

## Des Moines—Iowa State Capital

[The following article, with illustrations, is from the New York Daily Graphic (1873 to 1889). It was the first in the field of illustrated journalism. The Des Moines article appeared on September 17, 1878, at a time when the Capital City was forging to the forefront as the "metropolis" of Iowa. The article emphasized the growth, prosperity, and enterprise of Des Moines and its citizens. The Editor.]

Though not a mushroom growth, the result of speculation and manifest destiny, Des Moines has rapidly, yet substantially, grown into prominence as one of the leading cities of the West.

It was part of the Sac and Fox Indian reservation, a territory highly prized by these tribes. In 1841-1842 the westward march of civilization began to encroach upon the Indian domain. It became apparent to the Government that provision must be made for it, and under the inexorable demand which has crowded the Red Man from the shore of the Atlantic well-nigh to that of the Pacific, a purchase of the reservation from the Indians was made October 11, 1842. So reluctant were they to leave, and so great their attachment to the spot, it was stipulated that they might remain three years, and in the meantime no white people should be allowed to settle on the reservation. Soon after trouble was apprehended from the Pottawattamies on the west and Sioux on the

north. To protect them a detachment of troops was sent, and on the 9th of May, 1843, they arrived on the steamboat *Ione*. The landing was made where Court avenue bridge now is. The troops numbered 120, consisting of infantry and cavalry, under command of Captain James Allen, an uncle of B. F. Allen. Their first business was the erection of barracks and quarters, which were ranged along the west bank of Des Moines River and the contiguous bank of Raccoon River, now called "Coon," the confluence of the two rivers forming a right angle. The barracks were built of logs one story high with puncheon floors. The post was named Fort Des Moines, from the river. Prior to that the Locality was called Raccoon Forks. Captain Allen's headquarters were near where the Des Moines and Fort Dodge Depot now stands. But one of those buildings now remains, and is on Second street, near the Keokuk and Des Moines Railroad. Soon after the troops came, a trading post was established on the prairie, one mile east, where were three Indian villages. Major Beach, the Indian Agent, appointed two brothers named Ewing, with the euphonious front names of Washington George and George Washington, as traders, and Joseph Smart, interpreter. The log house built by the Ewings was the first dwelling house, except the barracks. It was not long before white settlers began to arrive, to make claims, but under the agreement made with

the Indians, none were permitted to settle on the "purchase." They accordingly hovered about, eking out a living in various ways, to await the expiration of the three years. The community thus became heterogeneous. To support it, special permit was granted Robert A. Kinzie to open a store where Sherman Block, corner of Third street and Court avenue, now is, to sell goods only to white people; Dr. T. K. Brooks, Benjamin B. Bryant, John Sturtevant and Alexander Turner, to cultivate a patch of land each, to raise corn and vegetables for the garrison; J. M. Thrift, to open a tailor shop; Charles Weatherford, a blacksmith shop; James Drake, a gun shop; J. B. Scott, to truck and dicker on general principles. These were all made attaches of the garrison, and were the nucleus of the future city.

It is not the purpose of this sketch to include the county, nor is there limit in the space allotted to record the schemes, speculative and otherwise, of rival localities so closely identified as to be a part of the history of the city.

At the termination of the Indian treaty, an area one mile square around the Fort was set apart for the use of the Government, 160 acres of which were subsequently ceded to Polk County, with all the buildings thereon, January 17, 1846. The County of Polk was organized by the Legislature and a board of commissioners appointed to locate the county seat. Rival towns sprung up like mush-

rooms, and Jerry Church nearly succeeded in securing his paper town of Dudley on the river bank near Carlisle. Tom Mitchell and others saw the county would be lopsided with Des Moines as the county seat, and by a little legislative strategy, four townships were borrowed from Warren County to "even up," which, after "the Fort" was selected, were returned to Warren County. The decision of location was celebrated at the Fort with burned powder, bonfires and a general jollification, to the music of two most unmusical fiddles.

The first survey of the town was made July 8, 1846, by A. D. Jones, with a rope, and embraced that portion from Des Moines River west to Eighth street and north from Elm to Locust. The original entry was made by commissioners May 12, 1848, and in 1853 the town of Fort Des Moines was incorporated.

In 1854, by act of the Legislature, Fort Des Moines was designated as the capital of the State and a committee appointed to locate the site of the Capitol. A village had sprung up on the east side of Des Moines River, which was called "De-moine," in derision of the west side "literary fellers," an orthography which was adhered to with pertinacity, and obtains to the present time in all legal conveyances of the original town. Strong rivalry existed, and the site contest was hot. The East Siders feasted and feted the committee, and A. W. Scott donated forty acres to the State. A

political contest was raging for Governor. Curtis Bates, the Democratic candidate, lived on the west side. Grimes, the Whig candidate, espoused the cause of the east side, purchased lots, got their votes, was elected, and the east side won the site. The west side held indignation meetings and resolutely vigorously, but harmony was finally restored. Scott, Colonel J. A. Williamson, Turner, Griffith and others formed a company, built the State House at a cost of \$35,000 and sold it to the State. In 1857, the archives of the State were loaded on trucks and hauled by oxen from Iowa City and deposited in the new State House. The same year the city of Des Moines was incorporated, the "fort" being lopped off. It embraced an area of two and a half miles north and south, and four and a half miles east and west.

#### *Comparative.*

Twenty-five years ago ox teams were the fashionable motors of vehicles. A load of corn was the price of hauling another load a few miles to the "Fort." Corn was sold at \$2.50 a bushel; potatoes, \$3 a bushel, and 3,000 pounds of nicely fattened and dressed pork was sold for \$45; wheat, \$6. Women wore plain linsey and calico to church. Quiltings and weddings were the principal amusements. For \$6, Frink & Walker gave stage coach conveyance from Keokuk, with the privilege of unlimited swearing and carrying a rail across

Skunk Bottoms to pry the jerkey out of mud. Then, wild duck angled for pollywogs in a pond where now stands the depot of the Chicago and Rock Island road. Then, ferry-boats crossed the rivers now spanned by three iron and three wooden bridges. Then, not a railroad was there west of Chicago; now six stretch their iron bands to every point from this city. Then, the post-office was kept in the hat of the Postmaster, who delivered the mail as he met the proper persons. Now, seven letter carriers traverse the streets, and the business of the post-office is measured by tons and tens of thousands of dollars. Then, at Fairfield was the nearest flour mill, and two weeks required for the journey to mill. Many a batch of corn meal ground in a coffee mill was baked by the pioneer matrons while waiting the return of the "grist." Now, five capacious mills roll out thousands of barrels of flour annually, and the housewife may suit her fancy from the "X," "XX," "Family," or "New Process."

#### *Newspapers.*

The intelligence of the people was manifest in the early establishment of a newspaper. On the 26th of July, 1849, appeared the first number of the *Iowa Star*, Barlow Granger & Co., editors and publishers. The press and material were dragged over 200 miles through mud by ox team. It passed into various hands until 1855, when it was

changed to the *Iowa Statesman*. In 1859 it was changed by Will Porter to the *Iowa State Journal*; in 1860, by Stilson Hutchins, again to the *Iowa Statesman*; in 1862, consolidated with the *Commonwealth* and called the *Times*. Late in 1862, the *Statesman* was revived and in 1872, became the *Iowa State Leader*. Through all these mutations it has been Democratic in politics.

