

Fruit in its Season

1883-1914

Long before its twenty-fifth year the young college was already bearing fruit in the sense that several alumni had become influential members of the faculty. In 1873 two farseeing Cornellians, H. H. Freer and J. B. Albrook, started a movement among the alumni, numbering then only 108, for the support of an Alumni professor and the endowment of an Alumni chair. James E. Harlan became the first Alumni professor, and through the years endowment funds have been raised for two additional professorships.

Probably the most significant growth of the college in the thirty years before and after the turn of the century was in its curriculum. This growth reflects, of course, the changing emphasis in education from classical to scientific. Again the development was like that of a tree sending forth branches. It was well summed up in 1904 by Dr. Norton in his address at the fiftieth anniversary celebration:

In 1868 the Department of Mathematics divided from all the sciences. In 1882 science separated into the physical and the biological groups. Geology emerged, in 1890, as a separate department, and in 1899 Physics parted company with Chemistry. In the languages, Latin and

Greek separated . . . in 1881, and German withdrew from the Romance languages ten years later. History and Politics were made a distinct department in 1886. Meanwhile new buds appeared on the old tree and grew to strong departments. Courses in Education were offered in 1872, one of the first recognitions of this science in the country. . . . Civil Engineering began in 1873 and English Literature in 1875. Courses in English Bible were first offered in 1894, and in Sociology in 1900. . . . The departments of Physical Training for men and for women belong to the present decade (1900-1910). The instruction given in music and in painting during the first years by one or two teachers developed into strong schools of Music and of Art, and in the same way the School of Oratory has sprung from incidental instruction given in elocution. The collegiate courses of instruction now offered number one hundred and eighty-three.

It is important to remember that the original seed had within itself the budding life of all these spreading branches. Dr. Norton's own career illustrates this truth and also the changing curriculum. He was successively tutor, adjunct professor, and professor of Greek, then professor of Greek and geology. His growing interest in geology led him to resign the chair of Greek in 1890, and from that time he devoted himself to research and to building a department of geology which became outstanding in the Midwest. In recalling his early years he wrote: "The marriage of Greek and Geology could hardly be called a happy one. . . . The new alliterative chair was unique, I suspect, in the history of education." And, for the students,

it was a "happy" marriage blessed with stimulating hours in the classroom.

In these days of specialization it is hard even to imagine how a man might be a successful teacher of both Greek and geology. We are so accustomed to depend on a Ph.D. as a label of scholarship that we can hardly believe in scholarship without such a label.

Between 1890 and 1910 thirty-three new professors were added to the Cornell faculty. Twelve of these came with Ph.D.'s. The first was Charles J. Goodwin, who succeeded to the chair of Greek in 1890 but remained only two years. His successor, William S. Ebersole, who came after two years of graduate study at Yale and a year at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, remained to serve the college for over forty years as professor, registrar, and twice as acting president. To his careful editorial work Cornell owes the Registers of 1925 and 1937 with their complete listing of graduates, trustees, and faculty.

The department of Latin also fell into able hands on the retirement of Dr. Boyd. Professor Evelyn C. Riley maintained its enrollment in a period of declining interest in the classics, and also enriched college life with her gracious presence, cultured mind, and zealous activity in religious affairs. She resigned in 1917 to become the wife of Bishop Nicholson and a leader in wider church fields.

Modern languages brought to the college two men of outstanding scholarship. George O. Curme, professor of German and French, 1886-1891, and of German, 1891-1897, accepted a call to Northwestern and became known as an authority on the German language not only in this country but in Germany. In 1903, Charles Reuben Keyes, sometimes known as Cornell's Mr. Chips, became professor of German. He was a Mount Vernon boy, an alumnus ('94), and a Ph.D. from Harvard. Scholar and gifted teacher, he distinguished himself and also brought honor to the college in two other fields, ornithology and archaeology. After much original work on the Indian mounds and other Indian remains of Iowa he was made, in 1922, Director of the Archaeological Survey of Iowa. Until his death in 1951 he worked devotedly at completing his record of discoveries.

Other sciences brought men of outstanding ability to Cornell. In 1894, Harry M. Kelly, wearing the Harvard crimson, became professor of biology. Until his death in 1936 he made his classroom and laboratory memorable to hundreds of students. In 1899, Nicholas Knight, graduate of Syracuse University and graduate student at Johns Hopkins and Strassburg, came to the chair of chemistry, and for thirty-four years sent out from the college a stream of young chemists, who carried his enthusiasm and his fund of humorous stories all over the country.

When Dr. James A. James, professor of history, 1893-1897, was called to a distinguished career at Northwestern, he was succeeded by Dr. Henry C. Stanclift, who for thirty-five years gave scholarly significance to the role of history in a liberal arts curriculum.

In the first decade of the twentieth century the department of education, established under Dr. H. H. Freer, received a new impetus under Professor George H. Betts and Professor John E. Stout, both Cornell alumni. In 1919 both were drawn away by Northwestern University to larger responsibilities.

Dr. Thomas Nicholson, later Bishop of the Chicago and Detroit area of the Methodist Episcopal Church, gave to Cornell, from 1894 to 1904, ten years of his talent as a dynamic teacher and administrator, combining the professorship of logic and Biblical literature with the principalship of the Academy. He left to become president of Dakota Wesleyan and was succeeded by Professor Kirk Waldo Robbins, who for four years successfully taught Bible in the light of the higher criticism without disturbing the faith of students headed for theological seminaries. In 1909 the scholarly Dr. John Robert Van Pelt became head of the department.

According to the fashion of education in the nineteenth century the department of English literature came in by a side door. In 1875-1876 the

records show a professor of rhetoric and elocution. In addition there were "essay classes" to teach writing, and the literary societies and the *Collegian* encouraged oral and written expression. From 1891 to 1903 three women, one a Ph.D., successively filled the chair of English literature and the office of preceptress. (Perhaps poetry and proper behavior were allied in the gay nineties!) In 1903 Clarence D. Stevens from Wabash College became professor of English and in the following ten years, with several able assistants, brought the department to a position in the college comparable with the place which English had begun to take in the liberal arts curriculum as the study of Greek and Latin declined.

Along with respect and enthusiasm for scholarship, Professor Stevens combined the gifts of a true teacher and of a dramatic coach. In the first decade of the century the literary societies at their annual "publics" usually chose to present plays. These, including outdoor performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, and *The Tempest*, were coached by Professor Stevens. In 1909 Professor Guy M. Knox, who became head of the department of Romance languages, began to share the responsibilities of dramatic coach.

After oratory had flourished in the literary societies and at Commencement for many years, a school of oratory and physical culture had been established in 1892. Although the emphasis was

on oratory and debate, Director Albert M. Harris and his successor, Theodora Irvine, presented scenes from plays in dramatic readings and trained their students to do so in the fashion of the day. Professor Harris coached the first play given on the campus. It was Sophocles' *Electra* presented by one of the women's literary societies, in March, 1899. (A performance of *Antigone* in Greek had been given earlier in the Greek department, but that was not public.) Dramatics, however, continued under the auspices of the literary societies rather than within the curriculum until 1912, when Rose Evelyn Baker, trained at the Cumnock School, became professor of public speaking and director of the school of oratory.

Like the other departments, the Cornell Conservatory grew from small beginnings, but its growth was implicit in the first plans. Instrumental music was offered in the first catalog of the Iowa Conference Seminary. By 1863 there were teachers of both vocal and instrumental music, and in 1878 the department became officially the Conservatory of Music. By 1883 a college orchestra was presenting programs. The first May Music Festival was held in 1899, and beginning in 1903 the Festival included concerts by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of Dr. Frederick Stock, and recitals by distinguished artists, such as Schumann-Heink, Campanari, Lotte Lehmann, and Marian Anderson. The mem-

