

Celebrating the Sesquicentennial
of Iowa Territory

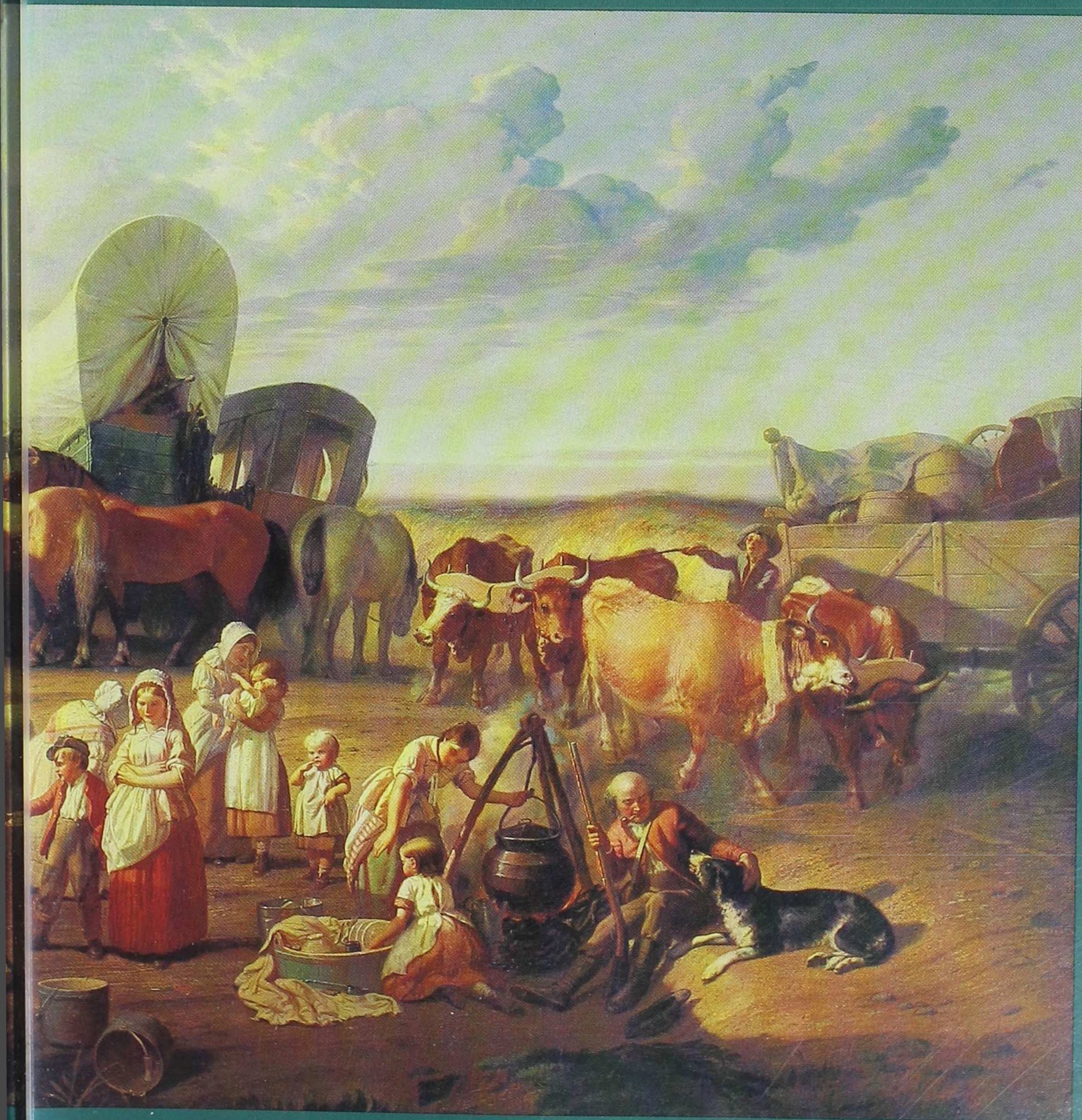
The

PALIMPSEST

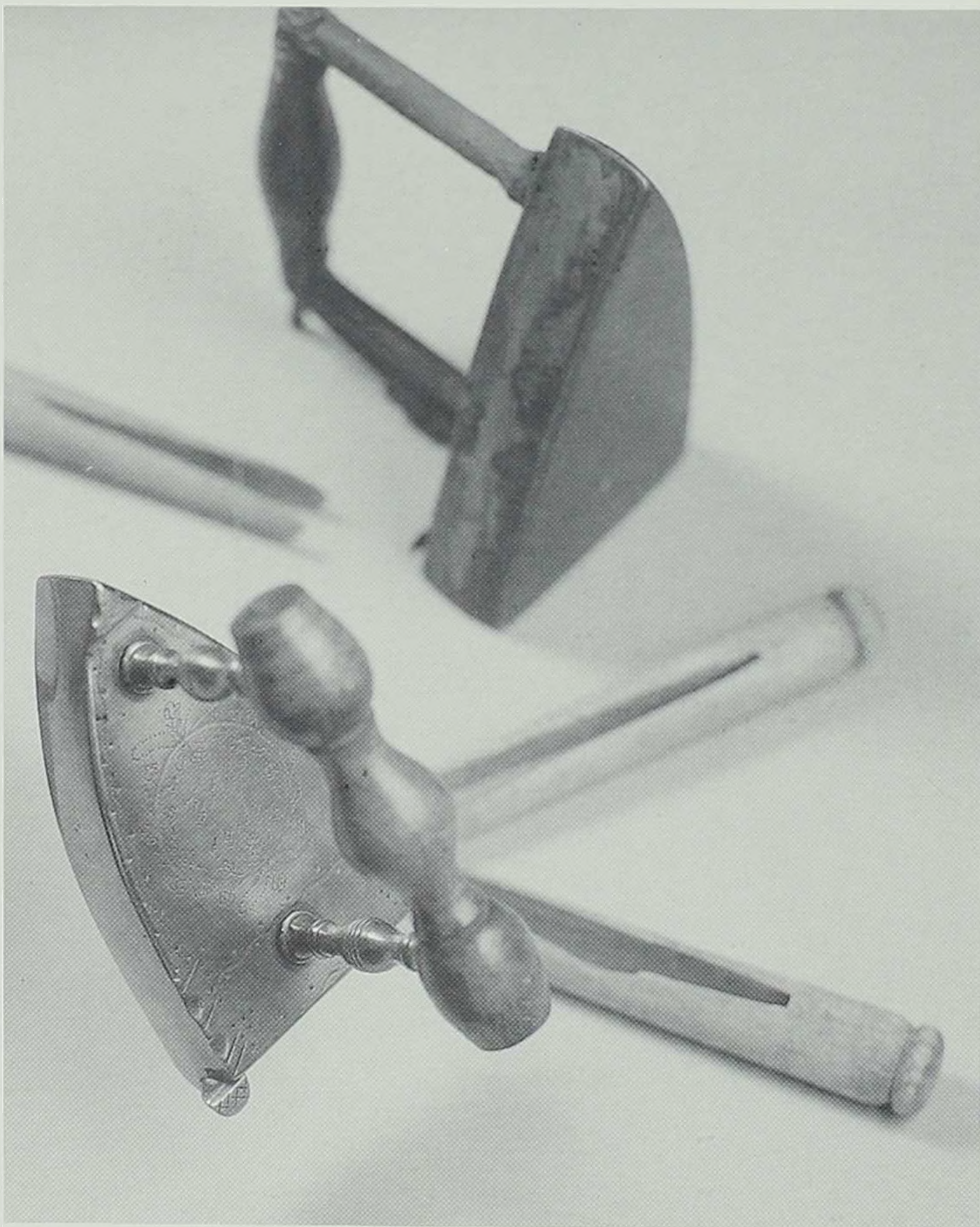
Volume 69, Number 2

IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

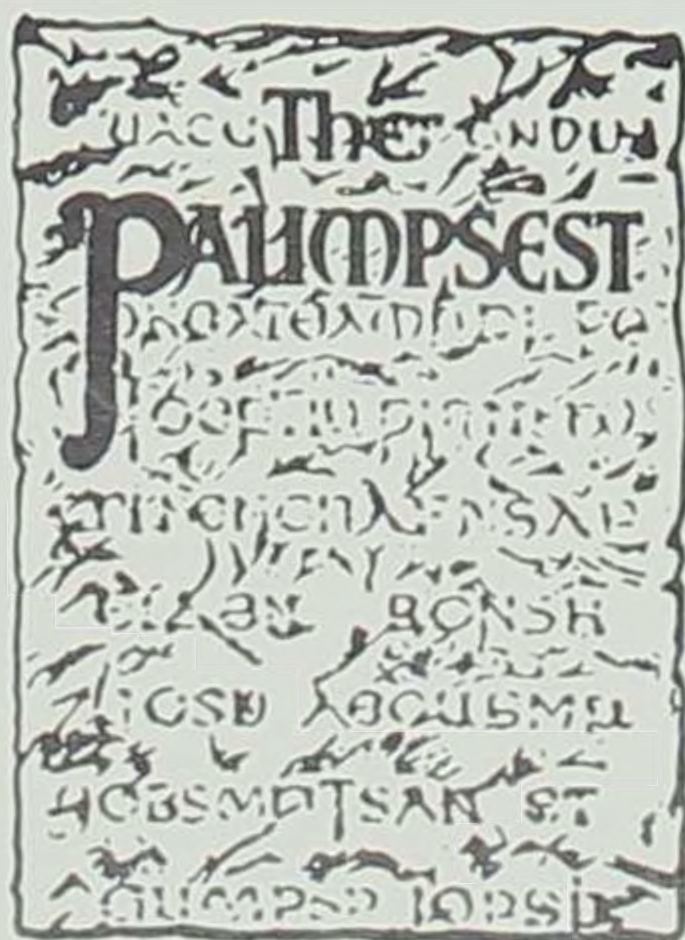
Summer 1988 \$3.50



Inside —



"Oh, the ironing," remembered Susan Dubell in her memoirs about frontier housekeeping. Here, the brass sadiron (with a delicate punched design) contrasts sharply with the hefty cast-iron one above it, symbolizing on a small scale the diversity of lifestyles in territorial Iowa. This special expanded *Palimpsest* celebrates the 150th anniversary of Iowa Territory. Through word, image, and artifact, the issue presents the diversity of the people who called Iowa "home" in the 1830s and 1840s.



The Meaning of the 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 record 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.

THE PALIMPSEST (ISSN 0031-0360) is published quarterly by the State Historical Society of Iowa. © 1988 State Historical Society of Iowa.

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA (SHSI) is the historical division of the Department of Cultural Affairs of the State of Iowa. The Society operates in two locations, Des Moines and Iowa City. The museum, historic preservation, and a research library are located at Capitol Complex, Des Moines, Iowa 50319, phone (515) 281-5111. Publications, development, field services, and a research library are located at 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240, phone (319) 335-3916.

SUBSCRIPTIONS/MEMBERSHIPS/ORDERS: Contact Publications, SHSI, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240, phone (319) 335-3916. *The Palimpsest* is distributed free to Society members. Membership is open to the public. Current single copies \$3.50, plus \$1 postage/handling. (For prices of pre-1987 issues, contact Publications.) Members receive a 20% discount on books and free entrance to historic sites administered by the Society. Gift memberships of subscriptions available.



SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS: *The Palimpsest* (quarterly popular history magazine), *Iowa Historian* (bimonthly newsletter), *The Goldfinch* (Iowa history magazine for young people, 4 per school year), *The Annals of Iowa* (quarterly journal), books, research guides, technical leaflets. Catalogs available.

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

Individual (\$12.50): *Palimpsest*, *Iowa Historian*.

Family (\$17.50): *Palimpsest*, *Iowa Historian*, *Goldfinch*.

Benefiting (\$22.50): *Palimpsest*, *Iowa Historian*, *Goldfinch*, *Annals of Iowa*.

Sustaining (\$100), Donor (\$500), Patron (\$1000): All books and periodicals.

Single subscriptions: *Annals of Iowa*, \$10 for 4 issues; *Goldfinch*, \$5.

The State Historical Society of Iowa and the editor are not responsible for statements of opinion made by contributors.

This code (© 1988 State Historical Society of Iowa, ISSN 0031-0360/88/\$1.00) indicates the copyright owner's consent to reproduction of an article for personal or internal use. The consent is granted, however, on the condition that the copier pay the stated per-copy fee of \$1.00 through the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 21 Congress Street, Salem, Mass. 01970, for copying beyond that permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law. The consent does not extend to other kinds of copying, such as copying for general distribution, for advertising or promotional purposes, for creating new collective works, or for resale.



Another Iowa

64



Boundaries and banks

94



Losing the land

88

COVER: Families heading west shared the work of difficult traveling conditions and the wonderment of a new landscape. In 1838 the Iowa Territory was created, and thousands of families farther east decided that—to quote a later Iowan—they “ought to give Iowa a try.”

The PALIMPSEST

IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

Ginalie Swaim, Editor

VOLUME 69, NUMBER 2

SUMMER 1988

50

Territorial Thoughts

by the Editor

Turning back to Iowa 150 years ago.

52

Prairie Partnerships

by Glenda Riley

Who made the decisions, and the money, on Iowa's prairie farms? A close look at the interdependent frontier family — who sometimes just made the best of it.

64

A Mesquakie Drawing

by Gaylord Torrence

In the 1830s an individual named Wacochachi drew his own vision of Iowa. An essay about an intriguing piece of art.

69

You Gotta Know the Territory: Material Culture from Territorial Iowa

by Michael O. Smith

A full-color showcase of museum artifacts and the stories they tell us.

88

Land and Personal Sovereignty

by Jerome Thompson

What does it mean to own the land — or to lose the land?

94

A Regulated Society

by David Walker

Did the Iowa frontier represent freedom or regulation? The story of how the territory conducted itself on the way to statehood.

Territorial Thoughts

AS I DROVE BACK HOME from Des Moines to Iowa City that day in late February, the Iowa landscape was bathed in late afternoon sunlight. The ground was golden with wintered grasses; snow still lay in the creases of the land and along fence lines. I saw few of the geometric divisions that confront the traveler's eye in summertime — the rectangular fields, the parallel crop rows, the perpendicular roads evident when dust billows up behind pickups speeding along them.

What was visible to me that February afternoon was the lay of the land — the soft hills, the dips, the twists of a river or creek, the soggy bottoms along the Skunk River, and a bit farther east, the trees, where highway deer signs alert the interstate driver to life in the woods beyond.

I had just spent three days in the new historical building in Des Moines working with freelance photographer Chuck Greiner and Society curator Michael Smith as we photographed over 150 artifacts relating to territorial Iowa. I had looked at a dozen maps that showed no middle or western Iowa as we know it today, and only a modest wedge of eastern Iowa that had fallen under the right-angle influence of the

federal surveyor or the entrepreneurial zest of early river town merchants.

So on this drive back to the Society office in Iowa City, where the *Palimpsest* is produced, perhaps I saw the land roughly as the early settlers and surveyors might have seen it. Well, I had to squint, of course, to erase utility lines and poles, fences, graded ditches, clusters of farm buildings. But because I had been immersed for three days in a dark museum exhibit hall surrounded by 150-year-old artifacts and the stories they yielded, I chose what I wanted to see on that drive home. What I saw was an expanse of land, land with few boundaries and with little cultivation. I saw territorial Iowa.

In my job as editor of the *Palimpsest*, words are my constant companions. The written word is my key to the past, often helped by illustrations and

tossed aside by those who lived in Iowa 150 years ago — these pieces of material culture speak of the past in a different voice than does the two-dimensional printed page to which I am accustomed. They tell us details that a writer may not have considered important. They tell us about the individuals who used the items, without the self-consciousness of autobiographical writing, without the selectivity of history.

Let me give an example. When we were photographing artifacts used by frontier farm women, I went to the artifact table to fetch a household broom. Picking it up sent an immediate message from the past: this broom weighed five pounds. Likewise a grub hoe used by farm women in their vegetable gardens — an iron hooked scraper at the end of a three-foot piece of wood: No grace of design here, no light-

I stood behind the plow thinking that it is no wider than my rototiller.

photographs. But while photographing the museum artifacts, I experienced an entirely different way of looking at the past — through material culture.

The objects made or bought, used or flaunted, treasured or

weight, steel-tempered tool. Here was the broom by which strong muscles were formed — and exhausted. Here was the hoe by which backaches were made.

There is a simple moldboard plow in the exhibit. Someone

(the original user?) had fitted a pair of polished, curved horns over the ends of the handles — an individual's touch on one of the most generic pieces of farm equipment from territorial Iowa. I stood behind the plow thinking that it is no wider than my rototiller. And yet how many of the nearly 29 million acres of Iowa prairie were broken by plows no wider than a gardener's rototiller?

Through material culture we realize the diversity of lifestyles and cultures. While territorial farm families were using rude, primitive tools to keep house and cultivate land, the wealthy in Iowa river towns entertained guests with gilt-trimmed porcelain tea services and silver punch urns sporting nymphs on the spout. The similarities are there too: Native American mothers taught their daughters first to sew for their dolls, just as Euro-American mothers taught their daughters to care for the young by giving them dolls to play with.

Material culture helps us make direct connections between yesterday's user and today's viewer. We begin to understand the sense of scale of an individual's setting, the props of one's daily life, the breadth of impact that person had, the contact with other people and other places.

We can compare that person's life with our own by comparing the objects we each use and value.

The irony, of course, was that on this particular February day 150 years later curator and editor and photographer accorded the same honor to the grub hoe as

examined a dozen maps between 1787 and 1846. Each time I searched for the few recognizable boundaries and landmarks — the rivers — so that I could locate my home state in a world that had not yet been carved into the political units we know today. As the years passed, as neighboring

We begin to understand the sense of scale of an individual's setting, the props of one's daily life.

we did to the silver punch urn. We know why artifacts such as silver punch urns survived the century and a half, but who saved the grub hoe or the broom — and why? Who thought to keep them because of the lessons they could teach us, not because they were useful or valuable?

This *Palimpsest* is devoted to territorial Iowa and commemorates the 150th anniversary of achieving territorial status. The articles that follow have all been prepared by individuals invited to share their views and knowledge of territorial Iowa, and to speak the many voices of the people who lived here at that time — farm couples, legislators and early governors, surveyors, native Americans.

As I worked with the authors and museum staff on this issue, I

states were formed and the remaining land fell under the name of a new territory, I could begin to discern the emerging shape of our state. Slowly Iowa of the 1830s and 1840s came into focus. We hope that as you explore this *Palimpsest* and the museum exhibit "You Gotta Know the Territory" (now open in Des Moines), territorial Iowa comes into focus for you.

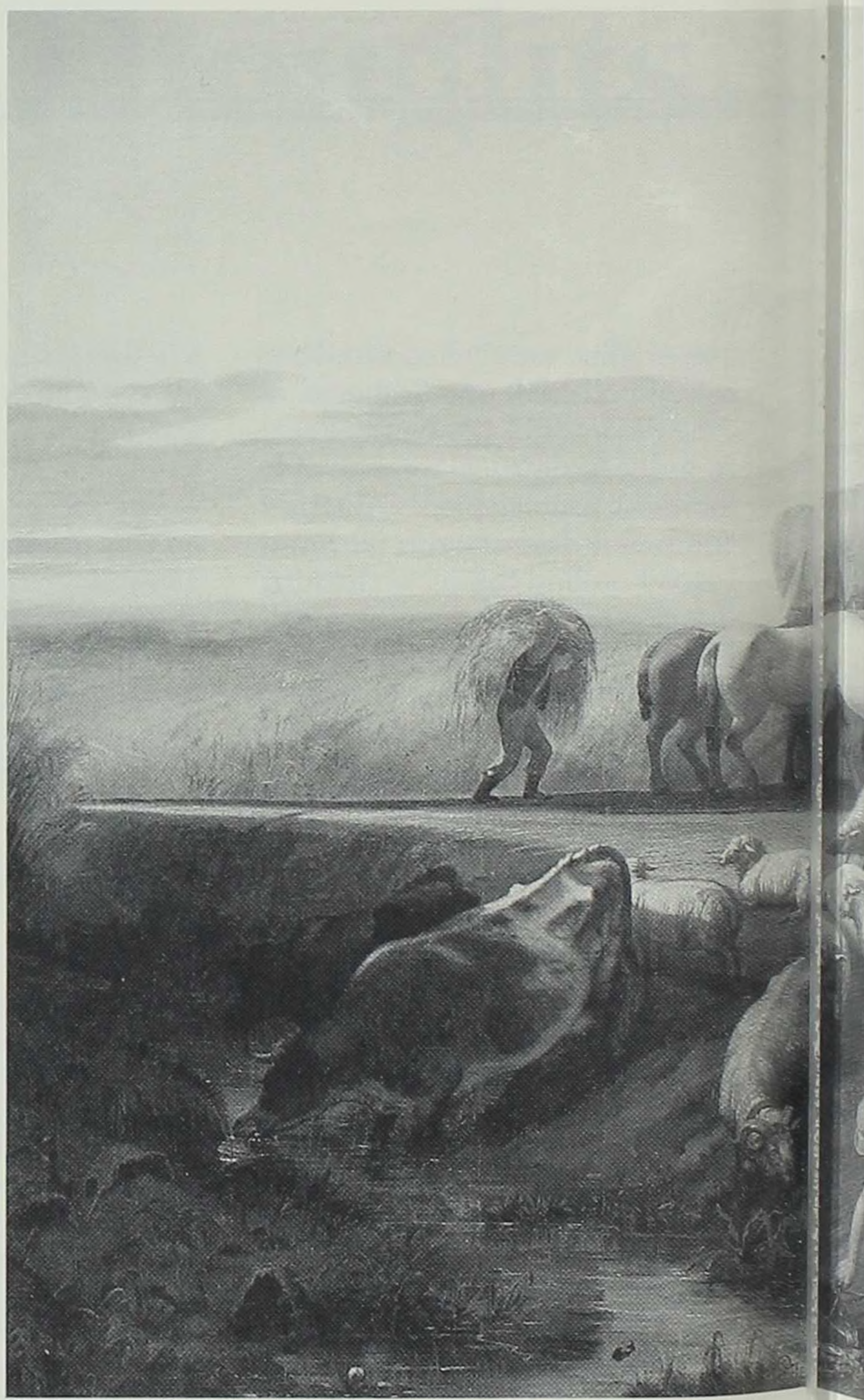
— The Editor

Prairie Partnerships

BY GLENDA RILEY

THE RICH SOIL of Iowa held out great promise to pioneers who illegally "squatted" on it during the late 1820s and those who claimed it after the first eastern portions were officially opened for settlement in 1833. Yet the realities of climate, finances, and breaking the prairie to cultivation warned the thousands of potential migrants, who looked toward this newly available frontier region with incredibly high hopes, that settlement would be a difficult and challenging task. Establishing an Iowa farmstead was not an endeavor to be undertaken lightly nor was it one that could be tackled easily by an individual. Rather, prairie farming required many hands to achieve success; it virtually demanded the efforts of a large family unit based on a partnership of adults who, in turn, depended upon younger family members as auxiliary laborers.

The typical farm family in early Iowa therefore consisted of wife, husband, and their offspring. A grandmother, aunt or uncle, cousin, or other relative or friend might supplement the unit. The wife and husband formed the nucleus of the farm work team and provided it with leadership. (Thus, in spite of the common tendency to think of farmers as male, farmers were actually female and male.) Although the jobs performed by women and men were generally different in nature, both kinds of work were crucial to the progress of the farm operation. That farm women clearly realized their worth is revealed in the remark of a young Iowa woman whose mother contributed significant operating capital to the family farm through production and sale of milk and butter. "When masculine attitudes became too bumptious," the daughter declared, those women who rec-



ognized that they actually supported their families while the men learned to farm on the prairie "were quite capable of scoring a point."

The working partnership of a farm couple existed at even the initial stages of settlement. For example, in many families the wife and husband decided that one of them should travel to Iowa as an advance agent to locate and pay for a farmsite before the entire family migrated. Because the woman was charged with the care of children and travel conditions of the time were harsh, it was the man who undertook this task. The woman, however, prepared for the journey by readying food and clothing, often sewing a secret pocket into a shirt or jacket to safely carry the cash or land



Benjamin Franklin Reinhart: THE EMIGRANT TRAIN BEDDING DOWN FOR THE NIGHT. In the collection of the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lansdell K. Christie.

warrants for buying the land. While the man ventured forth, the woman maintained the existing farm and cared for other family members.

Once the family decided to prepare for actual migration to Iowa, the female/male partnership was again very much in evidence. Together the couple sorted belongings, selling or giving away what would not be useful on the prairie. They also began the arduous task of making, gathering, and assembling all the things they would need. If they planned to travel by steamboat or railroad for part of the way to Iowa, the migrants had to hone carefully the list of items they wished to carry with them. Space limitations and high fares on boats and

Even on the trail to Iowa, work was shared by all members of the family. Such division of labor would continue when the family began their farming enterprise.

the "cars" dictated that travelers carry relatively little, even though an improperly equipped settler could expect difficulty and considerable expense in obtaining goods during the early years of a region's settlement. Those who migrated in some type of overland wagon were more fortunate; although the journey would be considerably longer and more trying, they would arrive confident that they were well prepared for the trials that lay ahead.

The wagon, whether it be a light emigrant wagon or the heavier and more celebrated Conestoga wagon, was central to both the

Prairie Partnerships

BY GLENDA RILEY

THE RICH SOIL of Iowa held out great promise to pioneers who illegally "squatted" on it during the late 1820s and those who claimed it after the first eastern portions were officially opened for settlement in 1833. Yet the realities of climate, finances, and breaking the prairie to cultivation warned the thousands of potential migrants, who looked toward this newly available frontier region with incredibly high hopes, that settlement would be a difficult and challenging task. Establishing an Iowa farmstead was not an endeavor to be undertaken lightly nor was it one that could be tackled easily by an individual. Rather, prairie farming required many hands to achieve success; it virtually demanded the efforts of a large family unit based on a partnership of adults who, in turn, depended upon younger family members as auxiliary laborers.

The typical farm family in early Iowa therefore consisted of wife, husband, and their offspring. A grandmother, aunt or uncle, cousin, or other relative or friend might supplement the unit. The wife and husband formed the nucleus of the farm work team and provided it with leadership. (Thus, in spite of the common tendency to think of farmers as male, farmers were actually female and male.) Although the jobs performed by women and men were generally different in nature, both kinds of work were crucial to the progress of the farm operation. That farm women clearly realized their worth is revealed in the remark of a young Iowa woman whose mother contributed significant operating capital to the family farm through production and sale of milk and butter. "When masculine attitudes became too bumptious," the daughter declared, those women who rec-

ognized that they actually supported their families while the men learned to farm on the prairie "were quite capable of scoring a point."

