

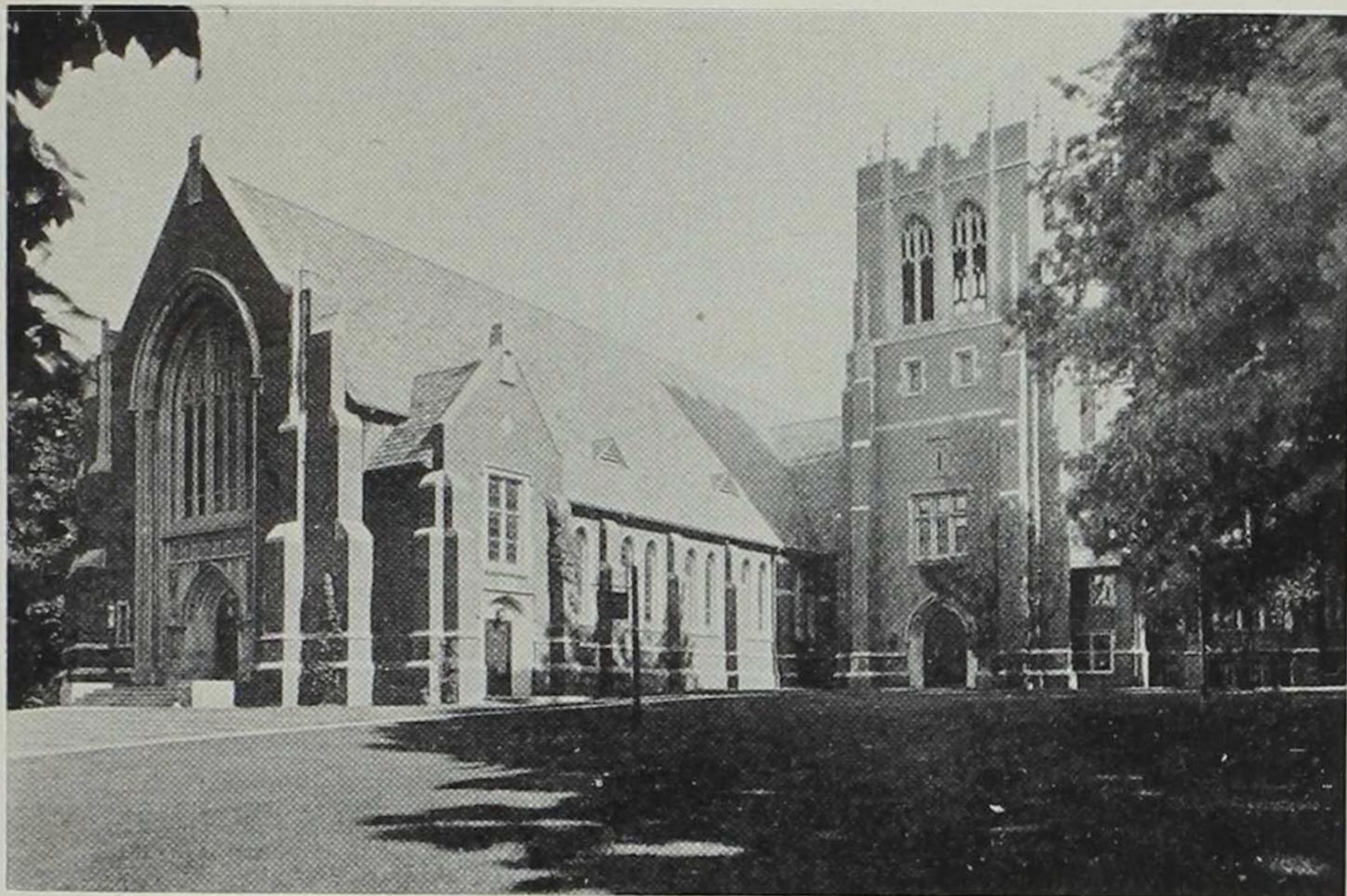
Years of Maturity

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

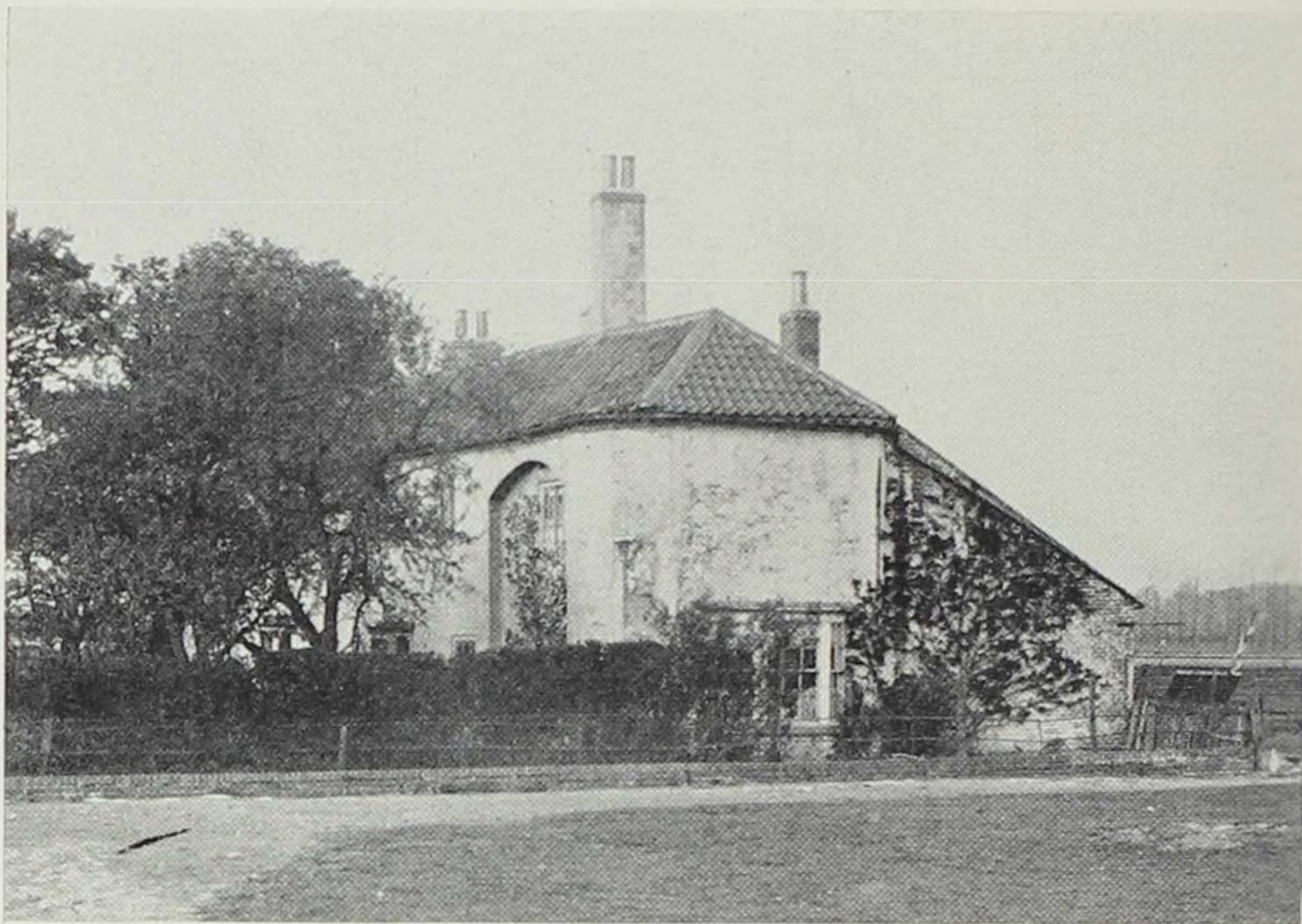


Plymouth Congregational Church, Des Moines



Immanuel Congregational Church, Dubuque

