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# Higher Education in Cedar Falls: Town and Gown in the First Hundred Years

William C. Lang

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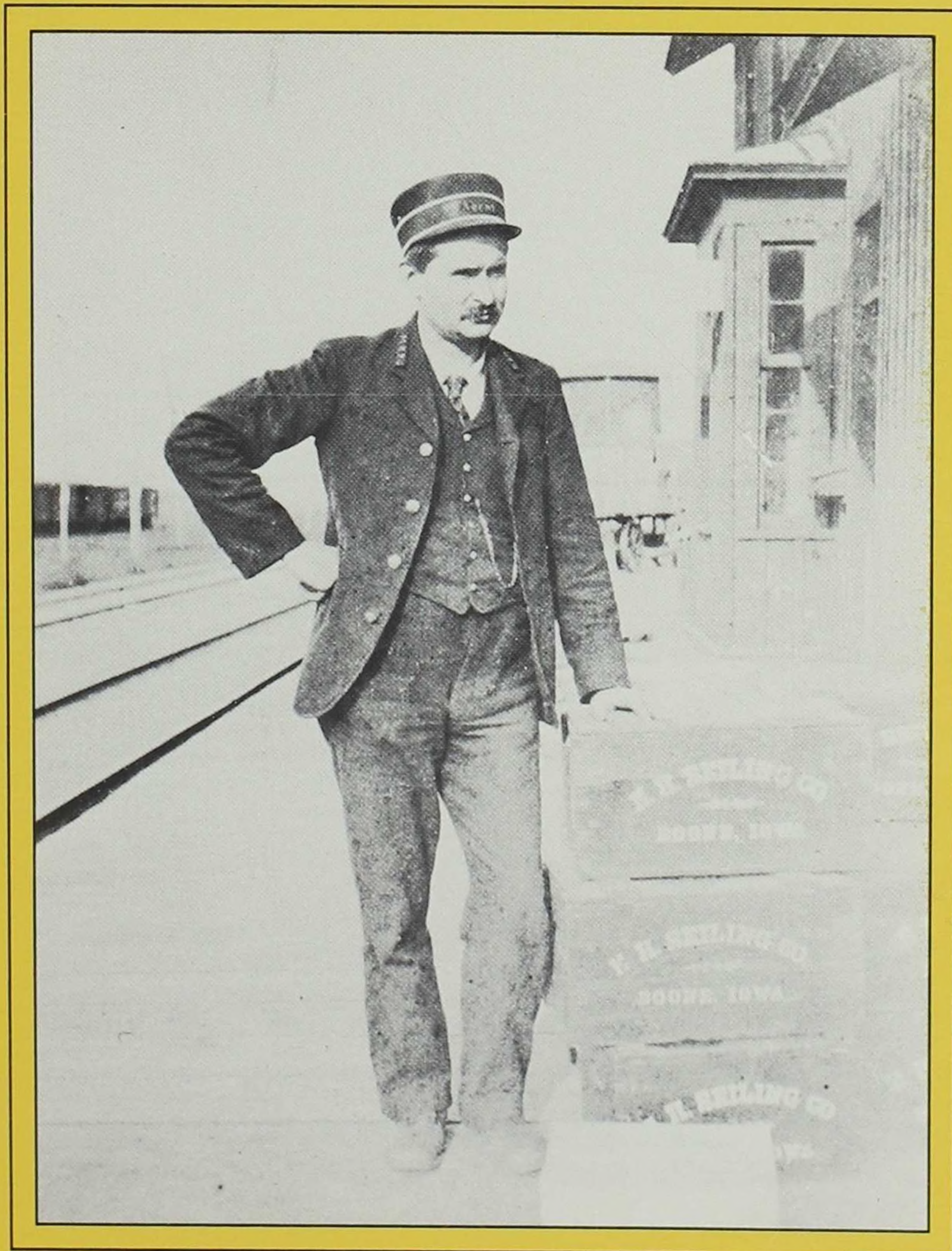


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Adrian D. Anderson, Executive Director

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Cover: *Chicago & North Western Agent William H. Marple poses with freight at the railroad's Lohrville, Iowa, depot in 1910. In the photographic essay appearing in this issue of the Palimpsest, H. Roger Grant examines the role of the small-town railroad station agent in Iowa in the early years of the twentieth century. (courtesy the author)*



*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.





Higher Education in Cedar Falls:  
Town and Gown in the First Hundred Years

by William C. Lang



“I was a farmer in Lincoln Township of Black Hawk County,” wrote Captain Edward G. Miller, who introduced the initial legislation for a normal school at Cedar Falls. “I think the first time I saw the . . . Soldiers’ Orphans’ Home, the thought came to me ‘That is the place for a State Normal School.’ The idea took complete possession of me; I felt sure that the thing could be done; of its desirability it seemed hardly necessary to argue.” When Miller “broached the subject to leading citizens of Cedar Falls,” he was, however, “disappointed—astonished—to see with what coolness the proposition was received. . . . They wanted the property to continue as a state institution . . . but there was one who would have preferred to try for a school for imbeciles.” Upon election to the Iowa General Assembly in 1874, Miller made it clear that his position regarding the building was “a Normal or nothing.” At that point the “best citizens” of Cedar Falls came to his support.

In 1876 the newly elected representative, H.C. Hemenway of Cedar Falls, and Senator Miller made a concerted effort to secure the approval of the General Assembly for the transformation of the Orphans’ Home into a normal school. The local press strongly supported the proposal. The editor of the *Cedar Falls Gazette* took pride in the fact that Iowa was “so philanthropic as to be in the forefront of caring for her insane, her deaf, her blind, her soldiers’ orphans, her reformatory school for youth.” He argued, however, that Iowa was “today, without a training school for her teachers who are to establish in the minds of our children truth and principles which will control them through life.” He expected that consideration of good policy and public welfare would result in the “solid endorsement of both houses” in estab-

lishing a normal school in Cedar Falls.

The endorsement the editor called for actually turned into a bare constitutional majority achieved only after much “horse trading” and “horse collaring” on the last day of the session. But the deed was done and the governor signed the bill into law.

The General Assembly adjourned without appointing a board of directors, a task which fell to Governor Samuel Kirkwood. The governor secured esteemed citizens from all sections of the state to serve on the board. Only one director came from Black Hawk County. The others came from the extreme east, southeast, central, northwest, and southwest sections of the state. The governor thus set a very significant precedent. The school could claim, as Principal Gilchrist did in his inaugural address, that the institution was “The Iowa State Normal School.”

