

The

PALIMPSEST

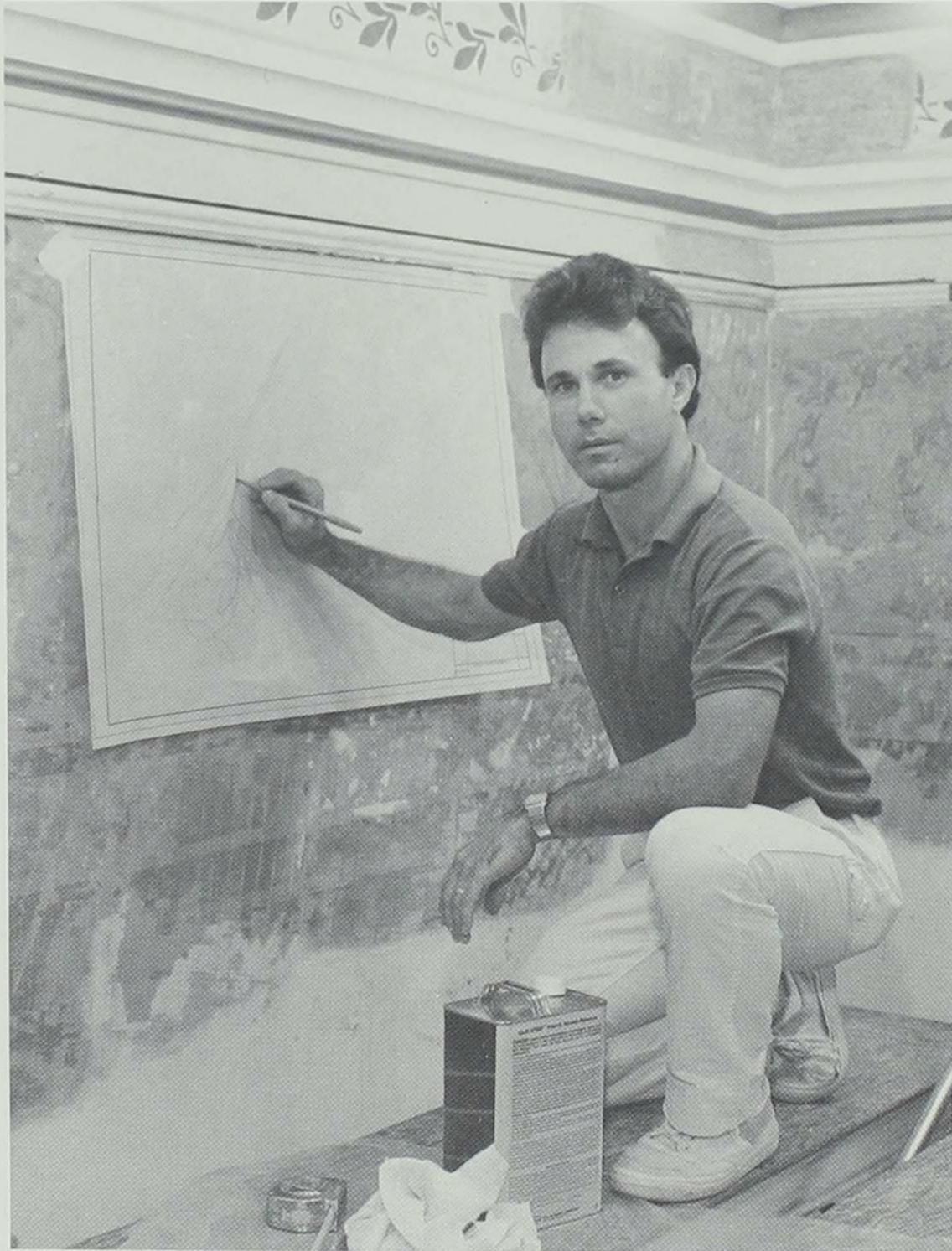
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IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

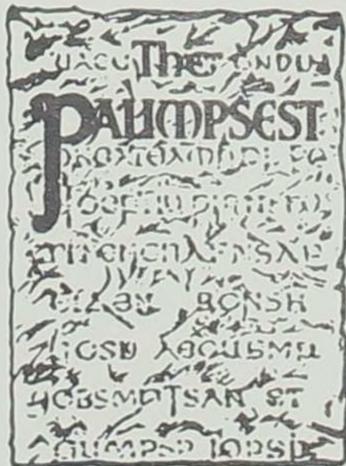
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Inside —



Restoration painter Dick Labertew traces the faint outlines of a turn-of-the-century stencil design in the governor's suite of the Iowa capitol. Carefully scraping off layers of paint reveals the original design. A visual tour of the Victorian stenciling in the capitol begins on page 173.



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.

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The

PALIMPSEST

IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

Ginalie Swaim, Editor

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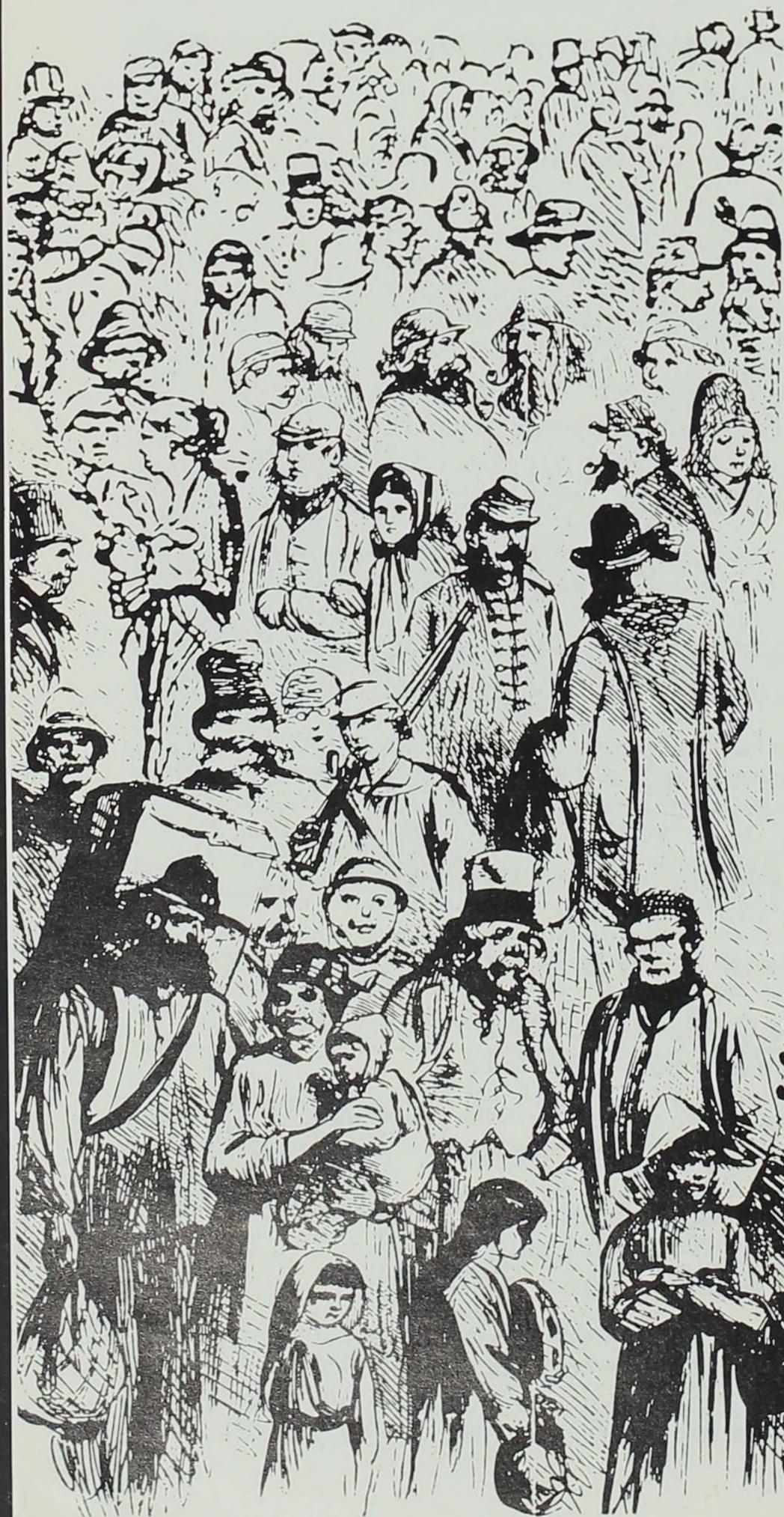
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An Amish Mennonite Farmer Chooses Iowa

by William B. Graber



ON FEBRUARY 14, 1822, Daniel Conrad stepped ashore in the United States at New York Harbor. For the hardy twenty-five-year-old farmer, it was to be a fortuitous step. Prohibited from owning land in Europe for his religious beliefs, the landless farmer would eventually own over two and a half square miles of Iowa farmland. He would marry his sweetheart in America on the Fourth of July; teach their twelve surviving children the values of industry, frugality, and honesty; and blaze the trail to the Iowa frontier for members of his community.

Some fifty years before Daniel was born, his paternal grandfather had also been an immigrant, seeking a more secure life within the constantly changing European political scene of the eighteenth century. In the 1740s Hans Kunrad (as Conrad was then spelled) arrived in the town of Montbéliard, the capital of the small German territory of the same name. Hans Kunrad was one of thousands of Swiss Brethren (also known as Anabaptists or Amish Mennonites) who had fled Canton Bern in Switzerland, where the government persecuted them for their pacifist beliefs and con-



"NEWLY-ARRIVED EMIGRANTS AT CASTLE GARDEN, NEW YORK CITY"/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

fiscated their lands to support the state church. Banished from even the harshest Alpine slopes of Switzerland, Hans Kunrad found nearby Montbéliard a comforting refuge where more established relatives and fellow Amish Mennonites eased the hardships for new refugees.

About the size of a county in Iowa, the territory of Montbéliard was nestled in the Jura Mountains between France and the Swiss Cantons. Officially property of the German Duke of Württemberg since 1397, Montbéliard had become a center of refuge for Amish Mennonites by about 1705 due to its uncommonly tolerant religious policies. Immigration to Montbéliard had increased after 1712 when King Louis XIV of France expelled Anabaptists from neighboring Alsace, which had long been a refuge for nonconformists. The Anabaptists, or Amish Mennonites, believed in literal obedience to the Scriptures. They rejected all secular oaths, including in the courts and military, and believed they ought not conform to an impure world.

Montbéliard continued to attract refugees throughout the first half of the 1700s; the Duke of Württemberg encouraged them to settle as tenant farmers on his empty Montbéliard estates. He found the Amish Mennonites to be honest, skillful, and competent in agriculture and animal husbandry; their high productivity thus enabled him to extract high rents from them.

Assimilation of the refugees into the Montbéliard society would occur slowly over several generations. Most of the Amish Mennonite refugees from Switzerland spoke German or were bilingual, whereas most of the Montbéliard natives spoke French. The inward-looking nature of the Amish Mennonite religion encouraged the retention of tradition, of which language, clothing, and religious customs were parts. Despite the benevolence of the German House of Württemberg in offering the Amish Mennonites a place to practice their religion, Hans Kunrad continued to consider himself Swiss, as did his son Martin (born in 1753), and as would his grandson Daniel, born on August 24, 1796.

Though Daniel was born in religiously tolerant Montbéliard, he grew up under the chaotic religious policies of France. Situated between

two powers — Switzerland and France — both with a state church, Montbéliard was in a precarious position. This refuge was separated from Württemberg in Germany by seventy miles, leaving the small territory exposed to the whims of France. Indeed, Montbéliard was occupied by France in 1796, freed briefly, then confirmed as French territory after the Napoleonic Wars.

These political shifts in Montbéliard led to confusion regarding citizenship and, as a result, military conscription. Soon after Switzerland became a French republic in 1798, Swiss citizenship was restored to banished nonconformists and their descendants. Though Daniel and his parents may never have returned to Switzerland, they appear to have been granted Swiss citizenship. In French Montbéliard after the Revolution, however, Daniel's status appears to have been ill-defined. Born in a region now incorporated into France, he could be considered a French citizen subject to military service, to which Amish Mennonites objected on moral grounds. Perhaps they began to consider "Mömpelgard" (as they called Montbéliard in their German dialect) only a temporary home and a place where they could be no more than tenants to a duke. In search of religious freedom, land-ownership, and political stability, many Amish Mennonite farmers chose to emigrate to Poland, Russia, Canada, and the United States. Daniel Conrad's family made this choice when he was twenty-five. For Daniel, America would largely hold up to the boasts made in emigrant guides, letters, and testimony of his relatives.

DANIEL'S IMMIGRATION to the United States was an example of the phenomenon of chain migration, in which immigrants encouraged relatives to join them and then helped sustain them after they had arrived. In 1822 Daniel was part of a wave of Europeans of various faiths and nationalities to emigrate following the Napoleonic Wars. Like most during this period, Daniel was poor but not destitute, and he held valuable skills — in his case, experience with dairy cattle and farming. His family had the resources (perhaps money sent from

relatives already in America) to pay his fare from Le Havre to New York, thus releasing him from the hardship of having to contract his labor to strangers for the cost of his passage.

The Conrads' kinship network greatly aided immigration and settlement. Daniel likely stayed with relatives in Pennsylvania (as did his eldest brother and parents who immigrated a few months later) before traveling by wagon to Amish Mennonite settlements in Wayne County, Ohio, in the spring of 1823. There he lived with his brother John or cousins until his other siblings and parents arrived in June or July. Daniel's eldest brother, Jacob, soon purchased 206 acres and, with the help of neighbors and family, constructed a large frame house and a gigantic, three-story Swiss barn. Daniel lived on Jacob's farm with his parents and siblings.

A few years later, in 1826, Daniel married Marie Klopfenstein, a young Amish Mennonite immigrant from Bourogne, Montbéliard. They married on the date of America's jubilee — July 4 — a wedding date one could view as symbolic of the couple's love for their new country. In America they could openly practice their religious beliefs, own land, and prosper. Here immigrants no longer needed to maintain foreign citizenship to exempt themselves from universal military conscription, which ran contrary to their peaceful religious convictions. In 1833 Daniel Conrad applied for citizenship; three years later he joined his first four Ohio-born children in becoming a citizen of the United States.

Daniel's naturalization, however, did not assume cultural assimilation. Buttressed by his Amish Mennonite peers and their German-language religious services, he retained his German dialect, distinctive style of dress, and religious tenets, as his grandparents had done earlier in Montbéliard. Although he learned some English, throughout his life he would speak German as his first language. In a land of Anglo-Americans, these cultural traits and religious values were the core of his self-identity.

By the mid-1820s Wayne County (like neighboring Holmes and Stark counties) had a thriving Amish Mennonite community. Census records show a thorough mixture of Ameri-

cans and Europeans. Completion of the Ohio Canal through Stark County in 1832 would further enhance settlement by linking Cleveland and the Ohio River. Immigrants could now travel from New York to Ohio exclusively by water. As waves of new settlers arrived, the population of Wayne County increased dramatically. Current residents added to the population pressure by continuing to enlarge their families through birth. Daniel and Marie did their share: Marie bore eleven of their thirteen children in Wayne County (one died). Many parents hoped that their children would eventually purchase local farms, but sale of remaining vacant sections of Wayne County and the rise in land values to \$10 per acre by 1830 precluded many of the larger and less affluent families from fulfilling their landowning dreams there. Daniel and Marie Conrad realized that for their children to become landowners, the family would need to move west. They had saved money in the 1820s and 1830s. Now it was time to find available land.

SOMETIME BEFORE 1837 a squatter named John Roberts set up house-keeping in a log cabin on the wooded promontory overlooking the confluence of Turkey Creek and Skunk River in what would soon be Lockridge Township, Jefferson County, Iowa Territory. Perhaps Roberts had moved to this edge of the frontier to work the old cornfields along the riverbank. These fields had been abandoned by the Mesquakie or Sauk a few years earlier when they had relinquished land included in the Black Hawk Purchase. A ceremonial wickiup still stood on the land, a reminder of the village that had been located there and proof of the land's suitability for settlement.

By September 1837 surveyor E. F. Lucas arrived in Lockridge Township and noted squatter Roberts's presence. He also noted the abundance of walnut, buckeye, elm, maple, hackberry, and oak trees. Despite this wealth of timber, valuable as lumber and fuel, squatter Roberts chose not to purchase the land when bids for the newly surveyed township were first opened in November 1838 in Bur-

lington. Evidently he preferred to take advantage of the free use of the land and to collect honey to sell in Burlington. By 1840 Roberts was once again chasing the frontier as it moved farther west.

Daniel Conrad, on the other hand, was probably pleased to find that federal land in newly surveyed Jefferson County was still available for sale. Having arrived from Wayne County, Ohio, in May 1839, Daniel bought what squatter Roberts had rejected — the heavily wooded land, part river bottom and part slope, just above “Cedar Ford.” At \$1.25 per acre, Conrad paid \$222.94 cash for his first 178 ⅓ acres of Iowa land.

Conrad’s purchase was not a solitary action, however, but an event orchestrated by the Wayne County congregation. Six other Amish Mennonites also bought federal land in Jefferson County on May 16, 1839. They scouted the best lands and invested in large blocks so their children and other kin could live nearby. The purchases in Jefferson County appeared in two distinct clumps: John Graber, Sr. and John Hockstetter (or Hostetler) joined Daniel Conrad in Lockridge Township; and Joseph Roth, Nicholas Klopfenstein, John Graber, Jr., and Tobias Schrock bought tracts in Cedar Township. All members of the scouting party returned to Wayne County to recruit settlers.

After a second scouting party from Wayne County made further purchases in 1841, Roth and the younger Graber led the first band of Amish Mennonite settlers into Jefferson County in 1843. Other members of the 1839 scouting party settled there the following year, purchasing additional tracts of land from local speculators, albeit at higher prices because the area was quickly becoming more settled — spurred by the opening of the Fairfield Land Office on August 1, 1842, and the accompanying local economic boom. Still, the land was much cheaper than in densely populated Ohio, and the sale of high-priced properties in the East sometimes financed the purchase of such large tracts in the West.

Daniel Conrad traveled to Iowa three more times before he and his family moved there — fully a decade after he had first bought land. In 1844 he paid \$140 for another eighty wooded acres adjacent to the farm of John Graber, Sr.

in Lockridge Township. In 1847 he purchased 160 acres across the Skunk River in Henry County, just a mile and a half east of his original farm at Cedar Ford. Two years later he and his elder sons returned in the spring to complete the clearing of fifty acres of timber on the Henry County “Merrimac” farm and to plant crops. Still in Ohio, the Conrad family waited while the harshest aspects of the frontier passed.

IN THE LATE SUMMER of 1849 Daniel and Marie Conrad and their ten children (ages fifteen months to twenty-two years) prepared to move to Iowa. They gathered horses, cattle, sheep, grain, apple seeds, and supplies. They loaded the youngest of the children into a wagon, and the older children walked behind. With their wagon pulled by oxen, they surely traveled more slowly than settlers with horse-drawn vehicles. They followed the Scriptures by resting on Sundays. Upon reaching the Mississippi River opposite Burlington, they may have crossed by ferry rather than brave the ford used earlier by the scouting parties. Then they followed the route of the Plank Road to Mount Pleasant and dirt (or mud) roads northwest to Cedar Ford.

