

Front Porches • Photographing the Mormon Trail Out West • Bishop's Block in Dubuque

SUMMER 1997 • \$6

# Iowa Heritage

ILLUSTRATED



# Front Porch

Dear Readers:

This issue fits in nicely with the end of summer in Iowa. Pull up a chair on your porch or patio for our opening salute to front porches. Then compare your own summer travels to those of western emigrants 150 years ago, as photographer Greg MacGregor takes us west on the Mormon Trail. Plan a day trip to Dubuque to discover the imposing buildings designed by architect Franklin Hyde a century ago, including Bishop's Block. Finally, mark your calendar for the recitals on the incredible Kimball pipe organ featured in our "One in a Million."

But first, here are a few recent letters from other readers.

—The Editor

## Look who's on the cover

My wife Beverly's brother, Dan Scott, of Burlington, Iowa, phoned last week to inquire if Bev had looked at the front cover of Spring 1997 *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*. She looked at the cover and exclaimed, "That's Mom and Dad!" The gentleman in the brown suit and hard straw hat and the lady wearing a blue dress and white hat are Bev's parents, the late Walter and Bertha Scott of rural Rome, Iowa. As long-term subscribers to *Palimpsest* and its better-named successor *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*, we welcome each issue into our home.

Irvin and Beverly Kaighin  
Bettendorf, Iowa

## Oils evoke pleasant memories

I enjoyed the Spring 1997 article about color tinting. My great-grandfather owned a photo studio in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, and my mother worked for him to help pay for college. She then went on to teach tinting at the vocational school in LaCrosse. Seeing the tubes of Marshall's Oil Photo Colors gave me a

start—I hadn't seen them since I was in kindergarten and first grade. I can still remember what the oils smelled like. Thanks for bringing back a pleasant memory.

Caryl Brown Swaim  
West Des Moines, Iowa

## Uprooted Iowan

I am an uprooted Iowan with [several] relatives about the state. We get to Iowa about twice a year. I certainly enjoy *Iowa Heritage*. The Tom Runyon story was a great piece in the last issue. Many months ago, the report on Iowa and the Ku Klux Klan (Summer 95) was a top-notch piece of largely unknown but important Iowa history. It caused me to buy three books of new research on the KKK of the 1920s.

Lyle Tatum  
Westmont, New Jersey

## Happy about Go-Hawks Happy Tribe

You will never know the joy that Louise Rosenfield Noun's article "Emilie Blackmore Stapp [and her Go-Hawks Happy Tribe," Winter 1996 issue] has given to me and my family. . . . We are so thankful that we contacted Dr. McCain, University of Southern Mississippi, after the death of my two aunts, Emilie [Blackmore Stapp] and Marie, and my mother. We were cleaning the three family homes on Friendship Farm. At that time, early 1960s, the University was building new and large library facilities. Dr. McCain, President of U.S.M., visualized archives with enough space to preserve large collections of writings and illustrations to be used for research. He came down to the Farm and personally supervised the packing and moving of the Doll Collection, books, and every piece of paper from the first scribbled notes of Aunt Emilie's writings. It was all moved to the University awaiting completion of the new library. Then came Lena de Grummond, retired librarian from Louisiana. She dreamed and worked to establish a "Children's Collection," internationally recognized as one of the larg-

est and finest. . . . The library staff has spent all these years keeping the fast-growing collection catalogued and placed in the climate-controlled archives. This is where Mary Hamilton has worked as a library assistant and developed an interest in the life and work of Emilie Blackmore Stapp.

We are so happy God led us in this direction for the dolls and writings because if we had tried to keep them, they would have deteriorated. To help children and youth receive an education was how Aunt Emilie spent her life. Now, to have everything preserved from her years in Boston and Mississippi in U.S.M. Library Archives, and everything prior to Boston in the State Historical Society of Iowa archives in Des Moines makes the picture complete.

Emilie Marie Stapp Rausch  
Bay St. Louis, Mississippi

## Cover-to-cover pride

Congratulations to you for your topical selections and coverage of articles that have been in your periodicals. You and your staff do a tremendous job.

As a native Iowan (from Scott County), I find that *The Palimpsest* and *Iowa Heritage* have been one of the few magazines that I read cover to cover upon their arrival at my home. And this has been a common practice every year since I left the Agricultural Engineering Department at Iowa State in 1956 to join the University of Missouri. The *Iowa Heritage* stories always make me proud of my own Iowa heritage and the farm electrification service contributions to rural Iowans in the early fifties.

Kenneth L. McFate  
Columbia, Missouri

## Come converse on the front porch!

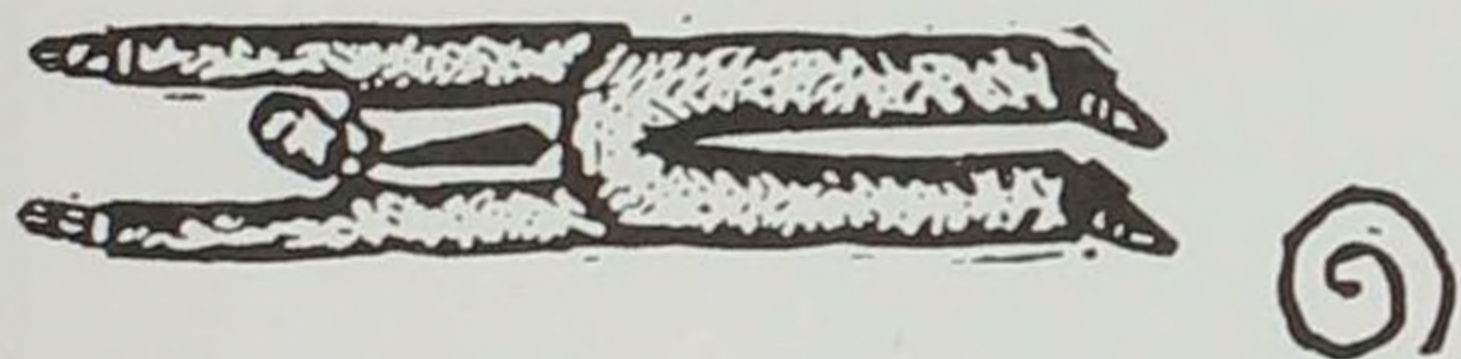
Share your thoughts with other readers here on the Front Porch. Send your letters to Editor, *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, IA 52240. E-mail: gswaim@blue.weeg.uiowa.edu Fax: 319-335-3935. (Letters may be edited for length and clarity.)

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Formerly The Palimpsest

Summer 1997, Vol. 78, No. 2

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**ARCHITECT**  
AND  
Building Superintendent.  
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(Bradley Block,  
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## On the Cover

For emigrants on the California-Oregon Trail, Chimney Rock could be seen three days in advance and signaled the beginning of the West. Greg MacGregor photographed stark trees and a burning field in the foreground of this Nebraska landmark and then airbrushed the black-and-white print with watercolors. His dramatic images of the Mormon Trail, across Iowa and into the West, appear in this issue.



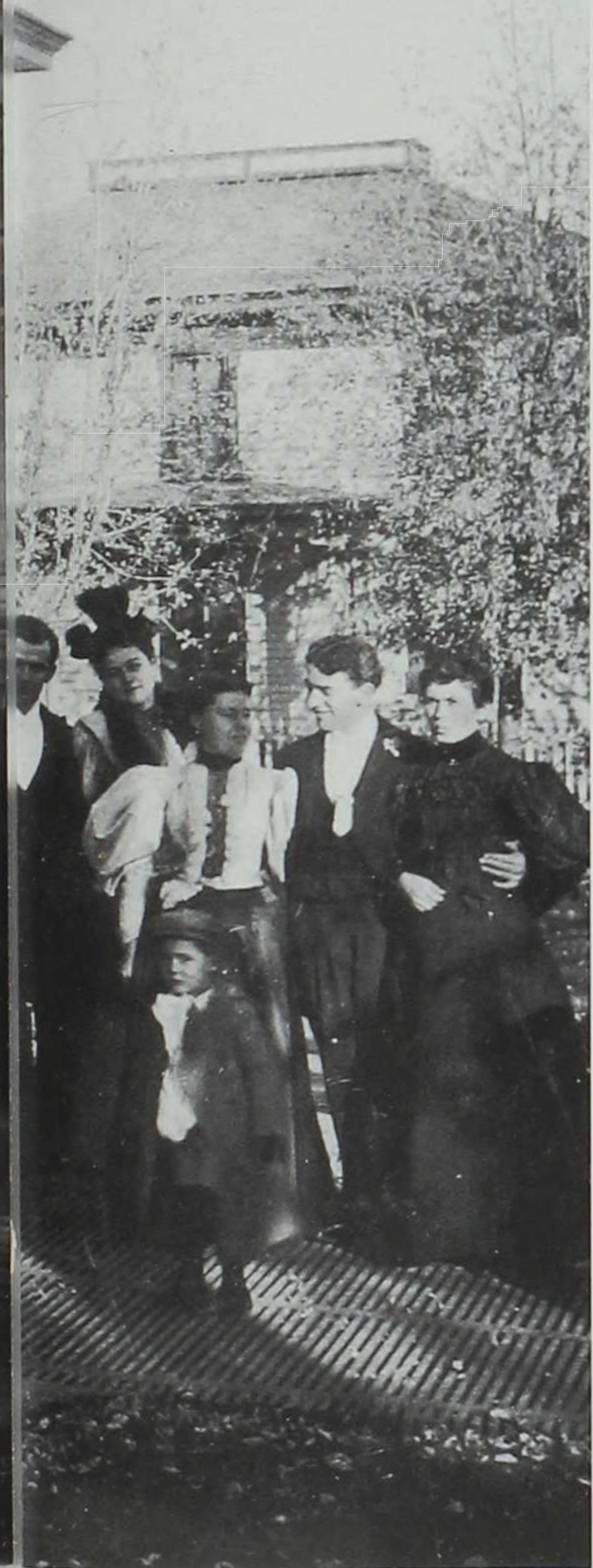
# A Salute to Porches

OF THE DOZEN HOUSES in which I've lived, three of them had fine front porches. On my family's farm in Scott County, the white, foursquare house had an

elegant front porch with massive pillars. On its broad railings I practiced tightrope walking, and under its roof on hot summer days, when boredom struck, I

dressed reluctant farm kittens in ridiculous doll clothes.

