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## Article Title: The Evolution of Arbor Lodge, 1855-1904

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Article Summary: Arbor Lodge, a Nebraska State Historical Park, began as a modest, frame dwelling in 1855. It was remodeled seven times until it became the present-day forty-two-room mansion. The author weaves the story of J Sterling Morton and his family into the development of the home.

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Photographs / Images: Arbor Lodge, 1864; Sketch of Arbor Lodge, March 1878 [*Nebraska Farmer*]; Arbor Lodge, 1880; Arbor Lodge, 1887; Arbor Lodge hall, 1887; Arbor Lodge Red Room, 1887; Arbor Lodge remodeling 1903; Arbor Lodge 1905; Caroline Joy French Morton; Four sons of J Sterling and Caroline Morton: Paul, Mark, Joy, and Carl; Arbor Lodge first floor plan, 1855-1905; Arbor Lodge, second floor plan, 1855-1905; Aerial view of Arbor Lodge, 1970

# THE EVOLUTION OF ARBOR LODGE, 1855-1904

By Gail DeBuse Potter

Arbor Lodge, a Nebraska State Historical Park administered by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, is located on the outskirts of Nebraska City. It began as a modest, frame dwelling constructed in 1855 as the home of J. Sterling Morton and his young bride Caroline. During Morton's lifetime the house was remodeled seven times. The final and most extensive remodeling (in 1903-04) was undertaken by Morton's son, Joy, to create a summer home for the Morton family. The resulting forty-two-room mansion bears little resemblance to the house that J. Sterling Morton occupied before his death in 1902.

In the years since the state of Nebraska acquired the house in 1923, some of its history has become confused. Interpretation of the evolution of Arbor Lodge has been based on the incorrect assumption that each addition to the house was made to the front of the existing structure, creating a series of houses. Essentially there are only two structures, the house J. Sterling Morton built in 1855 and subsequently remodeled, and the massive addition that Joy Morton constructed in 1903-04, which represented a significant departure from previous architectural styles incorporated in Arbor Lodge.

In an 1893 address before the Nebraska State Historical Society Morton stated, "Each family, every household, ought to have a record of its daily

events . . . the family and home are integral parts of the State, and the records of those parts would be the annalized history of the State which they compose." Morton "practiced what he preached," keeping daily diaries, ledgers, and journals, and preserving his correspondence throughout his life. Photographs of Morton and his family were made on a regular basis, and much of the Arbor Lodge remodeling was documented through the camera lens.

Twenty-two-year-old Julius Sterling Morton came to Nebraska Territory from Detroit, Michigan, in 1854. Before leaving for Nebraska, Morton married his childhood sweetheart, Caroline Joy French, on October 30, 1854. They began their journey at once, arriving in Bellevue on November 11, 1854.

Like many young men before him, Morton came west to seek fame and fortune. The political climate in the territory was perfect for a young man interested in politics and business. In April 1855 Morton accepted a job as editor of the *Nebraska City News* for \$1,000 a year.

His arrival in Nebraska also marked the beginning of Morton's lifelong interest in politics. He was appointed clerk of the territorial supreme court in February 1855, appointed secretary of the territory by President James Buchanan in 1858, elected to the second territorial legislature, and served as acting territorial governor from December 5, 1858, to May 2, 1859. He was the unsuccessful Democratic candidate for governor of Nebraska in 1866, 1882, 1884, and 1892; was elected delegate to the Democratic national

convention in 1880 and 1888; and served as secretary of agriculture in President Grover Cleveland's administration from 1893 to 1897.

Despite his deep involvement in national and state politics, it was in the business world that Morton enjoyed the most success. He frequently did legal and promotional work for railroads, including the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy. Investments in real estate and railroad stocks, along with income from his farm, provided the affluence to support his life as a gentleman farmer and the status to become a leader in numerous educational and civic organizations, particularly those seeking to improve agriculture. He served as president of the Nebraska State Board of Agriculture, the American Forestry Association, and the Nebraska State Historical Society. Morton considered himself an experimental farmer and horticulturist and is credited with founding Arbor Day.<sup>2</sup>

In the first letter to her family in Michigan, Caroline described their house at Bellevue:

[I am] expecting in a day or two to be snugly (what an expressive word) in a log cabin with two or three rooms in it. Kitchen, dining room, parlor and bedroom all on the same floor with *rooms to let* in the second story . . . it is built of logs instead of pine boards as they are very scarce here . . . I am very much pleased with this country.<sup>3</sup>

This cabin stood upon a bluff just above where the Missouri swept in a wide and easy curve around the southeastern edge of the village. On the river bank below the bluff the Omaha Indians encamped in buffalo-skin tepees. They were the Mortons' nearest neighbors.<sup>4</sup> The Mortons' first winter

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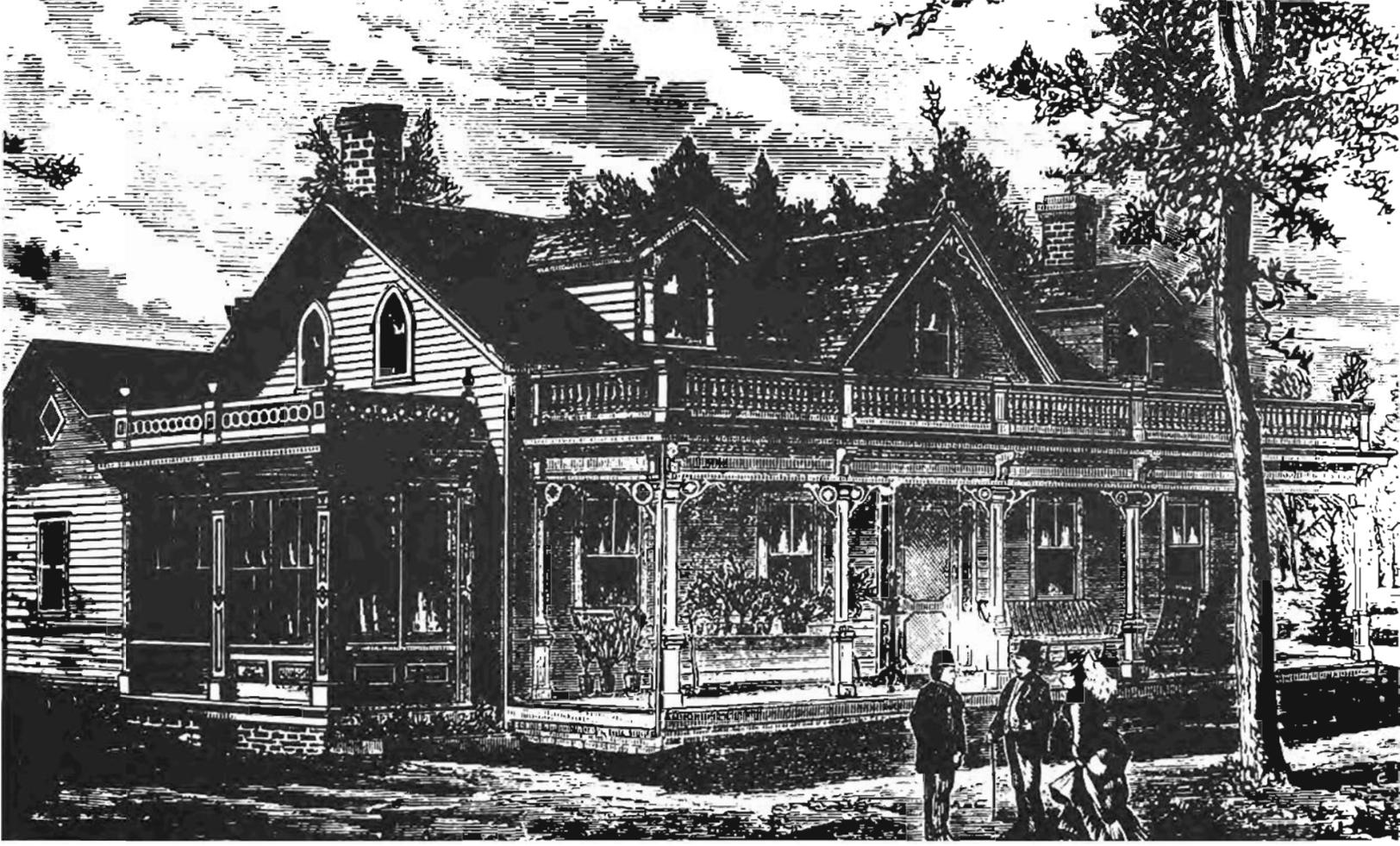
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Arbor Lodge