Their first home may have been a log cabin on the Cedar Ford farm (although by 1850 they would be living on their nearby 160-acre Merrimac farm in Henry County). Over the final months of 1849 they would be joined by friends and relatives from Wayne County, who would purchase nearby farms on either side of the Skunk River. The Conrads were more fortunate than most pioneers: thanks to Daniel’s spring planting, they already had crops to harvest that fall. Those crops provided valuable sustenance during a difficult year. The Henry County corn crop, normally 50 bushels per acre, was down by one third, and the potato harvest, normally 150 bushels per acre, was “nearly totally rotted.” That fall the Conrads harvested 300 bushels of corn, 100 bushels of oats, 50 bushels of barley, and 25 bushels of potatoes. Five tons of hay supplemented excess grain in feeding Daniel’s 2 horses, 4 milch cows, 3 other cows, 5 sheep, and 18 swine through the winter. (Any produce

from his farm at Cedar Ford escaped enumeration.)

THE KINSHIP NETWORK was a prominent feature of the pioneer experience for Daniel and Marie Conrad. It had helped pay their voyage from Le Havre to New York, helped familiarize them to life in America during their brief stay in Pennsylvania, and guided them to friendly settlements in Ohio. The reliance on extended family allowed members to do together what could not be accomplished alone, such as building brother Jacob's large Swiss-style barn. Though many American pioneers aided each other on the frontier, the sense of community among the Amish Mennonite immigrants was particularly strong due to their shared religious values and centuries-old kinship ties. These ties had bound them to each other at each step in the migration from Switzerland to Iowa. It was no coincidence that many of their Graber, Roth, Klopfenstein, Rich, Wyse, and Liechty neighbors in Ohio and Iowa had also been fellow members of the old Montbéliard church structure.

Moreover, the line between kin and congregation was often indistinct. Over the generations members of the Amish Mennonite communities had married whom they considered the most eligible mates: other members of the congregation. The result was a congregation united by ancestry or marriage as well as by religion. In a typical local congregation of less than two dozen families — albeit often large families (Daniel Conrad, who was one of eleven children, fathered thirteen) — one's selection of a marriage partner was restricted by the predominance of blood kin if one remained in the faith.

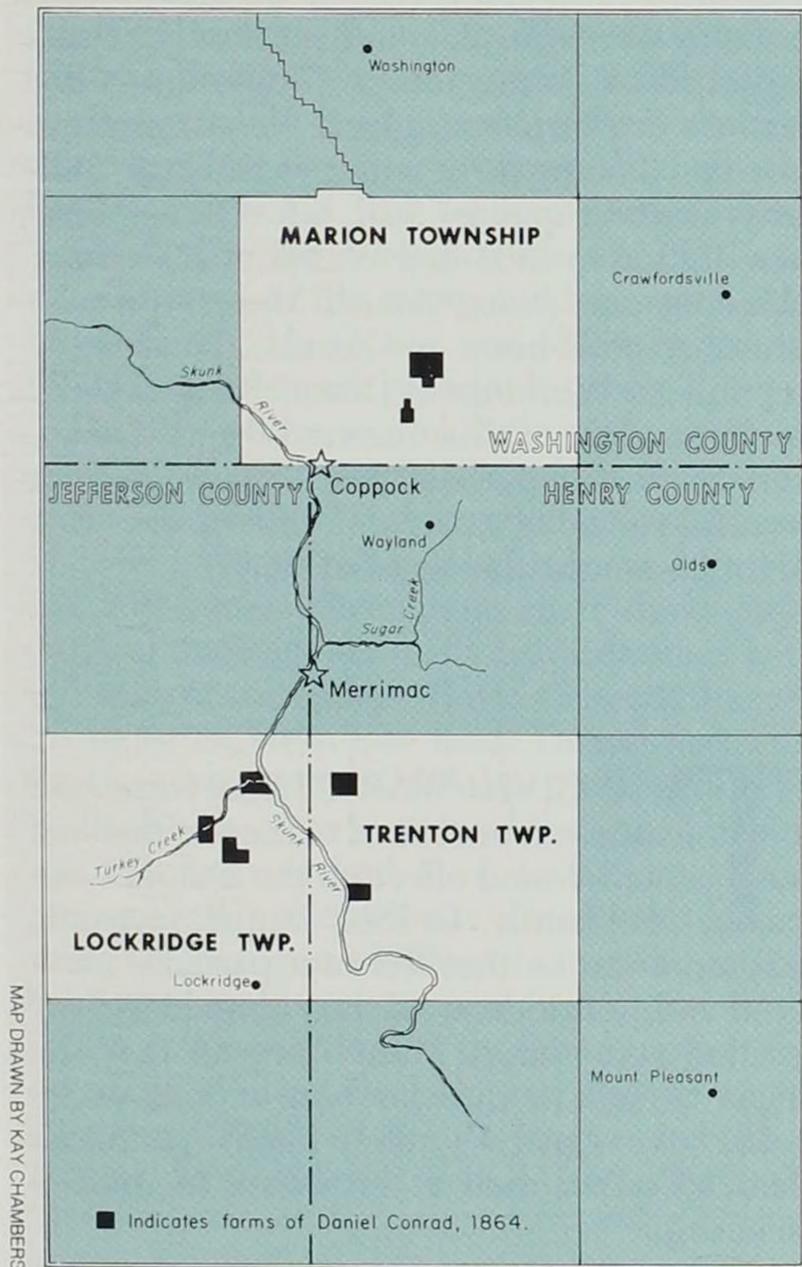
This phenomenon of marriage within a group was not unique to the Amish Mennonites. Such marriage practices can be found among other close-knit religious groups and the rural population at large. One's choice of marriage partner was typically limited by geographic distance (as affected by modes of transportation) and the frequency of public events (such as church services or barn raisings). An extensive kinship network had both benefits

and limitations, but the continuation of these communities over time and distance indicates that to most members the benefits clearly outweighed the drawbacks.

Distance, however, was affecting Daniel's faith community. It had spread from Cedar Creek in Jefferson County to Sugar Creek in Henry County, some twenty-five miles. Difficulties in transportation and communications precluded a unified Sunday meeting on a regular basis. For this reason the local preacher alternated services between different neighborhoods. In the absence of a church building, services were held in the members' homes or, in one case, in John Conrad's barn. The original faith community intended by the Amish Mennonite leaders who had purchased land in 1839 and 1841 had become too diffuse. Parents feared their children would not find Amish Mennonites to marry in areas where young Anglo-Americans abounded. The need for a close-knit sense of community, challenged by the distance between homes, increased the pressure for resettlement. Thus, in 1851 and 1852 part of the faith community in Jefferson and Henry counties decided to begin their own colony in Marion Township, Washington County — nine miles north of the Conrads' Merrimac farm. (This splinter group could probably buy land at lower prices in Washington County; the area was more isolated and railroads would bypass the township a few years later.) This desire for religious cohesion, and the abundance of cheap land for growing families, probably triggered Daniel Conrad's purchase of 240 acres in section 21 of Marion Township in April 1852. He negotiated the \$1600 purchase price through a mortgage with the seller (banks were still prohibited in Iowa, under the 1846 state constitution). Amish Mennonites were able to purchase land in contiguous blocks so that part of Marion Township became an almost unbroken chain of Amish Mennonite farms.

IN MARION TOWNSHIP the Conrad family prospered. The single most important factor appears to have been a windfall profit in 1856 of \$2000 from unspecified "general manufactures." (Most

By 1864 Daniel Conrad owned nearly two-and-a-half square miles of farmland (some shown in blocks below).



likely, Daniel sold logs for a dollar apiece to the local sawmills at Coppock and Merrimac, which provided lumber for frame houses and possibly ties for the approaching railroads. By 1860, in contrast, Daniel reported income of less than \$100 in the same category.) This boost in income allowed Daniel to pay \$700 cash for fifty acres in section 28 in September 1856; he had already paid \$400 cash for an adjoining forty in July 1855. His elder sons also made land purchases in the 1850s. This large family labor pool allowed the successful operation of the Conrad farms. In contrast to Daniel's early subsistence farming in 1849, by 1859 he was engaged in commercial agriculture. The family still produced most food for their dinner table, but they sold substantial surpluses as well. Fields on his 280-acre home farm in Marion Township alone yielded 1,000 bushels of corn, 300 bushels of wheat, 200 bushels of oats,

150 bushels of Irish potatoes, 15 bushels each of barley and buckwheat, and 35 tons of hay. His sorghum fields yielded cane for 27 gallons of molasses, providing an alternative sweetener to the honey collected from his bee stands and hives in trees. In addition, the family picked apples valued at \$25 from his young orchard.

Although surplus grain was sold, the primary use of his crops was to feed his expanding livestock operation, the greater part of his commercial enterprise. Since 1849, Daniel had increased his livestock holdings. The swine herd was up a third, and the dairy herd had doubled. The beef herd had grown fourfold, and the sheep, sixfold. He had added seven more work horses and a team of oxen. Although many neighbors to the north shipped hogs to Chicago through John Stone, a stock dealer on the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad at Ainsworth, Daniel continued to drive his stock to Burlington. With the help of three grown sons and two farm hands (recent Amish Mennonite immigrants), Daniel must have found greater profit in the longer trip to Burlington, where barge traffic provided competition to the railroad and higher commodity prices for the farmers. He sold other produce such as butter in Washington and kept much of the wool for domestic use. A side effect of the livestock operation was the greater quantity and diversity of meats for the dinner table. Daniel's farm economy was a diversified grain-livestock enterprise large enough to sustain a growing family of in-laws, children, and grandchildren on several farms, with a surplus remaining for sale.

Part of Daniel's success can probably be attributed to his willingness to adopt new farming technology, a quality shared with his European ancestors. (In Montbéliard, the Amish Mennonites had been famous for their intense cultivation and skilled animal husbandry. Although they had sometimes been ostracized by neighbors for applying manure to the fields, the practice had gained them higher yields.) In Iowa, Daniel became a leader in acquiring farm implements and machinery. By the early 1860s he owned outright several steel plowshares, harrows, a clover huller, grain drill, reaper, fan mill, and cane mill, estimating their total value

at \$580. This was \$230 higher than the collection of his nearest technological rival in Marion Township, his cousin Christian Conrad. Daniel could justify his large investment in implements by the number of acres under diversified cultivation.

The investment also illustrates his economic progressiveness. The Amish Mennonites in general were exceptional farmers; in France, Marie's uncle had won a gold medal for his farming. Though Daniel probably believed the popular contemporary notion that the prairie lands were less fertile, as shown by his pattern of purchasing wooded land near rivers and streams, Daniel's diversified grain and livestock enterprise and his willingness to buy new farm equipment show his progressive outlook toward farm operation on the eve of the Civil War.

THE START OF THE WAR, and the possibility that his beloved land of opportunity would be torn apart, presented Daniel with a dilemma. On moral grounds his religion prohibited fighting in any form. Involuntary military service had been a primary reason for his earlier emigration from French-held land. Amish Mennonite leaders, however, strongly condemned slavery, and Daniel's friendship with William Scofield, a local Presbyterian farmer and Republican activist who harbored runaway slaves, points to Daniel's concurrence with that view. Some Amish Mennonites, such as drummerboy Daniel Eicher, volunteered as non-combatants. A few left the faith to become soldiers. Most tried to stay out of the conflict. Conrad's sons Martin, Daniel, and Peter were placed on county militia lists but were not called up. Internal conflict likely subsided after 1863 when federal law exempted members of religious societies opposing war (upon a \$300 payment, used for hospitals and disabled veterans).

The Civil War also brought changes in the relationship between the Amish Mennonites and the Anglo-Americans. Despite the appar-

ent Union loyalty and anti-slavery convictions of Daniel's sons, young Amish Mennonite men probably were conspicuous in an area generally depleted of young males. Fortunately for Daniel's draft-age sons, local voluntarism ran so strong that the three counties had little difficulty meeting quotas. Still, when seven local men drafted in 1864 fled Washington County, including one young Amish Mennonite who returned to his home in Canada, the ardently Republican *Washington [Iowa] Press* roundly condemned them all as "cowards" and "Democrats of the Copperhead kind." Tolerance for peaceful religious views and dissent was often forgotten amidst the chaos of war.

THE CIVIL WAR YEARS witnessed an event unrelated to the war that had a profound effect on the Daniel Conrad family. In 1862 Daniel, sixty-six, suffered a stroke that left him partially paralyzed and bedridden. As their granddaughter recalled years later, Marie "prayed that she might be left to care for him as long as he lived." On April 1, 1864, family patriarch Daniel Conrad died at his home in Marion Township.

Four years earlier Daniel had asked his nephew, lawyer Benjamin Eicher, to translate his will from a German dialect to English. The will left all his personal effects and at least 940 acres of Iowa land, appraised at \$8,436, to Marie. The will obligated Marie to assure that their minor children could buy land at the same low cost as had the elder children who were already farming their own land. Beyond that, she could do as she pleased with the substantial family assets. The toll of bearing thirteen children and caring for her invalid husband for two years, however, must have been difficult for her. On December 23, 1865, she died at age fifty-eight.

A large number of neighbors and members of the congregation turned out on February 6, 1866, for the estate sale of Daniel and Marie Conrad. Certainly the range of farm equipment for sale and Daniel's local reputation as a wealthy and successful farmer drew more than

the usual bidders. Some, most likely, came to pay their respects to the heirs by bidding up goods or buying a memento. That thirty-one of fifty-six purchasers were non-Amish Mennonites points to the apparent postwar conciliation between the two groups. Although the largest single bid was by local miller Thom Tucker (\$246 for a wagon, wheat, and "sundries"), most of the major bidders were relatives. Even after Daniel and Marie had died, the kinship network remained strong.

Daniel's will sums up his life experience and provides insight into his attitudes toward his wife and children. It shows that he considered his wife a relatively equal partner in life. For her faithfulness throughout their thirty-eight years of marriage he justly rewarded her with the bulk of the estate. Having already helped his elder children buy land, Daniel had worried how his younger children might prosper if he died before they attained the age of majority. He had worked hard to become prosperous, and in the twilight of his life he did not want his youngest children to lose the opportunity he could give them.

After Marie's death, the court appointed neighbor William Scofield as guardian to the four minor children. Only a year younger than Daniel, Scofield was a logical choice: he had a



COURTESY OF ERNA ROTH

Astride a fine black saddle mare, Marie Conrad rode to neighbors to birth babies and care for the sick. No known photo exists of husband Daniel. Below: A portion of his will reads, "Thirdly . . . care shall be taken, especially for those children who have not received any land yet, that they receive it as cheap as the first."

Thirdly it is my will, that care shall be taken, especially for those children who have not received any land yet, that they receive it as cheap as the first, and that after my death, my dear wife shall have the right, to issue and sign deeds and conveyances of real estate and that they shall be as valid, as if I had signed them myself

fine reputation, lived near the Conrad home, and had apparently been friends with Daniel even during the divisive Civil War years. As a Presbyterian, Scofield was not part of the Amish Mennonite kinship group, and probably was more likely to ease any long-term family conflict over the division of farms of widely varying quality. Scofield faithfully acted in the minors' best interest during the lengthy division of their parents' estate.

Two years after Marie's death, the estate was still not settled. To speed the process, eldest son Martin initiated a legal procedure to sell all real estate and equally distribute the proceeds. The court eventually concurred. Family members purchased some of the farms. Other siblings — such as John William Conrad, who had married the granddaughter of an Amish Mennonite bishop and was living near Pulaski in Davis County — used their share of the proceeds to purchase land in new areas.

Wedding portrait of Daniel's youngest son, John William Conrad, and Mary Ann Fordemwalt, 1866. With estate proceeds, they bought land in nearby Davis County.



COURTESY OF JOHN W. CONRAD

THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE Daniel Conrad had felt a strong sense of responsibility to his children, his kin, and his faith. He had grown up in the fields surrounding a remote French mountain community but had come to realize that no mountain could protect his beliefs as well as could the liberty of America. He followed relatives to Pennsylvania and Ohio, where members of his faith founded a religious community and where he married and began a family. In Ohio he and Marie taught their large family to read the Bible, to be thrifty and honest, and to remain close to the precious land. When population pressure and rocketing land values in Ohio revealed that their goals could not be met there, they sought abundant lands in the West.

In Iowa the family prospered as the children helped work the fields. Daniel brought in extra income by selling timber for frame houses and railroad ties in a booming county. He reinvested his profits in the land not as a speculator, but as a benevolent father assuring that his many children could experience the joy of working their own land. He served as a link in chain migration to bring more kin to the United States, where he fed them, sheltered them, and gave them work (if not loans) so they, too, could escape the pattern of tenant farming. The religious devotion that guided many of his everyday actions caused friction with his Anglo-American neighbors for a period, but later diminished as the Civil War ended. Daniel Conrad lived in Iowa for only fifteen years, but in those fifteen he laid the foundations for permanent Iowa homes for his descendants. □

NOTE ON SOURCES

Primary sources, including Montbéliard archives, Ohio naturalization records, and original surveyor's notes, are the foundation of this article. The 1856 Iowa Census was essential; in addition to name, age, and nativity, it detailed crops and livestock. Iowa censuses of agriculture and industry and Iowa Social Statistics (1850–1880) are valuable contemporary documents. Courthouses are a rich source of deed and probate records. The author also interviewed an Amish family who had moved to Iowa from the East. The most useful secondary sources were Dorothy Schwieder, ed., *Patterns and Perspectives in Iowa History* (Ames, 1973); Melvin Gingerich, *Mennonites in Iowa* (Iowa City, 1939); and county histories. For an excellent biography of one of Daniel and Marie's children, see Ann Bechler Zimmerman, *A Conrad Family History* (privately published, 1954).

'So we stayed together'

TWO YEARS AGO I AGREED TO HELP sponsor two Southeast Asian refugee families in Des Moines. As my friends and I helped these families adapt and grow accustomed to American ways of living — bureaucracy, winter weather, new kinds of food, different social customs — it occurred to me that video-recording their experiences in their own words might create a valuable historical document. Imagine if someone had systematically recorded the early impressions of the first Norwegians in Decorah or the first Dutch settlers in Pella! Here was Iowa's newest ethnic group, a group considerably different from the Europeans who settled in Iowa. And here was an opportunity to record through oral history methods first-hand accounts of new settlers, for future historians and for later generations of young Americans of Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian descent. Like most groups, Southeast Asians will want to know their roots, how their parents and grandparents reached America, and by what means they survived those often difficult first years of the immigration and assimilation process.

The Tai Dam are an ethnic group who lived in the northwestern provinces of Vietnam until the communist Vietminh defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Opponents of Ho Chi Minh and allies of the French, the Tai Dam were forced to flee to either South Vietnam or Laos after the 1954 treaty in Geneva established North and South Vietnam. (Most of the Tai Dam who eventually came to Iowa were those who had first fled to Laos.) There they settled until 1975, when

The Tai Dam Immigrate to Iowa



by
Siang Bacthi,
InNgeun Baccam
Soulinthavong,
and
Jack Lufkin

communist troops overtook South Vietnam, Laos, and later Cambodia. Repercussions of the war reverberate today as "boat people" and other people from Vietnam and neighboring countries continue to flee persecution and oppression and find refuge in the Philippines, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. The United Nations defines refugees as individuals unable to live in their native country due to a "well-founded fear of persecution" because of "race, religion, social group, nationality, or political opinion." The Tai Dam's sorrowful background qualified them under this definition; hence they were able to move to a new home if another country would have them.

As the plight of the "boat people" and other refugees from the Vietnam War became known in 1975, Iowa governor Robert Ray acted on behalf of a plea from an American friend of the Tai Dam who worked with them in Laos. That same year Ray formed the

Iowa Governor's Task Force for Indo-Chinese Resettlement, and the Tai Dam began to arrive. In 1979 Ray, Colleen Shearer (then director of Job Service), and Ray's aide Ken Quinn (then on leave from the State Department) created the Iowa Refugee Service Center in Des Moines (now called the Bureau of Refugee Programs, headed by Marvin Weidner) and Iowa SHARES (Iowa Sends Help to Aid Refugees and End Starvation). These organizations coordinated churches and other sponsors interested in refugee resettlement statewide, which continues today with the support of Governor Terry E. Branstad.