SOME HISTORIC SCENES



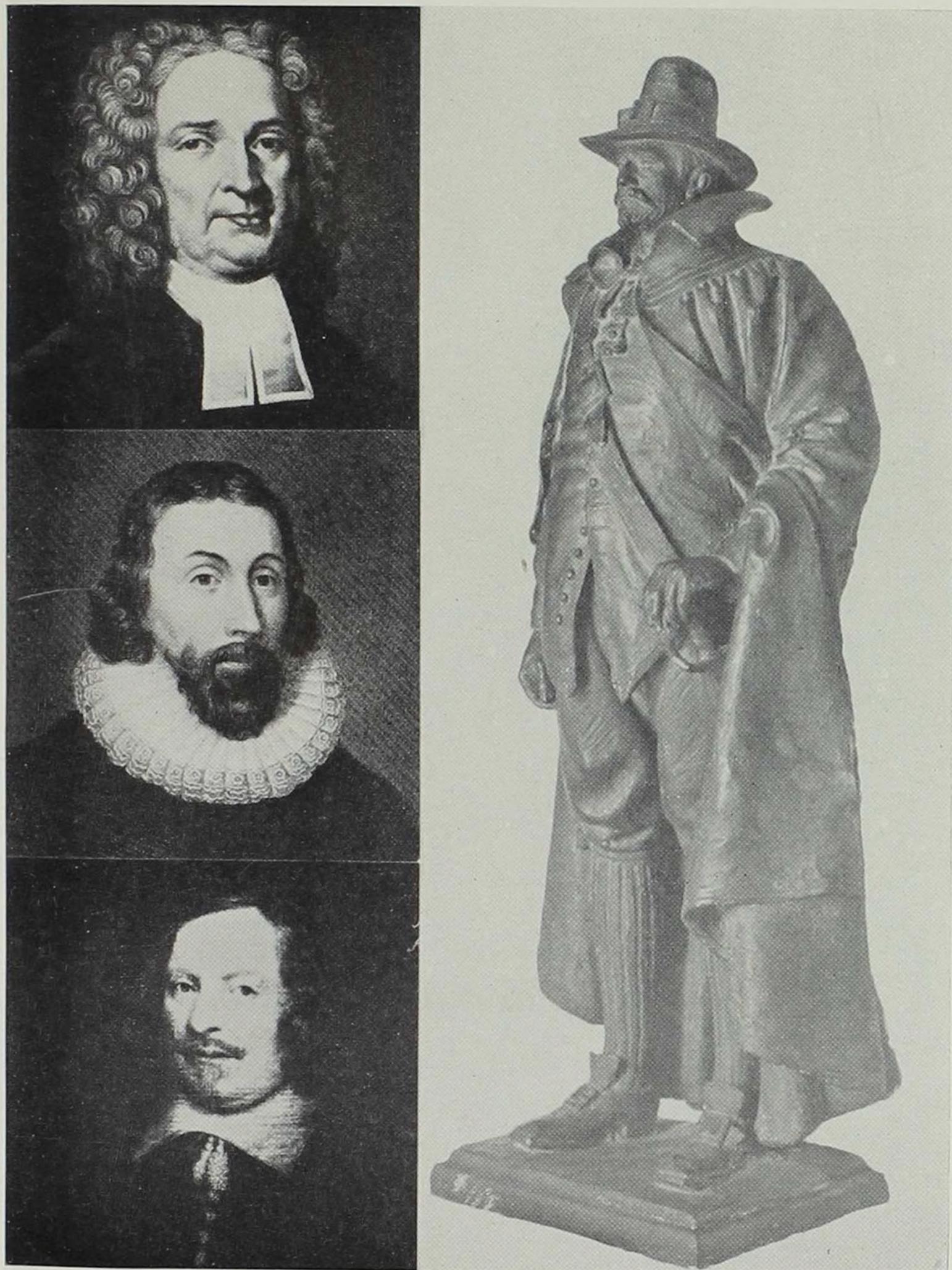
Scrooby Manor — England
Home of Elder William Brewster



Plymouth Rock Enclosure, Plymouth, Massachusetts

(Courtesy of the Pilgrim Society)

