

The PALIMPSEST

JANUARY 1948

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

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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THE PALIMPSEST

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Robert Lucas

A large crowd gathered on the Burlington levee early in the morning of August 15, 1838. News had spread that the steamboat *Brazil* was nearing port with Robert Lucas, the anxiously-awaited Governor of the Territory of Iowa, among her passengers. Mayor George Beeler, Cyrus S. Jacobs, William H. Starr, and William B. Conway, the Secretary of the Territory, were among the prominent citizens assembled on the river bank to welcome the new executive. Various reports had trickled westward concerning the character and personality of Robert Lucas. Every one knew that he was a man of action: his long career as a soldier and a politician was ample testimony of that. But what would his attitude be toward the new Territory of Iowa? Would he rule like a sergeant or be sympathetic with the needs of the people? Undoubtedly many who watched the *Brazil* dock hoped to read the destiny of the Territory in the countenance of the first Governor.

A brisk, erect, dignified figure strode down the gangplank of the *Brazil*. Although only about five feet ten inches in height, Robert Lucas probably seemed taller because of his straight military bearing. His thick wavy hair, frosted by fifty-seven years of intense activity, was combed straight back from his high forehead. Blue eyes, deep-set beneath beetling eyebrows, a slightly aquiline nose, straight firm mouth, all combined to give a somewhat severe expression to his thin face. Middle age had not robbed him of his vigor and restless energy. Grim determination, resourcefulness, and pride were basic qualities in the character of the courageous soldier and ambitious politician that was Robert Lucas.

Governor Lucas swung into action as soon as he arrived at Burlington. That very afternoon he issued a proclamation apportioning members of the Territorial legislature and providing for their election. Scarcely had this been done when an invitation was tendered him by leading Burlington citizens to attend a public dinner in his honor. Lucas thanked the committee graciously, but asked that the dinner be postponed until after he returned from a tour of the Territory. During the next three days he attended to problems of state and then set out on August 18th to visit the various towns as far north as Dubuque.

From early morning until late at night Lucas conferred with the leading citizens in each community. All were impressed with his sincerity, his energy, and his sterling character. A Dubuque editor liked his "plain and easy address" and commanding appearance. He believed this "practical farmer", whose constitution had been "shattered by toil", would "appreciate honest industry, and guard well its interest".

A descendant of sturdy Quaker ancestors who settled in Pennsylvania in 1679, Robert Lucas actually was a product of two frontiers. His father, William Lucas, was born in the wilds of western Virginia. There, at Shepherdstown, Robert Lucas was born on April 1, 1781. His early schooling consisted largely of mathematics and surveying, a training which proved invaluable when he moved to the Northwest Territory in 1800.

Despite his Quaker ancestry, Robert Lucas was distinctly a military man. Perhaps he inherited his warlike spirit from his father who had fought in the Revolutionary War. At any rate Lucas himself began his military career in 1803 when he received a commission from the Governor to enlist volunteers for the Ohio militia. From that beginning he rose in rank until he became a major general in the militia and a colonel in the United States Army. When the War of 1812 broke out

Lucas helped organize a battalion of volunteers from his militia. During the early part of the conflict he served as a detached officer in General William Hull's disastrous campaign. The daily journal which he kept clearly reveals his courage and resourcefulness whether employed as a scout or in the heat of battle. It also demonstrates his habit of meticulous care. When Colonel Lewis Cass made his report on Hull's discreditable conduct, he embodied sentences and even paragraphs from the daily record of Robert Lucas.

The soldier was also schooled in the ways of government and politics. As early as 1803 he began his career as a surveyor. Two years later he was appointed justice of the peace for Union Township in Scioto County. In 1808 he was elected to the lower house of the Ohio legislature. Between 1814 and 1830 he served all but two years as State Senator. Nominated for Governor by the Democrats in 1830, he was defeated but, having served meanwhile in the House of Representatives, he was again nominated for Governor in 1832 and this time emerged triumphant. A more significant partisan honor was his selection as temporary and permanent chairman of the Democratic Convention at Baltimore. He was re-elected Governor of Ohio in 1834 — an unusual tribute in the Buckeye State. His most notable

service to Ohio during his four years as chief executive was his victory in the Ohio-Michigan boundary dispute.

On September 4, 1838, soon after his return to Burlington, the Governor attended a "most sumptuous" banquet at which C. S. Jacobs acted as president. The customary thirteen prepared toasts and twenty-five volunteer toasts were drunk by the hundred guests present. After pointing out the salient facts in the new Governor's career, Jacobs offered the following tribute: "Our distinguished guest — We honor him as the gallant soldier in war — we honor him as the enlightened legislator and magistrate in peace, and we honor him for his virtue as a private citizen." A tremendous cheer greeted the Governor as he modestly arose in response.

Robert Lucas was not thinking of his military career, Ohio politics, or boundary troubles as he stood before his Burlington audience. Hopes for good government and a peaceful administration were uppermost in his mind. He was thinking of the amazing resources of the Territory and the admirable character of the settlers. Closing his speech, he proposed a toast to "The citizens of Iowa — Hospitable, intelligent, and enterprising. May their energies be united in support of such measures as are best calculated to advance the in-

terests of the Territory — promote virtue — increase intelligence — and secure the lasting prosperity and happiness of the people.”

Unfortunately for Lucas his three years as Governor of Iowa were destined to be as stormy as his career in Ohio. The seed of discord had been planted even before he set foot in the Territory. President Van Buren first offered the Governorship to General Henry Atkinson who refused the office. The delay and uncertainty caused much dissatisfaction in the Territory. Robert Lucas was finally commissioned on July 7th but did not hear of his appointment until ten days later, whereupon he promptly accepted. Preparing at once to assume his new duties, he left Cincinnati for Iowa on August 1st. Low water delayed the progress of his trip and he did not reach Burlington until two months after Congress had created the Territory.