There were difficulties early in the life of the school. The board of directors and Principal Gilchrist had differences over just what the school was to be. The institution was to train teachers, but what did that mean? To H.C. Hemenway, chairman of the board, the institution’s restricted function was “to train teachers for the common schools.” He did not feel that teachers needed much more than elementary knowledge in the three R’s and some instruction in “how to teach and organize a school.” The faculty accepted his position as a base but expected to do far more. Indeed, in his inaugural address, Principal Gilchrist noted that the common schools included high schools. But even training for teaching of elementary and high school subjects was not enough. To Gilchrist the normal’s “bounden duty” was to prepare “educators fitted for the best positions in the compass of our public school system.” He saw far beyond a narrowly conceived teacher preparation. Gilchrist de-

*The campanile was erected in 1926 as a memorial to the founders of the college. The 100-foot tower was funded by donations from alumni, faculty, students, and friends of the college. (ISHD, Historical Museum and Archives)*

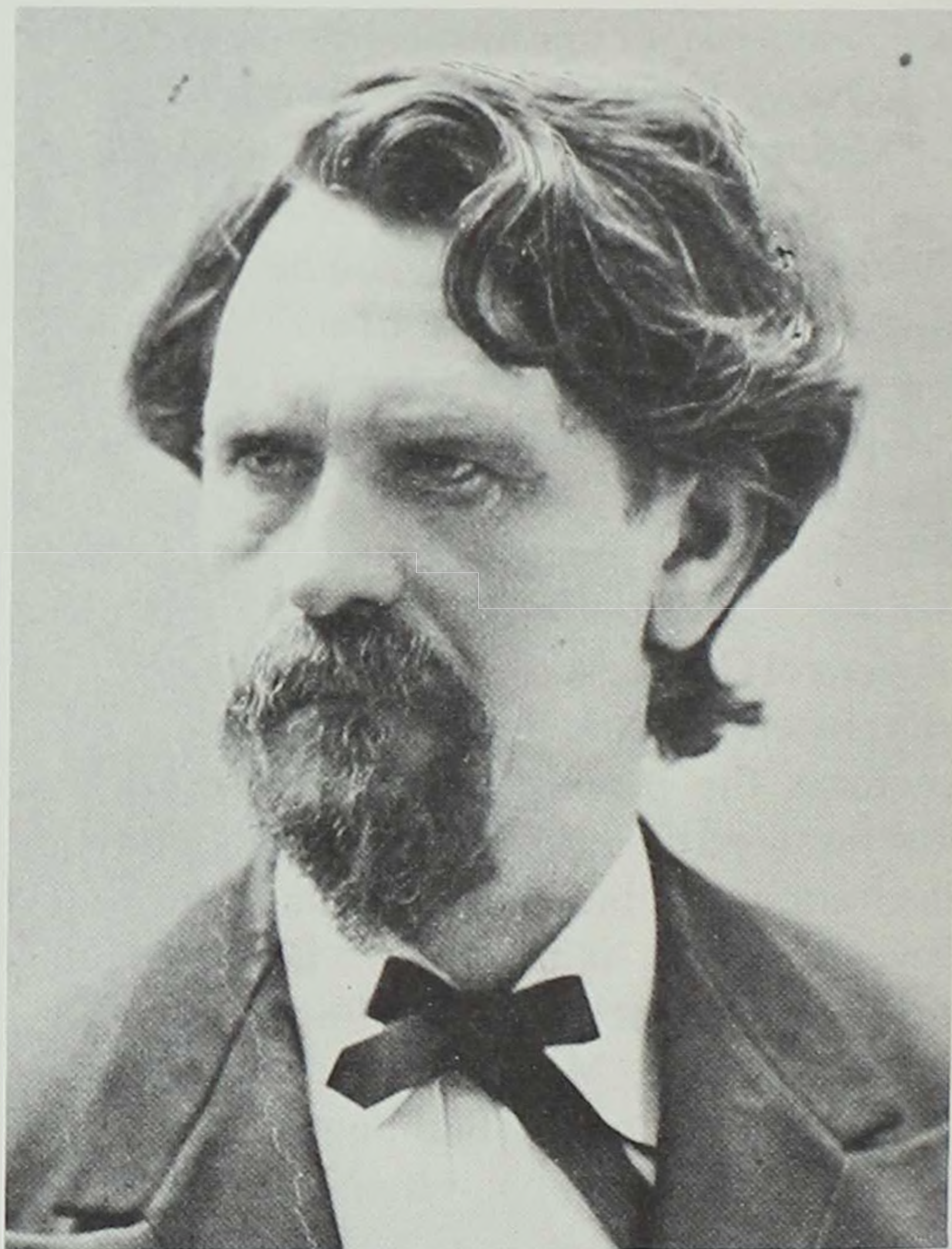


clared: "The teaching of the deeper sciences, the search through the broader and richer fields of human knowledge have such a stimulating power, such an inspiration over the students of *all grades*, that no school can afford to do without such instruction and exploration. . . . The intrinsic charm of knowledge, passing before [the student's] senses, allures him; and falling in love with the mystic beauty of the Knowable but Unknown, his soul is inflamed . . . He sees the far off heights of the golden glories, and, never wearying, onward he ascends, until, standing upon the summit, he surveys with one sweep all that is around him—the far extending tableland and distant deep valleys of human thought and human wisdom."

The faculty envisaged an education that encompassed not only the "deeper" sciences but courses in Latin, Greek, German, French, and English. The first catalog carried the principal's statement that some normal school curricula would correspond "to the work of a college."

To the board of directors, however, the true measure of the educational quality in a state lay in the literacy statistics. To expect much more of universal public education than instruction in reading, writing, computation, spelling, and similar activities was to project it into areas which were not public responsibilities. Such areas the individual should pursue at his own expense. Professor Gilchrist's efforts to implement his ideals at Cedar Falls brought him frustration and even failure in the early years—but the people of Cedar Falls came to accept the institution however ambivalent its characteristics.

**A**s the school grew, it soon needed more room. An appropriation of \$30,000 for a new building in 1882 drew plaudits from both town and gown. But when the estimates for the construction of the new building as planned by the principal, board, and architect came to well



*James C. Gilchrist, the first principal of the Iowa State Normal School, c. 1880. (courtesy UNI Photo Archives)*

over the appropriated amount, gloom replaced the joy which had been so obvious a few months before. Principal Gilchrist, however, was a determined man. He was not about to let the opportunity escape. He canvassed faculty and community and was able to tell the board at its meeting in June 1882 that "a voluntary subscription of citizens" made it possible "to donate \$5,000.00 to help the Board to erect [the] new building according to the plan." With this assurance, the board let contracts well over the appropriated sum of \$30,000 to build and complete "South Hall"—later "Gilchrist Hall." Sixty-four individuals and firms subscribed \$5,010.00 in amounts ranging from \$10 to \$500 per contributor. Town and gown had joined to show their mutual interest in the growth of the school. While the townspeople contributed the larger sums, some of the faculty members gave over ten percent of their annual salary to the

