

The Political Scene

On January 13, 1955, Leo A. Hoegh was sworn in as the thirty-third Governor of Iowa. Leo Elthon, who had served as chief executive since Governor William Beardsley's death in November, thereupon resumed his duties as Lieutenant Governor. Hoegh was the sixth consecutive Republican Governor and the twenty-seventh Republican to serve as chief executive of the State of Iowa. The new Governor delivered his inaugural address to a legislature which was composed of 90 Republicans and 18 Democrats in the House and 44 Republicans and 6 Democrats in the Senate. His inaugural address and budget message contained what many considered the most ambitious program ever set forth by an Iowa Governor.

Among Hoegh's recommendations were requests for: an increase of state aid to public schools to 25 per cent of operating costs; a broad road program calling for greater regulation of highway safety, a self-liquidating toll road authority, and an accelerated pay-as-you-go road building program; more money for the state's colleges; reapportionment of the legislature; broader unemployment and workmen's compensation bene-

fits; the legalization of the union shop; a Korean War veterans bonus, and many others. In his budget message Hoegh called for the spending of \$146,073,000 during each of the next two years, an increase of almost \$24,000,000 over the previous budget. He proposed to raise most of the additional funds through a two per cent tax on services which would yield about \$20,000,000 annually.

Although the Governor was commended for his courage, observers generally agreed that he would be lucky to secure adoption of only part of the program. Democratic Representative William F. Denman of Des Moines declared that it was so close to his own party's program that if the Governor "puts it across we would like to run him for re-election on the Democratic ticket." The influential Senator J. Kendall Lynes, Republican from Plainfield, commented that Hoegh's "objectives were quite commendable in many instances but will be extremely hard to reach. . . . He can't hope to get it all enacted into law in one session." After the budget recommendations were received the Republican Senate and House floor leaders, Senator Duane Dewel of Algona and Representative Dewey Goode of Bloomfield, issued a joint statement which concluded, "This legislature will not be too anxious to levy new taxes."

The 56th General Assembly, which did not come to an end until May 4, not only stayed in

session longer than usual, but was also marked by more than the normal amount of quarreling within the legislature and between the legislators and the executive department. Senate and House leaders disagreed as to which should come first — consideration of appropriations or taxation. In the House a group of young Republican representatives objected to the failure of their leaders to call party caucuses, and they succeeded in getting two caucuses in one week toward the end of the session. Senators and Representatives alike expressed dissatisfaction with the failure of the sifting committees to report out bills.

A split within Republican ranks appeared when the Senate refused to approve a number of Hoegh's appointments to state offices, including that of his campaign manager, Russell Lundy of Des Moines, to the State Highway Commission. Lundy and three other new Highway Commissioners were finally approved at the close of the legislative session, but the reappointment of Dwight G. Rider and V. B. Hamilton to the Board of Education was rejected. Hoegh gave the latter interim appointments after the legislature had adjourned.

This wrangling was understandable when one considered the difficult problems which the legislature had to face. As Governor Elthon had pointed out in his "state of the state" message at the outset of the session, the Assembly could no

longer avoid the issue that it must either provide the state government with more revenue or cut back on its expenditures and services. The "rainy day" reserve fund of \$30,000,000 which had balanced deficits in the state's income since 1949 was now exhausted. The legislature met this challenge by boosting the sales tax from two to two and a half per cent and making beer and cigarettes subject to this tax. It also increased state income tax rates and made changes in certain other taxes. In this way an estimated \$22,000,000 in additional yearly revenues was provided. A special tax study committee was appointed to investigate means of providing a more permanent solution to the state's tax problems.

Although the General Assembly did not go along with many of the Governor's ideas, it did enact some. Thus, it approved an annual budget of \$136,535,560 (a scant ten million dollars short of Hoegh's askings), and it increased the gas tax to six cents as requested by Hoegh. With the latter additions the Governor hoped by the end of 1956 to widen 1,000 miles of primary roads from their present width of 18 feet to 24 feet. A toll road authority was created with powers to sell bonds and build an east-west toll road as soon as a neighboring state (meaning Illinois) was definitely committed to building a similar road to Iowa's border.