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*Arbor Lodge, 1864. Photo by Dr. A. M. Smith. (NSHS-A666-3).*



*Sketch of Arbor Lodge from the March 1878 Nebraska Farmer. (NSHS-A666-5)*



*Arbor Lodge, 1880. Photo by C. W. Phillips. (NSHS-A666-155)*

was spent in this log cabin in Bellevue.

After moving to Nebraska City in April 1855, the Mortons lived in temporary lodging. Caroline, excited over the prospect of having her own home, wrote, "There's a better time coming. . . . Next fall we are going to have a house of our own—the bargain is made, contract signed."<sup>5</sup>

Morton had purchased a claim from Richard Pell to a quarter section of land west of town, which was crossed by South Table Creek. The house, built by William W. Soper in 1855, is described in a reminiscence: "The house itself these two [the Mortons] had planned together. It was a one-story frame structure, ample and spacious for that day, and so arranged that if children should bless their union it could be readily extended."<sup>6</sup> The contemplated expansion would become necessary. The Mortons were to have four sons: Joy (1855), Paul (1857), Mark (1858), and Carl (1865).

The Table Creek Treaty, negotiated by U.S. Commissioner James W. Denver and the Pawnee Indians on September 24, 1857, was signed a few miles north of the Morton farm. By this treaty, the Pawnee ceded all their lands in eastern Nebraska.<sup>7</sup> The Mortons were present at the ceremony, and General Denver stayed with the young couple.

An 1864 photograph of the Morton house indicates that it had been standing for several years, and shows the 1855 house with an addition on the rear. It was a central-passage house with two rooms forming the main portion. These two rooms did not change in size during the next fifty years of remodeling, but their functions changed. Today these front rooms are the red parlor, originally the family room, and the library or billiard room, originally the parlor.

Throughout the next decade the Mortons lived in Nebraska City and occasionally in Omaha, when Morton had political duties. The family diaries and journals contain few references to

the house during the early 1860s. The first known floor plan was drawn by Morton in his 1864 diary. It shows an L-shaped cottage with eight rooms on the first floor and two rooms — probably bedrooms — upstairs, although Morton indicated in his diary on January 4, 1865, that seventy-three pounds of buffalo meat had been put upstairs to dry. The first floor included a parlor, a family room, a hall, a dining room, a kitchen, two pantries, a woodshed, a spare room, a boys' room, and a room marked "Winslow" on the floor plan. A covered porch, eight feet wide, extended the full width of the house.

"Winslow" referred to Charles Henry Winslow, who was hired by Morton in the fall of 1863 to look after the livestock. Winslow, his wife, and two daughters occupied the rear portion of the Morton home. Kate Winslow Davis, the eldest daughter, described these living quarters as "a good sized room with a closet and a room upstairs, separated from the Morton house by the woodshed."<sup>8</sup> Winslow worked eighteen months for the Mortons.

The house was sixty-six feet long without porches and forty-six feet wide across the front.<sup>9</sup> These exterior dimensions remained basically unchanged through 1893, with the interior rooms being enlarged, modified, or altered. Pine shingles, zinc gutters, and a marbleized iron mantel were added to the dining room in 1865.<sup>10</sup> A chimney and coal grate were added in 1869.

The new furnishings for the house included a sideboard for the dining room and 130 yards of carpeting purchased in Detroit. A new cook stove was purchased in 1865, and a zinc-lined sink for the kitchen in 1869. Mrs. Morton sold her piano for \$300 to a Mrs. Morrison in town.<sup>11</sup> A new piano was purchased; the 1871 diary noted, "Collins tunes piano," on April 4, 1871.

During the 1870s Morton recorded more and more information in his diaries and ledgers. He began the practice of assigning ledger "duties" during

his frequent absences. His wife, sister Emma, various assistants, and each son as he came of age, recorded the daily events. Corrections or additions were often made by Morton after his return from a trip.

Morton, his sons, and laborers were often busy planting trees and orchards on the farm. In 1860 the home farm with the house comprised 160 acres, and Morton owned over 1,000 additional acres with a total value of \$20,000. By April 1871 1,000 apple trees and 100 pear trees had been planted in a new orchard east of the original orchard. The diary for April 10, 1872, mentions the first Arbor Day, as Morton bemoaned the fact that 800 new trees had not arrived in time for planting. Beginning in 1874 Arbor Day would be observed annually in Nebraska and subsequently throughout the United States.

In addition to agricultural data, the diaries and ledgers recorded the social activities of the family, their friends, and events in Nebraska City. On January 1, 1866, a large surprise party was held at the Morton home with music and dancing until two o'clock in the morning. One notable family event was making cider for the first time on October 9, 1869, using a cider mill borrowed from a neighbor. "This evening we eat pears and drink cider of our own raising and enjoy a grate fire greatly."<sup>12</sup>

The second major remodeling of the house began in early 1874 when Morton hired Louis J. Meyer to lay a new floor in the woodshed, located in the rear portion of the house. The main remodeling started in April when a load of lumber arrived from Gardiner and Company in Chicago. Two photographs taken by Dr. A. M. Smith of Nebraska City about 1875 show that three Gothic-style dormers were added to the front of the house.<sup>13</sup> A more elaborate porch, with wooden balustrade, eave brackets, and gingerbread trim, also was added. A door on the second floor allowed access to the upper porch. One of the photographs

shows a dormer window in the rear of the house and further indicates that the back rooms occupied by the Winslow family were built as additions to the original house. After the 1874 remodeling the one-and-one-half-story house could best be described as a Gothic Revival, I-type cottage, which became popular in eastern states during the mid-nineteenth century among prosperous farmers. Gothic Revival houses were rare in Nebraska.