The working partnership of a farm couple existed at even the initial stages of settlement. For example, in many families the wife and husband decided that one of them should travel to Iowa as an advance agent to locate and pay for a farm site before the entire family migrated. Because the woman was charged with the care of children and travel conditions of the time were harsh, it was the man who undertook this task. The woman, however, prepared for the journey by readying food and clothing, often sewing a secret pocket into a shirt or jacket to safely carry the cash or land

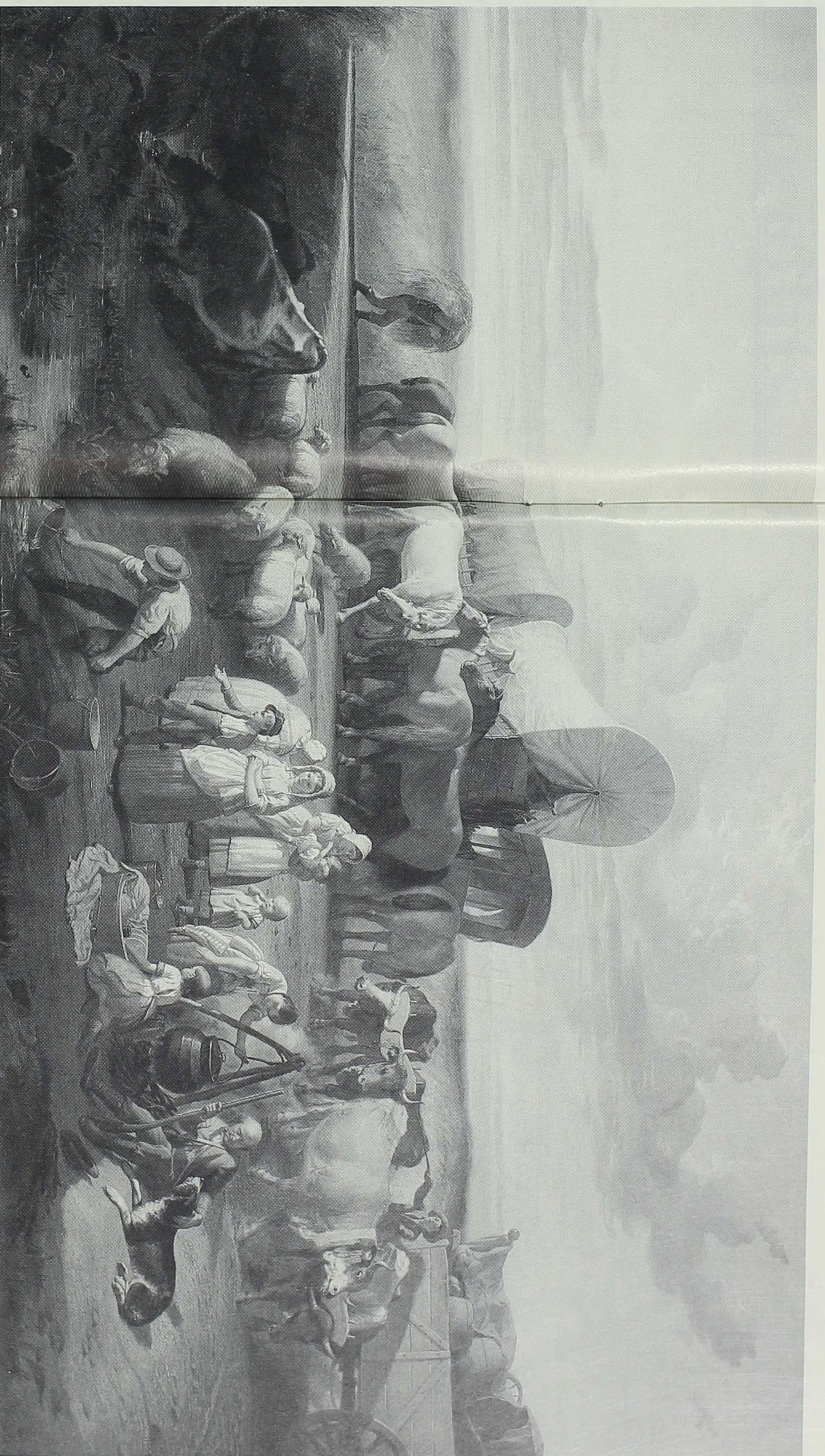
warrants for buying the land. While the man ventured forth, the woman maintained the existing farm and cared for other family members.

Once the family decided to prepare for actual migration to Iowa, the female/male partnership was again very much in evidence. Together the couple sorted belongings, selling or giving away what would not be useful on the prairie. They also began the arduous task of making, gathering, and assembling all the things they would need. If they planned to travel by steamboat or railroad for part of the way to Iowa, the migrants had to hone carefully the list of items they wished to carry with them. Space limitations and high fares on boats and

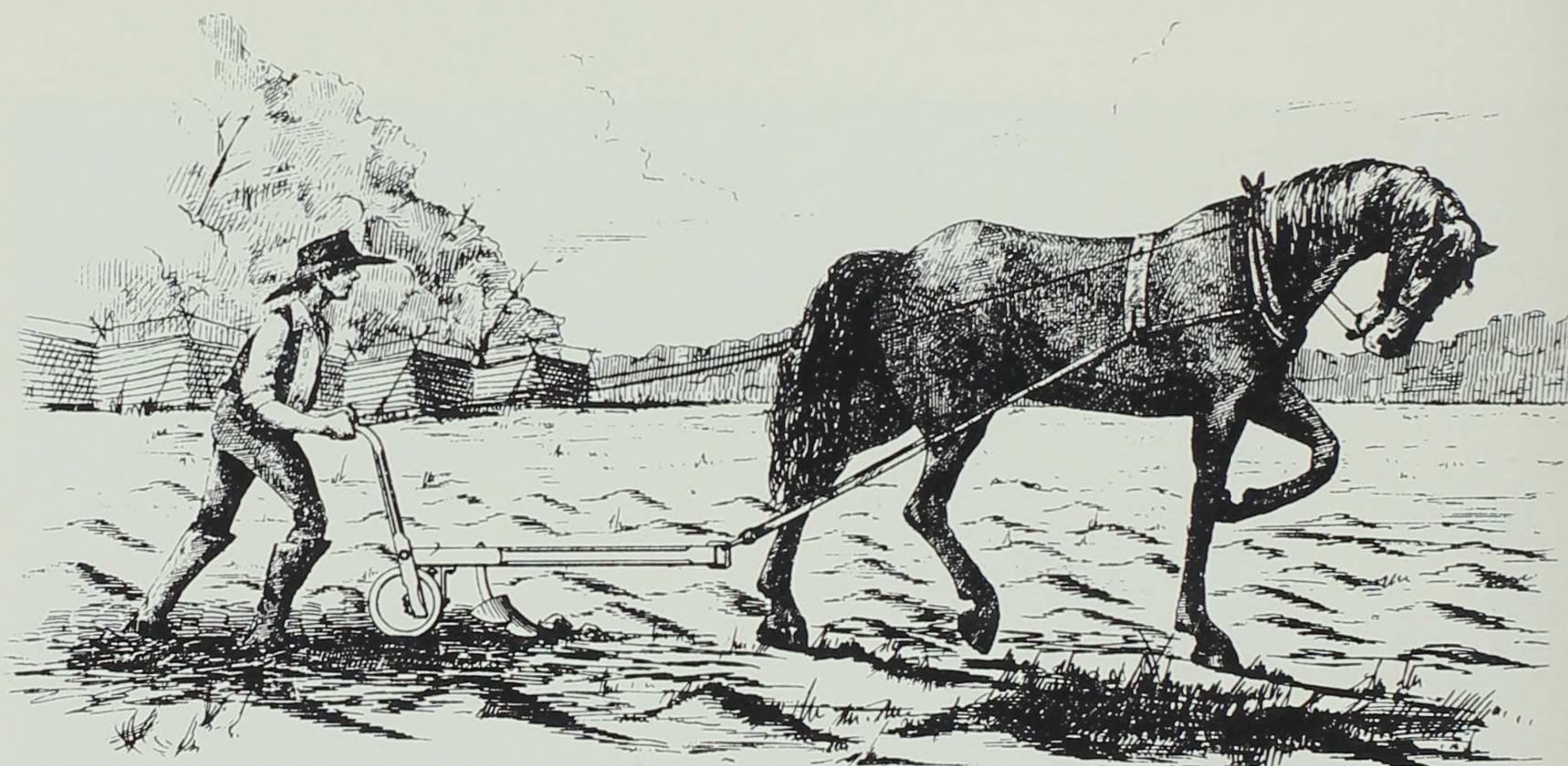
Even on the trail to Iowa, work was shared by all members of the family. Such division of labor would continue when the family began their farming enterprise.

the "cars" dictated that travelers carry relatively little, even though an improperly equipped settler could expect difficulty and considerable expense in obtaining goods during the early years of a region's settlement. Those who migrated in some type of overland wagon were more fortunate; although the journey would be considerably longer and more trying, they would arrive confident that they were well prepared for the trials that lay ahead.

The wagon, whether it be a light emigrant wagon or the heavier and more celebrated Conestoga wagon, was central to both the



Benjamin Franklin Reinhart: THE EMIGRANT TRAIN BEDDING DOWN FOR THE NIGHT. In the collection of the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lansdell K. Christie



migration itself and to the eventual development of a farmstead. It therefore received a great deal of care and attention. Men equipped the wagon box with wheels and axles and selected and trained the sturdy animals that would haul it and its precious contents to Iowa. Women hand-sewed a heavy canvas cover to protect people and goods from the rain and a lighter muslin cover to keep out sun and dust. Men added seed, animal feed, and farm implements to the wagon's cargo while women prepared food, clothing, and medicine. In the case of the Belknaps, who were among the thousands that poured into Iowa during the 1830s, George built an ingenious camp table, drilled his newly purchased oxen, and readied the other stock for travel, while his wife, Kitturah, dipped a year's supply of candles, filled homesewn sacks with flour, cornmeal, and other foodstuffs, and devised an extensive medicine chest.

Once on the trail, women and men continued to share the critical tasks that would get them and their family safely to Iowa. They took turns driving the wagon or walking in the dust or mud with the children and animals. At the day's end, the women drew upon meager resources to prepare a nutritious meal, usually cooked over an open fire, while the men cared for the stock, greased wagon wheels and axles, fished or hunted to supplement food supplies, and frequently helped the women by perhaps setting up a table or tending the fire. Together numerous women and men attempted to recre-

ate domestic routines on the trail and to offset the duress of the journey as much as possible in order to prevent the disintegration of family unity.

If these Iowa-bound women felt uprooted and overwhelmed by their workload, as some recent observers have charged, they usually kept it to themselves. Rather, they leavened any complaints recorded in their diaries and letters with positive observations. As they trudged and struggled along the trail toward Iowa, many women took great delight in the prairie flowers, marveled at the vast sky overhead and the rich resources that lay beneath it, and thanked Providence for the opportunity to settle in the new Iowa Territory. Occasionally women even enjoyed camp life. One woman jotted in her diary, "I hear the merry notes of a violin. A general cheerfulness prevails." Another noted that "we spent the evening singing and talking. [Husband] Will played on the fiddle."

This is not meant to discount the rigors of the passage to Iowa. Even on steamboats or railroads, travelers encountered difficulties ranging from high prices and cramped quarters to illness and poor or nonexistent sanitary facilities. And whether on the trail or on other routes, children had to be cared for, amused, and kept from ever-present dangers that could easily cause harm or death.

Yet, in spite of its many demands, the journey to Iowa did end. One young traveler who had envisioned the trek as a "great adventure"

was now exhausted and saddlesore and glad that it was over. "We have a lot of weary miles behind us," she commented upon reaching her new home in Iowa. "Glad to have done it but would not care to do it over again, or very soon anyway." Thousands of others, bone-tired and tense with both anxiety and hope, tumbled out of wagons and other conveyances to confront their promised land. Although they had already invested a great deal of money, time, and energy in the venture, they realized that the travail of actual settlement was just beginning.

BY MODERN STANDARDS the financial investment involved in this complex process of migrating and establishing a new farm was not great. But to a pioneer family in the 1830s and early 1840s the expense must have been daunting. In territorial Iowa, land often sold for \$1.25 an acre (the minimum price asked by the United States government until 1862, when the Homestead Act provided free lands in certain areas of the West). In addition, legal and claim fees often had to be paid. These expenses were followed by a series of outlays for such specialized equipment as breaking plows to rip through the tangled web of prairie grass roots, as well as nails, beams, and lumber for homes and outbuildings. Given their many expenses and the scarcity of building materials, it is not surprising that numerous settlers chose to build a simple sod hut, using strips of prairie sod plowed from their own land. As late as 1870, one person claimed to have built a sod house for only two dollars and seventy-eight and one-half cents. Nevertheless, estimates of migration and initial settlement costs average around fifteen hundred dollars, a sum that was considerable for people who usually had to sell everything they owned, deplete savings, seek loans, and draw upon land warrants awarded for previous war service (which could be used as payment for government lands) in order to fund the enterprise.

The financial burden of the settlement venture, intimidating as it might be to most migrants, was soon overshadowed by its psychological and physical demands. An initial

shock was the realization that the land of promise and plenty did not always appear quite so wonderful upon close inspection as it had in the sales literature, media, and word-of-mouth accounts. While "some like the new country," one woman observed, "others returned to their native States." Those who remained often had to adjust their view of the promised land to include prairie fires, blizzards, scorching heat, mosquitoes, snakes, and what one woman termed "wild beasts," along with the prairie flowers and vast skies that they so admired. Moreover, they soon learned that native peoples who were not anxious to leave their homeland sometimes reacted to white interlopers in less than a welcoming manner. One woman summed up the feelings of many new arrivals: "When we got to the new purchase, the land of milk and honey," she wrote, "we were disappointed and homesick, but we were there and had to make the best of it."

In most cases, migrants did have to "make the best of it." Turning back was an expensive and often impossible option. They had sacrificed everything — house, land, friends, family — to pursue a happier, healthier, and particularly a more prosperous future in Iowa. Disappointment aside, settlers quickly realized that only by pulling together, only by continuing the partnership that had gotten them this far, could they not only survive but also move their farming enterprise from the debit to the profit column within a few years. Most pioneers had not come to Iowa to live a life of subsistence, raising only what their own families needed and seldom seeing cash pass through their hands. Rather, they desired a quick entry into the market economy to bring them the profits that would help them create their own version of the good life.

With this end in mind, a family quickly established a division of labor based upon comparative strength, skills, and mobility. Most people probably did not see the frontier as an opportunity to break down and reshape traditional sex roles or customary ways of assigning family tasks, but it did provide a chance to utilize the old ways with more rewarding results. Generally the men went into the fields while the women stayed in and near the home and children. Together, women and men

formed a production system. The males supplied raw materials, such as corn, wheat, animals, hides, fish, and lumber produced from planting crops, tending livestock, hunting, fishing, or lumbering. These raw materials then went into the "factory" (in other words, the home) for transformation into finished products. In some instances, the raw materials could be sold for cash or traded for other items. In most cases, however, the raw materials first had to be processed in order to be consumed by the family, sold, or traded.

Because the raw materials were basic to the production process, the fields and field work usually became a high priority. As soon as some kind of basic shelter for the family was established, men turned their attention to breaking the prairie sod and planting crops. While this

prioritization is understandable, it also created problems for women who found themselves attempting to function as domestic artisans in hastily constructed and ill-conceived workplaces. Although this situation was usually alleviated over time, the workplace dimension of the home was seldom seen in the same light as that of fields, barn, and other outbuildings. Rather than being basic to the production of finished goods, raw materials were often believed to actually provide the family's livelihood. Thus women and men often agreed that the farming procedures outside the home should receive more thought and development than that same operation within the home. This kind of thinking often led to a lag between the two spheres of the farm production unit. Even in twentieth-century Iowa, farm women still



wondered why they cooked threshing dinners on wood-burning cookstoves for men who threshed on the latest gasoline-powered machines, or why their kitchens were inefficient and sprawling while barns, by contrast, were frequently marvels of efficiency and planning.

THIS NECESSITY to get the fields in operation meant that many settlers lived, and women worked, in woefully inadequate shelters and workplaces. Wagons, tents, caves, lean-to's, cabins, and sod huts were all pressed into service. George and Kitturah Belknap, who had migrated to Iowa with George's parents, set up housekeeping in one room of a crude two-room, hewed-log house; George's parents crowded into the other room. Kitturah's diary notation reflects that need often dictated circumstances: "We unloaded and commenced business. Made us some homemade furniture and went to keeping house."

The cramped housing situation endured by many families usually improved with time. When possible, men transferred time and energy from the fields to the family's dwelling. They "raised" a more substantial building, usually sixteen by eighteen feet and made of logs. Women and children participated by carrying tools, chinking spaces between logs or laths, and providing meals for neighbors who came to help. Numerous women, realizing the importance of their menfolk returning quickly to the fields, did not hesitate to undertake much heavier tasks including digging cellars and wells and building fireplaces. At the same time, men continued to build furniture or plane window and door frames in odd moments. Gradually dirt floors gave way to slabs and finally to planks. Eventually lean-to kitchens graced the backs of houses and attics appeared above them, providing storage space and sleeping quarters for children.

That women had to become partners in constructing family dwelling places, a circumstance that probably would not have occurred in their former homes, did not seem to distress them. Women recognized that field work was a



sunup to sundown proposition for much of the year and that such work required a good deal of hand labor during the early era of settlement of the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s, and they frequently expressed great sympathy for their men. For example, noting that wheat crops had to be hand-cut with a cradle on their family farm, one woman remarked, "That was real hard work swinging a cradle all day." Another pioneer explained that her father cut "all the wheat with a cradle and the hay with a scythe," while her brother "bound all the grain, and raked up all the hay with a homemade hand rake." Another described men hand-planting grain by carrying sacks of grain on their shoulders as they walked through fields scattering the kernels before them.

Because hired labor was scarce even if a family could afford it, women sometimes joined men in field labor. A woman might hack a cross into the prairie sod with an ax, creating a hole into which a man would drop a few kernels of seed. Their child might follow, closing the openings with a well-placed footstep. Women also drove teams of plow animals, harvested crops, and performed other heavy field work in spite of nineteenth-century proscriptions that women were not capable of such feats.

When women worked in the fields, they generally did so as adjuncts to men. But that



was not always the case. Examples do exist of widowed, divorced, deserted, and never-married women who performed both segments of a farm operation — home and field. Often assisted by brothers, fathers, sons, or hired hands, these women were in the minority in early Iowa. But they certainly demonstrated that other types of partnerships than wife/husband could lead to a profitable farm enterprise.

CERTAINLY FIELD WORK was taxing and involved rudimentary equipment, but the same can be said of the work performed within the home. Women and children labored at a huge variety of tasks, often with only the most basic of utensils and tools. Soap, for example, was not commercially available in territorial Iowa and thus was an important product of the “home-factory.” Its

production involved collecting grease, fat, and tallow from meat, saving wood ashes for lye, and then boiling these materials together to create a concoction termed "soft soap." The first two steps were year-long; the third was done outside in the springtime. Children helped the women measure grease and lye into a large iron kettle, stoke the fire under the kettle, and boil the substance until it reached the proper consistency. The liquid soap was then poured into cloth-lined boxes or crocks where it hardened. Later it was cut into bars and wrapped in straw for storage. Candle making was another time-consuming and complex procedure, also undertaken in the spring by women and children. Wicks were either repeatedly dipped by hand or hot tallow was poured into molds. Once firm, the candles were wrapped and stored with the soap until needed.

While soap and candle making illustrate the close working relationship that often existed between women and children, other chores demonstrate the interaction of females and males. Providing food, a never-ending task that involved producing, processing, and cooking, demanded the efforts of both women and men. For instance, corn, a staple of the Iowa pioneer's diet, was planted, tended, and harvested primarily by men. It was husked, dried, and ground by women and men. And it was converted into cornbread, mush, corncakes, corn pone, and hominy primarily by women. Beef and dairy products were a similar case. Fed, herded, and butchered largely by men, cattle provided meat, tallow, and milk, which were then processed into usable foodstuffs and goods largely by women. The resulting milk and butter were often sold, thus providing support for the family, not only while the men established themselves as farmers but while they paid off debts or bought new equipment with the profits from field crops.

ALTHOUGH THE ECONOMIC interdependence between females and males on early Iowa farms is clear, the power relationships that resulted are less so. Whether or not women participated to any extent in decision making is currently

under debate by scholars and other observers. One view hotly protests that women were not partners in the true sense of the word because it was the men who made major decisions, including the decision to migrate to Iowa in the first place. Another perspective suggests that women had a kind of power that does not fit the usual definition. For example, women did exercise a fair degree of choice — hence, power — in selecting a mate, because the ratio of men outweighed that of women during the pioneer period. Women could, and did, withhold their butter and egg money from projects they thought unworthy or unworkable. And because the home was also the farm woman's workplace, she ruled it, effectively limiting a man's power and participation in the domestic realm.

A brief examination of decision making in undertaking the Iowa migration suggests that this issue of relative power is not one that will be resolved easily. A common stereotype presents Iowa-bound women as simple appendages to men, as totally dependent on the male breadwinner of the family, who had the right to make, and always did make, the decision to move west. It is supposed that women submitted to the will of these determined husbands either because they felt economically or legally



required to do so or because they wished to obey or please them. Yet there are numerous cases of married women who actively supported or even initiated the idea of resettlement in Iowa. Like men, these women perceived Iowa as offering economic opportunities or better living conditions than those enjoyed in their present homes. Furthermore, many single women also chose Iowa. Some of these migrated as part of a larger family unit but had the choice to stay behind. Others migrated on their own to become teachers or missionaries or to find a husband on the male-dominated frontier. Thus, in opposition to the customary and widely accepted interpretation of women as subordinate to male decision makers, significant numbers of married and single women did migrate who were not forced westward by men.

At this point, it is unclear in which direction the debate will move next. As power is redefined to encompass both female and male terms, and as more women's documents become available and are examined from more perspectives, it is possible that early Iowa farm women may be imputed more partnership power than at present. On the other hand, evidence may accumulate that proves that although women's economic contributions were many and of great significance, women were not rewarded with any degree of influence in the realm of decision making.

Another current debate examines how much the economic partnership on early farms influenced the initial choice of a mate. Did men and women place more emphasis on the skills and work habits of a potential mate than on a highly romantic attachment, or "chemistry," as we would call it today? Extensive evidence demonstrates that women commonly graded men as "providers," and men judged women as domestic manufacturers. A recent study on frontier marriage argues further that "the choosing of a mate on the frontier was a matter of economic necessity far and above individual whim. Good health and perseverance were premium assets while the charm and ability to entertain that one values so highly in a society of mechanization and leisure time was only of tangential significance . . . the woman who could not sew nor cook had no place on the

frontier." Certainly the many advice articles that appeared in early Iowa newspapers counseled women to beware of alcoholics, gamblers, abusers, and other ne'er-do-wells, and counseled men to be suspicious of a fashionable front and to examine a woman's cooking and other domestic skills instead. Some source materials, especially anecdotal ones, demonstrate that even pioneers tripped over romance. Yet many more sources support the contention that one chose a mate at least as much for what that mate could bring to an economic partnership as for compatibility, appearance, or romantic appeal.

BECAUSE SKILLS and knowledge of a farm operation were so crucial to future productivity, and probably to success in marriage as well, both females and males spent much of their childhood and young adulthood preparing themselves. Girls served as apprentices to their mothers, sisters, grandmothers, and aunts, just as boys served as apprentices to their fathers, brothers, grandfathers and uncles. Women acted as trainers, organizers, and overseers of girls of all ages as well as of young boys. Acting in a supervisory position, adult women initiated children into the complexities of food processing, soap making, candle making, spinning and weaving, knitting, and other domestic jobs. Girls and boys both participated in these endeavors, but as they grew older girls assumed more of the indoor chores and boys more of the outdoor tasks (at which point adult males took over their supervision, usually around age ten or twelve). Typically, girls continued to produce food, soap, and candles, and took on the additional responsibility of caring for the younger children. Boys, on the other hand, fetched fuel and water, assisted with planting and harvesting, and helped with the stock. Such divisions of labor were not always absolute, however, and in times of need a girl might haul fuel and herd cows, or a boy might be called upon to help make soap or candles.

The use of children as laborers indicates their economic importance within the family and explains why many families were unwilling to part with their children until they were in



FROM CLOSE TO THE LAND BY THOMAS H. CLAYTON, COPYRIGHT 1983 THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS



their twenties. Despite the stereotype of very early marriage on the frontier, in early agrarian Iowa children often remained on the family farm until age twenty or twenty-one, or even later. In one typical Iowa family of the period, the eldest son was still at home at age twenty, acting as the overseer of the younger boys and serving as his father's assistant; the eldest girl, aged twenty-two, oversaw the younger girls and assisted her mother. Certainly it was to the family's advantage to retain their children's services, but it was also to a young person's benefit to gain solid experience and skills within that family unit.

THE SALIENT FEATURES of this interdependent farm family changed only slightly as time passed. But as Iowa rapidly "settled-up," developed, and even began to urbanize during the 1830s and 1840s, aspects of farm society certainly changed. Isolation lessened as neighbors, roads, and towns appeared in a region. Newspapers, magazines, and traveling shows also

provided increased outside stimulation, information, and diversion. At the same time, merchants, shops, and light industry began to supply "eastern-style" goods to the grateful settlers. As a rule of thumb, within two years of the initial settlement of any given area, neighbors and store-bought goods began to appear.

During the 1830s, isolated pioneer homemakers faced huge difficulties in obtaining such staples as sugar, salt, and spices. They relied upon herbs from their own gardens for seasonings, used honey and maple syrup in place of sugar, and often did without salt in their diet. But, as settlement progressed and towns appeared, their problems lessened. Sugar, salt, and spices became available from local merchants. In addition, sparse kitchenware was supplemented by "bought" tinware, pewter, and iron pots and pans. A stove boasting a new-fangled warming oven soon replaced the open fireplace. And a treadle-powered sewing machine usurped the place of honor once held by the spinning wheel.

Yet these changes did not bring a revolution in work loads or family structure. Women now

found themselves producing food for social events with the new neighbors. They were expected to welcome all travelers, migrants, and itinerant preachers whether they be friends or strangers. One historian of early Iowa observed that hospitality "was often so general as to impose a serious burden upon the woman as its dispenser." While most women seemed to enjoy the company, it certainly did nothing to lighten one's domestic load. Nor did technology change her roles and duties. The availability of store-bought foodstuffs meant that a woman was able and expected to provide more elaborate dishes and meals. Pewter and iron utensils had to be scoured and scrubbed with sand at least once a week. A stove required that its fire be fed and stoked and that its resplendant outside be kept that way by regular polishing. A sewing machine led to more complicated fashions including tucks, ruffles, and pleats, and its presence in the neighborhood encouraged friends and relatives to expect technical assistance with their own sewing chores. And the new technology was expensive. By the 1850s, the first sewing machines to appear in Iowa cost as much as \$40 to \$110. Farm families were discovering that moving into the profit column in anything more than a small way was going to take many years.

Farm men experienced change in a similar manner. Neighbors were a welcome source of company and additional labor but expected that same labor in return — or more, because they were just getting started. Seed and feed were becoming available but necessitated trips to town and a conveyance with which to carry them. Planters, threshers, and other machines could be rented or purchased but needed more than one person to operate them. Like domestic technology, field technology was expensive: by the 1850s the latest reaping machine cost upwards of \$155.

By the time that Iowa achieved statehood in 1846, "progress" had already transformed many of its raw frontier regions into bustling, settled areas. River towns on the Mississippi and Missouri particularly burst forth with merchants of all description, saloons, hotels, opera houses, newspapers, and burgeoning populations. Of course, more remote sections of Iowa

remained "frontier" in their orientation until the coming of the railroads in the 1860s and 1870s. For example, in 1856, ten years after statehood, Mary Ellis of Dickinson County recorded making a meal of "punkin flap jacks" and a few slices of venison. "We don't have anything but 'taters' and punkin here," she grumbled. And as late as 1869, a newly arrived family of settlers in Clay County existed for an entire winter on "sod house soup," composed of chunks of meat cut off a "half-of-beef" and mixed with a meager supply of vegetables. A year later, in 1870, the United States Census Bureau declared the Iowa frontier "closed" by virtue of the state having an average of 21.5 people per square mile.