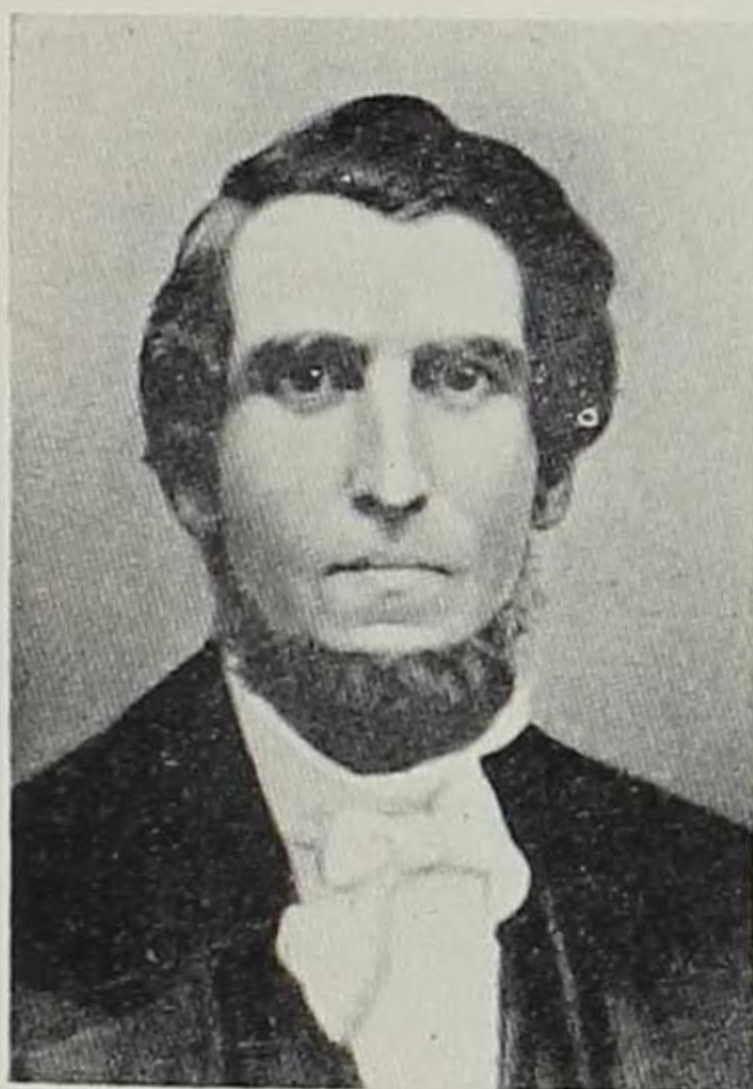
bers of the orchestra as well as their distinguished director showed such enthusiasm for their annual visit to Mount Vernon that it became a legend in the orchestra as well as on the campus. The musicians made friends among the townspeople and year after year were guests in the same homes.

A Saint Cecilia Society and later a Ladies' Semi-Chorus developed into a women's glee club paralleled by the men's glee club until the two were merged in the College Choir. The Oratorio Society, organized in 1898 by Professor Charles H. Adams, and open to both students and townspeople, started the custom, in 1906, of singing Handel's *Messiah* just before Christmas. This has become one of the most cherished of college traditions.

An outstanding figure in the development of the Conservatory during this period was Horace Alden Miller, musician and composer, who served as director from 1907 to 1916. As conductor of the college orchestra until his retirement in 1937, he carried music and the name of Cornell to many Iowa and Illinois towns in the orchestra's annual spring tour.

The art department also had humble beginnings. Instruction in embroidery, offered in the first catalogue, may perhaps be lightly regarded as the first budding of the fine arts. Drawing and painting were offered in 1857 and thereafter until the real School of Art was established in 1879