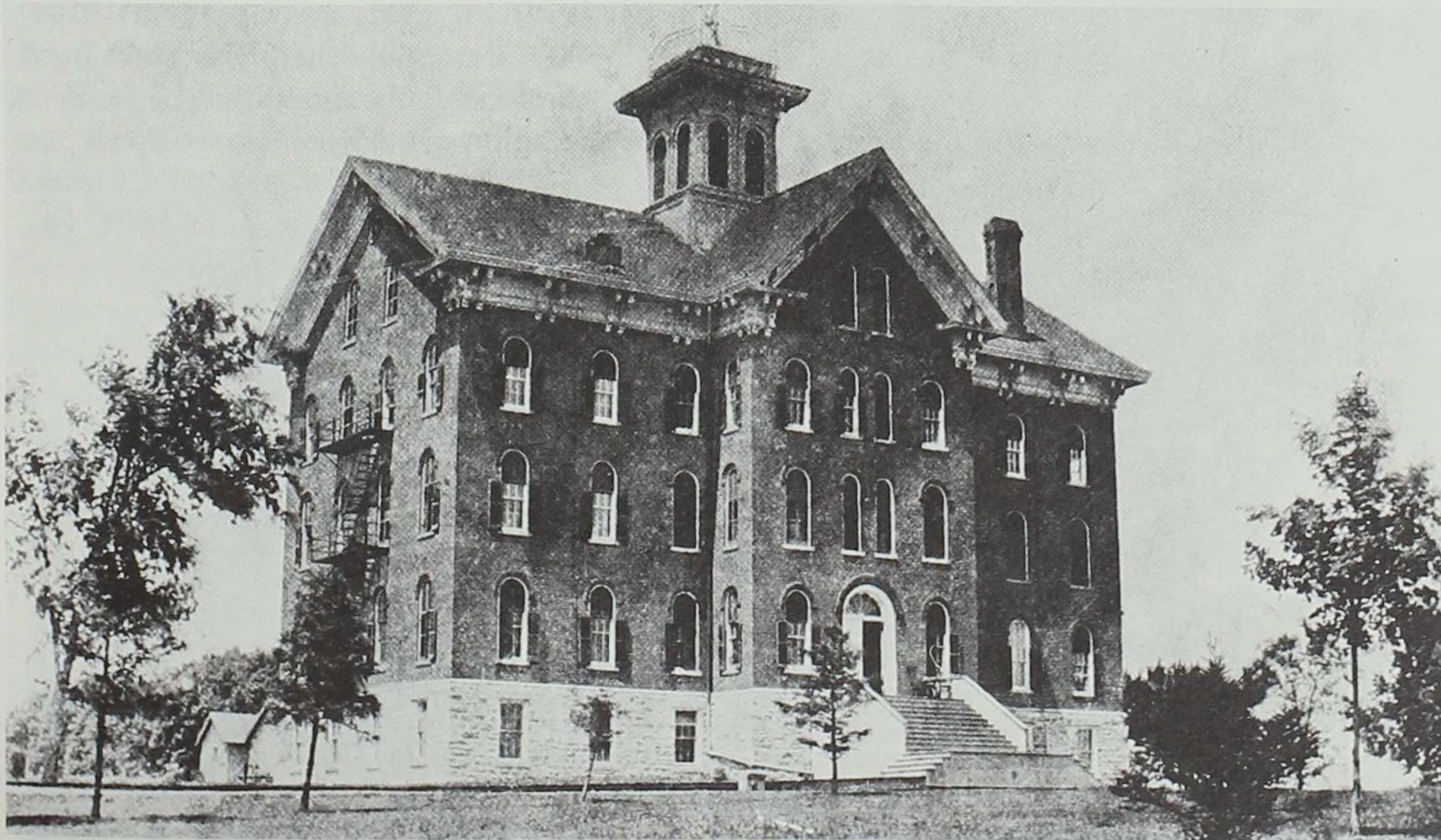


project.

With the new facilities came new tensions. How should they be used? What new programs should be inaugurated? Answers to such questions led to new divisions. The board of directors had not approved part of the faculty's plan for a diversified curriculum, nor had all the faculty agreed to the policies and procedures the principal followed in arranging classes, suggesting new programs, or requiring a board of examiners from off-campus to approve candidates for graduation. Long and complex disagreements ultimately resulted in some new board members being appointed. Their assessment of the problems led them in 1886 to elect Homer H. Seerley to replace Principal Gilchrist.

The bitterness engendered by this drastic action seemed to create a split between town and gown. The community of Cedar Falls strongly disapproved of the action of the directors and some citizens talked of seeking ways to set it aside. Though it never happened, it was

clear that Principal Gilchrist, stern, austere, and somewhat autocratic though he may have been, had won the hearts of most residents of Cedar Falls. The editor of the *Cedar Falls Gazette* observed, "The changing fortune and injustice of public position cannot lessen the high estimate in which [the Gilchrist family] are so justly held or effect [*sic*] their usefulness in their chosen sphere of educational labor." As many as 300 people attended a special reception for the departing principal. Although not all the faculty were there, speakers praised and honored him for making the normal school "the pride of the State and the copy and envy of the whole country." Principal Gilchrist, in his response, confessed bewilderment at the outpouring of generosity and emotion which meant so much to him. Then in a surge of feeling he revealed something of the harshness, if not the heartlessness, of the procedures then followed in dealing with employees of state educational institutions. "By the decree of fate, I go where I know not . . . The trees



The first building at the Iowa State Normal School. The building originally served as the Iowa Soldiers' Orphans' Home, Cedar Falls. (SHSI)



that my own hands have planted, I hoped to see spread their broad branches over many a square meter and give refreshing shade in the heat of day." He had, however, planted well and nurtured carefully the infant normal school, and his vision of proper teacher education is not without value even today.

