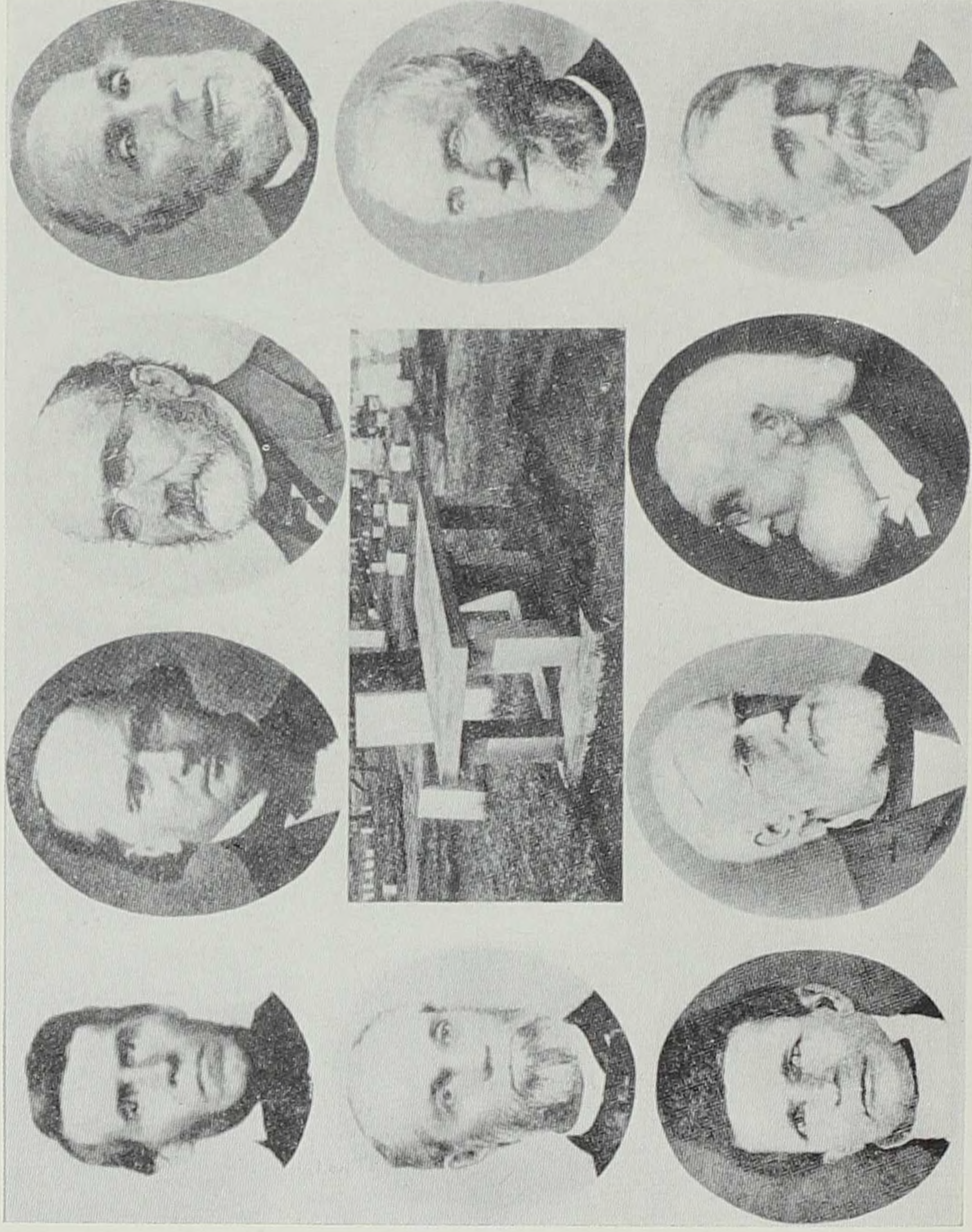


Right: Governor William Bradford, Plymouth Colony.

Left, top to bottom: Rev. John Cotton, Boston; Governor John Winthrop, Boston;
Governor Edward Winslow, Plymouth Colony.

(Courtesy of Pilgrim Society and Congregational Library)

THE IOWA BAND FROM ANDOVER SEMINARY IN 1843



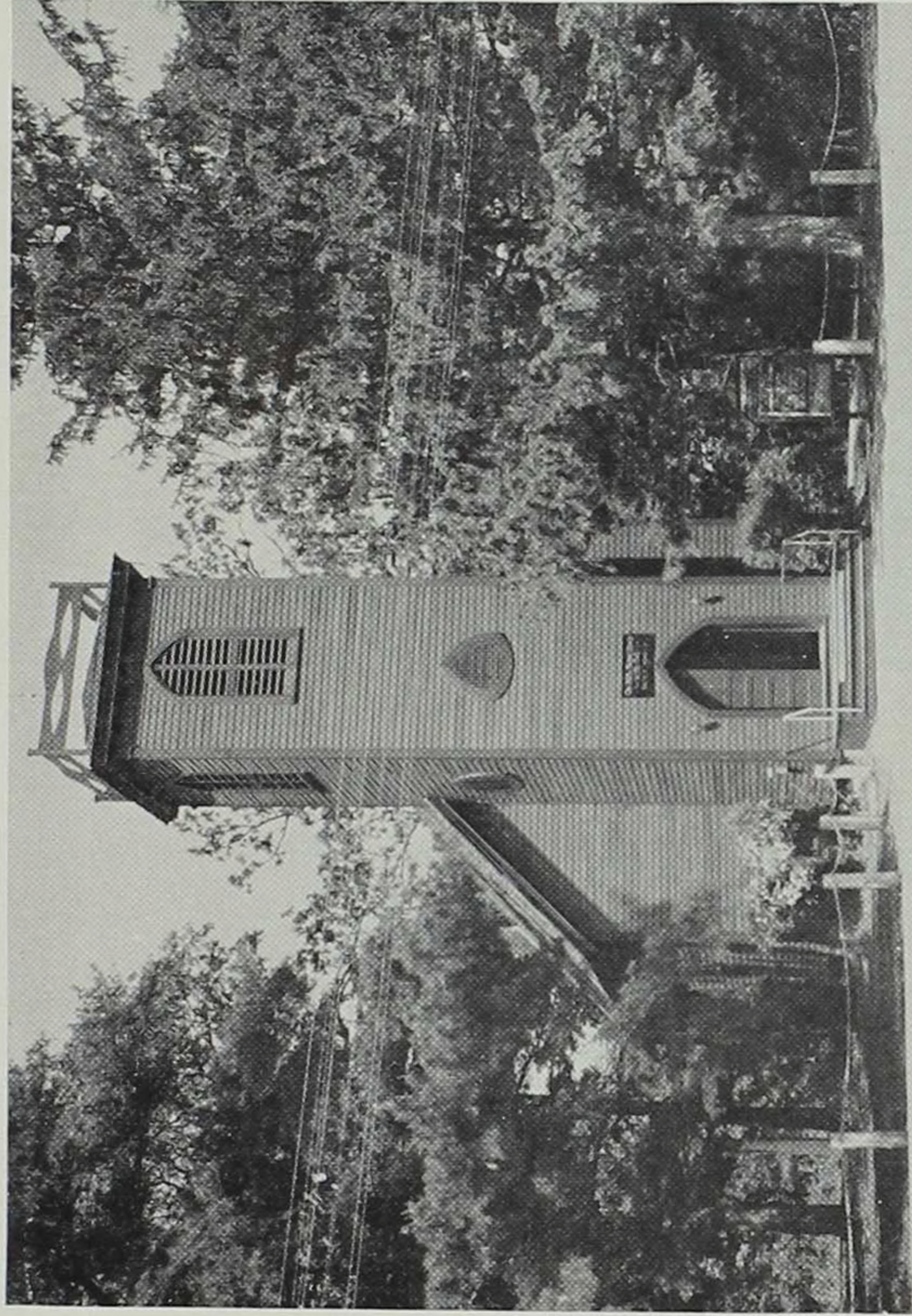
Top, left to right:
Benjamin A. Spaulding
Erastus Ripley
James J. Hill
Ebenezer Alden