Clearly, Iowa had grown very rapidly. Settlers had streamed in by the thousands during the 1830s. As a result, by 1840 Iowa's population was 43,000. By 1850 it had shot up to 192,000; by 1860 to 675,000; by 1870 to 1,194,000. Times had indeed changed, but the basic structure of the farm family remained essentially the same up to and beyond 1870. The economic partnership that had been so crucial in settling the Iowa frontier would continue to contribute greatly to the subsequent development of the state. □

NOTE ON SOURCES

A rich and fascinating mine of information is found in the diaries, daybooks, letters, reminiscences, and memoirs of early settlers in Iowa. These can be found in the University of Iowa Libraries Special Collections (Iowa City), and in the State Historical Society of Iowa-Special Collections (Iowa City and Des Moines). A considerable number of pioneers' writings are available in *The Annals of Iowa*, *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, and *The Palimpsest*. Two that were drawn upon here are Glenda Riley, ed., "Pioneer Migration: The Diary of Mary Alice Shutes," Parts I and II, *Annals of Iowa*, 43, 7 (Winter 1977), 487-514, and 43, 8 (Spring 1977), 567-92; and "Family Life on the Frontier: The Diary of Kitturah Penton Belknap," *Annals of Iowa*, 44, 1 (Summer 1977), 31-51. Also of interest by Riley is "'Not Gainfully Employed': Women on the Iowa Frontier, 1833-1870," *Pacific Historical Review*, 49, 2 (May 1980), 237-64, and *Frontierswomen: The Iowa Experience* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981), which received a Distinguished Service Award from the State Historical Society in 1983. Other useful secondary works are Ruth A. Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa, 1838-1918* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1918); Louise R. Noun, *Strong-Minded Women: The Emergence of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Iowa* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1969); and *The Invisible Farmers: Women in Agricultural Production* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983).

A Mesquakie Drawing

by Gaylord Torrence

MANY NATIVE AMERICAN works of art which have come down to us through time stimulate our curiosity, invite our study, and excite our sense of wonder, for they come from a distant past and a world very different from our own. One such object, an exceptionally rare and beautiful Mesquakie drawing (right), is preserved in the museum collection of the State Historical Society of Iowa. Its early date and relatively firm documentation establish its historic importance, while its intricate composition and complex imagery provide the viewer with a truly remarkable visual experience. But it is a drawing which was clearly intended to communicate specific information, and it is impossible to examine the work closely without also questioning its meaning.

Stylistically this drawing is extremely rare and may be unique in that no similar works by Mesquakie artists are known to exist. This fact alone makes the drawing difficult to interpret. While the Mesquakie and neighboring Great Lakes/Prairie tribes had a rich pictorial tradition in their arts which includes representational, as well as abstract, geometric imagery, figurative motifs were usually depicted in a different manner. Human, animal, and mythic images frequently appear on a variety of objects, but these representations are usually highly conventionalized and

not so complex in their organization. This specific work is unusual in the great number and diversity of animals depicted, the degree of naturalism which characterizes the drawing, and the inclusion of narrative autobiographical events. Because it does not fit within the more typical modes of expression, a comparison of this drawing with other works in which the pictorial system has been well documented is impossible, and many of the questions concerning its interpretation cannot be precisely answered. We are confronted with the realization that, as with many pictographic representations from the Great Lakes culture, the artist's verbal explanation would be needed to convey the full meaning of this drawing. At the same time, certain facts are clearly expressed and others are strongly suggested.

The drawing is attributed to Wacochachi (pronounced Wah co shah shee), a member of the Mesquakie tribe. The Mesquakie are more commonly known as the Fox, or Sac and Fox, but their name for themselves is Meskwahki haki, translated as "Red Earths" or "Red Earth People." Together with the Sauk, a separate tribe with whom they were joined in formal alliance since the early 1700s, they migrated to Iowa during the last half of the eighteenth century. Often treated as one tribe by the United States government, the Mesquakie and

The ink drawing (right) attributed to Wacochachi consists of two panels, each 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ " high by 15 $\frac{5}{8}$ " wide.



Sauk constituted the most important native American group in Iowa during the historic period.

Wacochachi was a member of the Fox clan of the Mesquakie tribe, and, as an important war chief, he was one of the principal leaders of his tribe during the first half of the nineteenth century. As a man of rank and achievement, his name, written phonetically in a variety of spellings, is recorded in at least three treaties and appears in other documents as well. He was an individual of impressive appearance, and his dramatic portrait is the only Mesquakie image to appear in the atlas produced by Karl Bodmer, the artist who accompanied Prince Maximilian on his exploration of the American West in 1833–1834.

Wacochachi must have had frequent contact with Colonel George L. Davenport, post trader for the Mesquakie and Sauk tribes at Fort Armstrong on the Mississippi River from 1816 until 1839. An abbreviation of his name appears several times in Davenport's ledgers, and a later event indicates that a special bond of friendship and respect existed between the two men: After Davenport's death in 1845, the Mesquakie tribe honored the trader with an elaborate ritual at his gravesite, at which time they erected a cedar post painted with totemic emblems and figures of slain enemies. It was Wacochachi who presided at the ceremony.

This relationship as well as the artist's materials may explain to some extent the drawing's existence. It was not uncommon for traders and military men who were closely associated with Indians to purchase or commission works of art, and often they would provide materials such as paper, ink, pencils, and watercolors. It is possible that Davenport asked his friend Wacochachi to make the drawing and gave him the materials, and then signed Wacochachi's name when it was finished. Wacochachi might also have made the drawing on his own initiative and later presented it to Davenport.

In 1973 the drawing was discovered in the State Historical Library in Des Moines during a routine inventory of books in the collection. At some time it had been folded and placed between the pages of a large volume belonging to Colonel Davenport, and this volume was

later presented to the historical department in 1924 through the bequest of Naomi Davenport, his daughter.

The drawing, sometimes referred to as a pictograph, was executed in pen and ink on two sheets of white paper joined by sealing wax. The overall compositional unity, the similarity or continuation of subject matter extending from one page to the other, as well as the identical style of drawing and scale of the figures, would suggest that the two parts were intended as a single work. At the same time, each page seems conceptually and compositionally complete in itself. It is really impossible to know if the paper was joined before the artist began his work in order to provide a larger format, or if a second sheet was added as the drawing progressed, or if the two separate drawings depicting different events were joined by Colonel Davenport after their completion.

The image is basically drawn in the archaic Great Lakes tradition, characterized by the flat, two-dimensional treatment of each figure, with no attempt to indicate background or spatial depth. Yet within the restrictions of this pictographic style, the figures are expressively drawn. While they exist only as silhouettes, and even though interior details are omitted, their sensitively rendered contours are highly descriptive, providing clear identification of each species. This is perhaps the most remarkable and unusual feature of the drawing; nearly one hundred different species are exquisitely delineated and combined with human events to form a dynamic and rhythmic composition. The artist has essentially recorded the vast array of animals, birds, and fish commonly found in the upper Mississippi Valley during the early nineteenth century, and, in doing so, has created a vivid sense of place. He has suggested a landscape, not through a naturalistic portrayal of hills, trees, rivers, and sky as in the Euro-American artistic tradition, but by depicting the creatures which fill these places with life and spirit. Within this rich environment, human events are pictured with varying effectiveness. In the lower panel the figures are especially animated, and Wacochachi has powerfully conveyed the drama and tension of the decisive moment of



JOSLYN ART MUSEUM, OMAHA, NEBRASKA

When Prince Maximilian met a delegation of Mesquakie and Sauk Indians in St. Louis at the beginning of his western exploration of 1833–1834, he described the encounter as “the first opportunity of becoming acquainted with the North American Indians in all their originality.” His companion, the artist Karl Bodmer, produced this striking portrait from that meeting. Wakusasse is depicted wearing the roach headdress and facial paint characteristic of Great Lakes warriors. Wakusasse (Wacochachi) is the artist who produced the remarkable drawing in the museum collection of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

battle. He has depicted himself leaving his beaver trap line and charging upon his well-armed enemy. He has fired an arrow, striking his victim, who has recoiled and doubled from its impact, leaving no doubt as to the outcome of the encounter.

Probably the most important question in

attempting to understand the content of the drawing is whether all the images constitute a continuous narrative — one story in which all of the elements are sequentially related. This seems impossible to determine by examining the drawing alone because no single line of thought adequately explains, without inconsistency or contradiction, the variety of figures and events and the relationships existing between them.

It does seem apparent that the drawing is primarily autobiographical, showing three events in the life of Wacochachi. Since prehistoric times, it has been the tradition of native American warriors to record their victories in a variety of pictographic forms on shell, stone, wood, hide, and antler, and they continued this practice when non-Indian materials such as paper, pen, and ink became available. On each panel, the great multitude of creatures revolves around a principal human encounter in which a warrior is slaying an enemy from another tribe. These events form the visual and conceptual center of organization for each composition, and it is very probable that both heroes, as well as one figure in a minor event, represent Wacochachi. In the upper panel, his name appears above him, in handwriting identified as Colonel Davenport's. Written below the name is the word *oquiman*, a phonetic spelling of the Mesquakie word for chief. On all three occasions, he is depicted wearing a “raven belt,” a distinctive feathered ornament worn only by warriors of great achievement, and Wacochachi may have intended this as a pictographic means of personal identification.

Wacochachi has also indicated a spiritual bond between himself and many of the surrounding animals, and it is unlikely that he would presume to portray such relationships if he were depicting a man other than himself. In the lower panel this relationship between the warrior and several of the birds and animals has been established by waved lines which flow from the various creatures and converge within the man. In Great Lakes art, waved or jagged lines universally symbolize the transmission of sacred power. All Great Lakes Indians, including the Mesquakie, perceived the natural world to be animated by a multitude of

spirits called Manitous. They believed that the earth, sky, underworld, and all other elements of nature were sacred, and that these elements were personified by numerous supernatural beings, the Manitous, who granted power and bestowed blessings. These deities manifested themselves in a variety of physical and mythical forms, and various ones revealed themselves as spirit helpers to men and women during their vision quests. These guardian spirits could be called upon in time of need, and no warrior would confront the enemy in battle without doing so. It appears that Wacochachi first filled the space surrounding the battle with all of the common life forms which shared his world, and then, by adding the waved lines, indicated those which functioned directly as his guardian spirits.

In the center of the upper panel, Wacochachi has portrayed himself in another battle, shooting an enemy from ambush behind a tree. The victim may have been one of the party of buffalo hunters drawn directly above. It was a common practice whenever possible to surprise enemy hunters while their concentration was focused on the events of the hunt. A single line connects Wacochachi with the image of a hawk clutching a smaller bird in its talons. This hawk configuration resembles a glyph, a pictographic symbol used to signify the name of the person represented, but if this were the case, the hawk would be in close proximity to the person it was intended to identify. Furthermore, the name Wacochachi is not translated as a hawk or other kind of bird but as "Brave Fox" or, more completely, "The Fox Who is Victorious in War and Will Live to Grow Old." The name in Davenport's handwriting indicates Wacochachi's identity, and we may assume that the hawk is not a name glyph but another guardian spirit. Wacochachi might also have drawn the line to emphasize a verbal narration in which he stated that he killed his enemy as surely and swiftly as the hawk grasps its prey.

The third human encounter appears along the lower left side of the top panel, but it is difficult to determine what is occurring. It would appear that one man is striking or lancing the other, but it could also be a friendly meeting or an exchange. The bison hunters

dominate much of the rest of the top panel, as do the highly descriptive images of fishes and water birds, which seem to be related to the two scenes of men fishing. It is impossible to know if the events depicted, including those in the lower panel, occurred in direct succession or were widely separated by time and place. One may only speculate what, if any, relationship exists between these diverse images.

Even though we cannot know his exact intentions or the conditions which resulted in the creation of this drawing, Wacochachi has left behind a fascinating work of art. The very factors which make it difficult to analyze also account for the richness, mystery, and expressive power it projects. Wacochachi has conveyed much more than an assembly of animals and a record of personal experience. He has evoked for us an image of Iowa as a place that we will never fully know, a dynamic world whose pale outlines are barely visible today, an open land of wild, rolling prairie, dense forest, and unrestricted rivers, all inhabited by an abundance of living creatures who shared their world with the Mesquakie. □

NOTE ON SOURCES

The only work devoted specifically to the Wacochachi pictograph is "Wacochachi's Talking Paper" by Jack W. Musgrove and Mary R. Musgrove, *Annals of Iowa*, 42 (Summer 1974), 325-43. The general literature on the various aspects of Mesquakie culture and history is extensive. An excellent basic source is Natalie F. Joffe, "The Fox of Iowa" in *Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes*, ed. Ralph Linton (New York: Appleton-Century, 1940). Other valuable references are Thomas Forsyth, "An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Sauk and Fox Nations of Indian Traditions (1827)" in *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and Region of the Great Lakes*, ed. Emma H. Blair, (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1911-1912), vol. 2, pp. 183-245; William Jones, "Ethnography of the Fox Indians" in *Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 125*, ed. Margaret W. Fisher (Washington, 1939); Allison B. Skinner, "Observations on the Ethnology of the Sauk Indians," *Bulletin of the Public Museum of the City of Milwaukee*, 5 (1-3) (Milwaukee, 1923-1925). Publications which focus on the art of the Great Lakes Indians are *Art of the Great Lakes Indians* (Flint Institute of Arts, 1973); Ruth B. Phillips, *Patterns of Power* (Kleinburg, Ontario: McMichael Canadian Collection, 1984); and Garrick Mallery, *Picture Writing of the American Indians, Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution (1888-89)* (reprint, New York: Dover Publication, 1972).

You Gotta Know the Territory

Material Culture from Territorial Iowa

by Michael O. Smith
photos by Chuck Greiner



People for the Land

"So one of the things that is taught to us is to be free with everything we have. In those days food was regarded as one of the greatest gifts anyone could give; and so the food, if we have food, if we have plenty, we should not think only of ourselves, but of our people first."

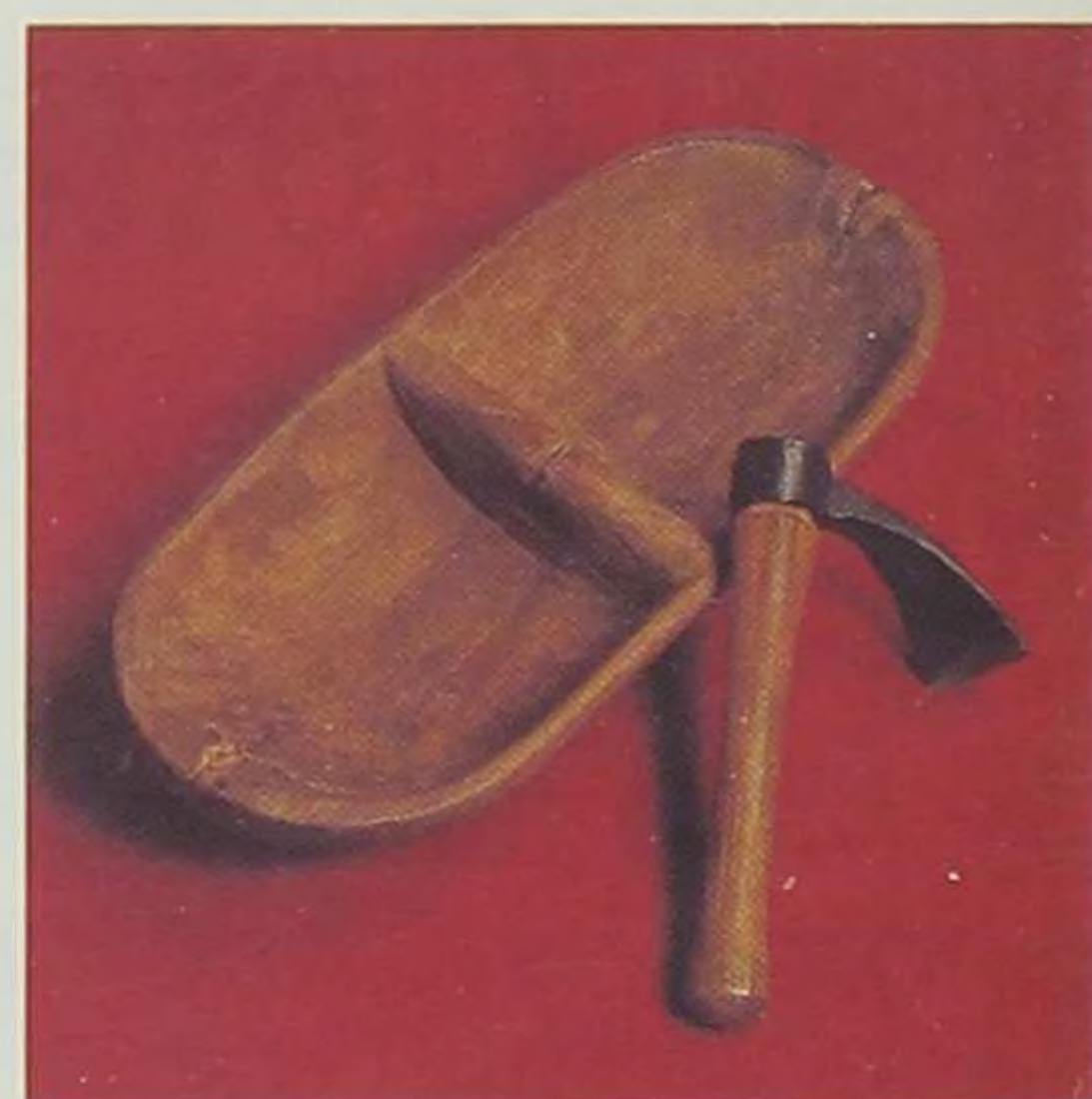
Youngbear (Mesquakie), interview

Several Indian tribes lived in territorial Iowa, with different languages, customs, and artistic expressions. But all tribes followed a common native ethic of sharing. Work and the products of hunting, fishing, gathering, and gardening were shared among kin and, on certain occasions, among larger groups.

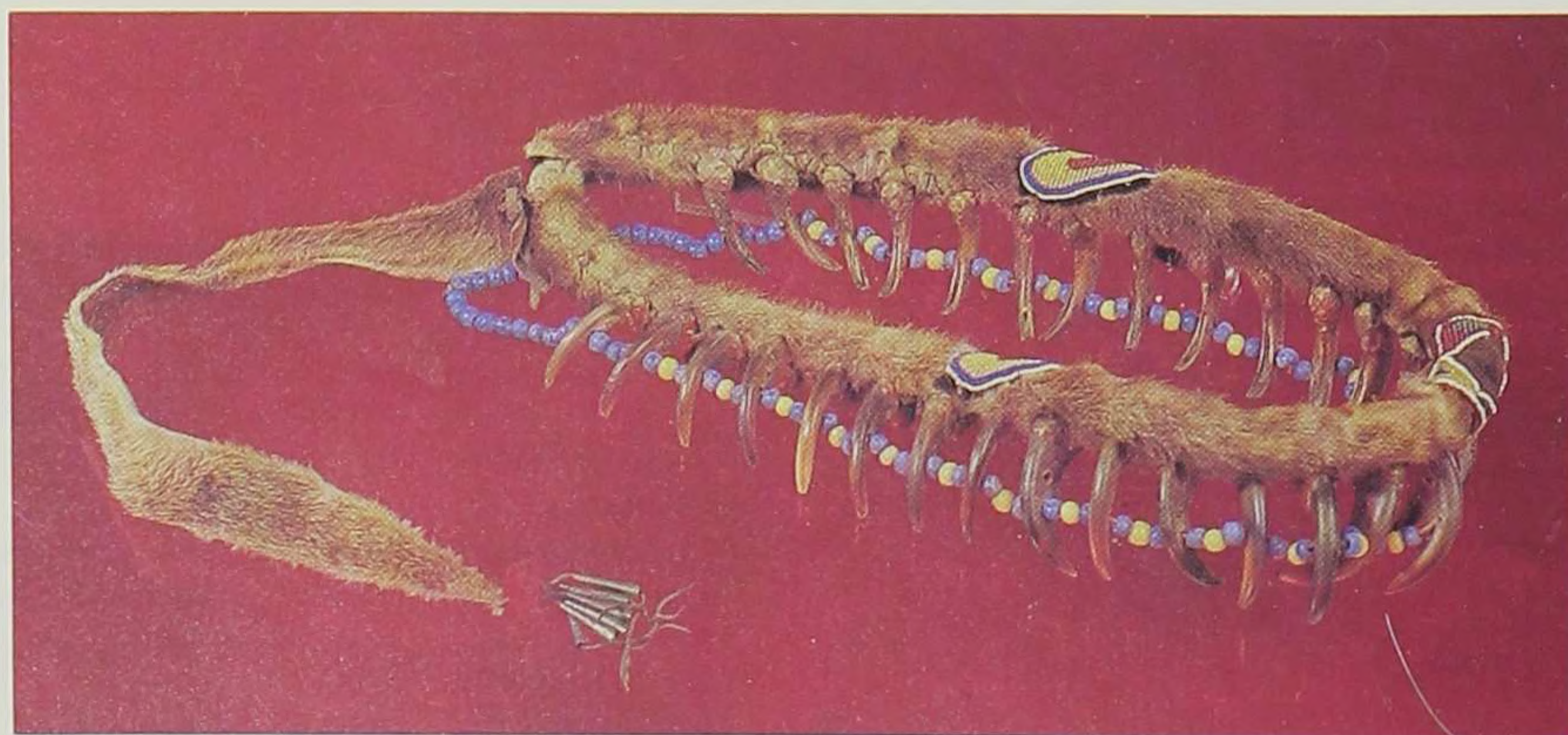
During religious feasts, Mesquakie food was served in a bowl such as the one above. Communal sharing of food reinforces unity among participants. Today the Mesquakie in Tama County, Iowa, continue many of the customs that they followed 150 years ago.

Within a tribe, governing was divided between military and civil tribal leaders. Work was divided between men, women, and children. Generally the men hunted and women gathered wild food and gardened. Through play and assigned tasks, children learned the skills they would need as adults. Men and women made the objects they used for everyday life and for ceremony.

Right: Men used axes, adzes, and specially forged "crooked knives" to sculpt objects of utility and ceremony, such as wooden bowls for serving food, spoons for ceremonial feasts, and dugout canoes. This Mesquakie hand adz was brought back to Iowa from Kansas in 1856, when the tribe bought land in Iowa for a permanent home.



Though not chosen for their military accomplishments, civil chiefs and other men of influence were often respected warriors. Clubs and bearclaw necklaces symbolized a warrior's status. Above: This club, a formidable weapon, may also have functioned as a leadership emblem. It was carried by Chief Keokuk's son, Moses. Below: Clan leaders and warriors of distinction wore bearclaw necklaces for ceremonial occasions.





Women produced the clothing worn by men, including leggings, moccasins for festive and daily wear, beaded garters, and ornamental bags worn on special occasions. Above: Detail of Mesquakie breechcloth, made of trade wool and seed beads. The breechcloth, part of a complete set of men's clothing, was probably made for a ceremonial occasion.



Many tribes of the Upper Mississippi River regions made and often traded ornamental bandolier bags. Left: Detail from Santee Sioux bandolier bag. Geometric designs are typical of Sioux design. Above: Detail from bandolier bag, possibly Mesquakie. Mesquakie used both abstract geometric and abstract floral designs.

"Well, I played with dolls. . . . That is how one learns to sew, by practicing sewing for one's dolls."

Anonymous Mesquakie woman



John Youngbear carved this Mesquakie doll from red cedar in the early 1900s.



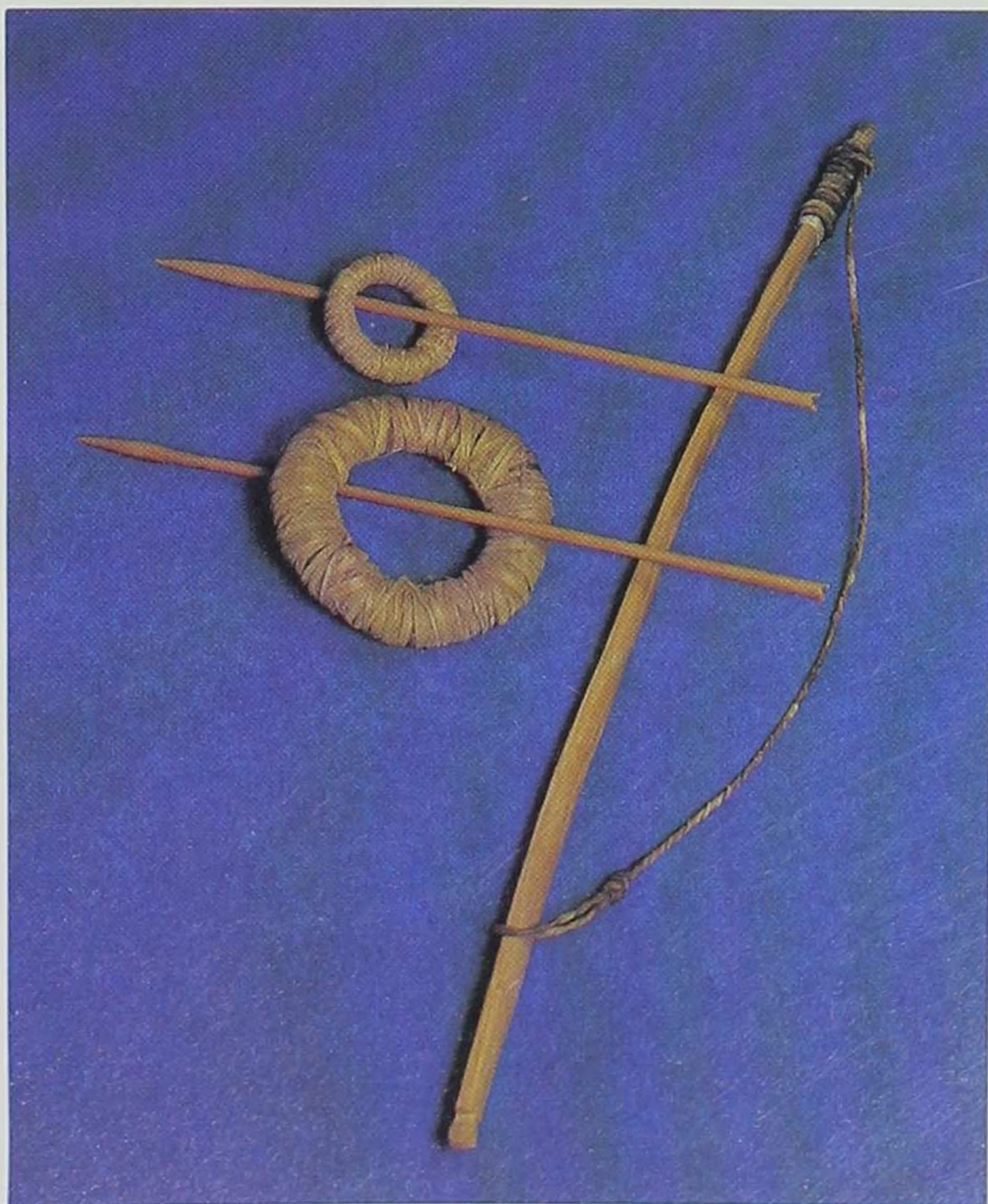
"And when I was eleven years old I likewise continually watched [my mother] as she would make bags. 'Well, you try to make one,' she said to me. . . . And soon I knew how to make it very well."

Women's tasks included weaving, preparing buckskin, and beadwork. Scraping buckskin hides removed the hair and softened the hide. Left: Basswood fiber and twine bag, hide scraper made from elk antler, and heddle with beadwork (all Mesquakie).

"The first bow and arrow that was made and given to me was when I was eight years old. . . . I was told not to shoot at the dogs, horses, or people, and . . . I was taught to shoot the birds and rabbits and things to eat."

Youngbear (Mesquakie), interview

Mesquakie boys practiced with small bows and blunt-tipped arrows by shooting at raffia-hoop targets rolling along the ground.