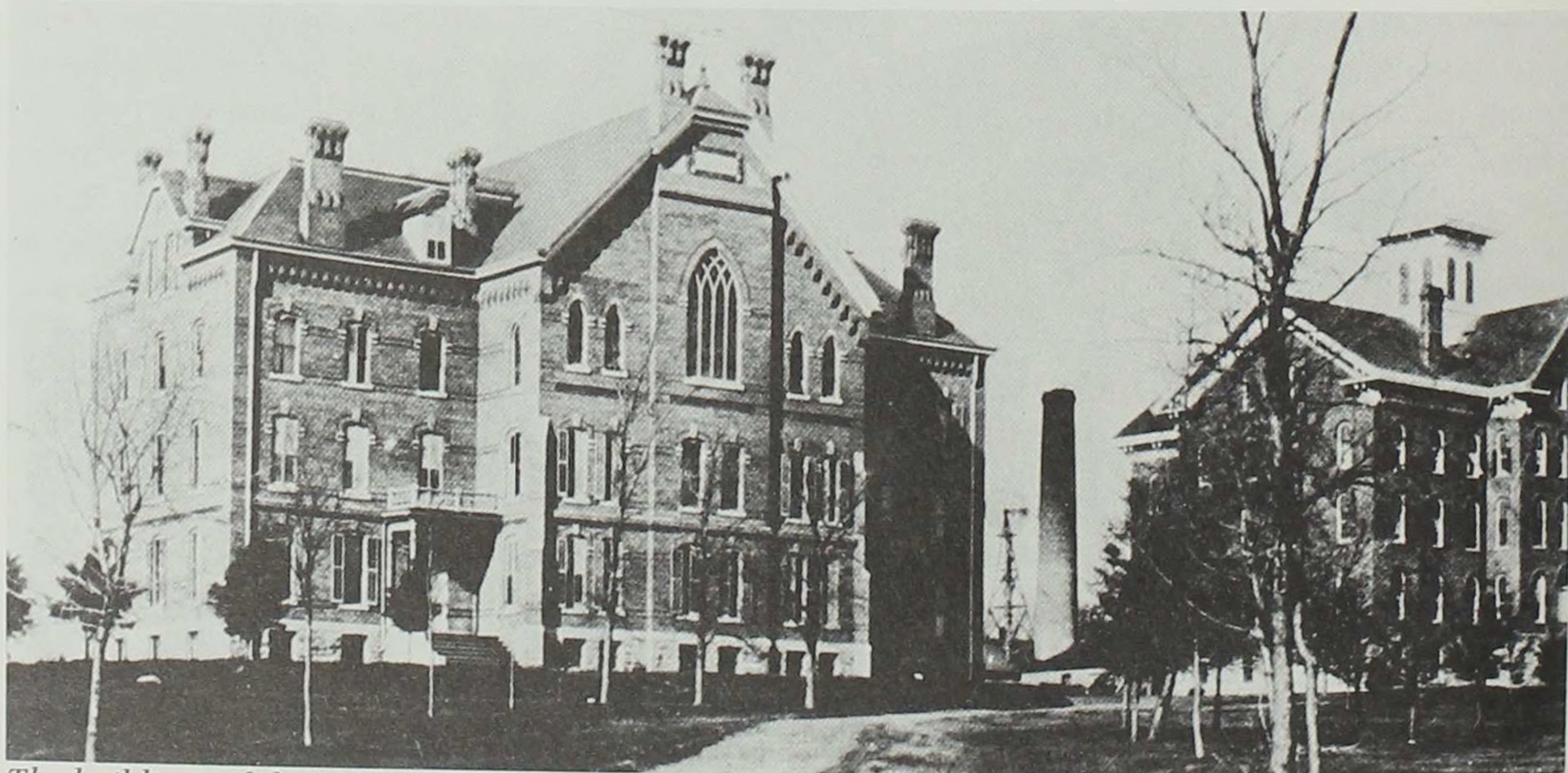
The newly elected principal waited three weeks before accepting the appointment. In that time he calmly assessed the problems of the school, met with some of the faculty, and sought the advice of friends around the state. He would have to handle the "disgruntled friends" of Mr. Gilchrist who some said would do "all the mischief" they could. There was a report that some of them had "tried to intimidate Seerley from accepting." Some gossip in Cedar Falls even suggested the action of the board was part of a Congregationalist conspiracy to secure one of their number "instead of a Methodist as head of the School."

Uncertainty and suspicion surely existed. The first few years of Seerley's administration saw little growth in the school's enrollment, though teachers and teacher education were greatly needed in the state. However, the new leader went about his task of uniting town and

gown. People in the state discovered that his Congregational public prayers were as fervent as those of his Methodist predecessor. They found that he created for the school a sound relationship with county and city superintendents of schools. They also found that he was responsive to the "will of the people" of which he spoke with great respect and which he sought to understand. Any reserve toward the man soon melted away. Principal Seerley became President Seerley after only two years and an era of good feelings between town and gown emerged.

New associations developed between them as Cedar Falls extended its water and sewer lines to "Normalville." The improvements removed the constant threat of a contaminated water supply and "unpleasant odors and gases" from the school's problems. The sewer connection allayed any complaints about an objectionable stench which had arisen since the normal had laid a sewer line from "The Hill" directly north to the small branch of Dry Run Creek.

By 1890 the normal school was entering a period of accelerated growth. The faculty, even though greatly overworked in



*The buildings of the Iowa State Normal School, 1882 to the early 1890s. (courtesy UNI Photo Archives)*



overcrowded facilities, took great satisfaction in the increasing support given the institution by parents, prospective teachers, and teachers. Although the financial panic of the mid-1890s severely limited funds, a small appropriation for a new building in 1894 gave hope for the future. The only discordant note struck during the period came from H.C. Hemenway, co-creator of the school and first president of its board of directors. He had been reappointed to the board in 1893 to fill an unexpired term. He still seemed to be distressed that the normal school had expanded its curriculum to include training of high school as well as elementary school teachers. When he was not appointed by the Republicans to a full term, he spoke out openly that the normal school and its leadership violated the law by not concentrating its resources on the education of teachers for "the common schools," which, to Hemenway, signified the elementary grades only. President Seerley responded by saying that no qualified person seeking training as an elementary teacher had ever been denied admission. The opportunity for such training was more available than ever at the State Normal School.

By 1900 the enrollment at the school approached 2,000. Its needs were stupendous. Fortunately, economic conditions had improved by the end of the century in the nation and in Iowa. The new prosperity, combined with the astute and vigorous leadership of a Cedar Falls representative in the General Assembly, Charles A. Wise, and the honest, straightforward, persuasive presentations by President Seerley, led to years of high hopes for the school. In 1900 an appropriation of \$100,000 for a new building—more than twice as much as had previously been granted for such purposes—seemed to promise a solution to space problems, but more money was needed to help expand the staff and raise faculty salaries which, for years, had not exceeded

\$1,600.

In 1902, a new Republican governor, Albert Baird Cummins, assumed office. Associating himself with the "new progressivism" which departed from the conservative stance of the "Old Guard," he supported education unqualifiedly and gave the normal school high praise for its excellent work. He noted the overcrowded conditions at the school and declared,



*Dr. Homer H. Seerley replaced Principal Gilchrist in 1886 and guided the school through the first decade of the twentieth century. (ISHD, Historical Museum and Archives)*

"Nothing but the disabilities of poverty can be pleaded in defense" of not furnishing additional facilities. "Iowa," he insisted, "cannot make this defense." With such friendly support at the gubernatorial level, town and gown decided to act in consort to assure that no one in Iowa governmental circles could misunderstand their needs and desires. Together they invited the governor, state officials, and all the members of the General Assembly to attend the