Center:
Edwin B. Turner
Grave of Horace Hutchinson
Daniel Lane

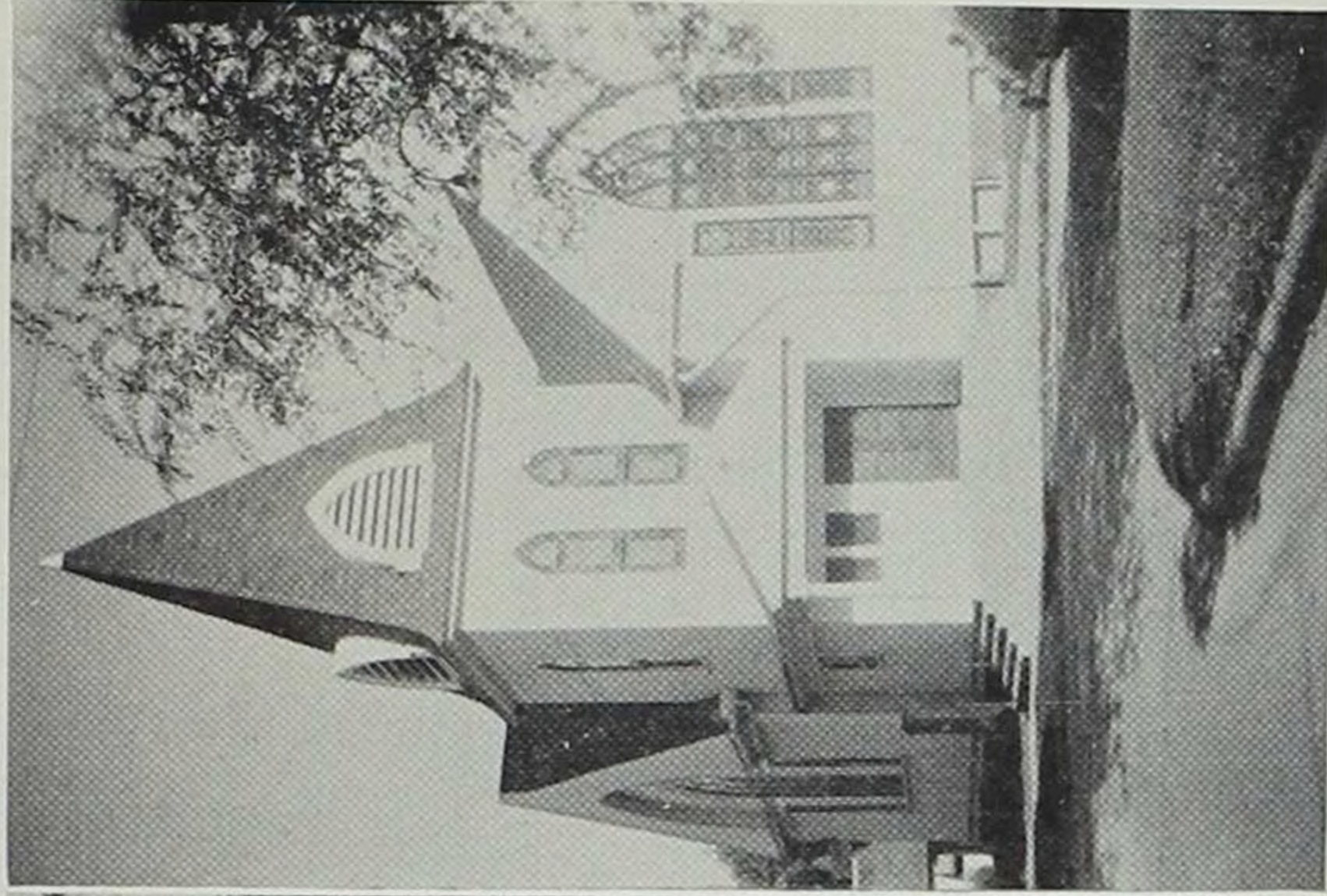
Bottom:
Harvey Adams
Alden B. Robbins
Ephraim Adams
William Salter

(From Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, courtesy of Pilgrim Press)

SOME IOWA CHURCHES



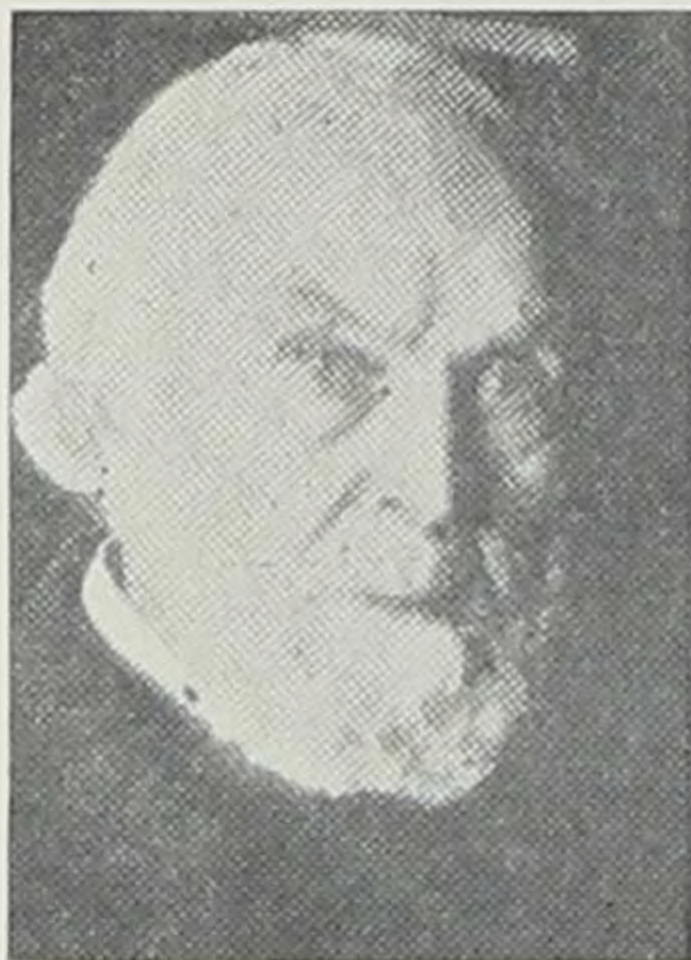
"Little Brown Church in the Vale"
Iowa's best known and most beloved religious shrine, near Nashua.



Largest church of the Christian
denomination west of the
Mississippi—at Madrid.

CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF IOWA

Superintendents and Officers



T. O. DOUGLASS
1882-1907



P. A. JOHNSON
1907-38



R. J. MONTGOMERY
1938-47



J. E. FIEBIGER
1947-



A. K. CRAIG
Field Secy.
1951-



V. E. FOSTER
Religious Education
1946-50



HARRY C. VOSS
Chairman, Trustees
Council Bluffs



R. J. BEEBE
Moderator
Sibley



D. H. THOMAS
Business Manager
Grinnell

SOME GRINNELL COLLEGE PERSONALITIES



G. F. MAGOUN
President, 1865-84



L. F. PARKER
1866-70; 1888-98



J. B. GRINNELL
Town Founder



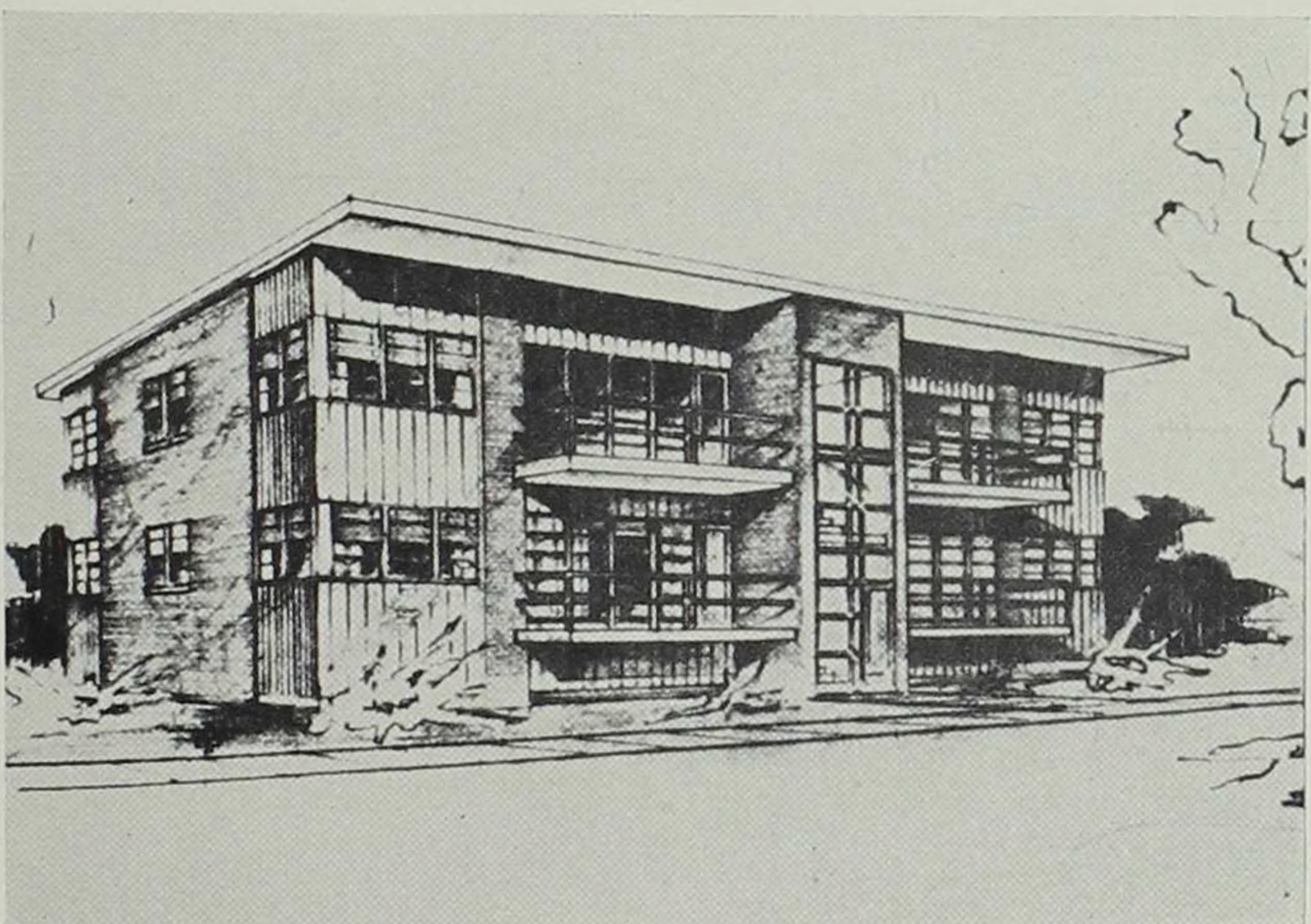
E. A. STEINER
1903-



J. S. NOLLEN
President, 1930-40



S. N. STEVENS
President, 1940-



"SHIP IN FULL SAIL"
MAYFLOWER HOME AT GRINNELL

GOD'S PORTION HARVEST SALE — DENMARK

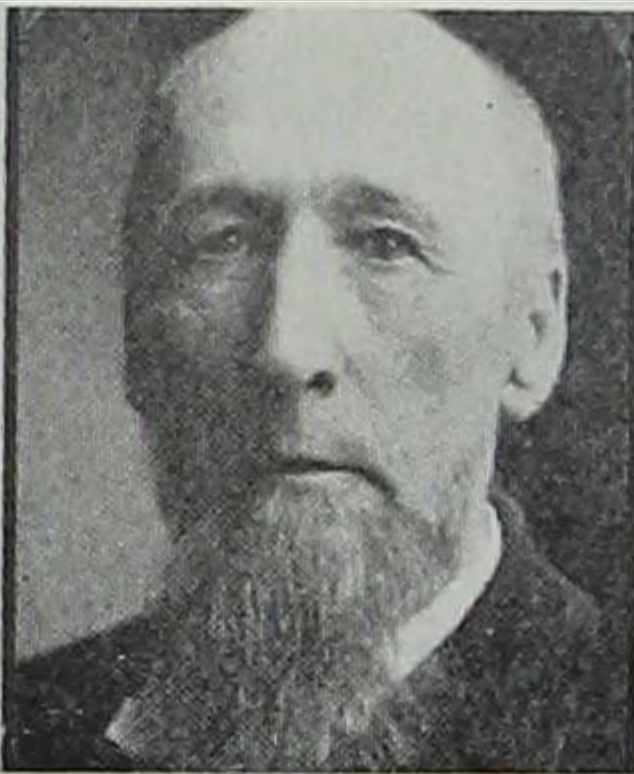


(Courtesy Des Moines Register and Tribune)

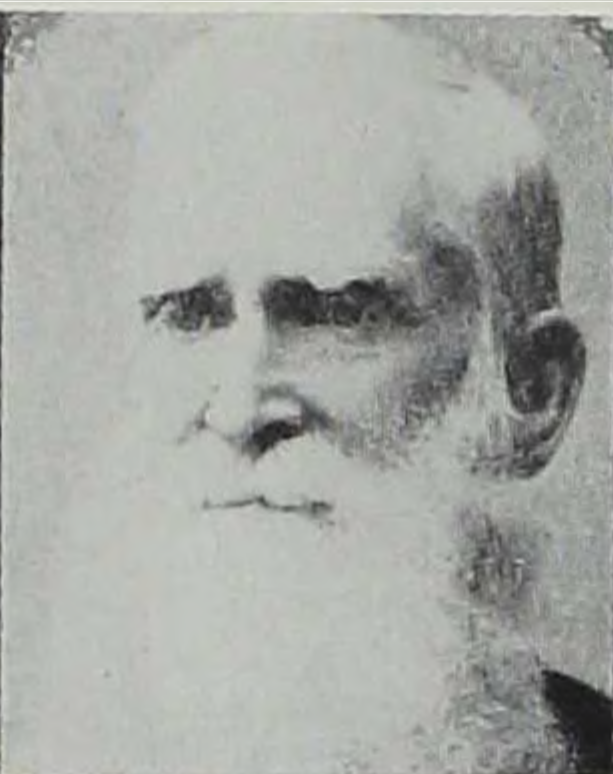
SOME IOWA CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS



ASA TURNER
Denmark



A. L. FRISBIE
Des Moines



JOHN TODD
Tabor



A. S. KILBOURN
Denmark

IOWA WOMEN ALSO BUILD



MRS. E. A. READ
Shenandoah



MRS. J. F. HARDIN
Eldora

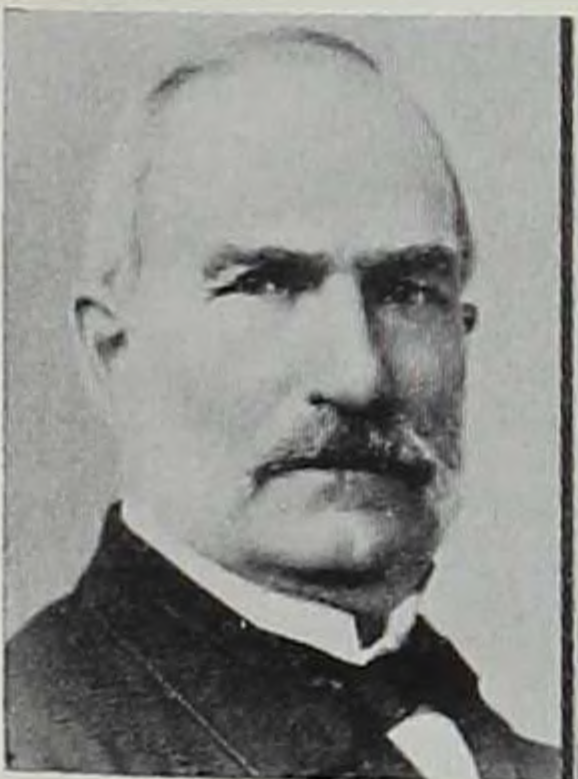


MRS. E. E. BRIGGS
Sioux City



MRS. T. O. DOUGLASS
Osage

IOWA LAYMEN'S FELLOWSHIP



SAMUEL MERRILL
Des Moines



S. Q. FRENCH
Hawarden

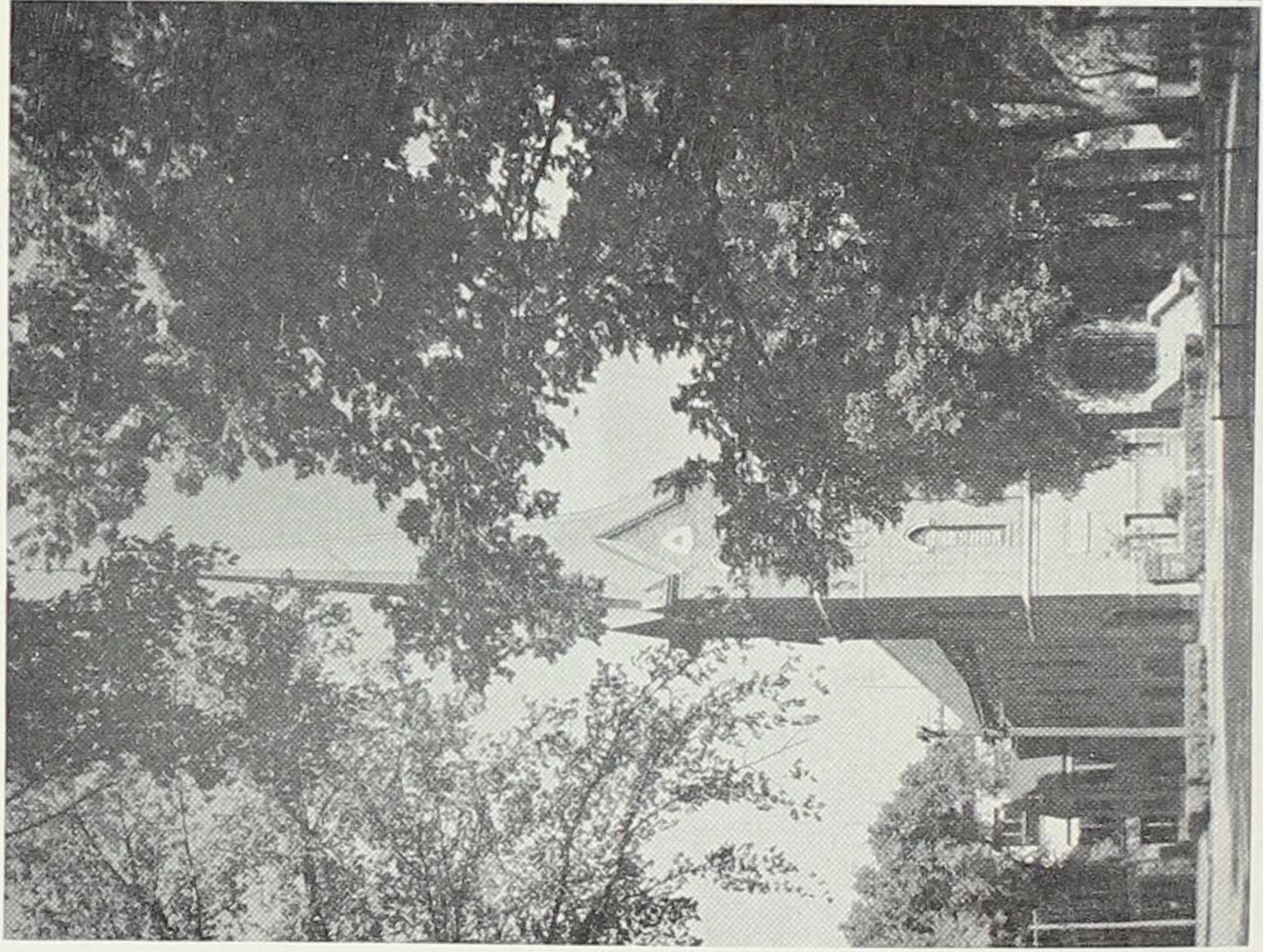


FRED D. CRAM
Cedar Falls

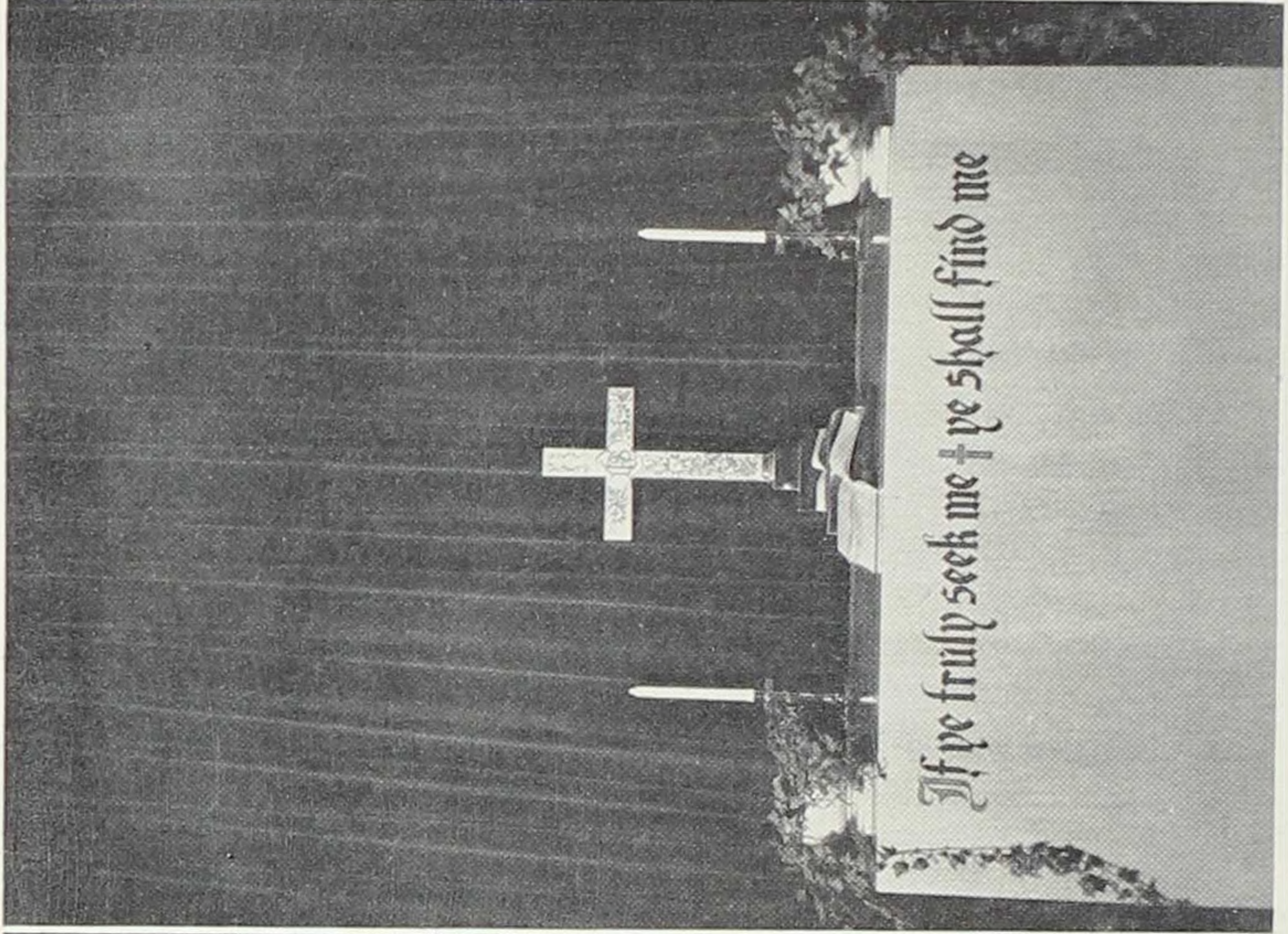


ROGER LEAVITT
Cedar Falls

IOWA CITY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

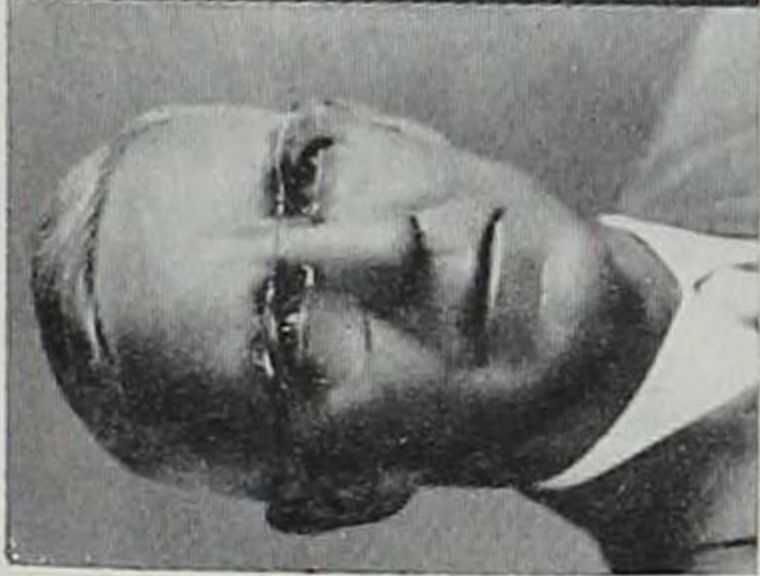


Opposite Old Capitol



Little Chapel

SOME IOWA CONGREGATIONAL MISSIONARIES



F. T. MEACHAM
South Africa



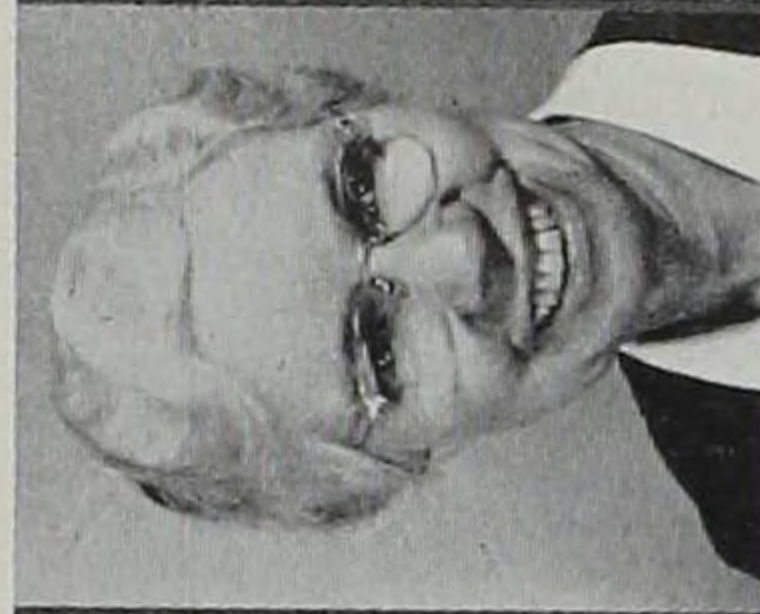
AGNES WOOD
South Africa



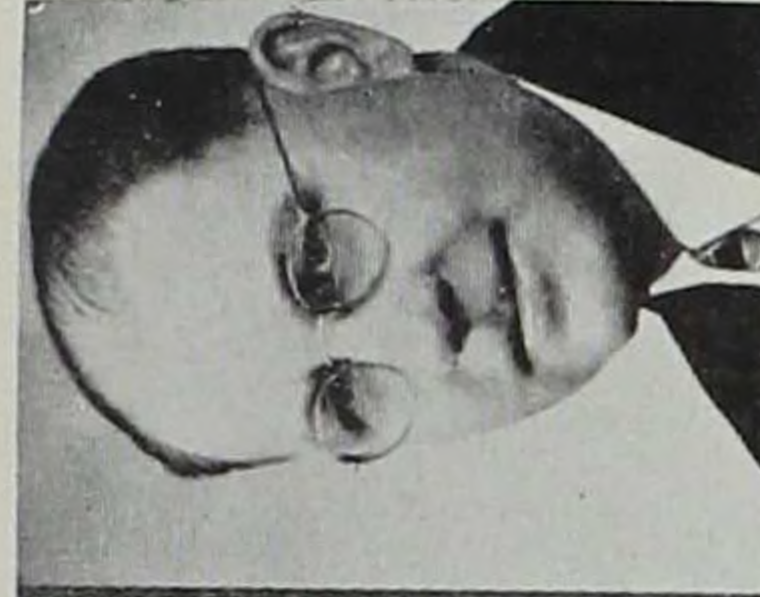
SARAH FIELD
Japan



H. P. DOUGLASS
*American Mission-
ary Association*



BESSIE K. MEACHAM
Tennessee



HAROLD MATTHEWS
China

SOME CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN LEADERS FROM IOWA



MRS. J. E. FIEBIGER
Missions Council



F. G. COFFIN
General Convention



C. E. BURTON
General Council



T. B. DOUGLASS
Home Missions

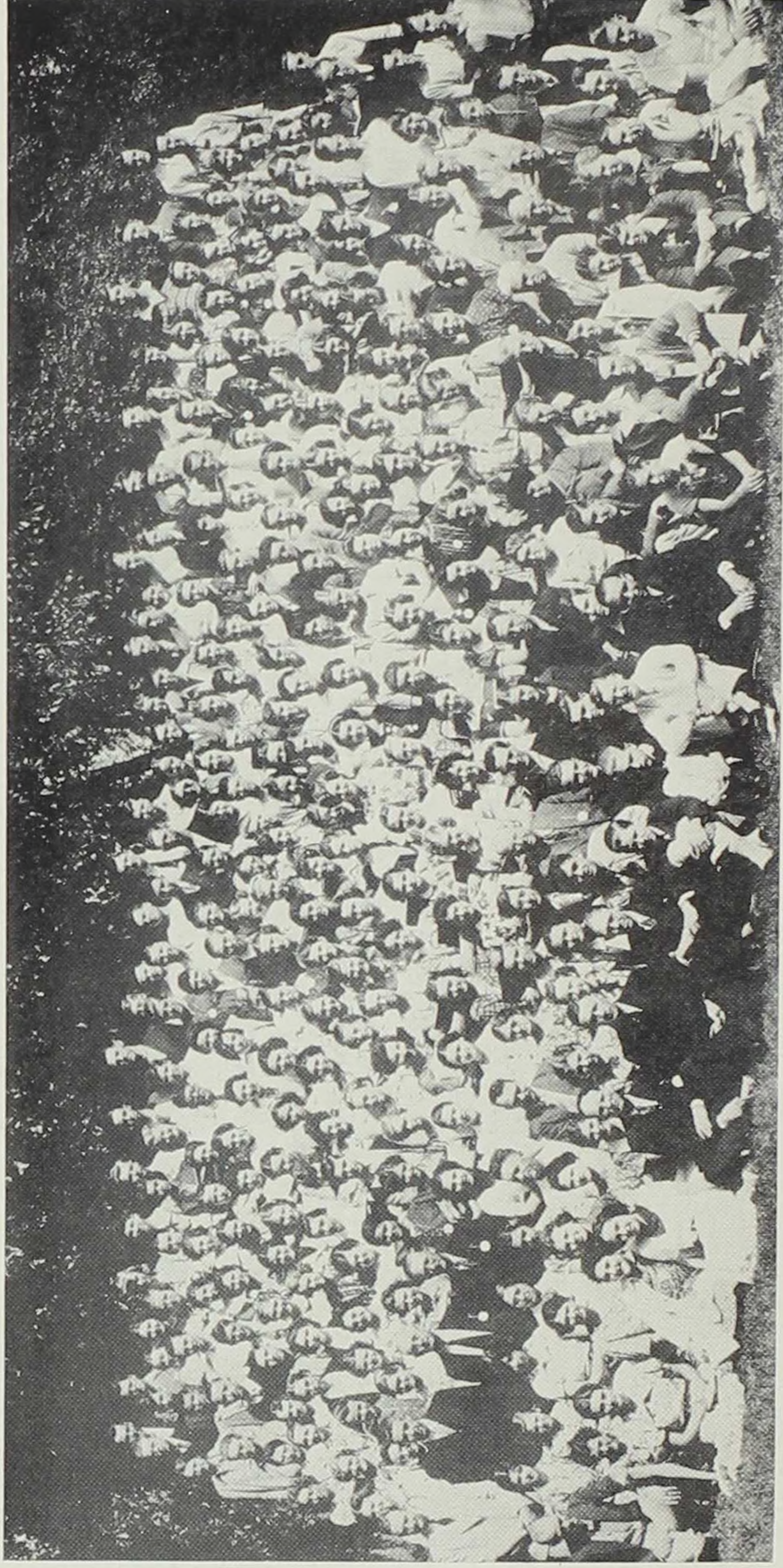


T. B. KEEHN
Social Action



MRS. M. A. HEINEMANN
Nat'l Pilgrim Fellowship

IOWA CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN YOUNG PEOPLE



Pilgrim Fellowship Conference, Grinnell College