In the first house my husband and I owned here in Iowa City, the 1890s house had a simple porch



across the front. From our hammock on that porch, I rocked our babies, hushed our dogs, and watched the world rush by.

Our current house, an 1880s Victorian, once had a wraparound front porch. I've only seen pictures of that porch, because a previous owner tore it off in the late 1930s. Although he reused some of the original millwork on it, the

"new" porch is much smaller. There's sufficient space for a cheerful basket of geraniums and a short, stand-up conversation with callers, but that's about all.

To me, a front porch manifests the concept of "welcome." That's why a year ago the opening page of this magazine, right inside the cover, was named "Front Porch." I see it as a welcoming entry point and a place to converse. This is where you'll meet other readers (through their letters to the editor) and where I'll introduce authors and their work. It's a place to begin our story and build our "readership community."

Naturally, my ears perked up when Patrick Overton started talking about front porches in his keynote speech at the annual Iowa Heritage Expo at the State Historical Society of Iowa in Des Moines this June. Overton is associate professor of communication and cultural studies at Columbia College in Missouri. He has a long history of working with rural and small communities. And he eloquently uses the metaphor of a front porch to help nudge America back to the concept of "community."

"The people who lived in [small, rural] communities relied on themselves for education, entertainment, and enjoyment. They spent time together," Overton writes in his *Re-Building the Front Porch of America: Essays on the Art of Community Making* (Columbia, Missouri: Columbia College, 1997). "Everyone knew each other's name. Neighbors were considered extended family, and shared in the rites, rituals, and responsibilities of raising children. The communities had their own traditions, history, and stories, but they didn't have names for all of this. The terms culture, values,

and art, didn't have names because they were considered part of the everyday lives of the people in these communities."

Overton reminds us that the contributions of "the people who have gone before us . . . help us understand the values that drive our work today. It is a story of self-improvement and self-education. It is a story of self-determination and rural genius. It is a story of porches and parlors, where people gathered together to share, to learn, to create community."

He continues, "Historically, our elders have been the storytellers. With ageism the way it is in our current society, we pay little attention to our elders. In the process, we have lost contact not only with our story, but our storytellers as well. They not only know the stories, they are the ones who grew up with the tradition of storytelling. They grew up on the front porch, listening to their older relatives tell the family and community stories."

As summer drifts into fall and the landscape we see from our own porches shifts from green to gold, *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* offers this salute to porches, inspired by Overton's metaphor of rebuilding the front porch of America. On the next page, Richard Thomas of Mount Vernon, Iowa, ponders the disappearance of porches. Photos from collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa hint at the variety of porches that have graced Iowa's houses, and Thomas's own photos showcase some fine, old porches still standing. The final selection in this salute offers tips on literally rebuilding a front porch.

—The Editor



SHSI (IOWA CITY)

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# From Porch to Patio



## *The Desire for Privacy and the Need for Community*

by Richard H. Thomas

*For two decades Richard H. Thomas has observed and pondered the evolution of "porch to patio." He has photographed porches in eastern Iowa and southwestern Wisconsin, and has celebrated front porches in his community of Mount Vernon, Iowa, by helping create a local "parade of porches" and a videotape on porches. His essay "From Porch to Patio" was well received when it first appeared in The Palimpsest (July/August 1975), so we invited him to revisit the subject for today's readers. This is a revision of that essay.*

—The Editor



**B**road front porches once were so common on American homes that we tend to take them for granted. Yet their prevalence a century ago tells us something about ourselves. Two assumptions are basic to understanding the role of architecture, and specifically the front porch, in our lives. First, domestic dwellings in their construction and design reflect the prevailing cultural





notions of what a "home" should be, of what the owners perceive essential to their life style. Second, a house is not only a shelter but also a cultural statement of how personal space and social life are organized.

The century between 1860 and 1960 saw many changes in technology, values, population, land use, consumer habits, and social structures. These changes were

sometimes rapid and accompanied by tensions between the desire for privacy and the need to be public enough to enjoy the benefits of community life. Some of these changing notions of privacy and community are especially apparent in the domestic architecture chosen by the upper classes, those who were the architectural style leaders and arbiters of culture. We see additional evidence

**In the distance, two women with parasols stroll down the sidewalk in Lake City, Iowa, circa 1910, past front porches and under shade trees.**

of these notions in the housing of other socioeconomic classes, who followed the lead of the gentry class, selecting homes that imitated those of their "betters," to use a 19th-century term.

In terms of the social dimen-

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SHARL HORN/CATTS

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SHSI: SCHWINN COLLECTION (IOWA CITY)

**Three women rock on the front porch of the Charles Kelly home in Red Oak.**

sions of architectural design, it is enlightening to focus on one facet of the total home, namely the porch, and its gradual move from the front to the back of the home, where it became first the patio and now the deck. This narrow concern leaves untouched crucial elements in domestic architecture, such as room arrangement or the evolution of the 19th-century par-

lor into the modern den or family room. Concentrating on the porch, however, helps us consider how an increasing desire for privacy has both modified and been reflected in changing house design. The evolution of porch to patio also suggests new forms of social relations with one's neighbors, and, in turn, shifting ideas about what is meant by a sense of community or belonging to a particular place.

A central feature of the changes over the last century is

how speed compressed both time and distance. In the late 19th century, most gentry-class homes were built on large lots. The homes faced the street and were viewed by passersby on foot or from horse-drawn vehicles. One approached and passed at a slow pace, with plenty of time to comprehend an entire house and its intricate ornamentation.

Part of our failure today to appreciate the grandeur of these older homes is attributable to the speed at which we now travel.

Many of these homes that have survived are often crowded by newer structures and are surrounded by less open space. At a car's speed of 25 or 30 miles per hour and with the distractions of traffic, a passerby's viewing time is reduced to approximately six seconds. The 19th-century passerby on foot or by buggy had far more time to appreciate the architecture and the ornamental features of the home, many of them clustered on the porch.

There was also sufficient time for passersby to notice the presence or absence of a home's residents on the porch because the porch represented an opportunity for social intercourse at several levels. When family members were on the porch, they might merely wave or exchange trivial greetings to those passing by. On the other hand, they might also invite passersby to come up onto the porch for extended conversations. In other words, family

members were very much in control of this social interaction, because the porch was an extension of their living quarters or private space.

While the porch served the function of letting others know that one was available for limited forms of interpersonal exchange, it served many other functions as well. The gentry homes were intentionally designed to provide space for entertaining guests, and large front porches were many times the location of social gatherings. A porch meeting with friends did not require cleaning the house and offered social time without formal

arrangements. Furthermore, a well-shaded porch provided a cool place in the heat of the day for women to enjoy a respite from household chores. Older persons derived great pleasure from sitting on the porch and watching the world go by or enjoying the grandchildren or neighborhood children at play.

Because the porch was a special zone that mixed both private and public space, it provided courting space, within earshot of concerned and protective parents. Being within the general confines of the house afforded some privacy, yet the watchful eyes of neighbors and proximity to parents kept the space public. The porch swing permitted a courting couple to sit together in an acceptable environment, and many a proposal of marriage was made there.

Lest we overglamorize the porch, we need to recall that not all porches were on the front of houses or blended public and private space. Small, upper-story porches had the very practical

**Furniture makes an inviting social space on this porch, circa 1906.**

SHSI: GIFFORD COLLECTION (IOWA CITY)



**Simple or elegant, small or large, most midwestern homes up through the early 20th century had front porches.**

COURTESY JAMES BERANEK





SHSI: SCHWINN COLLECTION (IOWA CITY)

purpose of providing a second-floor outdoor area for shaking a dust mop or rugs and providing cross-ventilation. Sleeping porches gave relief from the summer heat. And back porches functioned as service entries and private space.

Even the humblest homes could not do without some form of a porch. It was a pervasive architectural feature that disappeared slowly. Americans seemed to cling to the porch even as styles changed.

Part of the resistance to abandoning the porch as an essential element of the home can be attributed to the primary group relationships that permeated both the large and small communities. Americans valued knowing their neighbors and being known by them. The porch was a place to be

seen while still within the perimeter of one's home or private space. It had an additional advantage of being a platform from which to observe the activities of others. The porch, therefore, facilitated and symbolized a set of primary group relations and a strong bond to the community, which 19th- and early 20th-century Americans supposed was the way God intended life to be lived.

By the turn of the century, an ever-greater selection of porch styles was available to the home builder because of a well-established millwork industry, new building materials and techniques, cheap labor, and the publication of house plans in books and magazines. Yet at the same time, cutting-edge architects like Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Burley Griffin, and others



were searching for a new architecture that would become distinctly American. Although architects from the emerging Prairie School

**Left:** Two girls while away summer on the front porch of the Baptist parsonage in Red Oak. **Above:** Small, second-story porches allowed for airing a house or shaking a dust mop. **Below:** A 1911 postcard from Battle Creek shows off a front porch with a turret and carries this proud message on the back: "I painted this house. You see how bright it looks. That is the class of houses I have painted this summer. Only half of the house shows. Papa."



SHSI (IOWA CITY); COURTESY JAMES BERANEK



all found clients in Iowa for commercial and private buildings, much of the gentry continued constructing homes along the lines of the past three decades, expressing their power and wealth through large, elaborate homes.

But American homes also began to reflect a shift in size and formality. The expanding middle class, as well as the upper class, began to embrace less formal and more economical housing. They chose spare Craftsman styling over 19th-century opulence, and modest bungalows and prefabricated homes over inefficient and costly Victorians. Still, most of these more modest structures continued the tradition of the front porch.