January 9, 1850, L. P. Sherman, a graduate of the Cincinnati *Gazette* and brother of "Old Tecumseh," issued the first number of the *Des Moines Gazette*, which soon went down in financial ruin, when Peter Myers started the *Journal*, which lived one year, and was succeeded by the *Tri-weekly Citizen* in 1856, which passed through many hands until February, 1860, when it fell into the possession of F. W. Palmer, who changed its name to *Iowa State Register*. On the 13th of January, 1862, Mr. Palmer issued the first daily paper in the city. It was a small sheet and ably edited, but as there was no competition it was a "slow coach." There was no competitor to "scoop." When the compositors got tired "setting" telegraph news, they would quit, hang the remainder on the "hook" for the next day and go home. They don't do it now. On the election of Mr. Palmer to Congress the paper passed into the hands of Mills & Co., thence to Clarkson Brothers, who have made it the leading paper of the State and a mine of wealth. From the *Gazette* to this day it has

been the organ of the Whig, Free Soil and Republican parties successively. In 1873 the *Patron's Helper* was started as the organ of the Grangers, which was merged in the *Iowa Weekly People*, which became the advocate of Greenbackers, and a daily. During the present year was also started the *Des Moines News*, so that the city has four daily papers. There is also a weekly and religious paper, the *Iowa State Journal, Plain Talk, Iowa Staats Anzeiger* (German), *Western Farm Journal*. . . . Numerous papers have been also started to "supply a long felt want," but so soon were they done for, the wonder is what they were begun for.

#### *Churches.*

From the foundation of the settlement to this day the religious sentiment has been a prominent element in the social structure. The first sermon was preached by Ezra Rathburn, in 1845, and it was at the funeral of a babe of Colonel Grier, of the Fort. This child was the first born and the first to die in the city. The same year a Methodist Church was organized. There are now twenty-three churches, representing the several Protestant and Catholic denominations and occupying magnificent and costly edifices, prominent among which is the Congregational, erected last year at a cost of over \$30,000. Its architectural beauty, unique and tasteful internal adornments are decidedly attractive.

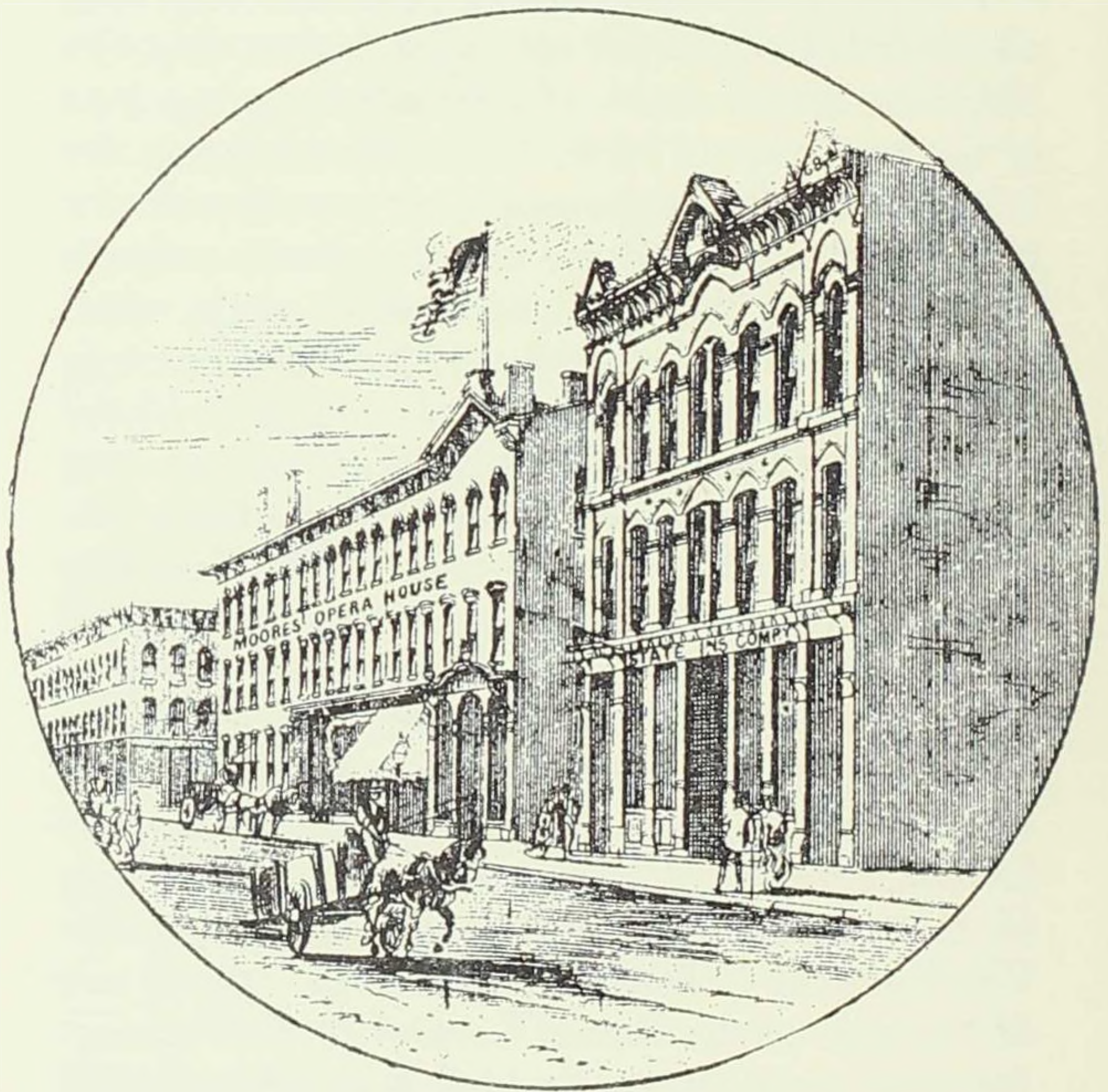


*Schools.*

The public schools, the pride of the city, and not excelled in the West, were begun, like the churches, at the dawn of civilization, in log huts of the barracks, in 1847, R. L. Tidrick being the first teacher. The following year was erected the first school-house. There are now seven magnificent public school edifices, one in each ward, costing in the aggregate over \$280,000, attesting the intelligence, generosity and enterprise of the people. The Second Ward building, costing over \$80,000 and accommodating 900 pupils is the model school edifice of the State. The Catholics have a large building and maintain schools of high order. The Germans also have a fine building. The University of Des Moines, delightfully located in a park of five acres, gives ample facilities for higher education. The Iowa Law School, the law department of Simpson Centenary College, affords unusual advantages for a legal education. The Business College, established in 1865, is one of the best in the State. Several private schools are maintained, among which is a kindergarten.