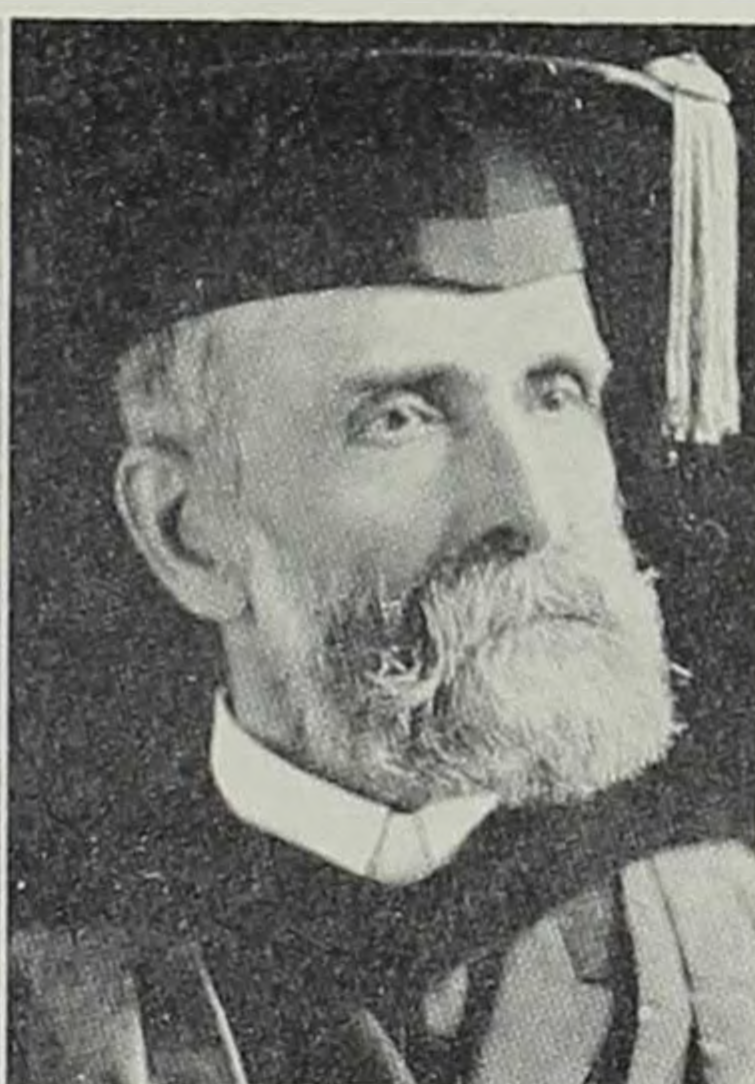
CORNELL'S PRESIDENTS



SAMUEL M. FELLOWS
Sem. Principal: 1853-1856
President: 1859-1863



RICHARD W. KEELER
1857-1859



WILLIAM FLETCHER KING
1863-1908



JAMES ELLIOTT HARLAN
1908-1914



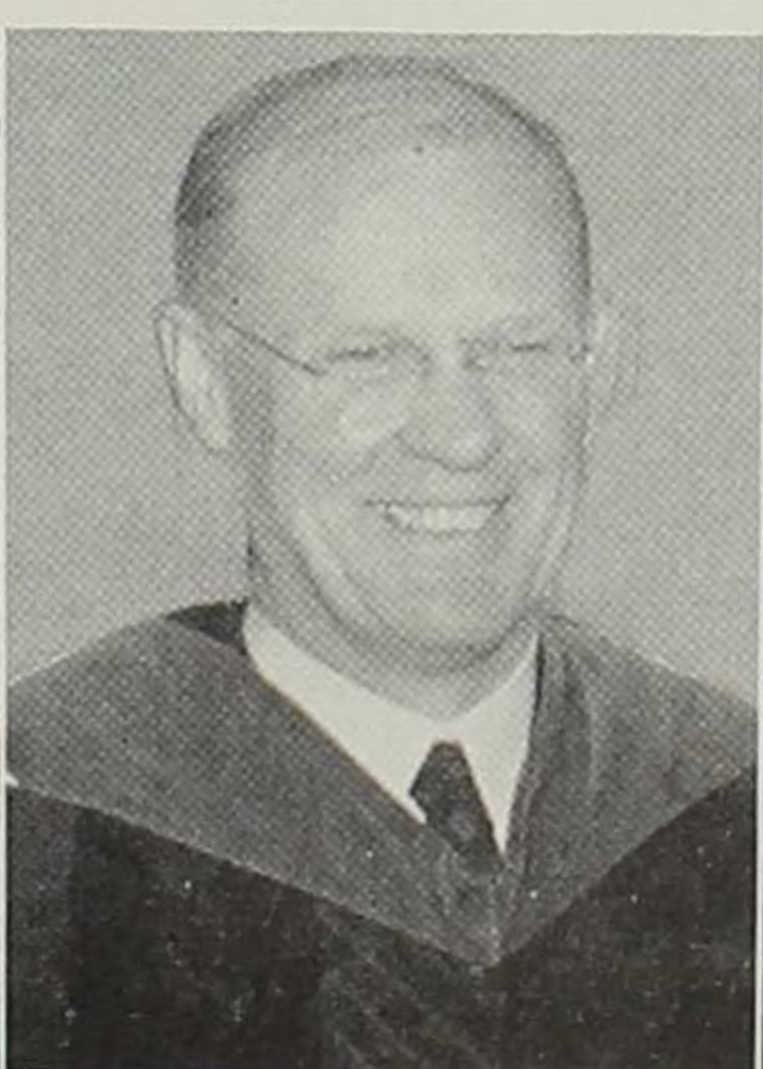
CHARLES WESLEY FLINT
1916-1922