After World War II, the population explosion, postwar economy, national demand for housing, and large federal subsidies for veterans all contributed to a massive building boom. Unlike the earlier streetcar suburbs, this new suburbia was driven by a need for moderately priced homes that lent themselves to mass production. In these new planned communities, land was costly, labor expensive, and architects were often the employees of large development corporations whose profits rested heavily on standardized plans and constructions.

The resulting "bedroom communities" often lacked established social structures and the ingredients for building a sense of com-

**T**he extravagance of porches like this one on the H.W. Bathke residence in Sumner, Iowa (left) gradually gave way to more straightforward treatments, such as this bungalow porch (top right), and then abbreviated or closed-in porches (center and below; from Cedar Rapids and Remsen, Iowa). Meanwhile, garages became more visible as they moved closer to the house and street.

COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



BOTH PHOTOS: SHSI (IOWA CITY)





COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



**A** traditional front porch maintains the character of an older home in Decorah. Below: An exchange between porch and buggy in West Branch, about 1912. Right: Along with suburbia, came attached garages, walled patios, and backyard decks—dramatically changing the streetscape.

was surrounded by walls or open on several sides, its location in the rear of the house provided privacy by creating barriers to the more informal public contacts once facilitated by the front porch.

It should be noted that many architects were able to find patrons in the new upper middle class who were anxious to separate themselves from the prefabricated or mass-produced communities and wanted homes that reflected status. Professionals, particularly doctors, lawyers, and rising business executives, could afford both innovative architects and enough land to ensure privacy. In many of these professionally designed homes, the patio achieved a prominent place at the rear of the house and opened onto a large, landscaped area with a commanding view of the city or countryside.

munity. The inhabitants were generally of the same age and economic status, which created a bland social environment. High mobility rates and neighborhood turnover worked against community building.

Many suburbanites were refugees from the city, seeking single-family dwellings that would

maintain the privacy afforded by the anonymity of urban culture. One way of achieving privacy was the patio. Like the front porch, the patio was an extension of the house but far less public. It was easy to be hailed by a passerby from the porch, but exceedingly difficult over the high fence of the backyard patio. Whether the patio



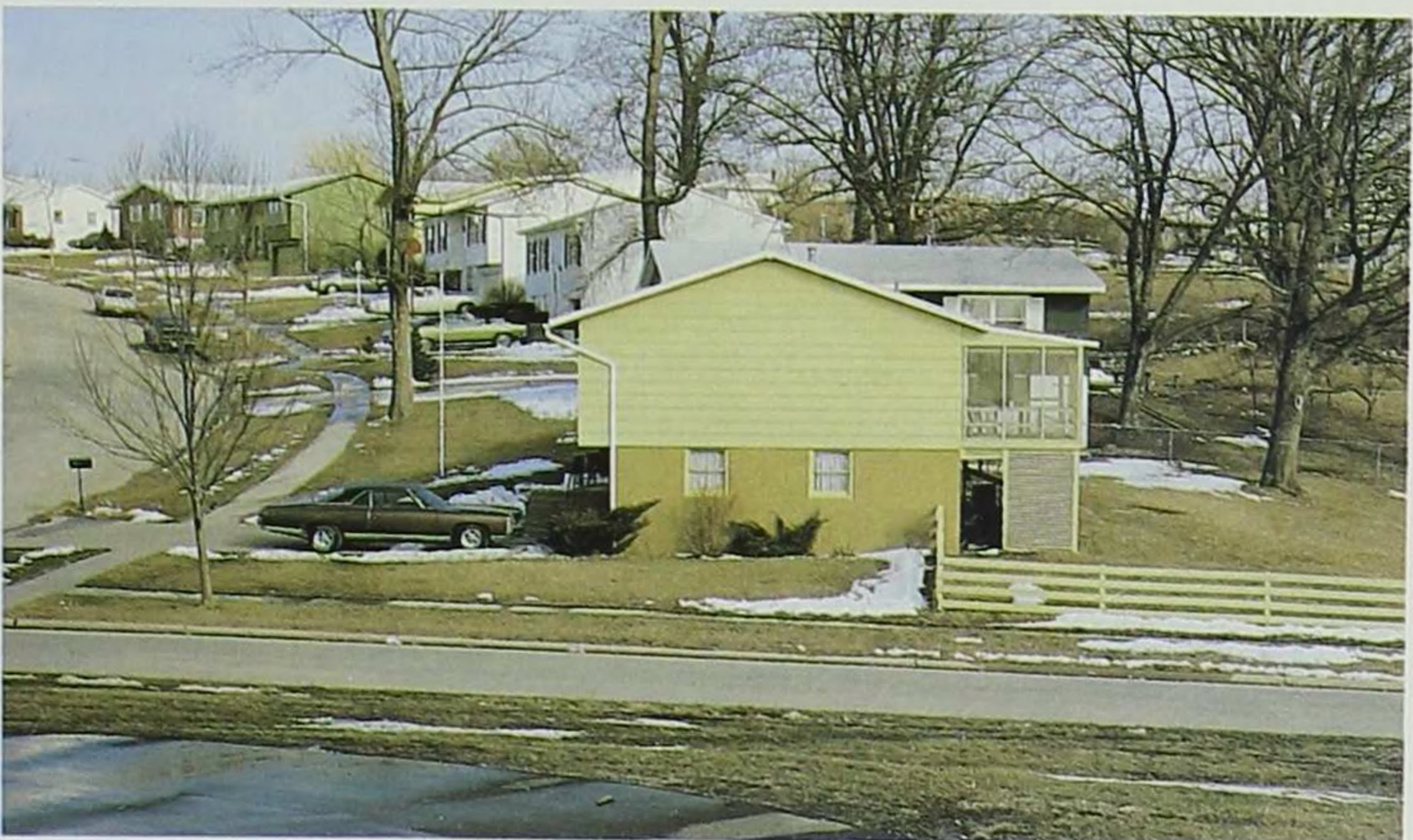
SHSI (IOWA CITY)

It is an old cliché that "a man's home is his castle." If that was true, the porch was an open drawbridge across which many passed in their daily transitions from private to public space. The modern home designed without a porch gives the impression of a closed drawbridge, suggesting that the royal family is tired of the world and seeks only the companionship of immediate family or intimate peers in the private space of the patio or deck.

In this transition from porch to patio, there is an irony. Nineteenth-century families were expected to be public and fought to achieve their privacy. Some of the 19th-century sense of community was achieved because of this expectation for forms of social interaction that the porch facilitated. Twentieth-century men and women have achieved a high degree of privacy in the patio, deck, or condominium balcony, but in so doing have lost daily touch with a sense of community. In their hurried flight from commuter vehicle to the sanctuary of the home (now often through an attached garage), they have little time for informal neighborhood contacts, without which a sense of community is difficult to establish and maintain.

Yet the tension between the need for privacy and the desire to belong to a community is still with us. Resolution of this seemingly ever-present conflict will continue to be reflected in the design of whatever we call home. ❖

*Richard H. Thomas is professor emeritus of history at Cornell College, Mount Vernon. He has served on the boards of local and state organizations for history and preservation, and continues to write and consult on historical issues.*



PHOTOS THIS PAGE COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

# First Steps for Rehabilitating or Replacing a Porch



SHS: SCHWINN COLLECTION (IOWA CITY)

**T**he first step in undertaking a rehab project is research. You should tap such sources as previous owners, local libraries, and magazine and newspaper accounts to learn as much as possible about the history of your building. On occasion, even the most thorough research fails to yield answers to important questions. For example, if you have been unable to find an historic photo of the original appearance of a long-gone front porch, how should you proceed?

The Secretary [of Interior's] Standards [for rehabilitating historic buildings] suggest the new porch should match what it replaces in composition, design, color, and texture. But the standards also state that the porch should not be conjectural—based on what you think it might have been like—or on the availability of a porch replacement that seems to fit the house. The appearance of the replacement porch should have an historical basis.

Should you forgo a front porch completely? This seems an extreme approach, especially for your own house where you want to enjoy a front porch. A middle ground relying on a little detective work seems the best approach. Look at the “footprint” of the porch as it relates to the house on fire insurance maps, such as those by the Sanborn Company. This will give you an idea of the location and general size. Look for pieces re-used or stored in the attic and basement or under the floor of an enclosed or altered porch. “Shadows”—clues such as nail holes from where the porch met the house or varying thicknesses of paint—may reveal the basic shape and extent of the porch. You might also look around for very similar houses in your community to see the range and similarities of those

porches. Also study styles from the period to see what captures the main characteristics of the time.

By all means, exhaust your research leads for old photographs showing your porch, because it is expensive to redo the porch later to conform to the original appearance. Any new porch without historic documentation of what it replaces should have a simple, compatible design. Otherwise it provides a false sense of the history of your house. Note that these approaches to respectful rehabilitation may need to be more rigorous in a Tax Act project where a certified rehabilitation is necessary. . . .

It is important to document the history of the changes to the house for future owners. . . . This evidence can also be useful for subsequent repairs or changes. . . .

The emphasis in a successful rehabilitation project is on repairing, retaining, and respecting the significant historic materials and features. However, new construction is certainly possible. New additions must preserve and not obliterate the significant historic materials and features of the building as well as the historic character of it within its surroundings. New construction should be compatible with the size, scale, materials, and character of both the building and its surroundings. . . . Otherwise, the effect is jarring and intrusive. Inappropriately designed new construction does not respect the appearance of older buildings around it.

On most older houses, porches are a vital part of the design. They lend character to the house and are a critical part of the first impression we have of it. Thus, it is very important to retain porches and as many original architectural elements as possible. If replacement parts—columns, brackets, spindles, balustrades—are necessary, they should resemble the originals. [For example,] using plain 4x4 foot posts is highly inappropriate, unless the original porch had such posts. ❖

This information was excerpted from *Historic Preservation in Iowa: A Handbook for Communities*, prepared by Barbara Beving Long and published by the State Historical Society of Iowa. To request more specific or technical information on historic preservation, contact Community Programs, State Historical Society of Iowa, 600 E. Locust, Des Moines, Iowa 50319, 515-281-8741.