Unlike most nineteenth- and early twentieth-century immigrants who relied solely on the beneficence of relatives or friends who had already immigrated, today's refugee groups (often family units) usually have a volunteer sponsor who helps the refugees get settled into new living quarters, find employment, and learn English and other skills needed to function effectively in American society. Refugees receive various forms of governmental assistance.

In all some 10,000 Southeast Asians have come to Iowa since the mid 1970s, including some 2,600 Tai Dam. This represents about 90 percent of the Tai Dam now living in America. (Shearer and Ray had decided to originally accept one ethnic refugee group, to insure compatibility.) Reflecting on his governorship in a recent biography, Ray felt this "gratifying" experience "made me think I had done at least something worthwhile during all those years."

Like most other immigrants before them, the Tai Dam and

other Southeast Asians faced, and continue to face, interrelated problems caused by acute emotional stress and fatigue from war and oppression, the need to find refuge, the loss of loved ones, separation from family and friends, language barriers, and the difficulties adjusting to a new culture. Also like many earlier immigrants, recent refugees have come to America with visions of boundless opportunity, freedom of expression and religion, and social equality. (They would probably agree with Thomas Jefferson's charac-

terization of America as an "asylum" for "oppressed humanity.") Apparent in the following interviews are the Tai Dam's efforts to adapt to a new culture while preserving their ethnic heritage — a balance all immigrant groups have struggled to achieve.

These excerpts were taken from two extensive oral history interviews regarding Tai Dam immigration and resettlement. The interviews were conducted in the native Tai Dam language. As editor of the complete translated

script, I did not want to alter the spirit or lyrical feel of certain sections, or remove the metaphors and rich imagery. In the following excerpts, only syntax and grammar have been corrected; some repetition has been cut.

This project represents only a beginning. It is hoped that under the continuing leadership of the Tai Studies Center in Des Moines more interviews will be conducted with Iowa's newest immigrants.

—Jack Lufkin

INTERVIEW 1

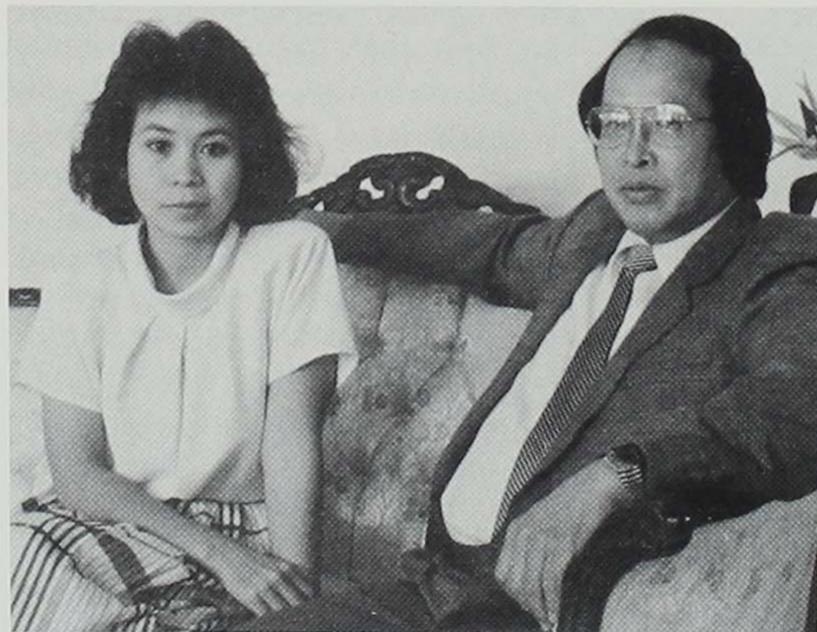


PHOTO BY JACK LUFKIN

Khao Baccam (right) first became a refugee when he was seven, fleeing from northwestern Vietnam to Hanoi. "My parents moved me frequently, fleeing from war and persecution," he stated. "I did not know where we were going. I just held onto my mother's hand and she kept on dragging me along." In 1954 they fled to Laos, where he grew up and studied electronics. In 1975 he and his family crossed the Mekong River to a refugee camp in Thailand. That November they immigrated to Des Moines. In June 1987 he was interviewed by InNgeun Baccam Soulinthavong (left), his cousin.

InNgeun Baccam: Why did you choose to come to America instead of other countries?

Khao Baccam: Oh, we did not know which country we were going to at first. Everybody was very confused about where to go at the time, because during the fall of Laos no one had accepted us as refugees from Laos. So we stayed together. Tai Dam people had leaders who had asked permission to go to many coun-

tries, every country. But I heard that the governor of Iowa, Governor Robert Ray, was interested in our people. So with this quota, we were allowed to come to Iowa. . . .

InNgeun: When you first arrived in Iowa, who met you?

Khao: I came in a second group [in November 1975]. Those relatives and friends who had come first went to meet us. Those friends who used to live together at the refugee camp came to Camp Dodge. . . .

InNgeun: Did you get the job that was in your profession?

Khao: Not really, because what I had studied was harnessing hydro electricity. But this is similar [current job at IBM repairing computers]. . . . At first I spoke French. . . . I was not good in English. Even though I have the knowledge in the field, communication is very important. I took the job to provide for my family. Then things got easier. I got used to the language. Friends got used to me, to my voice and accent.

InNgeun: How do you furnish your house, in Lao style or the style of people here?

Khao: . . . In Laos, we decorated it in one way and here we decorate it in another style. For example, the sofa: in Laos, it's made of bamboo; here it's made of foam.

InNgeun: Do you like it, the style?

Khao: As a man, I don't know much about it. It's my wife who has decorated.

InNgeun: Did you buy all of the decoration here?

Khao: Yes, everything we bought here.

InNgeun: Do you have anything brought over from there?

Khao: No. Nothing at all. I remember all I had left with me at the time of coming over was one hundred dollars. We spent it at Fort Chaffee [Arkansas, where refugees first arrived]. It was gone by the time I got to Iowa.

InNgeun: What about food and cooking? What kind of food do you mostly eat? American food or Tai Dam food?

Khao: Food is prepared and cooked the way we ate in Laos. My children sometimes eat hamburgers, but we older people still eat the food like it was prepared in our country. . . . When there's a party, I eat the way our people eat. Mostly we have *mum*, *chup-nor*, *chuphak*, *khoua*, *keng*, and *khaou-pun*.

InNgeun: About school: after you got here, in the United States, what school did you go to?

Khao: Many places, because I wanted to know the language, the pronunciation and the communication. I have not got it yet. I have gone to night school at North High in ESL [English as a Second Language], Iowa State University in their language class.

InNgeun: Are those schools and programs for refugees only?

Khao: Those classes and programs are for newcomer refugees who want to learn the language, how to communicate in English. They had them for free. . . .

InNgeun: What are the problems that you have encountered?

Khao: . . . I found out that when I am looking for a job, the most important thing is the language or communication. It's one of the biggest problems which prevents refugees from obtaining jobs. It's because I have to talk, not write, all the time.

InNgeun: Have you found a way to solve this problem and, if so, how did you do it?

Khao: To solve this problem, I needed a lot of time. For example, there were customers who could not understand me. Because Iowa is not one of the biggest states, Iowans do not have opportunities to meet people from different parts of the world. Unlike people in New York or Chicago or L.A., the Iowans have a more difficult time understanding me. When I go out of town on an assignment — to small towns like Creston or Winterset — the people there are

not used to meeting a foreigner, especially an Asian. It's even more difficult for them and me to communicate. I have tried to solve the problem, reading newspapers out loud, listening to the news and repeating after them. Sometimes at home, I read out loud and record it on a tape, and re-listen to it, to see if I can understand it. Anything I couldn't understand myself, I would find it [in a dictionary] and say it over and over again. . . . My tongue is not as flexible as when I was young. Unlike younger children — they go to school [here], watch TV, they already know how to speak the language.

InNgeun: When you were in Laos, before you came here, did you know how to speak English?

Khao: [From a class at school] I learned grammar and vocabulary, but I didn't speak. . . . It was easy just to learn, but it's a really different situation when you speak to a real American.

InNgeun: Do you still use our Tai Dam language?

Khao: I try. I will try to use the Tai Dam language for the rest of my life. Because Tai Dam people have been refugees in so many countries, we have lost part of our language. It was mixed with the Vietnamese language, as a result of our being refugees in Vietnam. In Laos, again the same thing happened. Right now, I am speaking Tai Dam mixed with Lao. And now that we have been here [in Iowa] for ten-twelve years, we are and will be using English in our language. Now, my children can't understand the Tai Dam language that well when I speak to them. Because of the reasons above, I like to have dinner or eat together with them and make them speak in Tai Dam.

InNgeun: Your littlest child, the youngest — do you speak English or Tai Dam to him?

Khao: My wife is a Laotian. When he, my child, is with me I speak to him in Tai Dam, but when he is with his mother, she speaks Lao to him. He ends up hearing three languages. Television taught him the English, plus his sisters speak to him in English. My children, when I speak Tai Dam or Lao to them, they don't comprehend it that well.

InNgeun: In your house, do you have any Tai Dam books or handwritten manuscripts?

Khao: Yes, I do have a computer that I use to do



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Vietnamese refugees land in Des Moines about 1981.

programs in Tai Dam. I'm trying to preserve the Tai Dam books and language.

InNgeun: What kind of books do you have? Magazines or what are they?

Khao: They are books from Tai Studies Center, song books, newspapers.

InNgeun: About clothing and dressing, do you try to teach [your children] to dress as in the old time?

Khao: . . . For myself, I would like for them once in a while to dress in traditional Tai Dam dress. For now they dress only in Western style, jeans and shirts just like the Americans here. To have them dress in Tai Dam, they don't have it. To dress in Lao, they don't like it. . . .

InNgeun: Have you any regrets about coming to Iowa?

Khao: No. I have not any regrets. On the contrary, I was lucky to have the chance to come and live here. Leaving our home, our country — yet I still found a new one, therefore I have no regrets. Only memories in the homeland, which make me think and miss home. Anything else, I am pretty happy with the situation.

InNgeun: The native-born Americans here, no matter black or white, how do they treat you, with dignity or not?

Khao: Some people do not, but I have not met one person yet who is prejudiced. It's only a few. Everyone that I have met and talked to has treated me nicely. I don't have this kind of problem.

InNgeun: What about among your people, do

you find the segregation among yourselves?

Khao: No, nothing like that. We will have the same culture, language, no one has divided into higher or lower class. We treat one another the same. When there is a death in a family, everyone comes to help out. It's one of the characteristics of Tai Dam society. I might say it's a good one.

InNgeun: In your point of view, do you think that the refugees here are prejudiced towards the native-born Americans here?

Khao: In my point of view, I don't think so. The younger people here do go out with their American friends. Some even get married to Americans. And they have not had any problems. In conclusion, I say we can live together.

InNgeun: Where you are living right now, are there a lot of Tai Dam families living nearby?

Khao: In this area, there are five or six families living here. There's my brother's house, Mr. Houg's house, Mr. Phoung's; next block there is Mr. Pheng's house, Mr. Cheu's, Mr. Kham-tanh's, and Mr. Done's house.

InNgeun: Did you intend to live close by your people or did it just happen?

Khao: It just happened. But it's good to be able to live close to each other. But we can't choose. It all depends on the circumstances. If we could build a village like Ban Song Khua, Ban Hong Seng [village in Laos], it would have been better.

InNgeun: Why would you want to live only with Tai Dam people?

Khao: Living together, we will be able to keep or preserve our language. The children will speak Tai Dam. It will help us preserve our culture. If we live mixed with other people, and when we have any special ceremonies, and too many relatives come over, we feel concern for our [non-Tai Dam] neighbors, we feel like we are being inconsiderate.

InNgeun: In the future, what do you think you and your family will become? Will you be able to maintain Tai Dam characteristics or will you become Americanized?

Khao: I think I will still be a native Tai Dam, but for my children's generation, I don't think so. They live here, they eat here. I hope they stay the same, but we can't stop the circumstances. We will just have to let go.

InNgeun: How about the preservation of Tai

Dam history, the old manuscripts or culture? How do you feel about that?

Khao: If possible, it's one of the most important things for the Tai Dam people. . . . We should try to work on the Tai Dam scripts and teach people how to read them. Whoever has done anything about it, I congratulate them, send them compliments for having a heart to preserve Tai Dam heritage, Tai scripts, and Tai culture. But whatever part of the culture is good, let's keep it; what's bad, let's forget it.

INTERVIEW 2

PHOTO BY JACK LUFKIN



As a soldier, Vong Lo Van (right) fought at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, and continued fighting the communists in Vietnam and Laos for over two decades as his wife, One Lo Thi (left), raised their eleven children. In March 1981 they fled from Laos to a Thailand refugee camp, where they lived until immigrating in 1984 to Des Moines. This interview took place in April 1987. (Lo and One are not related to interviewer InNgeun Baccam; the terms "Aunty" and "Uncle" denote respect.)

InNgeun Baccam: Why did you choose to come to the United States over other countries? You had hoped to go back [to Laos from Thailand], hadn't you?

Vong Lo Van: . . . When I arrived [in March 1981 at the refugee camp] in Thailand, I saw the situation differently from my earlier viewpoint [of returning to Laos to fight the commu-

nists] because former high officers, high-level such as ministers, from Laos were dispersed, and were showing no signs of fighting. [All these] led my heart to come to other countries. "Which country would be best to go to?" I thought over and asked myself when I got all my family with me. When we stopped fighting, we lost hope of going home. All I could do was come to America, the most important place or the end [the top] of the world. A lot of friends asked me to go with them to Australia, France, New Zealand, Canada, et cetera. Thinking it over, if a war has to break out again, we might have to move again. If we go we would rather go right to the end. There were already a lot of Tai Dam and relatives living in Iowa or America here. That's why I presented myself to American officers in the camp.

InNgeun: How about Aunty? Did you come after Uncle's decision, or did you take part in the decision?

One Lo Thi: I had the same opinion as your Uncle's. My parents were here in Iowa.

InNgeun: Why did you choose Iowa, instead of other states such as California, Hawaii, et cetera?

Vong: There were two reasons for me to come to Iowa. The first reason was that I have my in-laws and my own relatives, whose name is "Lo," who had been living in Iowa before and had sent money to help us out in Thailand for four years. The second reason was when I arrived in America, I did not have any skill in the English language. I had to depend on my own strength. Iowa is an agricultural state, where there's farming and gardening. I thought I still had strength to do a farming job. For the first year, I worked [detasseling] in a cornfield near Mt. Pleasant.

InNgeun: At the camp, what did you think you would find when you arrived in Iowa, concerning the state, the people, weather, country, et cetera?

Vong: I knew for certain that there was a lot of snow. I also knew that there would be a lot of problems in working, social [customs], transportation. Everything would be hard because it's different from our country. But when you arrive and with effort, you would overcome these problems. . . .

InNgeun: Do you think the American and Tai

Dam people in America are different from what you thought?

Vong: I saw a big difference between the Tai people who came earlier [in the mid 1970s] and the newcomers. First, for the social matters such as clothes and behaviors. The ones who came earlier were confident, radiant and happy. For the newcomers, they dressed differently, their faces were skinny — because these two worlds were very far away from each other.

One: . . . [My daughter and four grandchildren] didn't get to come along [from Laos to Thailand] because the [accomplice] was in a hurry and couldn't get them all. I dropped my tears crossing [the Mekong River]. At the [Thailand] camp, whenever our beloved relatives [in America] sent [money] over to us, we then had a chance to go to the market for food for our kids. One egg was divided into four or five portions.

I'm still mentioning it. Now we buy eggs by the box. "Kids, do not eat too much. One egg used to be eaten by four or five people," says their grandmother, just like a legend.

InNgeun: What did you study [at the refugee camp in Thailand]?

One: We learned ways in America, learned how to use the toilet, where to go, look for signs, how to store food in the refrigerator, how to talk on the phone. . . .

InNgeun: Who were the instructors?

One: [The high administrators of the camp] hired outside instructors, Thai people. Just like you, all were young ladies. Some were very mean, very rude. Some were very good: "Mom, if you don't understand, don't worry. It's ok to just remember a few words." Some were very mean: "Old witch, why don't you remember? You will die in America. You will die if you don't know how to spend money." We learned how to spend money (they gave us dollar bills) and how to go for groceries and shopping. . . . "To shop, there are carts to put in all of what you need. If you [carry items in your pockets] they will see and [think you are hiding them]."

InNgeun: When you arrived in America, what was going on?

One: . . . When we arrived and touched earth [in December 1984] there were a lot of rela-

tives and friends who rushed to welcome, embraced and hugged us. . . . I was then very skinny, just like a fish bone. . . . My mother cried, my younger sister did too, my uncles and aunts also cried. They then [took] us to our sponsors' car. . . . We came out [of the airport], oh, we never saw [anything like this] before. All was white. I was surprised.

InNgeun: Before anything, what did you do?

Vong: . . . The sponsors explained how to go to the hospital. Naturally, when we arrived in a new atmosphere and climate, we had to fight for our health, we had to see doctors, have physical exams. Secondly, we looked for schools or where to study language and skills.

InNgeun: How about you, Aunty, do you remember?

One: Yes, I remember. When we arrived, our sponsors found us a home. About three or four days later, they took us for medical exams. Right after those exams, they took us to the flower house [Botanical Center in Des Moines]. They took your uncle and daughter to study for six months. I was not allowed to. I stayed at home and looked after the kids. After six months of study, they looked for a job for your uncle. . . . The sponsors asked for food stamps for us and cash assistance for our rent. The food stamps were enough to buy food. For the car, our sponsors provided for us: "Take the cheap one, because you haven't got a permanent job." Then I saved some money to pay back our sponsors.

InNgeun: Do you remember what you ate?

One: Rice! Everything I like, we had them all there. My son, my nieces, my granddaughters brought the food, much more than we could put in the refrigerator, we put them outside in the cold. . . . Our Tai Dam people looked in on us for everything, such as silverware, appliances. Our Tai Dam relatives, families, gave us everything, clothes or linens. After a while, I started looking for a job and got one.

InNgeun: Comparing the living, in this house and the house you used to live in in Laos or our country, what are the differences?

Vong: About the differences of living here, there are food, [running] water, electricity. . . . Renting this house, we have land to grow a garden, because our people like to have a backyard garden. Living here is very



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Tai Dam immigrant Somsak Saythongphet, center, smiles at a citizenship party.

comfortable, there is electricity, heating, air conditioning, a refrigerator, freezer, fans. This is the best for human beings, compared to the standard of living in Laos. . . .

One: . . . Over there, if you earn enough and own a house, that is it. Here, it's different. You have to set apart money for the house, water and electricity payments. If you've never done it before, it's kind of hard, but when you live many years longer, you try to get [save] money for the house, water and electricity, because you are afraid not to have money for them when they're due. That's the difference.

InNgeun: When you first came, what were your first jobs?

One: When I said I would like to work, our relatives took me to Job Service. I told them that I would like to work at a fabric-cutting company [Bob Ellen Companies, Inc.] where my daughter had been working. The Job Service staff was a Hmong [another Southeast Asian ethnic group]. He took me there to apply and take a test. Since then I worked there for one year and three months.

Vong: About me, I still work at my first job [Container Recovery, Inc.]. I'm old but still work. Talking about working here, nobody forces you to [accept or take a particular job]. And people don't like being forced by other people. That's why we're here. People like being forced, but forced by ourselves [self-motivation]. . . .