Meanwhile, Secretary Conway had arrived and begun acting as Governor. Had he been less officious and attended only to emergencies, he would not have aroused the ire of Governor Lucas. But Conway, self-confident and ambitious, assumed more responsibilities than the circumstances warranted. On the very day Lucas arrived at Burlington he handed the Governor a copy of his proclamation apportioning members of the legislature

and ordering an election. No one knows what Robert Lucas said, but it is significant that he issued the proclamation himself and that Conway left for Davenport within an hour after the Governor's arrival. From that beginning William Conway was continually at odds with Robert Lucas. He opposed whatever the Governor proposed and stirred up dissension. In Lucas, however, he encountered a determined antagonist.

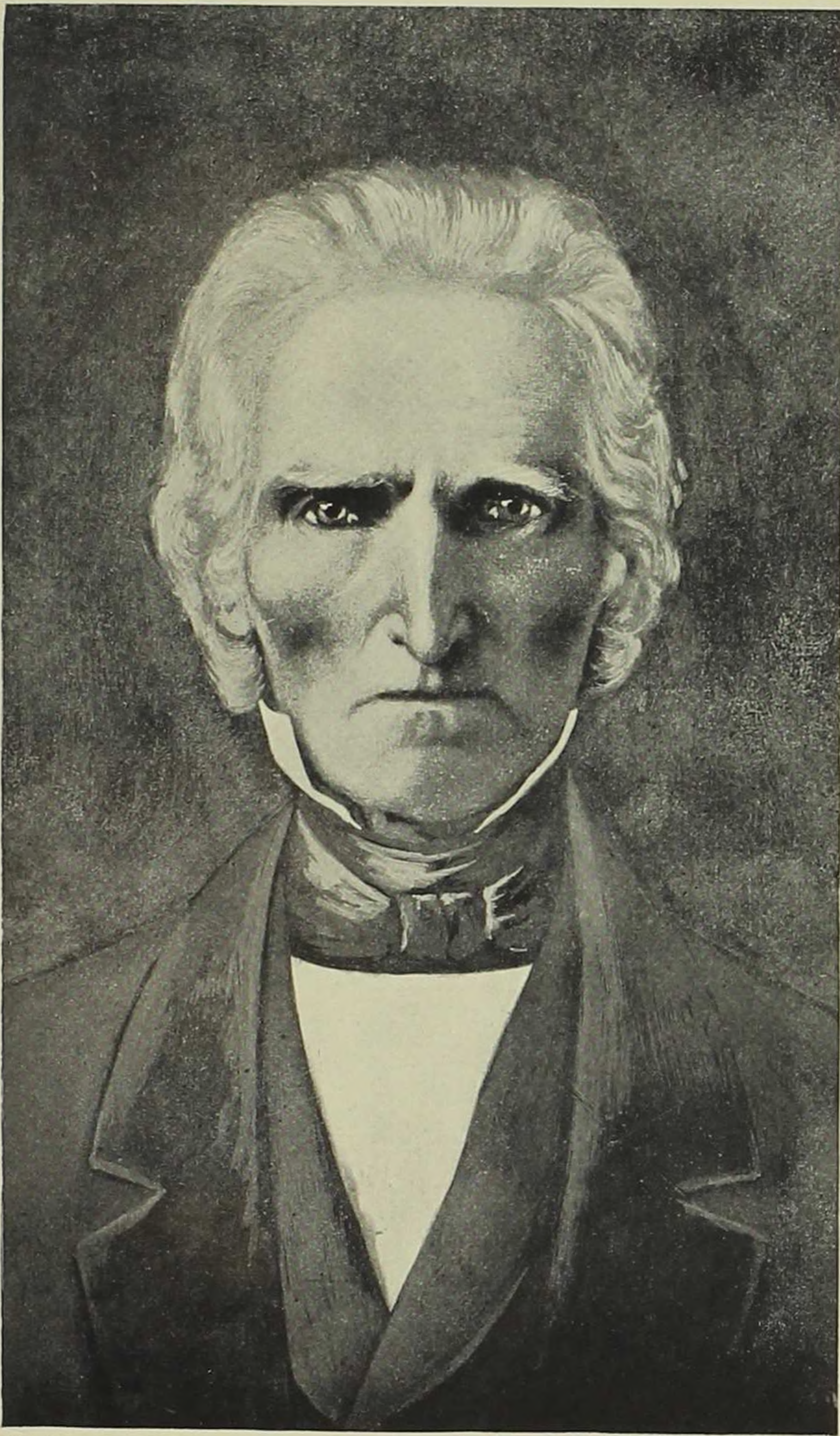
On November 12, 1838, the first Territorial legislature convened in the Methodist Church at Burlington. Most of the thirty-nine pioneer legislators were young men. They listened attentively as the Governor read his first message. It was a noteworthy document that clearly revealed the sagacity and long experience of Robert Lucas. Education, the compilation of a criminal code, the suppression of gambling and intemperance, the organization of an efficient militia, and strict economy in financial matters were but a few of the subjects on which the Governor recommended legislation.

The Legislative Assembly set to work with enthusiasm and a grave sense of importance. The first month of the session was marked by a sharp clash between Secretary Conway and the law makers over the purchase of penknives, tin cups, and similar perquisites. The Secretary's flippant,

sarcastic answer to the request deeply offended the Council which promptly informed him it would not "tamely submit to the insults and derision of any officer of this Territory". This quarrel had scarcely abated when a more serious dispute arose between the Governor and the legislature over Territorial expenditures. When Lucas refused to approve bills involving the payment of salaries for twenty-three assistants to the Legislative Assembly, the legislators promptly questioned his right to veto such measures, a right which was clearly provided in the Organic Act.