# Here's your sneak preview of the Western Historic Trails Center, opening October 5 in Council Bluffs

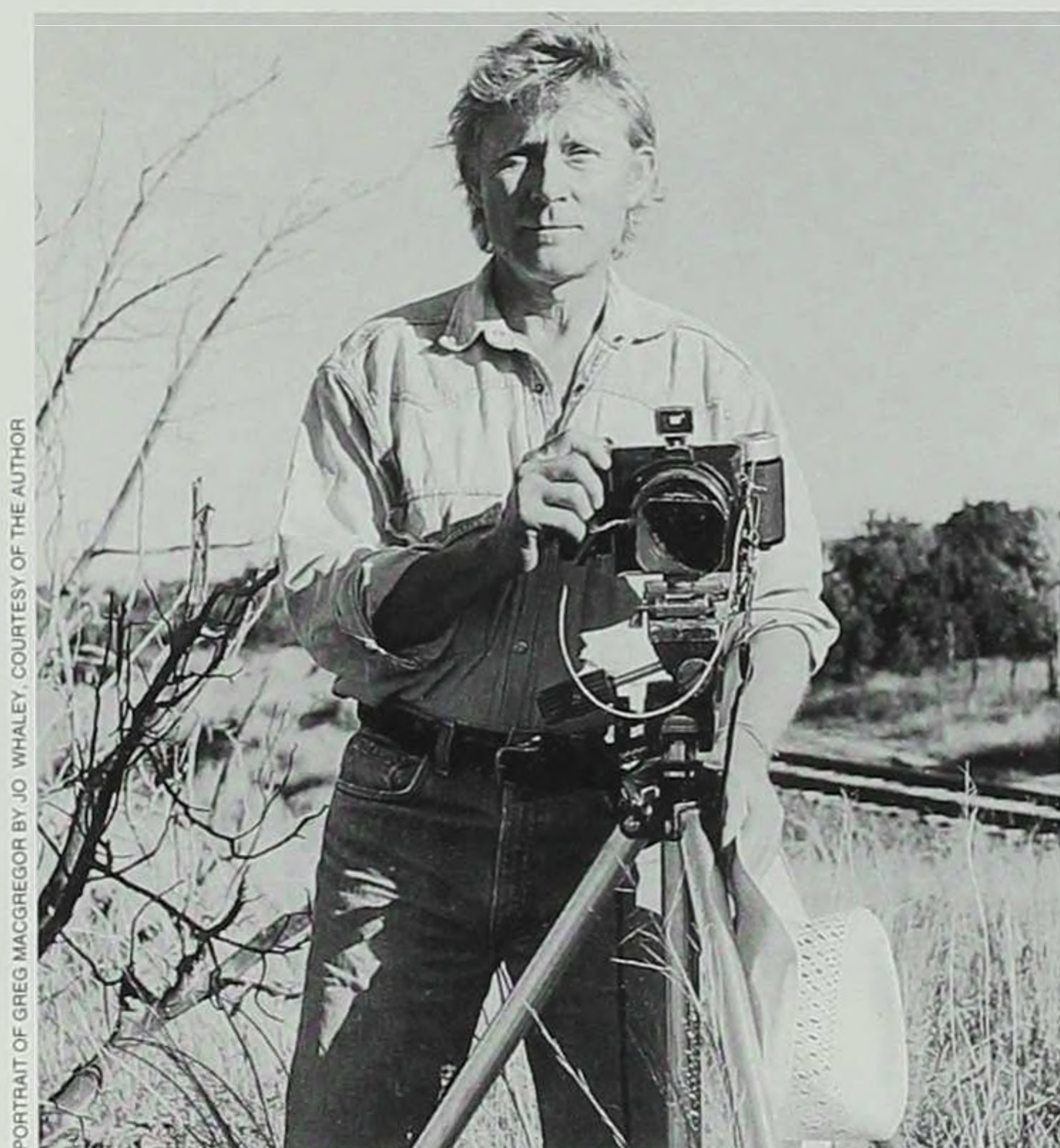


Aerial perspective of the 480-acre Western Historic Trails Center.

The following photo essay is part of an exhibit now being installed in the new Western Historic Trails Center in Council Bluffs. Opening in early October, the center will tell the story of western expansion in the United States. Through exhibits, sculptures, and film, visitors will experience westward migration on the four overland trails—the Lewis and Clark Trail, the Oregon Trail, the California Trail, and the Mormon Pioneer Trail, which crossed southern Iowa and is the focus of the images on the following pages.

Western Historic Trails Center is owned and operated by the State Historical Society of Iowa, and was built by the National Park Service and local partners. The center opens October 5. Take exit 1B off Interstate 80 and south onto 24th Street. For more information, call 712-325-4900.

—The Editor



PORTRAIT OF GREG MACGREGOR BY JO WHALEY, COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

# Photographing the Mormon Trail Across the West

by *Greg MacGregor*

**W**hen I first became interested in photo-documenting western migration trails in 1986, my motivation was grounded in what photographers then called “re-photography.” This was a fairly popular genre in photography circles, in which one would obtain a photo made in the mid- or late 19th century, locate the exact position, and re-photograph a modern view of the same location. The object was to record the changes that had occurred over the past century.

There were already several models for this type of project but none on overland trails. After an exhaustive search in archives that housed photographs of the early West, I soon realized that the migration of some 300,000-500,000 persons walking, riding, and pushing their way west was, in a word, “undocumented”—at least visually. Not only was this true for the migration itself, but only in a few places were the landscape, trail, and topography visually recorded.

There are several reasons for this. The wet plate process, invented in 1851, required that the glass plate negatives be prepared in the field and used while still wet and sensitive to light. Photographing the western landscape therefore required an entire portable darkroom on wheels. A photographer’s wagon had to haul the enormous weight of dozens of glass plate negatives, a large camera, and bottles of chemicals. All this added up to a process that was simply impractical.

There was also a motivational factor. The land traversed by these trails had one thing in common: it was the flattest terrain possible, usually a long way from the more scenic parts of the West like Yellowstone or the spectacular gaps in the Rocky Mountains. In comparison with such dramatic landscapes, this flat terrain was usually considered visually boring. Consequently, even though western survey parties traveled migration trails, photographers such as A. J. Russell, who documented the Union Pacific Railroad accomplishments of 1866-1868; Timothy O’Sullivan, with the King Survey of 1867; and William H. Jackson, with the Hayden Survey of 1870 didn’t record much of the “highway” itself. They were saving their precious glass plate negatives for the more salable views of Yellowstone and the Tetons.

As for images of the actual wagon trains and emigrants, by 1869, when qualified photographers and military expeditions were now free from documenting and fighting the Civil War, the transcontinental railroad was completed and the first wave of migration had finished. The only photos I have located of actual emigrant wagons on the trail were taken by Charles Savage, a Salt Lake City resident who waited near the mouth of Emigration Canyon and photographed the end of the journey as wagon trains passed through. The vast distance of some 1,300 miles between the Mississippi and Fort Bridger in southwestern Wyoming went unphotographed.

Given what little I could find of historic trail images, my project then changed into what would be a first look, rather than a re-look, at this historic route. My equipment was simple: a tall tripod, my homemade camera with large format and a wide angle lens, a ladder, and a cable release. My methodology was equally simple: I would shoot the photo either standing directly in the ruts of the trail or looking straight at where they used to be. It was tempting to wander a hundred feet off to capture a spectacular image, but I resisted. The maps of the trail are sometimes very specific, and I followed them whether they led under concrete, through cities, or across water.

I usually worked about five days in a row. The days were long, hot, and exhausting. The best light for landscape photography is early morning and late afternoon. But since there was nothing to do with the middle hours and since I was usually far from any towns, I just worked through the whole day, sometimes driving a hundred miles between photographs because a site could not be located, or when it was, there was nothing but grass and a historic marker.

The following selection of photos focuses on the Mormon Trail, the only western migration trail to cross Iowa (see map below). Although some of the events explained here were unique to Mormons, in general the western trail experience was shared by hundreds of thousands of emigrants, Mormons and non-Mormons alike. Their wagons creaked through the same ruts, passed by the same landmarks, and struggled across the same endless expanse of the West.

Physical evidence of the Mormon Trail itself is difficult to locate across Iowa and Nebraska; because of the ample rainfall and rich farmland, vegetation and cultivation have long since obscured the trail.