The legislature also voted to submit to the vot-

ers in 1956 a \$26,000,000 bond issue for Korean War veterans bonuses. It increased weekly unemployment compensation benefits from a maximum of \$26 for 20 weeks to \$30 for 24 weeks. In compliance with new federal regulations, the county agricultural extension services were now divorced from Farm Bureau Federation control. The post of legislative research director was established to expedite the work of future General Assemblies by providing legislators with detailed information on problems they would have to meet. A controversial egg grading law was enacted which was upheld by the state Supreme Court in October. Among the lesser actions of the session was one repealing the state's century-old (but rarely enforced) "Blue Laws" which had prohibited such activities as dancing or hunting on the Sabbath.

The legislature did not go as far as Hoegh asked in the field of education, particularly in granting more aid to schools and providing more funds to state-supported institutions of higher education. Neither did the General Assembly legalize the sale of liquor by the drink, grant 18-year-olds the right to vote, establish highway speed limits, declare that grocery stores could not sell cold beer, require all public employees to retire at age 70, compel lobbyists to register in both houses and file regular expense accounts, or repeal the ban on union shop agreements.

The failure of the legislature to adopt a plan for reapportionment of its membership probably caused the greatest adverse comment. The House passed a bill which would have reapportioned the House on an area basis, with one representative for each county, while the Senate would be increased in size to 60, with its members apportioned according to population. The Senate took no action on this or other reapportionment plans. During the summer and fall Senate Majority Leader Duane Dewel, through editorials in his paper, the *Algona Kossuth County Advance*, urged Governor Hoegh to call a special session of the legislature so that it might submit a reapportionment plan to the voters at the 1956 primary election. Dewel favored reapportioning the House on a population basis, and the Senate on an area basis. Governor Hoegh, who favored the plan passed by the House, did not adopt the suggestion to call a special session in 1955.

Governor Hoegh proved a most energetic chief executive in his first year in office. Although some of his proposals had been defeated Hoegh expressed satisfaction with the work of the General Assembly. Late in the summer and fall he became increasingly concerned with the farm situation. The Midwest Governors' Conference which he called in October, although criticized by some because no invitations were extended to Democratic governors, did much to draw attention to the

problems facing the farmers of Iowa and elsewhere. In a radio debate with Minnesota's Governor Orville Freeman in December, Hoegh blamed the farmers' plight on the Democrats, but he was also critical of Republican Secretary Benson for not doing more to stabilize the depressed hog market.

In September Hoegh inaugurated a series of informal "meet-the-public" conferences whereby he traveled about the state, giving people who would not ordinarily have an opportunity to talk with him in his Des Moines office a chance to express their views. At the first of these conferences in Missouri Valley a white-haired farmer told Hoegh that one cause of the farm problem was "that too many fellows spend their time in those pool-hall hellholes when they should be home fixing their fences." Others asked about the route of a proposed highway relocation, expressed opinions regarding liquor by the drink, and inquired if the Governor could help local groups to raise money for a hospital.

Another Iowa political leader, Senator Thomas E. Martin, extended the poll of his constituents, for which he had been famous while Congressman from the First District, to include the entire state. Every twentieth householder in the state received Martin's questionnaire, and 6,599 returned it with their answers to the 35 questions. Partly as a result of the poll, and partly because of his own

changing views on certain issues, the Senator's voting record was somewhat different from what it had been when he sat in the House of Representatives. A consistent opponent of foreign aid previously, Senator Martin now voted to continue this program. "Recent developments," he declared, "have increased the importance of presenting a vigorous and united front, especially in all matters related to our world position in economic strength and defense preparedness, during our struggle to insure a lasting peace."