SOME COLONIAL LEADERS

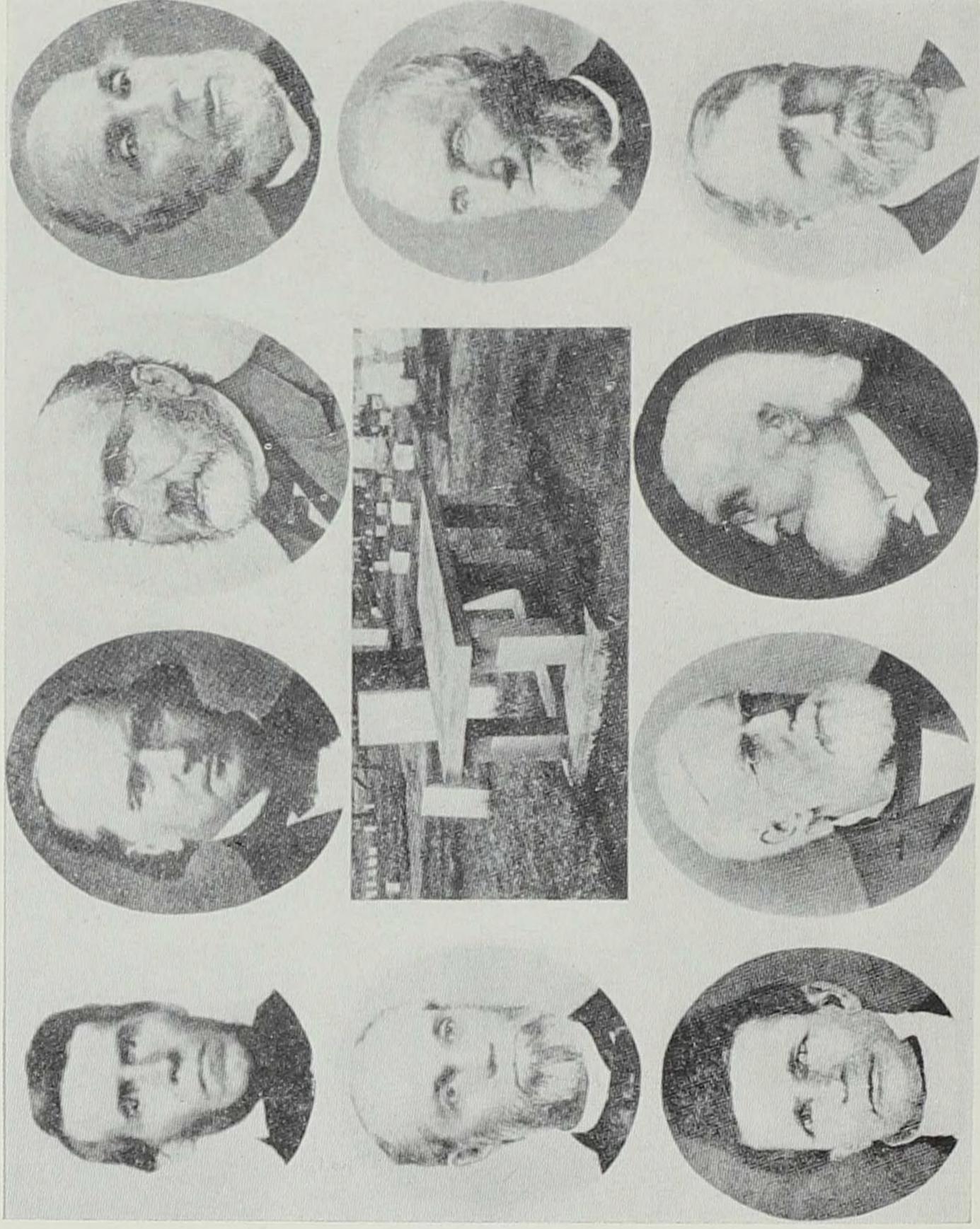


Right: Governor William Bradford, Plymouth Colony.

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



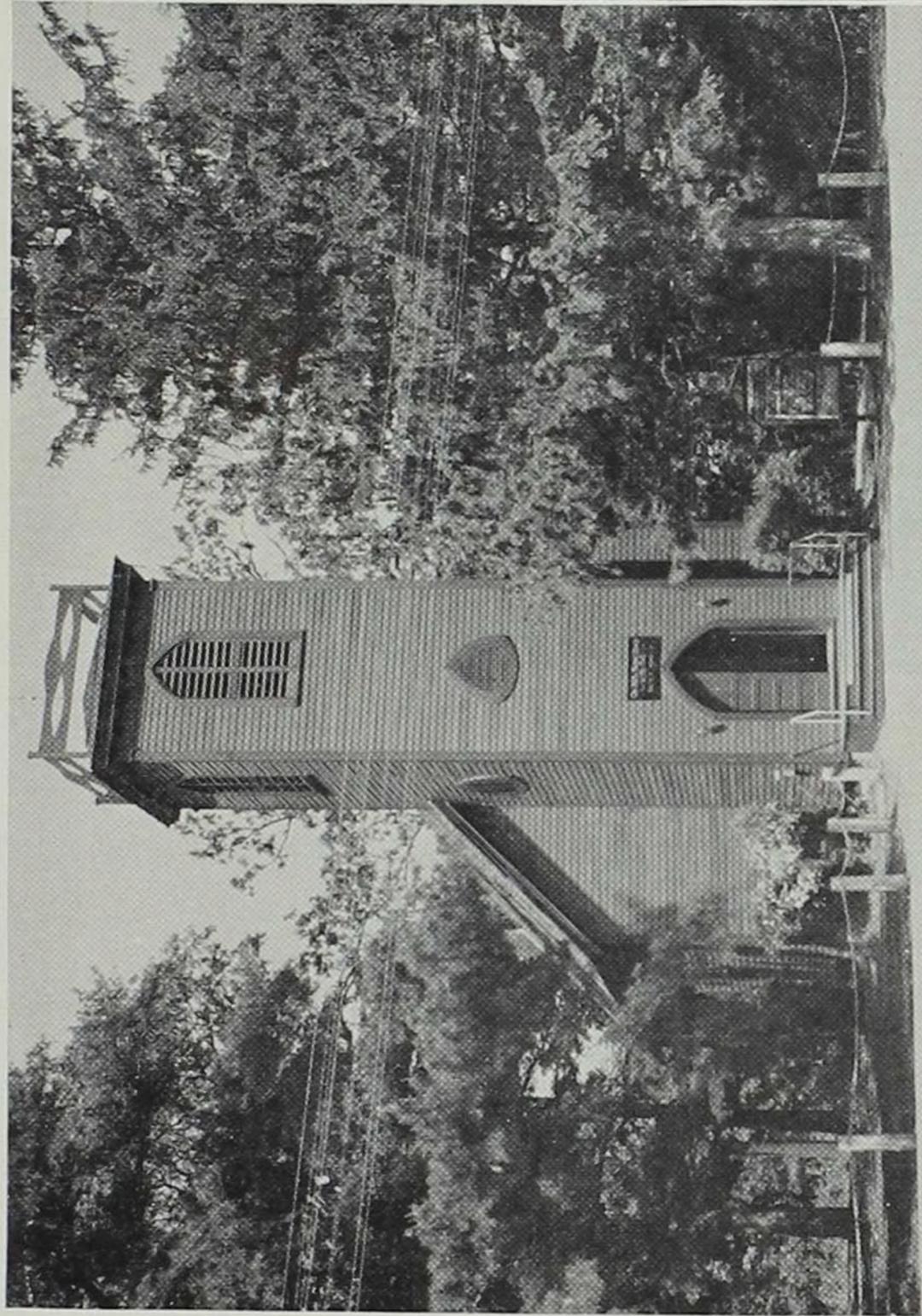
Top, left to right:
 Benjamin A. Spaulding
 Erastus Ripley
 James J. Hill
 Ebenezer Alden