Give and Take



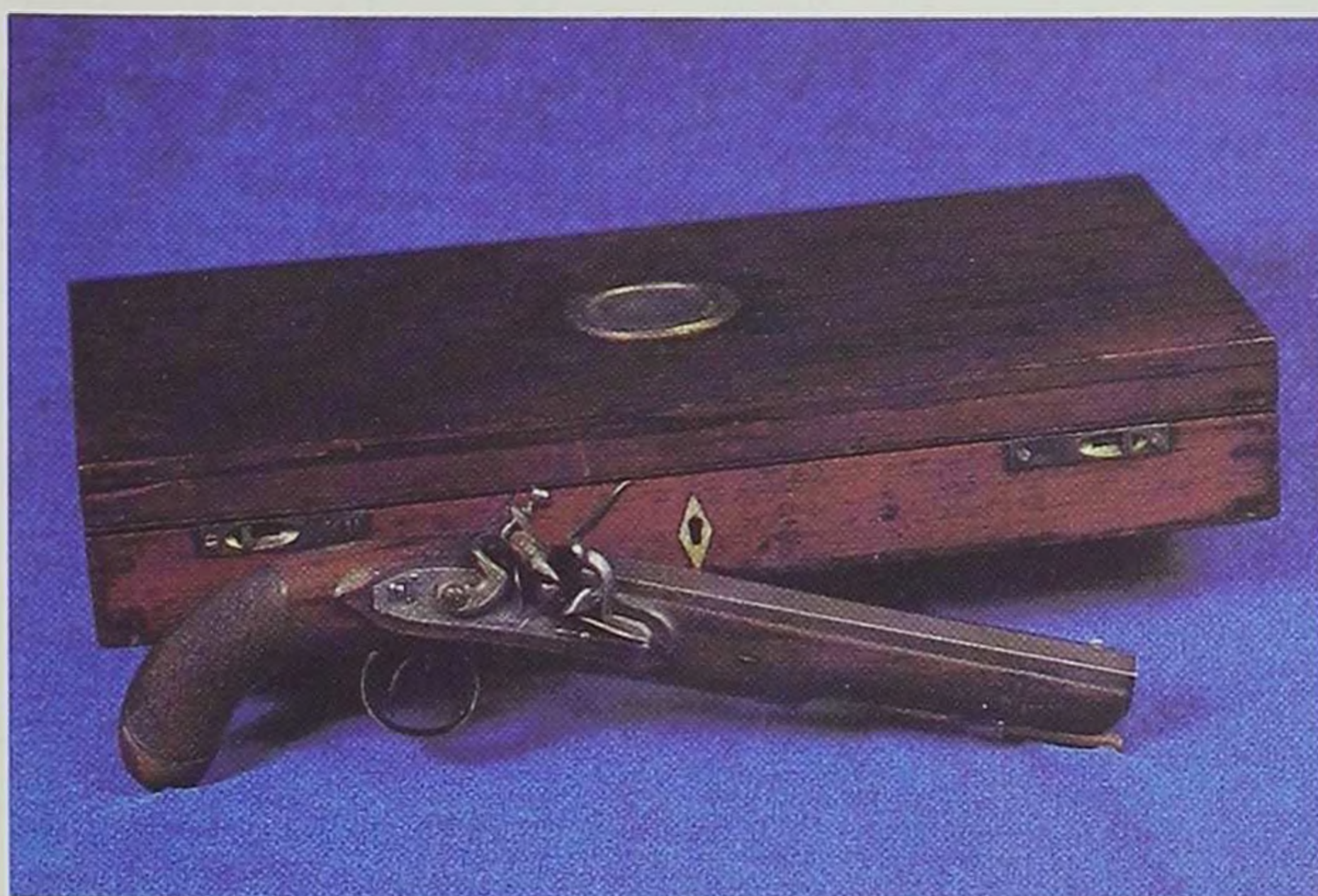
Above: Native Americans traded for necessities that made their work easier — such as this Green River steel skinning knife and wool blanket cloth (then often decorated by native women with silk ribbons or beadwork). They also traded for items of adornment or status, such as this silver peace medal from the American Fur Company, the flintlock pistol, and the pipe tomahawk.



The federal Indian agent's job was to enforce policies and treaties that removed tribes from their land, while protecting native rights under those treaties. As agent, he might accompany tribal leaders to Washington for treaty signings, where peace medals with the president's image (left) were often given to the Indian leaders.

The army in territorial Iowa also enforced federal policies and treaties and maintained law and order. But a soldier probably used this hoe blade and brace and bit (right) more than he used the 1841 Hall cavalry carbine. Basically the army explored and mapped the land, built forts, and raised food. A soldier's life was filled with boredom, hard labor, and little action or glory.

By the 1830s the fur trade in Iowa had ended, but traders such as Colonel George Davenport at Fort Armstrong continued to supply American or European manufactured goods on credit to native tribes. Cash replaced furs as the medium of exchange. Goods exchanged resulted in wealth. Each culture perceived wealth differently. What one culture needed or valued was not necessarily useful or valuable to the other.



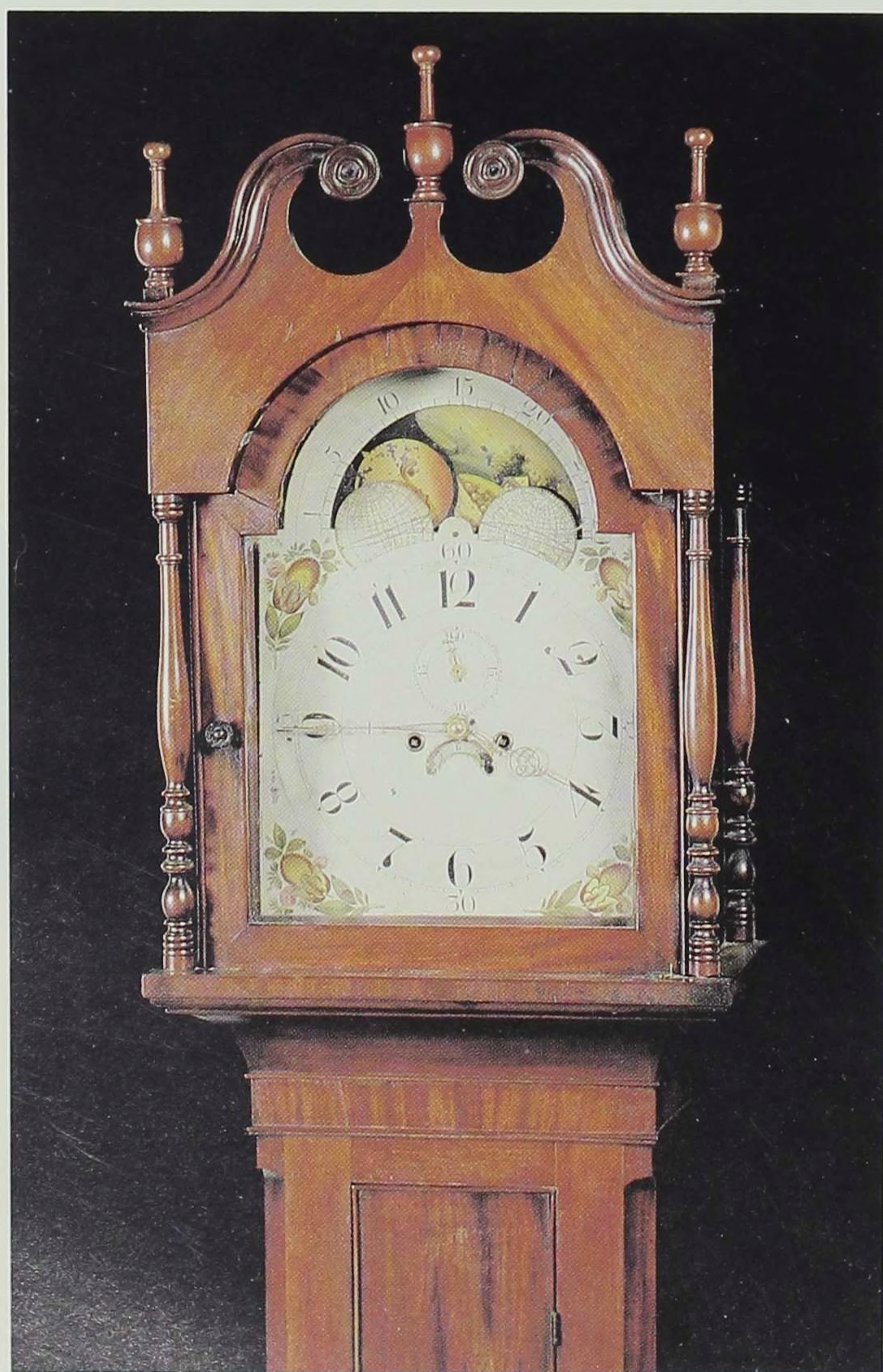
George Davenport used the wealth he accumulated through the fur trade to buy luxury or status items. For instance, only "gentlemen" owned dueling pistols. Davenport's pistol (above) and his sword (right) reinforced his position in the frontier community that bore his name. His children inherited his wealth; silver punch urn (upper right) was bought by Davenport's son George L. Davenport.



On the Road Again

"We are finding it a little rough to have to give away a lot of things you have owned since you can remember, things valuable to yourself only."

Mary Alice Shutes, diary



Whether coming by train, steamboat, or wagon, a first step for emigrants moving to Iowa was to decide what could be taken along. Here are some of the possessions emigrants chose to bring with them to their new homes.

Left: As a carpenter in Salem County, Indiana, Martin McDaniel had received this eight-foot mahogany clock as payment for work. He brought it to Iowa in 1839.

Opposite, clockwise from upper left:

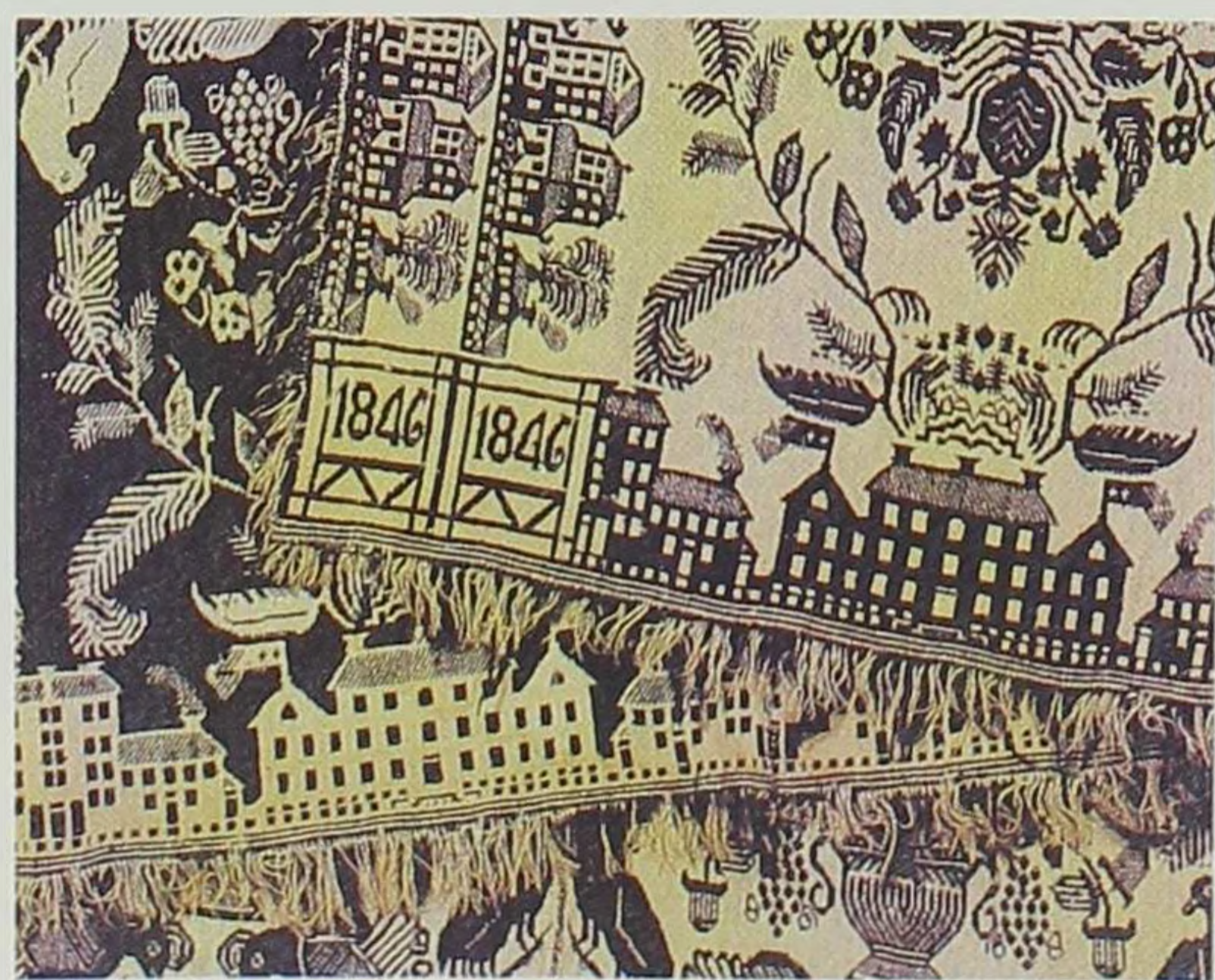
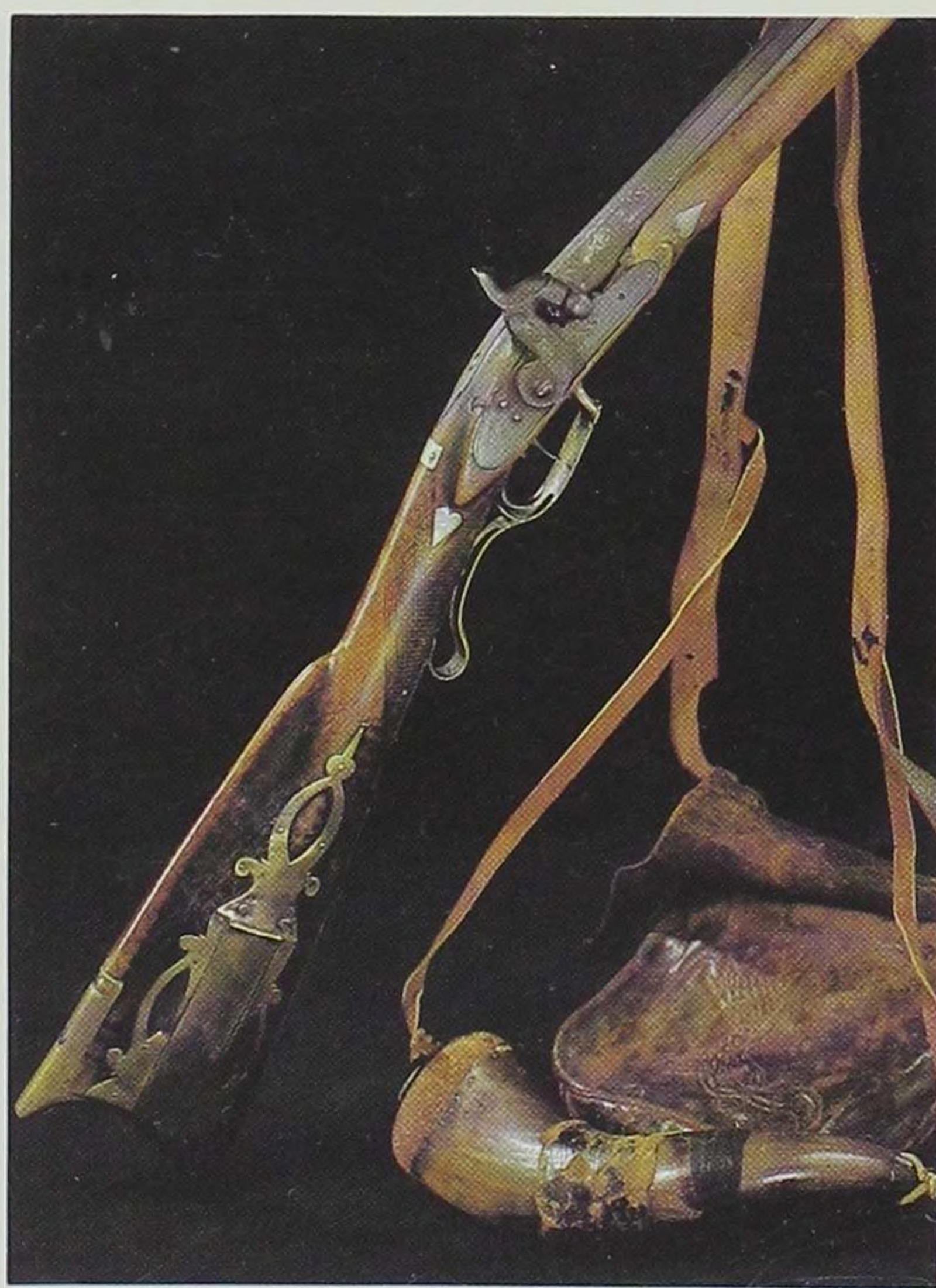
When Captain Paul Dahlberg moved from Sweden to Iowa in 1843, he brought this 1827 map (printed in Swedish).

In Indiana, a Mr. Wittenmyer traded an extra farm wagon for this rifle and accoutrements when he came to Iowa in the 1840s. A bird design appears on the leather pouch.

Martha Taylor made this cotton appliqué quilt in Decatur County, Indiana, in the 1830s. She brought it to Iowa.

In Ross County, Ohio, Ann Dean had this wool and linen coverlet woven in 1846 for the birth of her son. The next year she brought it with her to her new home in Des Moines.

Rhoda Chaplin Parker sat in this maple side chair in a wagon from New York to Iowa in 1840. The family of Abraham Henkle used this flax hackle first in Virginia, then moved it with them to Illinois in 1829, and then to Iowa in 1836. In 1844 in Ohio, V.R. Van Hynning packed up his wooden leather vise. Seated at a chair, Van Hynning used the vise to hold leather steady while he worked on it.





Law of the Land

Under the Land Ordinance of 1785, recently acquired public lands had to be surveyed before they were sold. Federal surveyors divided the land in orderly, square parcels called townships and sections.

Above: A survey crew measured and marked the land and made careful notes of soil and timber types, waterways, mineral deposits, and existing towns. Tools included (from left) ruler, *A Treatise on Surveying*, plumb bob, jacob's staff and compass, survey pins, and chain.

Left: Ira Cook, Iowa surveyor in the 1840s and 1850s.

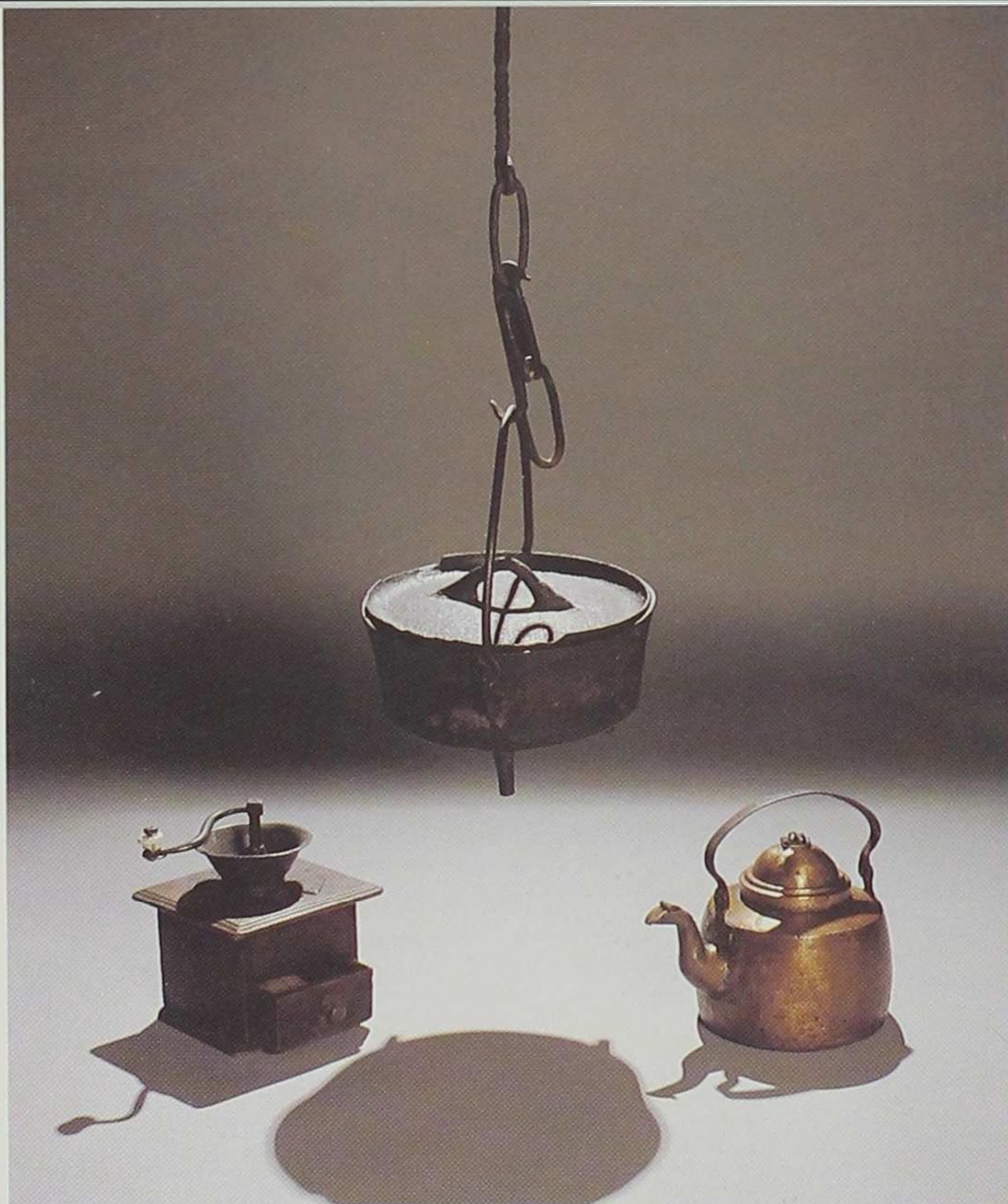
Farmer-Capitalist

"The best business, or surest one in this country, I think is that of farming. It is only necessary for you to go out a few miles from town and to make a selection of the best land the sun ever shone upon for your farm, build your house, and make your fence, plow your ground, and live unmolested, as regards payment for perhaps 2 or 3 years: then you will have a farm of 160 acres, worth several thousand dollars, for which you will have to pay but \$200."

Joseph Fales, letter



After building some kind of shelter, the pioneer farmer began plowing. Breaking the prairie sod was a major step; what had been an investment in land now would become a farm. Endless seasonal work and the constant need to expand and fence fields often required the man in the farm family to turn to other family members or neighbors for help. Some tasks were hired out, if the cash was available. Above: Grain shovel and breaking plow with horn handles.

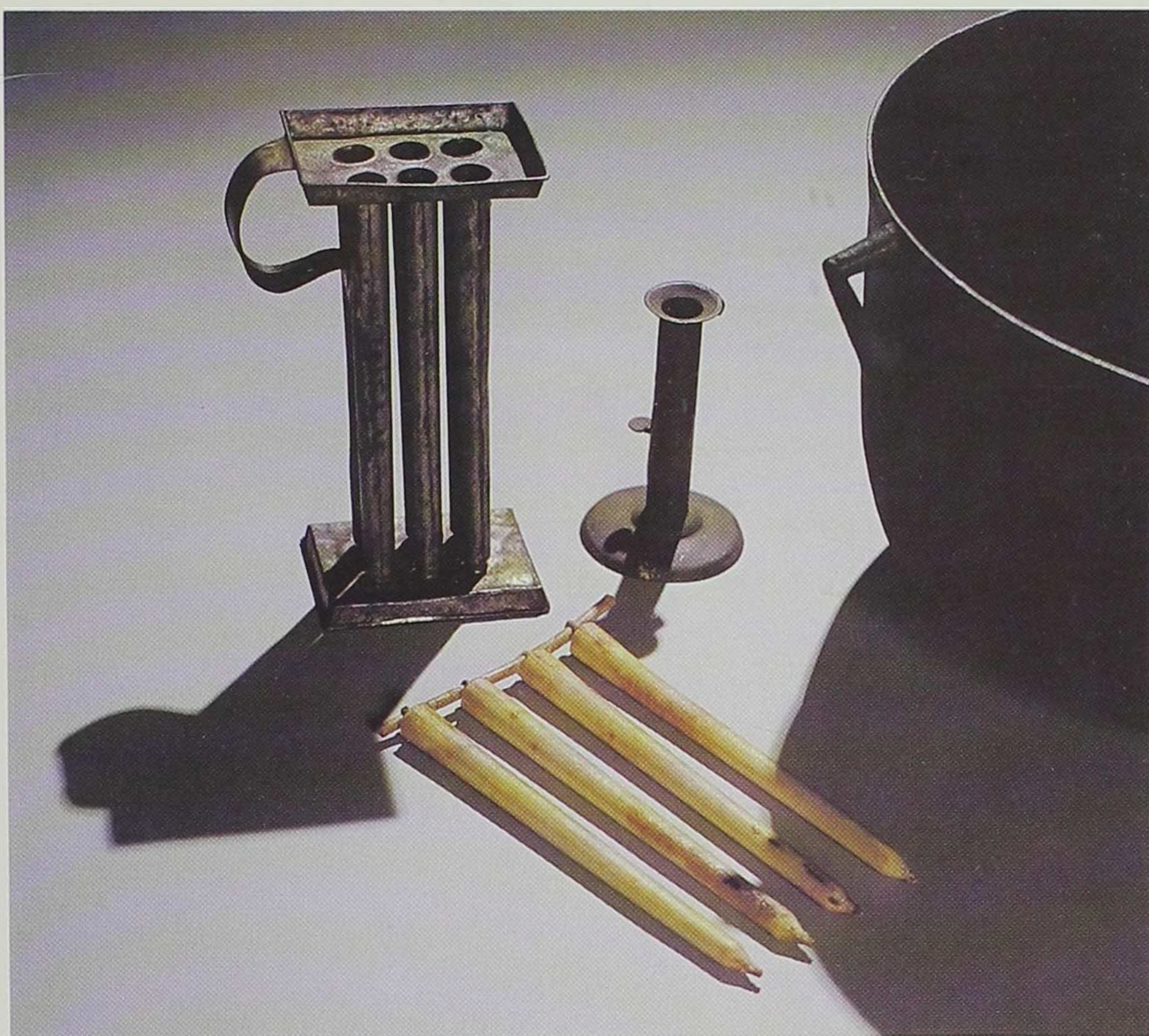


In 1842 Kitturah Belknap wrote in her diary, "Now my name is out as a good cook so am alright as good cooking makes good friends." Basic cooking equipment included (above) a coffee mill, copper hot water kettle, and, hanging from a trammel, a cast-iron Dutch oven, in which one fried venison, roasted chicken, and baked bread. Women earned cash (sometimes the only family income) by selling their garden produce, eggs, butter, cheese, and honey. Below: bee hive, butter churn, egg and field baskets.



Women were the chief laborers in a diverse domestic economy. Chief responsibilities were to process the unusable raw materials produced outside the home into consumable finished goods, and to care for, nurture, and develop the labor force.





"Mother bore and cared for the babies, saw that the floor was white and clean, that the beds were made and cared for, the garden tended, the turkeys dressed, the deer flesh cured and the fat prepared for candles or culinary use, that the wild fruits were garnered and preserved or dried, that the spinning and knitting was done and the clothing made. She did her part in all these tasks, made nearly all the clothing and did the thousand things for us a mother only finds time to do."

George Duffield, *Memoirs*

Left: Housekeeping in a log cabin or sod house was a next-to-impossible task. Floors were made of roughly split slabs or, in many cases, dirt or sand, sometimes swept by broom into momentary patterns pleasing to the eye.

Above: Women melted a year's supply of tallow in a cauldron for candlemaking, then dipped wicks or filled molds. Below: Produce was dried, canned, salted or pickled, and packed away. Here, cabbage shredder, brass preserve kettle, and stoneware crock.