During this non-election year there was the usual speculation with respect to what would happen at the polls the following year. At the annual "state day" at the Iowa State Fair legislators who were present discussed the possibility that Hoegh and Elthon might tangle in the 1956 primary for the Republican gubernatorial nomination. Elthon had announced earlier that he would not run for Lieutenant Governor again, but he declared it was too early to announce other political plans. On the Democratic side Representative Emlin L. Bergeson of Sioux City reported that a poll of his fellow Democratic legislators indicated that they favored R. M. Evans of Arnolds Park as the party's nominee for United States Senator in 1956 and Clyde E. Herring of Des Moines for Governor, a post he had sought in 1954.

Democrats were encouraged when Ray Mills, president of the Iowa State Federation of Labor



Courtesy Feiler Studio

The House of Representatives of the 56th General Assembly in session.



Courtesy Des Moines Register and Tribune

ABOVE: American farm delegation in Russia included Lauren Soth (right front), Marion Steddom (with glasses, next to Soth), and Ralph Olsen (third from left), all from Iowa.

BELOW: Dan Turner stands in the courthouse square at Corning, where he helped to organize the National Farm Organization.

Courtesy Des Moines Register and Tribune





Courtesy W. Grant Cunningham

ABOVE: Governor Leo Hoegh meets with the executive council. Left to right: W. Grant Cunningham, secretary; State Treasurer M. L. Abrahamson; Governor Hoegh; Secretary of State Melvin D. Synhorst; Secretary of Agriculture Clyde Spry, and State Auditor C. B. Akers.

BELOW: On a less formal occasion Governor Hoegh chats with Paul Gregory (left), Mrs. A. W. Schwalberg of Hollywood, and Charles Laughton on the occasion of the world premiere of Gregory's movie, *The Night of the Hunter*, which Laughton directed.

Courtesy Des Moines *Register* and *Tribune*





After the Maytag strike was settled, President Fred L. Maytag talked with pickets Bert Plate (center) and Roy McKeag (right).



In Des Moines in October to address a Midwest Democratic meeting, Governor Averell Harri- man of New York dis- cussed farm problems with an Iowa farmer. At the right is Clyde Her- ring of Des Moines.

(Photos courtesy Des Moines *Register* and *Tribune*)

Captain Harold E. Fischer, Jr., is reunited with his son, Harold III, at the Fort Dodge airport.