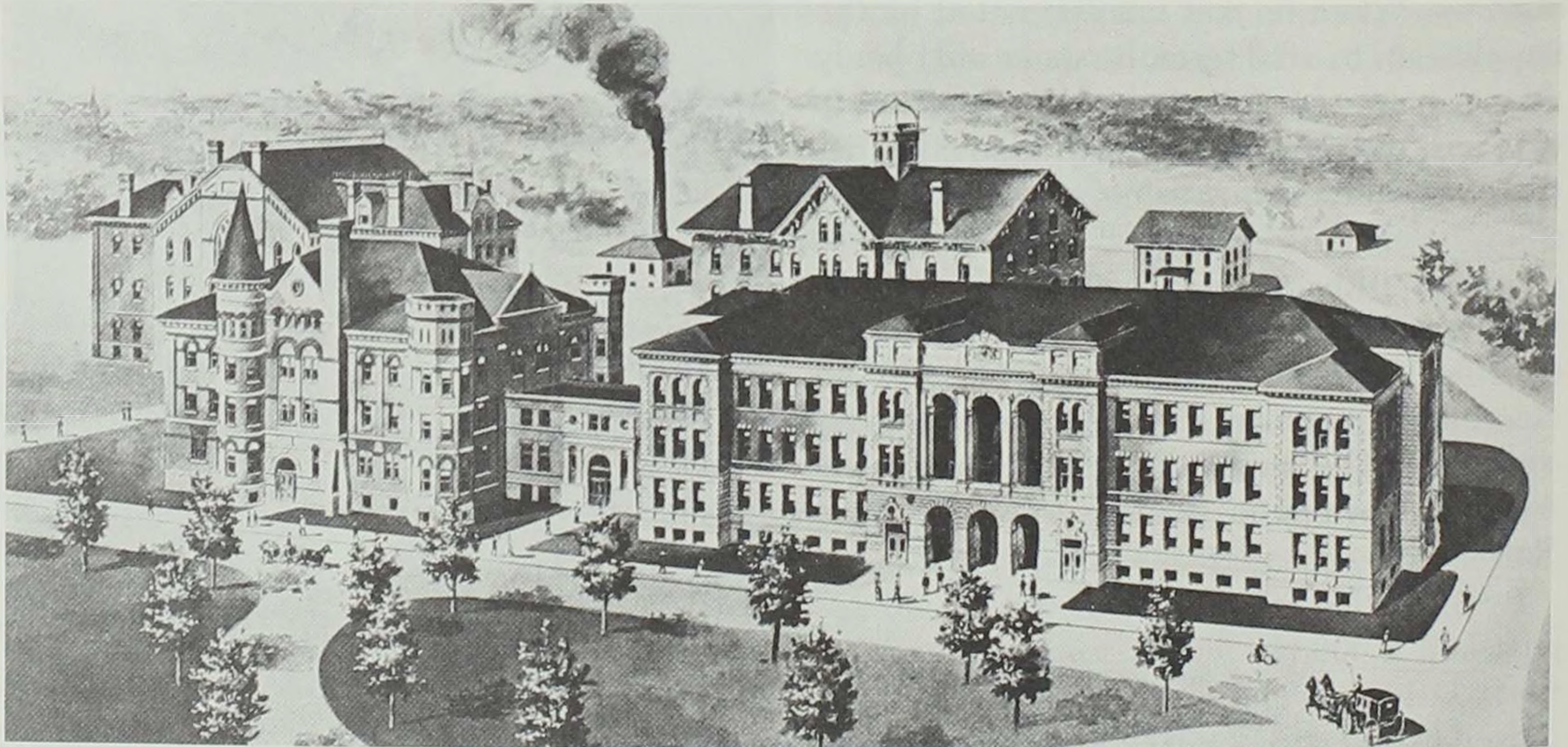
dedication of the new Auditorium Building January 30, 1902, as guests of the city of Cedar Falls and the State Normal School. The invitation was accepted.

What a stir of excitement for the town and the school as preparations for the event went forward. Over \$1,000 was raised to entertain the guests. Over 1,600 yards of bunting decorated the new building in which the governor and the other guests enjoyed a four-course dinner, heard speeches of dedication, and appeals for further support. Never before had town and gown been so united in their purposes.

The liberal appropriation for buildings in 1900 was followed in the next biennium with

buildings at the normal school. The actions of the General Assembly in 1902 provided the means by which President Seerley could begin to fulfill the promise he had made a few months before that with proper means "this school for teachers can be one of the leading schools of its class in the United States." Indeed, about this time, Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, declared that "Seerley's school," as he called it, was second only to Teachers College in his own institution.

Changes came rapidly in the first decade of the century. The growth of the school made it the largest of the three state-supported



*The hustle and bustle of the growing normal school at the turn of the century is well reflected in this 1900 depiction of the campus. (courtesy UNI Photo Archives)*

even more money for faculty than the increased numbers required. The result was that it was possible to increase the salaries of the faculty by as much as \$200. Those who had been teaching from the beginning of the school were to receive \$1,800, rather than the \$1,600 they had been paid since 1890. The president's salary was increased from \$3,500 to \$5,000. Equally important was the legislative decision to levy a statewide tax on all property of  $\frac{1}{10}$  mill for five years, such money to be set aside for

institutions of higher learning, and so it remained for a few years. The president of the Iowa State Normal School had declared on many occasions that it was a normal school and that it would remain a normal school. Soon, however, it was caught up in the Teachers College movement. By May 1904 it added to its other degrees and certificates a Bachelor of Arts in Education degree for those completing the four-year program for high school graduates. There were some people in the state



who wondered about developments at the school. A joint group of the General Assembly, the Whipple Committee, expressed concerns about course duplication and the general direction the normal school was taking.

The report of the Whipple Committee in January 1906 criticized all three state schools but was especially severe on the normal school. The committee declared that the normal had indeed gone beyond its legislative mandate. To them the "Common Schools" excluded high schools, and the law clearly stated training teachers for the "Common Schools" was the sole task of the normal. Indeed, "It seems plain," said the committee's report, "that we have in the State Normal School a miniature university, where a large part of the work is a duplication of that done in Iowa City." The committee suggested problems among the three institutions might be eased by the establishment of a single board of regents.

The Whipple report had a predictable impact upon all parties in Cedar Falls. Members of the board of directors of the normal school expressed surprise at "the ignorance, stupidity, and unfairness of the report." They were astounded by the charge that salaries of professors were too high. So were the professors. President Seerley wrote more dispassionately of the committee's report. He did not attack the idea of a unified board but he did defend the curricula and degree programs of the normal school. He pointed out that throughout its history the normal had interpreted "common school" as a school supported by taxation — a "public school." For thirty years the normal school had acted on this premise, and for thirty years it had received legislative and executive approval of its position. He concluded with the observation that in some areas the university was offering work which the normal school had initiated.

**B**y 1909 the General Assembly acted upon the recommendation of the Whipple

Committee and created a single board to govern the three schools. Although Cedar Falls agonized over the meaning of this action, both faculty and citizens could take comfort in a statute which made the normal school the Iowa State Teachers College. The General Assembly had thereby approved the four-year Bachelor of Arts in Education degree which had been so strongly criticized in the Whipple report.

For three years the new board of education worked on what seemed to be its legislative mandate: to examine the work of the three schools and coordinate their efforts to avoid duplication. In its first report the board of education acknowledged the role the teachers college had assumed in the educational system of the state. However, behind the scenes, the finance committee of the board believed that the time had come "to unify" the state educational system. President Seerley and a member of the board from Cedar Falls knew nothing of the proposed plan until it was made public but people in Cedar Falls agreed that President Seerley's report to the board in August 1912 expressed their view: "Today the Iowa State Teachers College ranks as the superior public institution of its kind and class in the United States. Its efficiency is unquestioned, its breadth of view is acknowledged and its capacity to accomplish is recognized."

Few individuals, however, were prepared for the recommendations which came from the board on October 9, 1912. Referring to its responsibility to coordinate the work of the three institutions, the board recommended "that all courses in professional education and in liberal arts now offered at the Iowa State Teachers College, which extend beyond the Sophomore year, be discontinued." A stunned community could not believe the proposal. The board of education, however, was adamant about its recommendation. It would not listen to President Seerley's request for a year's postponement.