InNgeun: Do you mean the jobs you're both working at now are not the jobs you learned [in Laos]? You've been trained here?

Vong: These jobs are new and we've never learned them before.

One: We learned them here. We never learned, never saw [these kinds of jobs] in

Laos. We just tried our best.

InNgeun: When you first worked, did you have intentions to work temporarily or for a long time?

One: Before I worked I had set my mind to work until my retirement.

Vong: To work temporarily or permanently, we couldn't decide, it depended on our health. We had to ask ourselves if we had enough strength to work on the job. Or if there is a better job. Like all human beings, we have to look for high places, not like water that flows down hills, right? Water goes wherever is lower, but humans always look for betterness. Wherever is better, we should try to get there. That's the theory [*laughing*].

InNgeun: The job you had been trained for before, couldn't you find it here in America?

Vong: About my profession: . . . I was a physician in the army, referred to by the French as a medical assistant. Comparing that profession to here, I can't do it, because they use computers. The computer will do the tests and diagnosis, and people will follow the computer. That's not what I learned before. I had been working in the medical field for more than twenty years. . . .

InNgeun: Uncle, where did you go to study?

Vong: I went to PROTEUS [in Des Moines, a publicly funded, nonprofit employee training program for the disadvantaged, especially former farmers] for six months [in 1985]. . . . There are Tai Dam, Khmers, also Mexicans, and many nationalities studying together.

InNgeun: What did you learn?

Vong: Conversation, reading, writing.

InNgeun: . . . Was it hard to study?

Vong: It wasn't hard at all, because the government paid us to study [*laughing*]. It's not like in our country. Over there we had to buy our own books and tuition. Here, the government paid us to study, more than three dollars an hour.

InNgeun: How many hours a day did you study?

Vong: I studied eight hours a day. . . . Each program is for six months only. If you want to continue, you have to apply to the government for more funds. . . . You have to look for a job after enough studying to become self-sufficient.

InNgeun: How about you or your generation?

Do you try to teach the kids how to speak Tai Dam?

One: We talk in Tai Dam, of course. Sometimes our daughters, the youngest one talks to us in English. And I yell at them, "Don't talk to me in English, I don't understand anything." "I taught you," [they reply,] "you just don't remember." [laughing] Now children teach their parents. . . .

InNgeun: About the Tai Dam script: do you have any books or scripts in Tai Dam to read?

Vong: . . . Since we escaped and lived in new countries, we didn't have a chance to bring [Tai Dam history books] out. All were abandoned. But there are some writings. Especially our Tai Dam associations have published books for our people to read.

InNgeun: We're now coming back to the kids. How do you raise them and discipline them?

One: . . . This country is very advanced, very educated. Because I am ignorant, teaching my kids is telling them: "Please, study hard since this country has a lot of riches, opportunities, happiness, education. I was ignorant because I didn't get to school. I raise you up till now and

A Hmong woman about 1979, arriving in Des Moines.



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arrive in America. It was with a lot of difficulties. Believe me and study hard." That's all I can teach them. It's very different from Laos.

InNgeun: Do you want to add anything, Uncle? About our culture?

Vong: About the costumes: the Tai Dam nowadays still do not let them go, because there are people who just come straight from our country. After my generation, for sure, the children and the grandchildren's generations won't keep the Tai Dam old fashion of costumes.

One: There won't be any, after our generation. There won't be any because they don't know how to make them.

InNgeun: If we teach them to wear them once in a while, when there are parties or reunions?

One: Yes, we prepare for those occasions. When asked, they will know how to show. My youngest daughter already knows how to show.

Vong: Most of our people are good at socializing. We look after each other whenever there is sickness, a death, a birth. Our people know how to gather and look after each other. We still do this in Des Moines. The Americans would look wrong on us [misunderstand us] about weekends. Instead of working or after church, there are Tai Dam religion gatherings, or weddings. Our people still stick to custom, whenever there's a wedding. If invited we will go. But us, we help each other preparing the wedding for two or three days. We gather, we eat, a lot of cars are around here and there. We have stronger social ties, a stronger love and cooperation than Americans, truly speaking. These are the loves of our Tai Dam people.

InNgeun: Now in America, do you live close to many Tai Dam in this area?

Vong: Now here, I still have the same feeling, because of the love between the Tai Dam couldn't be thrown away. We're now in this area with eight houses, very close to each other.

InNgeun: How about the teaching: "My kid, he's an American, don't go out with him, I don't like you flirting with American boys." Is there anything like this?

Vong: I take it as natural. I feel rather good, in my opinion. Because being here, I want my children, girls or boys, to get close and associate with the Americans.

InNgeun: This question is not about being only

friends, but flirting as boyfriends or girlfriends.

Vong: No, I don't set them apart. If they love each other, with black Americans, or white Americans, or Chek [Chinese ethnic] or Chinese, that's their business.

InNgeun: Aunty, how do you feel?

One: I want our people as daughters-in-law.

InNgeun: [laughing] Mostly, every mother would say so. . . . Talking about visitors or friends coming to our house, I don't mean our Tai Dam people [but] all other nationalities. How do you feel? Do you feel happy to welcome them?

Vong: This concerns respect and culture. . . . There is happiness and radiance because we have friends and relatives visiting. We will try to make those friends happy and satisfied with us. Following our Tai Dam traditions, we have to welcome, to entertain, and to feed them. That's our Tai Dam way. Many more people coming will be best. . . . But [Americans] are different. Following their ways, they tell in advance how many people will eat, how many will come. But us, we don't have to. From our Tai Dam traditions since long time ago, if there's a lot of relatives coming, that's much better. . . . At least, the very least, you have to offer tea. When going into somebody's house and there's no water offered, there will be bad talk around: "Going to that house, there's no water to drink!" Have you ever heard [that expression]?

InNgeun: Yes, what's the meaning, please tell me?

Vong: Now you're a young girl, you need to prepare for it. If there are relatives coming — with big glasses, fill only one third of it, not much.

One: Oh, that's old tradition. We don't do it anymore.

Vong: That's our tradition.

InNgeun: Even if we don't do it anymore, I want to know.

Vong: . . . If you fill the water glass full, it means you chase them out. . . . If I fill it less, it means that I want you to come often.

InNgeun: Now let's talk about the Tai Dam future in America.

Vong: . . . Since we've been here for ten years, there has been a big change, in education and



Seuang KaVanh and child arrive in Des Moines in 1979.

traditions. On the good side, we do have more doctors now, and five years from now, there will be more. And the traditional culture is preserved by old people. It will disappear later. . . .

InNgeun: Aunty, five or ten years from now, do you think our Tai Dam people will hold their hair-bun on top [a sign of marriage] or still dress in their black skirts?

One: After my generation, hair-buns will be no more. Even the language will be spoken differently. When the next generation marries, they will tell their wives or children that their mothers were Tai Dam, how they dressed. They will tell, but won't dress like us.

Vong: Five years from now, there will be no distinction between Tai Dam and other people. For now, we still can tell who's Tai Dam because of the hair-bundle on top and black skirt for people over fifty years old. But for younger people, . . . they just dress like local [American] people. Everything is changing so fast, let alone our children's generation. So American people won't be able to tell who's Tai Dam; they will only know that we are Asians.

InNgeun: This question is more political. If Laos became a democracy again, would you

COURTESY OF BUREAU OF REFUGEE PROGRAMS



PHOTO BY JACK LURKIN

Seated at a loom on display at the Historical Building, Toui Baccam wears a traditional Tai Dam black skirt, silver-buttoned blouse, and *kout-piay* headpiece.

want to go back? . . . If you did not have to fight, for example, and our country had turned back to democracy and everybody was allowed to go back because it belonged to us, would you want to stay there or just visit?

Vong: First of all, I would visit. . . . I don't think I would stay because I have already resettled here and my children growing up here would not go with me. As for my generation, we would go for political or democratic deliberation, not by force. But if there was a chance of fighting, I would go too. This is my cause, I fled not to run away from my country, but to go back to fight.

InNgeun: How about Aunty?

One: I want to go back to my country. Decades won't make me forget.

InNgeun: Is your mother still living in Tai Dam country?

One: My mother wrote me letters. She's still alive, but my father has already died. She recommended to my nephew: "I won't die till I hear news from my youngest daughter. Go and try to find her for me. Send me news as soon as you find her." That's how we got letters from her, also from my nephew's father, or my

brother, saying: "Dear sister, I am so poor here, if you have enough to help our mother and my family, please send me some clothes. Our mother won't go into the earth until she sees you first. . . . She loved you so much, missed you so much, she won't be able to go into the earth if she doesn't get to see her youngest child one more time. I have tried to find you, to have news about you. Now that I have letters and news from you, they are to me more precious than silver and gold." They are very poor over there. We are poor too, here — still we have enough to eat and enjoy life. But however happy we are here, we can't forget our people over there. Younger generations, five or ten years from now, might not know, not understand all these things. They might know that they are Tai Dam but not how miserable their people are.

InNgeun: That's true and possible. But the only way to prevent it depends on older people to keep on telling, orally or by scripts, how our history, our culture, and our people were. If not, our Tai Dam people will be no more, just like many other nationalities. . . . Do you think preserving our scripts and language is important?

Vong: Plainly talking, if you think it's important, it is, and if you think it's not, then it isn't. There are two aspects — first, if you think that the Tai Dam country is still our country, it's absolutely important; and if you don't care about our Tai Dam country, it's not important. We will be new people, such as all American people from England became Americans and built up their new country. □

SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to Wayne Johnson (Assistant Director, Bureau of Refugee Programs) and other staff members; and to Loren Horton (SHSI) for help with interview questions. Copies of the videotape are available at the Tai Studies Center and Bureau of Refugee Programs, Des Moines. Complete English transcriptions are at the Tai Studies Center and SHSI. The purpose of the Tai Studies Center is to promote Tai Dam heritage and integration of the Tai Dam into the American mainstream.

Sources include Jon Bowermaster, *Governor: An Oral History of Robert Ray* (Ames, 1987); "Tai Dam History" (unpublished, no date); "The Tai Dam: Nowhere To Stay," slide presentation written by Siang Bacthi, edited by Ginger Murphy (1988); Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York, 1983); and Jerald Starr, ed., "The Lessons of the Vietnam War" (Center for Social Studies, 1988).



Victorian Stenciling in Iowa's Statehouse

Photography by
Chuck Greiner

New York artist Elmer E. Garnsey designed the stenciling for the vaulted ceiling of the west corridor of the Statehouse in Des Moines. Completed about 1905, the design resembles Garnsey's earlier treatment of a vaulted ceiling in the Library of Congress. Fresco artists often used the geometrical Greek key border (here, in gold against olive). Garnsey's work had been a major element of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, where decorative arts united with architecture on a splendid scale.

Capitol Kaleidoscope

THE REPORTER in 1883 who previewed the Victorian "fresco work" in Iowa's brand new Statehouse seemed baffled about how to describe it to readers. No wonder: The elaborate stencils unite dozens of patterns in dazzling colors, visually lowering the lofty 22'9" ceilings. The accumulation of design and color wraps the rooms in Victorian elegance. As a contemporary designer wrote of successful stenciling, "nothing could be removed and leave the design equally good or better."

Touring Iowa's Statehouse is a vivid lesson in Victorian eclecticism. The building was con-

structed in the 1870s and 1880s, when the predominant architectural style for public buildings was American Renaissance. Architects looked back to classical cultures and to America's colonial period (which had been marked by Thomas Jefferson's preference for Greek- and Roman-style public buildings). They sought to artfully combine classical elements in an original and monumental manner that befit a prosperous and successful nation which had reached its centennial.

For interior ornamentation, Iowa's capitol commissioners wisely recognized that "next to

the architect, a decorative artist is counted perhaps the most important in buildings of a monumental character." The commission toured public buildings in eastern cities to view high-quality ornamental work. The role of artists and artisans, whether of national or local reputation, was to enhance the architecture. Sculptors and muralists created allegorical figures in classical garb, representing Industry, Peace, and Agriculture. Glassworkers etched borders of Greek frets on windows. Woodworkers fashioned Corinthian columns.

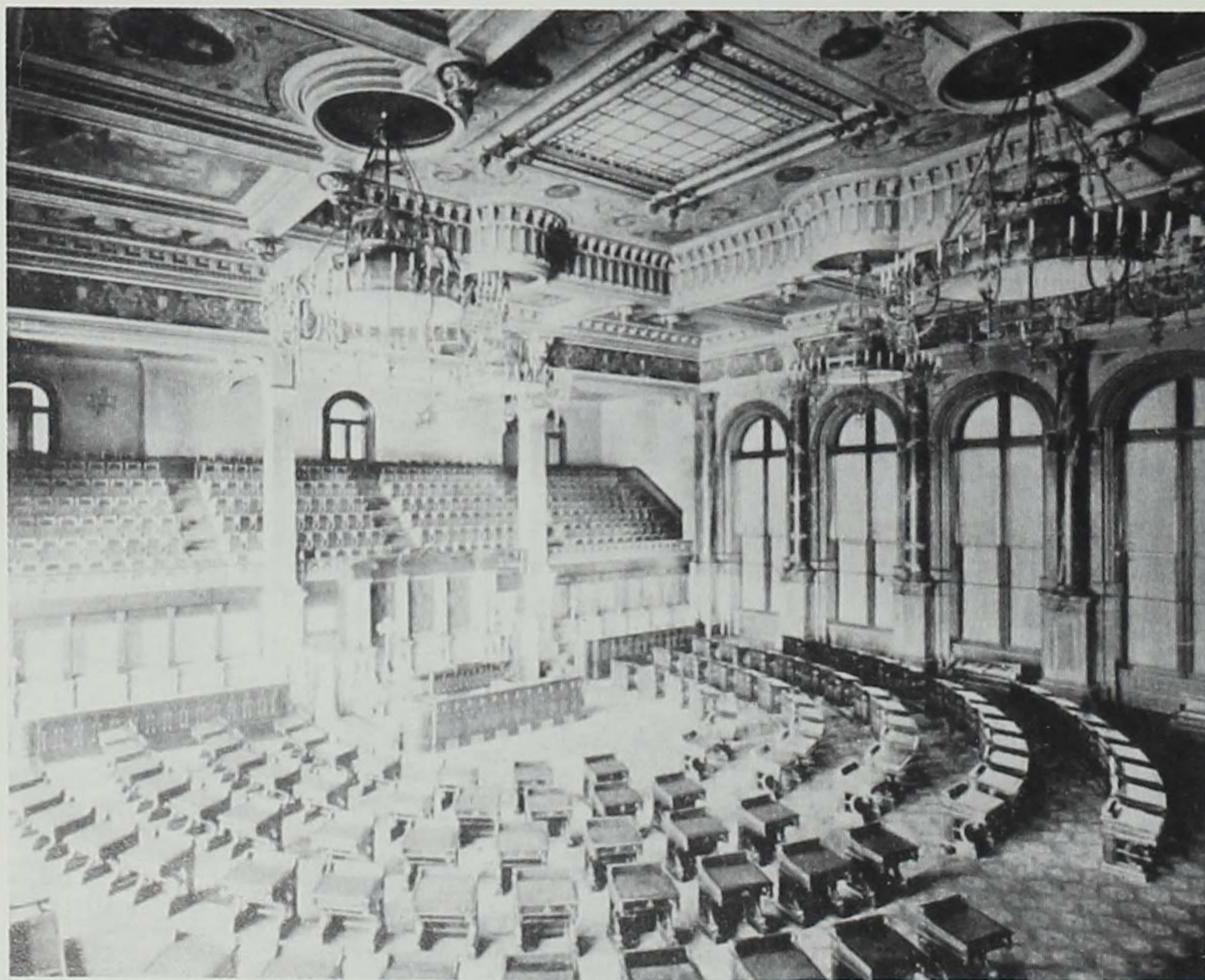
Within this union of the arts, "fresco artists" (or stencilers) also chose classical motifs, often from pattern books such as Owen Jones's 1856 *Grammar of Ornament* and its two thousand full-color examples of borders and motifs from Byzantine, Egyptian, Medieval, Greek, Oriental and other cultures. Such books also conveyed design principles, listed colors for convex or concave moldings, and recommended colors to be juxtaposed. Fresco artists used three techniques: stenciling (building a design through a series of templates), pouncing (transferring a design by forcing powder through a perforated pattern), and free-hand

brushwork (for shadows and highlights). Much of the Statehouse fresco work was completed in the 1880s; the rest was part of the remodeling that began in 1902.

Ensuing decades brought changes in taste, and some of the stenciling was painted over. In the 1970s an ambitious project took shape, in which restoration painters Jerry C. Miller and Dick Labertew and their assistants have uncovered the original patterns and colors under layers of paint, drawn new templates, and repainted walls and ceilings to their turn-of-the-century appearance. Miller, who recently retired, is collaborating on a book on the capitol's painted ornamentation, with Linda Nelson Johnson, assistant professor of design, Arizona State University. (Johnson helped with the restoration as part of her 1986 thesis at Iowa State University.) Their book will be available by mid-1989.

The following examples of original and restored stenciling gleam like patterns in a Victorian kaleidoscope, and the *Palimpsest* is pleased to present this holiday gift to its readers.

— *The Editor*



House of Representatives Chambers. Original ornamentation was designed by fresco artist E. S. Mirgoli of St. Louis. In January 1904, fire did extensive damage in the north wing, forever destroying Mirgoli's artistry in the House.

"A Register reporter looked into the new Senate chamber yesterday, and found it even more magnificent than he had hoped, for the scaffolding is now out of the way, and there is an unobstructed view of the grand ceiling . . . to long attest the artistic skill of Sig. Mirgoli."

*Iowa State Register,
Jan. 11, 1883*



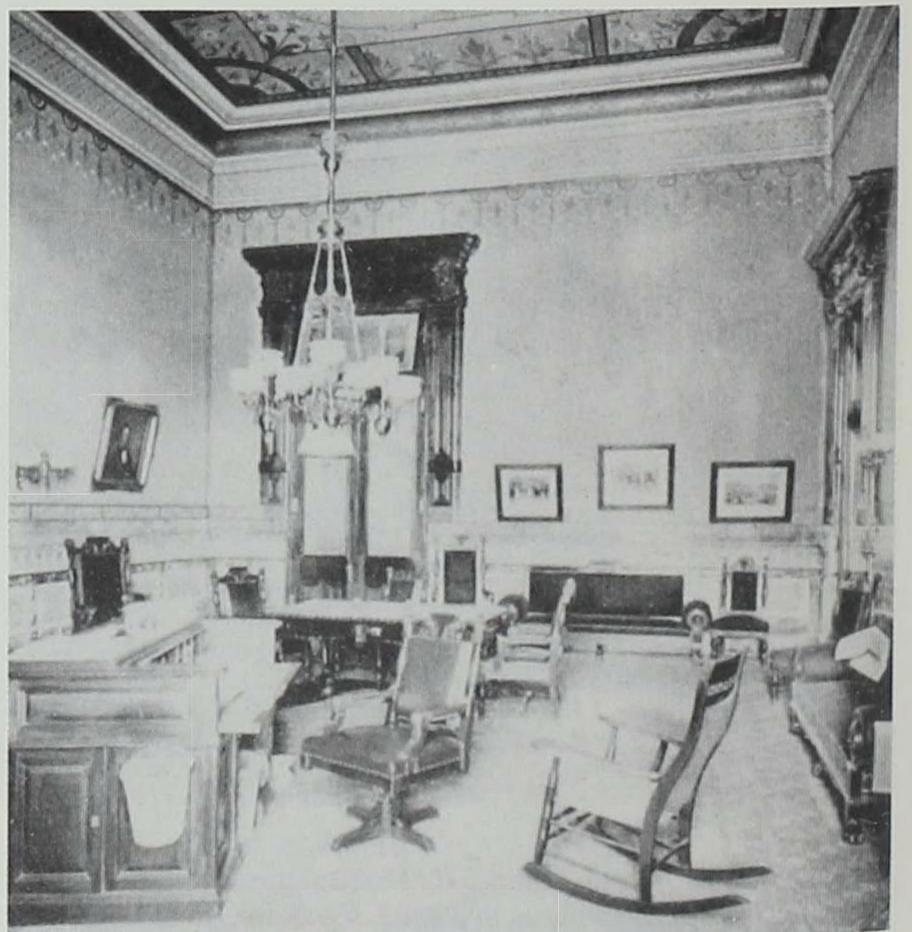
A portion of the Senate ceiling, by E. S. Mirgoli (1882/83), frames the stained-glass skylight. Stylized by the Greeks and Romans, the large swirling acanthus leaves in the corner constitute a basic ornamentation called *rinseau*.