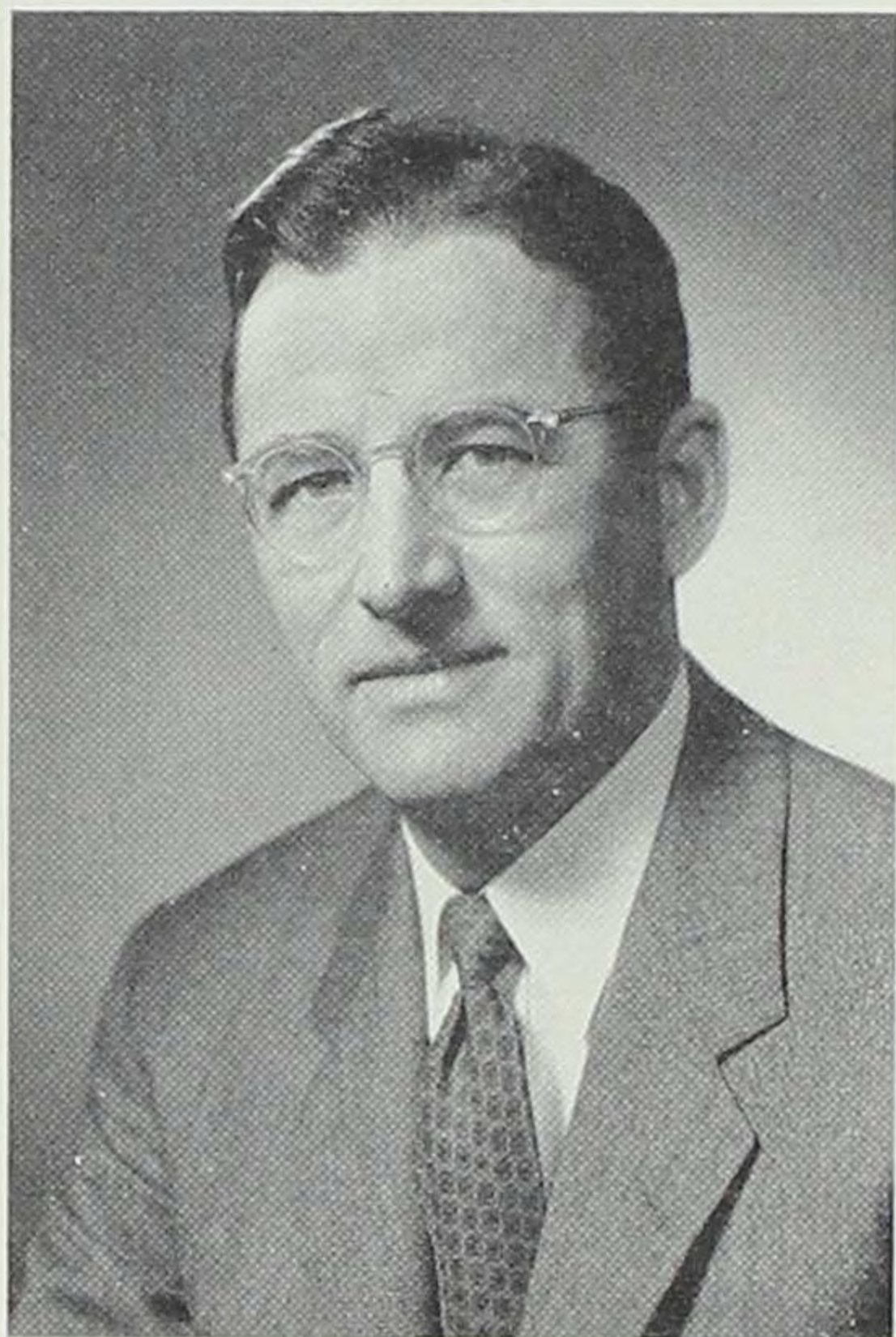


Bobby Kidney and his Hereford calf, Shorty, the grand champion baby beef at the Iowa State Fair.



(Photos courtesy Des Moines Register and Tribune)