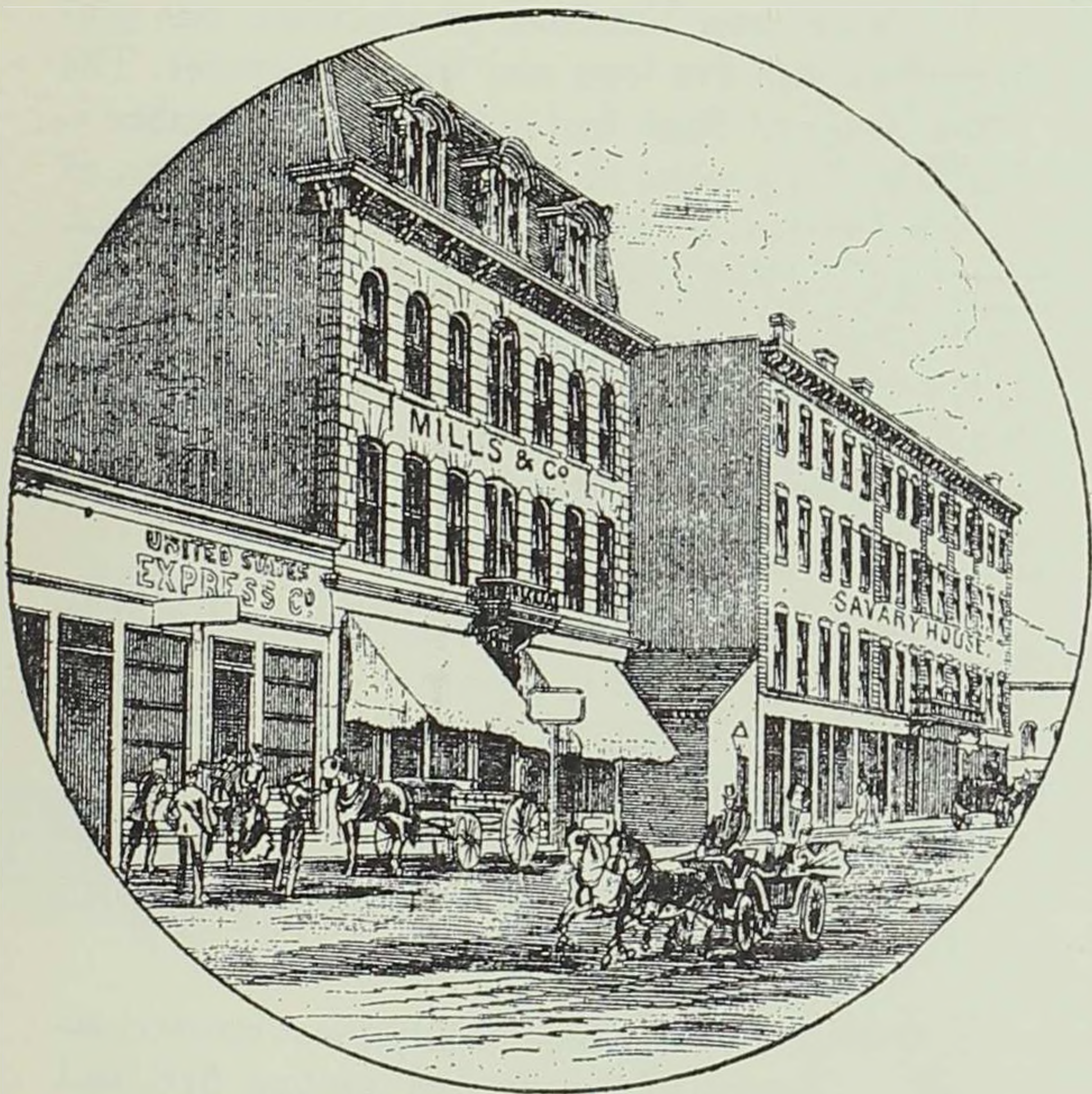
*Charities.*

Cottage Hospital, for strangers, is maintained by the efforts of women. The various civic societies also support charitable associations. There is also a Women's Relief Society, to aid indigent poor people.



Moore's Opera House was one of the largest and best appointed amusement halls in the west. Des Moines was indebted to W. W. Moore, one of the pioneer settlers, for the hall.

The spectacular rise of Des Moines as an insurance center was recognized long before the opening of the 20th Century. The October, 1898, number of *The Midland Monthly* contained a 15-page article on Des Moines entitled "Hartford of the West." Such giants as the Bankers Life Company and the Equitable of Iowa, together with several other Iowa companies, are ample proof that the term still fits Des Moines in 1970.



In the fall of 1856, W. W. Mills started a job printing office in Des Moines, where Frank M. Mills, his brother, soon joined him. The firm grew rapidly. When they purchased the *Iowa State Register* in 1866, Mills Brothers had become the largest book and job printing house in the State of Iowa, and the city's most prolific printing house. Their full-page advertisement in A. T. Andreas *Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa* in 1875 indicated Mills & Company were lithographers, engravers, & printers.

The Savary House in Des Moines is a reminder to present-day Iowans that the name Savary had achieved fame in the hotel business long before the contemporary Savary Hotel was opened to the public.

*Banks.*

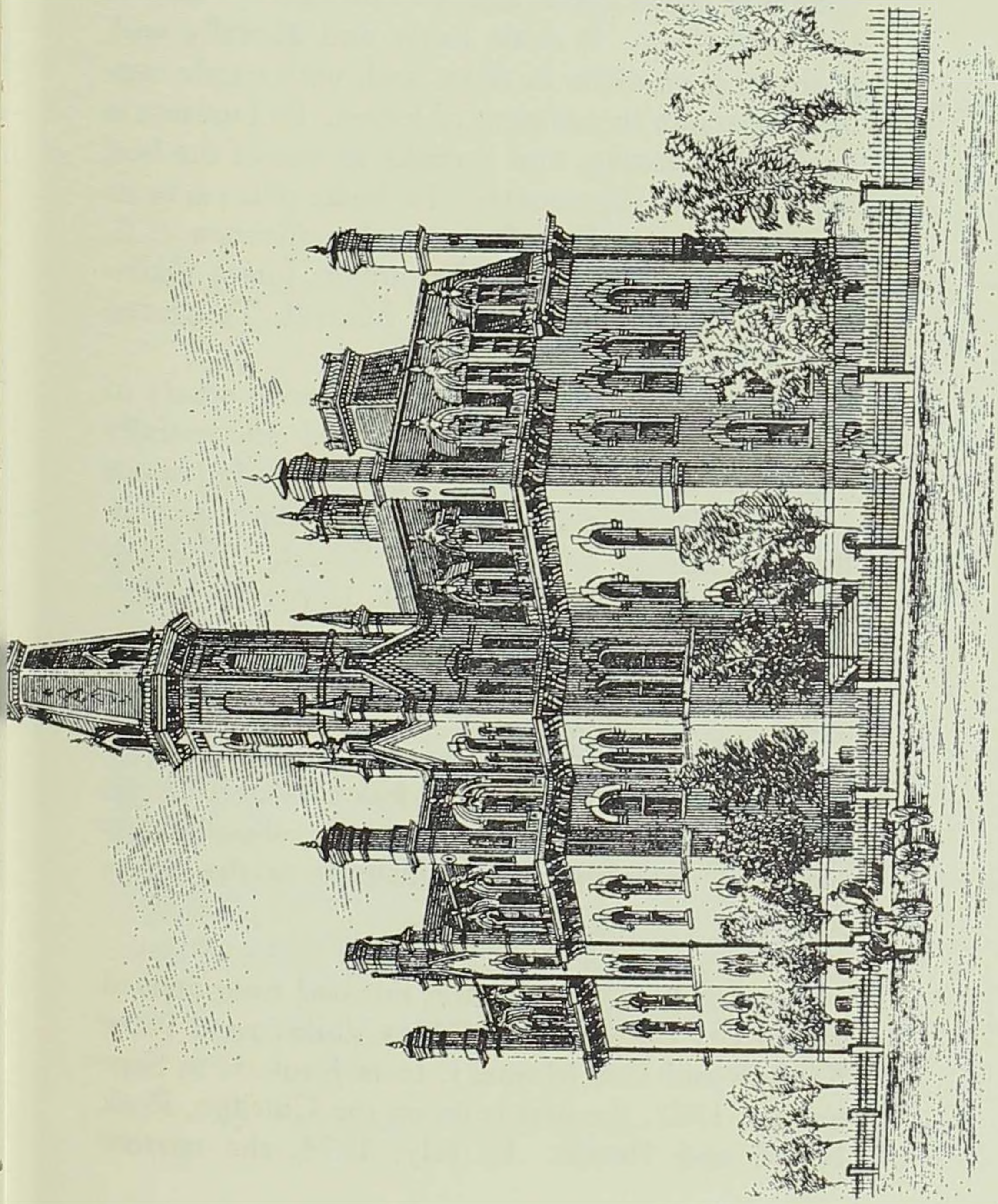
There are two National, four private, one savings bank and five loan and trust companies. The Iowa National Bank began business November 1, 1875, with a capital of \$100,000. Its deposits, as shown by the last statement to the Government, were \$277,000. President, H. K. Love; Cashier, George H. Maish. The Citizens' National Bank has a capital of \$100,000. The private banks are: Valley, Capital City, Des Moines, Spencer Kellogg and Bank of Iowa.