In times of illness, women acted as doctor, using herbal home remedies and store-bought medicines. Above: "Humphrey's Homeopathic Remedies."



"All this winter I have been spinning flax tow. . . Now the wool must be taken from the sheep's back," wrote Kitturah Belknap. Women made most clothing and linens. Above: Wool blanket, tow linen towel, knitted wool stockings, sewing sundries.



"The children had their work to do as soon as it was possible for them to work," remembered E. May Lacy Crowder. A metal infant feeder (above) and a sheet iron cow bell (below) symbolize some typical chores — caring for younger siblings and herding cows. In spare moments, children played with simple toys — ceramic marbles, wooden tops, ice skates, and dolls.



The Urban Frontier

Not everyone who came to the new Iowa Territory was a farmer. New towns offered opportunities for business. They were centers for trade and distribution, provided crafts and services to surrounding rural areas, and served as regulatory centers, all of which offered a variety of non-farm occupations.

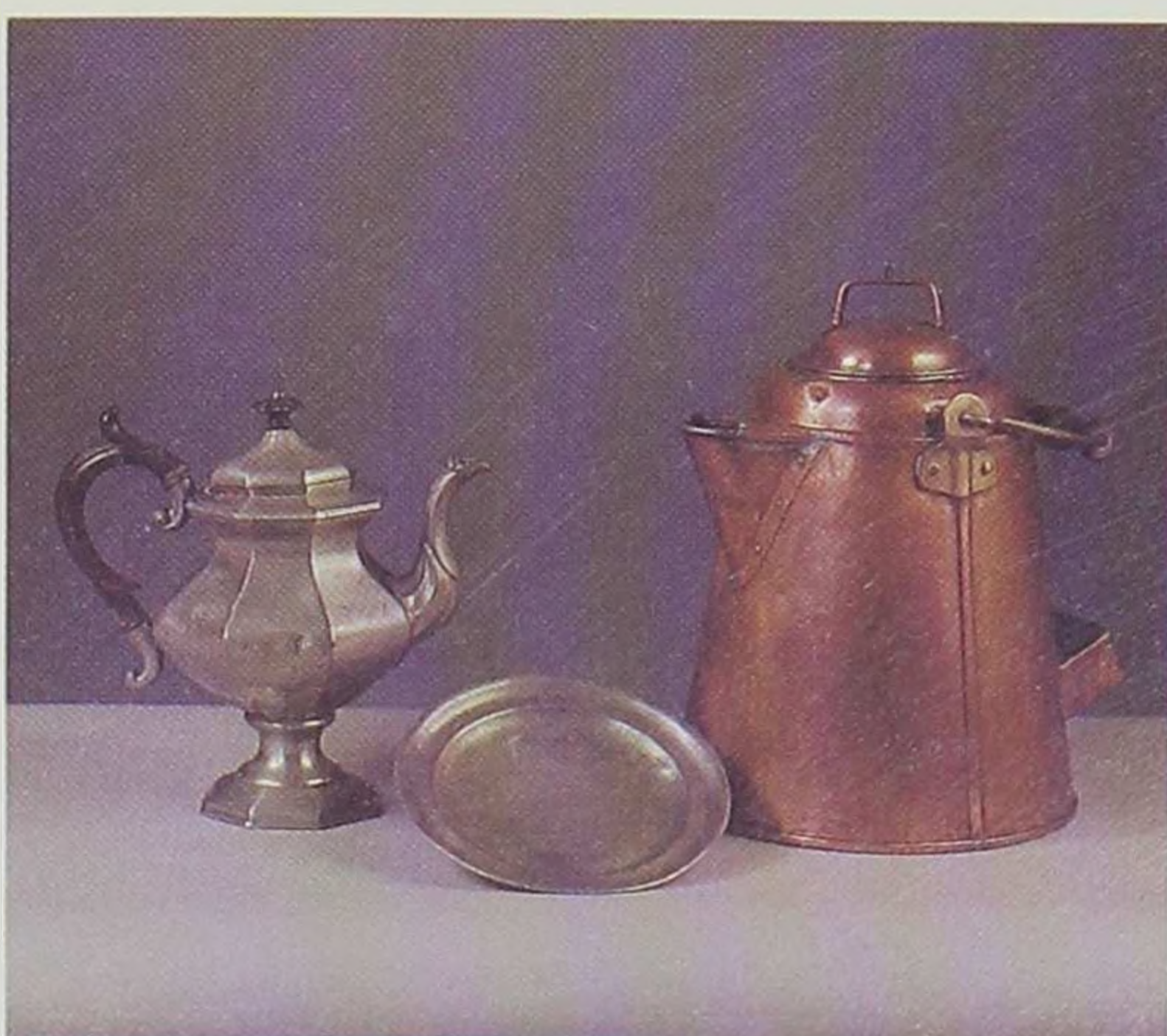
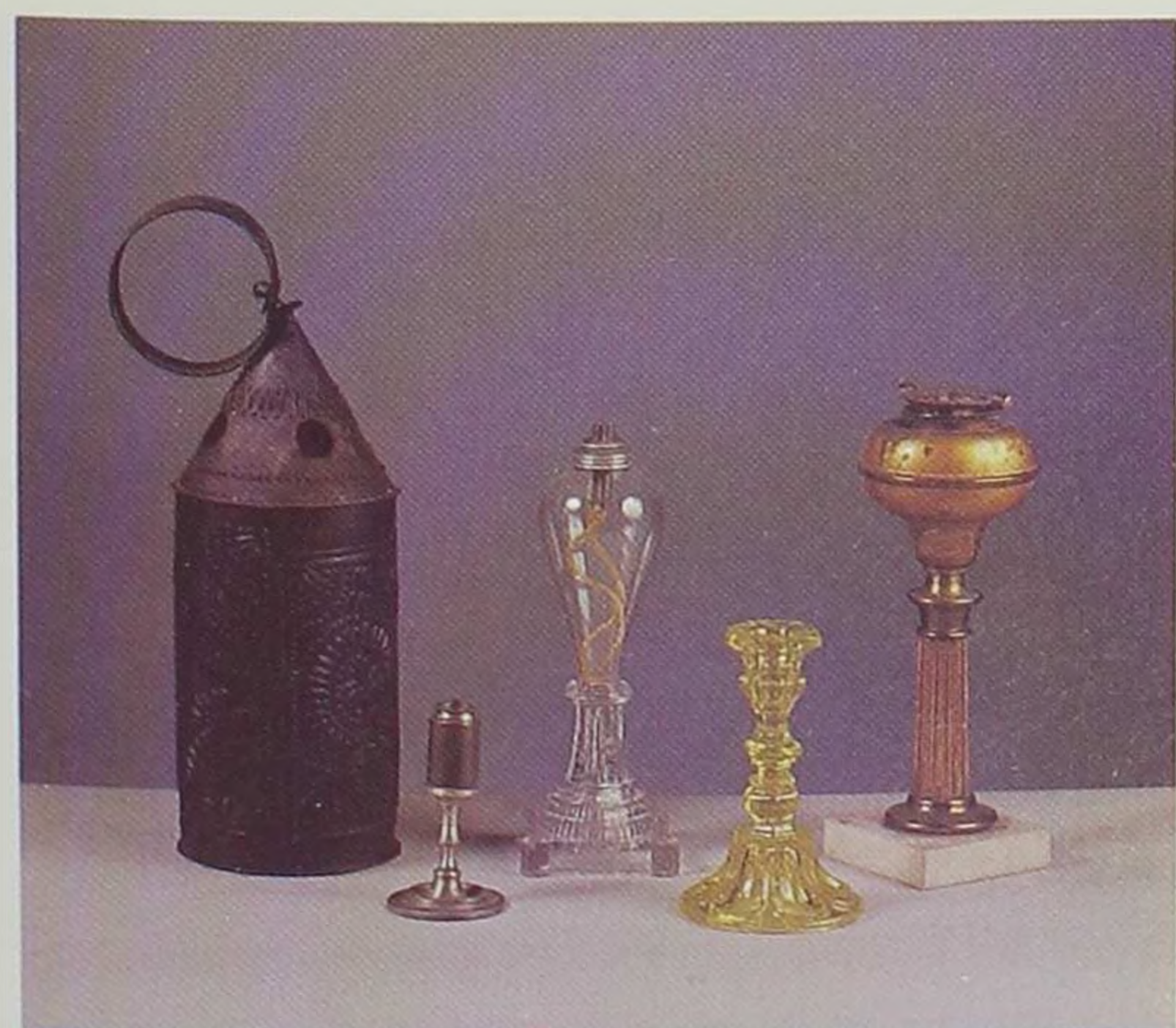
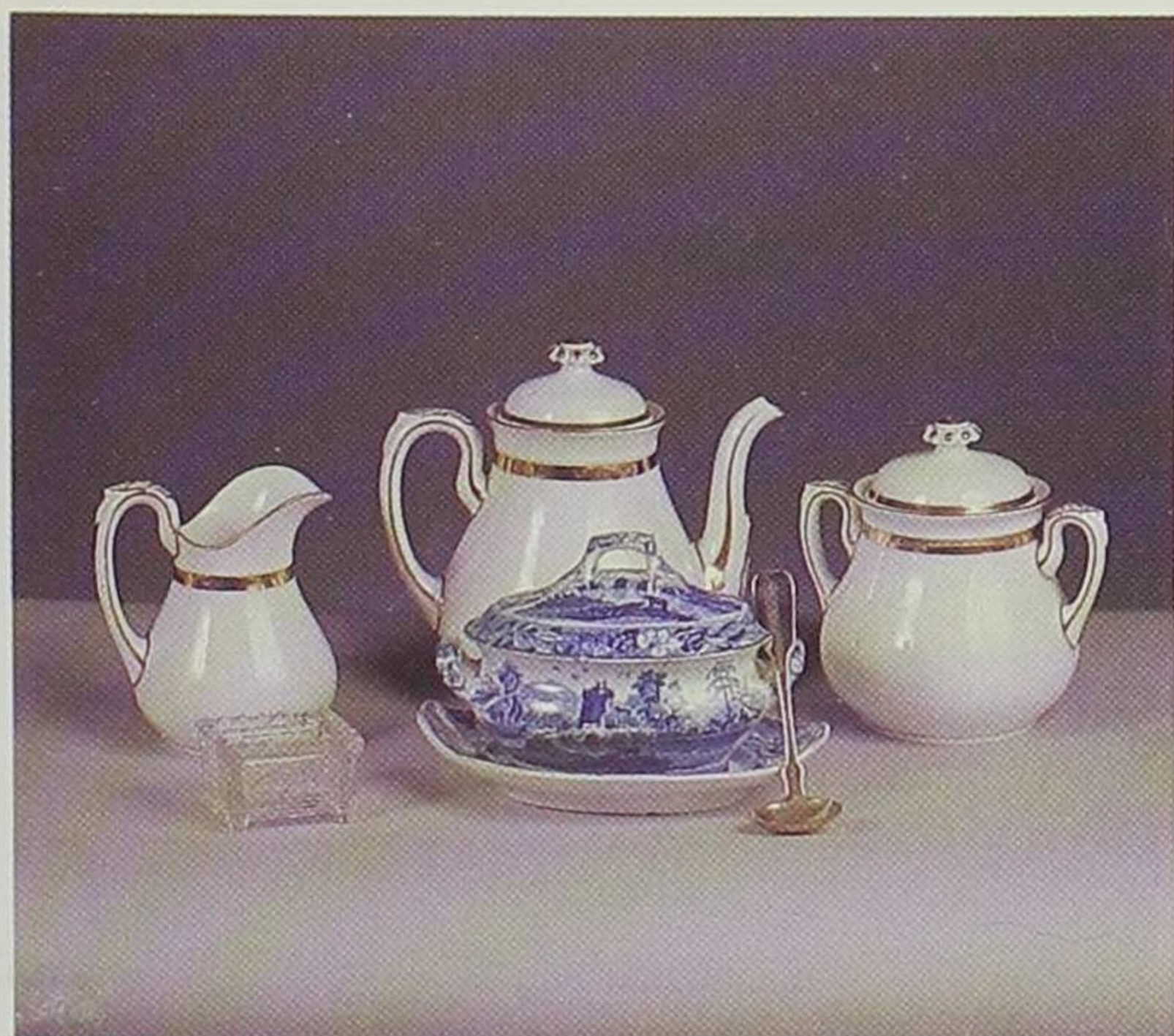
Soon after the territory opened, a broad range of manufactured goods from the world's growing industries was available in frontier towns. Below are some of the items that could be bought (clockwise from upper left):

GLASSWARE AND CHINA: French porcelain tea set, pressed glass salt dish, English pearlware sauce tureen, silver sauce ladle.

HARDWARE AND CUTLERY: Steel and brass padlocks, carpenter's plane, English-made bone and steel forks and wood and brass brace, and Sheffield steel knife with rosewood handle.

METALWARE: English pewter coffee pot, pewter plate, copper coffee pot.

LAMPS: Punched tin lantern, pewter fluid lamp, glass oil lamp, glass candlestick, brass and marble astral lamp.



Like signs outside businesses and offices, these groups of artifacts reveal the diversity of occupations in territorial Iowa. Across, from upper left:

LAWYER AND BANKER: Lawyer Charles Mason used this lap desk (he later became the first chief justice of the Iowa Supreme Court). Also, seal and wax, and currency. **HOUSEWRIGHT:** Hand tools and carpentry skills could earn a journeyman carpenter \$1.25 a day in 1840s Iowa. **JEWELER AND WATCHMAKER:** A fine selection of goods included pocket watches, jewelry, and ready-made eyeglasses (some even tinted).

DRY GOODS MERCHANT: Millinery shops were also women's social gathering places. Ready-made clothing here: man's cotton vest, muslin and lace handkerchief, wool paisley shawl from India, perfume, parasol with folding handle.

CLERGY: Religion played a major part in territorial days. The mahogany lap melodian is from Keosauqua's first church; the psalmist from a Burlington church.

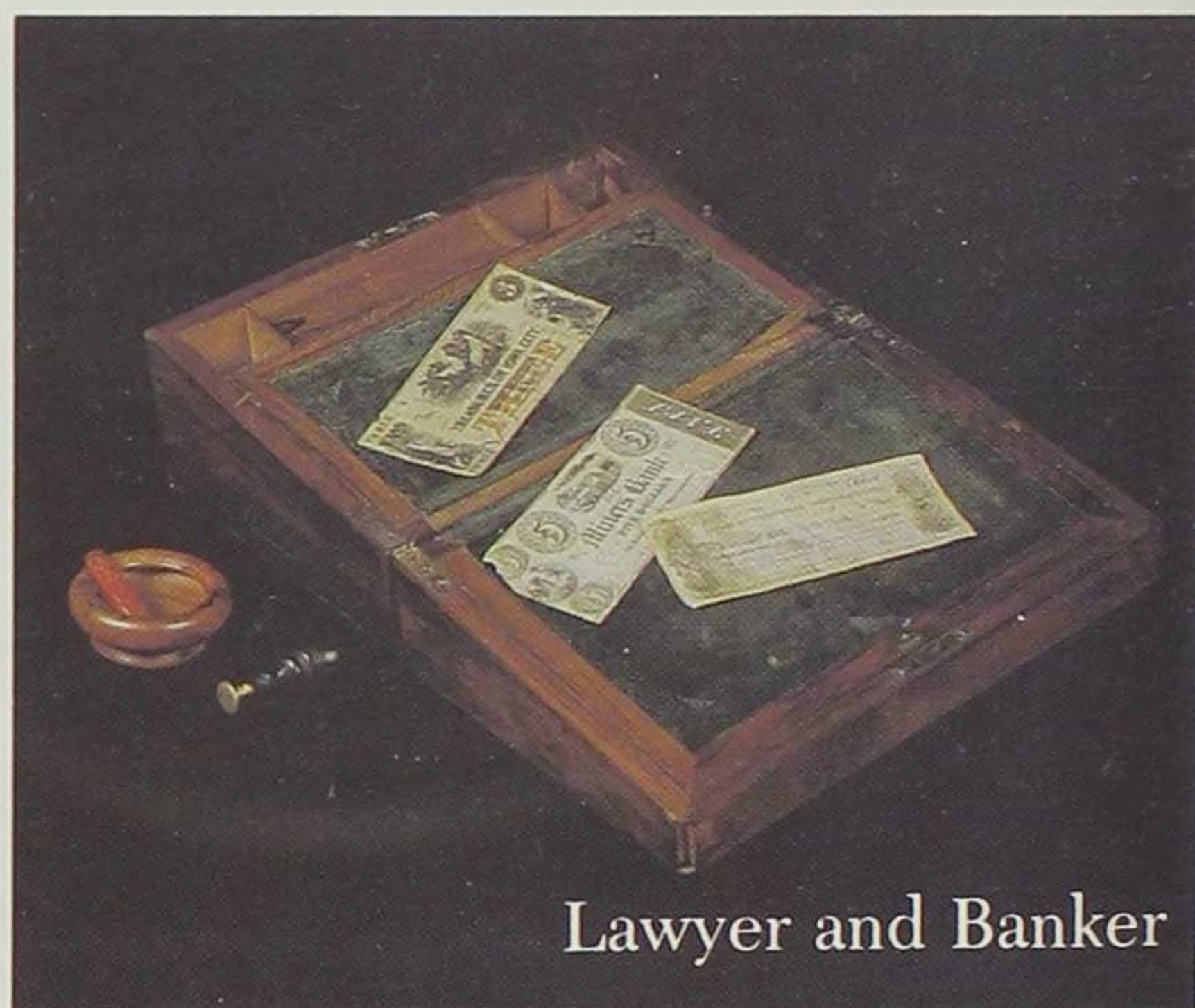
COOPER: Using a sun plane, adz, in-shave, and stave-set, coopers made barrels and casks that were used to ship both finished goods and raw materials.

DOCTOR, DENTIST, DRUGGIST: A constant battle against disease was fought with crude instruments and patent medicine. Here: surgical kit, dentist's turnkey, package of worm lozenges, obstetric forceps, and cedar stethoscope.

PEACE OFFICER: The administration of justice was centered in the towns. Most county seats had jails. Here, handcuffs, leg irons, wooden billy club.

GUNSMITH: The gunsmith was a needed tradesman in frontier Iowa. Here, pepper box pistols, screwdriver and rifling file, cap box and powder container.

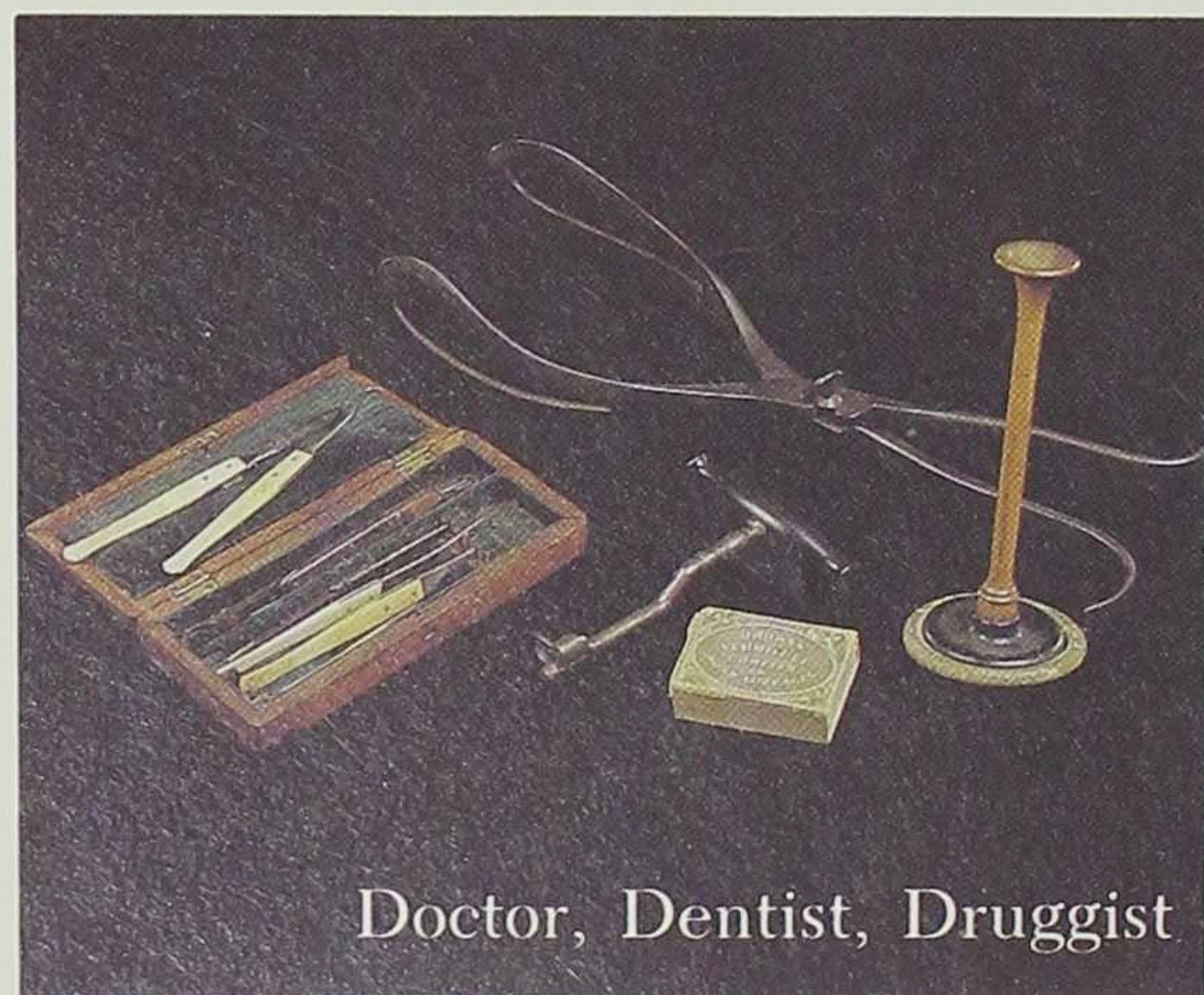
LEATHERWORKER: With a variety of tools and skills, shoemakers and harnessmakers supplied rural and urban customers with needed goods and repair services.



Lawyer and Banker



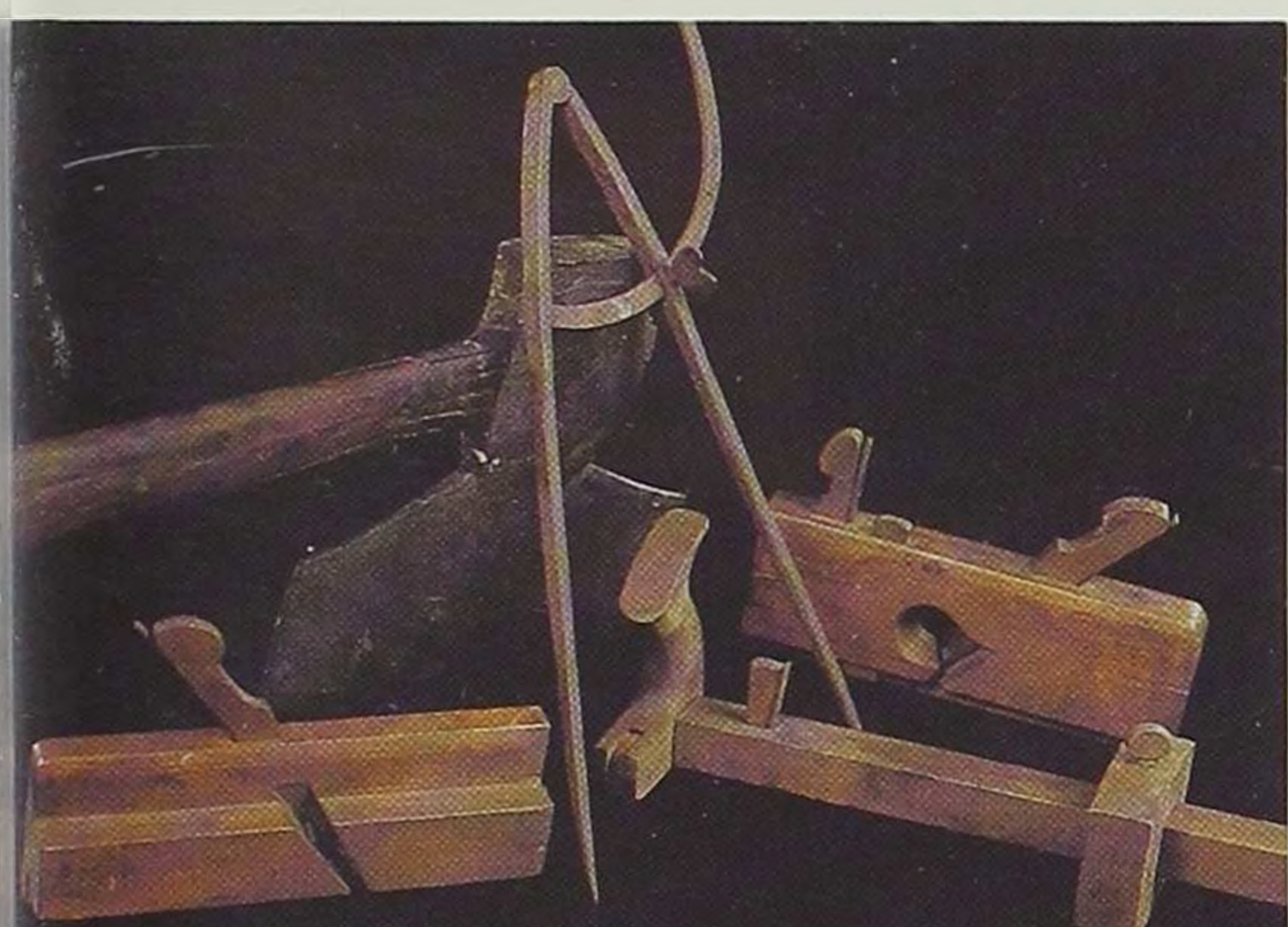
Dry goods merchant



Doctor, Dentist, Druggist



Peace officer



Housewright



Jeweler and Watchmaker



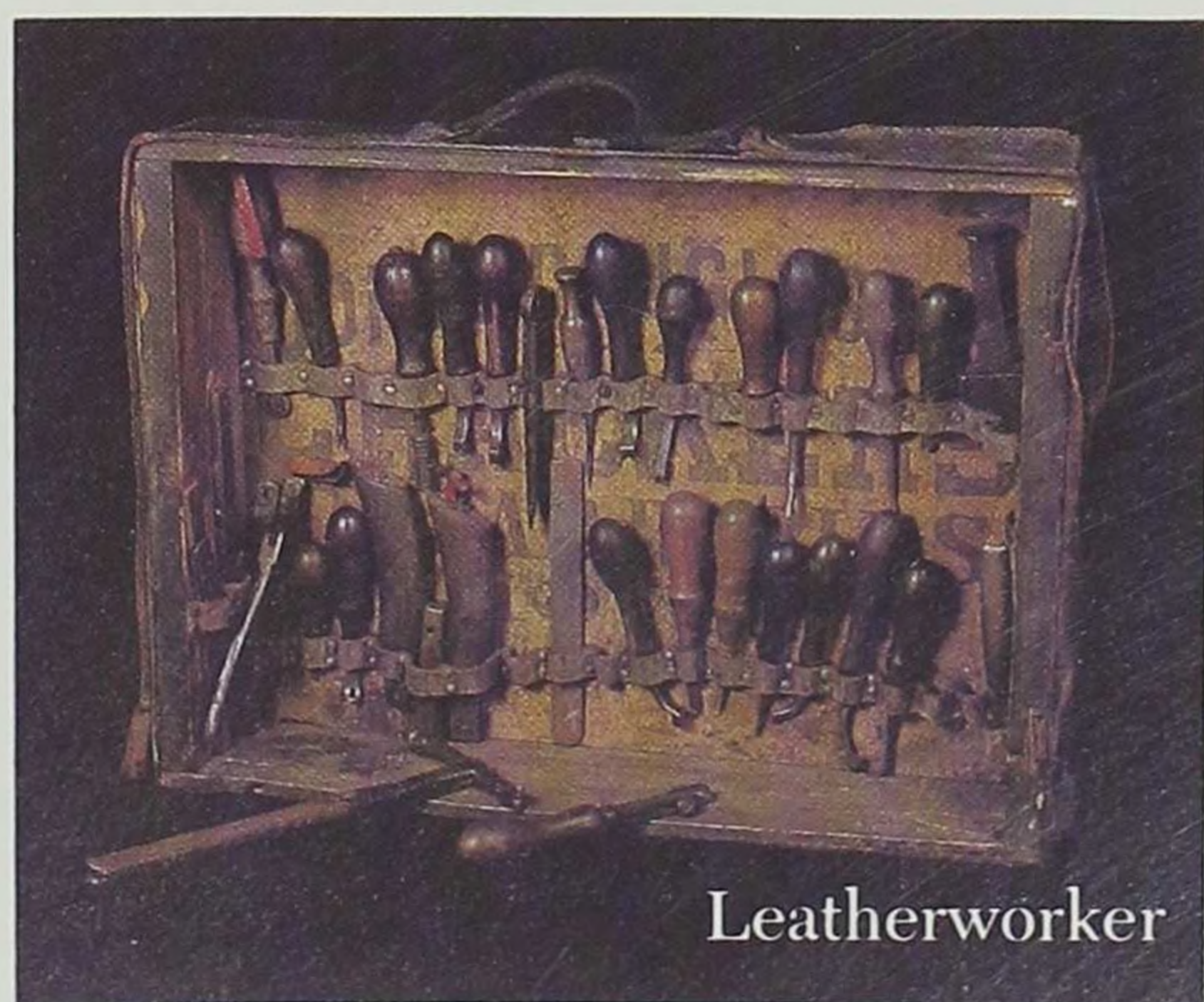
Clergy



Cooper



Gunsmith



Leatherworker

Ordain and Establish



This rosewood and brass portable lap desk was used by Robert Lucas, Iowa's first territorial governor, whose duties included appointing judges, militia officers, sheriffs, and Indian agents and approving legislation.