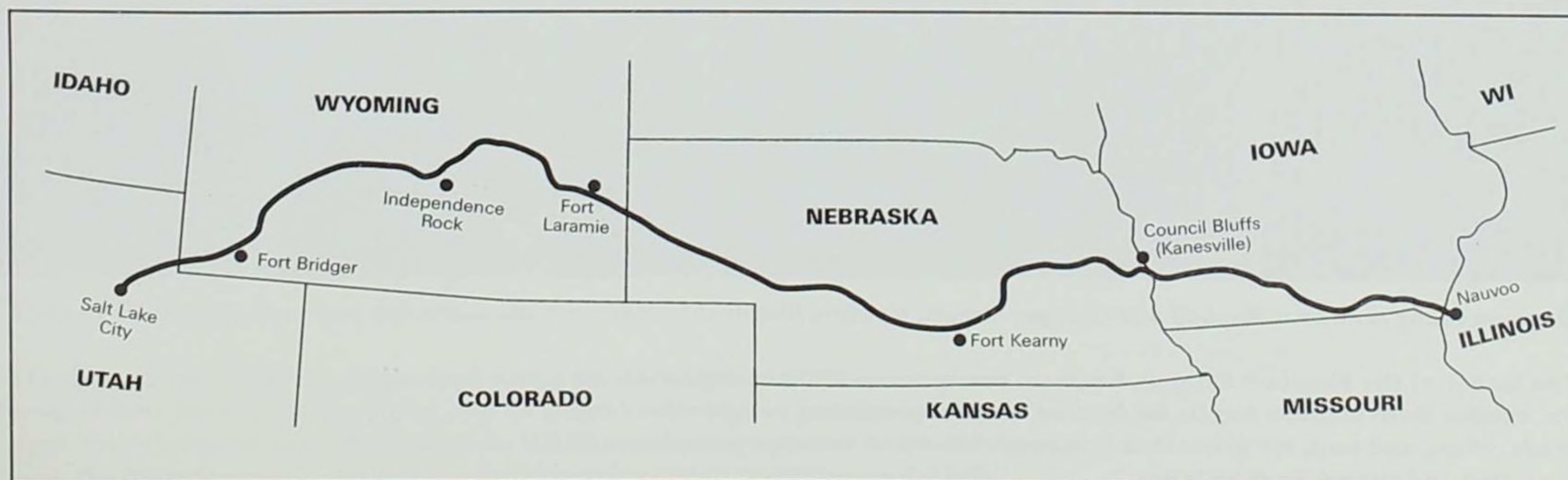
Occasionally, faint ruts may be found, for instance, near the Mormon Trail Park east of Bridgewater in Adair County. Trail enthusiasts in southern Iowa have been diligently searching for evidence of the trail in the southern tiers of counties, and there are many well-marked spots along the way that identify early campsites and way stations.

Once the trail enters the treeless grasslands of western Nebraska, where ranching has disturbed the land less than farming, ample evidence of the trail still may be seen. This is especially true after the Mormon Trail joins the California-Oregon Trail at Fort Laramie in Wyoming.

Yet recent changes are taking their toll. I often revisited a site two years after I had photographed it, only to discover that oil, water, and mining ventures, road construction, and rainfall and natural erosion were all taking their turn at erasing the original remains of the trail.

Seeing this happen before my eyes, I realized that I was documenting a part of our past that in this lifetime would be considerably diminished. Starting on the next page, then, is my late 20th-century view of the mid-19th-century Mormon Trail, through Iowa and beyond.

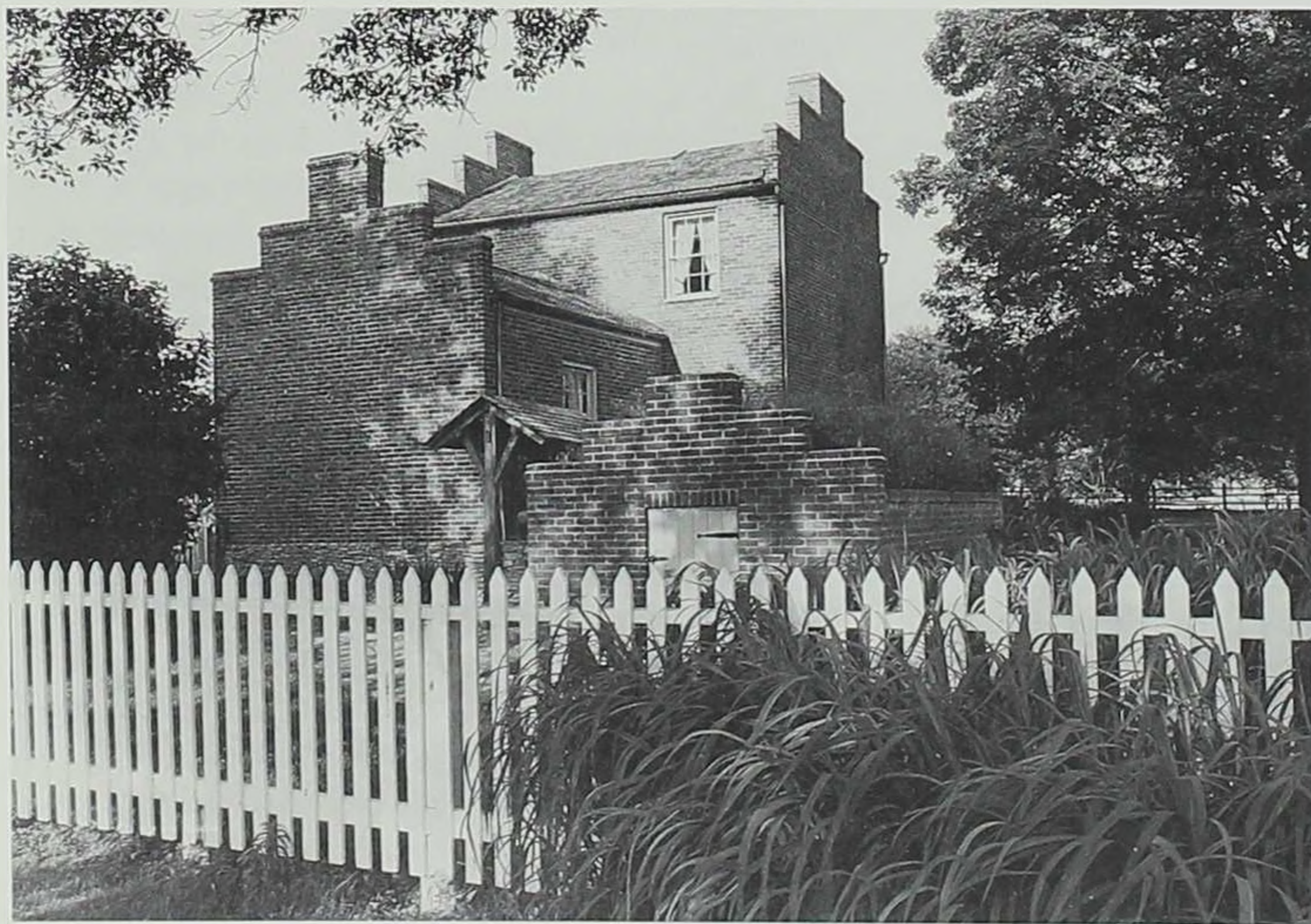
*Greg MacGregor is professor of photography at California State University, Hayward, and author of *Overland: The California Emigrant Trail of 1841-1870* (University of New Mexico Press, 1996). His work will appear in an exhibit in the Western Historic Trails Center in Council Bluffs, opening this October.*





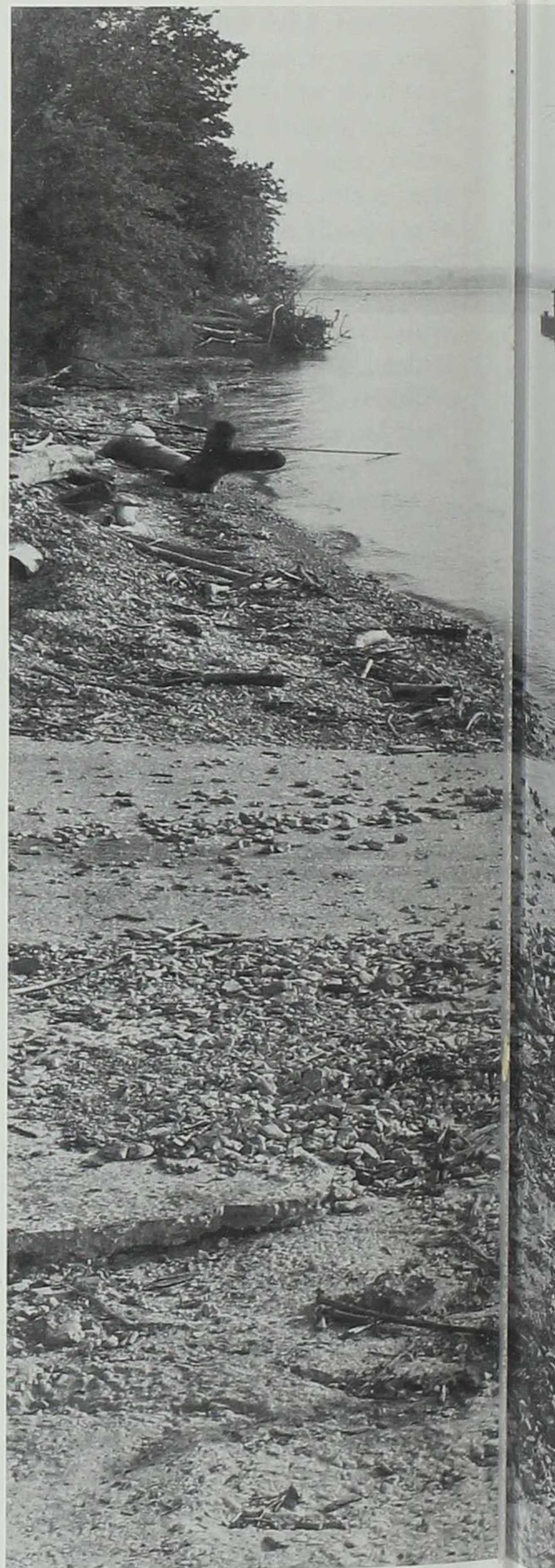
**F**oundation remains of original Mormon temple, Nauvoo, Illinois.

The story of the Mormon Trail starts in Nauvoo, where members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had established a faithful and industrious community. But persecution from the outside led to mob violence and the murder of Mormon prophet Joseph Smith Jr. and others. In early 1846, a three-part exodus began; by year's end, more than 13,000 Saints had fled Nauvoo.



**B**righam Young residence, Kimball and Granger Streets, Nauvoo, Illinois.

The leader of the Mormon Church, Brigham Young was a brilliant organizer. As the exodus from Nauvoo began, he divided the Mormons into companies of hundreds, fifties, and tens. He knew that crossing Iowa was a necessary step to reach unsettled and therefore safer land.