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

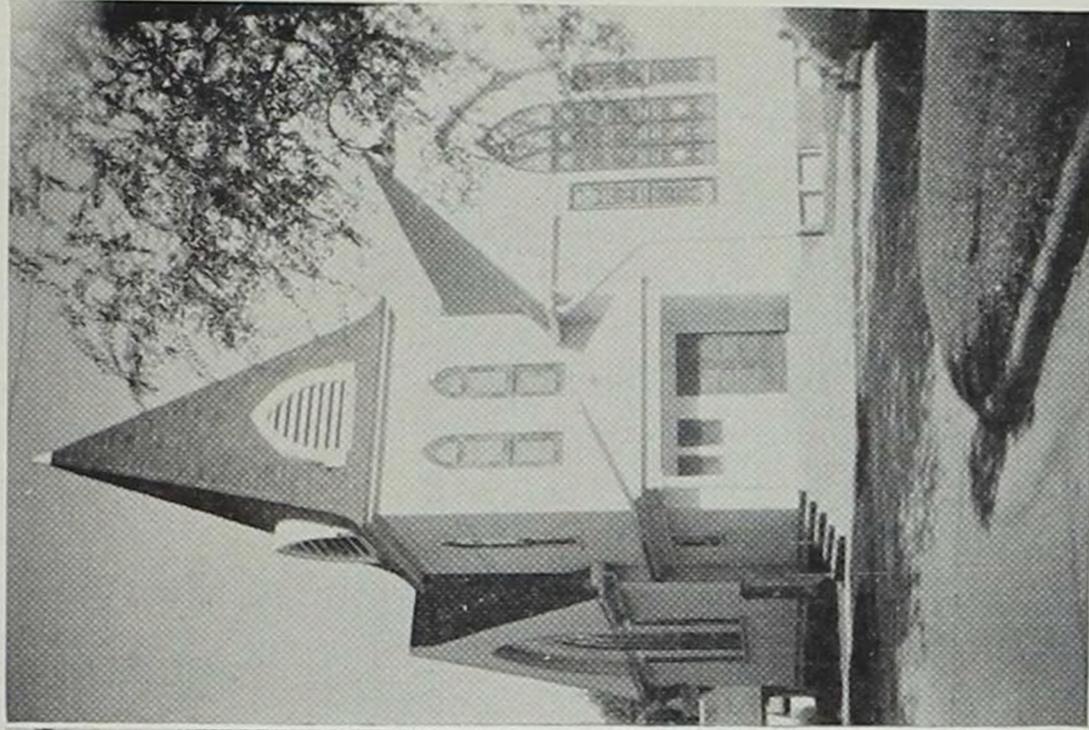
Bottom:
 Harvey Adams
 Alden B. Robbins
 Ephraim Adams
 William Salter

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

SOME IOWA CHURCHES



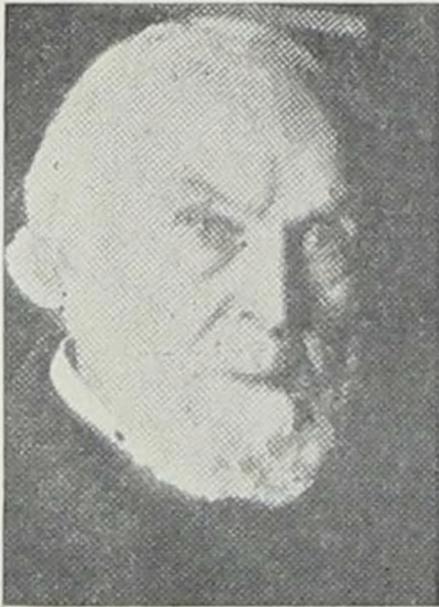
"Little Brown Church in the Vale"
Iowa's best known and most beloved religious shrine, near Nashua.