TWO NEW COLLEGE PRESIDENTS



Fabian Bachrach

HOWARD R. BOWEN
Grinnell College

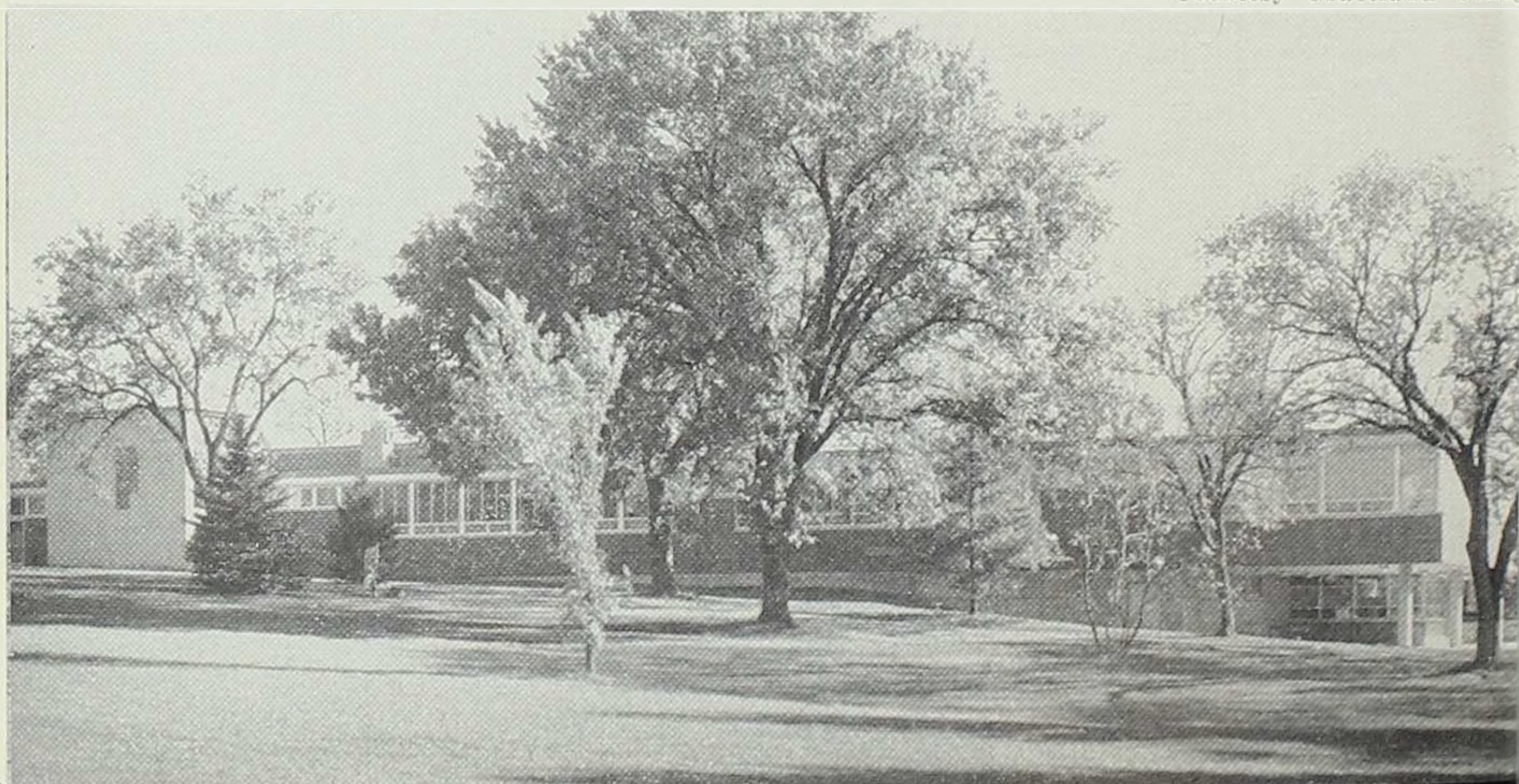


Fabian Bachrach

MILLARD G. ROBERTS
Parsons College

BELOW: The new science hall at Graceland College, costing nearly \$400,000, which was opened in 1955. The Mormon school at Lamoni has added a new building every year since 1950.