been organized, 222 houses of worship built, 78,958 members added, and \$1,176,225 raised for home and foreign missions. Many of these truly splendid accomplishments seemed lost in a cycle of endless change.

Yet, a general advance was made. In the 1880's alone, 66 churches were organized, 50 in the west half of Iowa, 32 in the northwest sector. Nearly a hundred churches came into existence in the 1890's — the fastest-growing decade in Iowa Congregational history. "We no longer talked of reaching the Missouri, or the Upper Cedar Valley, or the Upper Des Moines, or the Sioux Country, for we had in a measure covered the whole field." But the churches were still "for the most part small and weak, not one-third numbering a hundred members each."

The figures for 1930, when compared with those for 1880, actually conceal the developments covering these fifty years. The 246 churches, 221 ministers, 42,039 members reported in 1930 scarcely do justice to the prodigious labors of the home missionary task force — ministers and their wives, lay folk, women, young people, college students — who helped with the advance.

In 1890 the Congregational Association of Iowa observed the semicentennial year of organization, with the Rev. Alden B. Robbins of Muscatine serving as moderator and the Rev. William Salter of Burlington preaching the anniversary sermon.

Both were of the "Band," five of whom had died. One was in retirement in New York State, another in Massachusetts. Four were left in Iowa — Harvey and Ephraim Adams, Robbins, and Salter.

The National Council of Congregational Churches chose Des Moines for the triennial meeting of 1904; it was an honor for the entire Midwest. The same year, the American Board also met at Grinnell, while other denominational boards were meeting in the capital city.

In 1907 Dr. Douglass relinquished the superintendency to the Rev. P. Adelstein Johnson. His tenure covered thirty-one fruitful years until 1938 when he was followed by the Rev. Royal J. Montgomery. In 1910 the corporate title of Congregational Conference of Iowa was assumed. Up to 1932, the Golden Jubilee of independence, a total of \$890,680 had been invested in Iowa home missions — an average of \$17,800 per year for fifty years, with 850 workers commissioned.

In 1931 occurred the merger of the National Council of Congregational Churches and the General Convention of the Christian Church. The Rev. Charles E. Burton, born in Poweshiek County, was General Secretary of the former, while the Rev. Frank G. Coffin, born at Legrand, Iowa, served as President of the latter body. The new corporation is the General Council of the Congregational and Christian Churches in the United States. The 29 Iowa Christian churches likewise

joined with the 241 Congregational churches to form the Congregational Christian Conference of Iowa.