*The normal school neighborhood, c. 1906, with the school buildings atop the hill in the background.*

The proposal to reduce the teachers college to a two-year school met with determined opposition from Roger Leavitt, the board member from Cedar Falls. Students, alumni, and local citizens also joined in a chorus of protest that rose to a mighty climax when the General Assembly met in 1913. As the session progressed, it became clear that the recommendations of the board of education would not have legislative support. Indeed, the Senate passed a bill 43 to 4 which provided that "duplication of courses be permitted by the Board only when so to do will promote the educational interest of the state." The bill also made it clear that the Senate expected the board to rescind its recommendations. A slightly amended version of the bill passed the House 85 to 7. The Assembly adjourned without taking final action on the amended bill, but the will of the legislators was clear. The board of education saw that it could not achieve any of its purposes with such overwhelming opposition and, on April 8, 1913, it rescinded its order concerning courses of study at the three institutions.

Roger Leavitt suggested that the rejection of the coordination plan had come about for two reasons: the united devotion of towns and faculties to secure the continuation of the three institutions in the form they had assumed; and because, to quote Leavitt directly, "it would

destroy the life work of Iowa's leading citizen — President Seerley. He easily stood at the head of teacher training in the United States and was so recognized and this school [the Teachers College] stood ahead of all such schools."

The euphoria which came with victory solidified the town and gown relationship in Cedar Falls. Such relationships do not run smoothly for any length of time, however, and within four years a dispute arose in Cedar Falls. In 1917 a group of citizens of the town objected to using student teachers from the teachers college in the elementary grades of the city school system. The question of the continued use of student teachers quickly became an issue in the election of school board members. When those who wished student teaching discontinued carried the school board elections in 1918 and 1919, the remaining members of the board resigned. They were replaced by individuals opposing the practice. The college then immediately withdrew its student teachers and supervisors. It did not again seek to place student teachers in the Cedar Falls schools until the late 1960s, even though the General Assembly had enacted a statute in 1919 which legalized agreements between local districts and the State Board of Education for student teaching purposes.



Two world wars and a great depression had some devastating effects on both town and gown but their basic feelings toward one another remained as they had been. During the First World War, strict economy kept faculty salaries almost stationary in a time of inflation. Total enrollment fell by almost one-third, men by over two-thirds. Over a score of the faculty were released or entered war service. All able-bodied men students who were not conscientious objectors became members of the Student Army Training Corps. For them the campus became a training camp. The gymnasium became their barracks and a small wooden structure became their mess hall. The whole community took this training very seriously and glowing reports of the patriotism and precision drilling of the Corps appeared in the local paper. The most serious impact of the war on academic pursuits came in modern foreign languages. Anti-German feeling, which had begun to surface with the beginning of the conflict, mushroomed after America's entry into it. President Seerley was "pleased" to report to the Iowa Council of Defense that with the declaration of war he had had "the library investigated and every book" on the council's list of "improper German works" had been "immediately removed from the shelves" with the librarian's "hearty cooperation." A year after America's entry into the conflict, the schools of Cedar Falls responded to the request of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction that all Iowa schools abolish the study of German by burning their German texts. The Training School pupils, with the consent of the president and school superintendent, had their own bonfire. With the obvious approval of the local press, the students "made merry while the flames danced." Instruction in the language continued in the city schools with translations of President Wilson's speeches into German. College enrollment in German courses, the most popular of the modern languages studied before the war, dropped to almost

nothing. What few courses the college offered carried an explanation well into the 1920s that nothing in them would "offend the feelings of a loyal American." Indeed, Governor W.L. Harding in May 1918 denounced the study and use of all foreign languages. He issued an edict, later declared unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court, which prohibited the use of anything but English as a medium of instruction in all schools and which also required that all individuals and groups, regardless of their native tongue use English in conversations in public or on the telephone, in public addresses or church services. This order left deep scars in Cedar Falls which had large numbers of Germans and Danes who traditionally had held church services in their native languages.

Wartime emotions finally subsided, but serious economic problems remained. While most of the nation's industries seemed to be enjoying prosperity in the twenties, this was not true of agriculture. Prices for farm commodities were too low to meet the cost of production. Consequently, the college experienced continued severe economic problems. During the whole of Seerley's final decade as president, faculty salaries held steady while inflation decreased purchasing power by about one-half. The community suffered along with the faculty in these times and it appeared to solidify the bonds between them. As the national economy moved from a depression in a few industries to one that embraced the economic life of the nation and, indeed, of the entire world, the college found itself in even more serious economic difficulties. Enrollment declined by nearly one-half in the five years from 1928 to 1933. Appropriations declined forty percent in the same period. In addition faculty salaries fell over twenty-five percent while instructional positions were reduced by twenty percent.

While economic conditions improved somewhat during the latter years of the decade,



there were still financial difficulties for faculty and staff alike. To compound the problem, President Latham faced the need of raising the academic level of the staff to meet accreditation requirements. At the same time the attorney general decided in 1930 that the board of education had no authority to make any state money available for retirement purposes. The hard decisions which had to be made engendered bitterness in both the community and the college. To handle the first problem, President Latham received board approval to reduce the number of those in the professorial rank from over 100 to 33. In the future all academic staff had to have baccalaureate or advanced degrees. Scores of faculty members requested leaves of absence (without pay) to continue their academic training. The trauma of this action could hardly be appreciated by those outside academic circles. However, the results of the courageous decision resulted in

the college becoming recognized as a fully accredited four-year collegiate institution by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. It was placed on the approved list of the most prestigious accrediting agency of that time, the Association of American Universities, and its female graduates were henceforth accepted without reservation into membership by the American Association of University Women.

\* \* \*

The need for some support for retiring faculty members was apparent. No retirement system existed. In the past superannuated staff members had continued in some cases to teach into their eighties. When such persons withdrew from active teaching, the college had sought to give them some "detached service" with nominal remuneration. The aforementioned decision by the attorney general made it impossible to continue granting any money to



*Military programs were established during World War II and the college served as a training center for WAVES and Army Air Corps cadets. The impact of the war on campus life was apparent with the posing of student Jane Shennahan, of Des Moines, Air Crewman Jack Gideon, of Council Bluffs, and Seaman Ruth Grimes, of St. Louis, in front of the campanile. (courtesy UNI Photo Archives)*



staff members when they retired. At least eight members of the faculty were affected by the decision. Much of the staff and many in the community were embittered by what they considered a breach of a commitment by the board of education. To those retirees who had no other income, the failure to receive continued support worked serious hardship. In the case of at least one such person, members of the college faculty made special efforts to support their poverty-stricken colleague. Letters to President Latham contained heartrending pleas for support from some individuals who had given many years to the state at low salaries to educate aspiring teachers. By the mid-1930s the board of education agreed to allow staff members who had reached a newly established retirement age of 70 to be continued as part-time teachers until they reached 80, but at a maximum of \$75 per month.

The coming of World War II changed the structure of both college and community. Within a year after the outbreak of hostilities, WAVES and Army Air Corps cadets flooded onto the campus. Enrollment of civilian male students dropped to 62. Faculty members were "retooled" to teach in unfamiliar areas. Musicians taught physics and mathematics, mathematics teachers taught navigation, and one industrial arts teacher taught aerodynamics. The establishment of military programs on the campus was a boon for the institution. By the end of the war over 20,000 WAVES had been stationed at the college and over 5,000 Army Air cadets had completed part of their training there. Although the college maintained its educational program for teachers, the military dominated the life of the institution. The community of Cedar Falls responded with alacrity to President Price's request that the citizens make the trainees as much a part of the community's life as possible. Many of those who spent but short terms of training in Cedar Falls wrote or spoke warmly of its hospitality

and friendliness.