At an evening public reception, January 5, 1885, gas jets and chandeliers lit up the oil frescoes on the ceilings and walls of the governor's suite, painted by Albert, Noxon, and Toomey Studios of St. Louis. Above: A trompe l'oeil frame surrounds the state seal on the ceiling of the governor's private office (originally the reception room). Careful shading on the leaves and thin shadows behind the circular frame are actually painted, masterfully creating a three-dimensional effect that deceives the eye.

"A vast amount of pains has been taken with [the governor's suite], some of the best judges of this class of work in the country have been consulted, and the result is a marvel of taste, elegance, richness and beauty that can hardly be told in words."

Iowa State Register, Jan. 2, 1885



“Once it is done, you stand back to see it . . . and then go on to the next one. This will be here for my kids, and for my kids’ kids.”

Dick Labertew, restoration painter

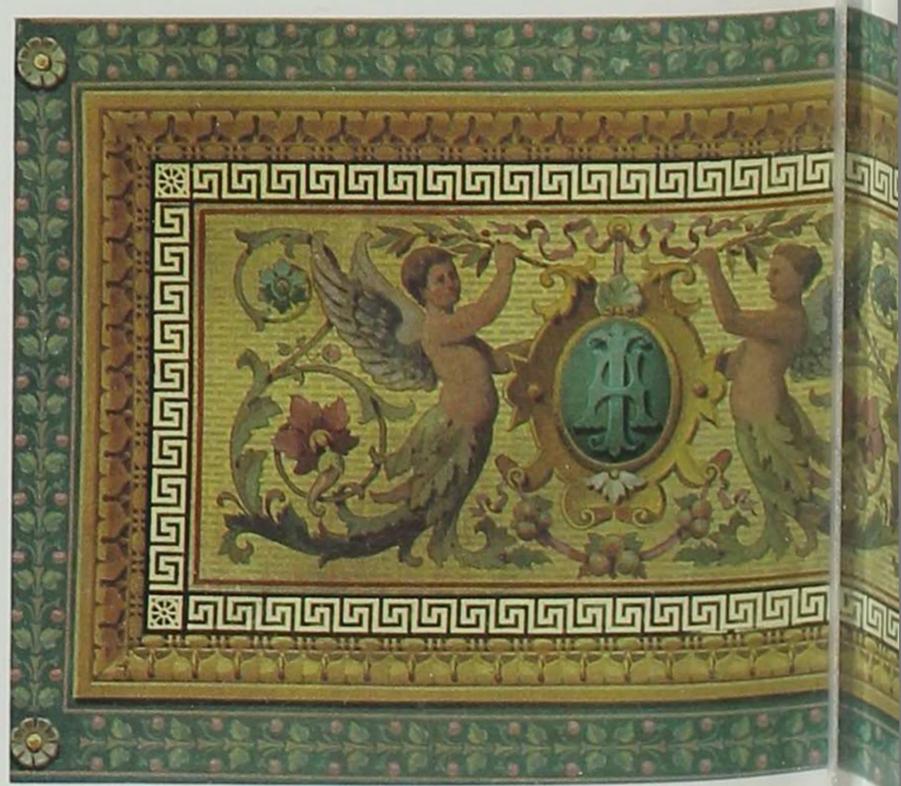


Egyptian motifs (by Albert, Noxon, and Toomey) grace the ceiling of what was originally the governor's private office (see black and white photograph) and is now the reception room. The walls have recently been restored.



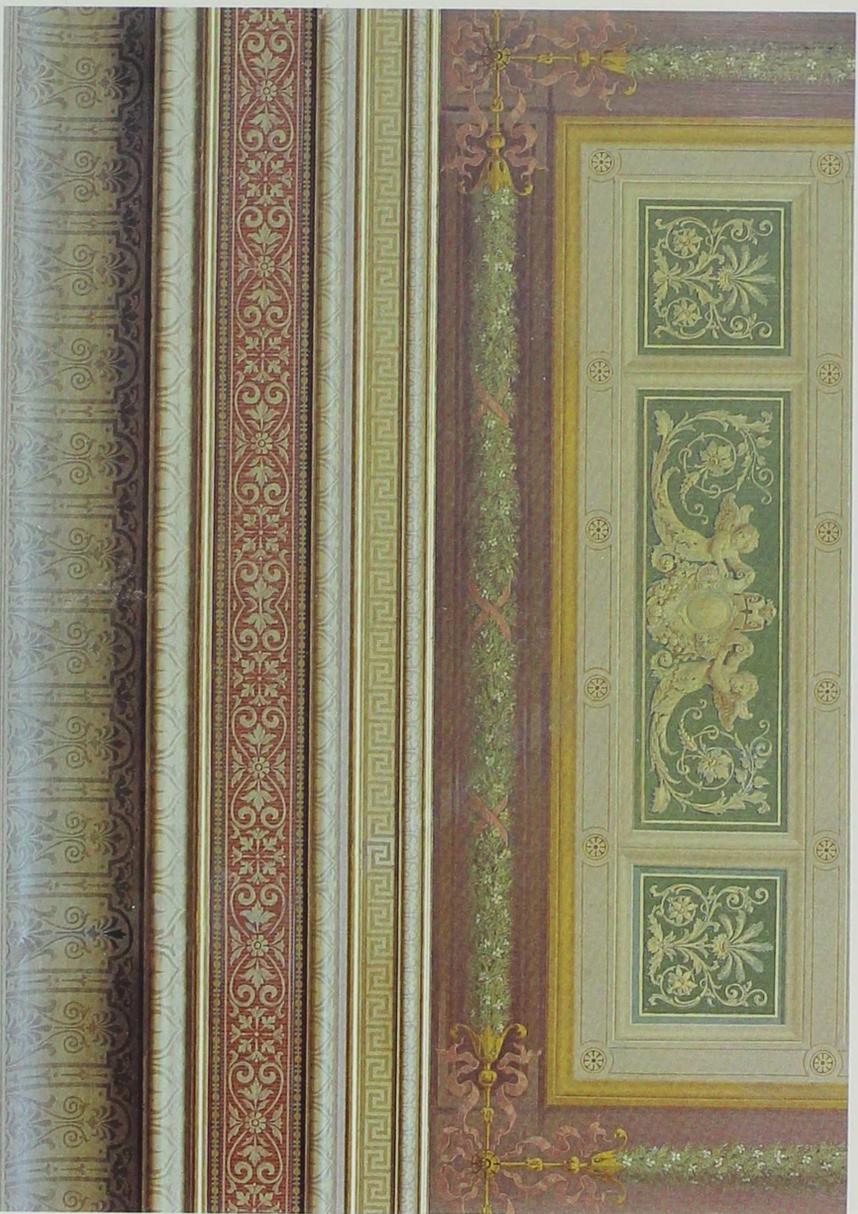
“Beauty of form is produced by lines growing out of one from the other in gradual undulations; . . . nothing could be removed and leave the design equally good or better.”

Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*



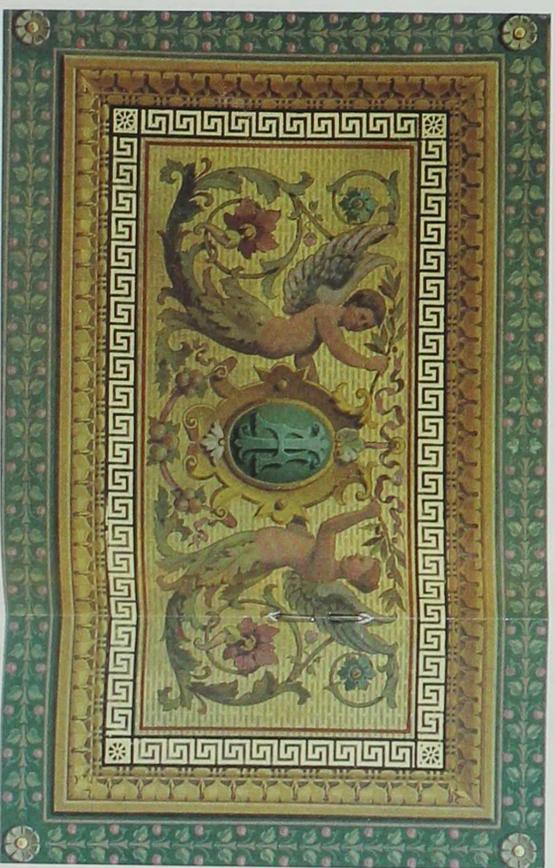


Above: Sunlight washes across the elaborate vaulted ceiling in the secretary of state's private office, painted by Danish artist Andreas Hansen. Lower left, two details from ceiling: Mythological arabesque figures, bordered by Greek key or fret; and triangular floral design, topped by Greek honeysuckle, repeated on restored walls (see cover). Upper left: Portion of ceiling in outer business office, designed by (William) August Knorr.



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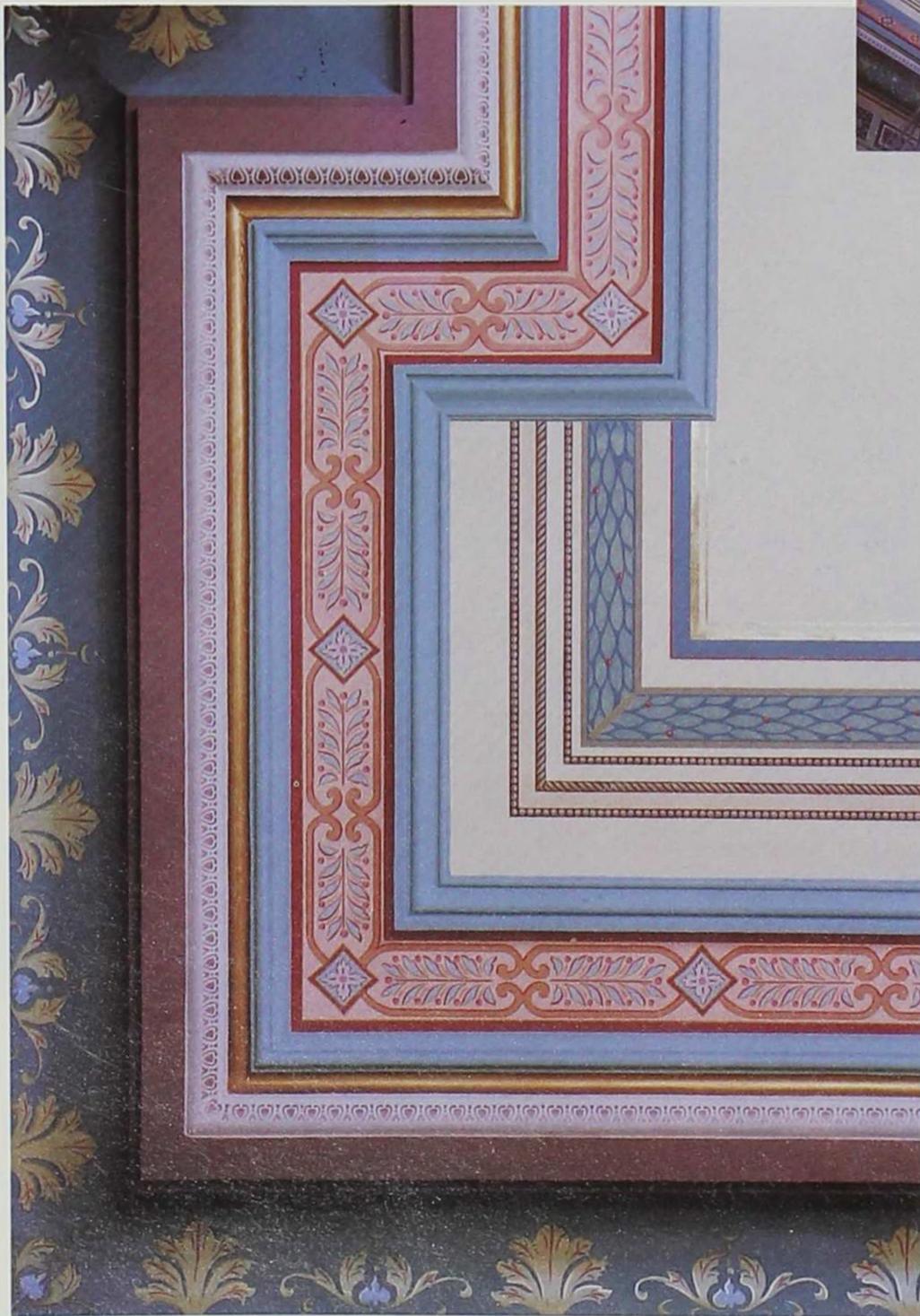
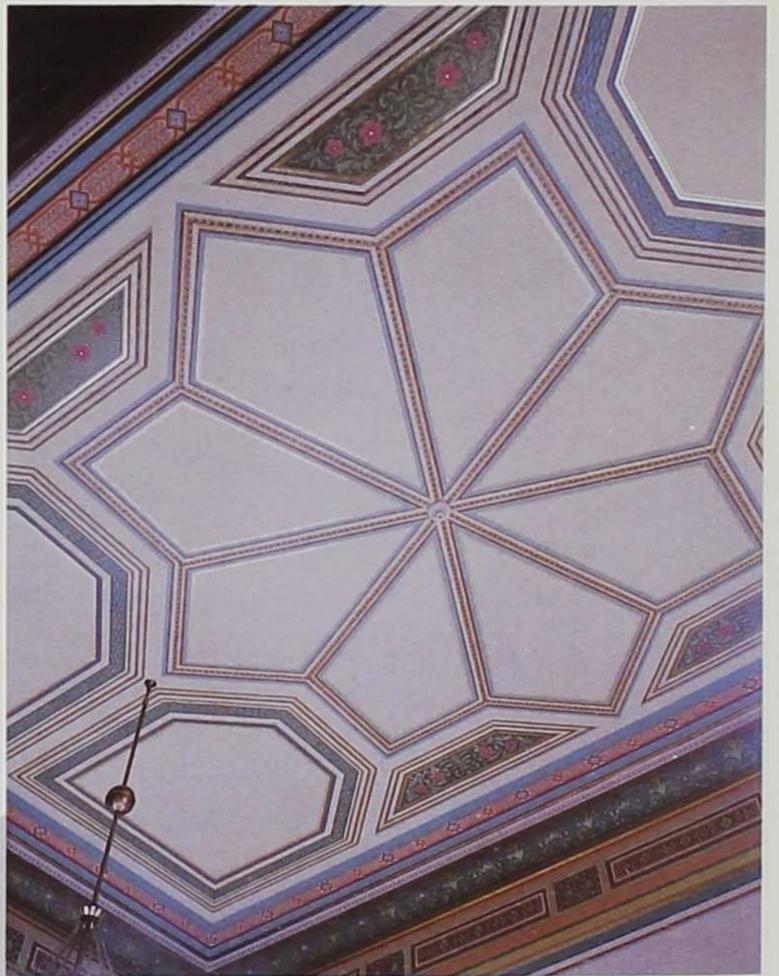
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“What an explosion of color!”

Young actor, touring the capitol, 1970s



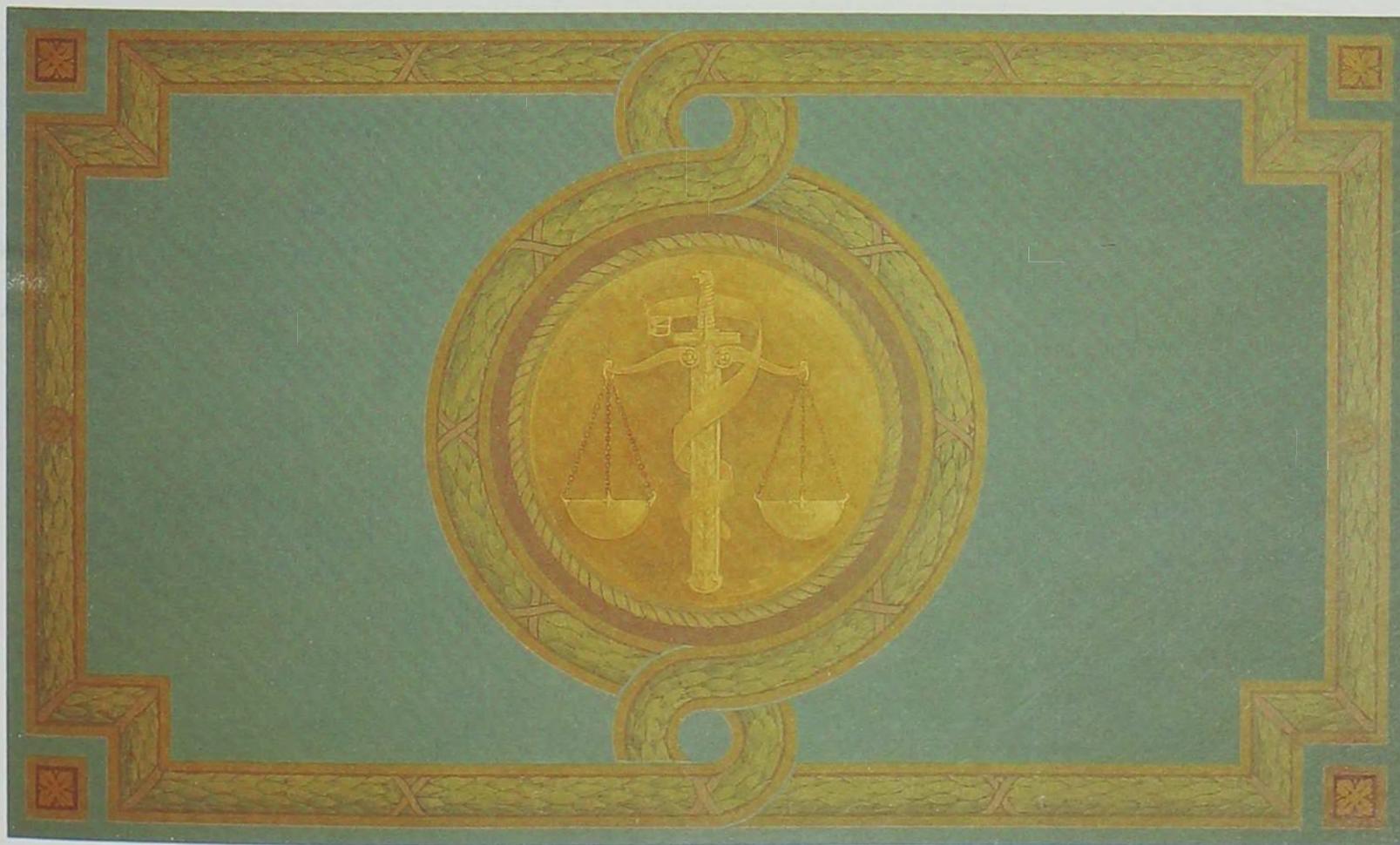
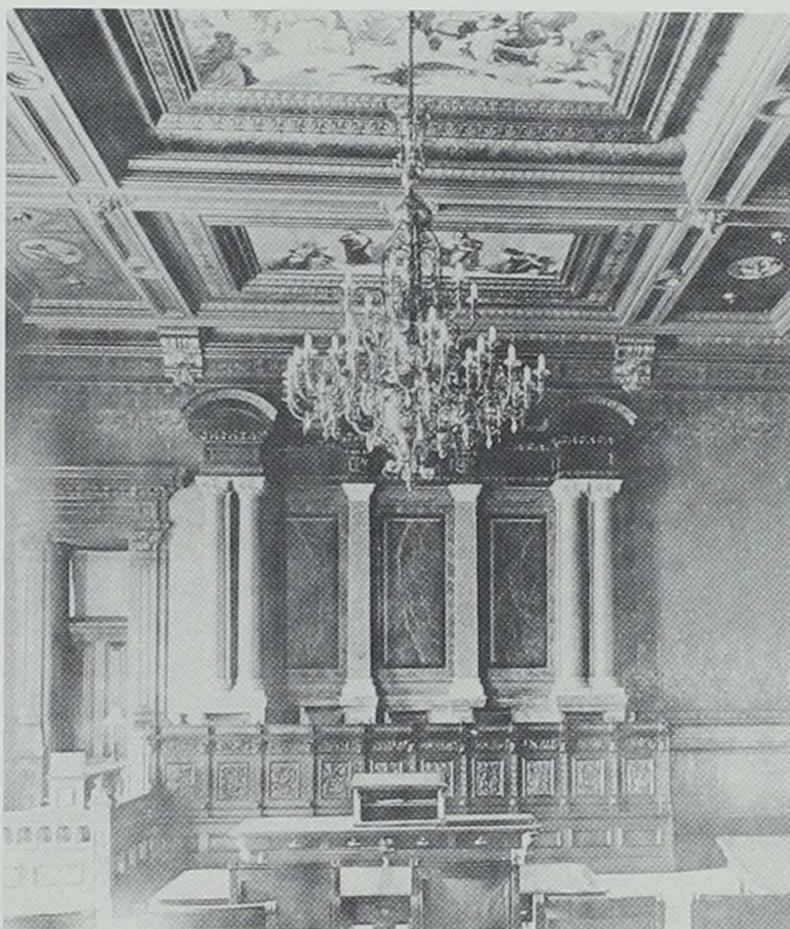
Left: Elegant corner detail from ceiling of Room 118, the House's conference room. Restoration of the room's enormous star pattern (above) was based on a photograph. (Because the ceiling was once replastered, the original colors and designs could not be uncovered through scraping.)