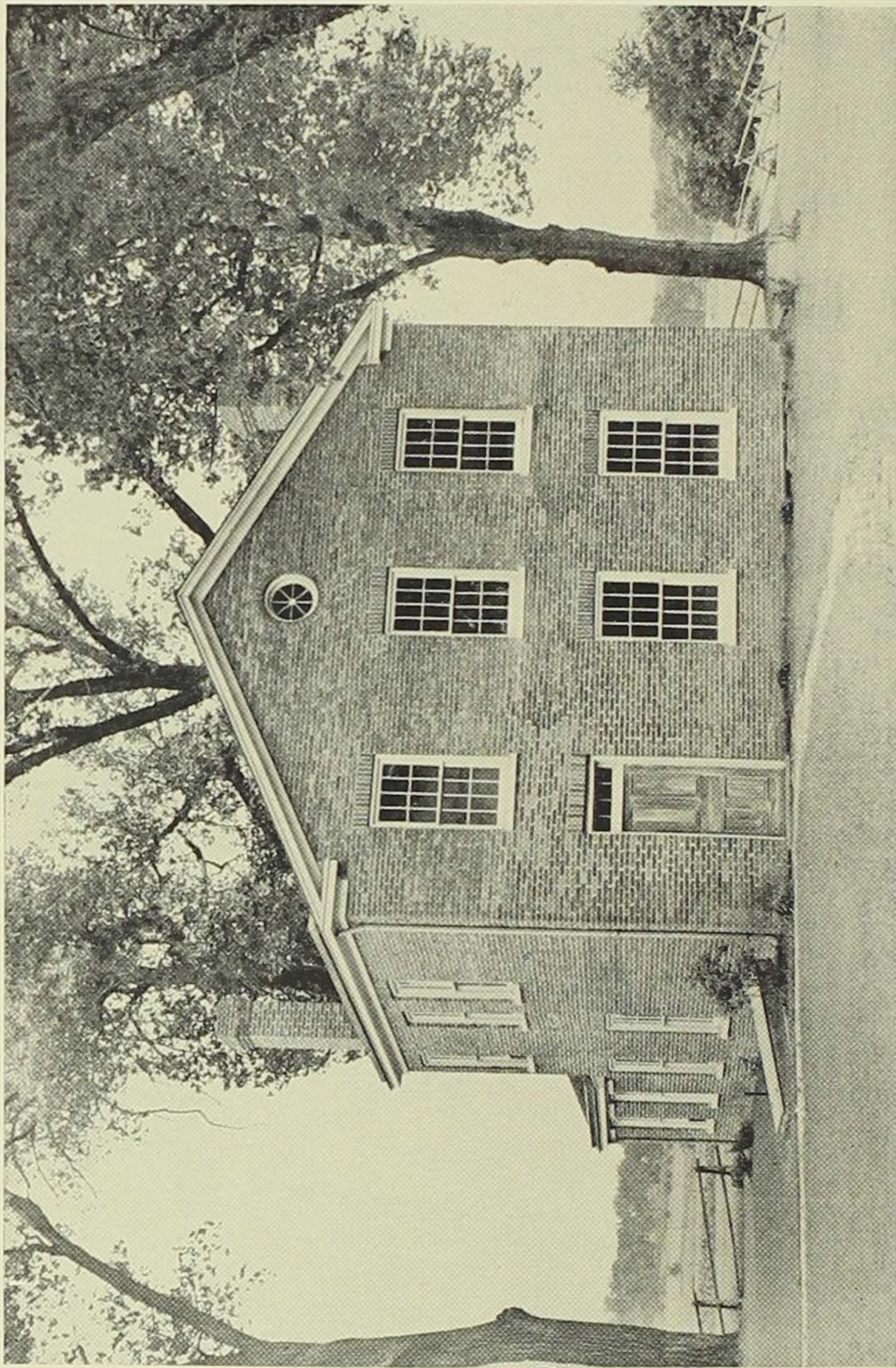
With characteristic determination Lucas stood firm throughout the controversy, displaying remarkable calmness for a man of such an impetuous nature. Although Conway and a small majority of the legislators sought his removal from office, many others saw the wisdom and legality of the Governor's position. When the session closed, Parvin recorded in his diary, "Legislature adjourned in confusion. All drunk with few exceptions."

The firm stand of Governor Lucas against the excesses of the Territorial legislature was supported by President Van Buren. At the same time the United States Treasury refused to pay the bills authorized by the legislature. Moreover, a letter from the Comptroller's office, on June 7,



FROM A PAINTING BY GEORGE H. YEWELL

ROBERT LUCAS



COURTESY OF THE IOWA CITY PRESS-CITIZEN

ROBERT LUCAS HOUSE AT IOWA CITY

1839, showed serious discrepancies in the Secretary's accounts. The death of William B. Conway at Burlington during the opening days of the second Legislative Assembly probably saved him from many unpleasant situations and removed a thorn from the side of Robert Lucas.

The first year of Governor Lucas's administration had been marred by bitter internal controversy. The second year was destined to produce a stormy battle with Missouri over the southern boundary of the Territory of Iowa. As early as 1816 John C. Sullivan had surveyed an Indian cession which later was ambiguously identified with the northern boundary of the State of Missouri. The influx of settlers into the area north of this line after the Black Hawk Purchase caused Missouri to cast covetous glances in that direction. In 1836, the Governor was authorized by the State of Missouri to survey the northern boundary and J. C. Brown ran the line in the following year. This line would have deprived Iowa of a generous slice of the southern tier of Iowa counties. When Missouri ordered its officers to collect taxes in this area, Governor Lucas advised Van Buren County citizens to refuse. Not long afterward a Missouri sheriff was arrested and brought to Burlington. Thereupon, the Missouri militia was called to enforce the law while Lucas issued a proclamation

calling out the Territorial troops. After such a display of force the question was adjudicated.

Though the remainder of his administration was comparatively calm, the election of a Whig President led to the removal of Lucas in 1841. Many Iowans expressed genuine regret that his strong hand had been removed from the pilot wheel.

Robert Lucas was inordinately fond of politics. In 1843, five years after coming to Iowa, he returned to Ohio temporarily. His old friends prevailed upon him to run for Congress, but he was defeated and returned to Iowa City the following year. Straightway he was nominated by the Democrats as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1844. Although opponents accused him of being a "confirmed office-seeker", he won the election. His work on the committees on State Boundaries, State Revenue, and the Executive was statesmanlike.

When James K. Polk was elected President, Lucas hoped to be reappointed Governor of the Territory of Iowa but James Clarke was chosen. Two years later, when Iowa was about to be admitted into the Union, Lucas again fixed his eyes upon the Governorship. He was then sixty-five years old, however, and his uncompromising nature had made many enemies. Younger men entered the field and Ansel Briggs, who in 1839 had

carried a letter of introduction to Lucas from the Governor of Ohio, was nominated by the Democrats and elected first Governor of the State.