Courtesy Graceland College



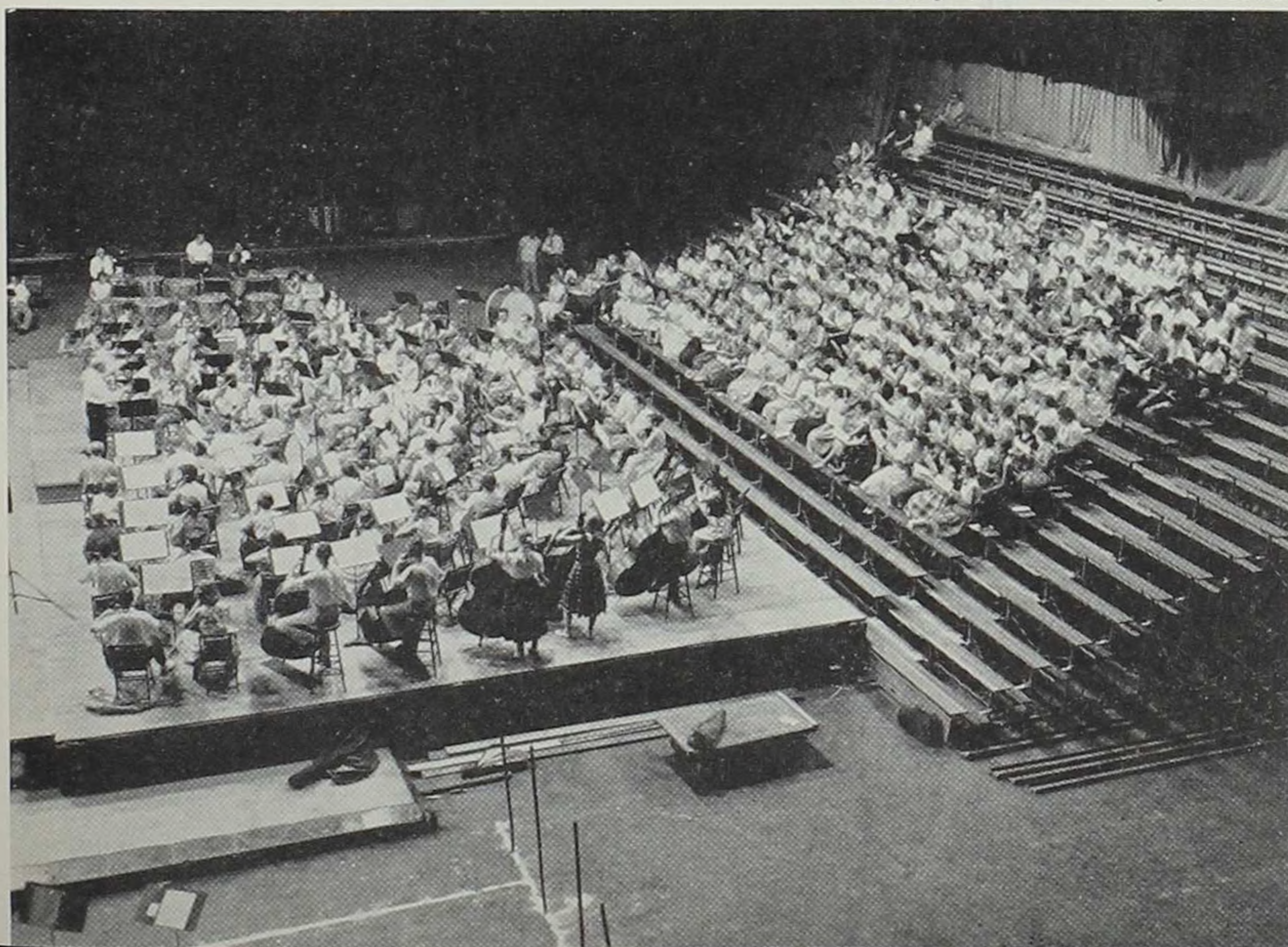


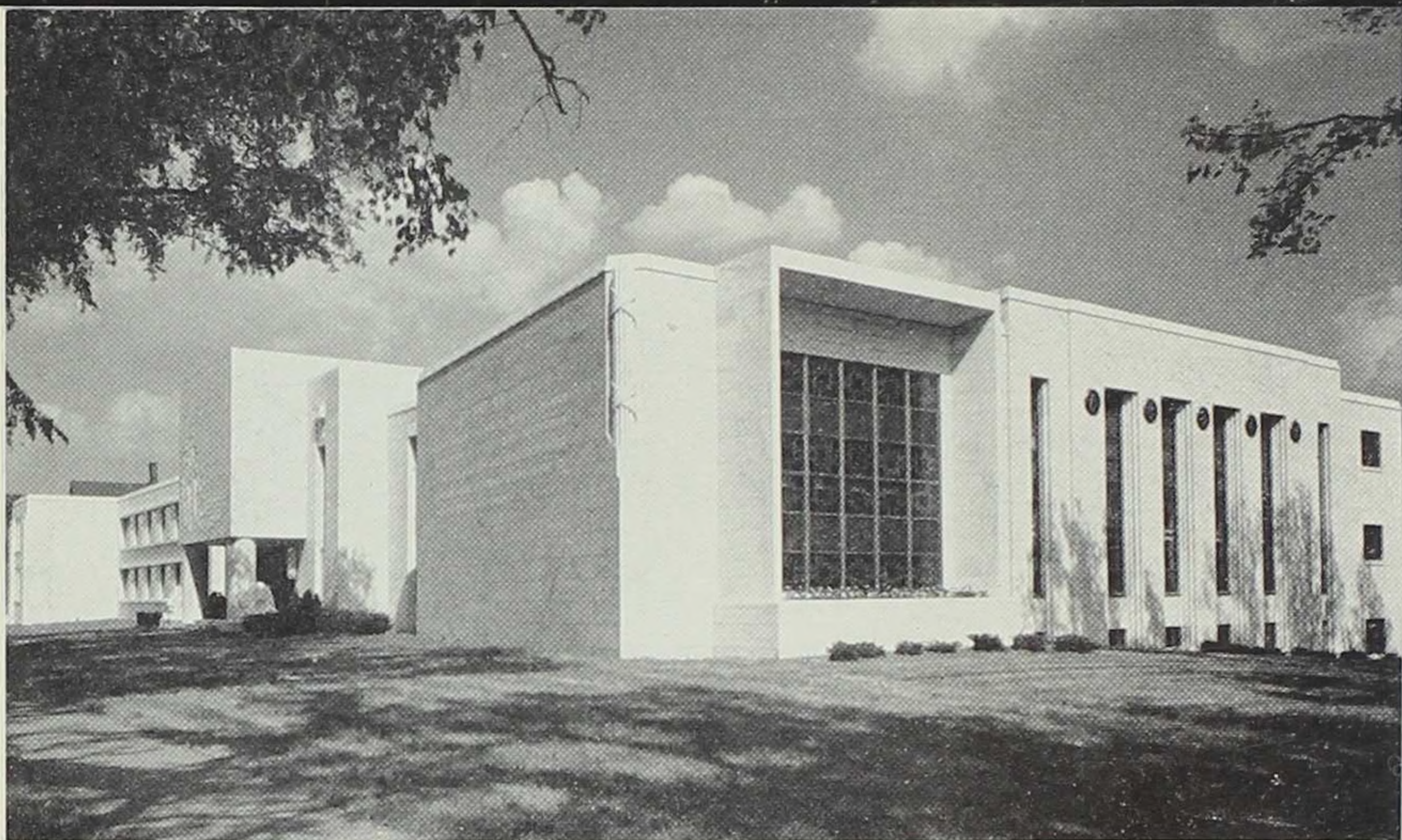
Courtesy Luther College

ABOVE: Bob Beasley of the Dubuque *Telegraph-Herald* caught this action at the Corn Bowl game as Luther College Quarterback Jack Schultz kicked the game-winning field goal against Western Illinois State.

BELOW: Dimitri Mitropoulos directs a final rehearsal of the Berlioz *Requiem* in the University of Iowa Fieldhouse.