“Successful stenciled decoration follows the predominant architectural details and blends motifs and interior architecture into a cohesive whole.”

Linda Nelson Johnson

"The most important consideration . . . is that the character and use of the building, as the visible heart and brain of the State, receive constant consideration; and that the efforts of the decorative artist be concentrated upon the unifying and beautifying of the architectural design, and not upon ostentatious display or meaningless ornamentation."

Elmer E. Garnsey



A close look at the black and white photograph reveals that stenciling originally covered the walls of the Supreme Court chambers. The 1904 fire destroyed much of the ornamentation, including the walls stenciled by August Knorr. (Fritz Melzer's ceiling murals, based on Greek mythology were rescued.) Above: One panel of the greatly simplified ceiling ornamentation, after the fire; ropes of banded greenery link together around the scales of justice.



The Horticultural Society originally occupied Room 116 (now the Senate's conference room). The room was later partitioned into two rooms. Removal of the partition in 1980 allowed restoration painters to scrape down to samples of the original stenciling so as to restore the delicate borders of wild roses, grape leaves, and wildflowers. Nineteenth-century woodcarvers had continued the theme of nature's glory; fruits and vegetables adorn the woodwork.

"The various colours should be so blended that the objects coloured, when viewed at a distance, should present a neutralised bloom."

Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*

"This room, more so than any of the others, tells a story. . . . We're putting history back on the walls and ceilings."

Jerry C. Miller, restoration painter

"The greater portion of the mural decoration has been done by artists employed by the day and working under the immediate supervision of Mr. August Knorr, who is a master in his profession. . . . It is very much to be desired that you continue the fresco work until the whole of the office story, including the corridors, is completed."

Architect's report, Feb. 1886



Fresco artist August Knorr created this celestial ceiling, webbed with gold and festooned with roses. Originally the office of the superintendent of public instruction, the room is now part of the auditor's suite.

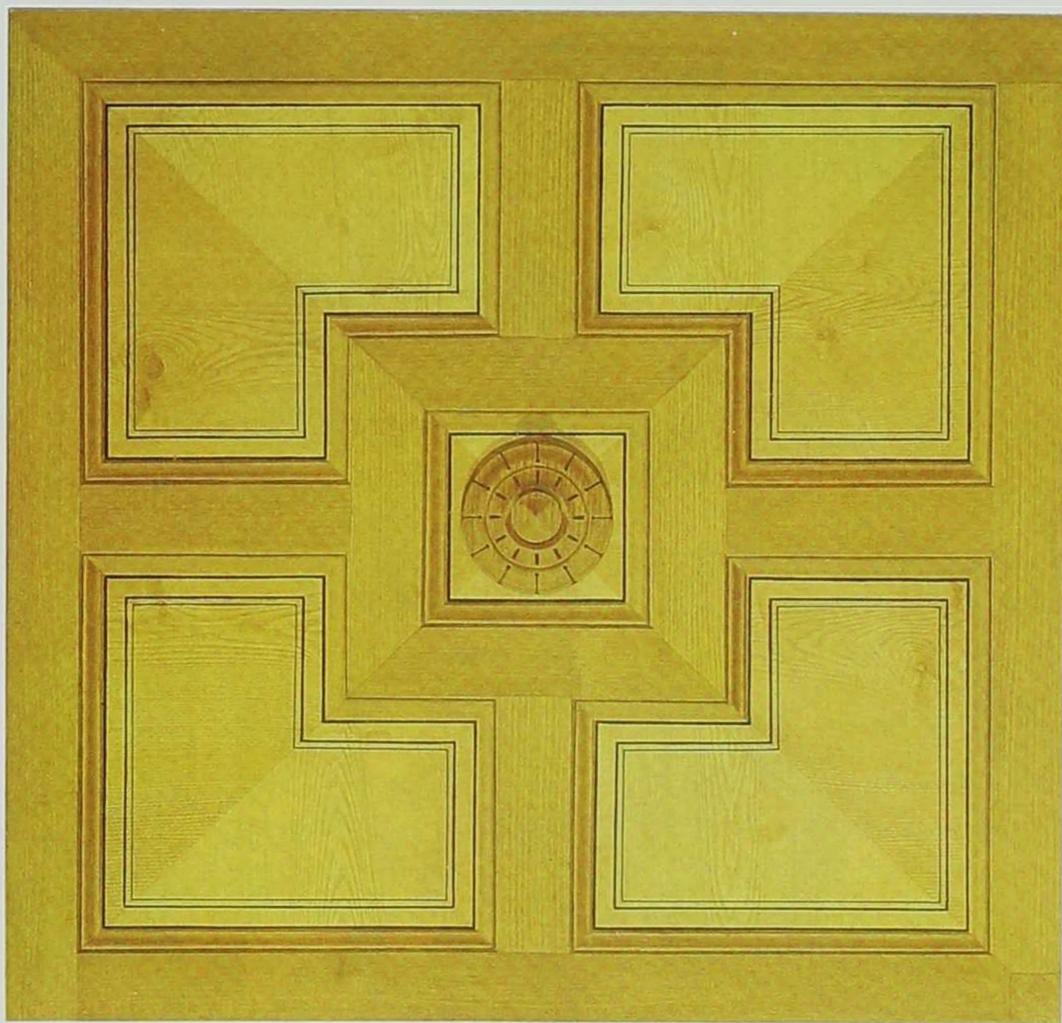


“The graining of woods, and the imitation of hard woods — so perfect that no one could hardly tell the imitation from the genuine, are all work worthy of artists — for these gentlemen are indeed artists in this line of work.”

Iowa State Register, Jan. 21, 1883

Upper right: A masterpiece of wood-graining. Note the knots and the “shadow” cast by the center rosette. Detail is from ceiling of west office, auditor’s suite. Artist unknown.

Opposite: The ceiling of the auditor’s private office showcases classical stencil elements: numerous trompe l’oeil moldings, swirling *rincaux*, Greek honeysuckles, small rosettes. Creator of this tour de force is unknown.



Below: Mythological griffins guard an ear of corn, high above the staff workers in the treasurer’s outer office.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The *Palimpsest* editor personally thanks the following individuals for their help with this photo essay: Jerry C. Miller, whose extensive research on the Statehouse ornamentation and his years of experience as a restoration painter made him the ideal tour guide for this editor; Dick Labertew, whose evident enthusiasm for the restoration project is matched by his skill; Linda Nelson Johnson, for her sound understanding of the prevailing nineteenth-century attitudes about architecture and ornamentation. My thanks to the office-holders and office workers (particularly Secretary of State Elaine Baxter and her staff) who allowed us to interrupt their work, move furniture, adjust lighting, and set up cameras; to General Services administrator Ralph Oltman for his cooperation; and to State Historical Society staff members Jon Robison and Don Lee for equipment arrangements. Special thanks to photographer Chuck Greiner, who overcame difficult lighting conditions with expertise and good humor.

A Christmas Story

Under the Ice A Thrilling Adventure on the Upper Mississippi

by Dan De Quille

Reprinted from the Virginia City (Nevada) *Territorial Express*,
December 25, 1879

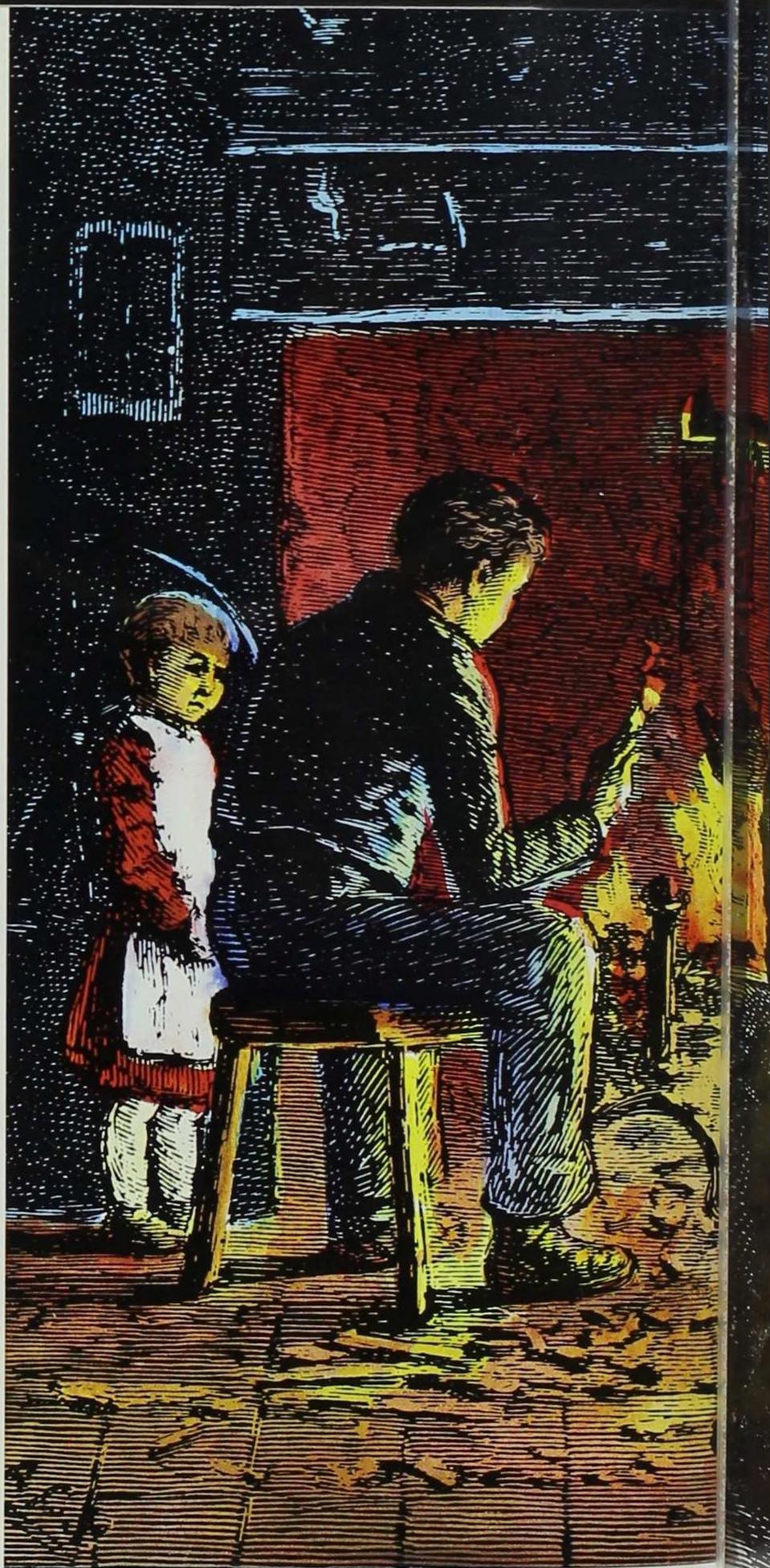
ONE DOES NOT always tell his story well. There is much in being in the proper humor. Agreeable surroundings and attentive and appreciative listeners are also of vital importance to every story-teller. When every eye is fixed upon the narrator — when every ear greedily drinks in his words — when not a shade of his countenance passes away unnoticed — when not a wave of his hand is lost — then his heart expands, his face beams, and his soul goes out in his utterances.

I think I never told the story of my adventure under the ice on the Upper Mississippi, with more satisfaction to myself, or to a more rapt and sympathetic audience, than on one stormy Christmas night, many, many years ago, in a cabin on the banks of the Red Cedar River, in Iowa.

I was then a traveler, and, for the night, was the guest of an honest old Pennsylvania Dutchman. The cabin boasted but a single room, and in this the whole family slept, ate and carried on all the indoor operations of the household.

After I had seen my faithful saddle horse well provided for, I shared with the family in a supper that was not only the most substantial, but which also showed some parade of luxury, in honor of the day and season. Occupying the center of the table, and a large place in the minds and hearts of the family, was a huge earthen bowl of large, rosy-cheeked apples. These the old farmer had caused to be brought from the nearest town on the Mississippi — sixty miles away — at considerable cost of money and trouble, in order to give his family a Christmas treat that would remind them of their old Pennsylvania home.

At last the grand Christmas supper was over.



The apples, nuts, and other good things were things of the past. On one side of the broad fireplace, wherein was a roaring and crackling fire of hickory, sat, puffing his pipe, the head of the family — a hale, kind-hearted, ruddy-faced man of fifty-five — while I, quite as earnestly puffing my cigar, had possession of the opposite side of the great hearth.

The wife of the good old Dutchman — bright-eyed, full-faced and forty — sat near her lord, industriously plying her shining needles



ILLUSTRATION FROM MARCH 1880 ST. NICHOLAS; COLOR-ENHANCED BY BRENDA ROBINSON

upon some piece of knitting work. A girl of eighteen, handsome and bouncing, was engaged in washing up the "supper dishes"; sewing on a child's "frock" was a miss of sixteen — slender and lithe as a willow wand, timid as a fawn and sweet as a pink. A much younger girl — a rosy-cheeked child — and a little curly-headed boy, the only son, and the pride and pet of the household, sat on the floor building a corn-cob house.

In those early days mail facilities were

exceedingly limited; the post-office nearest to many of the settlers was frequently distant from fifty to eighty miles, and often was not visited by any one in the settlement for a month or six weeks.

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news that was at all interesting, the settlers seldom failed to make him produce for their edification the very last item in his budget. It used to be asserted that a man who could tell a good ghost or murder story, might travel from one end of Indiana to the other without being charged a cent for either meals or lodging. In Iowa it was much the same in the early times of which I speak.

Being comfortably seated about the fire, as I have said, I was not long in perceiving that it was expected I would proceed to relate something of my history, something of my travels, of the news at the river towns, or tell a story of some kind. All in the old Dutchman's house hungered for the sound of my voice — thirsted to hear the "stranger" talk.

Between whiffs at his pipe, the honest old Pennsylvanian proceeded to inform me that this Christmas day was the anniversary of an accident that had greatly shocked the settlers. On Christmas day, the year before, a young man of great promise, and a large owner of land, had been drowned by falling through the ice at a place on the river some ten miles below; how a friend had vainly tried to save him, almost losing his own life in the attempt, and in various ways tried to draw me out. The mother and daughters looked at me anxiously, and, I thought, somewhat reproachfully. All the faces about me seemed to say: "Young man, you certainly ought to be able to tell us some news,

a story, or something that would interest or amuse us. You see how we are situated here — away out in the wilderness, where we hear nothing — you must know that a little story about your travels, or almost anything else, would be a great treat to us."

Observing the anxiety of all the family to be entertained, I cleared my throat by three or four preparatory hems, which at once attracted attention and greatly encouraged all present.

"Neighbor," said I, "what you have been telling me about the drowning of the young man here in your river reminds me of an adventure I once had on the Mississippi, between Dubuque and Galena, and, curiously, too, it was on a Christmas day."

"Ah — h!" cried the Dutchman, taking the pipe from his mouth, nodding and smiling. "Ah — h, vas dot so?"

The good wife's rapid fingers for a moment forgot their task, and her eager face said: "Do let us hear about it?" The bouncing girl of eighteen paused in her occupation of dishwashing, and stood, towel in hand, afraid to touch the rattling cups and saucers; the pretty modest lass of sixteen looked up from her sewing, her eyes sparkling a kind and earnest request for the story; the children, playing on the floor, paused in their sports and gazed up at me in round-eyed expectancy — even the great house-dog arose from his warm lair in the chimney-corner, and approaching, yawned

De Quille Sells a Christmas Story

by Lawrence I. Berkove

AMERICA'S LOVE of the tall tale is deep and long-established. Despite hundreds, if not thousands, of excellent examples of frontier humor, anthologies often repeat the same familiar ones: Davy Crockett and Paul Bunyan stories and Mark Twain anecdotes. Dan De Quille's newly rediscovered tragicomedy, "A Christmas Story," suggests what riches lie off the beaten track.

The story was originally published in the Virginia City (Nevada) *Territorial Enterprise* on December 25, 1879. De Quille

had been affiliated with this important western newspaper since 1861 (a few years after he had left behind his West Liberty, Iowa, farm and his given name William Wright; see Fall 1988 *Palimpsest*.) In addition to covering local news and being the paper's mining editor, De Quille also contributed works of humor and fiction to it. His lively sense of humor inclined toward the hoax — what was called in De Quille's time a "sell" but what today we call a "put-on" — a sub-genre of the tall tale. In essence, the sell depended upon undetected exag-

geration. Something in the story had to be literally incredible, but the seller's art consisted of so burying it in plausible details that it was not discovered until the audience completely "bought" it.

Selling could be a demanding art, and the seller had to be adept at gauging his audience, leading his listeners on and on at just the right pace. A single miscalculation could ruin the effect. De Quille, however, was a master among masters of this technique. A close look at this story set in the Iowa of his earlier days can pick up the signs of his skill.

suggestively; rested his black muzzle on my knee, looked appealingly in my face, and began wagging his tail — evidently meaning by this last movement to say: "Let the 'tale' proceed."

