

# SNOW

For Iowa, snow is a given. We curse it and we celebrate it. In winters of heavy snowfall, we compare each storm to those etched in our memories. In years of light snow, we caution newcomers that "this isn't your typical Iowa winter."

We frequent the hardware stores for the newest style of snow shovel or snowblower, the clothing stores for the warmest and most water-resistant fabrics, the sports stores for the fastest-flying sleds.

Snow. How we shovel it, dress for it, and move through it have certainly changed in the last century, as the following historical photographs reveal. But whether it is 1880, or 1936, or today, there are certain classic stages we Iowans go through every winter as we rekindle our love-hate relationship with snow.

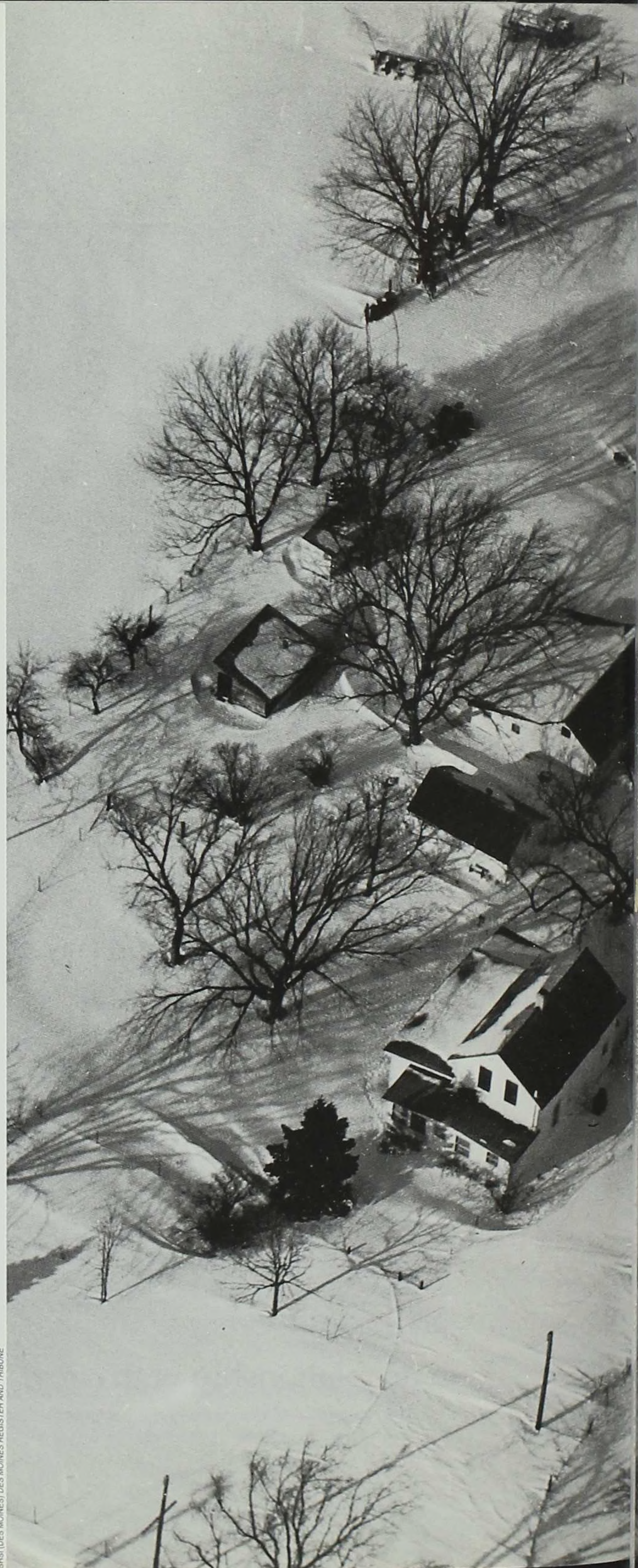
—*The Editor*



# Stunned . . .

First, we are stunned by the snow, by its beauty, its completeness, the way it commands the landscape into silence. Since the mid-19th century, we Iowans have pulled out our cameras, donned our boots, and stepped out to survey the snow.