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

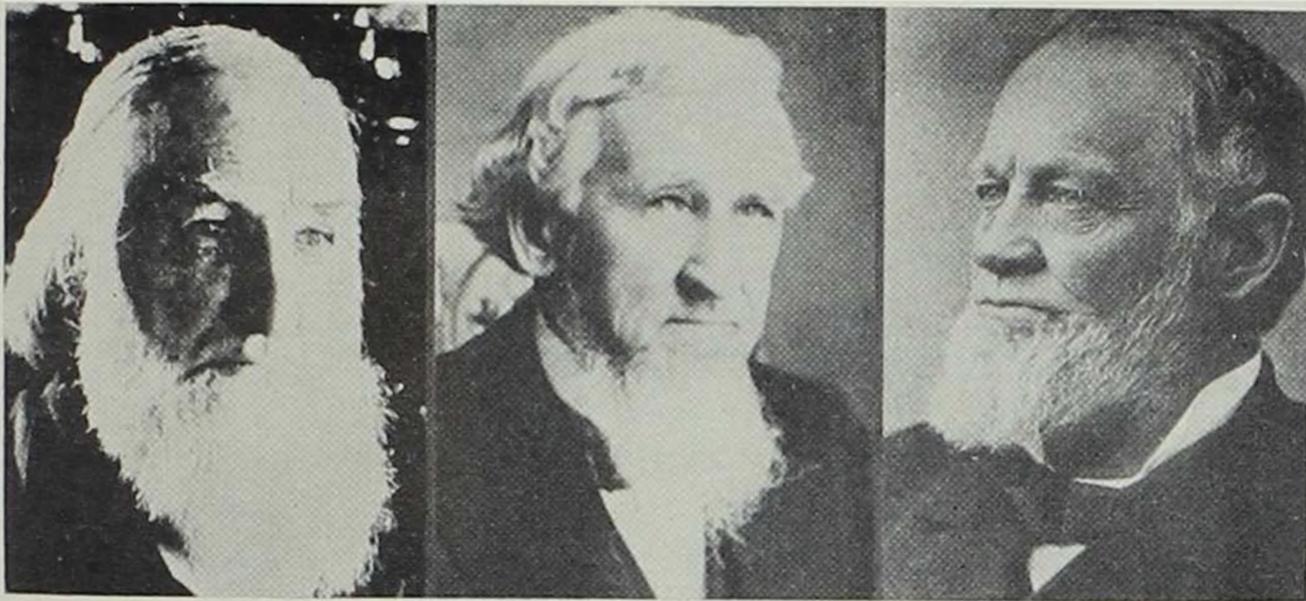


R. J. BEEBE
Moderator
Sibley



D. H. THOMAS
Business Manager
Grinnell

SOME GRINNELL COLLEGE PERSONALITIES



G. F. MAGOUN
President, 1865-84

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

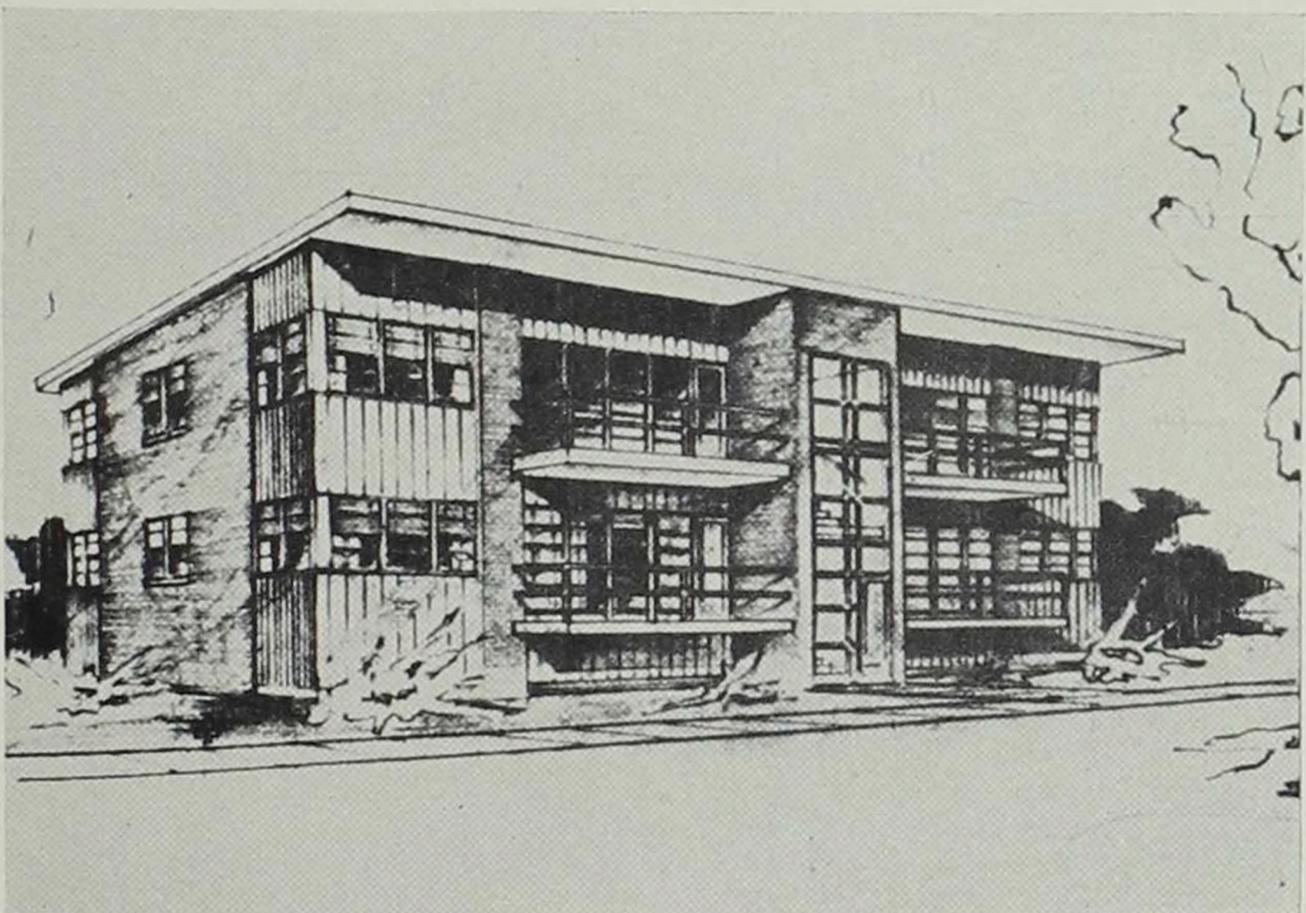
J. B. GRINNELL
Town Founder



E. A. STEINER
1903-

J. S. NOLLEN
President, 1930-40

S. N. STEVENS
President, 1940-



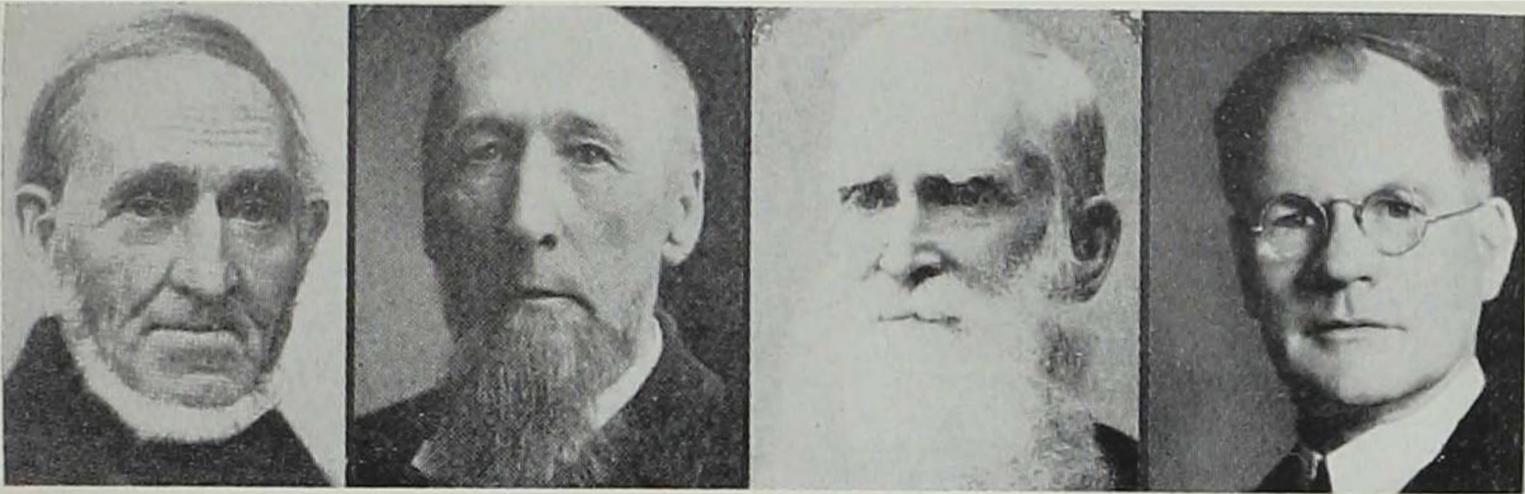
"SHIP IN FULL SAIL"
MAYFLOWER HOME AT GRINNELL

GOD'S PORTION HARVEST SALE — DENMARK



(Courtesy Des Moines Register and Tribune)