HARLAN UPDEGRAFF
1923-1927



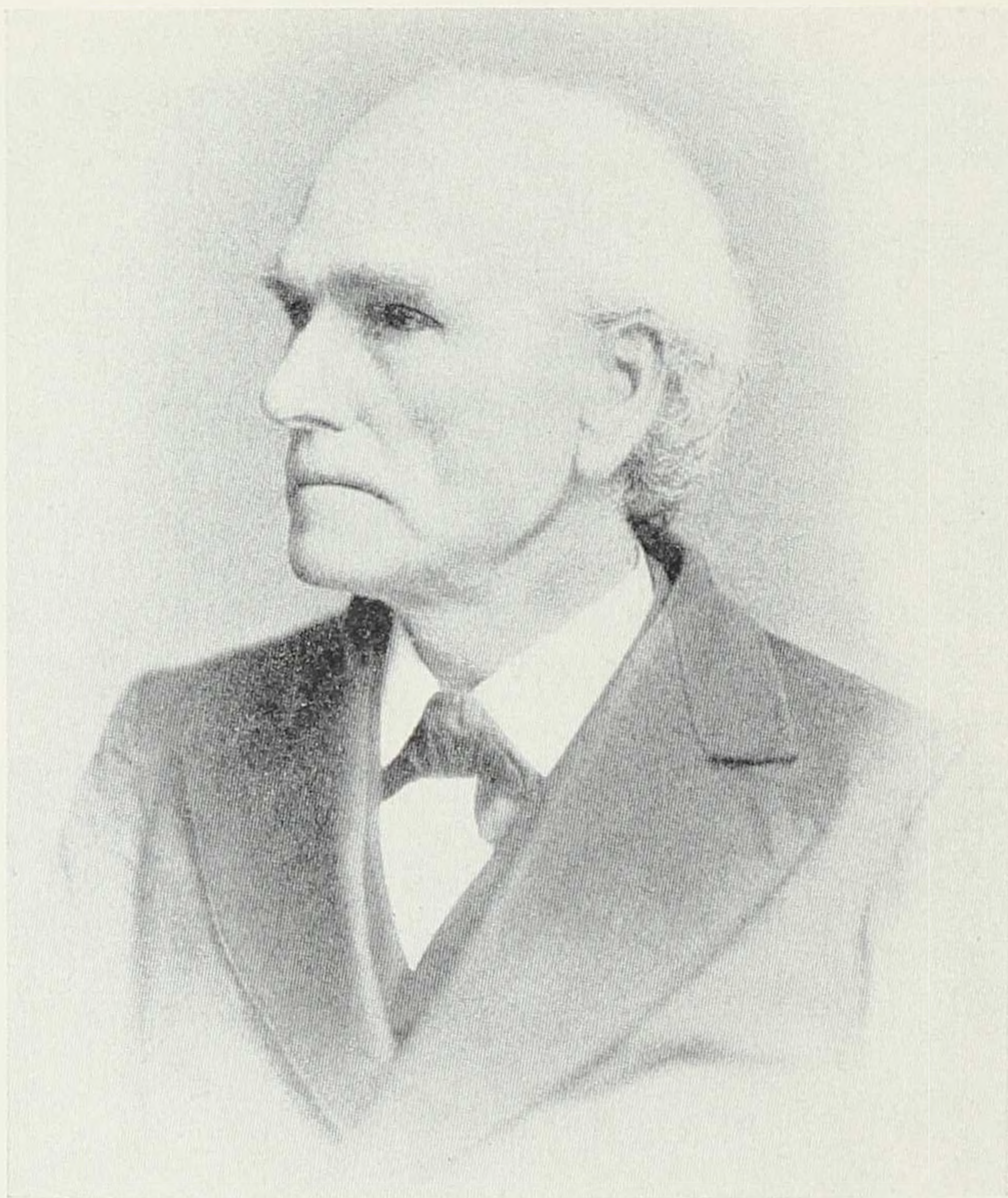
HERBERT J. BURGSTAHLER
1927-1939



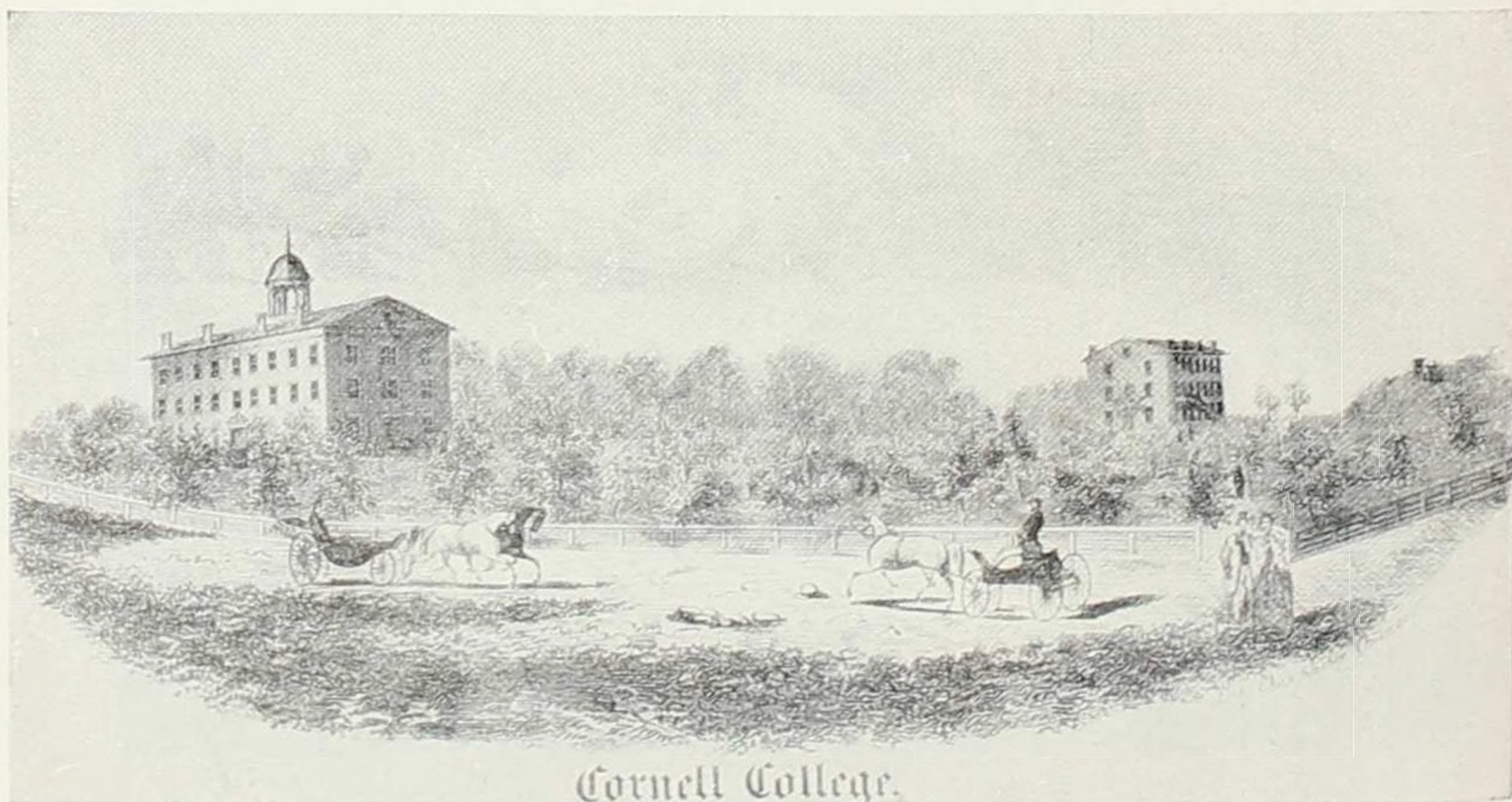
JOHN BENJAMIN MAGEE
1939-1943



RUSSELL DAVID COLE
1943-



REV. GEORGE B. BOWMAN, Founder of Cornell



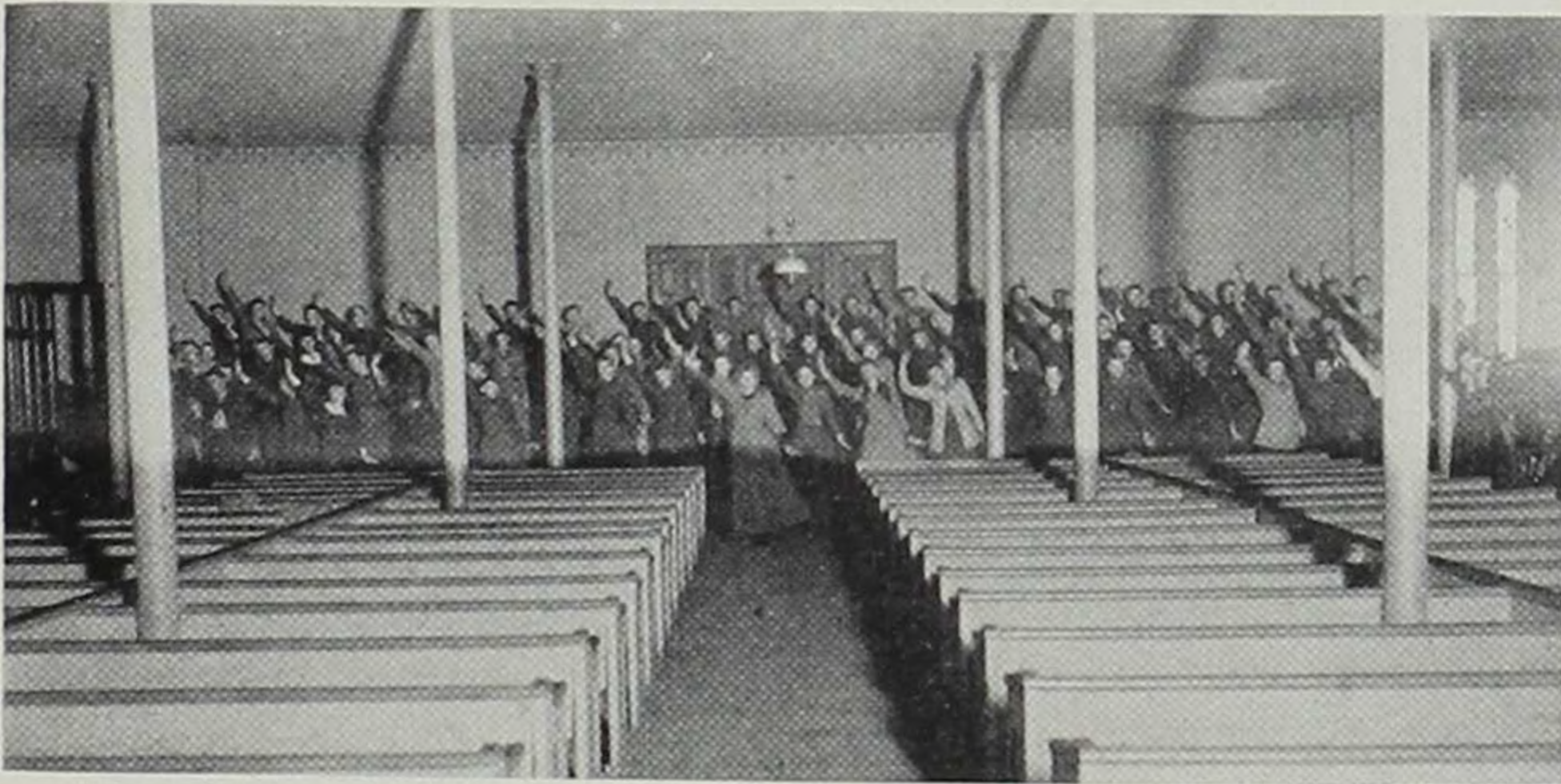
Cornell College.