**F**ences and telephone poles stitch puckered seams across an Iowa farmyard blanketed with snow. Circa 1960.









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PHOTO BY DES MOINES REGISTER AND TRIBUNE



SHSI (DES MOINES)



**A** snowbound photographer in Swea City created this photo postcard of a February 1909 snowstorm that blocked the streets in the northern Kossuth County community.





SHSI (IOWA CITY)

**M**ounted as a cabinet card in an Iowa City photographer's studio, this unidentified photograph demonstrates Iowans' ongoing fascination with snow and its stunning ability to stop us, literally, in our tracks.



## Stuck . . .

The next stage, of course, is the sinking realization that, regardless of destination or vehicle, we are stuck.



SHSI (IOWA CITY)

**B**eing stuck in the snow was nothing unusual in the winter of 1935/36, when tremendous snowfalls stranded far more vehicles than this lone truck.





**B**ut being stuck is all relative, as these two travelers found out in Des Moines in November 1957. Four-year-old Donna Gilley tugs at the tricycle handlebars as three-year-old William Gilley adds traction.

SHSI (DES MOINES); NOV. 19, 1957 DES MOINES REGISTER AND TRIBUNE



# Shoveling out . . .

Hailing neighbors, we begin the next stage—shoveling ourselves out. We call upon muscle power and horsepower, and, as the work gets underway, someone thinks to photograph our progress. “Because,” we say to each other, “years from now, no one will believe that it was this deep.”



**Ralph Tremaine** photographed these three scenes in February 1936, as Iowans helped clear the way for trains on Chicago & North Western’s Eagle Grove-Hawarden line.



ALL THREE: SHSI (IOWA CITY)









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ALL THREE SHOTS (OWNA CITY)







SHSI (DES MOINES)



**Left:** A farmer hefts a shovel and walks down a cleared lane, November 1959.

**Below:** Pedestrians at Fifth and Walnut Streets in Des Moines, January 1949, watch as snow heads up the conveyor belt of a mechanical snowloader and into a waiting truck, at the speed of a truckload per half minute.

**Next page:** Near Spirit Lake, photographer L. F. Williamz captures a dramatic moment as a train on the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific blasts through drifts in March 1917. SHSI (IOWA CITY)



SHSI (DES MOINES); DES MOINES REGISTER AND TRIBUNE, JAN. 1949






L.F. WILLIAMS

SPIRIT LAKE IA.