*Fire Department.*

No city in the Union is better protected against fire. The Holly system of water works, supplied from the inexhaustible Coon River, is carried throughout the city. Two hose, two hook and ladder companies and the district telegraph system render a conflagration nearly impossible.

*Insurance Companies.*

There are two fire and one life insurance companies. The Hawkeye insures against fire, and was organized under the laws of the State in 1866, with assets that year of \$28,600. Its assets January 1, 1877, were \$511,225.65; January 1, 1878, \$552,634.01, showing a net gain in one year of \$41,408.36. Its surplus January 1, 1877, was \$202,715.76; January 1, 1878, \$233,697.22, a gain of \$30,981.46, showing the standing of the



Second Ward School House.

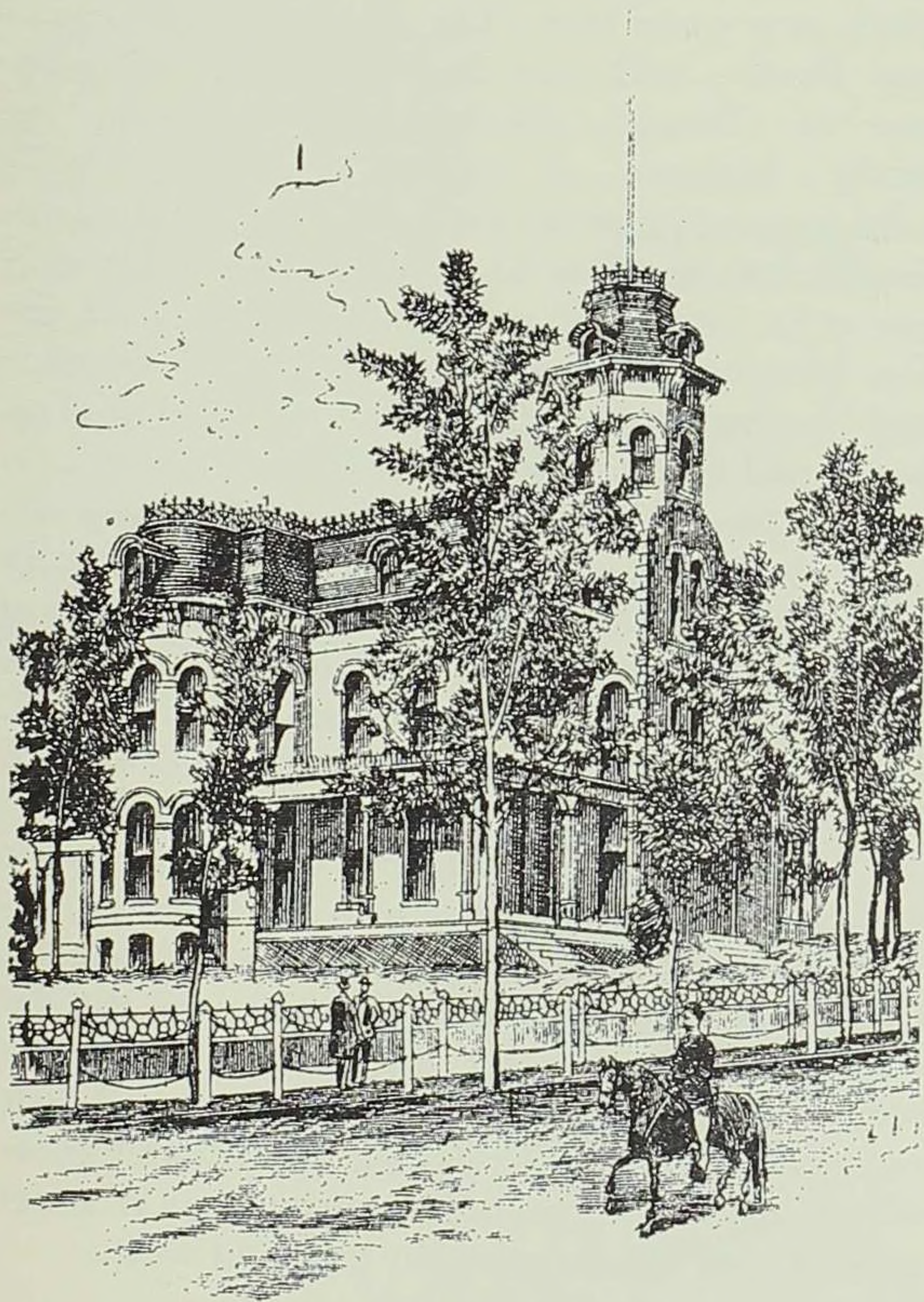
company and a good degree of prosperity, despite the hard times. It deals fairly and liberally with patrons, is cautious in risks, and, with ample capital, is prompt in payment of losses. Its business is rapidly increasing, and it ranks as one of the best institutions in the country. Its home office is in its own building on Fourth street. Its officers are: E. J. Ingersoll, its founder, President; James Callanan, Vice-President; Samuel Merrill, Treasurer; Adam Howell, Secretary.

The State Insurance Company, with assets of about \$300,000, is cautiously and successfully managed, is prompt and liberal in adjusting losses and rapidly growing in the confidence of the public. Its officers are: John A. Elliott, President; Mathew Long, Secretary; G. T. Carpenter, Vice-President; George H. Maish, Treasurer. Its offices are in its own stone front building on Fourth street.