The Early Campus, with "Old Sem" on left, and "Main" Hall

CORNELL IN THE NINETIES



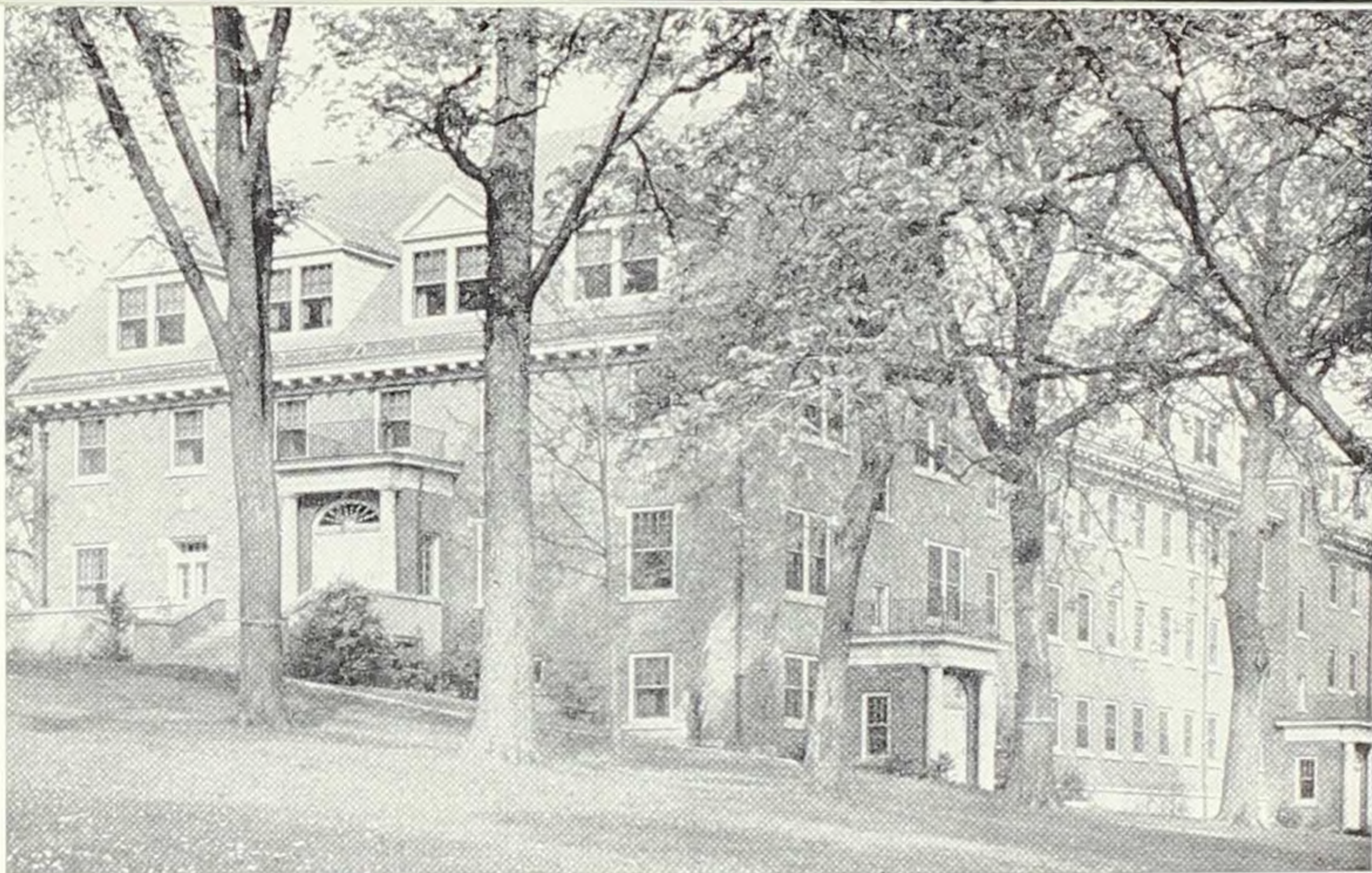
An Art Class



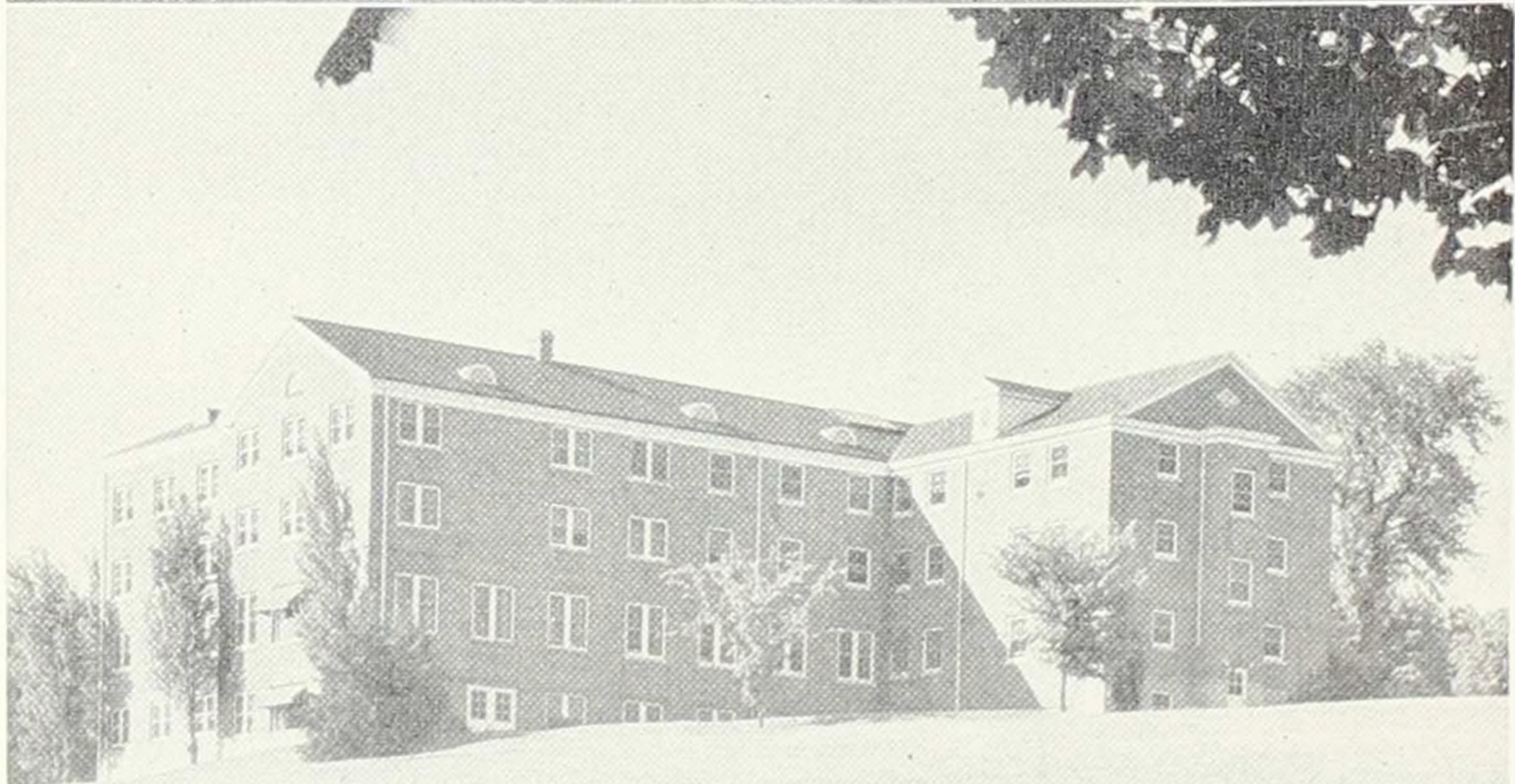
Women's Physical Culture Class



An Engineering Class



Merner
Hall