The diary for 1874 describes the interior furnishings of the dining room: wall paper, painted walls, an oiled floor, and wainscoting. Carpet was laid in Mrs. Morton's room, the boys' room, the spare room, and the hall and stairs. J. Henry Wischmeyer was hired by Morton for painting to be done at the house, including the south room upstairs, the hall, the dining room, and furniture in the boys' room. Exterior painting included the upper porch floor and hand graining the front door.<sup>14</sup> The carpet and china were purchased by Mrs. Morton in Chicago, and so began a relationship with Chicago furniture companies that continued until the house was furnished and completely remodeled by Joy Morton in 1903.<sup>15</sup>

The Mortons had lived in Nebraska for twenty years when they decided to name their home. The name "Arbor Lodge" first appears in the 1875 diary, when Morton referred to Arbor Lodge Farm. Morton began to use "Arbor Lodge near Nebraska City, Nebraska" as a letterhead on much of the family and business correspondence. Paul Morton gave his father stationery with an engraving made from a photograph of the house taken in the summer of 1876 by Dr. Smith. Morton commented, "Had the Dr. set his camera in the same place twenty-two years before it would have been a picture of barren prairie as far as the eye could see without a tree in sight."<sup>16</sup>

The year 1876 began with more remodeling. On January 15 Morton hired Meyer to build a bay window costing \$150 on the south side. This room became known as the conser-

vatory. During the construction of the conservatory, the sitting room, parlor, and kitchen were plastered, painted, and papered.

Just as the conservatory was finished, Morton decided that the family should have an indoor bathroom, and construction began on June 5. The bathroom addition occupied most of the summer because problems were encountered in making the plumbing operate correctly with the lodge's cistern-fed water supply. A bathtub, ordered by Morton from Chicago, arrived before the foundation was laid for the bathroom, or bathhouse as it was often called. Before the bathroom was completed, but as soon as the water tank was partially filled and the bathtub installed, Morton tested the new fixture on July 8, 1876, as noted by Joy in the farm journal.<sup>17</sup>

During the summer of 1876 Joy Morton was assigned to inventory the household goods for insurance purposes.<sup>18</sup> A new inventory was taken after every major remodeling of Arbor Lodge. The 1876 inventory listed the furnishings and contents of the following thirteen rooms in the house:<sup>19</sup>

parlor downstairs, southeast room  
southwest room downstairs (known as the "spare room")  
bathroom  
northwest room downstairs  
dining room  
room south of the dining room (bedroom)  
kitchen west of dining room  
south room upstairs (bedroom)  
north room upstairs (bedroom)  
hall upstairs  
conservatory, south of the parlor (plants)  
men's house (possibly quarters for hired help)  
cellar

The inventory indicated that the house, furnishings, barn, and corncrib were valued at \$10,000. The inventory listed not only the types of furniture, but sometimes the style, upholstery, and manufacturer. It listed the paintings, pictures, and photographs on the walls by title and medium. The inventory also included linens, floor coverings, decorative objects, and clothing. The descriptions are important because many of the furnishings

remain to the house today.

Although a great amount of remodeling had already occurred in 1876, Morton began another project in September. This one involved removing the dining room roof and replacing it, and perhaps adding a "bay window" to the room. Additional work on the house included installing two new coal stoves for the bath and dining rooms, tinting the rooms with vermilion and ocher, and adding additional windows to the conservatory.<sup>20</sup>

As 1877 began, Morton described the family situation:

The head of the family is in Washington, D.C. acting as attorney for the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad. Mrs. JSM at the lodge. Oldest son (Joy) on the farm. Paul occupies an important position in the general office of the CB & Q in Chicago. Mark in same office with Paul. Carl will be 12 . . . a student at Nebraska College in Nebraska City. Arbor Lodge is a farm of 180 acres about 60 of which is timber. [and] the balance is improved with trees of various varieties planted by the proprietor and is well fenced and well tilled. The place is generally conceded to be the best of its kind in the state.<sup>21</sup>

The Mortons began updating their furniture in 1877, decorating the library with Eastlake furniture from Tobey and Company of Chicago. By the end of 1878 the Mortons had added an extension table, a second secretary bookcase, a bedstead, a dressing case, a washstand, and a medicine closet all in the Eastlake style. Several of these pieces can be viewed at Arbor Lodge today. However, the family was not a slave to any single style of furniture, and had eclectic tastes. Queen Anne dining room chairs and a table, and a Turkish sofa and easy chair, were purchased in 1878 from Tobey and Company.<sup>22</sup>

*The Nebraska Farmer* included an engraving of the Morton house in the March 1878 issue. The engraving was captioned:

To make a home and keep it, has been Mr. Morton's ambition; and a glance at the illustration will satisfy any one that his ambition should be amply satisfied. "Arbor Lodge" is a hospitable lodge, from whence no one ever turned away hungry, but all are made happy with the heart-felt benediction "Come again."<sup>23</sup>

Throughout the late 1870s work on Arbor Lodge never seemed to cease.

## Arbor Lodge

*Arbor Lodge, 1887. (NSHS-A666-380)*



*Arbor Lodge hall, 1887. (NSHS-A666-11) . . . (right) Red Room, 1887. (NSHS-A666-12)*



Porches, chimneys, and interior modifications were done during 1879. In a letter to Joy on May 8, 1879, Morton stated,

Work progresses very well. It will be a good job. This is the best and most convenient farm house in the state 62 x 42 without the porches. The west porch is 10 feet wide added to east porch makes 18 feet of porch added to length of house 62 feet makes just 80 feet by 42 on the ground.<sup>24</sup>

In the summer of 1879 another complete remodeling of the house began in preparation for the Mortons' twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in October. The dimensions of the first floor rooms began to change. Cherry and maple flooring for the dining room was ordered from Chicago. This flooring was laid in alternate light and dark strips and remains today. The dining room is about one-and-one-half times larger than it was in 1874. The strip flooring was also laid in the northeast room or parlor.<sup>25</sup>

During 1880 Arbor Lodge took on a completely new appearance. The small cottage became a two-story, central-passage I-house with an Italianate facade and a two-level veranda or gallery. The front portion was enlarged to two stories, including the parlor, the library, the hall on first floor, and two bedrooms on the second floor. The middle section of the house remained one-and-one-half stories containing the dining room, bath, and spare room. The rear portion of the house was also one-and-one-half stories, but with a higher roof pitch than the middle section. This area included the kitchen and servants' room. The veranda was added and the conservatory moved to the rear of the house. A photograph of the house taken by C. W. Phillips on June 21, 1880, shows the house from the north side and illustrates the changes that had occurred during the 1870s. It also shows that when the house was approached from the east (the front), it appeared as a very impressive two-story mansion.<sup>26</sup>