The end of the war brought a new influx of "GIs." Beginning in 1945 when seventeen veterans (ten percent of the male student body) came to the campus, GI enrollment expanded until by 1948 there were 1,120 of them, making up three-quarters of the males enrolled. The number declined almost as rapidly as it had grown. By 1952 there were only 209, representing nineteen percent of the males. The number of GIs would undoubtedly have been higher had not the college decided to continue its exclusive role as a teacher education institution. It required all students to pursue the course leading to teacher certification.

The faculty found it a joy to have these returning veterans in their classes. Those who had been students before were much better students. They read more widely, studied more seriously, and entered more enthusiastically into student activities than most of their non-veteran peers. They challenged the teachers to do a better job of teaching. They sought out the courses that they wanted without concern for difficulty. Moreover, they scorned professors who had not kept up with recent findings to which GIs had sometimes been exposed in specialized military training. The advent of these veterans also brought the first significant number of married students to the campus and the community. Special efforts by citizens of Cedar Falls in 1945 provided 300 housing units for these students. Waterloo provided housing for fifty families in barracks moved in from Nebraska. With special effort, accommodations for an additional 340 veterans were found the next fall. Soon the erection of quonset huts and barracks on college property brought the students and their families virtually onto the campus.

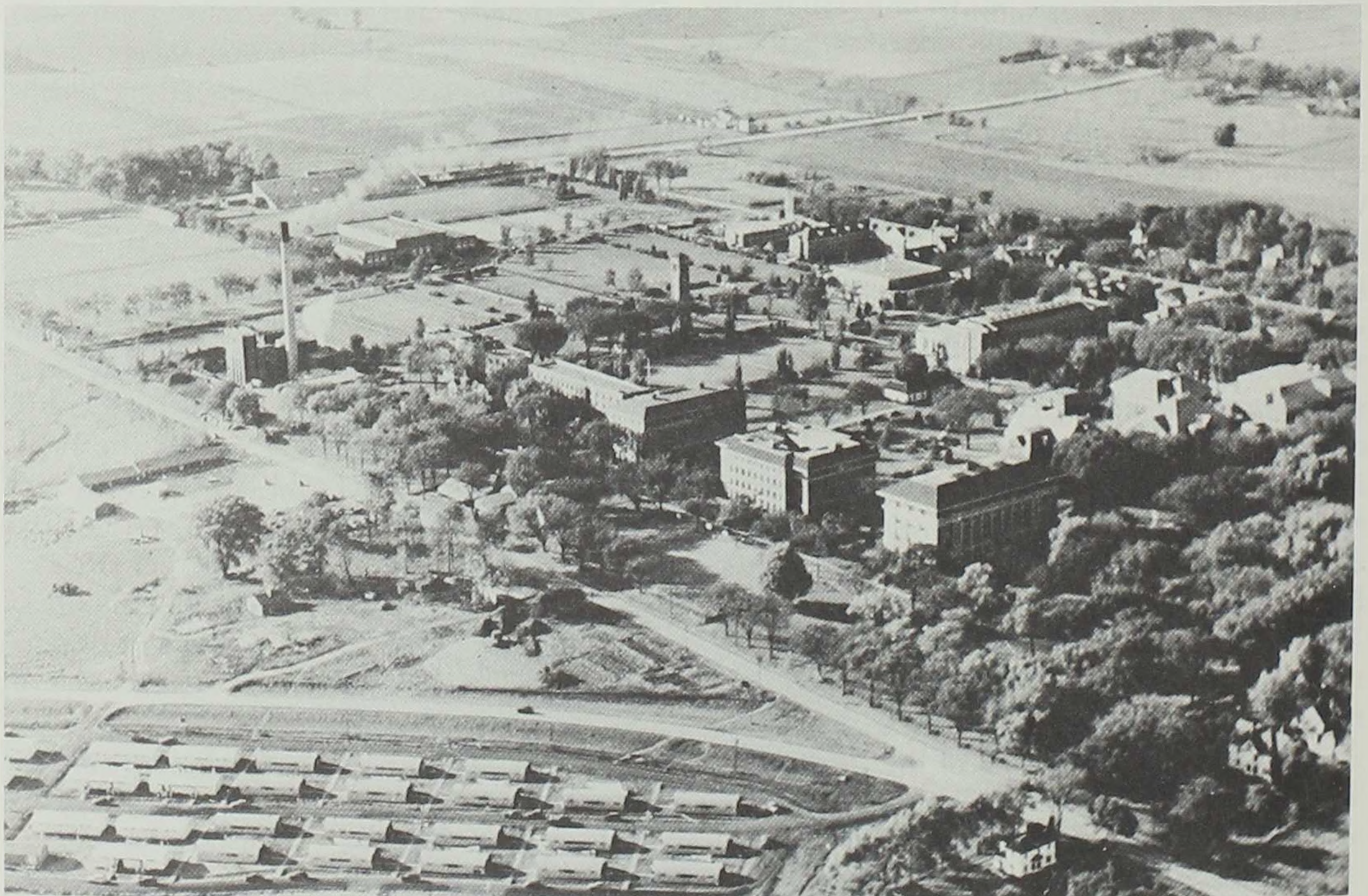
The 1950s saw the emergence of McCarthyism. The fear of subversion by communists or others plotting against the United States government was used by Senator



Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin as early as 1951 as a launching mechanism to spread accusations and innuendos that distressed many. Some feared he was right while others feared his reckless methods were undermining civil liberties. By 1953, McCarthy, to use *Time* magazine's term, "was riding still roughshod" on his steed of fear and panic.

The mood created in 1953 served to set some members of town and gown against one another. An anonymously written document, which was circulated not only in the college community but in the community at large, charged that some members of the college faculty were subversives who advocated communist doctrines and other ideas destructive of what has been called "the American way of life." The concern over the charges was so widespread that the State Board of Regents decided to investigate

the allegations. In April 1953 they not only talked with those accused in the document, but also invited any citizen who so desired to appear before the board on the matter. No one appeared. The board, having satisfied itself that the charges were unsubstantiated, brought the incident to a close. However, the broader issues of what might be properly taught, the distinction between the study and advocacy of a doctrine, and the basic problem of freedom in educational instruction had been dealt with only in passing. Suspicions lingered on. On the one hand some thought that dangers existed because of certain faculty members; on the other hand others thought the effort to associate staff members with a conspiracy posed a continuing threat to the basic purposes of education in a free society. President Maucker, who had taken office in 1950, and the



*A 1947 aerial view of the campus. Note the quonset huts and barracks that were moved in to accommodate the large influx of veterans and their families (lower left corner of the photograph). (courtesy UNI Photo Archives)*



board, made it clear that they would allow the largest area of freedom possible in instruction as long as it was consonant with law and the constitutional guarantees this nation provided.