Thus appealed to and encouraged on all hands, I at once launched forth on a pair of skates of bright and ringing steel, and, with the old Dutchman and all his family close at my heels, sped away down over the broad expanse of new and glassy ice bridging the "Father of Waters."

Many narrow escapes from gaping air-holes did I have; many times did the thin ice bend and crackle under my weight; often the good Dutchman cried: "Ah, Gott!" Often the knitting needles of the old lady were still; the dishwasher stood with half-wiped cup in hand; the sewing girl bent forward with idle needle in her fingers; the children on the floor gazed up with open mouths, and the dog, in his warm corner, forgot to snore.

Soon, however, the danger is past, and again we are gliding merrily on. The sigh of relief from the father is echoed by each member of the family, and every face is again bright as we look up together through the clear frosty air at the spreading cedars climbing in long rows the many terraces of the mighty bluffs rising hundreds of feet above the frozen river.

We are thus happily gliding along when suddenly an immense air-hole yawns but a few yards ahead. I see the water rippling and flash-

ing before me, but I am going at lightning speed and know not well how to avoid the danger. My first impulse is to make a bold dash and leap the chasm; but I have scarcely taken three vigorous strides before I see that it is too wide. Can I get by on either side? A quick glance shows it to be impossible. Again I rush forward, resolved to attempt it. I have delayed so long that to gain impetus for the final spring I must now run to the very brink of the hole. Within a foot of the edge I bow myself down, but when in the act of rising up for the leap, the ice breaks like an egg-shell beneath my feet. I plunge forward some feet into the ice-cold water, I sink, am caught by the swift current of the mighty river and whirled away *under the ice*.

The old Dutchman and his family have seen, and see, it all. Their eyes are riveted upon me — they scarcely venture to breathe. The cheeks of the sewing girl are white. We are in a situation of terrible peril. I must try to swim back to the air-hole. It is expected of me and I make the attempt.

I writhe and struggle with the current which is pressing so fiercely against me — pressing me, in spite of all my efforts, downward under the ice to death!

As I thus fight for life the veins swell upon the good Dutchman's forehead; his teeth are set hard together; his hands open and close as if he were clutching at something, and in the

In addition to telling a humorous story that turned out to be a hoax, De Quille's "A Christmas Story" also tells a serious story about telling stories. The narrator, for example, is a carefully conceived character. In contrast to the "honest old Dutchman," the narrator is relatively well educated, traveled, and sophisticated. He is also observant and sensitive to what is going on around him. He understands that the family "thirsted" to hear him talk, but he delays until the eagerness reaches a peak. He waits for precisely the right moment, when he perceives an unspoken anxiety in the entire

family for "news, a story, or something that would interest or amuse us."

When the host gives him an opening, the story of a drowning, the narrator quickly invents a story that fits in naturally with the subject. As he tells it, it "curiously, too" occurred on Christmas. Cast as autobiography and rich in plausible detail, it brings an authority that disarms skepticism.

By using the historical present tense, the narrator achieves a sense of immediacy which quickly engages his audience. His graphic description of his poignant struggles under water grips the imag-

inations of his audience. Time is erased; they see, they feel, they struggle with him. When they can, they lend him support. As he prepares to succumb, the host calls, "Schtick it out!" When the man in the water grasps some object before him, the host quickly leaps to a conclusion in the romantic tradition: "Dank Gott! . . . it vas a rope and you vas safed!" The narrator milks one last bit of suspense from the situation. No, it was not a rope. And then he springs the sell on the audience.

But who is the audience? The naive family is only imaginary. The real audience is the reading

A Christmas Story (continued)

faces of all about me I see pictured suspense — suspense almost amounting to agony.

On I struggle. I seem to be gaining upon the cruel current; I strain every muscle; my painfully distended eyes peer ahead through the yellow water for the light that should mark the opening in the ice — bravely I struggle, but cannot see that which I would give the wealth of the world to behold — the open water.

I am holding my breath till my eyes seem starting from their sockets. I would give millions on millions for a single breath of air, though drawn in the foulest dungeon or the most loathsome charnel-house the world ever saw. I feel that I must breathe or die, and to attempt to breathe is to die.

My arms are growing weak; their strokes are short, feeble and convulsive. I merely hold my ground against the current. I am not gaining an inch. Oh, God! no sign of the opening I seek. Lost! lost! I am going backward. I will breathe in the cool, clear water and die.

"No! no! for God's sake, don't do dot!" cries the good old Dutchman, leaping from his chair and rushing toward me with outstretched arms — "don't do dot. Schtick it out! Schtick it out!" The old lady's knitting work rolls from her lap; the dish-washer lets fall a plate, and it is shivered on the floor; the sewing girl rises and cries: "Oh, sir!" then sits down, blushing.

We are still under the ice. The family control

their emotions and I continue: I am struggling but feebly. The temptation to breathe and at once end all is fast overcoming me. All that I have ever seen or heard seems rising before me. * * * But what do I see? Before me and almost within reach of my hands appears a large black object. A few fierce strokes and I have gained it — have grasped it in my hands.

"Dank Gott!" cries the Dutchman, "it was a rope and you was safed!" The faces of all the other members of the family show that they, too, are mentally thanking God for my having at last found some thing upon which to cling.

"No," I answer the honest Pennsylvanian; "No, it was not a rope."

"Was fur ding, den, was it dat you grabs?"

"It was the roots of an old tree that I found, far down there under the ice. Once I got hold of the roots I crawled into the forks of a large one and camped there till Spring. When the ice finally broke up I kept close watch and, letting go my hold, plunged up through the first big air-hole that came floating down."

The good old Dutchman took his pipe from his mouth, drew a long breath, gazed at me sorrowfully for a full minute, then said: "Young man, in my obinion dat schtory vot you tell is one tam big swindle — *on top of de ice!* Katterina — gals, young man, shildren — I dink we was all petter go to ped."

What does the reader think — taking into consideration the fact that to-day is Christmas?

De Quille Sells (continued)

audience. In *our* eagerness to hear something that will amuse or entertain us, we drop our guard and make ourselves vulnerable to a fiction. We do this, of course, with every story we're told, from the ancient tales of the *Arabian Nights* to the most recent detective or sci-fi story. The storyteller always, always exploits the preferred gullibility of the audience. Coleridge classically defined the condition of successful narration as the audience's "willing suspension of disbelief." De Quille's story, therefore, is didactic not only in showing us the process of how a storyteller casts a spell, but

also in exposing how eager we are to be enchanted and how vulnerable we then become. His Christmas gift to us consists of showing us these things about ourselves without penalty; what might have ended tragically ends comically. But truly, we are as naive as the members of the "honest Dutchman's" family, and we are equally susceptible victims of the one who is not honest — the storyteller. Curiously, like the family, we cherish illusions and resent being disenchanting.

De Quille's ironic estimate of the human mind is shared with other authors of his time. The

transition from chapter 32 to 33 of Mark Twain's *Roughing It* (1872) turns on exactly this point. Chapter 32 ends romantically, and the reader "buys" it. The embarrassing truth of the hoax is uncovered in the second paragraph of chapter 33. And Ambrose Bierce's great short story of the Civil War, "A Son of the Gods," originally subtitled "A Study in the Historical Present Tense," reveals the tragic consequences of the ease with which the human mind is manipulated. De Quille, like Twain and Bierce, left us with stories that entertain but also teach us things beyond entertainment.

WALKING STRAIGHT

Claud McMillan and the Anti-Saloon League

by William H. Cumberland

SIOUX CITY was so saturated with illegal liquor traffic and prostitution during the early decades of the twentieth century that it achieved the reputation of a "little Chicago." This exaggerated view belies the constant challenge posed by temperance advocates to the city's liquor industry. The Anti-Saloon League was among these advocates and would be a powerful force in Iowa politics until the 1933 repeal of national prohibition. In the front lines of the struggle against bootlegging and prostitution were the crusaders sent out by the Anti-Saloon League. And in the front lines of the league crusaders stood Claud N. McMillan.

The Reverend Claud N. McMillan, who ranks as one of Iowa's most fervent and dynamic temperance crusaders, was superintendent of the Woodbury County league from 1914 to 1922. Founded in Ohio in 1893, the Anti-Saloon League became a powerful single-

issue pressure group, able to mobilize a national constituency and capture massive support from the evangelical churches. The league focused its efforts on achieving local and county options (whereby local citizens could vote out open saloons if the state was not dry, or vice versa) and on state and national prohibition amendments. The clergy provided much of the Anti-Saloon League leadership — although it was a leadership that occasionally split over whether to emphasize law enforcement or education. League officials sometimes joined law enforcement agents in raids on illegal establishments and actively supported dry candidates for political office.

During McMillan's eight-year reign in Woodbury County, he funneled his inexhaustive energies into the 1916 election and law enforcement, as well as into typical league goals of local options and a state prohibition amendment. In each arena, his zealotry

would draw solid support — and marked disdain. At a time when much of the nation neither embraced prohibition nor damned alcohol to the degree that he did, McMillan accepted that his mission would bring him enemies. His highly publicized work serves as one example of Anti-Saloon League activity in Iowa.

Before 1914, Claud McMillan's strong temperance stand was already well known in church circles. In 1909 he had waged a successful campaign at Gowrie, Iowa, to rid that community of saloons. Such efforts could prove divisive among church and community members. In Gowrie, the young Methodist minister had heard threats that he might encounter an "accident," and church officers had accompanied McMillan home at the end of each day. Eventually McMillan felt obliged to request reassignment. He subsequently served parishes at Wall Lake, Anthon, and Charter Oak.

McMillan was seeking a new parish when he was approached by Anti-Saloon League officials. As a thirty-eight-year-old pastor intent upon preaching, McMillan was at first repelled by the offer, even though he had been recommended by the district superintendent of the Northwest Iowa Conference of the Methodist Church. A meeting with Anti-Saloon League directors in Sioux City in October 1914, however, assured him of moral support and financial backing, and he accepted the post as superintendent.

FORTY-EIGHT SALOONS, five wholesale liquor houses, and two breweries greeted McMillan upon his arrival in Sioux City in 1914. "There was little law and that was unenforced," he would later observe. He claimed that "members of the police force had their own women and owned places where these women worked." McMillan's perception was that neither the police nor the local courts were friendly to the work of the Anti-Saloon League, and that local judges enforced the law out of fear of being overruled by a state supreme court that was receptive to league work. The temperance forces also garnered support from church-goers and business people who were, in McMillan's words, "sick of the outlaw liquor traffic and



Steady and sure, Claud McMillan poses for this photo, labeled "1922—for his federal identification." The photo was in McMillan's bulging scrapbook of carefully dated clippings; several appear on the following pages.

willing to back the work with their money."

That fall, McMillan's first task was to aid Sioux City temperance forces in a battle against the local-option saloon-consent petition. If approved, the petition would extend the life of the saloons as provided by the Mulct Law. (The 1894 Mulct Law permitted operation of saloons in cities of over 5,000 with 65 percent voter approval and upon payment of a \$600 fee or mulct tax.) The league challenged names on the consent petition, charging that saloon advocates had purloined names from old telephone books, directories, and even the Floyd cemetery. Ready to carry its cause to the Iowa Supreme Court, the league filed suit. McMillan quickly revealed his fund-raising abilities as he won financial support from bankers and merchants.

The case became moot, however, when the Iowa legislature repealed the Mulct Law in February 1915, bringing Iowa into the ranks of the dry states on January 1, 1916. The case was

subsequently dropped, with each side paying part of the expenses. Nevertheless, McMillan's strong leadership, and the resulting renewed vigor of the league, had become visible.

MCMILLAN AND THE LEAGUE would become even more visible as the election year of 1916 dawned. In Iowa, most Protestant clergy always identified with the majority party in an overwhelmingly Republican state, partly because the GOP traditionally supported the cause of temperance. "Wet" forces, including large numbers of first-generation Americans of German ancestry, generally voted for the Democratic party. In 1916, however, this pattern was thrown into disarray: the traditionally "dry" Republicans chose a "wet," Lieutenant Governor William L. Harding of Sioux City, for their gubernatorial candidate; and the traditionally wet Democrats nominated a dry, Edwin T. Meredith, editor of *Successful Farming*. Along with good roads (Harding seemed to favor mud) and woman suffrage (Harding was opposed), the liquor question would play an important role in the election of 1916.

The Republicans attempted to appease temperance forces by nominating for attorney general a staunch temperance advocate, H. M. Havner of Des Moines. But temperance forces remained outraged over the nomination of Harding. Many evangelical churches believed the liquor question was paramount, and Harding's temperance record seemed uncertain. Opponents argued that as a state representative in 1909 Harding had tried to kill a stricter enforcement of the Mulct Law. During his successful 1914 campaign for lieutenant governor, temperance organizations had accused him of opposing every bill that "made for social reform." In the 1916 election Claud McMillan continued the opposition. The press depicted him as the one "who fathered the agitation of the clergy against the gubernatorial aspirations" of Harding. In his journeys across Iowa McMillan warned that the Republican candidate was no friend of temperance.

ON ONE SUCH JOURNEY, in August, McMillan spoke before a small group of community leaders at the Methodist church in Knoxville — and soon demonstrated his ability to attract press and rally support. Reportedly he told the group that Harding was a "second-rate lawyer" who had "no financial standing in Sioux City, could not borrow \$25.00 at any bank, could not get credit for a suit of clothes or a grocery bill," and that he "was the associate and defender of the underworld of Sioux City." McMillan also reportedly accused Harding of having "lived at Des Moines with another woman while his wife was in a delicate condition at Sioux City."

Tipped off by a man who had attended the gathering, the editor of the *Knoxville Journal* charged that McMillan's remarks misrepresented Harding. "After instilling his venom in his hearers," the editor wrote, "McMillan wriggled away on his slimy course like his prototype of the swamps — the deadly copperhead." The *Journal* announced that it would now abandon its erstwhile neutrality and support the campaign of the maligned Harding. According to the editor, Harding had the support of Sioux City's prominent merchants and businessmen, judges and lawyers, possessed a strong record as a vote-getter, and had been endorsed by Iowa senators Kenyon and Cummins. The Knoxville editor also printed a letter from a Sioux City charity organization, claiming that Harding had widespread local support including that of the press and many prominent church leaders. Unfortunately, "a lot of preachers and other well-meaning men are being induced to accept lies and livery stable gossip as the truth," the Knoxville editor wrote. He found it incredible that the Sioux City Ministerial Association and the state Anti-Saloon League could sanction such unsavory campaign methods.

McMillan wrote the editor that although he had learned to disregard personal attacks, he could not in this instance remain silent and ignore the "vicious methods" of the press. McMillan claimed that he had been invited to Knoxville by a leading church member and had held only a private conversation with a small group of men. He had explained the methods their opponents were using to undermine

Meredith and had suggested that "before the campaign was over certain matters in regard to the personal habits of Mr. Harding would be published." He had informed the group that the Woodbury County league was not paying his expenses and that he had been released from his official duties until after the campaign.

At Knoxville McMillan had read aloud letters from supportive clergy, such as a Sioux City pastor who had written that he was unable to back Harding "in light of his record." The district superintendent of the Northwest Iowa Conference called Harding's record "notoriously opposed to the most modern Christian principles on Temperance." The president of Morningside College lauded McMillan for his "careful and aggressive law administration": "Moral conditions in Sioux City have never been better . . . largely due to the activities of the Anti-Saloon League."

McMillan continued to gather support. From the Sioux City Ministerial Association he won approval of resolutions declaring Harding unfit for the governorship and endorsing Meredith. Some association members objected, claiming that only eleven of twenty-six members had been present when the resolutions were adopted and that no official notice of the meeting had been sent. One dissenter argued that it would be hypocritical to determine the moral superiority of one candidate over the other and that preachers should not interfere in political contests.

Not everyone viewed prohibition, or Harding's stance on it, as so important to the election. In Harding's hometown, the *Sioux City Journal* seemed to dismiss the liquor question. Because the local-option Mulct Law had been repealed in 1915, Iowa was dry in 1916, and the paper noted that there was no clamor for a change. There were no wet advertisements, no one was coming out in favor of the saloon, nothing was being spent for wet causes, and the saloons were closed. Although intoxicants were consumed, they could be legally purchased only outside the state. Furthermore, the *Journal* insisted, Harding had supported all GOP measures concerning the liquor question. There was no evidence that Harding was an opponent of temperance or that he was a drinking man.

Harding defended himself with grace. While acknowledging that he was not as radical on the temperance question as some, regarding it as a practical question requiring a practical solution, Harding insisted that during the past decade of political activity he had "always spoken a word in favor of temperance." Although the liquor question might not yet be settled, he believed that the saloon was "gone and gone to stay."

Nevertheless Harding's own pastor and the president of Morningside College (a Methodist Episcopal college in Sioux City) supported Meredith. Yet Meredith was not immune to the kind of attacks McMillan had slung at Harding. Opponents endeavored to dampen his status as a dry. In an open letter to Bishop Homer Stuntz in Omaha, a Farm Loan broker in Manson claimed that Meredith had joined friends at the recent Democratic Convention, "himself ordering and drinking apricot brandy and personally paying for one round of the drinks"; had attended and imbibed at a beer-drinking session in a business office of the "absolutely dry town of Manson" in 1915; had served cocktails at a 1914 Des Moines banquet; and in 1914 had proclaimed to potential supporters that "I am not a prohibitionist in any sense." Meredith denied these charges and saw them as another attempt by Harding's followers to undermine his personal character.

McMillan and the league's work to defeat Harding proved futile. The disaffection of the traditionally wet and Democratic German vote more than offset the desertion of evangelical Republican Protestants drawn to Meredith because of the liquor question. Thirty thousand Democrats crossed Party lines to vote for Harding, but only fifteen thousand Republicans voted for Meredith. Meredith's crushing loss in November indicated that the temperance and ministerial coalitions had less effect than they had imagined and that temperance had not been the only major campaign issue.

McMILLAN AND OTHER temperance forces immediately tackled another campaign — to write prohibition into the state constitution.

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Day Message	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	Nite
Night Letter	N L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a day message. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT GEORGE W. E. ATKINS, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

RECEIVED AT COMMERCIAL BLOCK, 505 PIERCE ST., SIOUX CITY, IA. ALWAYS OPEN

322DSHB 9

DES MOINES IA 7PM OCT 17 1917

C N McMILLAN *418*
SIOUXCITY IA

COOK SAYS ONE THOUSAND WET MAJORITY AT FIVE O'CLOCK
J B WEEDE

AMENDMENT LOST ON OFFICIAL COUNT

1917
Wets Carried State by 932,
According to Returns As
Finally Announced.

In the official count of the special election of Oct. 15 conducted yesterday by the state council the prohibition amendment was shown to have a majority of 932.

Headlines to the public and a telegram to McMillan announce defeat of the prohibition amendment in October 1917.

Once this was done, they believed, the liquor issue would be eliminated from politics. Beginning in June 1917, through the auspices of a newly created Allied Temperance Committee of Iowa, an effort was made to unite all state temperance organizations (including the Iowa Anti-Saloon League, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Iowa Constitutional Prohibitory Amendment Association, the Business Men's Temperance Association, the Inter-Collegiate Prohibition Association, and the Prohibition Party of Iowa). McMillan and ninety-nine other men and women were asked to serve on the advisory board. McMillan was appointed financial manager and was expected to raise \$40,000.