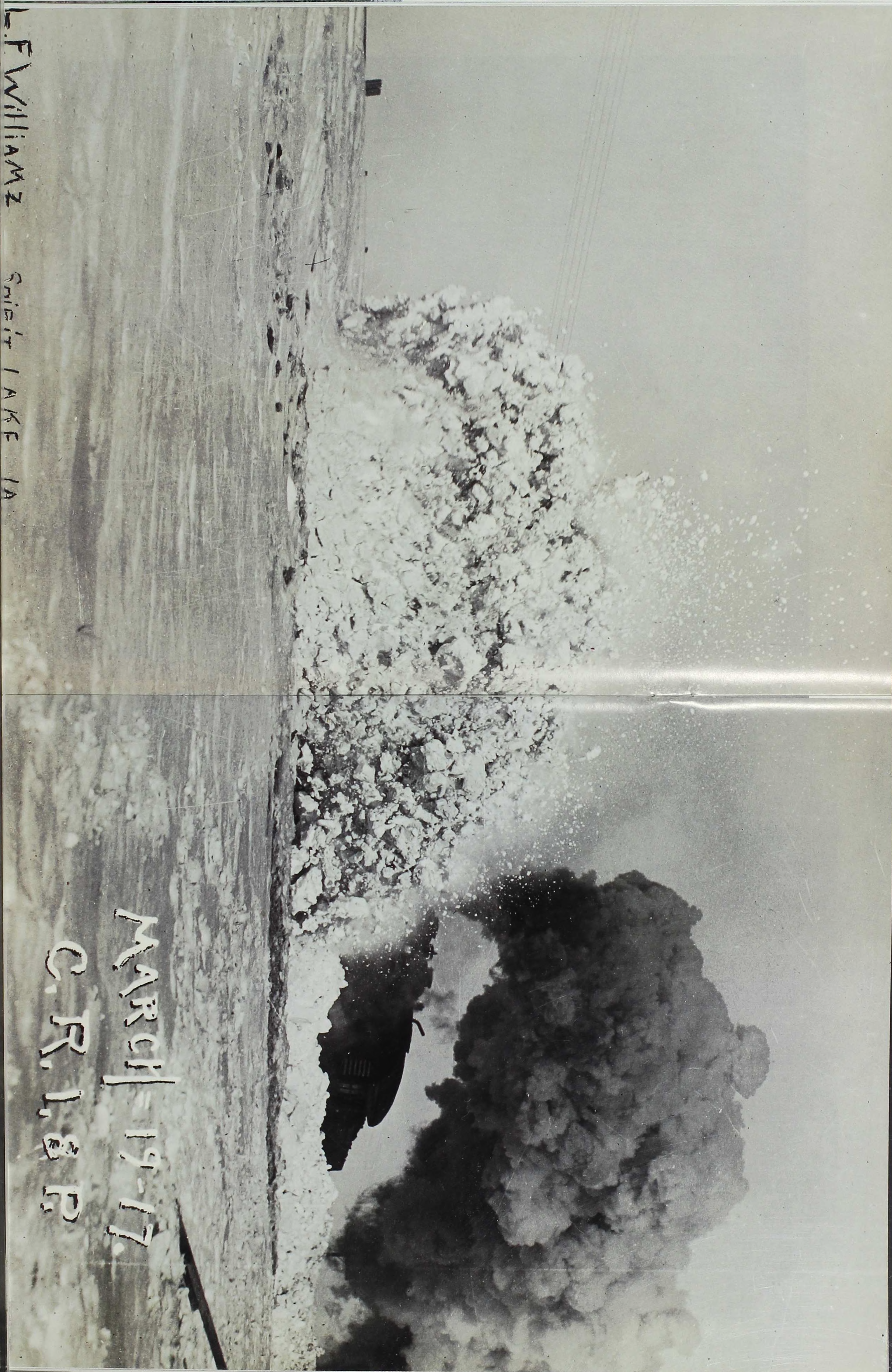




MARCH 19-17.  
C. R. L. & P.



L. F. WILLIAMS  
SNISSIT LAKE IA



MARCH 19-17.  
C. R. L. B. P.



# Settling Forth . . .

Finally, once sufficient snow has been blasted and blown, shoveled and shifted—or has simply melted away—we set forth to resume our daily business. We seek each other's company, eager to share stories about who conquered the deepest drifts and whose horsepower performed the best.

Sleights and bobsleds surround the Monroe County Courthouse in Albia, circa 1900.



SHS (IOWA.GOV)



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SHS (IOWA CITY)





SHSI (IOWA CITY)





SHSI (IOWA CITY); CUNDILL COLLECTION

**A**bove: Satchel in hand, a Maquoketa citizen sets forth after a March 1923 snowstorm.

**R**ight: Nellie and Wilma Warren pause outside their home in West Liberty, about 1904.

**B**elow: Ears peek above the drifts as a mule team pulls a wagon and its passengers through the winter snows of 1935/36.

**L**eft: Two women strike a jaunty pose in front of the Winnebago County Courthouse in Forest City.



SHSI (IOWA CITY); W. A. WARREN COLLECTION



SHSI (IOWA CITY)



SHSI (IOWA CITY); YOUNG COLLECTION



Snow comrades watch as a single sled barrels down a 30-foot drift.

## Surrendering to the joy . . .

SHSI (DES MOINES); PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOAN LIFFRING FOR THE DES MOINES REGISTER AND TRIBUNE (JAN. 27, 1962)



Others among us simply surrender to snow's splendidly slippery nature. We pile into sleds and sleighs, strap on skis, seek out the pure joy.

**Left:** Photographed near Cedar Rapids, where they were attending college, four sisters of a religious order in India embark upon a sleigh ride in January 1962.

**Overview:** While a woman smiles from the porch, a bobsled party poses in West Liberty.

SHSI (IOWA CITY); W.A. WARREN COLLECTION





Sledders trudge up Simplot's Hill in Iowa Falls, about 1900. Only the dog looks back at photographer Frank E. Foster.