Courtesy State University of Iowa



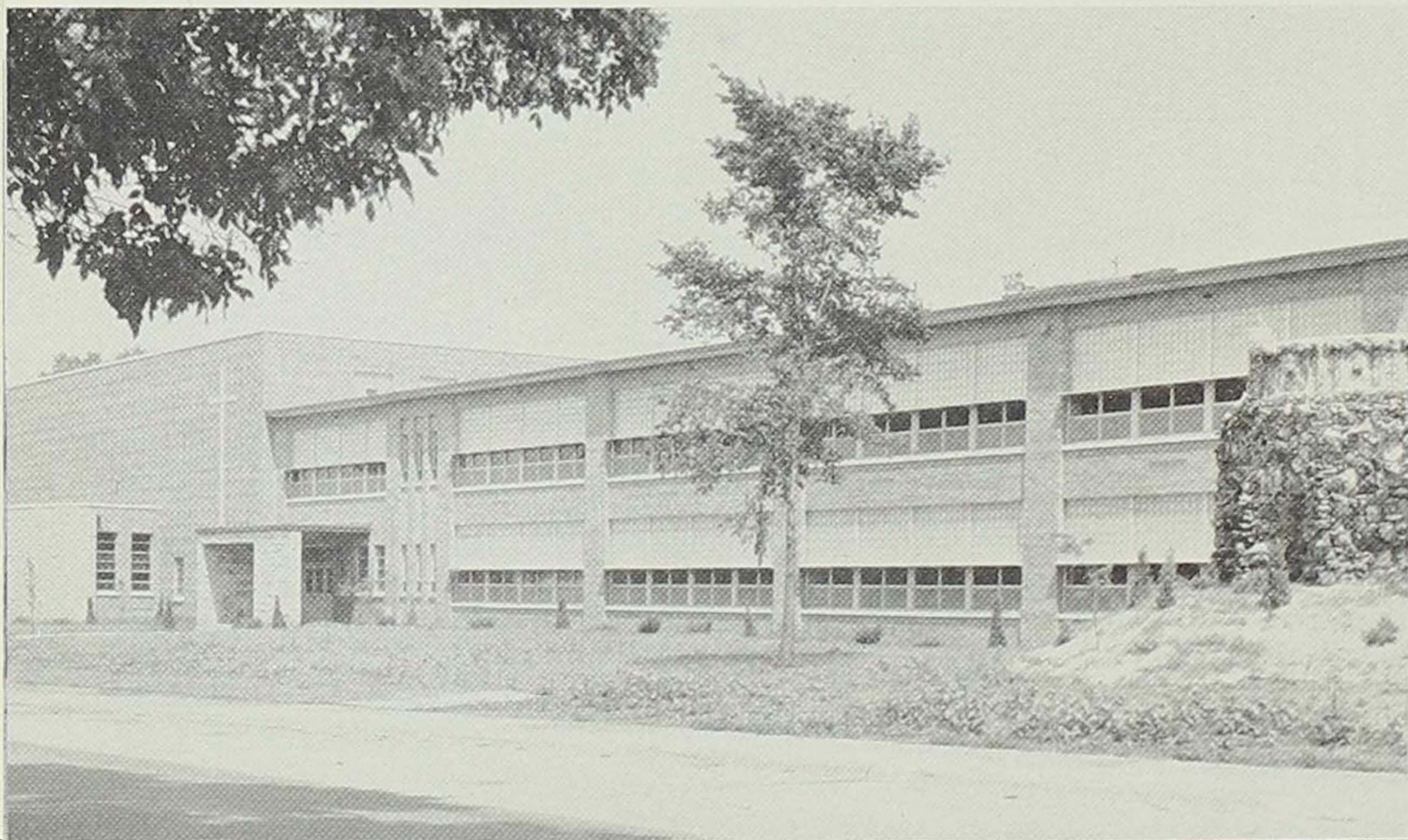


Courtesy Iowa Masonic Library

ABOVE: The new Iowa Masonic Library, Museum, and Administration Building in Cedar Rapids, which was dedicated in June.

BELOW: The Kuemper Catholic High School at Carroll, which was dedicated in September.

Courtesy Kuemper High School



and one-time Republican precinct chairman in Des Moines, announced that he was moving over into Democratic ranks. Mills gave as his reason the "failure of the Republican party to go through with what it promised to labor people." Republican state chairman Don Pierson replied that he disliked "references that legislation should be something to be bought and sold at the polls."

Few candidates had officially announced their intention to run by the end of the year, but at least two familiar faces would not be present when the 57th General Assembly convened in 1957. Senator DeVere Watson, Republican from Council Bluffs, and president pro tempore of the upper house in 1955, announced that he would not seek re-election. A similar announcement came from Gus Kuester, Republican from Griswold, who had served eleven consecutive sessions in the lower house where he had been Speaker in 1947 and 1949. Both men had long been numbered among Iowa's most respected legislators.

GEORGE S. MAY