The Christian denomination, itself the result of fusion, derived from three distinct religious movements. The first began in Virginia with James O'Kelley, who came out of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1792. A second was begun in Vermont under Abner Jones in 1801 and Elias Smith in 1803, both ex-Baptists. A third arose in Kentucky in 1804 under Barton W. Stone, a Presbyterian. The followers of each movement, calling themselves "Christians," discarded all man-made creeds and took the Bible as their only guide. In the West there was much commingling of all the denominations, and eventually — about 1832 — the "Christian Connection Church" was formed. It was this group that merged with the Congregationalists in 1931.

The oldest Christian church in Iowa is not in existence today, although some of the strongest churches of this denomination are functioning under the merger. Among these are the churches of Antioch, near Fairfield, and Madrid, northwest of Des Moines, the latter being the largest west of the Mississippi River. In Iowa the Christians had four conferences, organized as follows: Des Moines, 1853; Union, 1857; Central, 1858; Southwestern, 1861. The Christians also organized the Iowa State Conference in 1872. As the

Rev. Warren H. Denison of Grinnell, former Secretary of the General Convention of the Christian Church, has written: "Christian Union was one of the cardinal principles of the Christians. . . . The Merger has been a very happy one. There should be many others."

Congregational Christians "hold to the autonomy of the local church and its independence of all ecclesiastical control." Each church frames its own doctrinal statement. The principle of fellowship "assumes a general consensus of beliefs," but none is imposed. Baptism is by sprinkling, though some of the Christian churches followed immersion. Open communion is customary, while faith in the Trinity is the accepted confessional standard.

The merger has been promoted through various publications, state and national. Thus, as far back as 1808, Elias Smith, a leader of the Christians in Vermont, had begun publication of the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. It was the nation's "first distinctly religious newspaper," and the Christian Church continued its publication later at Dayton, Ohio. It is now carried forward in *Advance*, the semimonthly national journal of Congregational Christian churches.

Youth Serving and Being Served

Work for and by youth has occupied a conspicuous place in Congregational history from the first. The "Pilgrim Fathers" were young people. Pastor John Robinson died at fifty, in 1625, after illness and other reverses had prevented him from coming to America. And the Puritan clergy of New England were but youths when they fled to Boston and vicinity from the policies of Archbishop William Laud. As Eleazer Wheelock had responded to the Indians' need for a school in 1770 by planting Dartmouth College in the wilderness of New Hampshire, so others kept faith with a Christian commitment, and in time there came to be many colleges of Congregational origin and background, stretching like a chain from coast to coast and meeting the needs of the new settlers in the West.

One day in June, 1844, a group of Congregational and New School Presbyterian ministers, returning from a missionary convention at Cleveland on the steamer *Chesapeake*, were discussing western education. Before they reached Milwaukee, the men had completed their plans. Asa Turner of Denmark, Iowa Territory, had unfolded the design of the Iowa College Association, arrived

at months earlier, and all agreed to help. Thus, the Beloit, Rockford, and Iowa colleges came into existence at about the same time, all three having Congregational and Presbyterian backgrounds and sponsorship. In addition to private benefactions, assistance came from the American Education Society and the American Home Missionary Society. The Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West, formed in 1843 to assist the small western colleges struggling to their feet in the wake of the panic of 1837, helped later.

A board of trustees was chosen for Iowa College at Davenport in 1846. The constitution was adopted the next year, and the first building, measuring 36x55 feet, erected. Instruction, begun in 1848, was "on the level of a good academy." Iowa College in 1859 was removed to the new colony at the heart of the state, founded by the Rev. Josiah B. Grinnell who had begun a university.

At Iowa's western edge in 1857 Tabor College was established by Fremont County pioneers who brought the antislavery impulse from Congregational Oberlin College in Ohio. The Rev. William M. Brooks was Tabor's first president. For years, difficult tasks were well performed, but Congregationalism found its natural center at Grinnell, and Tabor was closed in 1927.

Legrand Christian Institute was organized in

1865 by the Rev. J. P. Watson of Marshalltown and the Rev. D. M. Lines of Legrand, two ministers of the Christian denomination. The Iowa Central Christian Conference approved their plans and provided the necessary funds for the opening of Legrand, eventually controlled by the Iowa State Christian Conference. However, one disaster after another impeded its way, then in 1885 the roof of the college building was carried off by a tornado. Finally in 1889 school reopened under the Rev. D. M. Helfenstein and his colleagues. Nine years later its continuance as Palmer College was made possible by a grant from Francis A. Palmer of New York City. Both preparatory and collegiate departments were maintained, but in 1912 the college was transferred to Albany, Missouri.

It has been at Grinnell College that Iowa Congregational Christians have felt the pulse-beat of the entire denominational life, although Grinnell's program is nonsectarian in character. Women were first admitted in 1860. The first college president was Rev. George F. Magoun, who held office from 1865 to 1884. His successors have been George A. Gates, Dan F. Bradley, John H. T. Main, John S. Nollen, and, since 1940, Samuel N. Stevens as Grinnell's sixth president. "Building has been the keynote of President Stevens' administration, both in physical resources and in academic achievements." College enrollment for

1949-50 was 1,113 students; the teaching faculty numbered 86. In addition to her notable program of instruction, counseling, and student activities, Grinnell has a dormitory system probably unique among institutions of her size.

In keeping with the design of her administration — to provide opportunities for expression of Christian ideals in service — Grinnell, since 1915, has maintained a vital interest in world movements through "Grinnell-in-China" — the embodiment of the idea of perpetuating "the missionary spirit of the Iowa Band." Until recently, two academies were maintained at Tehchow, Shantung, but the "exact future of the project" is rendered "uncertain" by present conditions in the Far East.

Iowa Congregationalists once dreamed of having four academies in operation, one at each corner of the state, but most of this dream was not realized. Thus, in the 1860's, there was the Bradford Academy in Chickasaw County, begun by the Rev. J. K. Nutting, pastor of the "Little Brown Church in the Vale," and kept by his nephew, William P. Bennett until 1877. At Hull, in Sioux County, similar efforts were made, after 1884, by the Rev. J. B. Chase, but his institution closed with the appearance of the high school. Likewise, the academy at Wilton Junction, operated by the Davenport Congregational Association, succeeded but a few years. In this instance, Nebraska German Congregationalists merged their work, re-

sulting in the German-English college at Wilton. In time the assets were transferred to Redfield, South Dakota, and still later to Yankton College. Of the four academies opened by Iowa Congregationalists, only Denmark was successful. The Rev. Henry K. Edson, after 1852, gave "a new era of expanding influence" to this academy, whose enrollment once reached 250 students. A township high school now replaces it.

Since the 1920's, youth work in the Congregational churches has been chiefly organized as the Pilgrim Fellowship, by conferences and by states, and, at the national level, as the National Pilgrim Fellowship. One of Iowa's own young people, Miss Betty Long, now Mrs. Myrvan A. Heinemann, was chosen national vice-president and, in 1947, attended the World Convention of the United Christian Youth Fellowship at Oslo, Norway. Prior to that event, however, during the summer of 1939, on the very eve of World War II, Iowa delegates Walter Staves and Thomas Keehn attended the "Christus Victor" conference of youth at Amsterdam.