One of the legislature's administrative duties was to regulate weights and measures for the territory. The standard was set by official brass measures (above), kept at the seat of territorial government.



Everyone was not equal under the law. Only free, white males over the age of twenty-one could vote in elections. Above, banner from the 1840 Harrison presidential campaign, the first to use placards, rallies, and floats.



On December 28, 1846, Iowa Territory became the twenty-ninth state to enter the Union. Here: The first official seal of the State of Iowa, with lion's head press.



White men, elected by white men, made laws concerning rights of blacks and women, education, and criminal and moral acts. In their efforts to protect individual rights, some individuals were more protected than others:

"AN ACT concerning the rights of married women" (1846): a married woman could own property, but any profits belonged to her husband. Sale of property required the husband's co-signature. Individual divorces were also granted by the legislature.

"AN ACT providing for the establishment of common schools" (1839): open to "all white citizens between the ages of four and twenty-one."

"AN ACT for the prevention of certain immoral practices" (1843): One could not work, fight, fish, shoot, or sell liquor on Sunday (unless one observed Saturday as the Sabbath).

"AN ACT to regulate Blacks and Mulattoes" (1839): a freedman's \$500 bond was required of any blacks or mixed-bloods who wanted to settle or live in Iowa.



SALE OF LOTS

IN THE
COUNTY SEAT OF JOHNSON
COUNTY, I. T.

WILL take place on the premises, ON MONDAY the
24th of May, 1841,

Under the superintendence of the Board of Commissioners of said county, and will continue from day to day until all the Lots are sold, (at the discretion of said Commissioners.) This town is situated on the North West quarter of Section 15, Township 79 North, Range 6 West; lying south and adjoining the town plat of IOWA CITY, and is in effect, an addition to said city, the principal streets being laid out parallel and corresponding with the streets of the City. This town is situated on high and dry ground, nearly level, abounding with excellent timber and water. In point of health, this location cannot be surpassed by any in the Territory. IOWA CITY being so generally known, we deem a further description unnecessary. The value and rising prospect of property so advantageously situated, must be apparent to all who are desirous of making profitable investments.

Terms of Sale.

One-fourth of the purchase money in hand, and the balance in three semi-annual instalments. Bond or Certificate will be given for the execution of a Deed when all the payments are made.

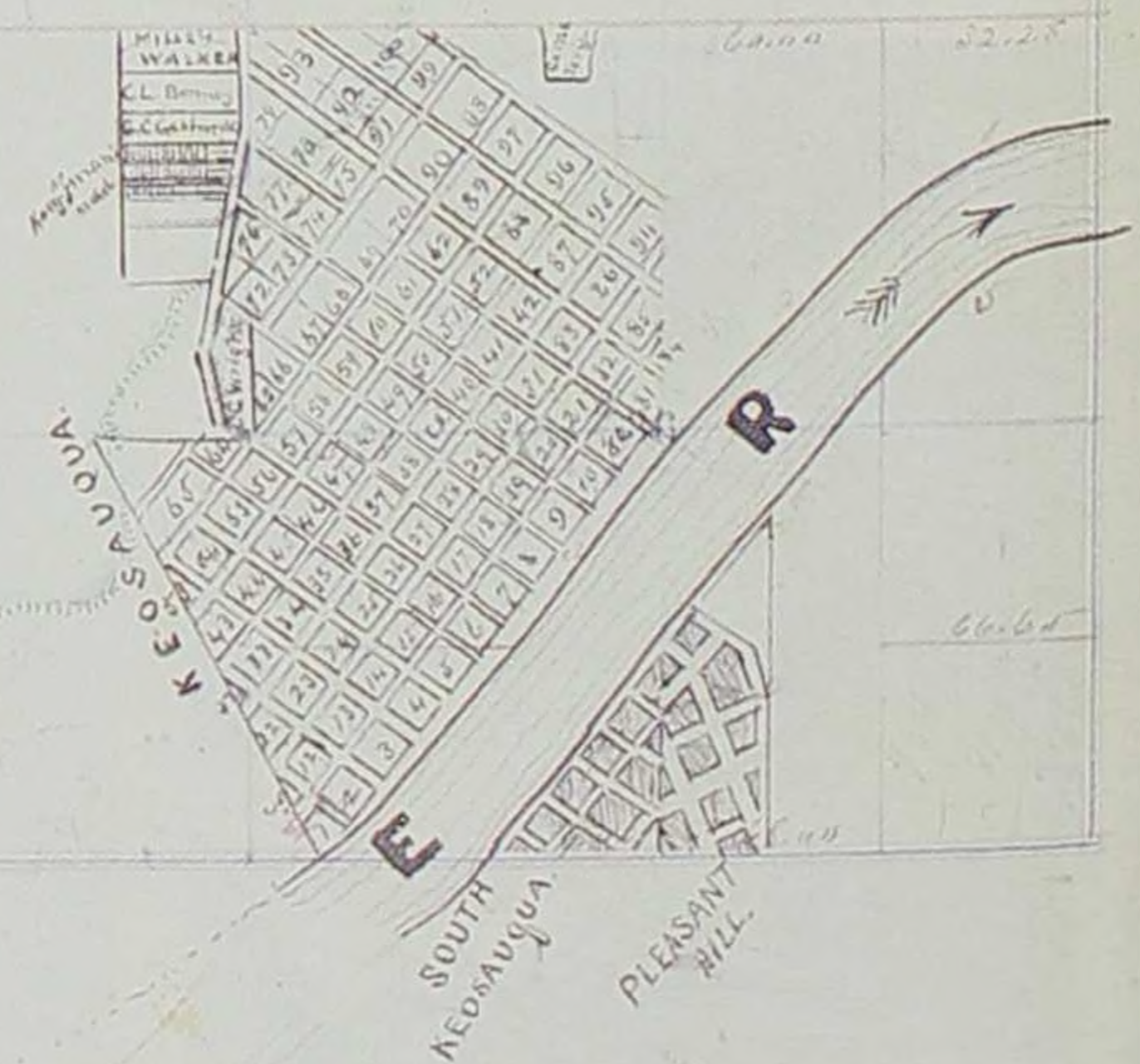
By order of

**PHILIP CLARK,
JOHN PARROTT,**
Commissioners.

S. B. Gardner, Clerk.
February 8, 1841.

PRINTED AT THE "HERALD" OFFICE, BLOOMINGTON, IOWA.

Despite surveyors' efforts to square off Iowa, river towns tended to be laid out parallel to the rivers. Portion of Van Buren County plat and Keosauqua. Inset: 1841 ad for land sales in the new capital city.



Land and Personal Sovereignty

by Jerome Thompson

THE CHANCE TO OWN a piece of land attracted thousands of settlers to territorial Iowa a century and a half ago. Today the "American Dream" for many Americans continues to include owning property, a home, or land. In Iowa particularly, land is a major natural and economic resource, providing a sense of identity and pride. The importance of landownership can be traced back in our history as part of a cultural attitude that has been codified into law. Within this century, for example, elaborate inheritance laws have arisen by which parents pass a family farm onto their children, thereby maintaining through the generations the sense of tradition, identity, and status often associated with landownership. In the century before, the legislators who wrote our state constitution protected citizens' rights to acquire property.

Even much earlier — in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries — conquest and acquisition of land was a driving force behind European exploration and settlement in North America. Explorers claimed vast tracts of land in the name of their royal sponsors, thus extending royal sovereignty over that land, resources, and transportation routes.

That those lands were already "claimed" by the inhabitants — native Americans — was generally ignored by European monarchs and their explorers and colonists. Their justification for rejecting native claims and thus dispossessing the Indians of traditional lands was based on a cultural attitude about the correct way to use the land — an attitude that clashed with native American attitudes.

Ecology historian William Cronon explains the clash in his book *Changes in the Land*. In Europe (where the population was dense and available land was limited) individuals derived their livelihood from a specific piece of land, through crop production or animal husbandry.

Surplus agricultural goods entered a market economy as commodities. The land which had yielded the surpluses was also viewed as a commodity — something that could be bought or traded at a particular economic value. Improvements on the land increased the value.

In North America, Cronon continues, native people used the land in a different way. Taking advantage of a region's diversity of resources, a village remained mobile, moving wherever seasonal abundance showed itself, rather than living permanently on and improving a specific area. Many tribal societies combined agriculture with hunting and gathering. Men hunted, traveling the necessary distances to find the animals. Women tended plots of vegetables (an activity that could be done while also tending children). But after the crops were harvested, the village would move to where other varieties of food were available — nuts, shellfish, waterfowl, berries, or wintering herds. This mobility required that villagers limit possessions to ease travel and resettlement.

The two cultures clashed, Cronon summarizes, because European lifestyle and use of land were based on "fixity" and a view of land and surplus goods as commodities, whereas the native American lifestyle was generally based on mobility and diversity of resources, in which surpluses were shared through kinship customs. Indians pared down their possessions so there was less to carry with them in their mobile lifestyle; what they needed could generally be made from natural materials at hand. But Europeans, for whom material possessions indicated status and a high standard of living, perceived the Indians, with their few possessions, to be living in poverty. Europeans judged the seemingly impoverished Indians as "undeserving" of this land of plenty — and hence rejected their claims.

Historian Wilcomb Washburn has traced

this justification of dispossessing the Indians back to European philosophers as early as Sir Thomas More (in *Utopia* in 1516) and John Locke (in *An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent and End of Civil Government* in 1690); both wrote on the justice of expansion. Although some explorers and colonists (notably Sir Walter Raleigh and Roger Williams) recognized this justification as decidedly unjust, the attitude held sway during European conquest and colonialism and continued into American thought and government. For instance, Washburn quotes Theodore Roosevelt in his 1889 *Winning of the West*: "settler and pioneer have at bottom had justice on their side; this great continent could not have been kept as nothing but a game preserve for squalid savages."

This cultural clash resulted in widespread rejection of native land claims and centuries of conflicts. The Euro-American cultural judgment about the use of land and the individual's right to own a specific piece of land became codified into law — often in the form of treaties that extinguished the native land claims and removed most tribes from traditional lands or significantly reduced the extent of those lands.

JUST AS EUROPEAN monarchs and their colonists had wanted to own land, so did Americans. To meet this need, the federal government created elaborate systems of acquiring the land from native tribes, and then organizing and dividing it so that individual citizens might eventually acquire it for themselves. By passing the Northwest Ordinance in 1787, Congress promised the settlers eyeing the huge Northwest Territory an orderly way of governing this frontier. In his study of the ordinance, Peter S. Onuf writes, "Plans for territorial government culminating in the Northwest Ordinance can only be understood in relation to land policy: the price of lands, their location, and the process of acquiring them determined who would settle the national domain and the kind of communities they would form."

The ordinance immediately addresses the issue of property ownership: Preceded only by a one-sentence introduction, the second paragraph launches into procedures for dividing

property of persons dying intestate. But more important, the ordinance states that in order for residents in the new territory to vote or to serve in territorial government, they must first be landowners. For example, the governor, appointed by Congress, must "reside in the district and have a free-hold estate therein, in one thousand acres of land." Judges had to own five hundred acres, as did members of the legislative council appointed by Congress. To serve as a representative, one had to own two hundred acres. To vote, one had to own fifty acres. Quite simply, to have a hand in ruling people and the land, one had to own land. In determining a territory's destiny, landownership was vital.

Landownership as a voting requirement did not carry through into territorial organizational laws that affected Iowa, nor to Iowa's state constitution approved in 1846. But the lawmakers who wrote the constitution did not neglect the importance of landownership to citizens. Article II of the state constitution (the Bill of Rights) begins: "All men are, by nature, free and independent, and have certain inalienable rights — among which are enjoying and defending life and liberty, *acquiring, possessing and protecting property*, and pursuing and obtaining safety and happiness" (italics added).

Iowans have exercised their constitutional right to acquire and possess property vigorously and happily. But when property is tragically lost, the sorrow of the owners is great. The sense of loss is emotional — not just economic — because dreams are shattered too. This has been witnessed in the recent farm crisis in Iowa and throughout the United States, which has driven many farm families from traditional landholdings. These victims of poor economic times have expressed a strong sense of loss. When land is lost, a culturally ingrained right seems violated.

THE SORROW and loss that native Americans must have felt when they were removed from Iowa by treaty came from a different relationship to the land than individual ownership. Native Americans' philosophy of land rights was rooted in their religious beliefs that include the



DUREN WARD COLLECTION, SHS-HOWA CITY

A Mesquakie wigwag of woven mats was home to Na-na-wa-chi.

unity of the natural world and the human world. One world did not master the other.

Land was held communally by the tribe. "What the Indians owned — or, more precisely, what their villages gave them claim to — was not the land but the things that were on the land during the various seasons of the year," historian Cronon explains. "An individual's or family's rights to property were defined by the community which recognized those rights," he continues, "whereas the community's territorial claims were made in opposition to those of other sovereign groups."

Francis La Flesche, an Omaha Indian, writes, "The White people speak of the country at this period [of their settlement] as 'a wilderness,' as though it was an empty tract without human interest or history. To us Indians it was as clearly defined then as it is today; we knew the boundaries of tribal lands, those of our friends and those of our foes." Before and during Iowa's territorial period, Iowa lands were home, at least temporarily, to several sovereign groups — the Sauk, Mesquakie (Fox), eastern divisions of the Dakota (Sioux), Winnebago, Pottawatomie, Omaha, Otoes, and Missouris. Tribes recognized boundaries and areas of land used by other tribes.

The key word here is "used." Land provided a tribe's living. The animals that lived on the land were hunted for food, clothing, tools, and weapons. The plants that grew there were harvested from gardens or gathered from the wild. Stone, wood, fiber, and clay were used for making tools and other equipment. All of these resources were used and were therefore owned

— but not the land. Tribes did not perceive an economic value to land; it was not a commodity. No one could own or sell the land, although one could hold rights to certain activities on that land.

In Iowa, the rights of the Mesquakie tribe were extinguished through a series of treaties enacted between 1804 and 1842. The United States government paid the Mesquakie in cash and goods as they gave up their claims to the land in Iowa.

The 1842 treaty required that the Mesquakie be removed from Iowa by 1845. But the Mesquakie did not want to leave their land. Groups of Mesquakie fled from the Racoon River Agency near Fort Des Moines into the Des Moines River valley, hoping to avoid relocation to lands in Kansas. Troops were dispatched to capture and force the Mesquakie to move. On December 10, 1845, Lieutenant R.S. Granger carved the following inscription on a rock along the Des Moines River in Boone County: "Found 200 Indians Hid and Around This Mound They Cried, No Go! No Go! But We Took Them to Ft. D[es Moines]."

In 1856 the Mesquakie, as a tribe, chose to return to Iowa and began to buy land in the state. Today the Mesquakie live on a settlement of some 3,000 acres of land in Tama County, purchased in parcels by the tribe over the last 132 years. The land is owned by the tribe as a whole, not individually. Significantly, the Mesquakie used the federal government's legal system of land purchases and individual ownership to maintain their own cultural view of communal sovereignty.

AN AERIAL VIEW of Iowa is often likened to an orderly and rich patchwork quilt. Square or rectangular fields and roads intersecting at right angles are the products of a significant legal system for organizing land. Without this two-century-old system, words like section, quarter-section, square mile, and south forty would be absent from our lexicon of land terms.

This system of regularity is a product of the Land Ordinance of 1785. Preceding the Northwest Ordinance by two years, this act set forth a system of surveying, dividing, and disposing of "territory ceded by individual States to the

United States which has been purchased of the Indian inhabitants." Federally hired surveyors were to "divide the said territory into townships of six miles square, by lines running due north and south and others crossing these at right angles." The townships "shall be marked by subdivisions into lots of one square mile or 640 acres." With these orders, the land in the Northwest Territory (which became Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin) was divided so that individual citizens might be able to afford portions. Transactions could be accurately recorded by the location of the land on an imaginary grid.

Once Iowa received territorial status, it, too, was surveyed and divided. Today roads and edges of fields are physical manifestations of these small, affordable portions divided up by the government and bought by individuals. It is these boundary lines of privately owned property that provide the patchwork quality.

According to the Land Ordinance of 1785, lands had to be organized — namely, surveyed — before they could be sold to the public. But the slow, tedious process of surveying often took years to complete. For instance, some of the lands opened in 1845/46 by the 1842 Sauk and Mesquakie treaty were not surveyed until the 1850s. Ira Cook, a government surveyor, wrote in his memoirs that he began surveying ten townships in present-day Carroll and Sac counties in September 1852 — seven years after the area had been opened.

Settlers coming to territorial Iowa did not want to wait for the official surveying as required by law. They moved onto the public domain in spite of the law and began staking claims. In September 1842 the *Bloomington Herald* reported that along the Des Moines River (on land opened under an 1837 treaty) "almost every tree bore the initials of some adventurous pioneer, and by way of indicating to the observer the right to title by which it was to be and would be defended, the representation of a bowie knife, a brace of pistols (crossed at the muzzle), or a rifle was cut in a tree above or below the name of the claimant."

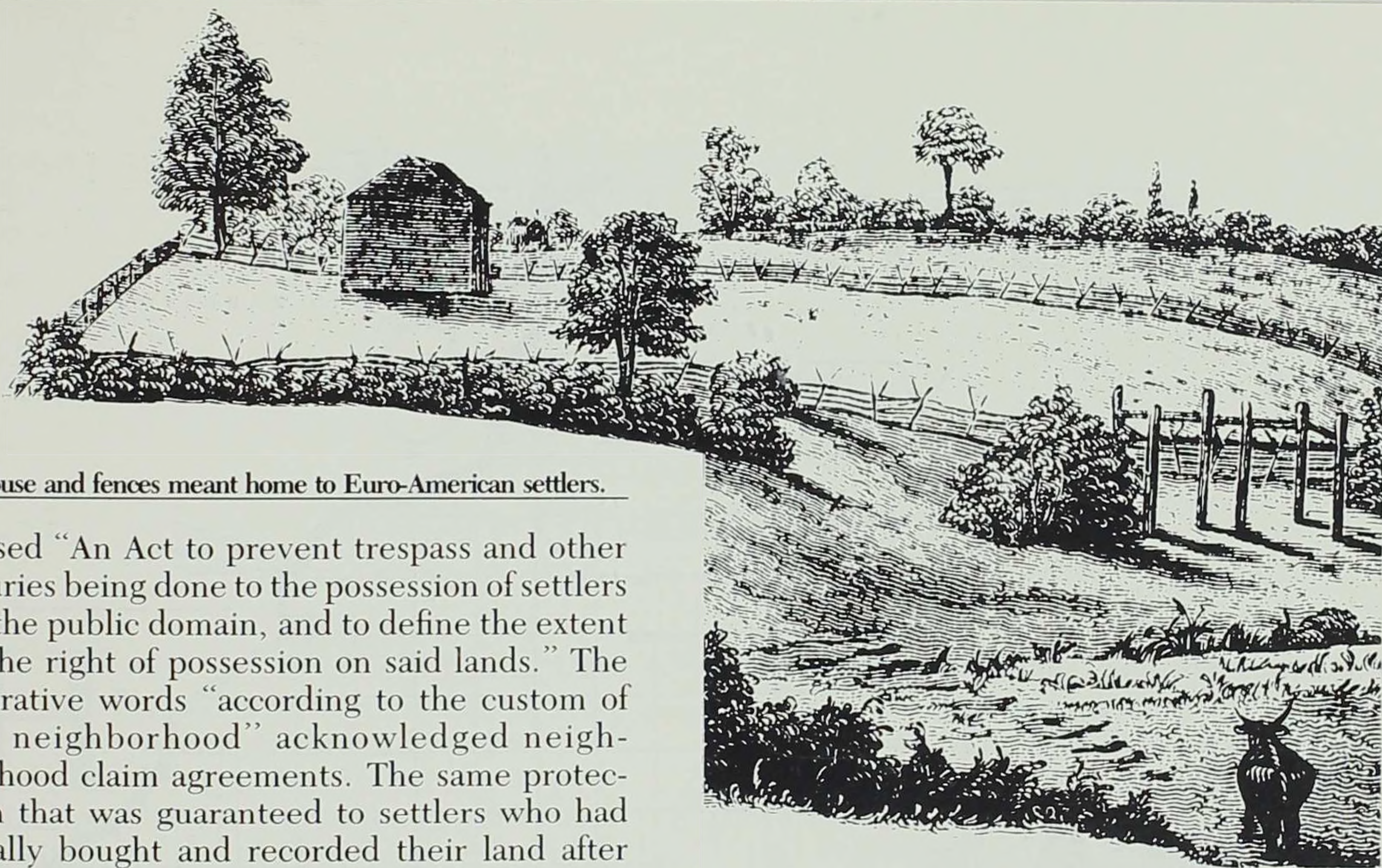
One such "adventurous pioneer," Aristarchus Cone, ventured to Iowa in 1838 to "go into the Farming business" with his partner, Richard Lord. Cone described stumbling

onto claims that were marked by "improvements" such as a log pen or a patch of corn or potatoes. These "improvements" indicated an individual's intent to settle and buy that land. Although the claimant might be absent, the improvements "encouraged" newcomers to seek land elsewhere.

Following the custom, Cone and Lord made similar improvements. As Cone later described it, "I staked off my claim (The Land had not been surveyed at this time only into Townships six miles square) and went to the recorder of Claims living about 8 miles distant near the mouth of the Cedar River and had a Record made of it. My Friend Lord took a claim near mine we paid 50 cts each for Recording our Claimes this was according to squatter rule there being not much Law or Gospel here." Cone continued, "The Land was run off into section[s] soon after we came here and we conformed our claimes to the sections Lines I put up a rail pen in the shape of a House on my claim had it noted on the surveyors Book and returned to the General Land Office at Washington with my name. . . . This fully confirmed my sovereignty as a squatter on the Public Domain."

SUCH INFORMAL — and extralegal — systems of organizing and protecting claims were frequently implemented. On a local basis people agreed by formal charter how much land could be claimed and how claims would be marked and improved, and then forced neighbors to not bid against each other when the land was officially auctioned after federal surveying. These "claim clubs" developed out of local fear that monied land speculators might try to wrest club members' illegal claims from them at the public sales following surveying.

Recognizing that settlers were not waiting for desirable land to be fully surveyed before claiming it, lawmakers took action. Whether passed in the interest of their constituents or as an attempt to make a widespread illegal action legal, preemption laws were passed on a territorial and federal level to regulate and facilitate the claiming process. In 1839, for example, claim clubs became legal institutions by allusion when the Iowa Territorial Assembly



A house and fences meant home to Euro-American settlers.

passed "An Act to prevent trespass and other injuries being done to the possession of settlers on the public domain, and to define the extent of the right of possession on said lands." The operative words "according to the custom of the neighborhood" acknowledged neighborhood claim agreements. The same protection that was guaranteed to settlers who had legally bought and recorded their land after surveying — namely, freedom from trespass, forcible detainer, and ejectment — were now guaranteed to settlers on the public domain. In September 1841, Congress granted those who had settled on public lands after June 1840 the right to maintain their claims (not exceeding 160 acres) and purchase them at public sales.

THE BOUNDARIES that define a piece of land are respected as messages that that area is claimed by someone. Native Americans chose natural landmarks such as rivers and creeks as boundaries announcing tribal use of the land that lay between the waterways. In territorial Iowa, eager settlers carved initials on trees to mark off the best land they could find. Federal surveyors, ignoring the twist of a river or the quality of land, duly numbered off sections and lots on township maps while sighting through their compasses. Today Iowa's fence-line boundaries are commonly recognized and respected and are formalized in legal documents of ownership. In any situation where people live and work, boundaries are a mental and mathematical concept tangibly expressed and culturally respected — in the plat books in a county courthouse, by a picket fence or hedge on a city property lot line, by interior walls dividing up offices or apartments in a building.

Boundaries command this respect because they are statements of ownership. Acquisition

and claiming of property by a variety of means and justifications has been part of the Euro-American experience for nearly five hundred years. Acquisition and possession of property is a basic freedom granted Iowans under the state constitution. Within boundaries and on one's property a person is free (within the law) to pursue the right to obtain happiness and security in one's own way. Having property may not be happiness, but it may enable happiness. Having property won't make you free, but it might let you feel free.

By the prevailing cultural definition in this nation, owning property is part of the "American Dream." Perhaps that is why when people lose their land, the loss is emotional. When land is lost, a culturally ingrained right may seem to be lost too. The creators of the documents that governed the acquisition, division, and sale of land acknowledged and met Euro-Americans' need to possess their individual space. □

NOTE ON SOURCES

Secondary sources cited are William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York, 1983); Francis La Flesche, *The Middle Five* (Madison, 1963); Peter S. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Bloomington, 1987); Mildred Throne, ed., "The Memories of Aristarchus Cone," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* (Jan. 1951); and Wilcomb E. Washburn, "The Moral and Legal Justifications for Dispossessing the Indians," in *Seventeenth-Century America*, ed. James Morton Smith (Chapel Hill, 1959).

Map
OF THE SURVEYED PART
OF
IOWA TERRITORY,

FROM THE OFFICIAL PLATS;
Defining all the TOWNSHIPS & COUNTIES, and being the
only Map yet published, exhibiting the location

OF
IOWA CITY
the permanent Seat of Government of the Territory,
as established by the Commissioners 4th May, 1839.

Map compiled and published by
John H. Smith
of Sinsper, Wisconsin.



Ten months after Iowa achieved territorial status, this 1839 map boasted of "being the only Map yet published exhibiting the location of Iowa City, the permanent Seat of Government of the Territory." Nevertheless, not until the fall of 1842 did the territorial legislature convene in the new stone capitol built in Iowa City.