SOME IOWA CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS



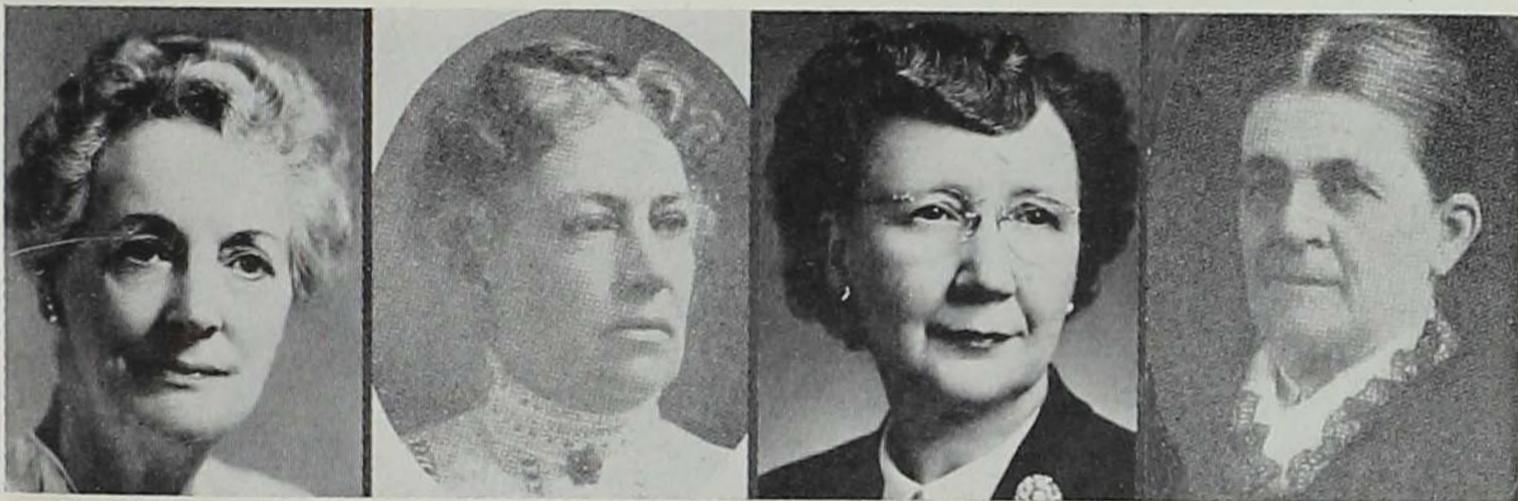
ASA TURNER
Denmark

A. L. FRISBIE
Des Moines

JOHN TODD
Tabor

A. S. KILBOURN
Denmark

IOWA WOMEN ALSO BUILD



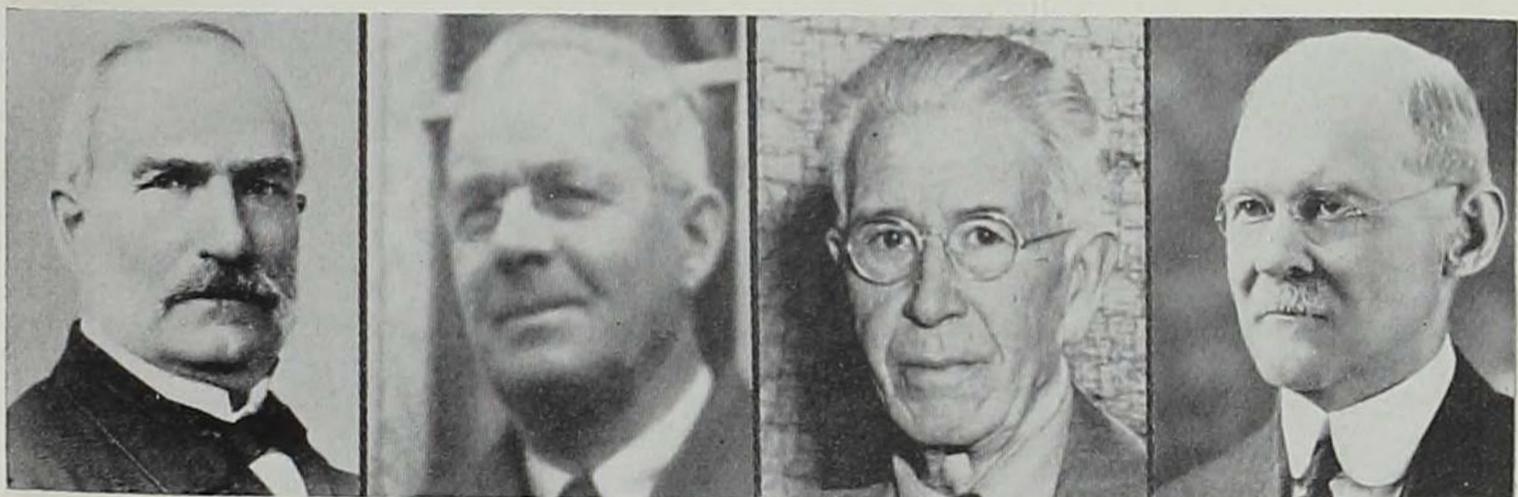
MRS. E. A. READ
Shenandoah

MRS. J. F. HARDIN
Eldora

MRS. E. E. BRIGGS
Sioux City

MRS. T. O. DOUGLASS
Osage

IOWA LAYMEN'S FELLOWSHIP



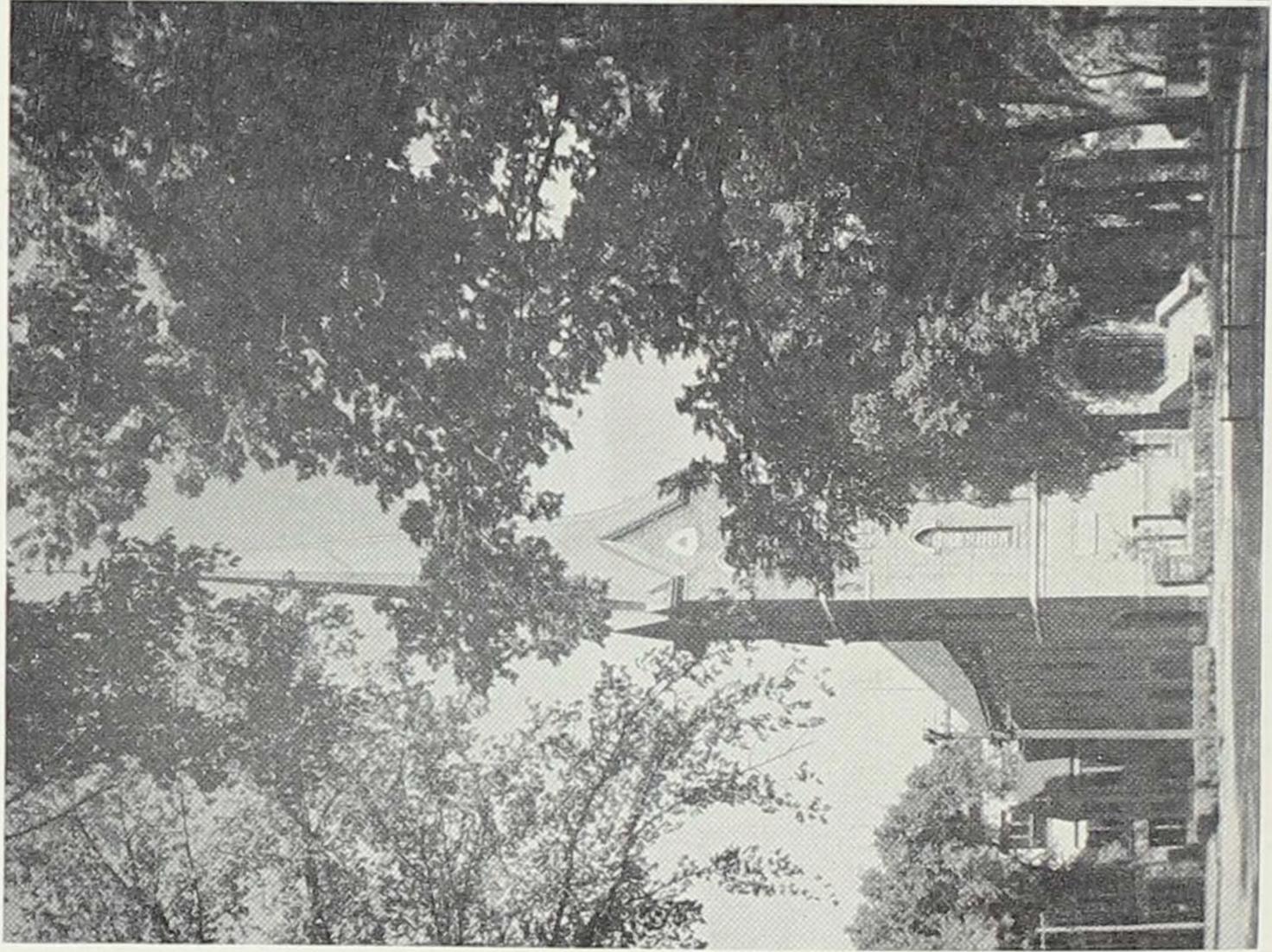
SAMUEL MERRILL
Des Moines

S. Q. FRENCH
Hawarden