Robert Lucas retained his keen interest in public affairs to the very end. When he retired to the friendly atmosphere of Plum Grove he still found time to engage actively in the temperance movement, to advocate the development of the public school system, and to promote railroad building. At Burlington in 1839 he was chosen president of the Iowa Territorial Temperance Society. Thirteen years later his name was included in a select list of prominent temperance leaders in the United States. On December 14, 1848, in the Old Stone Capitol at Iowa City, Lucas was chosen president of a State convention of teachers and friends of education in Iowa. In the following year he became a member of the Board of Trustees of the State University of Iowa. Always a firm believer in the development of the West, Lucas in his later years transferred his support from canals to railroads. During 1850 he took a prominent part in two railroad conventions — one attended by the friends of the Dubuque and Keokuk Railroad, the other by proponents of the line from Davenport to Council Bluffs.

Despite the fact that he had been a Democrat for over half a century, Lucas revealed a remark-

able ability to break with the past. It required a great principle — the slavery issue — to cause him to forsake the Democratic party when Franklin Pierce was nominated and cast his vote for Winfield Scott, the Whig candidate. He even presided at a Scott meeting in Iowa City and gave an address which was "loudly and frequently cheered by the delighted audience, among which were a number of ladies." It was his last recorded political speech, made with conviction in the camp of his former opponents. He died at Plum Grove on February 7, 1853, and was buried at Iowa City.

Robert Lucas brought to the young Territory of Iowa the strong arm of the soldier and the steady influence of a practical politician. A crusading idealist, he accepted the Methodist faith at an early date. He detested gamblers and drinkers and would not appoint such men to office. He gave freely of his time and energy to all causes that embraced the common good. A man of intense convictions and genuine patriotism, Lucas never wavered in the cause of duty. His frank and rugged honesty must have left a deep imprint upon all who knew him. The history of Iowa was enriched by his political services.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Iowa in the Days of Lucas

The State of Iowa to-day covers an area of about 56,000 square miles. In 1838 when Robert Lucas came out to Burlington as Governor he found the Territory of Iowa spread over a tract of land approximately three times that size. It included, besides the present Iowa, all of modern Minnesota lying west of the Mississippi River, and all of what is now North and South Dakota east of the Missouri. On the north the Canadian line was the boundary and on the northwest in the faraway land of the Sioux the line followed the White Earth River southward from Canada until it joined the Missouri.

But if the area was large the population was exceedingly small. In 1838 there were 23,242 persons in the Territory and this is less than one per cent of the present population of the State. Furthermore over half of these had come in within two years.

These people lived almost entirely in the Black Hawk Purchase which extended back from the river not more than fifty miles. The chief centers of population were a half dozen or more towns on the west bank of the Mississippi; but in 1838 the

counties which ranked second and third in point of numbers were two interior counties — Van Buren and Henry.

Iowa City in that year was not yet thought of; Des Moines was merely the name of a river and a county; and the western part of the Territory was an unpeopled wilderness save for bands of Indians. It is true that near Council Bluffs Father De Smet had a mission post; on the Red River of the North in the present Minnesota was the group of Selkirk colonists; and west of the Mississippi near Fort Snelling were a few white squatters. But it is doubtful if Lucas realized their existence.

Before Lucas went out of office in 1841, the population had no doubt doubled itself for it had almost done so when the census of 1840 was taken. This survey showed 43,112 persons in the Territory. As might be expected in a pioneer Commonwealth, the men greatly out-numbered the women, the proportion being roughly 4 to 3. Scattered throughout the various counties were 188 colored persons. Most of these were free, of course, but the United States census returns list 16 as slaves — all from the county of Dubuque. This same county is credited by the census taker as possessing among its inhabitants a woman over one hundred years old. This must have been the mother of Alexander Butterworth of Dubuque,

who was reported to have danced at her son's wedding in 1837, despite her 107 years.

The presence of so large a number of free colored persons and especially of the sixteen slaves is in line with the fact that Iowa in the time of Lucas had been peopled to a considerable extent from the Southern States. The first Legislative Assembly which Lucas faced in 1838 included in its membership twenty, or more than one-half, whose birthplace was south of the Mason and Dixon Line. New Englanders there were in abundance but they did not predominate as has so often been claimed. As the Civil War approached, the southern influx weakened while that from the northeast increased, but in the years of the early Territorial period, the migration from Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas — sometimes with a few years stopover in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois — was large. Kentucky and Tennessee sent many young men into this new and promising Territory. And the contributions of Missouri to this upstream migration included such men as George Wallace Jones and Augustus Caesar Dodge, the first two United States Senators from Iowa, and Stephen Hempstead, the second Governor of the State.

In the early days they had come to trade in furs and to mine lead but by 1840 they came to farm. Over 10,000 in that year were listed as farmers

while all the other occupations together gave employment to less than 3000. They were men of little wealth, but of sturdy ways. They were democratic and independent, accustomed to labor and frontier hardships, but unaccustomed to restraint. They were intelligent but not many of them were highly educated. Only 365 in 1840 practiced the learned professions.

The steamboat *Brazil* from Cincinnati brought Lucas to the landing at Burlington. This was the leading town of the Territory, proud of the honor of having been the Territorial capital of Wisconsin and eager to continue its position as the seat of the government. Dubuque was a strong rival, while Davenport, Fort Madison, and Bloomington (later taking the name Muscatine) were smaller but were growing rapidly. In the interior, settlements had sprung up at Salem, the Quaker village, at Mt. Pleasant, Keosauqua, and a dozen other places but they could not hope to rival the river towns. Iowa City was laid out in 1839 as the seat of government and grew rapidly.

Dubuque was still essentially a miner's town, Burlington a lawyer's town, while Iowa City became the dream town of the politicians. And each of the other smaller towns had its own ambitions and characteristics. Some of the ambitions came to naught, as in the case of Ivanhoe which died a

natural death, and Rockingham, which, after fighting a valiant contest for supremacy in the county with Davenport four miles away, was worsted and finally engulfed by its rival. But most of the settlements persevered and grew into thriving and permanent towns.