Prepared to launch an intensive statewide drive, they were somewhat divided on how to proceed. Personal rivalries soon plagued the advisory committee and its board of managers. McMillan believed that the secretary of the Constitutional Amendment Association, A. U. Coates, was attempting to dominate the coalition. John L. Hillman, Anti-Saloon League officer, wrote McMillan that he feared that certain individuals "wanted to be the whole show" and that Coates was attempting to dominate the coalition. McMillan replied that Coates was about as suited for a position of leadership "as a hog is for preaching." The Anti-Saloon League, McMillan argued, was a

vital part because they had the "machinery, methods and experience."

Machinery and methods may have had some effect — but not enough. Although the amendment to the state constitution was approved by an overwhelming margin in the Iowa legislature, it lost by 932 votes in the popular referendum on October 15. The *Sioux City Journal* suggested that Iowans had been alienated by laws making it a crime to ship liquor into the state and the rigid enforcement of blue laws, which kept businesses closed on Sundays.

Temperance forces were stunned by their defeat. J. B. Weede, campaign manager for the Allied Temperance Committee, attributed the failure to "over-confidence on the part of supposed friends of temperance," and wrote McMillan that the state would certainly be "disgraced if Iowa should fail to ratify national prohibition at the first opportunity."

Quick ratification of the national prohibition amendment became the next goal — a goal that McMillan and other temperance forces reached. As a delegate to the National Convention of the Anti-Saloon League, McMillan was in Washington D.C. in December 1917 as Congress debated the Eighteenth Amendment. Watching from the congressional galleries, he was amused by the "comical" efforts of liquor forces to save beer and wine by offering to sacrifice whiskey, and he rejoiced when

"Booze Beaten in Four Years" Is Rev. McMillan's Prediction

Booze is on its last leg. In four more years it will have been but a drab, panicky memory. It will take just about that long to legislate it into its grave.—From an interview with Rev. C. N. McMillan.

The action of congress in adopting the amendment to the constitution which calls for a dry nation is the

PROHIBITION HERE TO STAY

M'MILLAN, MINISTER AND RUM SLEUTH, MAKES STATEMENT.

Congress nevertheless voted for a dry nation. McMillan reasoned that the world war would further strengthen support for national prohibition. If the war were to be effectively fought, "we must see to it that our men in uniform are free from the curse of alcoholic stimulants," he wrote, and that the American labor force is "permitted to be at the highest state of efficiency." "We shall have a bone dry nation in a very few years now," he wrote his brother, Don. "Then I will be compelled to find a new job."

ACTUALLY McMILLAN had already found a new job. Although he continued his salaried position as Woodbury County league superintendent, as early as January 1916 Iowa Attorney General George Cosson had appointed him as a special agent "to act in Sioux City." (Cosson and his successor in 1917, H. M. Havner, were strong temperance and law enforcement advocates who supported McMillan's work.) McMillan's unpaid commission as a special agent apparently gave him the power of arrest (a point that would be contested), and he often accompanied police on raids against bootleggers and prostitutes.

McMillan soon won the praise of the *Sioux City Journal* for having a "more precise understanding of vice conditions than any other man here." His special status quickly made him a known figure among unsavory elements whom he called "the half-world." His efforts against

liquor violators and prostitutes led to much verbal and physical abuse. Threats were common, and three times he was subjected to brutal physical attacks. The first occurred in November 1917, when McMillan was assaulted near 5th and Virginia streets in Sioux City by mobster Red Burzett. Apparently McMillan had arrested Burzett's Sioux City girlfriend. As McMillan passed under a streetlight, the mobster struck him from behind with a leather billy club, and then went off to boast that he had killed McMillan. McMillan recalled, "I did not know anything until I found myself at my office cleaning up the blood off my face." With a black eye and a badly bruised jaw, he remained in bed for a week. (Several days later Burzett and several gang members were killed in a shootout with Sioux City detectives at a west-side bar.)

The election in March 1918 of liberal mayor Wallace M. Short and his administration put temperance forces on guard. McMillan soon had a serious run-in with newly elected commissioner of public safety W. R. "Bull" Hamilton, whose brief tenure of duty would be so filled with corruption that it would attract the attention of Attorney General Havner — no doubt with McMillan's help.

Bull Hamilton was "selling protection which he could not deliver," McMillan charged, "as I was breaking in on his people all the time." McMillan informed Havner that Hamilton was "reaching out to get control of conditions here so that he may force vice, and do his bidding." Bull Hamilton insisted that McMillan was a

"pest" who created "spirited discord" among law enforcement units in Sioux City. In April 1918 Hamilton apparently requested that Havner withdraw McMillan's credentials. Havner refused.

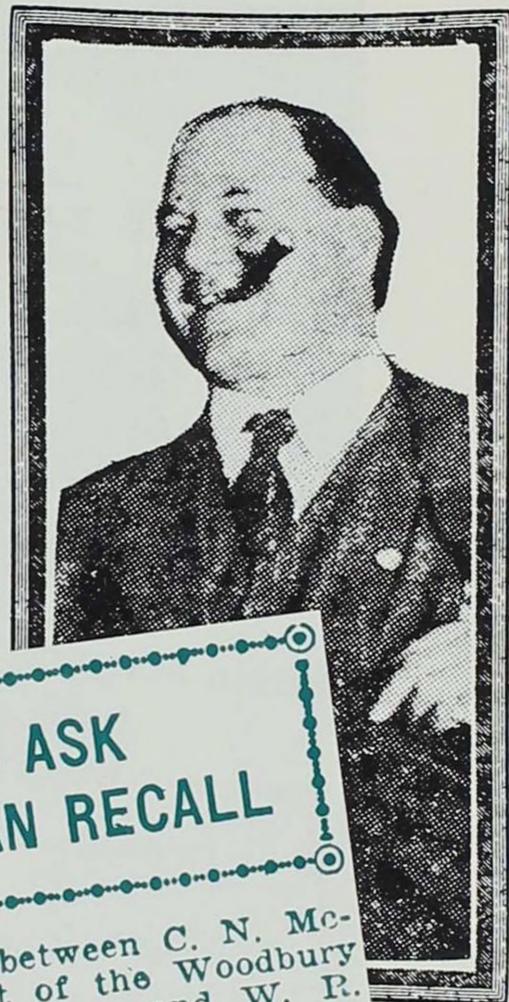
In the summer of 1918 the collapse of the Ruff Building, a large downtown department store, brought the crisis to a head. A witness later testified that during the chaos and tragedy Bull Hamilton was "three sheets to the wind." McMillan confirmed that widespread drinking followed the tragedy and that whiskey was passed among the crowd "in almost every kind of bottle including nursing bottles." Partly due to this controversy, and other incidents of corruption, Hamilton was removed from office in September.

McMILLAN RAIDED forty to fifty establishments during a five-month period in 1918. In early September he participated in a massive dragnet resulting in the arrest of hundreds of liquor violators and prostitutes. (The Anti-Saloon League's interest in enforcement extended to prostitution, which was often intertwined with liquor violations.) Claiming that he had more authority "than even the sheriff in the county," he toured the city in a Ford coupe sniffing out wild parties, wearing his nickel-plated badge inscribed "Special Agent, Department of Justice, Iowa." He apparently had knowledge of the intimate workings of Sioux City, and a friend proclaimed that "McMillan could raise hell and put a brick under it, if he would."

Opponents constantly challenged McMillan's status as special agent. Even supporters occasionally admitted that the vice crusader demonstrated excessive zeal. McMillan insisted that law violators were liable for prosecution regardless of their status in the community. When he uncovered a party of adolescents from solid Morningside families and placed a sixteen-year-old girl in the lockup, charging her with prostitution, he incurred the wrath of the accused and her parents.

There were constant attempts to embarrass the Anti-Saloon League leader. The *Sioux City Journal* printed an allegation that McMillan

Public safety commissioner W.R. "Bull" Hamilton (right) and some of the press generated by his struggle with "pest" McMillan. McMillan claimed the publicity brought him unsolicited donations and support.



HAMILTON TO ASK M'MILLAN RECALL

After a conference between C. N. McMillan, superintendent of the Woodbury County Anti-Saloon league, and W. R. Hamilton, commissioner of public safety, Mr. Hamilton stated yesterday that he will request Attorney General Havner to revoke Mr. McMillan's appointment as a special agent.

M'MILLAN NOT DISMISSED

ATTORNEY GENERAL REFUSES W. R. HAMILTON'S REQUEST.

UNFAIRNESS CHARGE MADE

Crime Rampant and Decidedly on the Increase, Is Allegation of State Official—Investigation Is Invited.

ATTACK ON M'MILLAN WINS DONATIONS.

C. N. McMillan, superintendent of the Woodbury County Anti-Saloon league, yesterday voiced his thanks for the attack made on him by W. R. Hamilton, labor candidate for public safety commissioner.

Mr. Hamilton called him a "pest." "The next day," said Mr. McMillan, "the league received two \$100 contributions from business firms which never had before contributed. Hamilton's attack was responsible."

BOOZE TAKES FLIGHT.

McMillan Knew It Was There an Hour Before Raid.

Earl Morgan, police captain, and C. N. McMillan, superintendent of the Woodbury County Anti-Saloon League, reported that McMillan had lacked status as a special agent of the state since January 1921. It was insinuated that McMillan might face prosecution on the charges of impersonating an officer. McMillan insisted that his status as special agent was valid because it was renewed annually. Arrest warrants, McMillan stated, had always been served by an accompanying police officer. Nothing came of the inquiry.

ASKS LIQUOR INJUNCTIONS

McMillan Starts Action Against Five Defendants.

Two applications for liquor injunctions have been filed in the district court by C. N. McMillan, superintendent of the Woodbury County Anti-Saloon League.

McMillan Makes Booze Haul.

C. N. McMillan, superintendent of the Woodbury County Anti-Saloon League, seized 528 half pints and forty-seven quarts of whisky concealed in an automobile in a garage at 1021 1/2 The automobile.

M'MILLAN GETS MORE BOOZE. Shows Police Where Liquor "Plant" Is Concealed.

had peeked over the transom of a hotel room while an alleged prostitute was dressing. Nor was it unusual for young women charged with immoral behavior to insist that the minister had made improper advances. In the summer of 1921, a Sioux City waitress accused McMillan of kidnapping her in Grandview Park while she was in the car of a gentleman friend. Given the choice by McMillan of being taken home or to the police station, she chose home, and then claimed that McMillan "tried to do awful things to me and he talked terribly." The vice crusader was saved from arrest only through a timely phone call to Police Commissioner J.B. Mann.

The episode captured the headlines in the local papers and led to an inquiry concerning McMillan's status as a law enforcement agent. Sioux City's commissioner of public safety, the police captain, and Mayor Short denied that McMillan represented the city as a special agent. Iowa Attorney General Ben Gibson

reported that McMillan had lacked status as a special agent of the state since January 1921. It was insinuated that McMillan might face prosecution on the charges of impersonating an officer. McMillan insisted that his status as special agent was valid because it was renewed annually. Arrest warrants, McMillan stated, had always been served by an accompanying police officer. Nothing came of the inquiry.

Threats on McMillan's life became so common that he carried a weapon. He later revealed, "I am glad I never shot anyone. I had plenty of occasion, but I never shot anyone." But he was not beyond bluffing. McMillan recalled that a young woman whom he had arrested for jumping bond announced that if he didn't release her, a friend in Omaha would come and "bump [McMillan] off." McMillan drew back his coat revealing a forty-one colt and informed the woman, "I can hit a dime at ten paces anytime I want to draw. If you want your friend cared for just send him along, for if any man ever tries to draw on me, I will kill him before he can draw." The word that he was a crack shot, McMillan believed, quickly penetrated the underworld.

WHILE UNWILLING to surrender to fear, McMillan realized that the constant verbal and physical abuse created enormous stress for his family. Consequently, McMillan resigned as superintendent of the Woodbury County Anti-Saloon League in early 1922. He soon took a job as a Methodist college fund raiser. Anti-Saloon League forces, however, urged him to return to temperance work. By mid-year he was appointed general prohibition agent with district headquarters in Minneapolis.

McMillan soon found that his assignments took him as far as Philadelphia. Tiring of the travel, McMillan resigned and returned to Iowa as the general secretary of the state Anti-Saloon League. Again, constant travel coupled with increasing disillusionment over law enforcement efforts became major factors in McMillan's decision in 1928 to leave temperance work and to return to the ministry.

Despite McMillan's years of service in tem-



COURTESY SIOUX CITY PUBLIC MUSEUM

Sioux City police agents try to contain a flood of confiscated liquor. Their efforts to catch bootleggers continued long after McMillan resigned from his position with the Anti-Saloon League and left Sioux City.

perance campaigns at considerable personal sacrifice, the Methodist Church appeared unenthusiastic about his return to the ministry. The fifty-two-year-old former vice crusader was told that he had been too long removed from active service, that he would no doubt be preaching temperance sermons constantly, that he would be unable to work with young people, and that he had undoubtedly developed poor study habits that would affect his ability to construct theologically sound sermons. Eventually he was given an appointment, at Pocahontas, Iowa. There for three years, he steadily increased membership. He held subsequent parishes at Paullina (1931–1934), Britt (1934–1939), and Primghar (1939–1945). Although he rarely preached temperance sermons from the pulpit, McMillan retained interest in the temperance movement and attended national conventions as an Iowa delegate.

In September 1944 his wife, Lydia, died suddenly. The next year McMillan had a second heart attack (the first had been in May 1939). Doctors gave him only a few months to live. He retired from his pastorate, disposed of his library, and moved to California, where two sons resided. There he continued to write and publish the genealogy of the McMillan family. His active retirement consistently defied the doctors' predictions by another fifteen years. In 1960 he died in Long Beach, at the age of eighty-four.

OVER A HALF CENTURY after his Sioux City prohibition work, McMillan may appear to us as a character drawn to extremes. A rural Methodist pastor, a man with strong evangelical fervor, McMillan had developed an obsession concerning the

evils wrought by the consumption of alcohol and the power of the liquor industry. Politically, he remained a staunch Republican, extolling free enterprise and castigating the union movement. During the Great Depression he expressed little sympathy for the Farm Holiday and argued that farmers had contributed to their own economic plight through excessive land purchases, buying new cars they could have gotten along without, and indulging in high living. Although he sympathized with Judge C. C. Bradley as a victim of Farm Holiday mob justice (in April 1933 a few Le Mars area farmers attempted to hang the judge), he also considered Bradley a "weakling, a policy man, a politician drifting with the political winds."

Herbert Hoover, Senator Robert Taft, and Dwight Eisenhower drew his admiration; Truman and Roosevelt, his scorn. FDR's advocacy of the repeal of national prohibition (and the marital problems of the Roosevelt family) incurred his wrath. He was convinced that FDR would be remembered for the "inestimable damage he did" by restoring the liquor traffic.

McMillan, who participated in more than 350 raids against law violators during his career as special agent, demonstrated little compassion for the alcoholic. The enemy was to be arrested, driven out of town, prosecuted in the courts — but not counseled. For him, single-issue politics discolored all other areas of reform.

Still, McMillan was not as narrow-minded as his opponents portrayed him. Despite the temperance stand of the Ku Klux Klan, McMillan disdained the Klan as one of the deep stains on the nation's history and hoped that "its very name be forgotten." He enthusiastically endorsed the selection of a black pastor as the presiding officer of the Methodist Conference in his California district. His theological stance was essentially ecumenical. He numbered Catholic priests among his friends and corresponded with Mormon members of his family as he engaged in genealogical research.

A man who appreciated classical music and who amassed a quality library, he was far from wealthy. Neither the Methodist Church nor the temperance organizations for whom he

labored paid handsomely. The McMillans lost their house in Des Moines during the depression, and pension for a retired pastor was barely adequate.

A devoted family man, he watched with anguish as one of his eight children died of tuberculosis, another suffered from chronic ill health after years in a Japanese prison camp, and other children and grandchildren struggled with job and marital problems. He deeply mourned his wife's death in 1944. Through his own experiences and through his ministry, McMillan had known suffering. He wrote a friend, "I have thanked God for death. After seeing physical suffering that was unendurable, and for which there was no relief or release, I have thanked God for the marvelous provision He has made for we humans, after all."

Claud McMillan's unbridled zeal and single-issue politics aroused criticism, but no one could deny his fearlessness and devotion to the cause he regarded as superior to all others. In Sioux City and Woodbury County, he performed the work of the Anti-Saloon League with fierce dedication. Despite frequent opposition to his prohibition work, he honestly believed that he could walk the streets of Sioux City and "look everyone squarely in the face, The City, The Courts, The Police and everybody, and I know I have their respect if not approval." □

NOTE ON SOURCES

Major sources for this article included the Claud McMillan Papers (State Historical Society of Iowa); McMillan's unpublished "Memories, Incidents & Experiences, of Fifty Years as a Methodist Minister" (housed at Iowa Wesleyan College); and the Harding Papers in the Sioux City Museum. Others include the *Sioux City Journal* and other Iowa newspapers; Nancy Derr, "Iowans During World War I: A Study of Change Under Stress" (Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1979); Austin Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League* (New Haven, 1985); Scott Sorensen and B. Paul Chicoine, *Sioux City: A Pictorial History* (Norfolk, Va., 1982); John T. Schou, "The Decline of the Democratic Party in Iowa, 1916-1920" (M.A. thesis, University of Iowa, 1960); and the proceedings of several national conventions of the Anti-Saloon League of America.

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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.

LETTERS FROM READERS

Waxed fruit in a one-horse buggy

I enjoyed the pictures and descriptions of the things Iowa pioneers brought with them [Summer 1988, "You Gotta Know the Territory"]. I thought I would share with you a story about an unusual article that my great-great-grandfather brought with him. John Walker was in town [in Columbia County, New York] and saw an arrangement of wax fruit under a bell-shaped glass. He thought it was beautiful and would be just the thing to take to his wife, Eliza, who was dying. . . . Several years after Eliza's death, John set forth for Iowa in a one-horse buggy [in 1843 with his new wife and] brought the fruit arrangement. The family eventually settled in Elk River Township after John served several years [as a Methodist circuit rider] on the Bellevue, Sabula, and Lynn Grove circuit. The arrangement of fruit under glass now sits on a small table in my dining room.

Roberta Wood, Estill Springs, Tennessee

A little more about that fruit

I'm writing [again] to tell you that the lovely story . . . about my wax fruit arrangement just "ain't so." When [my aunt] gave me the arrangement we had been discussing John Walker and the death of his first wife. She told me of "Grandpa" having the arrangement made for his dying wife. However, it was not Grandpa John Walker, but Grandpa George Forest, who was already in Iowa at the time. [My aunt] does have something John Walker brought to Iowa. . . . a small Irish trunk. . . . I am sorry I have misled you. I usually try to check my facts, but in this case, I suspect I just did not listen carefully enough and so I got my grandfathers confused.

Roberta Wood, Estill Springs, Tennessee

We're glad the photo essay spurred you on to clarify your family history. Correction and revision is just part of the process! Thanks for the story.—The Editor

Kind words

The [Fall 1988] issue was the best ever. I couldn't put it down. Keep up the good work and thanks.

Lorna Christofferson, Fort Dodge, Iowa

Power to the farm woman

I enjoyed ["Let your Corn Stalks Buy a Maytag," Fall 1988]. . . . I was married in 1941 just a few years after REC made its debut in our area. My father-in-law spent many, many hours working towards getting it in this county—in fact he was the first president. My mother-in-law said she could hardly get dinner ready the day the "juice" came on. Their first purchases were a refrigerator, an electric stove (I've a story about it, too) and an iron. . . .

Jean M. Stoner, Mount Vernon, Iowa

The *Palimpsest* welcomes letters. Published letters may be edited for clarity and brevity. Write: *Palimpsest* Editor, State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

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