In the late 1950s the teachers college continued to grow and received increased support. In the early 1960s, town and gown joined in a successful effort to enlarge the role of the institution by the creation of a state college not limited to teacher education. A few years later the fledgling State College of Iowa became the University of Northern Iowa — without, however, receiving any sufficient increase in financial support. The fifteen years from the early 1950s to the late 1960s were a time when the relationship between town and gown was as close as it had been in but few previous years. The institution under President Maucker's leadership implemented a general education program begun under President Price which became the paradigm of such educational efforts in institutions across the nation. Dr. Howard Bowen, then president of Grinnell College, when speaking on the Cedar Falls campus, said that the program was the finest in the state. Indeed the teacher education program continued to influence scores of schools. Under prodding from the president, the faculty and students attained extremely high levels of academic achievement. The visions of both town and gown expanded as special cooperative efforts brought an international dimension to campus life and learning. Graduate work began. Faculty participation in decision making increased while students played larger roles in their self-government.

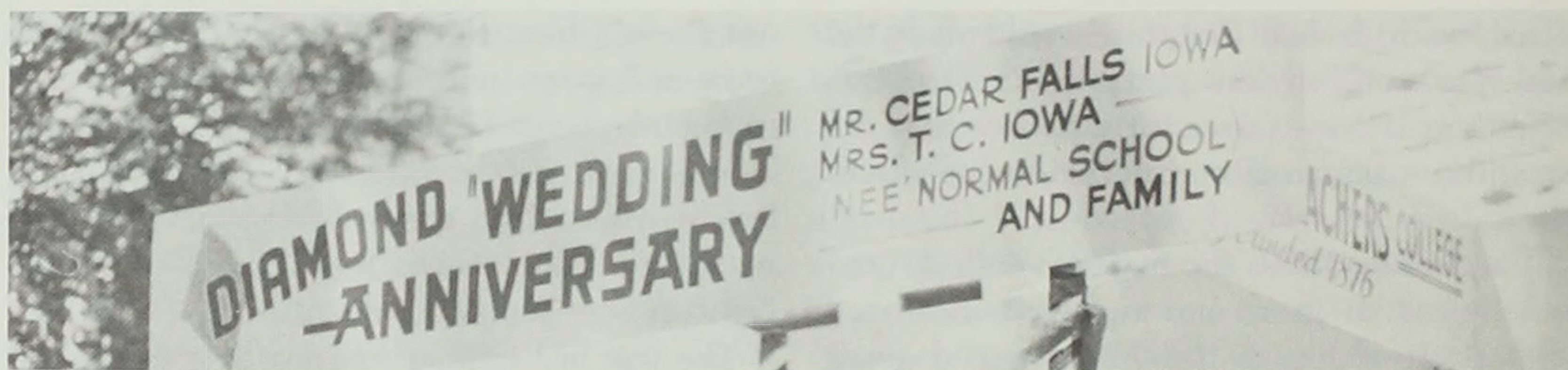
However, by the late 1960s these achievements were pushed into the background by problems which began with an increased national consciousness of the need to fulfill long postponed civil rights demands and afford greater opportunities for minorities. Then came the increased concern over the conflict in Southeast Asia. The State College of Iowa was

not exempt from the turmoil of the times and town and gown underwent new stresses and ultimately confrontations as newly emerging values disrupted the hitherto close relationship between town and gown. The years were not necessarily happy ones for Cedar Falls or its institution of higher learning.

The war in Vietnam was a widely discussed and very divisive topic. A controversy swirled up about Ed Hoffmans, who was an instructor in English, and a raging discussion concerning academic freedom accompanied that controversy. President Maucker took the position that, in an article published in the *Northern Iowan* in 1967 about avoiding and repudiating the draft, Mr. Hoffmans had not proposed action but had proposed an idea for discussion. Thus he should be allowed to continue to express his ideas and to continue as a faculty member. The president's position aroused the antagonism of a great many people who made their opinions known in the press and elsewhere. Indeed one of the leading citizens of the community denounced the president at a public meeting. Later in 1967 Mr. Hoffmans received notice that his contract would not be renewed at the end of the school year. Some of those who wanted him removed from the faculty for other reasons were convinced that the action was in response to earlier pressures and not for academic reasons. The decision, however, was based on his instructional record at the college. For his defense of academic freedom President Maucker was given the coveted Meiklejohn Award by the American Association of University Professors.

In addition, there were the problems in minority relations that led to sit-ins at the president's home and demands for added facilities. The tragedies at Kent State University and Jackson State College, along with local student unrest over the war policy of the national administration, particularly the invasion of Cambodia, led to civil disobedience, attempted arson on the campus, and an abrupt halt to the





*This descriptive sign atop a parade float during the 1951 Diamond Jubilee celebration of the school's founding underscored the strong supportive relationship that has existed, and continues to exist, between town and gown in Cedar Falls. (courtesy UNI Photo Archives)*

school year in 1970. As a result of these problems, the attitude of the town toward the university deteriorated and a further decline in the formerly close relationship between town and gown was noticeable.

In spite of disappointments, President Maucker did not lose faith in his ideals, in the students, in the need to implement justice, or in the ability of the university to survive and meet the needs of the students, the state, the nation, and the world.

A change in attitude has taken place in recent years, highlighted by relaxed tensions and generous support from both town and gown for the various projects put forth by President Kamerick's administration. It is well to remember, however, that creative tension between town and gown is as old as universities, and it will not cease. Towns have a tendency to be conservative and tend toward the old ways. The gown, on the other hand, has a tendency to be innovative, questioning, searching for truth and finding fault with the existing order. But towns can be innovative and gowns can be conservative and often are.

I believe that the idea of the university was caught very well by James Hearst in his centennial poem for the University of Northern Iowa which he entitled *Evergreen Transformations*. The section entitled *The University*, in its remarkable way, emphasized much of what is referred to when attention is called to the close

relationship between town and gown in Cedar Falls for over 100 years and the creative tensions that have been part of that relationship:

*The architecture of scholarship  
survives, times may break stained glass  
windows and tumble stones, but the  
edifice  
of faith and thought, poetry, art,  
harmony,  
the probing sciences, stands wherever  
men have cherished it.*

#### Note on Sources

The University of Northern Iowa archives are the main repository of the sources of the history of the institution. The collection includes the minutes and reports of boards, faculty, and committees; the correspondence and reports of presidents (except for Gilchrist's letters); the minutes of meetings and reports of literary societies and other student academic and social organizations; documentary material written by staff members, past and present; professional publications of staff members. The author interviewed past and present staff and students. *Iowa Documents* provided speeches and reports of governors, superintendents of public instruction, and committees of the General Assembly. The Iowa Historical Library and Museum provided material on legislative debates, copies of bills proposed but never enacted, and legislative proceedings recorded in the daily press. The diary of David Sands Wright, a staff member from 1876 to 1930, provided valuable information as did his "Fifty Years at the Teachers College," a volume of reminiscences and sketches published in 1926. Irving Hart's article, "The First Seventy-five Years," published in 1951 included original material since he was the first director of the extension services at the college, an active staff member, and finally, archivist at the institution. The *Journals* of the Senate and House of the General Assembly provided a history of legislation relating to the institution. Student publications, as well as the local and statewide press, provided pertinent materials. Not the least important was the information furnished by living presidents and officials.