When Lucas arrived the great highway was the river. Steamers shuttled back and forth between Dubuque and Burlington and brought increasing numbers of settlers from the East and South by way of the Ohio River and St. Louis. But the overland immigrants also were numerous. They came to the river and crossed on ferries at Dubuque or Davenport or Burlington, and then proceeded to roll their wagon wheels inland.

Trails developed into roads; ferry crossings and fords at the small streams caught the moving tide of migration into little knots of settlement. A military road was laid out in 1839 from Dubuque to Iowa City, and in 1841 Burlington boasted four tri-weekly mails.

The census of 1840 tells us that fifteen men in Iowa were employed in the turning out of newspapers. Weekly sheets were issued in Dubuque, Davenport, and Burlington, the latter town enjoying the luxury and excitement of two rival papers, the *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot* published by James G. Edwards, a Whig, and the *Iowa Terri-*

torial Gazette published by James Clarke, a Democrat who became Governor of Iowa in 1845.

The columns of these newspapers reflect a virile but heterogeneous population. There were good men and horse-thieves in most of the communities. The settlers built churches soon after they had founded their towns, and schools came not much later. But the tavern was even an earlier institution. Gambling and intemperance were common vices, the carrying of firearms was prevalent, and organized bands such as the "Linn County bogus gang", and the group that brought on the Bellevue War in 1840, did not hesitate now and then to add murder to the crimes of counterfeiting and horse-stealing.

The better element, however, was strongly in the ascendant, the incoming migration held a constantly larger proportion of law-abiding citizens, and the vigorous administration of Robert Lucas did much to establish peace and order in the frontier Territory. It was still the edge of civilization, with wilderness and the Indian close at hand; but the Indian was more often a victim than an aggressor, and the forces that were to conquer the wilderness had crossed the Mississippi and established themselves invincibly on the western side.

JOHN C. PARISH

Plum Grove

On the edge of Iowa City, toward the southeast, stands a dignified two-story brick house, set on a spreading lawn dotted here and there with trees. There is a deep significance in any historic dwelling and this one, known as Plum Grove, spans a century of Iowa history and tells an interesting story of pioneer days. It was the country home of Robert Lucas, the first Governor of the Territory of Iowa, and its seven rooms, walnut trimmings, winding staircase, and sturdy, inviting fireplaces reveal the pattern of those early days. The house, like the first owner, has dignity, poise, stability, and modest grandeur.

Robert Lucas was born on April 1, 1781, among the independent planters of Virginia, the son of a Revolutionary soldier of wealth and distinction, and was educated by a private tutor. Later he moved with his parents to Ohio where his life was enriched by pioneer experiences. He was slender of stature, with pronounced physical features. Although not a large man, he was impressive and stately in appearance.

In 1810, Robert Lucas married Elizabeth Brown, who died in 1812, leaving one daughter

named Minerva. In 1816 he married Friendly Ashley Sumner, and moved to Piketon, Ohio, where he operated a general store. A few years later, on a farm nearby, he built a large two-story brick house, each room of which "upstairs and down was provided with a fireplace." Because of its pleasant surroundings, and in honor of his good wife, Mr. Lucas named the place Friendly Grove.

Lucas was twice Governor of the State of Ohio, but when his services as chief executive ended, he was quick to return to the quiet surroundings of Friendly Grove. It was not long, however, until his friends recommended him for the office of Governor of the new Territory of Iowa and in 1838 President Martin Van Buren appointed Mr. Lucas to that office.

With the spirit of the pioneer still in his blood, the veteran statesman gladly accepted the challenge of the new West, but Mrs. Lucas had little of the adventurous spirit which characterized her husband. "Aunt Friendly Lucas was a large woman. Not a great deal over five feet in height, she weighed perhaps two hundred pounds. She had a florid complexion and an everready tongue, an unquenchable fund of spirits and vigor, and a wonderful reputation as a cook". Friendly Grove was to her a paradise and she preferred to remain there. Like her husband, she was a resolute soul.

so it was that when Robert Lucas came to Iowa in the summer of 1838, he came alone.

In the spring of 1839, however, William Reed, a nephew of Robert Lucas, made a trip to Iowa by steamboat and with him came two of the Governor's four daughters, Abigail, twenty-one, and Mary, twelve. During the same year, Edward, the fourteen-year-old son of the Governor, started across country from Piketon to Burlington on horseback. The records show that the boy arrived at Burlington safely with an expenditure of only \$23.37½.

Favorable reports from the Territory of Iowa gradually modified Mrs. Lucas's determination to remain in Ohio, and she consented to visit Iowa and see how she liked it. Sometime during the year 1840 she came out to the frontier to join her husband. It is probable that Susannah, then seventeen, and Robert S., eight, came with their mother.

As Governor of the Territory of Iowa, Lucas resided at Burlington and there his daughter Abigail was married to Charles Nealley. The eldest daughter, Minerva, had married Horatio Sumner, a brother of her step-mother, in 1829. Mr. Lucas was removed from office in 1841 and soon afterwards moved to Bloomington (now Muscatine). Here for nearly two years the veteran statesman

lived a quiet life, occasionally speaking at a Democratic meeting or addressing a temperance society and now and again making trips to Burlington or Iowa City. Here Susannah Lucas became the wife of W. L. Smith.

By the beginning of 1843 Mrs. Lucas seems to have been convinced that she could be content to remain in Iowa permanently, and in March, 1843, Mr. Lucas purchased from the Territory of Iowa a building site in block twenty of the original plat of Iowa City. Before moving to Iowa City, however, a visit to Ohio was in order and in May, 1843, Robert Lucas and his family left Bloomington on the steamboat *Iowa* for a visit at Friendly Grove.

The pioneer statesman had been absent from Ohio for five years, but in August, 1843, a Democratic convention nominated him as a candidate for Congress. Had he been successful in the ensuing campaign, his predominating interests in Iowa might have come suddenly to an end, but he was defeated, and in the spring of 1844 he sold Friendly Grove, and returned to Iowa.