Iowa Pilgrim Fellowship (IPF) has had excellent advisers in Dr. and Mrs. R. J. Montgomery and Dr. and Mrs. Virgil E. Foster. Each association has its own distinct organization, as does each local church; but everyone participates in electing a state-wide administration. Presidents of IPF since 1945 have been Don Yungclas of Webster

City, Scott Libbey of Fort Dodge, and Mart Bailey of Emmetsburg, while in 1951 Miss Norma Linka of Sioux City is President. Features of IPF are the "Christ's Work Day" and "Pilgrim Crusade," calling for fuller dedication of one's life and possessions. In 1948-49, IPF members gave more than \$10,000 to state and national work through sharing their income from farm, shop, office, factory, and other lucrative services. Summer camps and conferences are held at Camp Wapsie Y and elsewhere to plan the year's programs, and association rallies are held in the fall and spring. The *Iowa Pilgrim Log* is issued monthly. The United Student Fellowship, growing out of IPF, holds great possibilities of further development of youth activities.

At Iowa's three state institutions of higher learning, the Congregational Christian pastors in Ames, Cedar Falls, and Iowa City assist with the student programs. "Frisbie House" in Ames is Conference-owned. Student fellowship groups are also sponsored at Grinnell College, with the local Congregational church taking charge. This field is now receiving intensive study, and new developments will doubtless soon be forthcoming.

Pilgrim Harvests

In more than a century Iowa Congregationalism has seen some good years and some lean ones; it did not crash in the depression, although its stamina was given a grueling test.

During the 1930's, the church membership remained practically stationary, but Iowa's home expenses fell off dangerously by more than 50 per cent. The figures for benevolences light up the combined postwar and depression period from 1920 to 1935, in so far as the basic economic difficulties are concerned. Iowa's benevolences, which had reached their all-time high of \$216,074 in 1920, plummeted to \$137,430 in 1925. By 1930 they had shrunk to \$80,439, although the fearful extent of this shaking did not become evident until 1935. In that year the benevolence giving scraped the bottom at \$30,965 — one-seventh of the 1920 amount. It has been with great determination that Iowa Congregational Christian people have been making the long and difficult climb to the \$125,835 reported in 1950, and present indications are in favor of still higher totals.

The past two decades, though filled with accomplishments of many kinds, have brought some serious reverses. Painstaking researches recently

made have dictated a number of timely projects which, already under way and in good hands, make the outlook much more promising. Nevertheless, the faith of each church is being tried.

Iowa Congregationalism, in so far as the membership figures are concerned, has been in a static condition since 1920, yet today's total of 43,218 is the largest ever. Withal, since 1900, the number of churches on the roll has decreased. Fifty years ago that figure was 317; it is now but 221. There has also been a decrease in the number of Sunday school pupils enrolled. The all-time high in this department was attained in 1925 with 34,683, but today's enrollment is one-half of that number. Youth groups have likewise been affected. The 1950 enrollment of 3,914 is equal to that of 1943, but represents a loss of 60 per cent since the turn of the century. On the other hand, the work of the Sunday schools and young people's organizations of today is vastly superior to that done fifty years ago, more of it being self-planned and self-sustained than formerly. The quality of direction and teaching is also much better today.

In 1950, the twelve largest churches, in order of size, have a combined membership of 10,322, about one-fourth of the total strength of Iowa Congregational Christians: Des Moines (Plymouth), Spencer, Mason City, Grinnell, Waterloo (First), Burlington, Sioux City (First), Dubuque (First), Ames, Dubuque (Immanuel), Fort

Dodge, Cedar Rapids (First). The denomination is growing in the cities and in the smaller towns, best in the latter; but it seems to be losing in the larger villages and in the open country. The property valuation of all Iowa Congregational Christian churches in 1950 exceeds \$8,000,000, while the total Conference assets are better than \$200,000.

In recent years the church association has been increasingly stressed as "the pivotal unit of fellowship next to the local church"; in Iowa, each of the nine associations has its officers and committees elected by the church delegates and sharing the load of Conference administration. Known as the "Iowa Plan," this is undoubtedly one of the finest illustrations of church democracy. The organization of association parishes is now being tried out "as a helpful transition toward better techniques." To spearhead the rural expansion needed in Iowa, the Board of Home Missions has assisted with generous grants, and competent direction of association parish units has been given by the Rev. and Mrs. Vern R. Willey while at Truro, and by the Rev. and Mrs. Homer E. Dalrymple, now at Keosauqua. At Denmark over \$5,000 in proceeds from the God's Portion Harvest Sale in 1948 helped to finance the work of six vicinity churches, including one of the Roman Catholic faith.

In 1920, in addition to providing for the regular

home and benevolence budgets, Iowa Congregational Christians raised \$243,000 toward the Pilgrim Memorial Fund — the system of ministerial annuities. Practically every church in the state shared in this enterprise, several giving over \$10,000 apiece. Again, in 1949, the Iowa churches put the Unit Plan Fund over the top in less than eight years instead of the ten suggested for the completion of this further drive for pensions and annuities.

The Iowa Fellowship of Congregational Christian Women, and the Iowa Laymen's Fellowship are both performing constant and timely services within Conference bounds and throughout the world. The president of the former is Mrs. E. R. Norton of Grinnell; the latter organization is headed by Sherman Q. French of Hawarden. A notable feature of the annual Conference meeting is the dedication of the Woman's Gift — more than \$5,500 in 1950. The Laymen's Fellowship is now in the process of raising the Fred D. Cram Christian Education Fund of \$54,000, named for Professor Cram of the Iowa State Teachers College at Cedar Falls and offering scholarships to deserving young people who are preparing for full-time Christian service.

The Conference in 1945 published the volume prepared by Superintendent Emeritus Johnson, *The First Century of Congregationalism in Iowa, 1840-1940*, which included a chapter on the work

of Iowa women written by Mrs. Elbert A. Read of Shenandoah. The General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches held its biennial session at Grinnell College in 1946 and brought to Iowa more than 3,000 delegates representing more than forty state conferences.

Superintendent P. Adelstein Johnson was succeeded in 1938 by the Rev. Royal J. Montgomery, who had previously given sixteen years as the Conference Director of Religious Education. As Superintendent Emeritus, he now serves as Conference Historian and directs the Mayflower Home project from Grinnell, the Conference seeking to raise \$130,000 for the erection of a retirement home for the ministry and others. Together, Dr. and Mrs. Montgomery and F. J. Kiesel of Grinnell have donated the large nucleus of this fund from their personal treasure.

In 1947, the Rev. Judson E. Fiebiger, D. D., came to the superintendency of the Iowa Conference from the pastorate of the Ocean Avenue Congregational Church of Brooklyn, New York. Dr. Fiebiger also serves as President of the Iowa Inter-Church Council. Mrs. Judson E. Fiebiger is Chairman of the Missions Council, the official promotional body functioning primarily in the areas of missionary education, stewardship, and giving. Serving with Dr. Fiebiger are the Rev. Andrew K. Craig as Field Secretary, and D. H. Thomas as Business Manager. Until recently, the

Rev. Virgil E. Foster was Director of Religious Education.

Iowa Congregational Christians have promoted the work of the Federal Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches, and now support the program of the newly constituted National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. As the denomination has grown, much of its national leadership has been recruited in the Middle West, and Iowa has responded generously.

What of the decade that lies ahead, and what of the future? During the 1950's, fifty Iowa Congregational Christian churches will commemorate a hundred years of service. Among these are some of the strongest in America — churches rich in resources of men, women, and youth. Superintendent Fiebiger recently stated in an address, "A Triumphant Church is a militant and crusading church. It is a church with a purpose, a mission. . . . It is a church that is aglow, that has a Cause to promote, a Lord to serve, a God to glorify." The Iowa churches are now faced with the greatest challenge in their history.