Caroline Morton injured her knee in July 1880 but paid little attention to it as she prepared for the weddings of her two oldest sons. She suffered a

"rheumatic attack" in December from which she never seemed to recover, and it was finally determined that her illness was related to the knee injury. Her health continued to fail.<sup>27</sup> Caroline's last journal entry in her own handwriting on February 2, 1881, noted, "Leg very painful still, guess it will be better when the fruit trees blossom and birds begin to sing. Glad I have got a comfortable house and everything so pleasant around me."<sup>28</sup> During the next six weeks Morton tried everything to cure "Carrie," including bringing a surgeon, Dr. Moses Gunn, from Chicago. His efforts were to no avail. Caroline Joy French Morton died in her room at Arbor Lodge on June 29, 1881, at 8:30 A.M. Morton was consumed with grief. Throughout the remainder of his life he faithfully recorded in his diary the anniversary of her death. The balance of 1881 was spent creating a monument to his beloved wife. Morton hired the Chicago firm of F. O. Cross to build an impressive monument in Wyuka Cemetery, Nebraska City, which remains today.<sup>29</sup>

During 1881 Morton became concerned with his own affairs, and felt that he needed to "put things in order." On July 26, 1881, he filed an entail deed and last will and testament in the Otoe County clerk's office; its intent was to "entail the northeast quarter of S7 T8 R614 E of the sixth meridian in Nebraska to my male heirs forever."<sup>30</sup> Morton also ordered his own casket "to be made of willows . . . I desire to be buried in Wyuka Cemetery close by the side of my noble wife . . . The law of decay after death should not be impeded. And an example of economy in burial cases is needed. I will make such an example."<sup>31</sup>

Most of the work at the house during 1882 related to memorials to Caroline. Large vases were placed on the lawn in front of Arbor Lodge, inscribed with the birth date of each son and the death date of their mother.<sup>32</sup> The south door of the library was replaced by a window on May 10, 1882, "just as Carrie said it ought to be."<sup>33</sup>

Morton asked his unmarried sister, Emma, and his mother, Emeline, to come and live at Arbor Lodge.<sup>34</sup> This marked a new beginning for the house. Emma became the "lady of the house" and assisted Morton in the last major remodeling of the house during his lifetime, "completing it as Caroline desired it in her lifetime and as she planned it finally should be."<sup>35</sup> The project began in September 1884 and continued through early 1885. The roofs of the half stories were taken off (the middle and rear portion of the house) and the entire house converted to a two-story structure. Exterior decorative features included the addition of wrought iron railings on the roof and second-story bay windows. A telephone was also installed at Arbor Lodge during this project. The rebuilding cost more than \$6,000.<sup>36</sup>

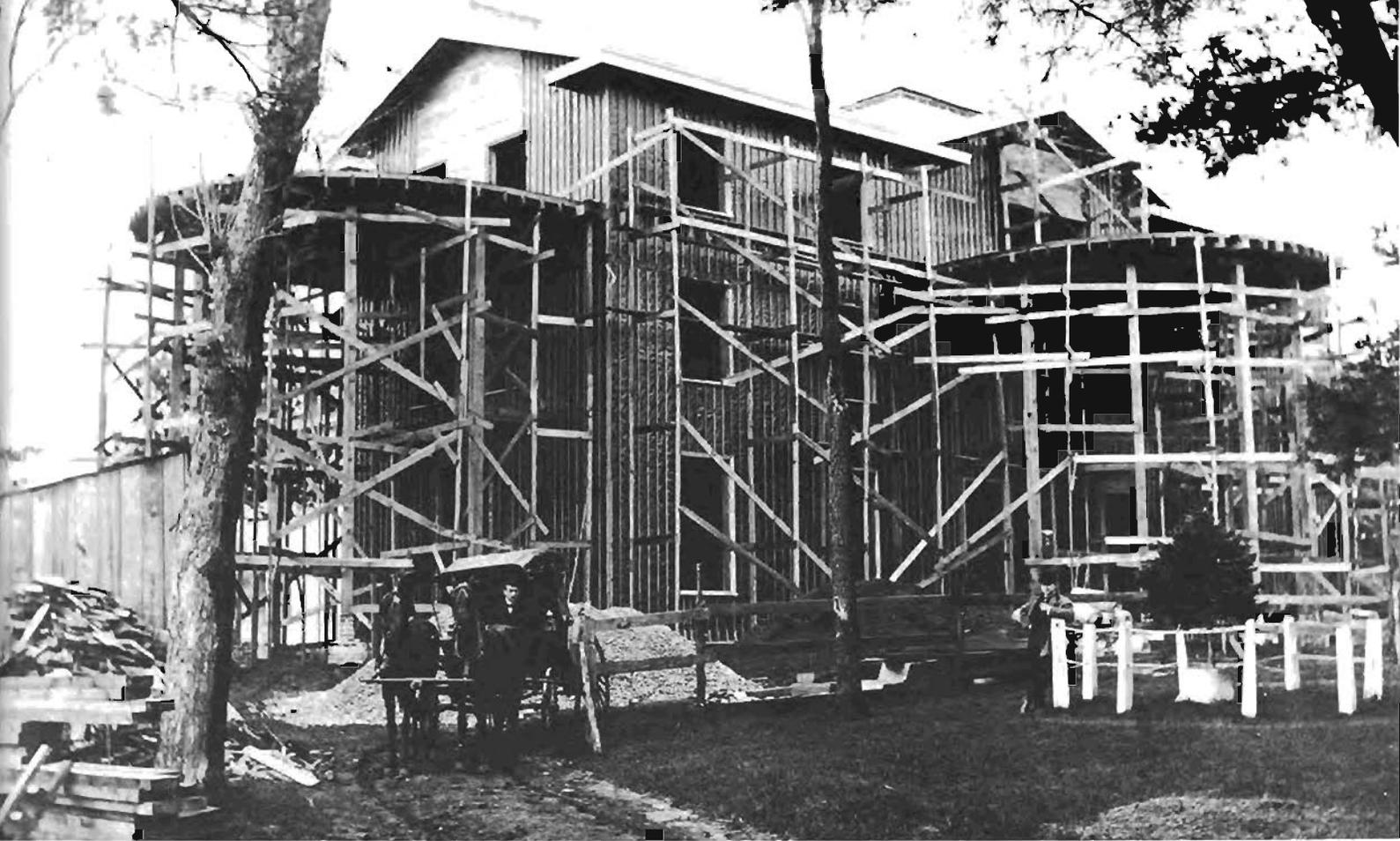
The second inventory of the furnishings was taken on April 22, 1885, and again included the names of all the rooms in Arbor Lodge:<sup>37</sup>

library  
parlor  
dining room [with Brussels rug 18 x 18]  
father's bed and bath [J. Sterling Morton's room]  
lower hall  
kitchen  
china closet  
terra cotta room [bedroom]  
brown room [bed only]  
clothes press [a room]  
back hall second floor  
olive room [bedroom]  
blue room [Emma's room]  
bedroom room off blue room  
center hall second floor  
red room [bird's-eye maple bedroom furniture]  
black room [bedroom]  
green room [bedroom]

The entire remodeling was documented not only by an inventory of furnishings, but with exterior and interior photographs made by H. McElhinney of Nebraska City.