Mrs. Lucas, however, was not one to confine her interests to a few lots within a city block and in March, 1844, she purchased eighty acres of land — the east half of the southeast quarter of Section 15, Township 79, Range 6 — an area ly-

ing just a little south of the southern boundary of Iowa City, now Court Street. The site had originally been purchased from the Federal government by Samuel C. Trowbridge in 1843. There, in the fall of 1844, Mr. and Mrs. Lucas built a home patterned somewhat after their old residence at Friendly Grove. The new house was surrounded by a thicket of plum trees, so the place was appropriately named Plum Grove.

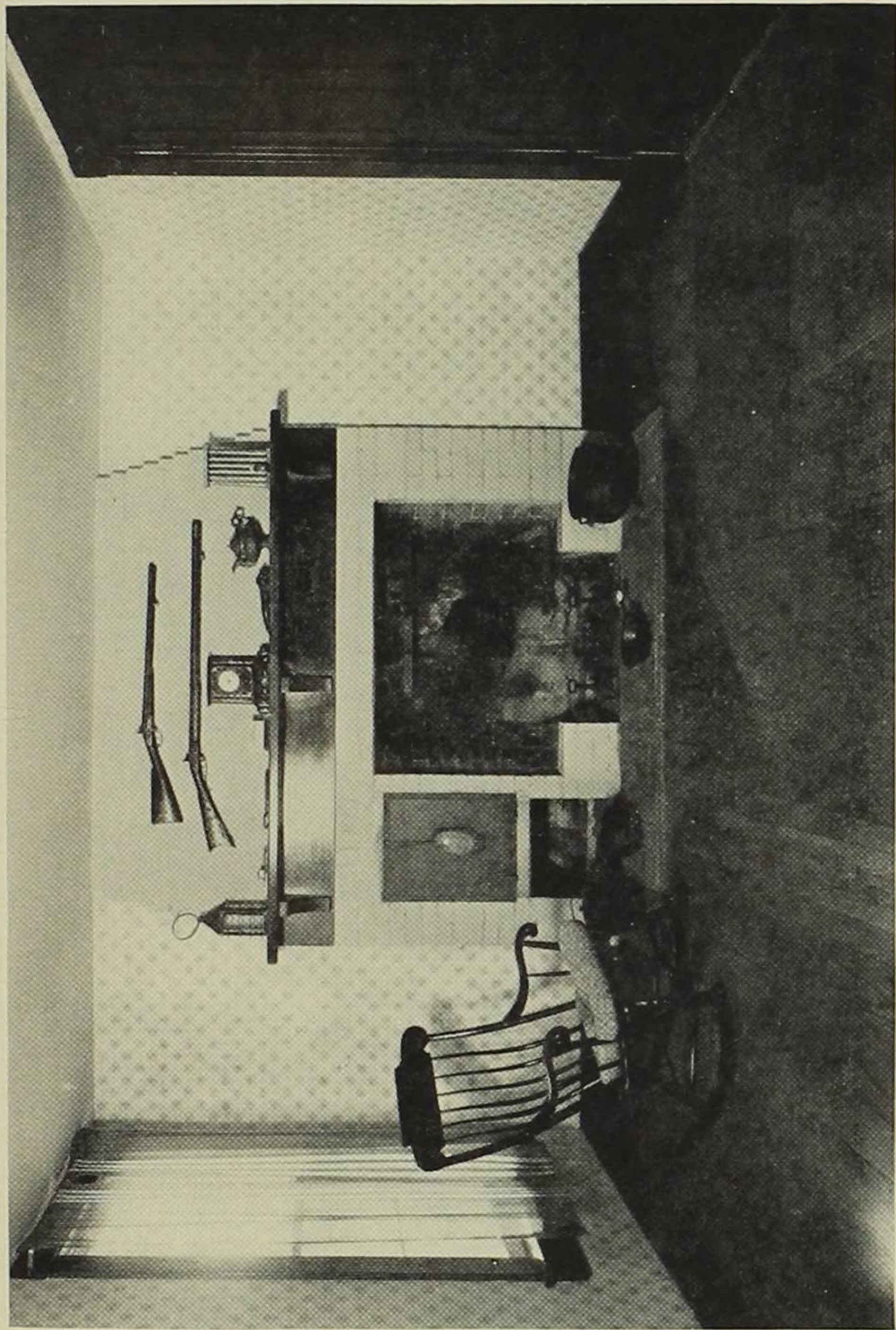
Log cabins were typical of pioneer days, but the Lucas house, like some of the more pretentious buildings in the thriving capital city, was constructed of the soft, red brick manufactured locally. The main part of the house consisted of a two-story structure about 30 x 30 feet in dimensions, with a one-story kitchen 14 x 14 feet in size projected on the south. The home afforded seven main rooms — four rooms downstairs and three upstairs, each with a fireplace. In addition there was a large buttry opening off the kitchen and a small room opening into the main bedroom. Under the north portion of the house was a large cellar with an outside and an inside entrance. Its walls were of stone, probably from the quarry just north of Iowa City.

The plumb brick walls were constructed by skilled hands, faced with hand-hewn white oak lath, and carefully covered with a superior grade