The Equitable Life is one of the soundest institutions of the Union, and has a larger deposit with the State Auditor to protect its policy-holders than any company doing business in the State.

#### *Railroads.*

August 29, 1866, the first railroad train arrived in this city on the Des Moines Valley road (now Keokuk and Des Moines), from Keokuk; in September, 1867, the first train on the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific. In July, 1874, the narrow



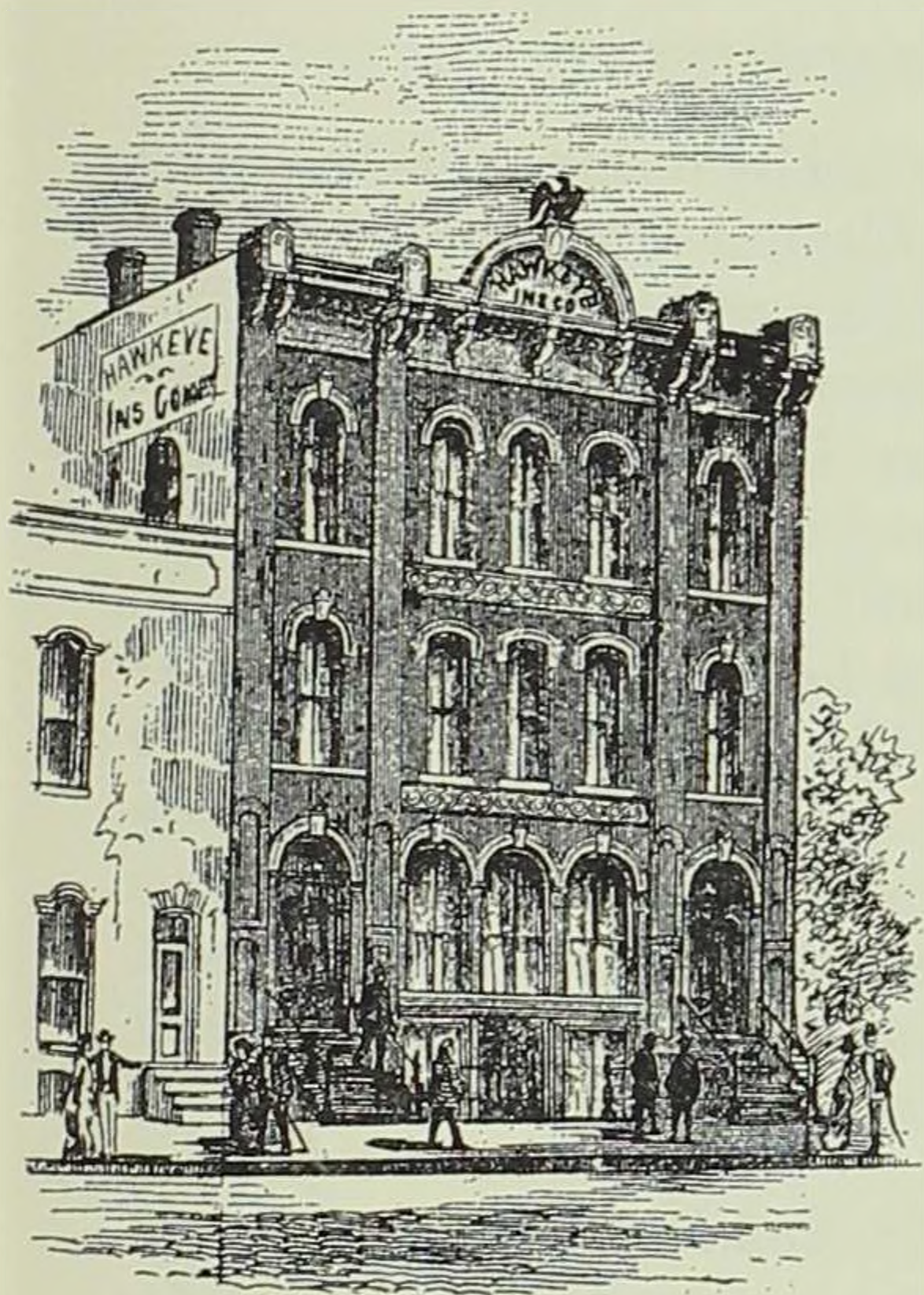
Residence of Judge C. C. Cole.

gauge locomotive started for Minneapolis, and will reach the State line in another year. Six railroads now enter here. The Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific, with one arm stretching 357 miles east to Chicago, another westward over the world's highway, as near to the setting sun as solid foundation exists for a road bed. Southward, the Keokuk and Des Moines and North Missouri enters St. Louis, 365 miles away. Northwest, the Des Moines and Fort Dodge crosses the Chicago and Northwestern at Grand Junction, and the Dubuque and Sioux City at Fort Dodge, eighty-nine miles distant; it halts for a time ere it moves forward over the rapidly developing prairies. Southwest, the Des Moines, Indianola and Missouri road reaches Indianola, and the iron horse is pawing the ground for a start to Kansas and Missouri. The Des Moines, Winterset and Southwestern has reached Winterset, forty-two miles away, and will soon move on. Northward, the narrow gauge is slowly but surely creeping to St. Paul. St. Joseph, Mo., and Kansas City will soon be connected with the city by roads guaranteed by the demands of a rapidly increasing and indefatigable people. By these completed trunk roads and their connections unlimited shipping and travelling facilities are had. For home convenience a street railway runs through the city east and west.

#### *Hotels.*

No city in the State has more ample accommo-





Hawkeye Insurance  
Company's Building.

Court Avenue Bridge  
over the Des Moines.



dations than are provided by its eleven hotels. The Savery, Aborn and Capital City are large and elaborately furnished, at a cost of \$60,000 to \$75,000 each, and the Mecca of travellers and pride of the city. Mine host, Frederick C. McCartney, of the Savery, has been with it since the opening, is "to the manner born" and one of the few who knows how to keep a hotel. "Luxury and courtesy" is his motto. The presiding genius of the Aborn, G. B. Brown, many years a conductor on the New York Central Railroad, and known from Dan to Beersheba, gives the public a modern hotel. His pleasant face and 370 pounds of corporosity attest the excellence of its *cuisine*.

#### *Public Buildings.*

Conspicuous among the public buildings is the old State House and the new Capitol, standing on an eminence overlooking the whole city. The latter was begun in 1871, and will require four years yet to complete it. It will cost not less than \$3,500,000, and will be one of the best in the Union.

The United States Post-office and Court House, corner Court avenue and Fifth street, costing about \$210,000, is an imposing structure. In it are located the United States Land Office, Collector's Office and Pension Agency.

The Iowa Industrial Exposition building, erected in 1876, on Walnut street at a cost of \$75,000, is an ornament to the city and an honor to its

enterprising people. It is three stories high, 132 feet square and devoted to annual exhibitions of industry, where are brought together the inventor, manufacturer, producer and consumer, to their mutual benefit.

It is open to the world for the display of works of art and manufacture, and its exhibitions have increased in extent and importance every year. September 4 began the third, with promises of greater success than heretofore.