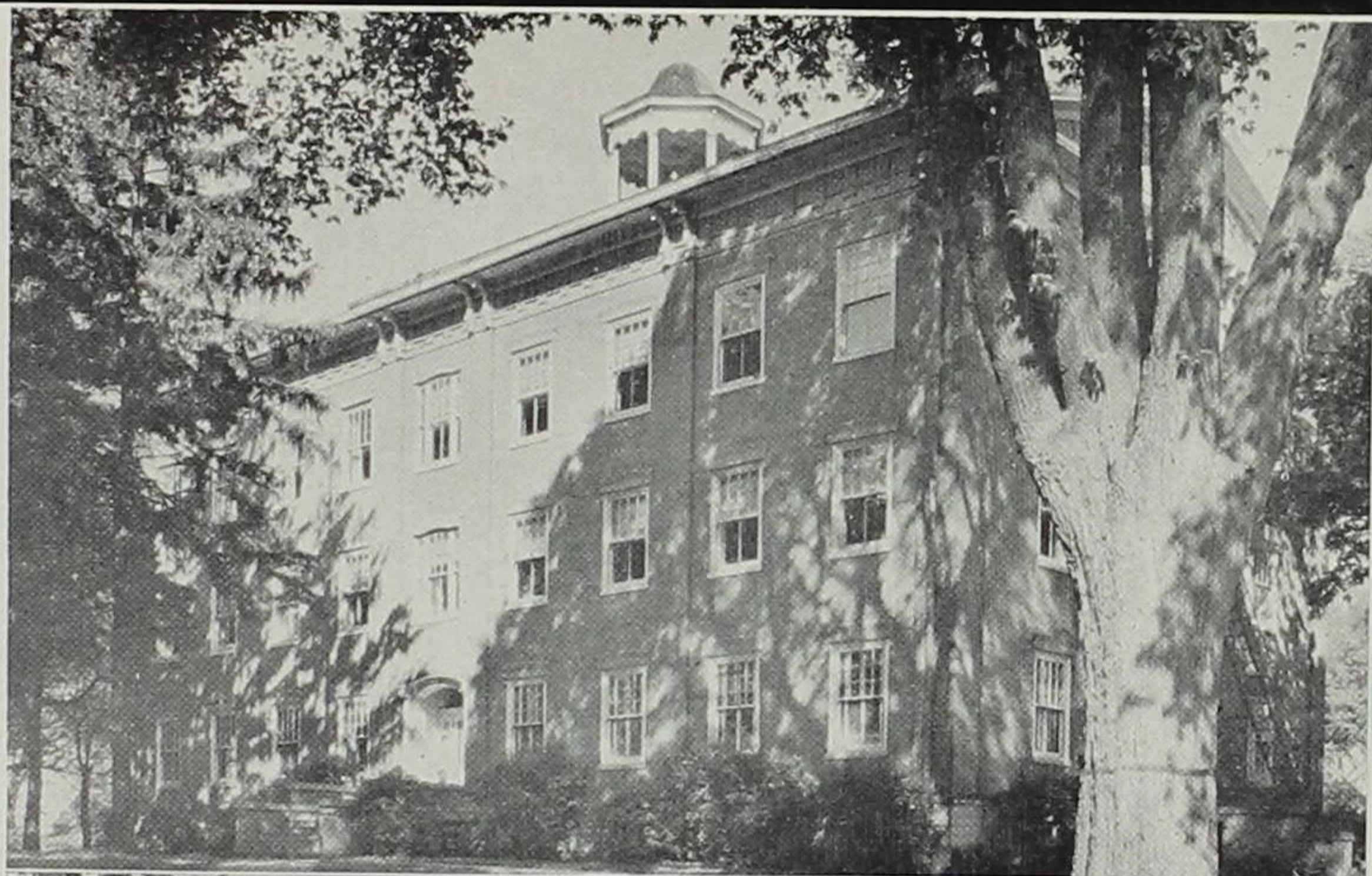


Pfeiffer
Hall

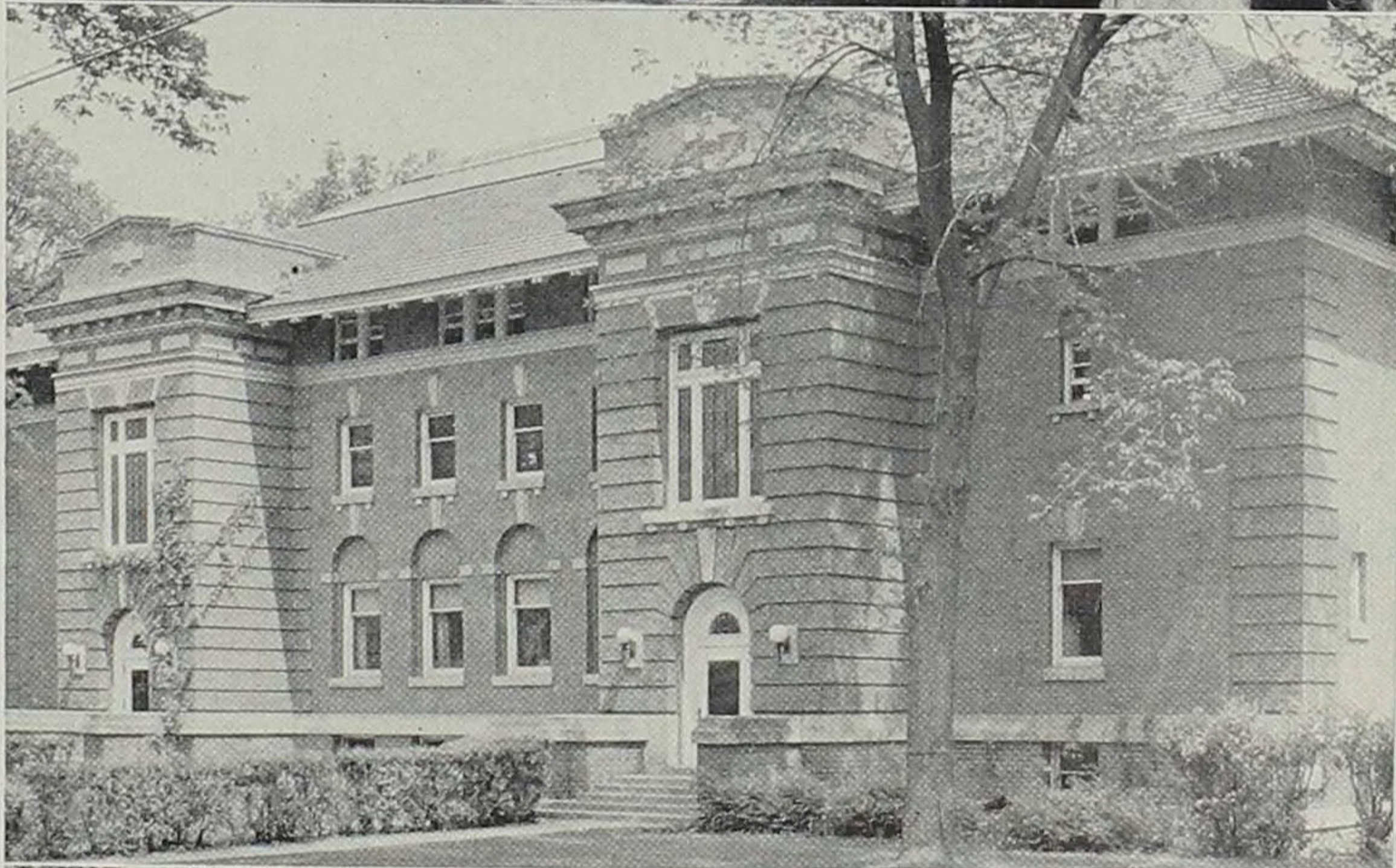


Armstrong
Hall

Main
Hall

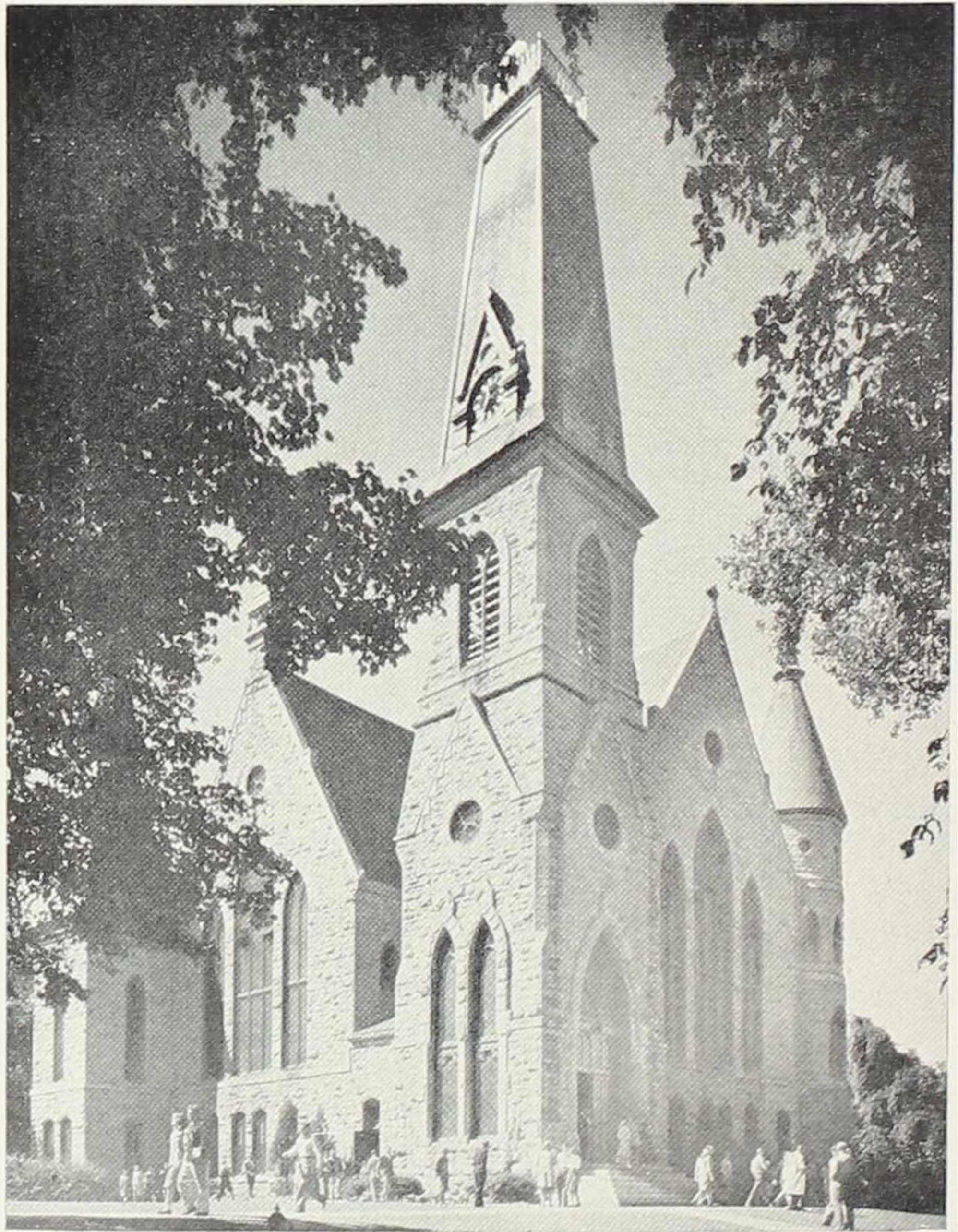


Alumni
Gym

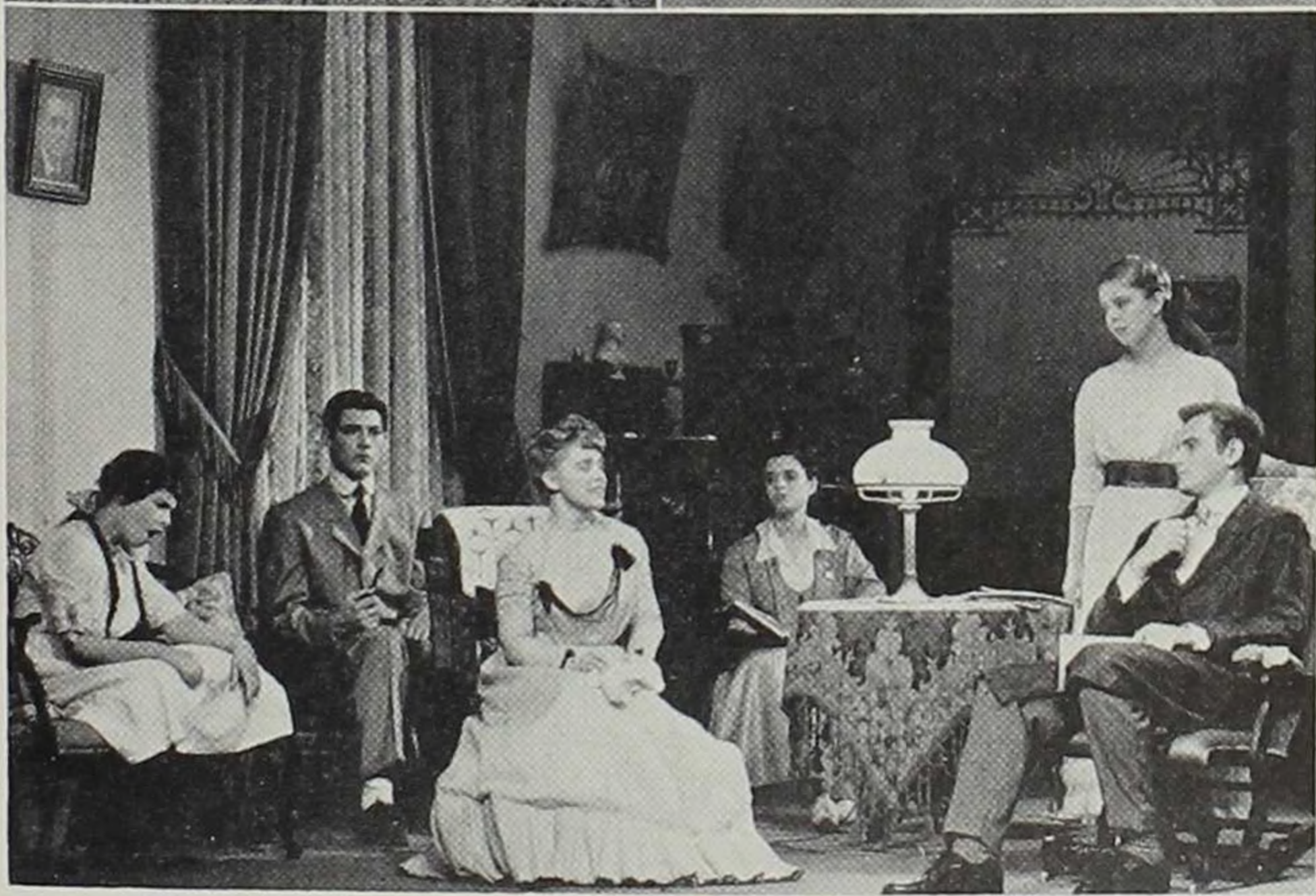
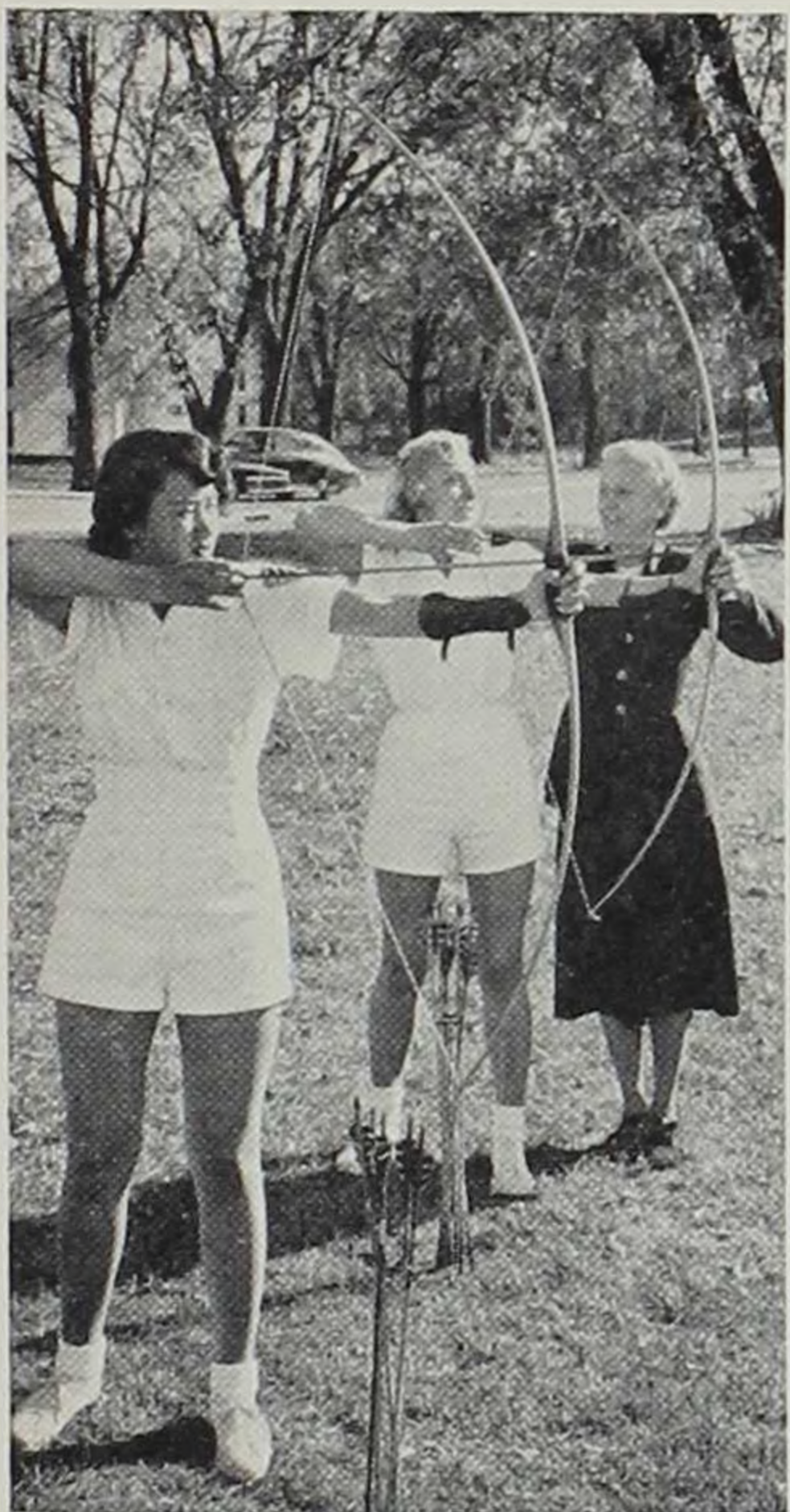


Law
Building