A REGULATED SOCIETY

by David Walker

HALF A CENTURY before Iowa gained territorial status in 1838, years before Iowa and the rest of the Louisiana Purchase even became part of the United States, the fundamental governing structure of new territories was being determined in New York City. In 1787, while convention delegates from a dozen states hammered out the Constitution in Philadelphia, the U.S. Congress convened in New York.

That summer the land west of the Mississippi was not on the minds of the congressmen meeting in New York City. How to govern the Northwest Territory, however, was on their minds, and by what system new states would enter the Union from that huge territory northwest of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi. On July 13 they solved this problem by passing the Northwest Ordinance, one of the most fundamental documents in America's political history. The ordinance would be used fifty-one years later as the foundation of territorial government in the new Iowa Territory. In deciding matters of morals and suffrage, schoolhouses and slavery, frontier lawmakers in territorial Iowa would refer back to the Northwest Ordinance.

Originally included in the Louisiana Purchase, the area we now call Iowa became part of the Missouri Territory in 1812 when Louisiana gained statehood (the first to be admitted from the Louisiana Purchase). In 1821 Missouri became a state, and Iowa became known only as the "Iowa District," not part of any recognized territory. During all this time there were few if any permanent Euro-American settlers in Iowa, making the need for a governmental

structure minimal. But in 1833, after the forced removal of the Sauk and Fox (Mesquakie) tribes from eastern Iowa by June 1, settlers began crossing the Mississippi into the Black Hawk Purchase.

The following year the Iowa District was placed under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Territory. The district was divided into two enormous counties, Du Buque and De Moine, at a line drawn west from Rock Island. Thus, in the frontier towns of Burlington and Dubuque federal and territorial laws were enforced, criminal and civil cases were tried, and land claims were registered.

As Michigan approached statehood in 1836, the Iowa District joined the newly created Wisconsin Territory. Settlement in the Iowa part of Wisconsin Territory grew rapidly, and residents assumed an active role in territorial government. Eighteen representatives from Du Buque and De Moine counties sat in the Wisconsin territorial legislature. At the first session the legislators met in the isolated lead-mining community of Belmont (now in southwestern Wisconsin); the second session convened in Burlington. Although residents in each of the river towns of Dubuque, Bellevue, and Burlington actively lobbied to become the permanent seat of government, the political influence and land manipulations of lawyer/speculator James Doty convinced lawmakers to establish the territorial capital in Madison.

Arguing that a rapidly growing population did not want to be so far removed from the seat of government, a group of Iowans soon established committees to pursue separate territorial status. Supportive resolutions were introduced in Congress by Territorial Delegate

George W. Jones (from Dubuque) and Missouri senator Lewis F. Linn. Despite partisan squabbles and the nationally divisive issue of slavery expansion, both houses of Congress passed the necessary legislation and sent it on to the president. On June 12, 1838, Martin Van Buren signed the law (the Iowa Organic Act). On July 4, 1838, the land we now know as Iowa, as well as half of present-day Minnesota and part of the Dakotas, was officially recognized as Iowa Territory.

BY THIS TIME Congress had modified the rigid stages of political organization contained in the Northwest Ordinance, dispensing with the earlier requirement that there be 5,000 free adult males before a legislature could be elected. Federal officials were quickly appointed by the president and confirmed by Congress. Presi-

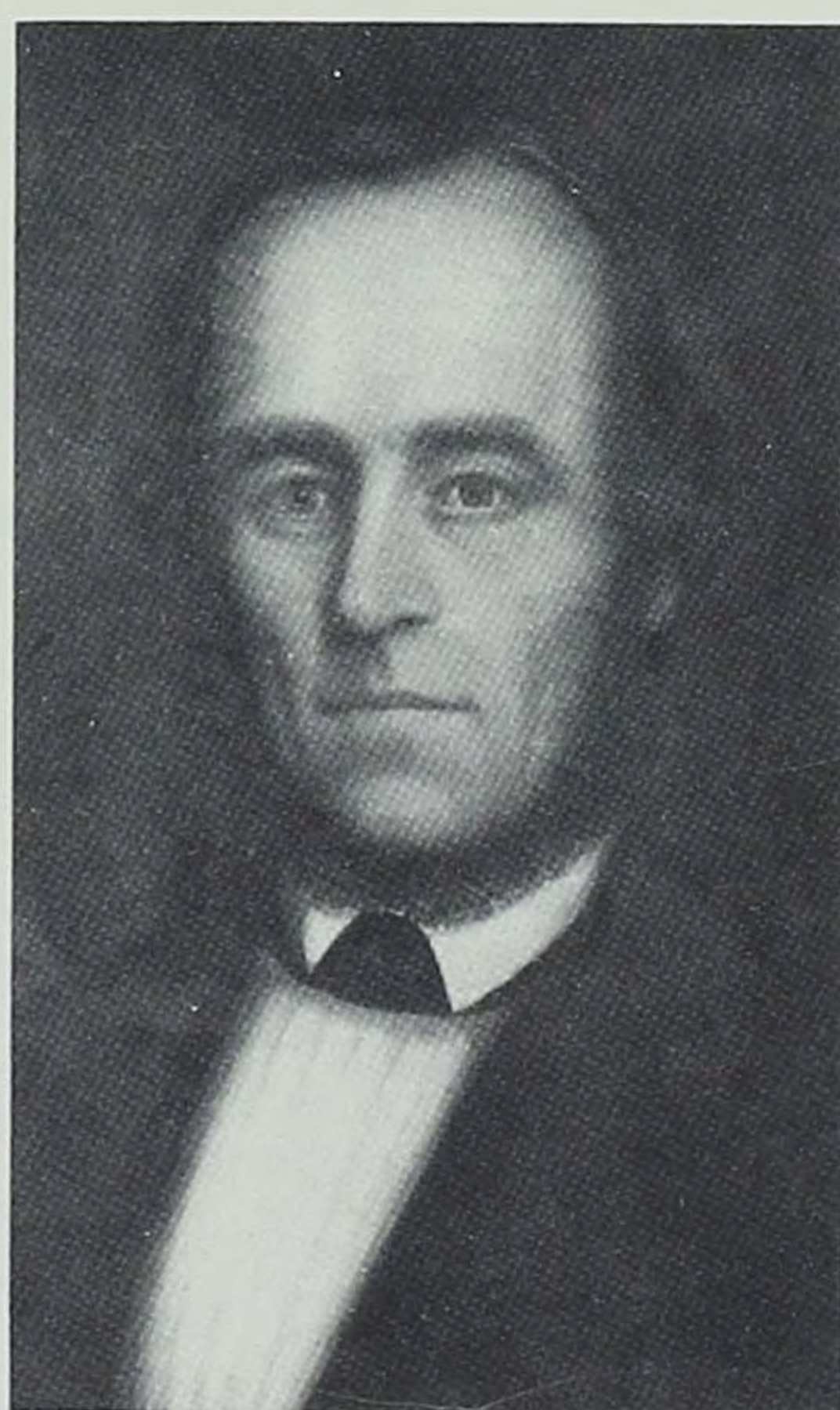
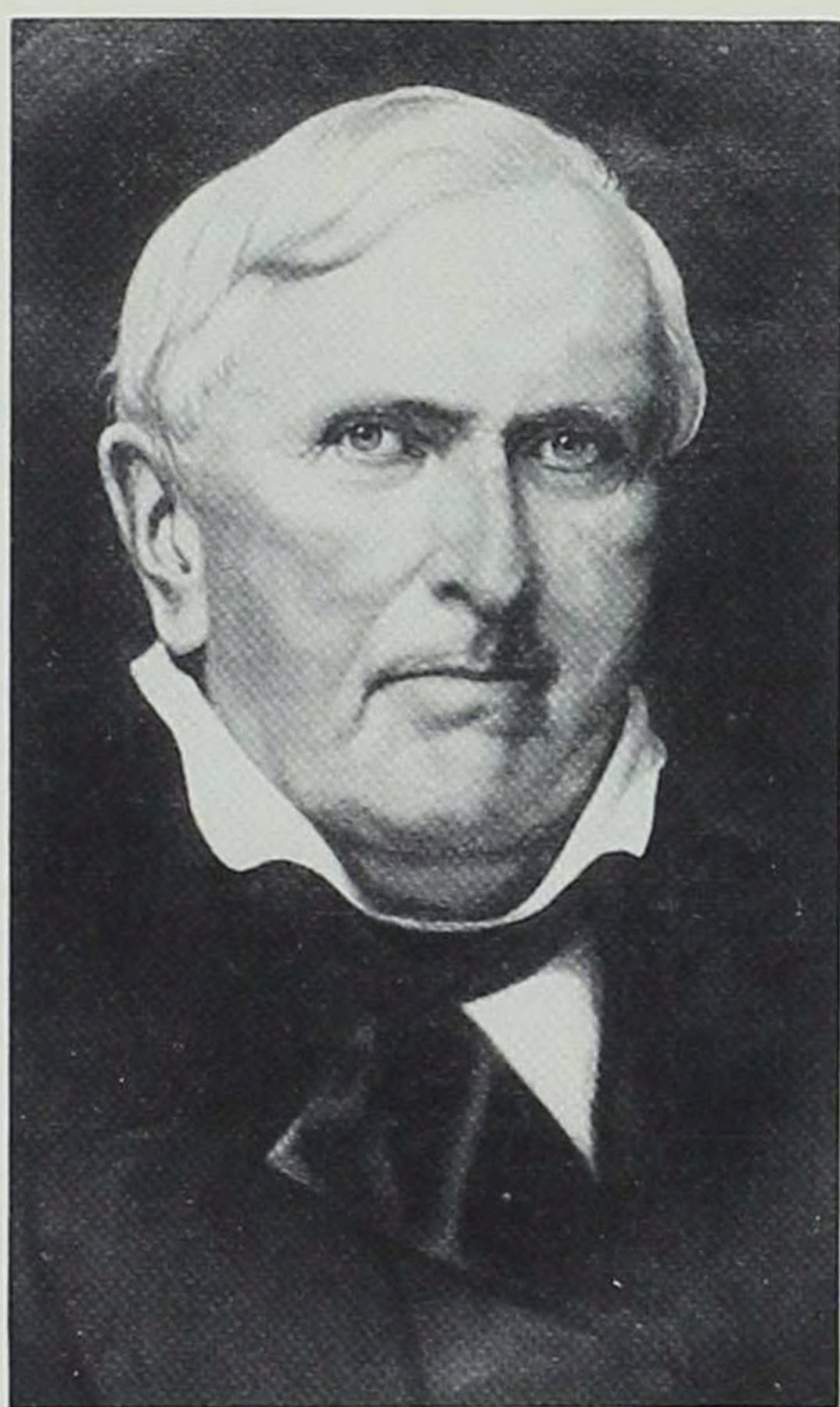
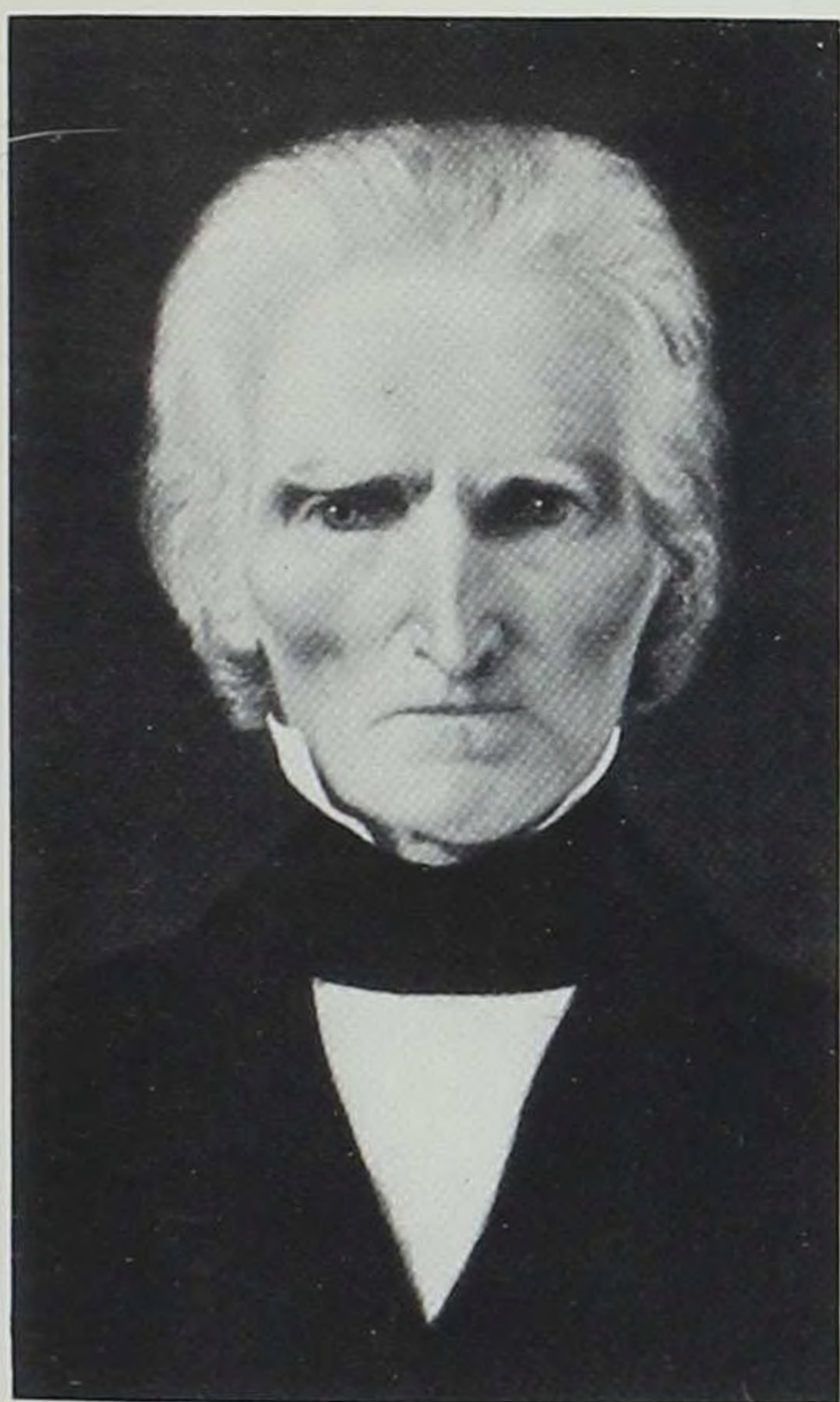


Iowa's first territorial assembly convened in Burlington's Methodist Church. Later called "Old Zion," the church appears above in a much later photo.

dent Van Buren appointed experienced Democrat and former Ohio governor Robert Lucas as the territory's first executive. A Quaker turned Methodist, Lucas had trained as a surveyor before taking his young family from western Virginia to the Ohio frontier. Following experience in both houses of the Ohio legislature, he had served two terms as governor. In that office, Lucas had advocated free public schools, strengthened the militia, and battled with Michigan authorities over a controversial boundary (a similar challenge would confront him as Iowa's governor).

Under the Iowa Organic Act, which was built on the Northwest Ordinance, the governor held executive power and authority as commander-in-chief of the militia and superintendent of Indian affairs. Upon his arrival at Burlington by way of steamboat in August 1838, Governor Lucas called for a census to be taken, established legislative districts, and set an election date. Although this and other executive prerogatives had already been exercised by the appointed territorial secretary, a partisan Jacksonian Democrat from Pennsylvania named William B. Conway, Lucas quickly asserted gubernatorial authority; he would continue to quarrel openly with this young rival.

Governor Lucas also appointed district and supreme court judges, justices of the peace, sheriffs, militia officers, and county surveyors. Legislative power was to be vested in the governor and a bicameral legislative assembly. The assembly would be composed of a Council of thirteen members elected biennially and a House of Representatives of twenty-six members elected annually. For election to either, one had to reside in the appropriate district and be able to vote — a right held by "every free white male citizen of the United States, above the age of twenty-one years." All lawmakers would enjoy identical privileges and immunities and receive equal pay — three dollars per day in annual session (which could not exceed seventy-five days) and three dollars for every twenty miles of travel between home and the capital. The Organic Act further specified that lawmakers could not simultaneously hold a regular military commission, nor could they hold any office created by the same assembly



Iowa's three territorial governors were presidential appointees. Democrat Robert Lucas (left) served from 1838 to 1841; Whig John Chambers (middle), from 1841 to 1845. He was succeeded by Democrat James Clarke (right), 1845–1846.

branch in which they served or for one year thereafter.

Following the election, the first Iowa territorial assembly convened on November 12, 1838, in Burlington's Methodist Church (later called Old Zion). Although Democrats held nearly a two-to-one margin in the House (but only one vote difference in the Council), Whigs assumed two leadership positions. Lee County merchant Jesse B. Browne, who at six feet seven inches towered over his colleagues, presided in the Council, and William H. Wallace of Henry County was Speaker of the House, the only Whig to ever hold that office.

PARTISAN POLITICAL struggles dominated each of the eight annual assemblies and two extra sessions during the territorial period. The assemblies convened in Burlington until moving permanently to Iowa City in 1842. Despite success for both Democrats and Whigs in presidential elections (which led to new federal appointees in Iowa), the party of Jackson and Van Buren nevertheless dominated every session of the lawmakers, each constitutional con-

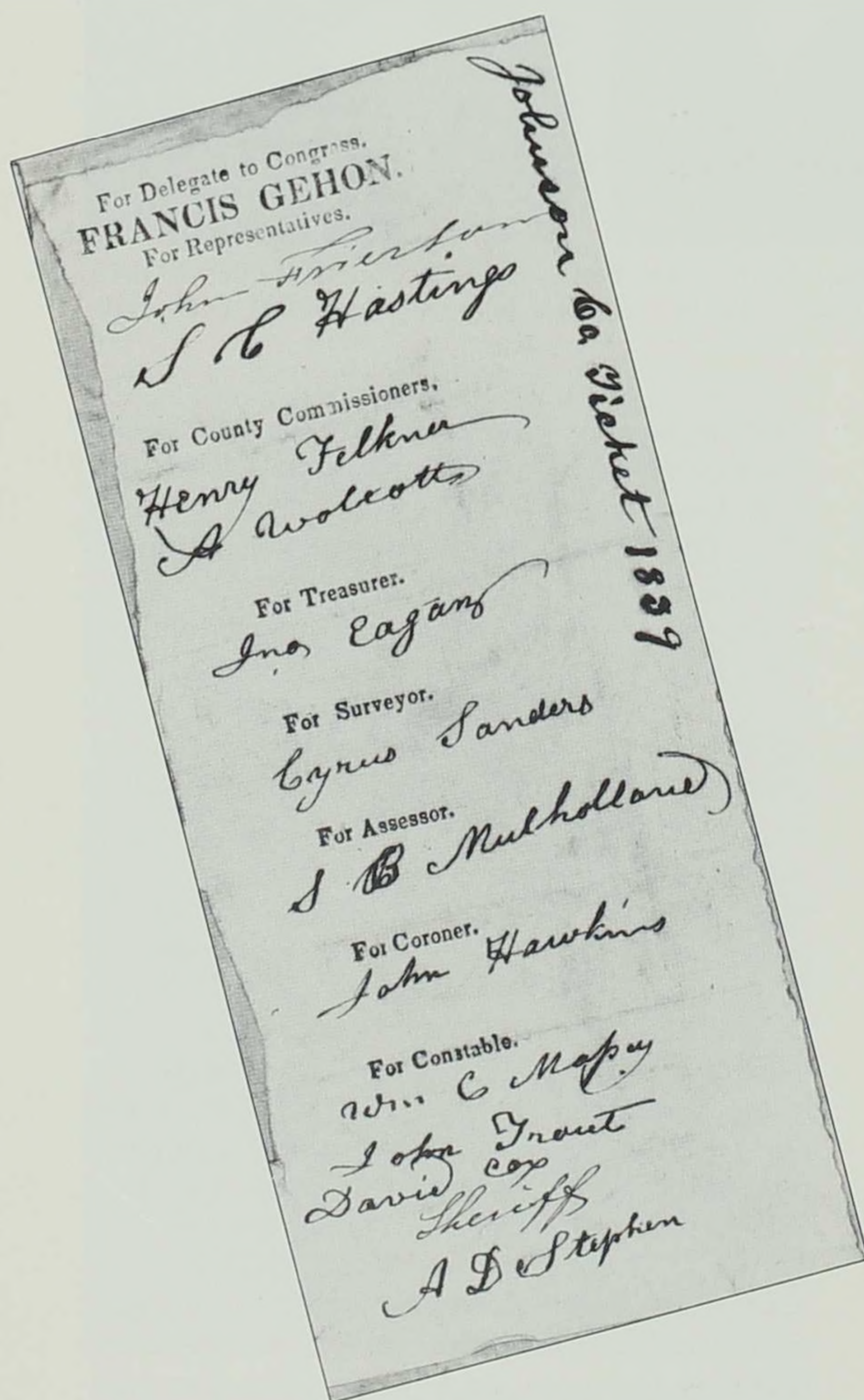
vention, and the election of both congressional delegates. As a result, territorial statutes do not reflect such major Whig principles as support for a national banking system and circulation of a uniform paper currency.

Voters had elected the initial legislators following campaigns revolving around such issues as county seat location, temperance, internal improvements, and personal notoriety. Local issues continued to dominate the election of the second assembly, but party affiliation also exerted some influence. From 1840 on, however, partisan organization became extremely important. The feverish excitement generated by presidential campaigns during the 1840s — including mass rallies, barbecues, and parades — contributed significantly to coalescing political organization on the Iowa frontier. Each party established central committees, correspondence networks, and local clubs.

In order to maintain and expand voter solidarity, both parties depended upon openly supportive newspaper editors from the two capital cities. Democrats relied on the *Burlington Gazette* and the *Iowa Capital Reporter*, whereas Whig issues were reflected on the pages of the *Hawk-Eye* and *Iowa Patriot*.

and the *Iowa Standard*. This highly charged, partisan atmosphere is captured in the following verse popular among Whigs in the 1844 election:

Ye Whigs who fought the noble fight,
For Tip and Tyler too,
Remember that we've met this day
To organize anew;
And by the blessings of that power,
Which smiled on those of yore,
We'll lay the traitor on his back,
And Martin on the floor.



1839 ballot from Johnson County

THE ORGANIC ACT provided that the lawmakers' authority extended "to all rightful subjects of legislation." This seemingly unlimited power, however, was subject to implied and articulated restrictions. First, a basic assumption was that laws of the United States extended over the territory and its inhabitants. Second, the House Judiciary Committee listed thirty-four statutes from territorial government in Michigan and Wisconsin that remained in effect in Iowa. Most related to property rights and criminal law and would subsequently be altered or replaced. In some cases, such as a law regulating marriage (by legally recognizing those marriages conducted by ordained ministers), it remained the only statute on a particular issue. Specific prohibitions did exist: the legislature was restricted from interfering with laws disposing of the public domain, from taxing federal property, and from establishing a higher tax rate on the land and property of non-residents. For the first year the governor held absolute veto power, and all territorial laws were subject to Congressional approval.

Throughout Iowa's eight years of territorial government, the legislators took action on matters that affected territorial growth and development, but they also acted on particular concerns of communities, interest groups, and individuals. This reached its extreme in the legislature's granting of divorces to individual couples. The vast majority of territorial statutes, however, established and administered departments and offices of government. These somewhat routine but often lengthy statutes organized a board of commissioners in each county, defined crimes and punishment and regulated criminal proceedings, organized and governed the militia, and established the election of sheriffs and constables. As the first governor Lucas was responsible for inaugurating a census for apportioning legislative districts, establishing the time and place of elections, and creating judicial districts and selecting the justices, but thereafter most organizational activities reverted to the legislature.

A property tax funded the cost of operating the territorial government. Initially 5 percent of all revenue collected in each county was set aside for administrative operation. In 1841,



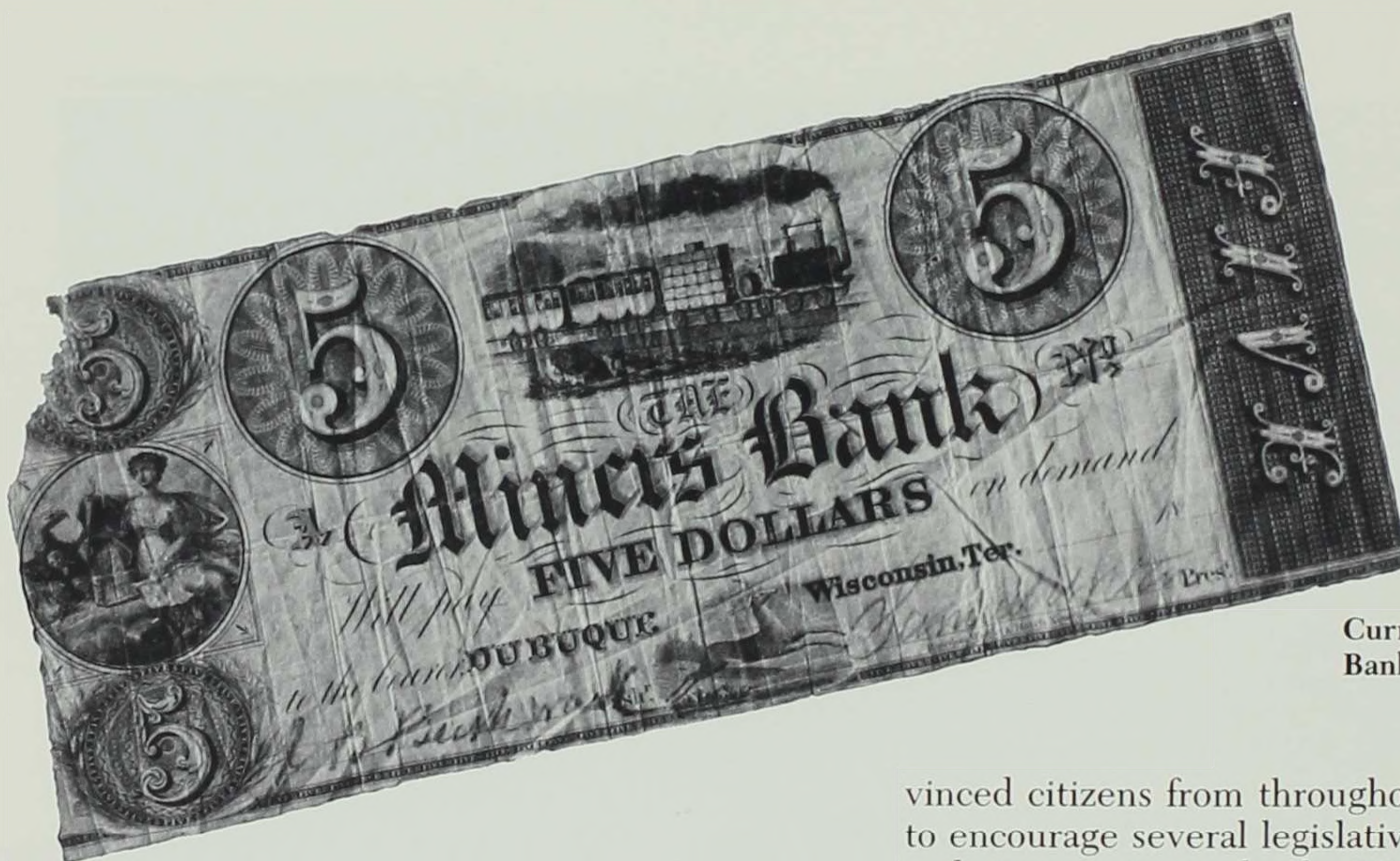
Within the chambers of Old Capitol, territorial lawmakers debated the pros and cons of joining the Union. This image dates to 1853; the occasion was a Johnson County fair. In 1857 the state capital was moved to Des Moines.

however, the territorial tax was separated from county revenue, but county commissioners continued to levy and collect the tax.