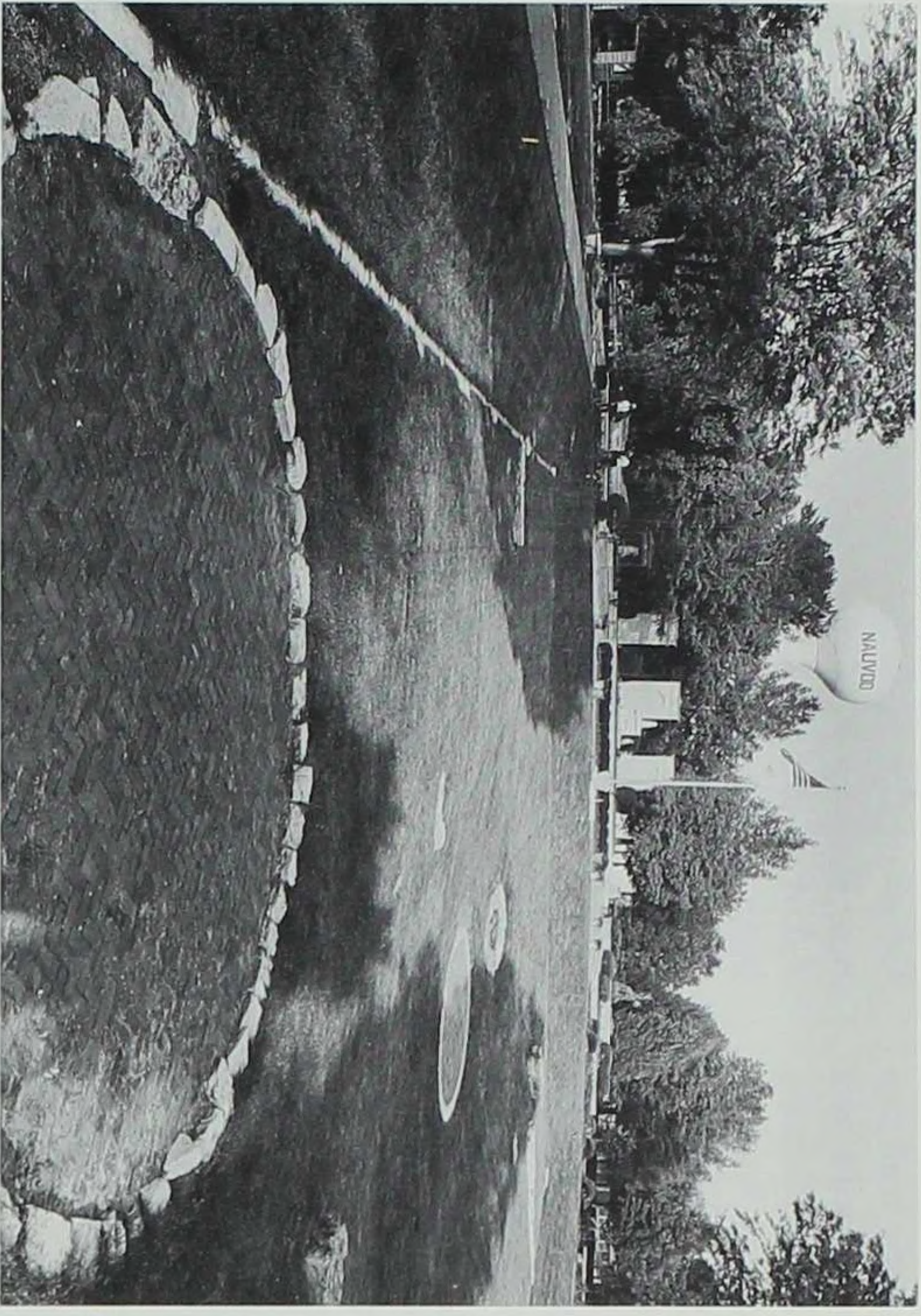




*View of Mississippi River and departure site from Nauvoo.*

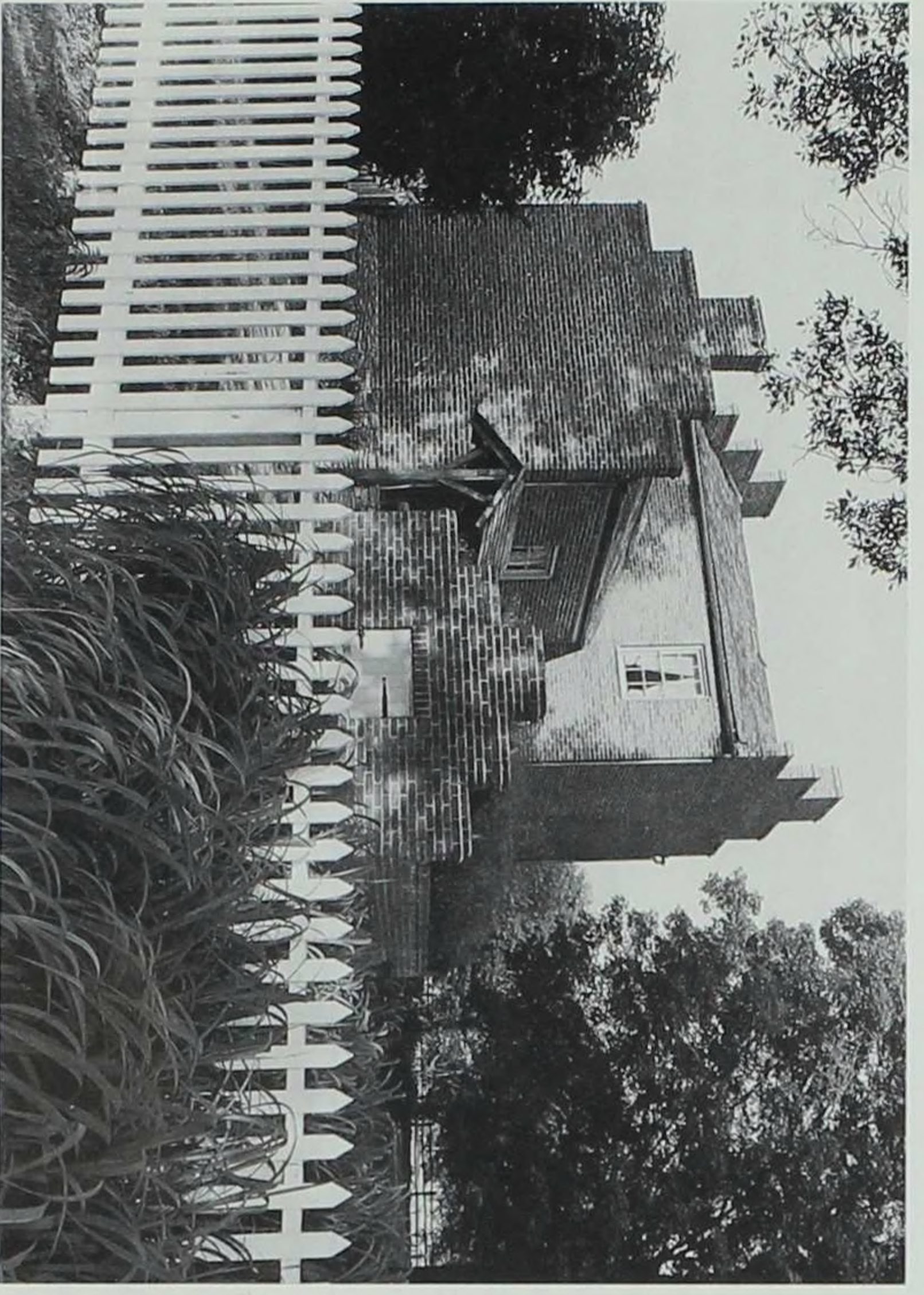
The first obstacle was the Mississippi, which bordered Nauvoo. Mormons first crossed over here, by ferries, rafts, and flatboats, to Montrose, Iowa (from left to right above). About a hundred yards up the Illinois shore, a plaque reads: "Near here the Mormon exodus to the Rocky Mountains began on February 4, 1846."





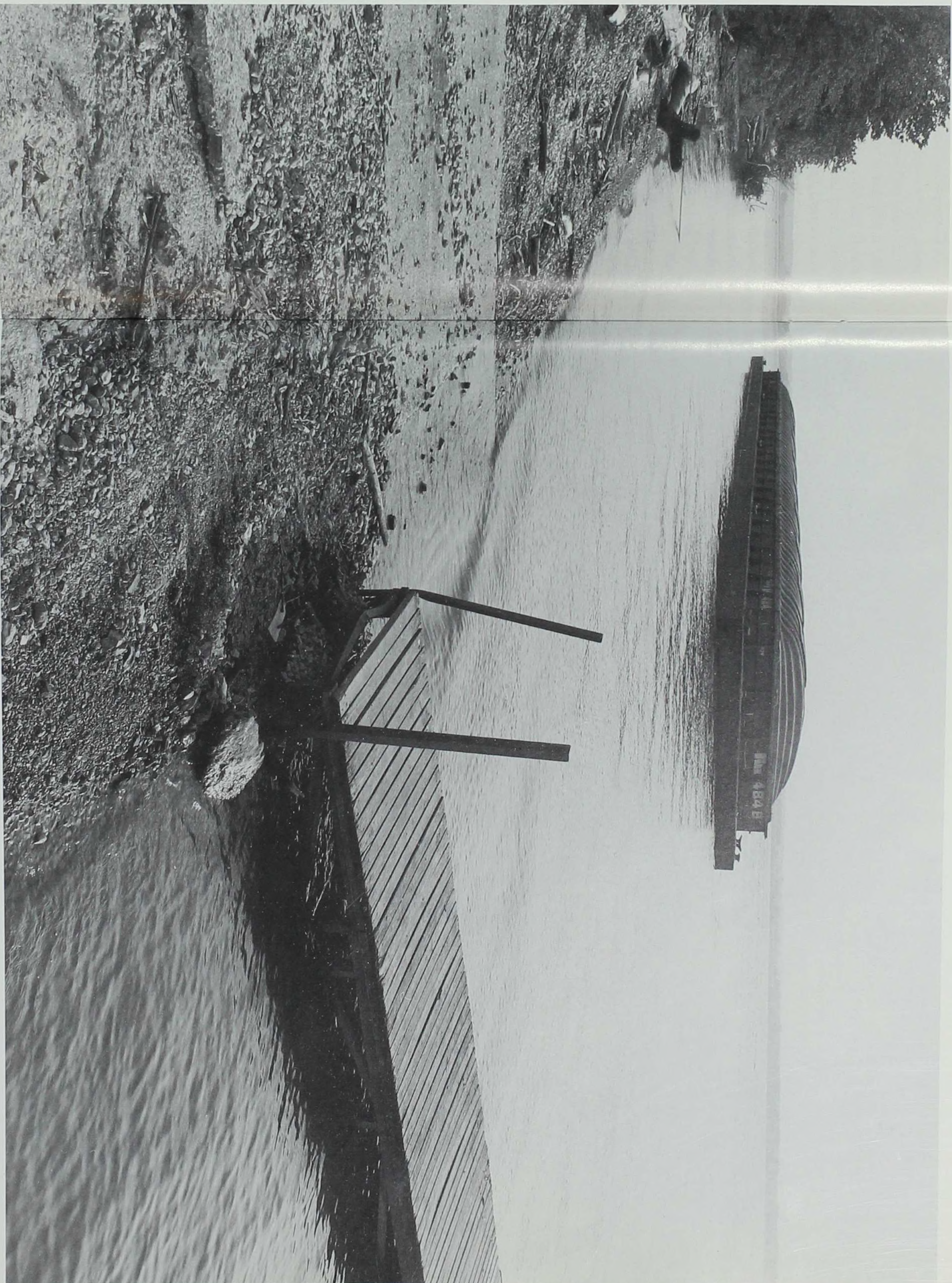
**Foundation remains of original Mormon temple, Nauvoo, Illinois.**