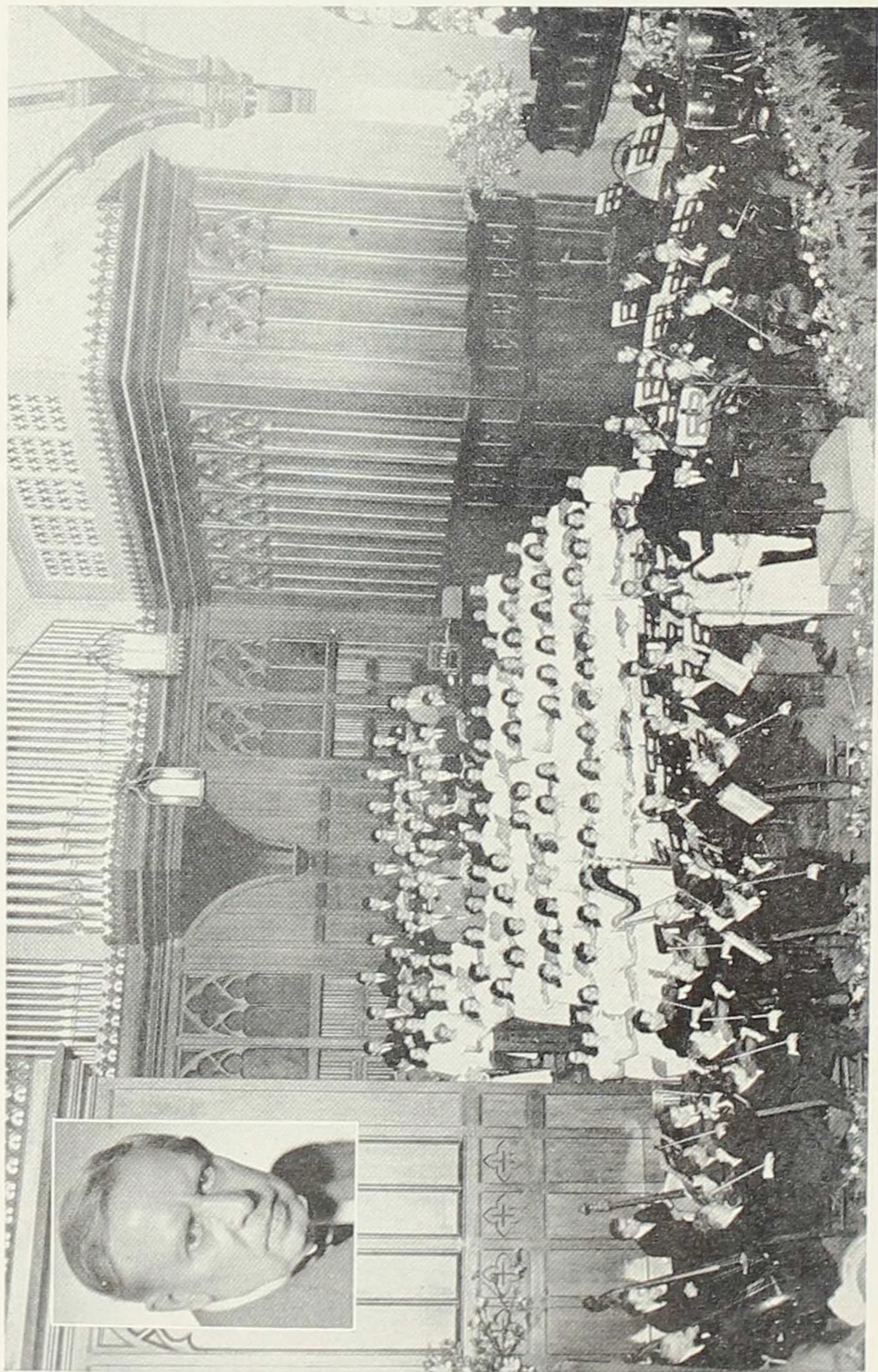
The Cornell Chapel, Center of Campus Life



Upper left — Girls' archery class

Upper right — President Cole greets Lowell Lange, Cornell's NCAA and AAU wrestling champion

Lower — Cornellians give their version of "Ah, Wilderness!"



The Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the Cornell May Music Festival
Dr. Frederick Stock (inset), conductor

under Charles A. Cumming. Then Professor H. A. Mills, who followed him in 1897, continued for twenty-four years to guide students toward new understanding of the beauty around them. The art classes were held on the top floor of Old Sem under a mansard roof which had been added to the first college building.

As for physical training, it was a late addition to the curriculum, for the pioneers had little reason to worry about lack of exercise; their work provided plenty. For a long period there was military drill for the men, directed by a professor of military science. After a beginning in sports, the Cornell Athletic Association was organized in 1888 and became affiliated with the Iowa State Intercollegiate Association three years later. In 1891 the first Cornell football team played an informal schedule and emerged from the season with a .500 average. The powerful State University of Iowa squad crushed Cornell, 64 to 6, but the Mount Vernon fans were encouraged by a 82 to 0 victory over neighboring Coe College.

Football continued to interest students and townspeople. For the 1902 season Cornell's first football coach was hired with funds provided by Mount Vernon citizens. This 1902 team was long remembered as a gridiron powerhouse, for it lost only two games to state opponents and held Coach A. A. Stagg's University of Chicago team to a 21 to 0 triumph. Two weeks after the Chicago

loss, Cornell overpowered Iowa State at Ames, 17 to 15, before a buzzing crowd of 800 fans.

Not until 1907 was there a full-time Director of Athletics. This was Sherman W. Finger, who in 1908 developed a football team which again beat Iowa State College, 6 to 0, on the home field. The C Club was organized that same year "to promote clean sportsmanship and athletics," with membership open to men who won their C in one of the four major sports: football, basketball, baseball, and track.

The goal at Cornell has always been to maintain a balanced program of intercollegiate athletics. Backed up by loyal alumni who have seen the dangers of the "win at all costs" philosophy, Cornell has managed to triumph and lose with equal grace, as the athletes involved realized that their contests were only a supplement to the larger training of the college program. Friendly rivalries have helped maintain a keen interest in intercollegiate athletics, particularly the series with Coe and Grinnell Colleges, both of which date back over fifty years. Sometimes an ambitious Cornell football team has risen to the heights by defeating a larger opponent, as when the purple-and-white eleven won from Michigan State, 19 to 13, in 1927. But the effort to strike a "golden mean" in athletics has paid dividends at Cornell, since college officials have never been hampered by the problem of de-emphasizing sports or placing

sports in their proper perspective on the campus.

Until the twentieth century coeds got their exercise by walking. It is interesting to note that Elder Bowman, in his talks at chapel, often spoke to the students about care of their health. He recommended walking as good exercise and said: "When you go walking over these hills, go as if you are going after something, and when you come back, come as if you had got it." In 1900, Mary L. MacLeod became director of physical training for women. Soon the catalog stated that each girl must come provided with a suit of dark blue serge with knee-length bloomers; but a strict rule forbade her to appear on the campus in her "gym suit" without a covering of skirt or long coat. There was at that time no gymnasium, but an open space back of the seats in the "day chapel" gave room for marching, rhythmic exercises with Indian clubs, and even rope-climbing and folk dancing! During the rest period the young ladies stretched out on the hard, straight-backed benches — a funny sight which they tried not to remember while sitting on the same benches during chapel prayers. In the fall and spring they played hockey, basketball, and tennis in Ash Park. Folk dancing led to May fetes, which around 1910 developed into pageants including drama and music.

Physical training for both men and women gained new emphasis with the building of the Alumni Gymnasium in 1909. It was truly an

alumni and student project, initiated by the class of 1908 and enthusiastically carried to completion with considerable speed.

Extra-curricular activities held a less conspicuous place in college life at the turn of the century than today, but they had their place. Campus groups, organized under the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., and the Student Volunteers, had a real influence on the religious life of many students and brought to the college outstanding youth leaders of that day.

Student publications gave voice to student opinion and aspirations. Following the earlier *Collegian* and *Graphic*, the *Cornellian* began as a monthly in June, 1880, and became a semi-weekly in 1895 after some competition with a weekly called the *Breeze*. In 1911 the *Cornellian*, by that time a weekly, appeared in regular newspaper format and has so continued. A literary magazine called the *Script* flourished briefly from 1910 to 1912, a worthy forerunner of today's *Husk*. The junior annual, the *Royal Purple*, begun in 1902, still appears each spring.

On the whole, expansion of grounds and buildings had kept pace with the expanding curriculum — at least according to the standards of the period. From a modern point of view dormitories, classrooms, and equipment for recreation all seem meager. In 1885 a women's dormitory had been built and named Bowman Hall in honor of the

Elder, who, generous as always, contributed nearly one-fourth of its cost. Four stories in height, with rooms for ninety girls, two per room, it was considered a fine building for its day and is still preferred over more modern "dorms" by some young Cornellians.

Land purchased in 1891 and 1892 brought the area of the campus to fifty-five acres. Then for a decade the efforts of President King and his helpers were directed toward raising the first large endowment funds. Until about 1893 the college had been supported almost entirely by small subscriptions. The campaign begun in the nineties came to a happy conclusion in 1904 when Cornell was able to boast assets of over nine hundred thousand dollars, nearly eight hundred students, six buildings, and the assurance of a library building. Toward this much-needed equipment Andrew Carnegie had contributed fifty thousand dollars on condition that a maintenance fund be provided by the college and the town, which was to share in its privileges.

The cornerstone for the new library was laid in June, 1904, during Commencement and the celebration of the Semi-Centennial. When the building was completed the following year, there was at last space for the development of the kind of library demanded by the growing curriculum. The endowment of departmental libraries had been begun in 1883, and it was continued by gifts from

the literary societies and from individuals. The new building must have seemed like heaven to Librarian May L. Fairbanks ('87), who for more than ten years had been doing her best to serve eager students and professors in cramped "alcoves" in old Sem. Mabel Williams and Jessie Rigby ('00) were added to the library staff. The latter, a granddaughter of President Fellows, served until her death in 1938, sharing quietly with many students the riches she had discovered in books and music.

The Semi-Centennial in 1904 was marked by other events. Governor Albert B. Cummins spoke at the Commencement and declared:

Allow me to again congratulate you all, not so much upon the mere fact that there is here established one of our most distinguished institutions of learning, as upon the spirit of unity and affection, of harmony and of enthusiasm which prevails in every rank, — Faculty, Trustees, Alumni, students, and members of the community. It promises for the College a long life of great usefulness.

The Semi-Centennial was also the occasion for another significant gift — a hundred perpetual scholarships endowed by President King in memory of his wife, Margaret McKell King, who had died the year before. A memorial tablet to Mrs. King, placed in the new library, was presented by Secretary of the Treasury, Leslie M. Shaw ('74). The King scholarships, bestowed on deserving students from the ninety-nine counties of Iowa, have through the years spelled opportunity to

thousands of young people. The last line on the memorial tablet, a quotation from John Knox, is a fitting statement of the faith which has guided the builders of Cornell: "Every scholar is something added to the riches of the Commonwealth."

When in 1908 Dr. King retired as president emeritus, Dr. James E. Harlan took over the guiding reins and continued the policies which he had wisely administered for many years. Under his guidance a campaign for five hundred thousand dollars was completed in 1912 with a gift from the General Education Board.

MARJORIE MEDARY