

## *Iowa People and Events . . .*

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### The Rails Being Replaced

Steam power and rails are going into the discard in Iowa. The diesel engine burning oil and the motor using gasoline have gradually crowded out the steam engine and electric trolleys. With these changes Iowa is gradually losing her branch line railroads, which before the days of the trucks were feeders to the mainline railroads crossing the state.

The coming of the railroad line was originally hailed by countless communities as an event signaling the establishment of commercial contact with the great centers of industry and commerce in the midwest. But now the coach and truck, with the passenger automobile, have captured the local traffic, and in a degree the long haul tonnage. This was made possible by the widespread building of hard-surfaced roads, induced by the introduction of the automobile. And the freight traffic quickly followed, affording convenience in dispensing with separate pickup and delivery, and appropriating use of highway surfacing originally intended for passenger cars.

Railroads traversing Iowa areas are dispensing with local branch lines wherever allowed by the state commerce commission, and in consequence the state highways are becoming crowded with freight as well as passenger vehicles. The first move is to reduce the number of passenger trains; and next, dispense with them entirely. Finally branch lines have been abandoned altogether. The most recent action of this sort is up in northeastern Iowa, being the line from Dubuque to LaCrosse, where ten regular stops and numerous flag stops on 125 miles of track are bidding adieu to passenger train service. This line was established in 1872 and the last passenger train run was on June 8, 1951.

This was about the last corner of the state to secure paved roads, long being inaccessible because of unusually rough

and hilly surface. At one time a single station on this branch line afforded to the road \$2,000 per month in passenger business alone. Since June last only freight trains have been run, and how long this will continue is anybody's guess. In other sections of Iowa they have survived only a year or two after the passenger trains were discontinued.

Both perplexity and dismay trouble the minds of Iowa people, as they are confronted with these changes. Undoubtedly the passenger auto and the truck have come to stay, at least until air flight becomes universal, but the state highways, built and maintained at great public expense, are rapidly wearing out with the unanticipated heavier traffic. Besides, they are crowded and dangerous in the extreme, and already the terrific casualty lists of killed and maimed citizens, and destruction of property is appalling.

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## When Maturity Arrives

A few months since, William Mort, of Cantril, a native-born Iowan who had celebrated his one-hundred-sixth birthday a few days previous, died after only a week's illness. After an entire life of usefulness, began when Iowa was yet a territory, this man suffered only briefly. His advice to the younger people, voiced on his last birthday was: "stop worrying and you'll live longer."

Mort boasted that he had chewed tobacco for ninety years, and said he had considered giving it up on his 100th birthday, but had decided against it. At that time he said he "only chewed tobacco between meals, anyway."

Iowa has but few, if any residents, who were here one hundred years ago, although several who have attained greater age now reside here, though born elsewhere. Yet, Iowa may be properly considered a young state, as ours is a young nation—still in the early days of its formative period. It is yet a bit headstrong and willful, prone to experiment overmuch. When mature years arrive, in the centuries to come, more stable and conservative procedures should be anticipated, although the current drift seems in the other direction.

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