Numerous legislative acts sought to stimulate economic growth and to protect property rights. Lawmakers incorporated and chartered individual companies to construct, operate, and maintain roads, ferries, mills, dams, steamboats, and other means of transportation. Agriculture and household manufactures were encouraged through funds distributed to county agricultural organizations and the Iowa Territorial Agricultural Society. Rights to real and personal property were protected in wills

and estate settlements. Widows whose husbands died intestate were allowed to retain certain possessions that were exempt from debt obligations, namely, "one bed and bedding, the wearing apparel of herself and family, one milch cow and calf, her saddle and bridle, one horse, household and kitchen furniture sufficient for herself and family, and provisions for the same for one year."

In a somewhat related matter, the legislature made an interesting distinction related to property settlement in divorces. If the wife committed adultery, her husband would control not only jointly held property, but also her



Currency from Miners' Bank of Dubuque

real estate during his lifetime. A judge would decide if the wife would receive any "subsistence allowance." If, on the other hand, the husband committed adultery, the wife would receive all of her "land and inheritance," one half of his personal estate, and a court-determined lifelong alimony.

The most contentious economic issue revolved around the existence of banks. In late 1836 the Wisconsin Territory legislature had authorized formation of the Miners' Bank of Dubuque. The bank quickly experienced serious financial difficulty, accelerated in part by management activities and by the general anti-bank stance of Democratic administrations in Washington, D.C. (During the 1830s President Jackson carried out a bitter struggle against the national banking system and its circulation of paper currency. A wave of speculation in western lands and overly ambitious state transportation projects flooded the nation with bank notes. This, in turn, accelerated public suspicion of the fluctuating, nonregulated value of paper dollars.)

Triggered by numerous economic issues (including Jackson's feud against banks), the panic of 1837 and enforcement of the Specie Circular (which required individuals to use only gold and silver when buying federal land) led to widespread depression. Especially detrimental in Iowa, national fiscal policies con-

vinced citizens from throughout the territory to encourage several legislative investigations and attempts to revoke the Miners' Bank charter. The final devastating blow came on March 29, 1841, when Miners' Bank suspended all specie payments for three years — an action that directly affected investors in bank stock, and indirectly led to a total lack of public confidence in the entire institution.

The issue of banks was raised in the 1844 and 1846 constitutional conventions and elicited bitter partisan rhetoric. Most Democratic delegates at the first convention favored repeal of the Miners' Bank charter and a prohibition on the establishment of future banks. But conservative Democrats led by ex-governor Lucas joined the Whigs in supporting a provision that each bank charter had to be approved by voters in a general election. Two years later, with Democrats more unified and in complete control of the convention, the 1846 constitution specifically prohibited the creation of "corporations with banking privileges." (Meanwhile, in May 1845 the legislature had revoked the Miners' Bank charter. District court judges had appointed two trustees to sell all bank property and collect outstanding debts.)

TERRITORIAL LAWMAKERS also sought to protect individual rights. The Organic Act included a brief, one-sentence bill of rights, declaring that "the inhabitants of said Territory shall be entitled to all rights, privileges, and immu-

nities heretofore granted and secured to the Territory of Wisconsin and to its inhabitants." By implication, Iowa residents retained rights specified in the Northwest Ordinance and the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

The 1844 and 1846 Iowa constitutions also included a lengthy bill of rights, but the legislature went further in addressing specific issues. The Northwest Ordinance had affirmed that "religion, morality and knowledge" were essential ingredients for establishing good government; therefore "schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." In the Land Ordinance of 1785 the Confederation Congress had already provided an incentive: the proceeds from the sale of one section of each surveyed township were to be set aside "for the maintenance of public schools within the said township."

Lucas stressed this link between townships and public schools. In his initial address to the legislature in 1838, he declared, "There is no subject to which I wish to call your attention more emphatically, than the subject of establishing, at the commencement of our political existence, a well digested system of common schools."

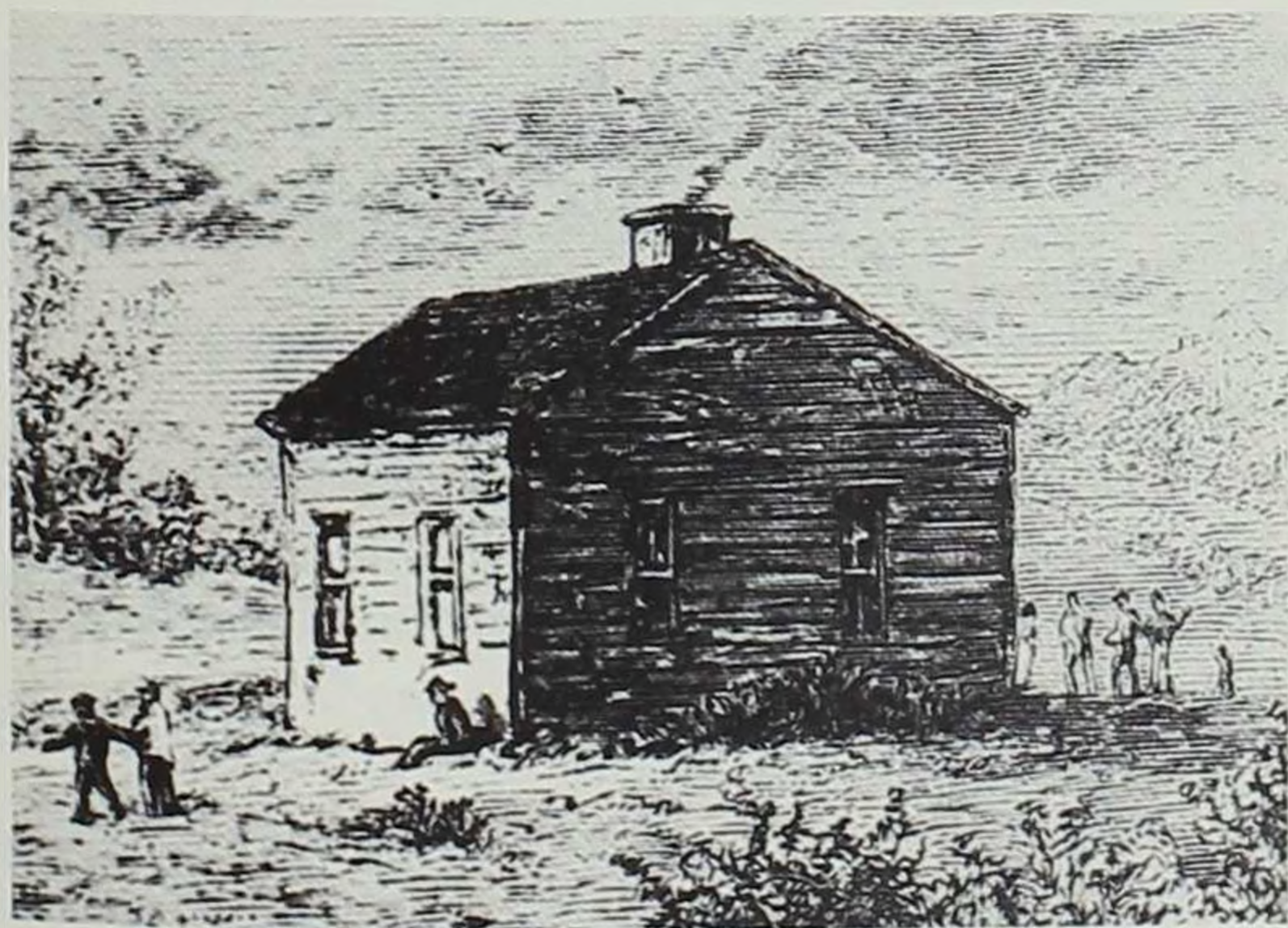
The assembly responded by calling for the creation of common schools in each county, but they placed organizational responsibility in the hands of local officials. The schools were to be "open and free for every class of white citizens" between four and twenty-one years old. In 1841 the governor was instructed to appoint a Superintendent of Public Instruction for a

three-year term, but the position was abolished in the next legislative session. Although territorial lawmakers incorporated several academies, Iowa's school system would not be fully developed until after statehood.

The frontier politicians also addressed issues of religion and morality. Statutes called for the punishment of individuals selling liquor to Indians or "unwholesome liquor and provisions" to any resident; participants in a duel were heavily fined and denied the right to vote or hold office; and debt imprisonment was abolished. Anyone over fourteen caught "rioting, quarreling, fishing, shooting, or at common labor" on Sunday was penalized. A maximum fine of fifty dollars could be levied against anyone disrupting people "assembled together for the purpose of worshipping" by swearing, disorderly or immoral conduct, or by dispensing liquor within two miles of the congregation.

SUFFRAGE, considered a basic privilege in any democratic society, was guaranteed by the Organic Act; "every white male citizen of the United States, above the age of twenty-one years, who shall have been an inhabitant . . . at the time of [territorial] organization, shall be entitled to vote at the first election." For subsequent elections the legislature stated qualifications through a single, federally imposed limitation: "the right of suffrage shall be exercised only by citizens of the United States." Statute law and the proposed constitutions of 1844 and 1846 added more voter qualifications by requiring written ballots and Iowa residence of six months and county residence of twenty, then later, thirty days before the election. Duly naturalized immigrants (provided they were also white males over twenty-one) could also vote. Military personnel stationed in Iowa, however, were non-residents. The law disenfranchised an "idiot, or insane person, or persons convicted of any infamous crime"; such individuals could not vote, hold office, serve on juries, or provide testimony.

The volatile national issues of slavery and



Lucas wanted public schools established in all townships.

race relations played a continuing role in territorial Iowa. The Northwest Ordinance declared that "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude" should exist in the region. In addition, the Missouri Compromise specifically prohibited slavery in the area later organized as Iowa Territory. The proposed state constitu-

tions explicitly stated that "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, unless for the punishment of crimes, shall ever be tolerated."

This seemingly unquestioned antislavery attitude, although still subject to historical debate, is somewhat misleading. Like the vast majority of Northerners, nearly all territorial Iowans either actively or passively exhibited anti-black feelings. Refusing to legalize slavery, they nevertheless sought to tightly control or discourage any black population. Of the 188 blacks listed in the 1840 U.S. Census, 16 were categorized as "slave." The remainder lived under some form of servitude although they were disguised under the enumeration label of "laborer," "miner," or "domestic." Several prominent politicians openly held slaves, including the second territorial governor, John Chambers, Territorial Secretary O.H.W. Stull, and Congressional Delegate George W. Jones.

Enslaved or legally free, black Iowans were subject to numerous discriminatory restrictions. The most blatant example was the "Act to Regulate Blacks and Mulattoes," approved by

Upper: Runaway slave Lucy would have had few rights in Iowa Territory even if she had been free. Lower: Portion of freedman's bond for free blacks Francis and Maria Reno. The \$500 bond, promising orderly conduct, was required of all free blacks who lived in Iowa Territory.



RUNAWAY on Sunday, the 31st of May, 1846, from the subscriber, living in Waterloo, Clark county, Mo., a Negro woman named LUCY, about 36 years old, very stout and heavy made, very black, very large feet and hands; had on when she left a Blue Calicoe dress and a Sun Bonnet; no other clothing. It is believed she will be conducted to the Territory of Iowa, in the direction of Keosauqua, or beyond that place, to a settlement of free negroes, that was set free by a Mr. Miers, living in Tully, Lewis county, Mo., some years ago. Any person apprehending said slave, and returning her to me, or securing her so that I can get her again, I will pay a liberal reward, and pay all reasonable expenses. Give information to Daniel Hines, Keosauqua, or James F. Death, Farmington, I. T. JOHN DEDMAN. June 6, 1846. n21-3w

The Condition of the above Obligation is such that whereas the Board of Commissioners of the said County of Johnson & Secretary of Iowa have required that the said Francis Reno and Maria Reno colored persons as aforesaid, should enter into Bonds with Security as required by the Laws of this Territory regulating Blacks and Mulattoes" Now if the said Francis & Maria, shall not at any time become chargeable to the said County of Johnson ~~and~~ any other County in this Territory, and shall at all times conduct and behave themselves in an Orderly and Lawful manner, then this Obligation to be

the first legislative assembly on January 21, 1839. Within three months all designated residents had to obtain a "fair certificate . . . of his or her actual freedom" in order to remain in the territory. The document had to be accompanied by a five-hundred-dollar bond as a guarantee to the county commissioners that the individual would not commit any crimes or become a ward of the government. Local officials could, if necessary, "hire out" the individual "for the best price in cash that can be had" (the wages were then paid directly to the county treasury toward the five-hundred-dollar bond). Blacks were denied suffrage and militia service, and the legislature voided interracial marriages and disallowed a black's court testimony against any white. Likewise, an 1842 statute specifically excluded blacks and mulattoes from using poor relief acts "to gain legal settlement" in the territory (without legal settlement one was not eligible for such support mechanisms as public assistance and residence in a county "poor house").

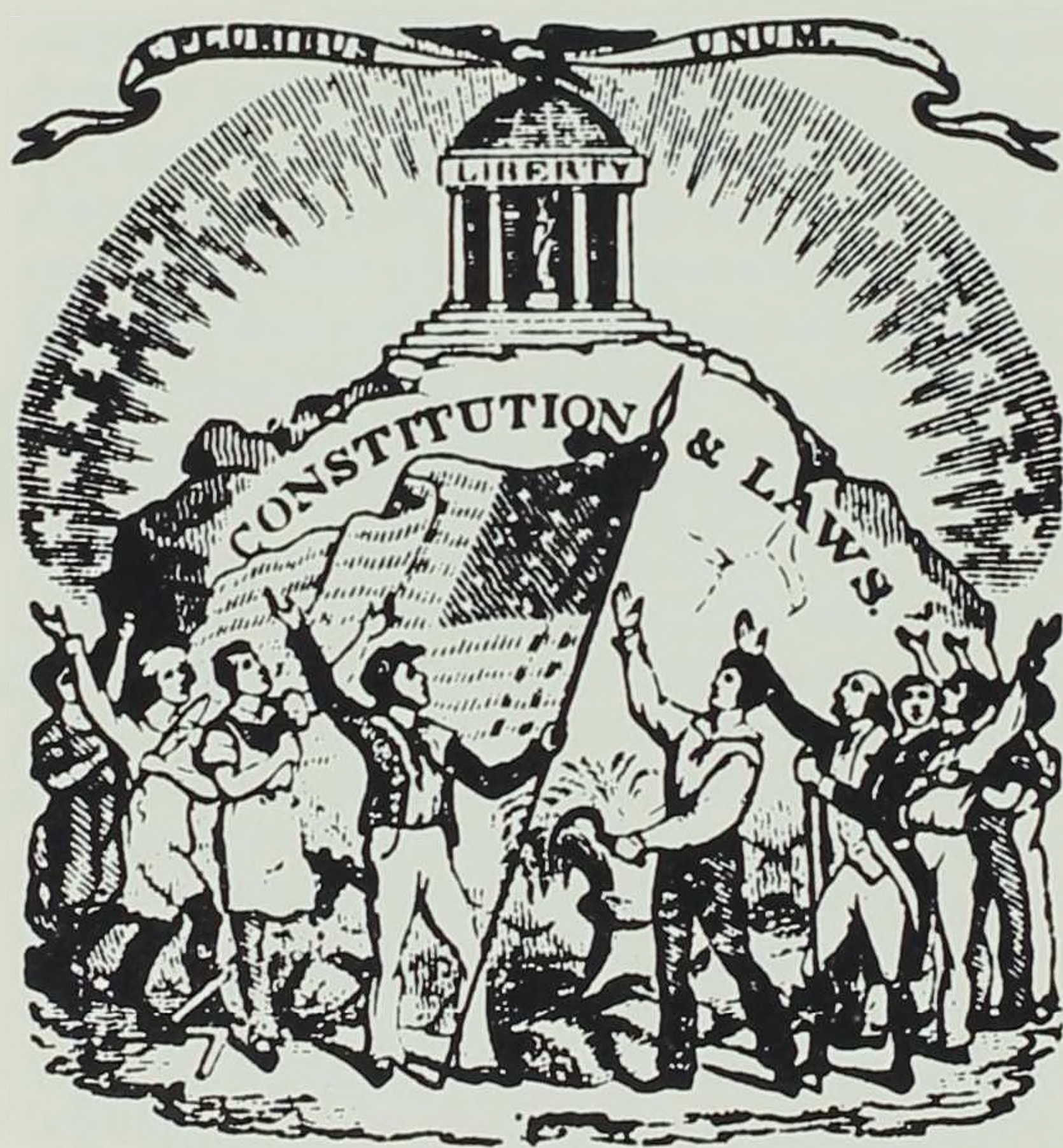
NO SINGLE ISSUE dominated territorial politics as much as did admission to the Union. Already in his second annual message to the legislature in November 1839, Governor Lucas encouraged rapid movement toward drafting a constitution and forming a state government. He argued that many neighboring states had experienced accelerated economic growth after their territorial status had ended. Lucas also proposed generous state boundaries — west to the Missouri and Big Sioux rivers, then north to the St. Peters (Minnesota) River before joining the Mississippi at the present site of St. Paul. Legislators declined to pursue these matters, insisting that statehood would not guarantee prosperity but would increase the tax burden on residents.

When John Chambers, a Kentucky Whig, was appointed territorial governor in 1841, he also encouraged seeking admission to the Union. He urged the assembly to ascertain "the wishes of the people" regarding statehood by asking them to vote on holding a constitutional convention. Ironically, Whigs in Iowa

led the opposition against statehood, anticipating increased taxation, limited resources, and the political immaturity of the citizenry. Democrats, on the other hand, supported statehood, forecasting increased migration, generous federal appropriations for internal improvements, and voter eagerness to select their own governor. An Iowa City editor in July 1842 believed that statehood would attract thousands of settlers "desirous of making their homes with us [but] are deterred by what they deem the unsettled state of things incident to a Territorial government." Nevertheless, in the August 1842 election, a majority of the voters in each county rejected the call for a constitutional convention. The voters had rejected this step toward statehood primarily because of the financial burden a new state would have to assume (the federal government paid for many territorial services), and because the political parties were not yet very well organized.

Within fifteen months lawmakers and voters had changed their minds and authorized selection of convention delegates. (The change was probably because the Democrats were now better organized, and because Congress had begun to distribute funds from land sales back to the states, thus eliminating the financial-burden argument.) Seventy-two delegates, dominated by Democrats, met in Iowa City from October 7 to November 1, 1844. The constitution they drafted in those three weeks was based on the individual freedoms and government responsibilities guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution. It included a lengthy bill of rights and supported existing territorial statutes on suffrage, banks, education, and county organization. The generous boundaries that Lucas had suggested earlier were included in the final draft submitted to Congress.

In Washington, debate revolved around the necessity to admit Iowa concurrent with Florida, a slave state. President John Tyler signed the legislation approved by Congress, but it included significantly reduced northern and western Iowa boundaries. (The southern border would continue to be the subject of an ongoing squabble with Missouri.) Back in Iowa, in an almost unprecedented action, voters by a narrow margin rejected the 1844 constitution as modified by Congress. Voting



"no," largely because of the decreased boundaries and Whig opposition to prohibition of banks, Iowans lost this chance at statehood.

The highly partisan political rhetoric resumed immediately, as did pressure from Governor Chambers and his Democratic successor in 1845, James Clarke. Consequently, a second constitutional convention met in Iowa City, May 4-19, 1846. The issues of banks and boundaries dominated the debates. Using the previously proposed constitution as a model, the majority Democrats doubled the guber-

natorial term to four years, eliminated the office of lieutenant governor, increased the term of judges, and prohibited banks that circulated paper currency. Most significantly, a compromise was reached on the northern boundary question. This opened the way for approval in Iowa and in Congress, and on December 28, 1846, President James K. Polk signed the bill admitting Iowa into the Union on an equal base with all other states.

LOOKING BACK over the 1830s and 1840s, permanent Euro-American settlement in eastern Iowa in 1833 had led almost immediately to demands for governmental organization. After being attached to Wisconsin Territory, Iowans had sought separate political status. Voters had quickly elected a legislature, and thus began more than eight years of debate, conflict, and compromise that resulted in statehood. During this brief political apprenticeship, territorial citizens had sought and accepted a regulated society built upon a foundation of basic rights and privileges guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, Northwest Ordinance, and various Congressional enactments. Like residents of any democratic community adopting representative government, Iowans willingly abandoned elements of individual choice in their lives for the benefits of a society based on duly ordained and established law. □

NOTE ON SOURCES

In this abbreviated list, the publisher is the State Historical Society of Iowa unless another is noted. Complete bibliography may be requested. On territorial organization, see John E. Briggs, "The Birth of the Territory," *Palimpsest* [henceforth, *Pal*], (Jan. 1928); Kenneth E. Colton, "Iowa's Struggle for a Territorial Government," *Annals of Iowa* (July 1938); and Jacob A. Swisher, "The Organic Act," *Pal* (June 1938). On territorial legislature, see Briggs, "History and Organization of the Legislature in Iowa," in Benjamin Shambaugh, ed., *Applied History* (1916), 3:3-135; Carl H. Erbe, "The Legislative Department . . .," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* (April 1925); Jack T. Johnson, "Second Legislative Assembly," *Pal* (Feb. 1940); and Hugh E. Kelso, "The Extra Session of 1840," *Pal* (April 1941); and Swisher, four *Pal* articles (Feb. 1939, April 1941, Feb. 1942, and May 1944). On constitutions, see Erbe, "Constitutional Provisions for the Suffrage . . .," *IJHP* (April 1922); Shambaugh, *The Constitutions of Iowa* (1934) and *Fragments of the Debates . . .* (1900); and Swisher, "A Constitution in the Making," *Pal* (Oct. 1944). On governors, see Johnson, "James Clarke," *Pal* (Dec. 1939); Thomas McMullin and David A. Walker, *Biographical Directory of American Territorial Governors*

(Westport, Ct.: Meckler, 1984); John C. Parish, *John Chambers* (1909) and *Robert Lucas* (1907), Shambaugh, *Executive Journal . . .* (1906) and *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, vol. 1 (1903). On political parties, see Louis Pelzer's two *IJHP* articles (the Democrats, Jan. 1908; the Whigs, Jan. 1907). On boundaries, see Erik M. Eriksson, "The Boundaries of Iowa," *IJHP* (April 1927) and "The Honey War," *Pal* (Sept. 1924); Carroll J. Kraus, "A Study in Border Confrontation," *Annals* (Fall 1969); and Ben H. Wilson, "The Southern Boundary," *Pal* (Oct. 1938). On banking, see Erling A. Erickson, *Banking in Frontier Iowa, 1836-1865* (Ames: ISU Press, 1971). On slavery and black Iowans, see James Connor, "The Antislavery Movement in Iowa," *Annals* (Summer, Fall 1970); Robert R. Dykstra, "Dr. Emerson's Sam," *Pal* (May/June 1982) and "White Men, Black Laws," *Annals* (Fall 1982); and Joel H. Silbey, "Proslavery Sentiment in Iowa," *IJHP* (Oct. 1957). For broad overviews, see Leland L. Sage, *A History of Iowa* (Ames: ISU Press, 1974); Alice E. Smith, *The History of Wisconsin . . .* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1973); and Joseph F. Wall, *Iowa, a Bicentennial History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978).

CONTRIBUTORS

Glenda Riley is professor of history at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls. She has written numerous articles and books on women in the American West and other aspects of women's history. Her latest book is *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and Plains*.

Michael O. Smith is chief curator of the State Historical Society and is co-curator of "You Gotta Know the Territory," the first permanent exhibit now open in the new historical building in Des Moines. Smith previously worked as curator for North Carolina State Historic Sites.

Jerome Thompson heads the museum bureau of the State Historical Society of Iowa and is co-curator of "You Gotta Know the Territory." Before joining the staff in 1982, Thompson was site coordinator at Terrace Hill and played the role of sutler as a site interpreter at Fort Snelling in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Gaylord Torrence is professor of art at Drake University, where he teaches drawing and American Indian art history. He has curated numerous exhibitions of American Indian art and has written and lectured extensively on the subject. He is guest curator for "Art of The Red Earth People: The Mesquakie of Iowa," to open at the University of Iowa Museum of Art next January.

David Walker is professor of history at the University of Northern Iowa. He has published numerous articles and book chapters and is the co-author, with Thomas A. McMullin, of *Biographical Directory of American Territorial Governors* (1984). Walker is writing a book-length manuscript of Iowa's territorial years.

SUBMISSIONS

The editor welcomes manuscripts and edited documents on the history of Iowa and the Midwest that may interest a general reading audience. Submissions that focus on visual material (photographs, maps, drawings) or on material culture are also invited. Originality and significance of the topic, as well as the quality of research and writing, will determine acceptance for publication. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced, and follow *The Chicago Manual of Style* (13th edition). Standard length is within ten to twenty manuscript pages, but shorter or longer submissions will be considered. Include a list of sources used and a brief biographical sketch. Because illustrative material is integral to the *Palimpsest*, the editor encourages authors to include photographs and illustrations (or suggestions). Please send submissions or queries to Ginalie Swaim, Editor, *The Palimpsest*, State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

Thank you

Thanks to the overwhelming number of Society members who returned questionnaires earlier this year. We value your comments.

— The Editor

LETTERS FROM READERS

More on Phil Stong

I must take exception to Louie Attebery's comment that "there is a paucity of scholarship" on Phil Stong [Note on Sources, Winter 1987, p. 188]. True, he has not gotten the attention he deserves, but *Palimpsest* December 1957 is entirely about Stong (all written by John Towner Frederick, plus reminiscences by William Petersen, and a complete bibliography). Also: *A Literary History of Iowa* (1972); Frank Paluka's *Iowa Authors: A Bio-Bibliography of 60 (Iowa) Authors* (1967); and Gerald Nemanic's *A Bibliographical Guide to Midwest Literature* (1981), pp. 337-38.

Clarence Andrews, Iowa City, Iowa

Author's Reply

I take it that *Palimpsest*, like many other good state historical society periodicals, is not included in the *International Index* and *Reader's Guide*, which I used. I appreciate the addition of *A Literary History of Iowa* since it includes a 10-page essay on Stong by Dr. Andrews. . . . For this man whose creative output has been identified as 23 novels, 12 works of nonfiction, and 19 children's stories (*Newsweek*, May 6, 1957) and who, in my judgment, was a better writer than Henry James, I fear that scholarship is something perilously close to paucity. One further observation: It may be that Stong foresaw his vulnerability to benign neglect, for in an unpublished letter (Jan. 28, 1944) to distinguished historian Carl Cone, Stong writes: "Who am I to counsel anyone? I was forty-five yesterday and so far all I have gotten done is some thirty-odd books, running out of print, a notable operation for haemorrhoids and a slight hardening of the liver" (copy through courtesy and with permission of Professor Cone).

Louie W. Attebery, Caldwell, Idaho

Amana Colonies

The Amana articles [Spring 1988] interested me because I knew the colonies before and after 1932. I often in my teens drove my father out to Amana [on telephone business]. We went about the other villages too and along the way I made a point to read as much as I could about their history and life. . . . If the articles didn't contain anything I didn't already know, I read them with great interest nevertheless. . . . We purchased our Amana blankets from Billy Foerstner, who ran the store in High Amana. In the summer of 1942 when Mary Louise and I were fixin' to get married, we purchased some Amana furniture, which in those days was affordable, even for young people no more affluent than we were at a time of life when all things seem possible.

Carl Cone, Lexington, Kentucky

The Palimpsest welcomes letters from its readers. Please include your complete address and phone number. Letters that are published may be edited for clarity and brevity. Write: Editor, *Palimpsest*, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

THE PALIMPSEST (ISSN 0031-0360) is published quarterly by the State Historical Society in Iowa City. Second class postage paid at Iowa City, Iowa. Postmaster: send address changes to State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

Benjamin Franklin Reinhart. THE EMIGRANT TRAIN BEDDING DOWN FOR THE NIGHT. In the collection of the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lansdell K. Christie.