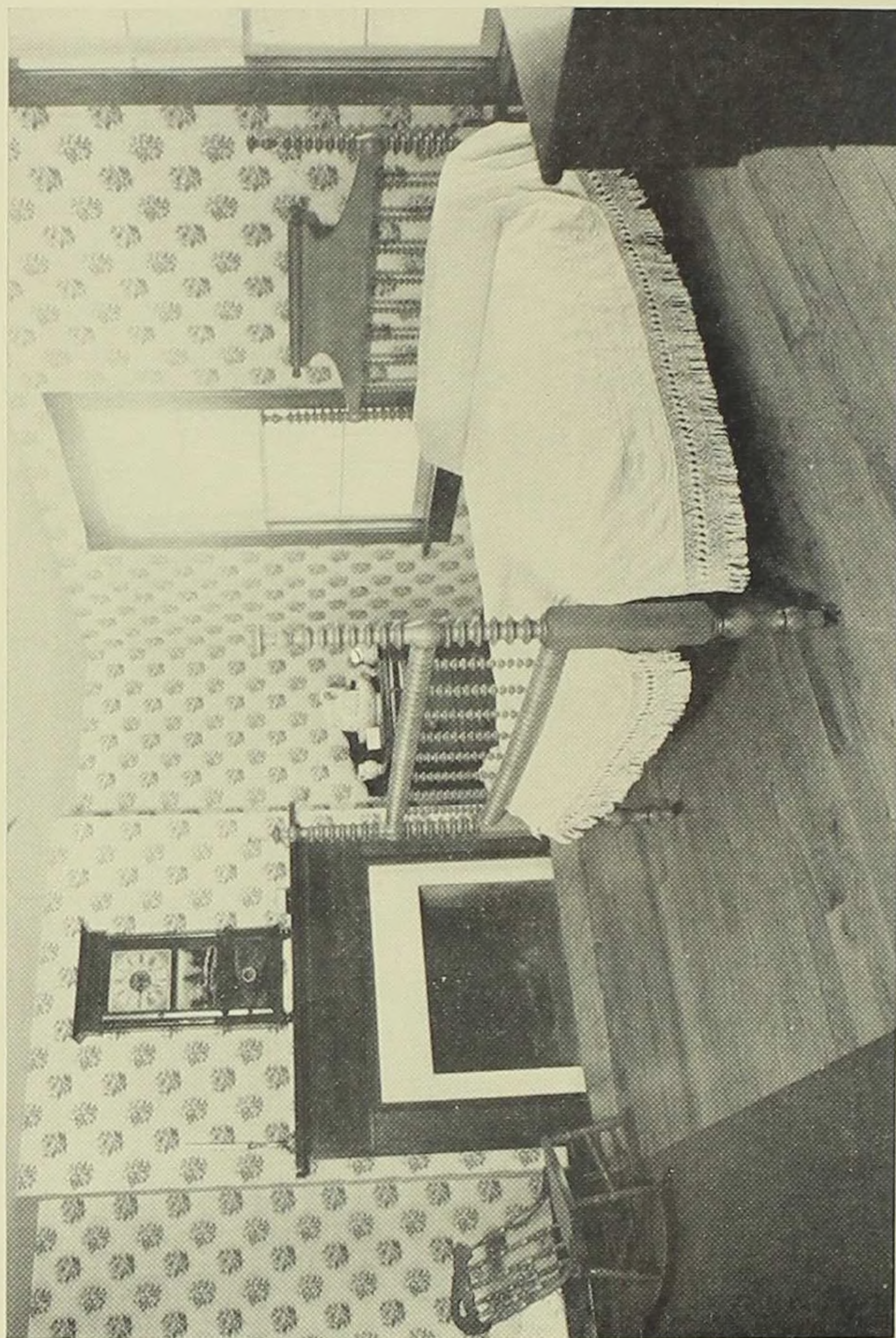
of plastering. The floors were of 1 x 6-inch white oak boards. The doors and door casings, the window frames, and the mantels above the fireplaces were of black walnut, cut from the local hillsides, as were also the curved staircase and the graceful balustrade. The furnishings in the Lucas home were undoubtedly typical of the best homes on the frontier, combining beautifully carved and polished articles with some more primitive and utilitarian.

In this home of simple dignity Robert and Friendly Lucas lived for almost a decade. With them lived a daughter Mary, who remained unmarried, and two sons — Edward W. and Robert S. For the former Governor and statesman, these were chiefly days of retrospect. He could look back across the years to his services in the War of 1812, to his nineteen years of legislative and political experiences in Ohio. He could recall, too, serving as chairman of the first National Democratic Convention. He remembered, also, his somewhat turbulent experiences with William B. Conway and the Iowa Territorial Assembly and the two boundary wars.

But not all was retrospect. Mr. Lucas was elected a member of the first constitutional convention which convened in the Capitol Building (now the Old Stone Capitol) in Iowa City, on



KITCHEN FIREPLACE LUCAS HOUSE



MASTER BEDROOM LUCAS HOUSE

October 7, 1844. When statehood finally came, in 1846, Robert Lucas, then in his sixty-fifth year, would gladly have accepted the governorship of the new State, but the veteran statesman was bypassed for a man of younger years.

Robert Lucas was thus left in retirement at his home at Plum Grove. His declining days were spent in quiet meditation, in writing verse on the margin of newspaper pages, and in leafing through a Bible and a well-worn Methodist hymnal. He died in February, 1853, at his home at Plum Grove. Friendly Lucas survived her husband by twenty years. In 1856 the city boundaries were extended southward as far as Wyoming Road (since 1888 Kirkwood Avenue), the northern boundary of Plum Grove farm, and in 1857 the Lucas Addition to Iowa City was platted on both sides of the Lucas house. The Lucas family retained ownership of the old home until 1866, when it was transferred to Walter Hoyt, whose daughter, Eleanor Hoyt Brainerd, was born there in 1868. After the sale of Plum Grove, Mrs. Lucas resided on Jefferson Street somewhere between Linn and Van Buren streets.

Plum Grove was owned by members of the Hoyt family until 1883, when it was sold to Jacob C. Switzer, who in 1923 platted the part north of the lot on which the house stood as the Switzer

Addition, selling the Lucas house and the land on which it stood to Morgan W. Davis. Two years later it was sold to Mr. and Mrs. William Hughes, from whom the house and four acres of land were purchased by the State of Iowa in 1941.

With the passing of the years, new owners and new tenants made various alterations in the home. A fire in the roof necessitated some reconstruction. A large two-story ell was added to the west and south of the original structure, and a large porch was built on the north and west sides of the dwelling. Six of the seven fireplaces were torn out or bricked in and plastered over. Here and there interior walls were moved. Some doors and windows were closed, sealed, and plastered over and new openings were provided. Areas in the white oak floors, worn by excessive traffic, were "patched with other material" — sometimes quite unlike the original.

The appearance of the premises in the twenties and thirties was not inviting. The plum trees had disappeared. In the yard were a number of gnarled and twisted old cottonwood trees. In the background a motley thicket of blackberry and raspberry bushes provided a hiding place for rabbits and other rodents. The outbuildings were shabby and leaning with the weight of many years, and the old dwelling itself gave perceptible

evidence that it had surrendered its former dignity and grandeur to the incessant and insistent demands of Father Time.