The County Court House, at the head of Court avenue, with its fine park and fountain, is one of the attractive spots in the city, and in summer a place of resort for rest and pleasure.

#### *Private Residences.*

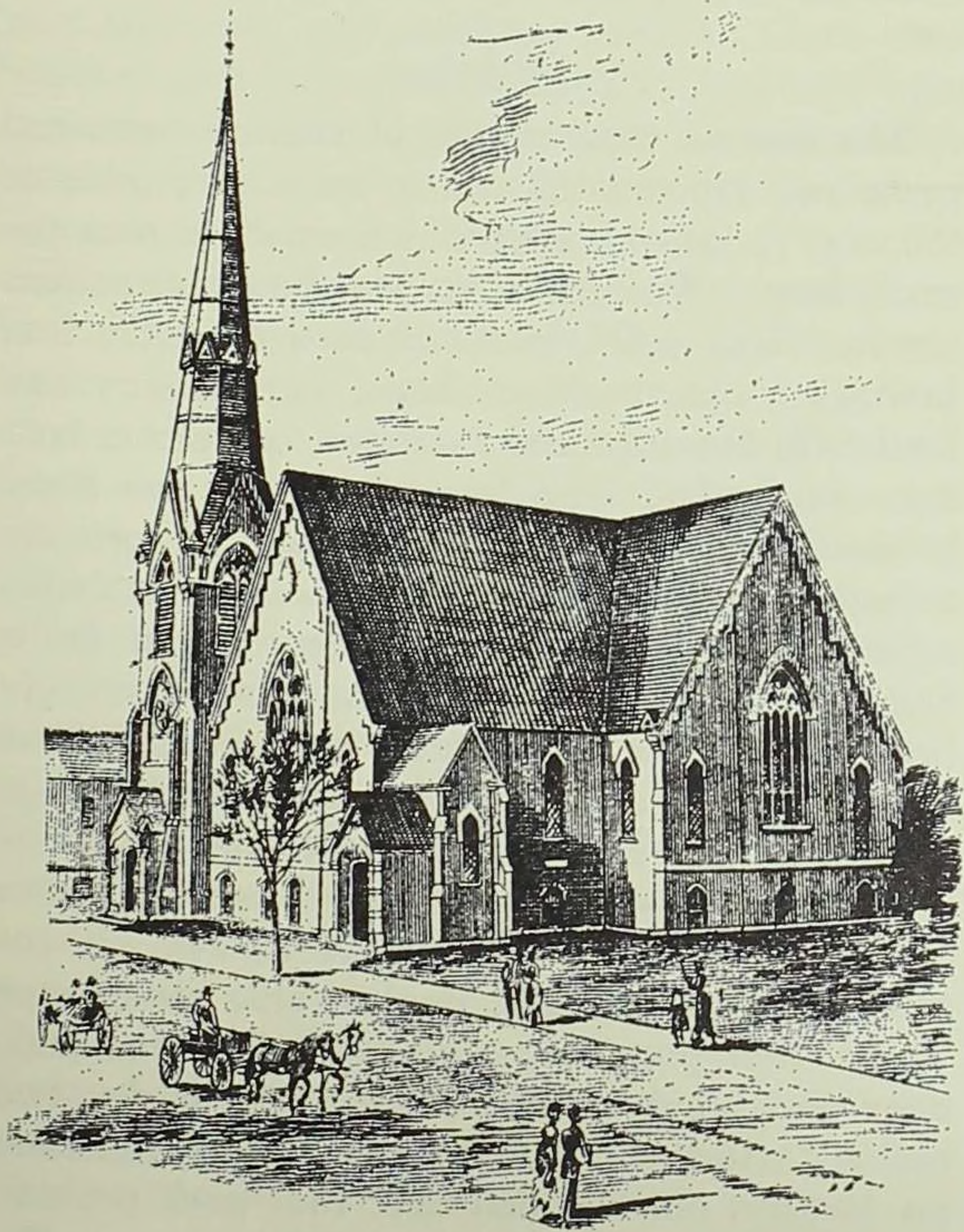
No city in the West can boast of more attractive houses than this. Nature and art have conspired to make them beautiful. Prominent are Terrace Hill, formerly the property of B. F. Allen, costing nearly \$200,000; Inglebrae, the luxurious home of James Callanan; Colchester Place, the elegant and capacious residence of Judge C. C. Cole, and the attractive suburban home of Wesley Redhead, who in 1850, in a wooden building now standing on Third street, south of the Keokuk and Des Moines Railroad Depot, pitched his tailor board and set his goose. Possessing a versatile and remarkable business capacity, he has materially aided in various enterprises and won a competency.

*Amusements.*

Moore's Opera House, corner Fourth and Walnut streets, is one of the largest and best appointed amusement halls in the West, for which the city is indebted to W. W. Moore, one of the pioneer settlers, a prosperous and now wealthy merchant. Lewis's Opera House, on the east side, is spacious and well arranged and divides the honors with the halls of the west side. Foster's Academy of Music, on Walnut street, near the Exposition building, is a *bijou* of beauty, costing over \$23,000. Turner Hall, in Sherman block is occupied as a German theatre. The Driving Park, with its excellent half-mile track, gives ample scope for the presiding genius of horse trots.

*Societies.*

The city is pre-eminently social and civic societies are numerous. The Masonic fraternity is represented in several lodges, chapters, councils and commanderies, occupying sumptuous and elegant halls. The Odd Fellows have three lodges and an encampment. The Knights of Pythias, two lodges; the Improved Order of Red Men, a wigwam; the Good Templars, two lodges; the Ancient Order of United Workmen, two lodges. There are also the Young Men's Christian Association, German Turners' Association, Caledonian Club, Hibernian Society, German Harmonica Society, Railroad Conductors' Brotherhood, Patrons of



Congregational Church.

Husbandry, Old Settlers' Society, Woman's Temperance Union, Union Relief Society, Woman's Suffrage Society and two Blue Ribbon clubs.

*Business.*

The several departments of manufactures and trade are represented, on a scale creditable to the city, to individualize which would require too much space. Prominent among the manufactures are five flour mills, two flax seed oil mills, four foundries and machine shops, one hominy and feed mill, five furniture factories, one steam bakery, two barbed wire fence factories, two blank bookmakers, one auxiliary newspaper printing house, one lithograph and stereotype establishment, four plough factories, two steam boiler works, one brass foundry, five breweries, eight brick yards, with a capacity of several million brick annually; one bridge builder, three carriage factories, nine coal mines, employing over one thousand miners; one file factory, two iron cornice factories, three artificial stone works, two carbonated stone pipe works, one metallic sewer pipe works, four potteries, one spice mill, three sash, door and blind factories, one scale works, two broom factories, two soap works, one wholesale tin factory, one woollen mill, four pork packing houses, with a capacity of 100,000 hogs annually; two vinegar works, one alcohol works, one bottling

works, one organ factory, one cigar box factory, three cooper shops, one seal and die factory, four marble works, one shirt factory, two school furniture factories, one stocking factory, three stair builders, and four wholesale cigar factories. There is an abundant field here open for the capitalist to make profitable investment in the development of rich and bounteous resources.