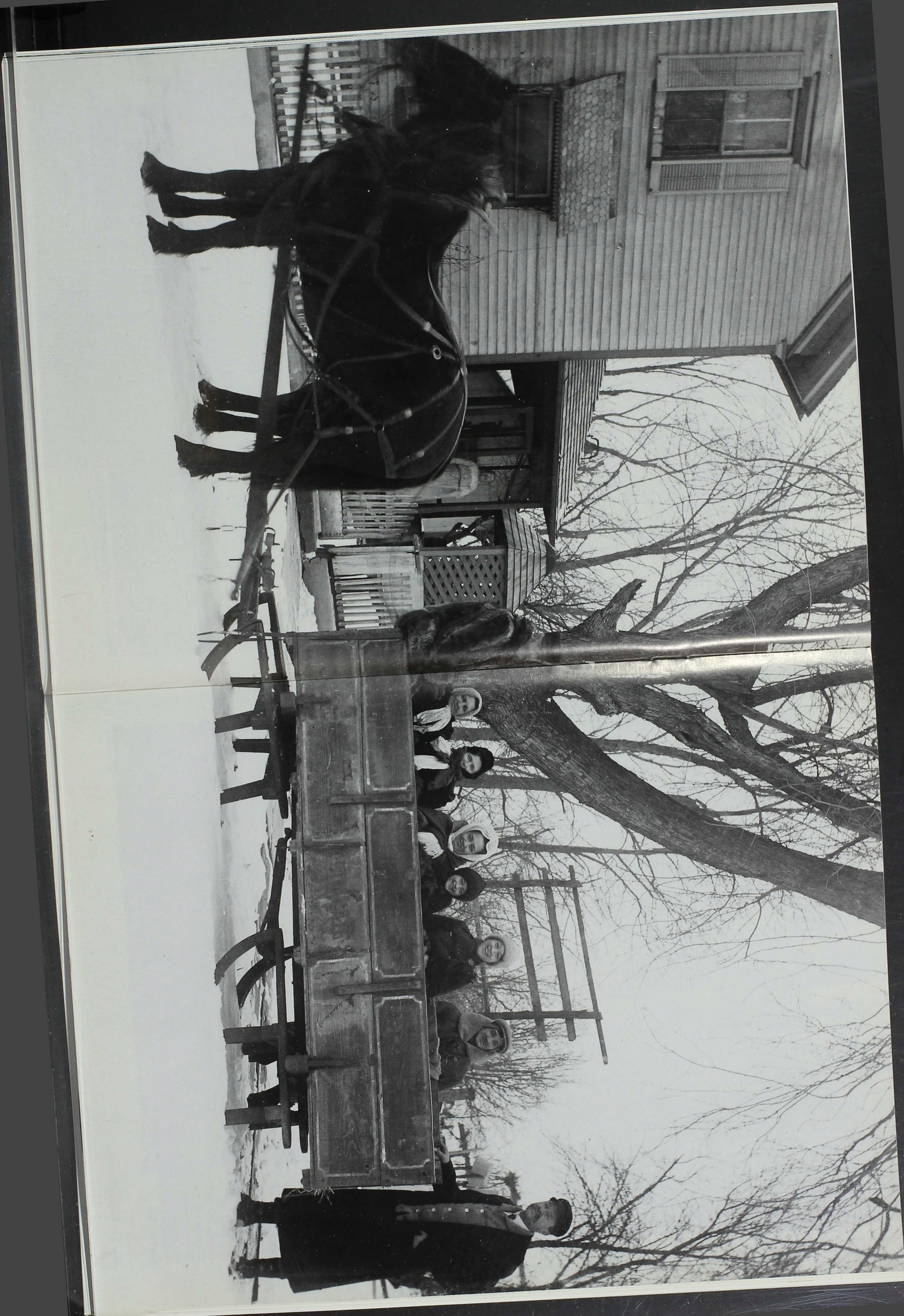










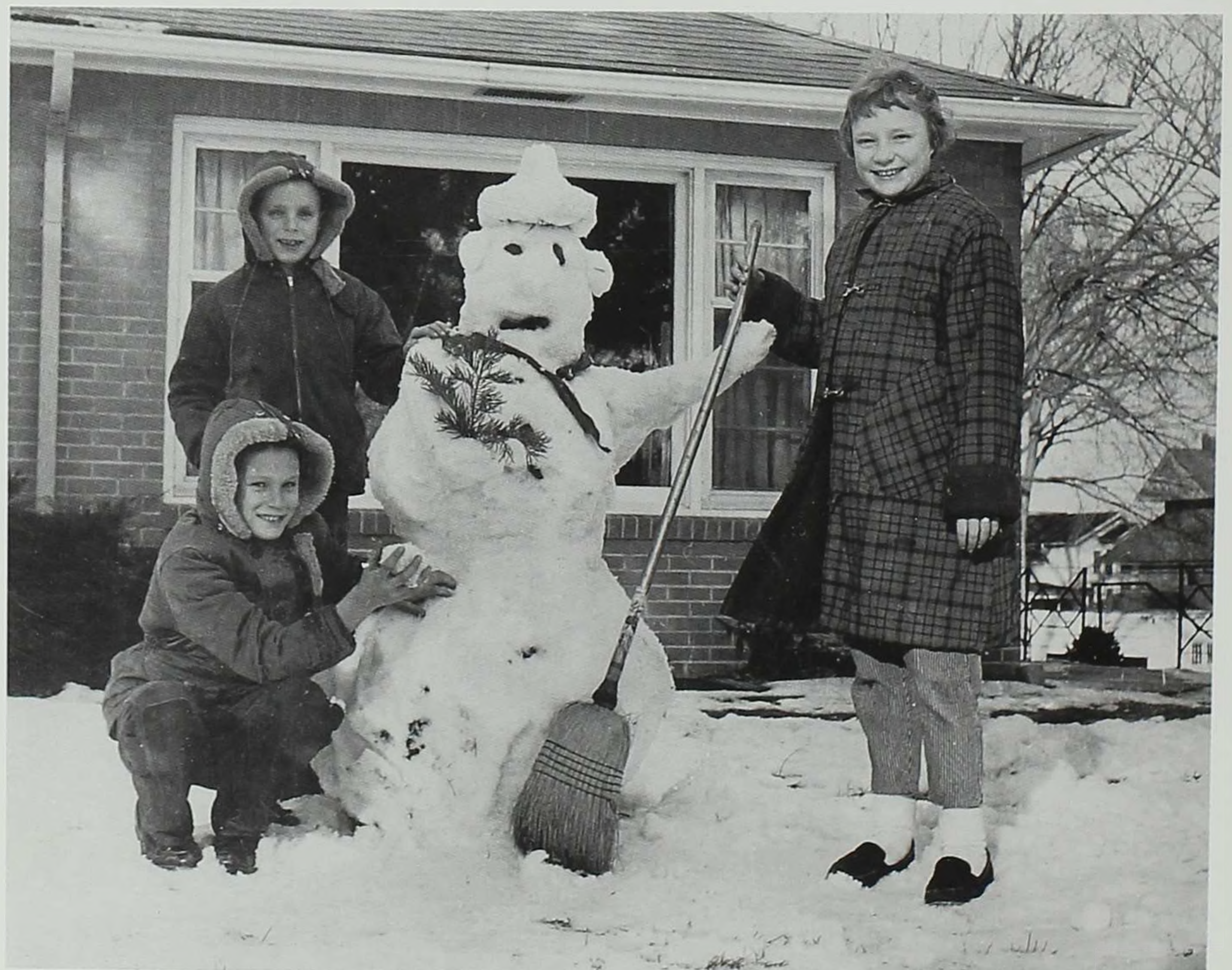






SHSI (IOWA CITY)

**B**arth L. Wick of Norway, Iowa, tests—and confirms—the force of gravity.



**S**teven Edwards (kneeling) and Gordon and Jan Goettsch add finishing touches to a snowman in Monticello, December 1958.

SHSI (DES MOINES)





In galoshes, headscarf, and snowsuit, Shirley Riley hooks a leg over a school railing in Des Moines, 1944.