Interested citizens of Iowa City often talked of preserving this historic landmark, but the rain and winds of a score of summers and the sleet and snows of a score of winters drifted through the cracks and crevices to cause further deterioration and decay before any action was taken. In June, 1940, George D. Koser and William J. Petersen conferred with the owners relative to a proposed purchase of the property and acquired, for the nominal sum of one dollar, a ninety-day option to purchase the Lucas house and about eleven acres of land.

In November of the same year the "Governor Robert Lucas Memorial Association" was formed in Iowa City. The charter members were O. A. Byington, George D. Koser, William T. Hageboeck, Dr. E. J. Anthony, Frank J. Krall, Leroy S. Mercer, W. W. Mercer, Jessie B. Gordon, Mildred W. Pelzer, Celia N. Carson, Blanche D. Thoen, Ingalls Swisher, Thomas Farrell, Edward W. Lucas, and J. A. Swisher. This organization secured the coöperation of the Iowa State Conservation Commission and the Interim Committee in consummating a purchase for the State of the historic home and a little more than four acres of

land surrounding it for approximately \$5,000, a grant made by the Interim Committee.

The task of restoring the home to its original status, as near as may be, was a long and tedious process. Aside from members of the local association, some of the persons most interested were Fred J. Poyneer of Cedar Rapids and Mrs. Addison Parker of Des Moines, both members of the State Conservation Commission, and Mrs. Clinton L. Nourse of Des Moines, a grand-niece of Robert Lucas. The restoration of the building and the landscaping were directed by members of the staff of the Conservation Commission. The Society of Colonial Dames assisted in collecting and placing the furniture.

As a part of the restoration program the yard about the Lucas Home was leveled and reconditioned. More than a thousand plum trees, rose bushes, lilacs, and other appropriate shrubberies were planted to create conditions similar to those of Territorial days.

The house itself was completely rejuvenated and reconditioned. The large two-story ell and the front porch were removed, the rooms were remodeled to conform with their original status, with a fireplace and an American black walnut mantel in each of the seven main rooms. The floors were relaid with 1 x 6-inch white oak boards similar to

the original flooring, a new stairway was built, and the curved black walnut balustrade was refinished and replaced in its original position. Numerous coats of paint were removed from the outside of the building, and the brick walls were sandblasted, pointed up, and refinished to make them waterproof.

Inside the house, everything was made clean, dignified, and beautiful — just as the rooms must have appeared in the days of Robert and Friendly Lucas. Wall paper like that of Territorial days, designed and hand-blocked by Nancy McClelland, decorates the interior walls. Only a few pieces of furniture from the original Lucas home have been secured, so to give the house an atmosphere of human possession, pieces of furniture from the home of Samuel J. Kirkwood and from other Iowa homes of distinction have been placed in the rooms to supplement the Lucas furniture. A couch and a highboy of cherry from the Lucas home are to be added to the collection as soon as they have been refinished.

A visitor who enters the Lucas House from the front finds himself in a narrow hall. To his right a door leads into the parlor, straight ahead is the entrance to the dining room, and on the left a winding stairway leads to the floor above. A grandfather's clock in the hall reminds one of the

old days but pays no heed to the time of day. Will you walk into the parlor? The room is not large but it is formal and dignified. Over the walnut mantel on the west is a reproduction of a painting of Robert Lucas. A ceiling-high mirror in a gilt frame and an oval, marble-topped table are redolent of pre-Civil War days, but only the andirons in the fireplace were in the house when Robert Lucas was the master.

A door leads into a room facing the west which may have been used as a living room, the parlor in those days being often reserved for funerals and weddings, or it may have been used by Robert Lucas as a library and office. A secretary or desk, now in private hands, no doubt stood in this room.

From the study we step into an equally pleasant dining room with windows to the east. No Lucas furniture has been replaced in this room, but on the extension table of black walnut which stands in the center of the room is a doll in a glass case, a doll which belonged to a granddaughter whom Robert Lucas never saw — Isabel Ashley Lucas (1857–1867).

The dining room, of course, opens into the kitchen. Above the fireplace on the south wall is a muzzle-loading shotgun and a powder flask made from the horn of an ox or a buffalo. A typical old candle lantern and a candle mold rest on opposite

ends of the mantel — just as they may have stood in the days of yore. An old rocker, similar to that in which Friendly Lucas rested, stands by an east window. An old clock on the mantel is as silent as the house. The buttery, half as large as the kitchen, is empty now, but Friendly Lucas no doubt had it stored with flour, cured meats, vegetables, dried apples, cans of lard, and other supplies.

To go to the second floor, one must pass through the dining room to the front hall and climb the stairs. The walnut handrail is smooth and cool to the touch. A small hall at the top of the stairs opens into two of the three bedrooms. The room on the north, above the parlor, was the master bedroom, and was undoubtedly occupied by Robert and Friendly Lucas. Here is assembled a large share of the furniture reclaimed from the old Lucas home. A spool bed of cherry, a chest of drawers used as a washstand, a small chair with a seat of interlaced thongs of green deerhide, and an old mantel clock made in Bristol, Connecticut, were in the house, if not in this room, in the time of Lucas. One can imagine that a large four-poster bed once stood here. To the east is a small room with one window, which may have been intended for a child or for a closet.

To the south is another bedroom and through it one may pass into a third bedroom and from that

back into the hall. In each of these rooms there must have been a cord bedstead and a stand on which was a wash bowl and a large pitcher, with a smaller pitcher for hot water and a soap dish. On each mantel there stood, no doubt, a candlestick.

By the fall of 1946, restoration, long delayed because of the war, was substantially completed and on November 2nd, the Governor Lucas Home was dedicated as a State monument. With Senator Leroy S. Mercer presiding, State Conservation Commissioner Frank W. Mattes made the presentation and Governor Robert D. Blue accepted the historic shrine on behalf of the State of Iowa. And so Plum Grove is today one of Iowa's valued possessions. Tourists and interested citizens come from many parts of Iowa and from other States to visit this historic shrine, a memorial to a great man of two frontiers.

JACOB A. SWISHER

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