The commercial department is represented by four wholesale and thirty retail dry goods stores, twenty boot and shoe stores, eighteen clothing stores, three commission houses, one wholesale confection house, two wholesale and four retail crockery houses, four wholesale and nineteen retail drug stores, two elevators, five florists, two wholesale and five retail furniture stores, two wholesale glassware stores, seven wholesale and fifty-nine retail grocers, two gun stores, three wholesale harness and saddlery supply stores, four wholesale and fourteen retail hardware stores, six hat stores, two hide and leather stores, two ice companies, ten jewellers, four lumber yards, four wholesale and sixteen retail millinery stores, four wholesale and three retail notion stores, two music stores, eleven agricultural implement stores, six architects, twenty-two real estate dealers, ten live stock dealers, eight sewing machine agencies, six grain dealers, nine merchant tailors and eight photographers.

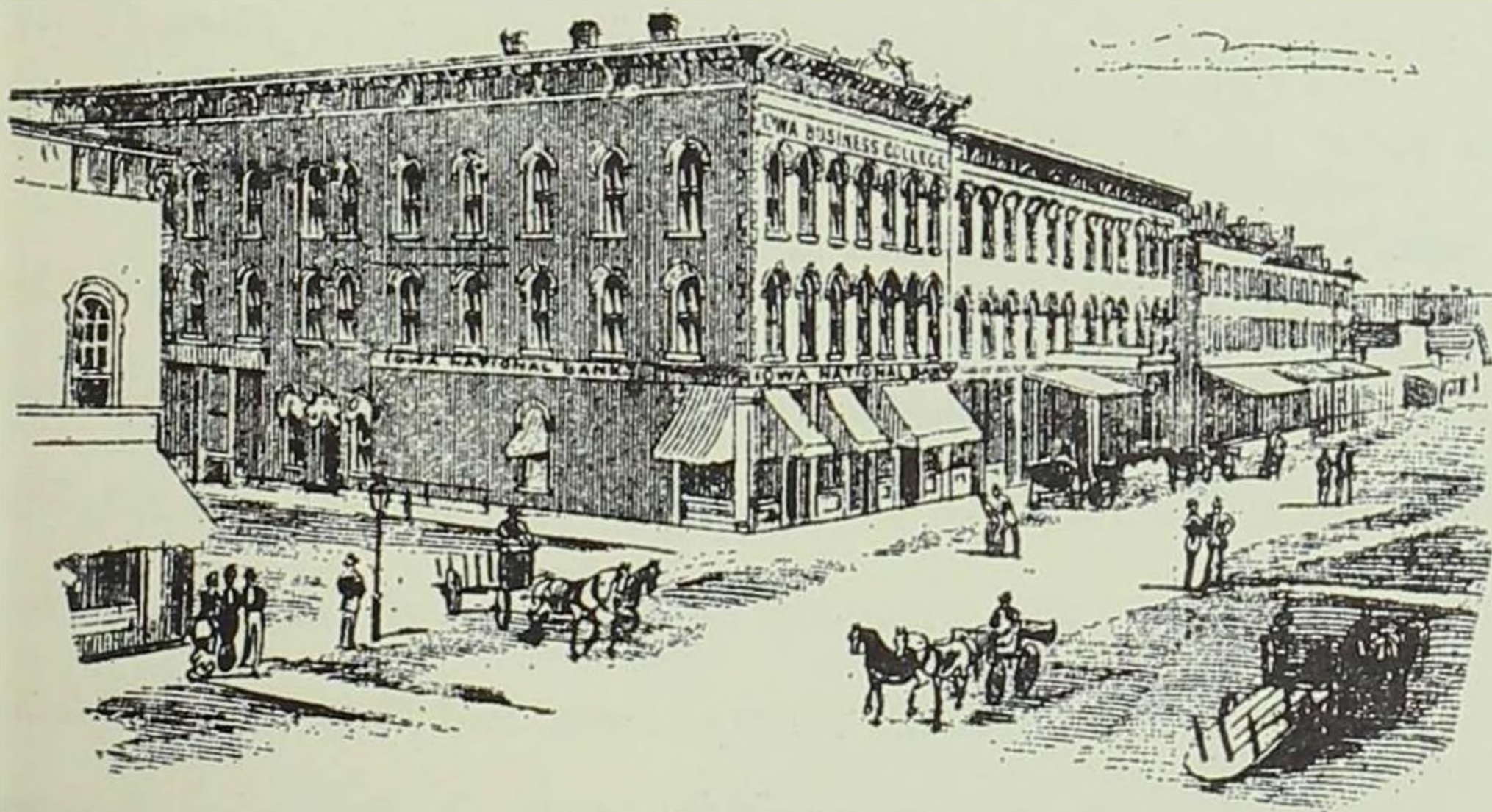
*The City.*

Geographically, the city is in longitude 16 deg., 43 min., 5 sec., latitude 41 deg., 35 sec., and nearly in the centre of the State and fitly chosen as the capital of a great and wealthy Commonwealth. Two large rivers unite their waters within the corporate limits. From the confluence of these rivers, on either side, stretches a beautiful plateau half a mile, skirted with gently undulating bluffs, where, hid in the groves, are beautiful residences. It is remarkably healthy, its mortality list being less than any city in the State, the deaths in 1877 being but 224. The two rivers, 600 feet wide, with eight feet fall, afford power for thousands of wheels of industry. Underlying the whole city and surrounding country are inexhaustible beds of coal, which can be supplied for making steam at 3 cents per bushel and for fuel at \$2 per ton.

Around the city is a wide expanse of country, growing in wealth and population, with thriving towns springing into existence. There were in the city July 1, 1846, 127 persons, thirty-one houses and thirty-one families; in 1865, 5,650; in 1872, 15,372; and now there are over 25,000 inhabitants, surrounded with all the concomitants of older Eastern cities—water and gas works, street railway, district telegraph, telephones, postal carriers, munificently endowed public schools, elegant and luxurious churches and extensive present and prospective railroad facilities. The city is yet



in an undeveloped condition. The next decade will add 15,000 to her population. With all the financial difficulties which have embarrassed the country at large, at no time in the history of the city has so much building been done as in the two years last passed, probably exceeding that of any three other cities in the State combined. Energy and enterprise are visible on every street. It is no marvel that what has already been done is a matter of pride to every citizen or that their future aims are set high.