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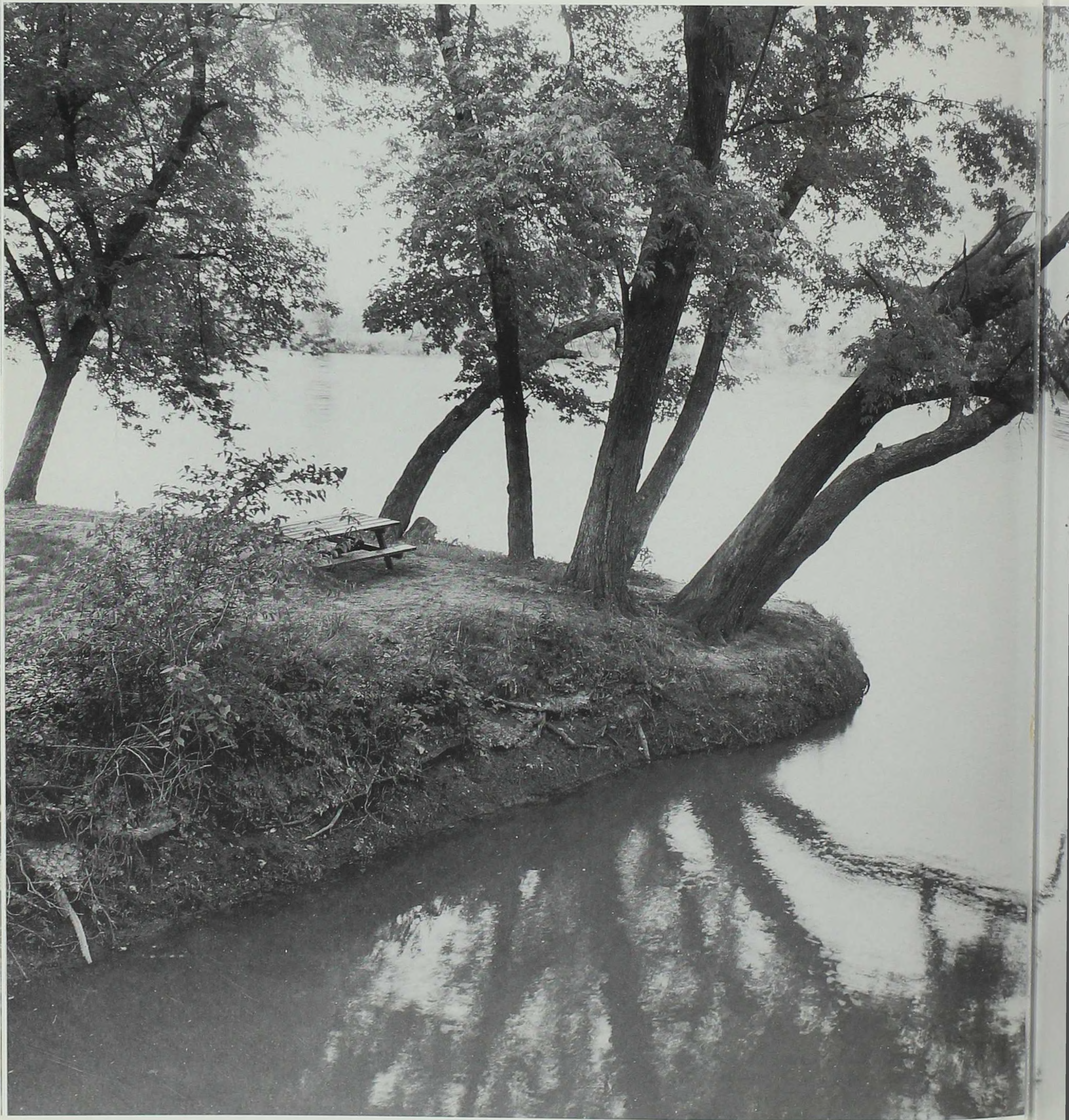
**Brigham Young residence, Kimball and Granger Streets, Nauvoo, Illinois.**

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**View of Mississippi River and departure site from Nauvoo.**

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**Ely's Ford, Van Buren County, Iowa.**

Ely's Ford is a site where Mormons crossed the Des Moines River. (The crossing occurred just to the left of where the picnic table appears here.) Marked by a monument, this area is now in Lacey-Keosauqua Park.

For all emigrants on western trails, crossing rivers and streams could be treacherous unless shallow places to ford were located. The first Mormon companies to head across Iowa built bridges for the several thousand Mormons who would follow over the next few years.



**Site of Locust Creek Campground in Wayne County, 106 miles west of Nauvoo.**

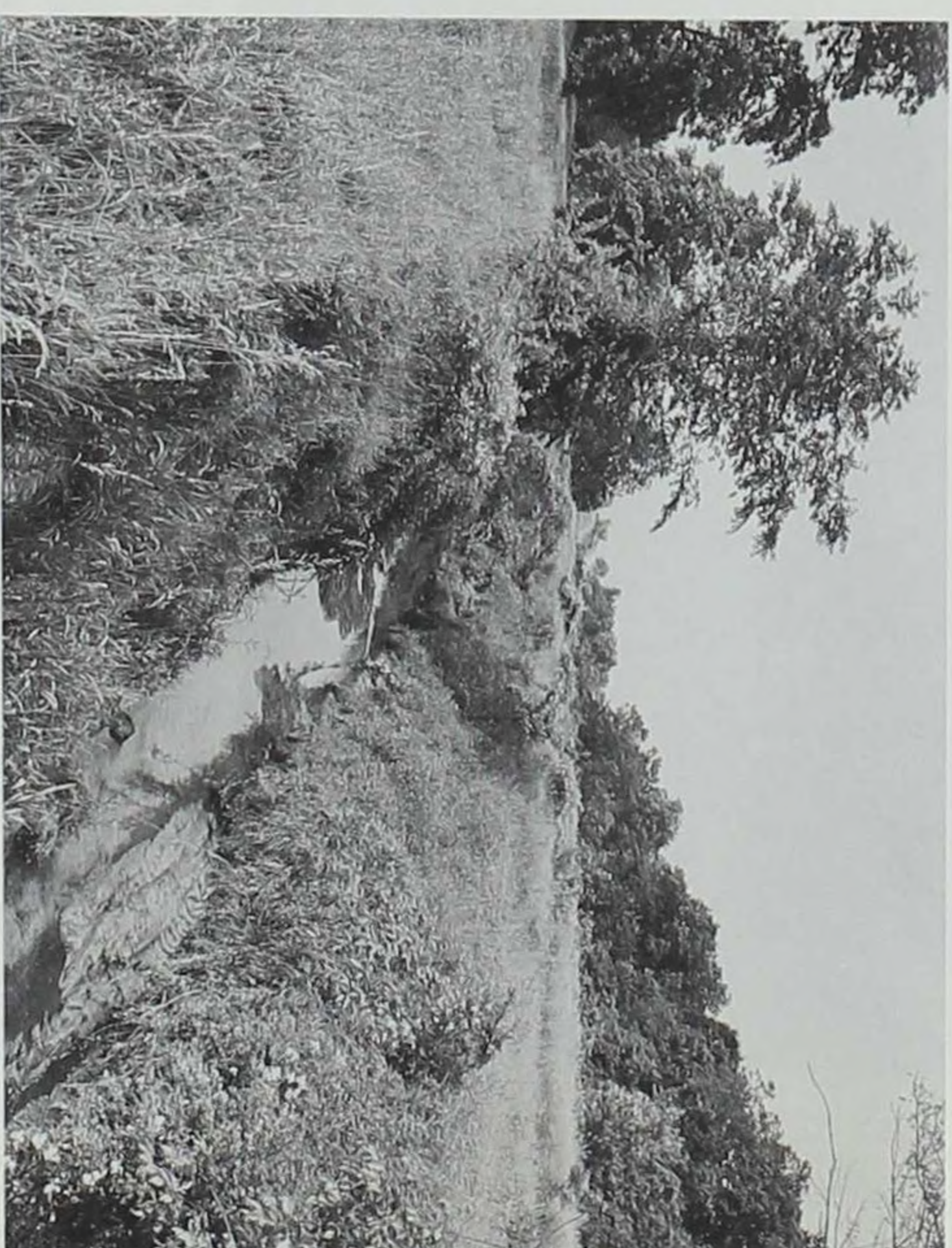
Mormons camped on a nearby ridge and in the flat grassy areas on both sides of Locust Creek and drew water from it. It was at this campsite that William Clayton wrote the words to the Mormon hymn "All Is Well" on hearing that his son had been born safely in Nauvoo. (The hymn was later renamed "Come, Come, Ye Saints.") In a nearby cemetery, a bronze marker commemorates the event.