The Morton family shared a second period of grief with the death of Paul and Charlotte Morton's infant son, Donald, in 1885. Morton was upset that Paul buried his son in Chicago and wrote Joy:

Perhaps he [Paul] will reconsider and remove the child to be buried with his ancestors, on the paternal side. The Wyuka lots were secured in the



*Arbor Lodge remodeling, 1903. (NSHS-A666-366)*



*Arbor Lodge, 1905. (NSHS-A666-35)*

names of each of my sons for this purpose, solely. And if now Paul finally determines to entomb those of our own name (who are taken away by death) among strangers rather than with our name, he should relinquish by deed his interests at Wyuka. But I trust you can persuade him to see the propriety and beauty of a common burial place for the descendants of his mother and father who bear the name of Morton.<sup>42</sup>

Morton wanted his family to live and die in Nebraska and until his death encouraged his sons to build homes near Arbor Lodge.

A small remodeling project was undertaken during May 1887. Morton ordered two stained glass windows to be installed on either side of the bay window in the dining room. The windows contain the Morton crest and motto from Scotland and "some Shakespearian quotations appropriate to Arbor Lodge."<sup>39</sup>

The remainder of 1887 was spent constructing a lake, a fish preserve, and a bathhouse. It was called Lake Jopamaca, named for the four Morton sons, using the first two letters of each name. The lake was located southeast of Arbor Lodge and west of a bridge that crossed South Table Creek near the Belmont schoolhouse.<sup>40</sup> A boat-house was built. Morton was convinced that there was no fish preserve equal to his in Nebraska. It was stocked with black bass and German carp. The dam which formed Lake Jopamaca broke in 1889 and again in 1891. It was rebuilt both times.

There was no exterior remodeling of Arbor Lodge from 1889 to 1892. A few new pieces of furniture were purchased, including a "Home Comfort" wrought-iron range, two side tables, an extension table, and two Smyrna rugs. Oak bookcases were built into the north and east walls of the library in 1890.<sup>41</sup>

In February 1893 Morton accepted an appointment to serve as secretary of agriculture under President Cleveland. He and his sister, Emma, moved to Washington, D.C. Carl and his family moved into Arbor Lodge on April 27, 1893, "to take charge . . . until Father has finished his four year term . . . Aunt Emma departed for the east after a ten

year reign of the farm."<sup>42</sup> Shortly afterwards the third inventory was made of the contents of the house which contained the following rooms:<sup>43</sup>

red room [a bedroom]  
front hall, second floor [sitting room or area]  
black room [a bedroom]  
green room [ash bedstead]  
mother's room [mahogany bedstead]  
middle hall, second floor [chiffonnier]  
middle hall, first floor [hall chair, chiffonnier]  
parlor  
front hall, first floor [hall rack]  
dining room  
library  
J. S. M.'s room [black walnut bedstead]  
brown room [mahogany bedstead]  
bathroom  
Sarah's room [house maid, black walnut bedstead]  
attic  
Emma's room [single bedstead]  
Annie's room [cook, black walnut bedstead]  
silver, china and glassware [butler's pantry]

In the summer of 1893 the roof was painted a moss green and the rest of the house was painted white.<sup>44</sup>

Morton began urging his sons to build homes in Nebraska City. In a letter to Joy on March 18, 1894, he stated:

I hope that you can arrange with a landscape gardener to lay out the building sites and grounds as you wish them laid out for yourself and brothers, so that the new homes for Mortons may be constructed on the original quarter section, which your dear and competent mother and myself took from the aboriginal in 1855.<sup>45</sup>

Morton wrote again four days later:

I am gratified . . . to know that you and your brothers have agreed as to the best way of establishing buildings at Arbor Lodge . . . The plans are hereby thoroughly, fully and irrevocably approved and I hereby relinquish all right to revise or change them in the slightest degree, provided you proceed with the work . . . at the earliest possible moment, and that you shall have, by the close of this summer, finished the brick roads and other approaches about the house . . . nothing could gratify me more than to have all four families regard Arbor Lodge as their home.<sup>46</sup>

Improvements continued on the grounds at Arbor Lodge during 1894. H.W.S. Cleveland, a landscape architect from Chicago, was hired by Morton to take charge of the work. Morton discussed with Carl "the understanding . . . to reduce the grade in front of the house as much as Mr. Cleveland thinks necessary . . . then pave out as far as the hitching posts, also pave south of the house and whatever is necessary in the yard back

of the house, and the driveway [and] . . . the road on the north side."<sup>47</sup> Cleveland arrived at Arbor Lodge on April 9, 1894, and began work. The next day Carl decided that Cleveland was a failure and on April 14, he discharged "the celebrated landscape gardener Mr. Cleveland and he left for Chicago."<sup>48</sup> In April 1894 poles for electric lines were set, and electric fixtures selected by Joy in Chicago were installed in Arbor Lodge. Although Morton was still in Washington, D.C., his heart was in Nebraska when he wrote:

There is nothing so potent in good influence upon the family and its reputation, as a permanent, substantial, and embellished home. The longer it remains in the family, the more its power for good, the greater its inspiration to a renewal of efforts, intellectual, and physical, which may demonstrate the capability and courage of a race.<sup>49</sup>

In 1895 Joy Morton began plans to build a public library for Nebraska City. His father felt that the building should be constructed of brick and preferably located on the Arbor Lodge grounds between the east gate and the front of the house. Joy followed part of his father's advice, and the building was built of brick, but situated in downtown Nebraska City. Morton wrote a letter of introduction for two young artists, sculptor Rudolph Evans and painter W. Hascall Coffin, to meet with Joy to discuss employing their skills in the proposed library building. Joy followed his father's advice and sent the two artists to Arbor Lodge to get ideas. Carl was not impressed:

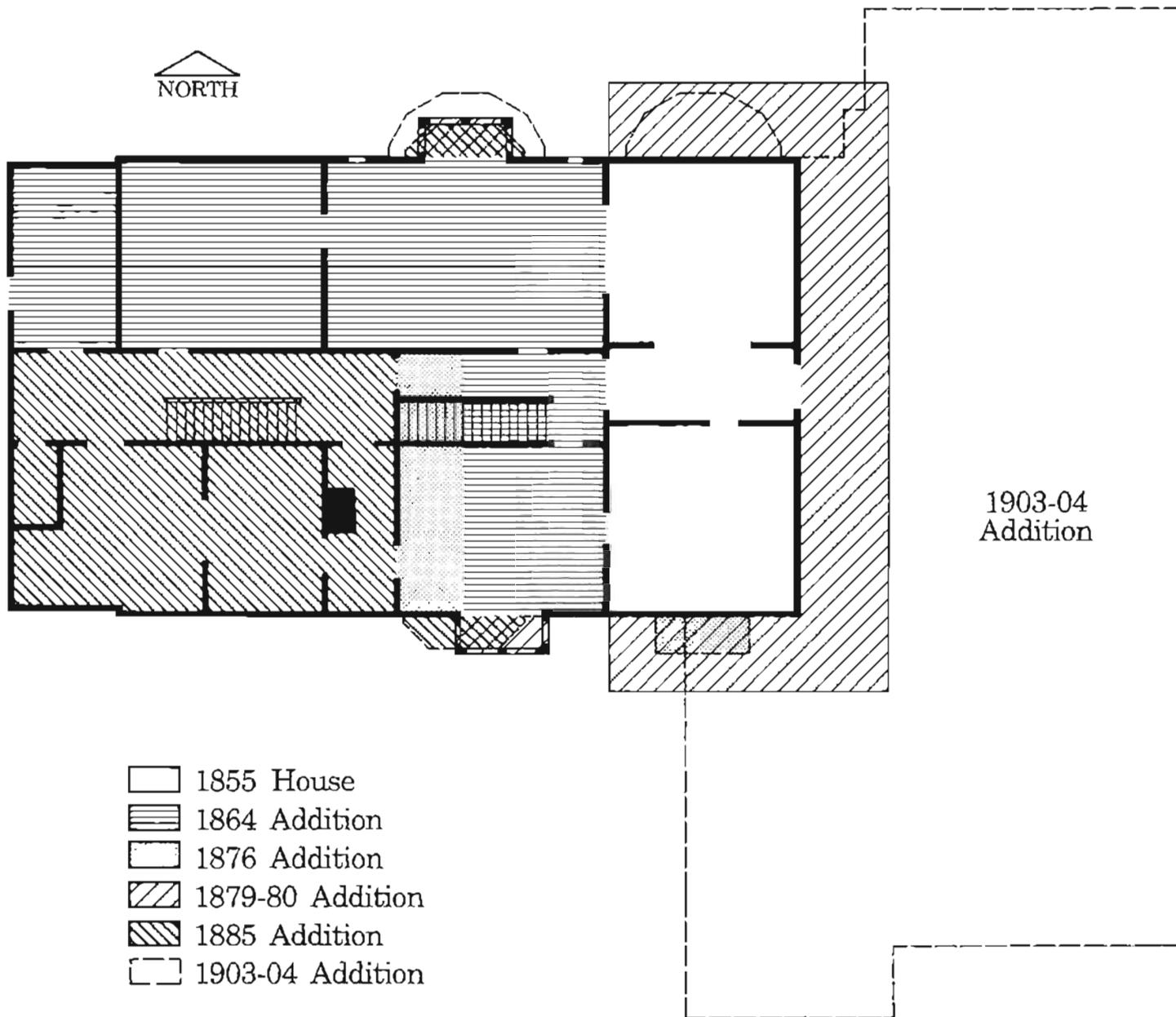
This morning I finally got the young artists down 'on the earth' once more long enough to have them do some real business in regard to taking the photograph of the grounds about where the treaty took place in 1857 . . . I hope you will entertain them in Chicago a couple of weeks or so, and if there are any more artists or musicians in Washington that you want entertained I wish you would send them out as it is an easy matter for me to devote about two-thirds of my time to them, as I have nothing else to do.<sup>50</sup>

The importance of the first visit of Coffin and Evans was not evident for several years. About 1897 Morton commissioned Coffin to paint the *Table Creek Treaty*, and the painting was hung in the Nebraska City library building until it was moved to Arbor



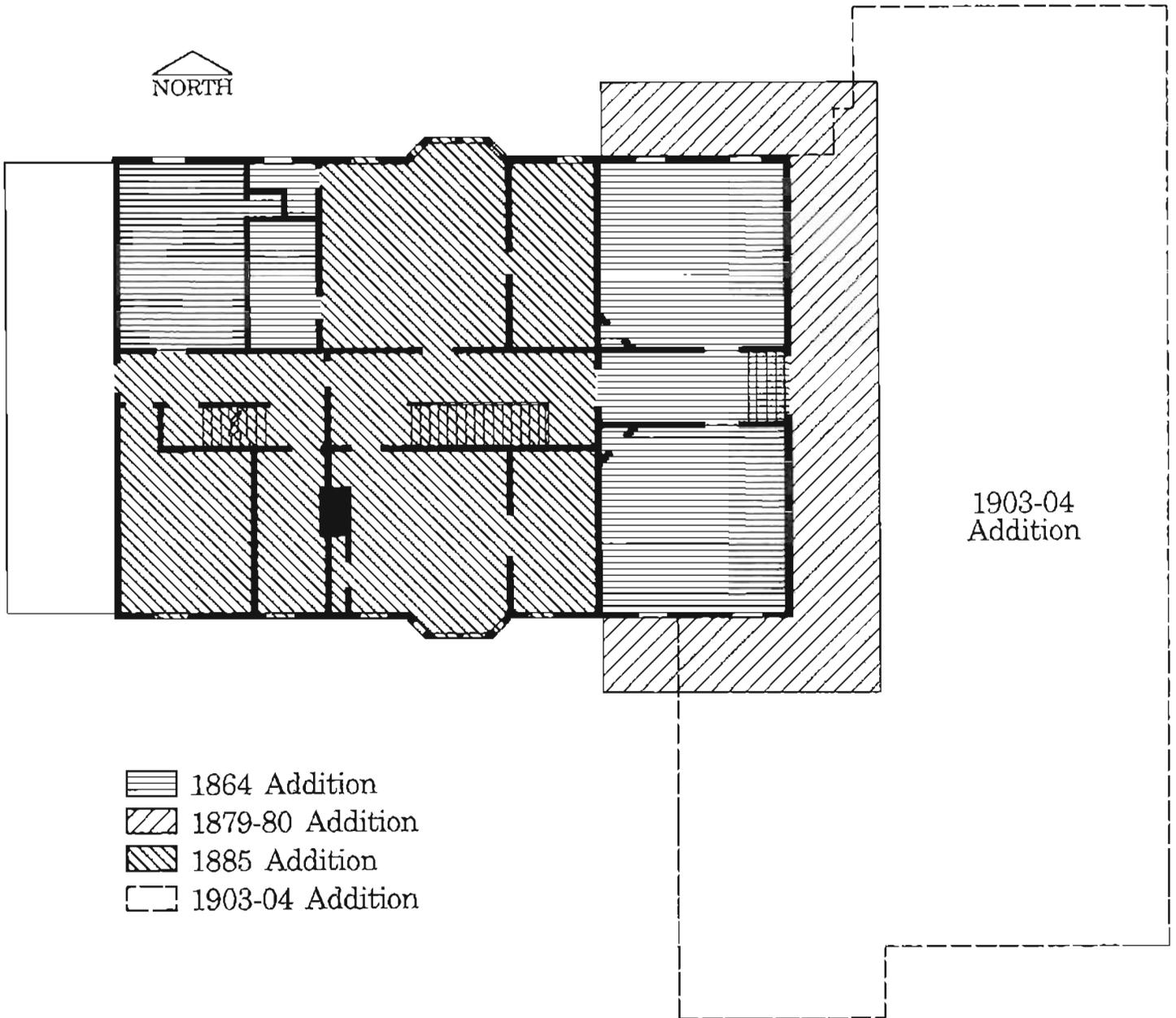
*Caroline Joy French Morton . . . .  
(right) Four sons of J. Sterling and  
Caroline Morton: Paul (top left), Mark,  
Joy (seated at left), and Carl. (NSHS-  
M889-61)*





*Arbor Lodge, first floor plan, 1855-1905. (NSHS-MS7) Drawing by Dell Darling.*

Arbor Lodge



Arbor Lodge, second floor plan, 1855-1905 (NSHS-MS7) Attic spaces and third floor plan of 1903-04 addition not illustrated. Drawing by Dell Darling.