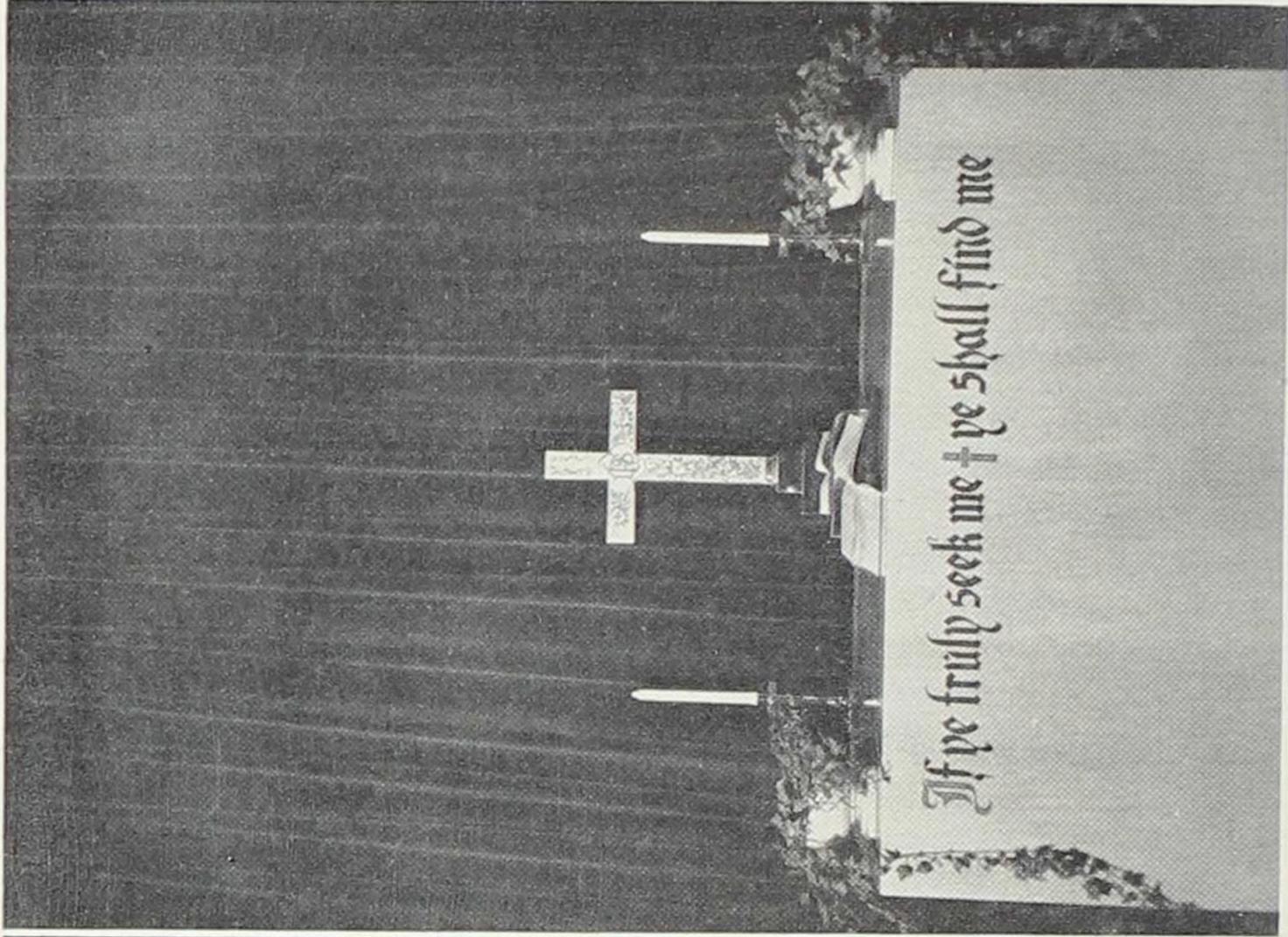
FRED D. CRAM
Cedar Falls

ROGER LEAVITT
Cedar Falls

IOWA CITY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

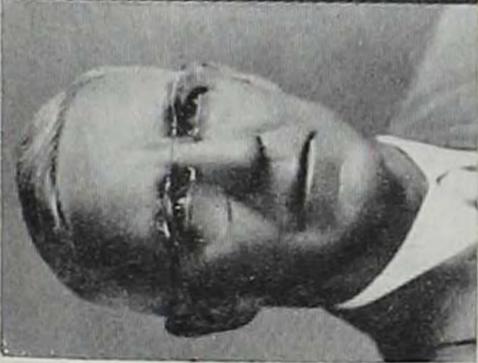


Opposite Old Capitol



Little Chapel

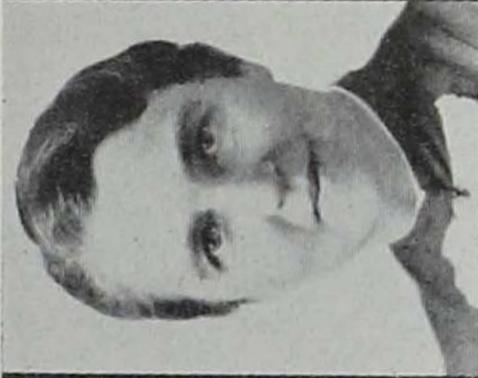
SOME IOWA CONGREGATIONAL MISSIONARIES



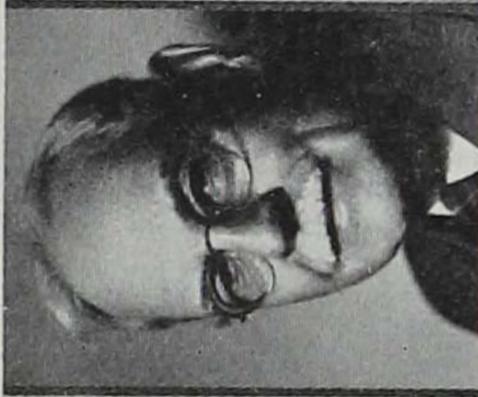
F. T. MEACHAM
South Africa



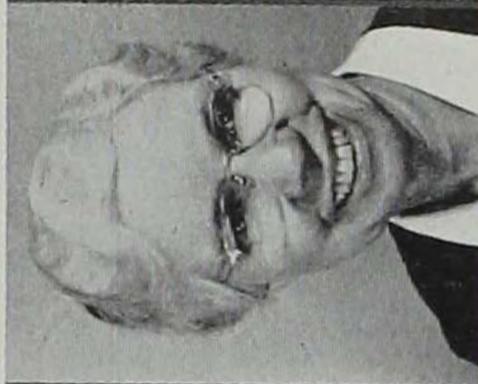
AGNES WOOD
South Africa



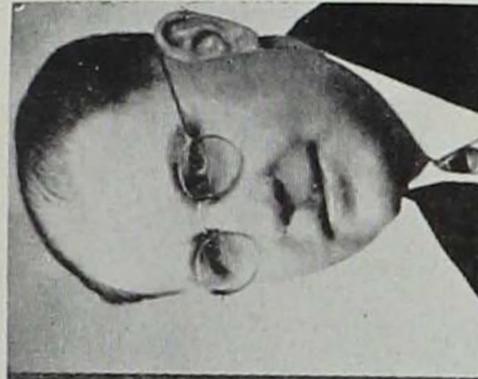
SARAH FIELD