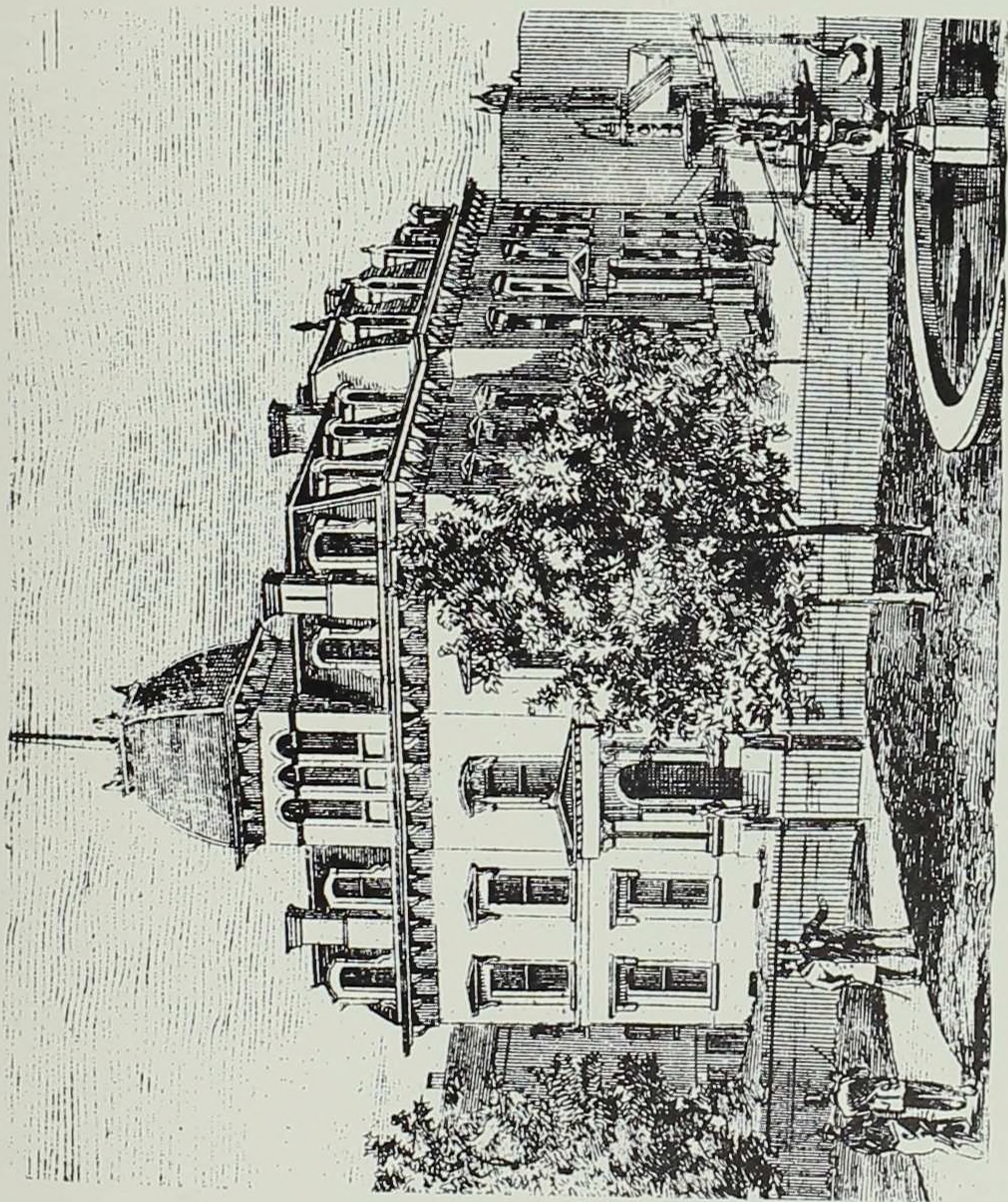
Iowa National Bank

Des Moines, in 1878, had two National, four private, one savings, and five loan and trust companies.

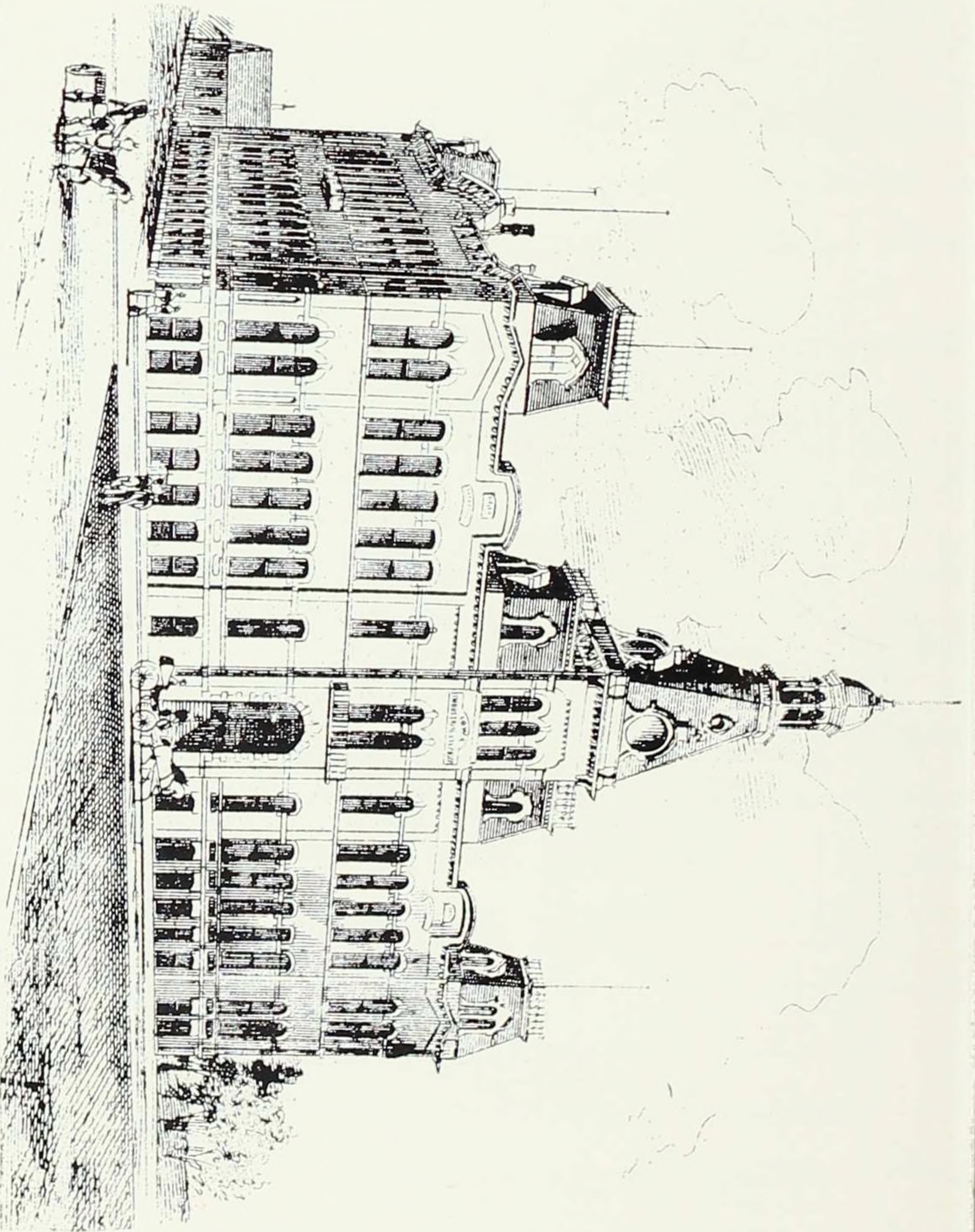
The Iowa Business College was established in 1865. During its first seven years it enrolled more than 700 students. In the mid-1870's it averaged 100 pupils per annum.

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Post Office at Des Moines.



The Iowa Industrial Exposition Building, 132 feet square and three stories high, was a valuable multi-purpose building. It was completed in 1876.