Lodge in 1904. It can be seen there today.

Morton returned to Arbor Lodge in March 1897 after the McKinley administration took office. He spent several days getting settled in the house, arranging books in the library, unpacking furniture, and putting down rugs purchased in Washington. For months the wells and windmills had been unable to supply enough water and in the fall of 1897, Morton had water pipes laid to Arbor Lodge and connected with the city water system. City water was turned on November 12, 1897. Morton felt that no other improvement at Arbor Lodge had added so much to the comfort and safety of the family.<sup>51</sup>

Morton hired Carlie Barr to paint Arbor Lodge a canary yellow with white trim during the spring and summer of 1898. Only minor improvements were undertaken in 1898 with \$250 paid for the exterior paint and \$75 for fixing and polishing the floors.

Thomas R. Kimball, a prominent Omaha architect, was invited to Arbor Lodge by Morton in 1900 to discuss a plan for stables and other improvements. Kimball and his partner, George Prinz, began working for Joy Morton on February 20, 1901. The Arbor Lodge journal indicated that the plan was to build a stable and consider an eastward expansion of Arbor Lodge. The stable designed by Kimball was begun on June 18, 1901. As the work progressed on the stable, the old barn had to be moved. The north part had been built by Morton in 1856. The barn, shed, and corncrib were then located west of the stables.<sup>52</sup>

On January 7, 1901, Carl Morton died suddenly of double pneumonia at his home in Waukegan, Illinois. This was the second great tragedy of Morton's life, from which he never seemed to recover. Throughout 1901 correspondence continued among Joy, Paul, and their father regarding the construction of additional Morton homes near Arbor Lodge. Morton hoped that his sons would at least "summer" in Ne-

braska City. The plan for Joy's home included 5,000 fruit trees and 170 rose bushes planted at the old "Vincent place," near Arbor Lodge, which had been purchased by Joy. Morton offered to buy Jack Armstrong's residence on the north side of Nebraska City for Paul's summer home. Morton continued to stress to his sons the importance of land to future generations, although the boys had chosen to seek their fortunes in business. These "summer homes" were never built or acquired, but Morton's desire that each of his sons have a "home" at Arbor Lodge may have been the basis for the final remodeling of Arbor Lodge.

Morton became ill in December 1901 and his doctor felt a change of climate would help him. Morton traveled with Paul and his family to Mexico and still ill, returned to Arbor Lodge in March 1902. He then went to Chicago to consult several specialists. There J. Sterling Morton died at the home of his son, Mark, in Lake Forest, Illinois, at 4:30 P.M. on April 27, 1902. His body was brought back to Nebraska on a special train and he was buried next to his beloved Caroline.<sup>53</sup>

In late 1902 or early 1903, Joy Morton hired Jarvis Hunt, a Chicago architect, to design the eastward expansion of Arbor Lodge. The plans were finalized on June 22, 1903. The "new house" was a three-story addition to the front of the existing house. It included on the first floor a reception room, the red library, a sun room, and a main hall. The second floor had three bedroom suites, and the third floor had two bedroom suites and three bedrooms. A bowling alley was added to the basement. The "old house" underwent considerable remodeling to enlarge the kitchen, construct a new pantry, and add three bedrooms for servants in the attic under the eaves. The entire house was stuccoed, creating a very different appearance.

The construction of the "new house" and remodeling of the "old house" cost over \$66,000 including furnishings, and more than doubled the size of

the house. Robert Seth Lindstrom was the superintendent of construction, and Warren H. Manning of Cambridge, Massachusetts, was the landscape architect.<sup>54</sup>

In its final configuration, Arbor Lodge assumed the appearance of a Neo-Classical Revival mansion with three large porticos utilizing Corinthian columns on the north, south, and east sides. The mansion has nearly 17,000 square feet with forty-two rooms, not including the hallway sitting areas or the attic storage rooms in the "old house." Joy ordered enough furniture to permit entertaining twenty or more. The housekeeper's account book indicates that an average of thirty-three people a day were served meals from 1904 to 1906, with the largest event, a party for 130 on July 16, 1904, celebrating Paul Morton's appointment as secretary of the navy. Other large events at Arbor Lodge, such as Jean Morton's wedding to Joseph Cudahy on October 1, 1904, and the unveiling of the Morton statue on October 28, 1905, required outside caterers.<sup>55</sup>

The furnishings of the "new house" included a set of Tobey and Company mission furniture for the red parlor. This "library set" was from the "Quaint" line of Tobey's Arts and Crafts furnishings designed by Joseph Twyman. Twyman was known as "the foremost [designer] in this country in interpreting the art of William Morris."<sup>56</sup> Today, this set of furniture is one of only two such sets known to remain in its original setting. The bowling alley was supplied by Brunswick. Tiffany and Company created the skylight in the sun room, and Zuber and Company of Paris supplied the wallpaper and matching chamber sets for the second floor bedroom suites.

Emma Morton was living at Arbor Lodge during the last remodeling and construction phase. It was Emma's idea to name the rooms and Joy's suggestion to use the names of trees.<sup>57</sup> However, the rooms were never renamed, but continued to be known by



*Aerial view of Arbor Lodge, 1970. (NSHS-A666-150)*

the old names with one or two exceptions. The first floor southeast room in the "old house" was originally called the parlor, then the library, then the billiard room, and finally the Denver room. This may have been the room or space where J. W. Denver stayed while working on the Table Creek Treaty with the Pawnee in 1857.<sup>58</sup>

A sunken garden and formal arboretum were added to the grounds during this period. Warren H. Manning of Cambridge, Massachusetts, purportedly designed the area. C. E. Dwyer, a forester, was hired by Joy in 1904 to care for the arboretum under the general supervision of E. Burnett of New York City.<sup>59</sup> In 1905 a memorial

area was added to the grounds. The memorial, designed and executed by Rudolph Evans, included statues of J. Sterling Morton and a wood nymph holding a sapling in her left hand. It was dedicated by former President Grover Cleveland, who stayed at Arbor Lodge.