Japan



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



BESSIE K. MEACHAM
Tennessee



HAROLD MATTHEWS
China

SOME CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN LEADERS FROM IOWA



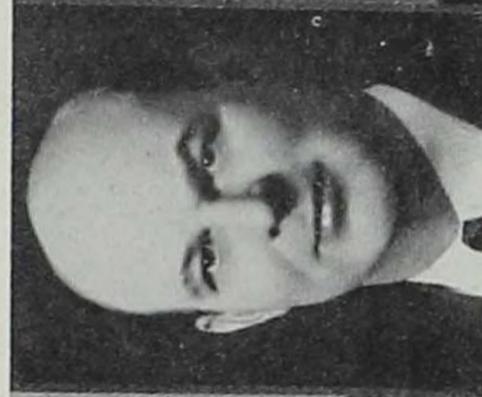
MRS. J. E. FIEBIGER
Missions Council



F. G. COFFIN
General Convention



C. E. BURTON
General Council



T. B. DOUGLASS
Home Missions

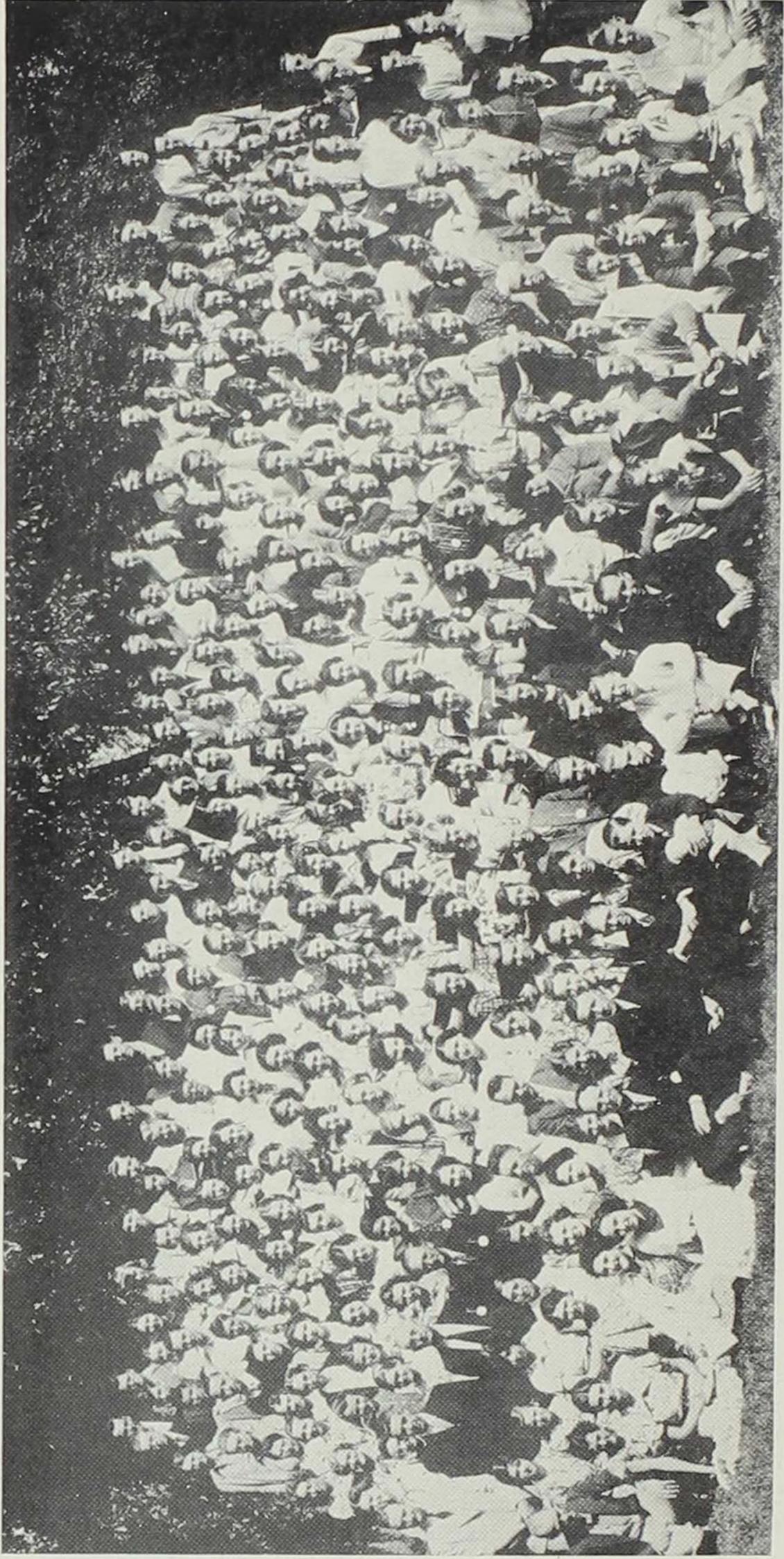


T. B. KEEHN
Social Action



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.