... and to  
the solitude ...

... of Iowa's snow

**S**ilhouetted against the winter sky, a child holds the reins of a horse-drawn sled transporting an enormous log to a sawmill. Photographed on the Heiber family farm, in Black Hawk County. ❖







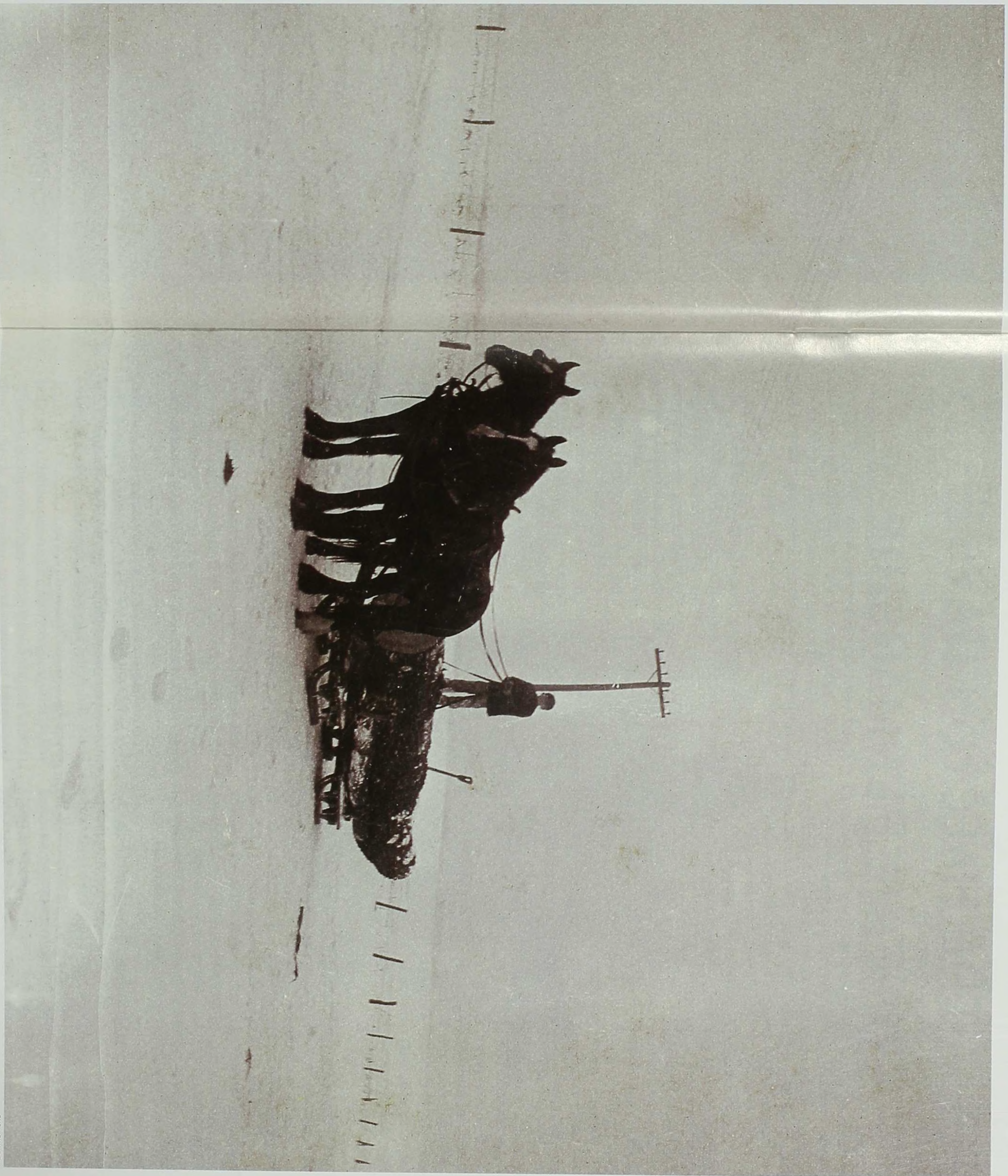
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SPRINGFIELD, IOWA