Arbor Lodge today is furnished as it would have appeared in 1905, when the memorial was dedicated. The house is one of the best examples in Nebraska of a historic house containing many of its original furnishings. The furnishings span the several decades during which the house served as the Morton residence. Many of them were specially ordered from firms in Chicago or New

York, and represent contemporary styles. As the house is approached today from the front, one sees the structure created by Joy Morton in 1903. Because Joy, Paul, and Mark Morton's business interests drew them elsewhere, J. Sterling Morton's dream that his sons would one day live at or near Arbor Lodge was never realized.<sup>60</sup> The mansion was occupied only irregularly between 1906 and 1923, when it was donated to the state. The Arbor Lodge that Morton knew is barely recognizable today; in its place stands his sons' creation, a nationally known memorial to the founder of Arbor Day.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>J. Sterling Morton, "Records and their Conservation," *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society* V (1893):11.
- <sup>2</sup>For a complete biography of Morton see James C. Olson, *J. Sterling Morton* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1942. Reprint, Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation, 1972).
- <sup>3</sup>Caroline Morton to Emma Morton, Nov. 11, 1854, J. Sterling Morton Papers, Chicago Historical Society.
- <sup>4</sup>Robert W. Furnas, ed., "Mrs. Caroline Joy Morton," *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society* I (1885):119-20.
- <sup>5</sup>Caroline Morton to Emma Morton, May 27, 1855, J. Sterling Morton Papers, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln (hereafter Morton Papers, NSHS).
- <sup>6</sup>Arbor Lodge Farm Journal, July 4, 1871, Morton Papers, NSHS; J. Sterling Morton and Albert Watkins, eds., *Illustrated History of Nebraska* I (Lincoln: Jacob North & Company, 1905):715.
- <sup>7</sup>Olson, *J. Sterling Morton*, 89.
- <sup>8</sup>Kate Winslow Davis, "Neighbor to the Mortons," *Nebraska History*, 53(Spring 1972):19.
- <sup>9</sup>J. Sterling Morton Diary, Aug. 23, 1864, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, July 7, 14, Aug. 3, 1865.
- <sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, May 27, June 30, and July 17, 1865.
- <sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, Oct. 9, 1869.
- <sup>13</sup>Arbor Lodge Farm Journal, Jan. 4, 1876, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, June 25, July 25, 28, Aug. 3-5, 13, 20, Sept. 1, Nov. 13, Dec. 26, 1874.
- <sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, May 4, 1874.
- <sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, Mar. 13, 1877.
- <sup>17</sup>Arbor Lodge Farm Journal, July 8, 1876, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>18</sup>J. Sterling Morton Diary, Aug. 7, 1876, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>19</sup>Morton Farm Account Book, 1871-73, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>20</sup>J. Sterling Morton Diary, Sept. 22, 1876, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>21</sup>Arbor Lodge Farm Journal, Jan. 1, 1877, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>22</sup>Morton Farm Account Book, 1871-73, includes bill of sale from Tobey Furniture Company, Chicago, Ill., Jan. 15, 1878, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>23</sup>*Nebraska Farmer*, Mar. 1878.
- <sup>24</sup>J. Sterling Morton to Joy Morton, May 8, 1879, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>25</sup>Arbor Lodge Farm Journal, May 31, 1879, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, June 21, 1880.
- <sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, Dec. 7, 1880.
- <sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, Feb. 2, 1881.
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, July 17, 18, 1881.
- <sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, July 19, 26, 1881.
- <sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, Oct. 6, 1881.
- <sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, Mar. 3, 1882.
- <sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, May 10, 1882.
- <sup>34</sup>J. Sterling Morton to Emma Morton and Mrs. J. D. Morton, June 24, 1882, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>35</sup>Arbor Lodge Farm Journal, Jan. 9, 1885, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, Jan. 1, 1885.
- <sup>37</sup>Morton Farm Account Book, 1885, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>38</sup>J. Sterling Morton to Joy Morton, Apr. 26, 1886, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>39</sup>Arbor Lodge Farm Journal, Mar. 22, May 3, 27, 1887; Morton Farm Account Book 1871-73, 89, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>40</sup>*Nebraska City News*, July 8, 1887.
- <sup>41</sup>Morton Farm Account Book, 1871-73, containing original receipts; Arbor Lodge Farm Journal, May 28, 1890, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>42</sup>Arbor Lodge Farm Journal, Apr. 27, 1893, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>43</sup>Inventory of Arbor Lodge Furnishings, 1893, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>44</sup>J. Sterling Morton to Mrs. Carl Morton, July 15, 1893, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>45</sup>J. Sterling Morton to Joy Morton, Mar. 18, 1894, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>46</sup>J. Sterling Morton to Joy Morton, Mar. 22, 1894, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>47</sup>J. Sterling Morton to Carl Morton, undated letter, 1894, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>48</sup>Arbor Lodge Farm Journal, Apr. 9, 10, 14, 1894, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>49</sup>J. Sterling Morton to Joy Morton, June 11, 1894, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>50</sup>Carl Morton to Joy Morton, Nov. 10, 1896, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>51</sup>Arbor Lodge Farm Journal, Sept. 2, Nov. 12, 1897, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, Feb. 26, June 18, Nov. 18, 26, 1901.
- <sup>53</sup>*Nebraska City Daily News*, May 1, 1902; Olson, *J. Sterling Morton*:424.
- <sup>54</sup>Robert Seth Lindstrom to Custodian of Arbor Lodge, Apr. 18, 1948, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>55</sup>Housekeeper's Account Book 1902-05, Morton Papers, Chicago Historical Society.
- <sup>56</sup>Sharon Darling, *Chicago Furniture, Art, Crafts, & Industry, 1833-1933* (Chicago: W. W. Norton & Co., 1984):240.
- <sup>57</sup>Joy Morton to Emma Morton, Aug. 21, 1903, Morton Papers, Chicago Historical Society.
- <sup>58</sup>Arbor Lodge Farm Journal, Oct. 13, 1887, Morton Papers, NSHS.
- <sup>59</sup>"A Notable Western Homestead," *Town and Country Magazine* (Sept. 3, 1904):15.
- <sup>60</sup>Joy Morton engaged in banking in Nebraska City before going to work for the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad in Aurora, Illinois. In 1879 he became a junior partner in a Chicago salt company. In 1885 he and his brother Mark took over the firm that became the giant Morton Salt Company. Joy Morton founded and endowed the Morton Arboretum near Chicago.
- <sup>61</sup>Paul Morton went to work for the Burlington Railroad and won rapid promotion. Later he was vice-president of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad and president of the Equitable Life Assurance Society of New York. Morton was appointed secretary of the navy by President Theodore Roosevelt.
- <sup>62</sup>Carl Morton helped to found the Argo Starch Company of Nebraska City and later moved to Waukegan, Ill. to manage a starch and corn sugar factory for his brother Joy.
- <sup>63</sup>More information on J. Sterling Morton's sons is found in Olson, *J. Sterling Morton*.