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*View of Council Bluffs, Iowa, at dusk, looking toward Omaha, Nebraska.*

First named Kanesville, Council Bluffs served as a cohesive religious community for Mormons who had not yet moved on to the Great Salt Lake. It also thrived as a staging area for non-Mormon emigrants headed to Oregon and California. Kanesville businesses competed against outfitters in St. Joseph and Independence, Missouri, and the local *Frontier Guardian* recommended the best departure dates, routes, and supplies to the stream of emigrants ready to cross the Missouri River. Although the *Frontier Guardian* warned its Mormon readers against the vice and depravity that gold-seekers would bring to the town, it also promoted Kanesville as the best jumping-off place for the gold rush.



**Pioneer wagon and reconstructed cabin, Winter Quarters, Omaha, Nebraska.**

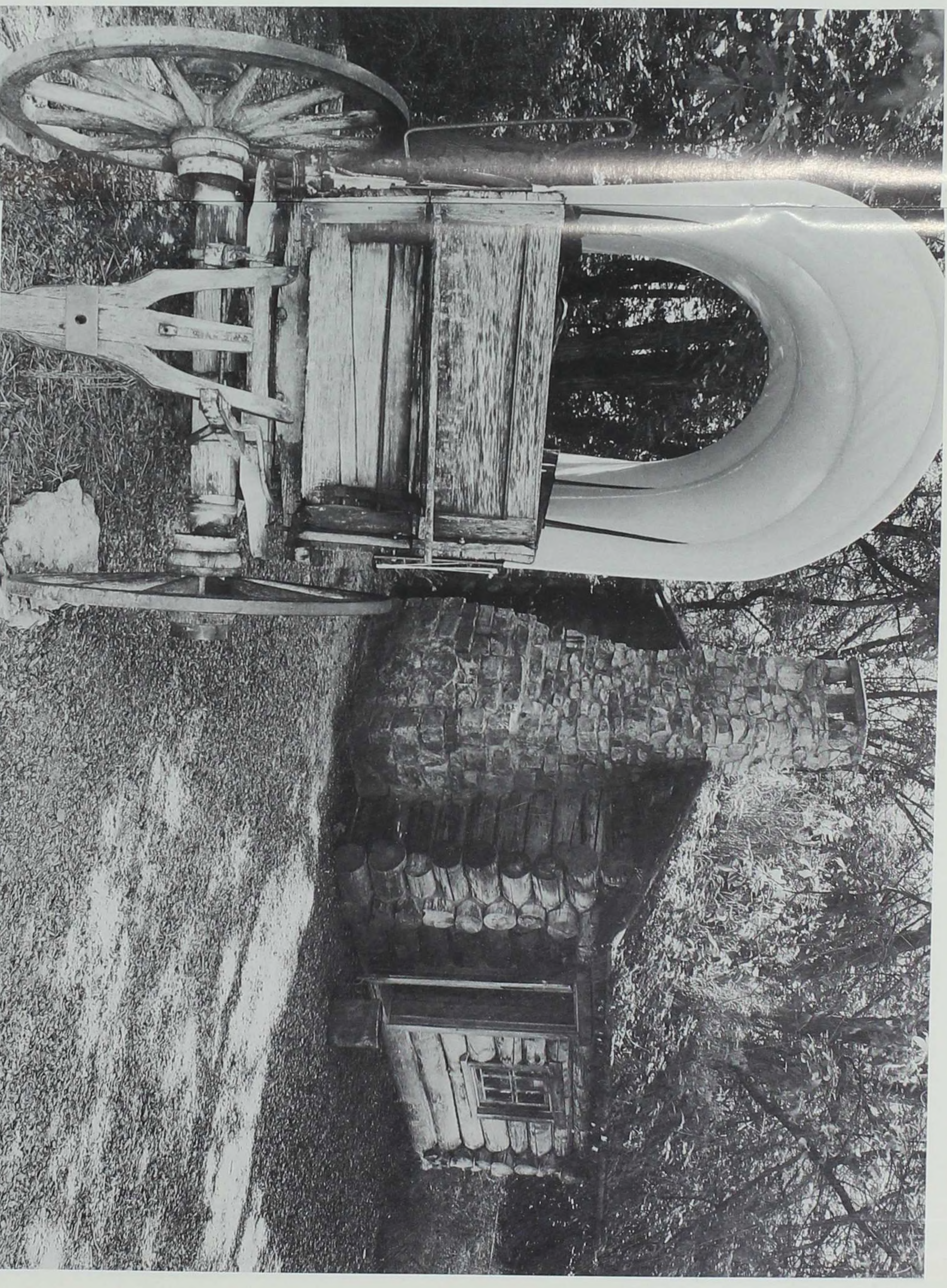
A historic site and visitors center in Omaha commemorate the Mormons' first winter beyond Nauvoo. Those who had forged the trail across southern Iowa reached the Missouri River by the summer of 1846, but it was already too late in the year to continue across the Great Plains. Mormons wintered over on both sides of the Missouri River, in Kaneshville and surrounding hamlets in Iowa, and in Winter Quarters on the west side.

Spring was the best departure time, while there was still sufficient grass for livestock and sufficient time to cross the high passes before early snows. The wagon most suited for the trip west was a covered farm wagon with a short wheel base (as typified here). The long, swayback Conestoga wagon depicted in so many Hollywood westerns would have been too heavy and could not have made the tight turns, handled the mud, or negotiated steep crossings at creeks.



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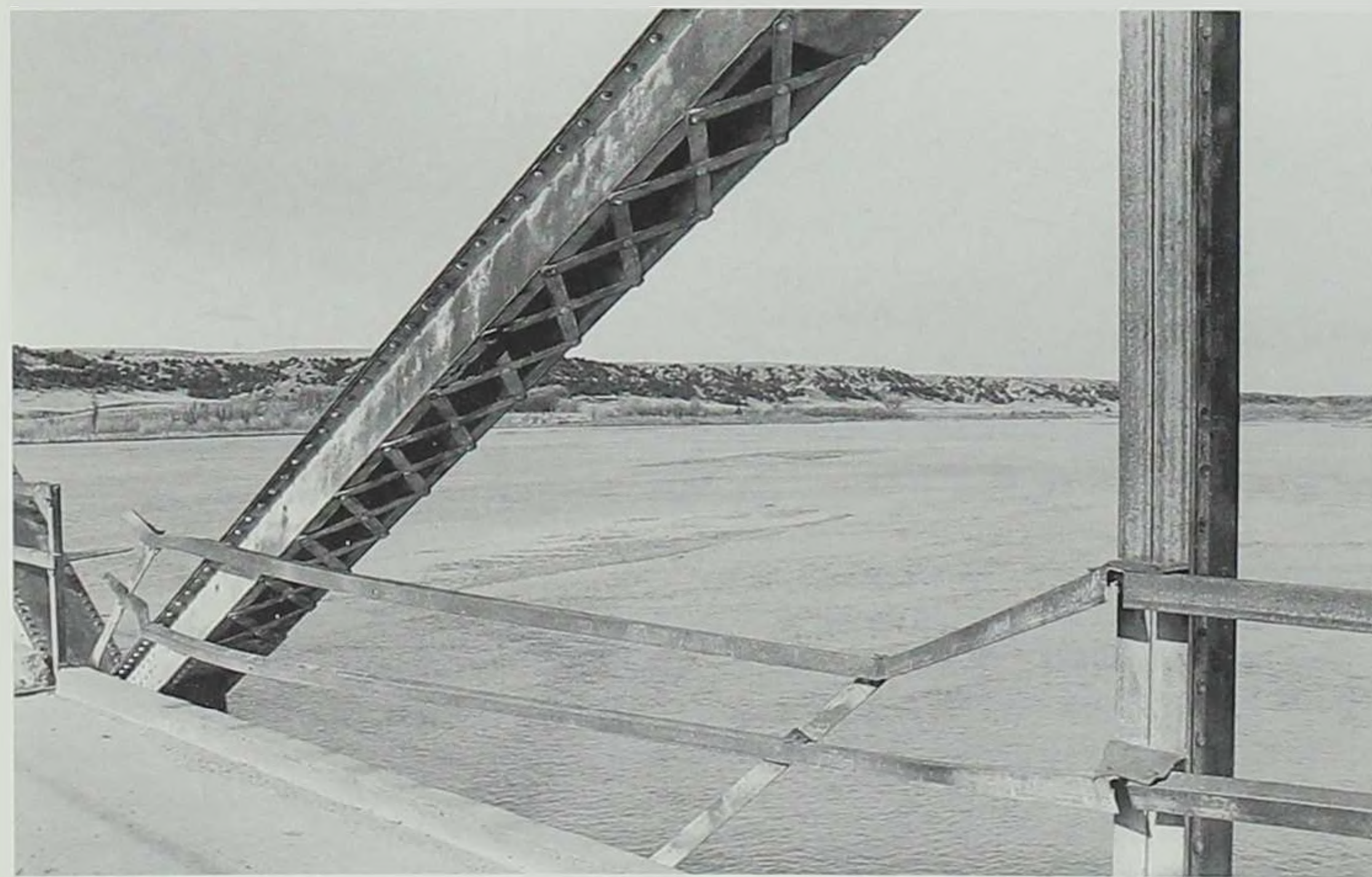
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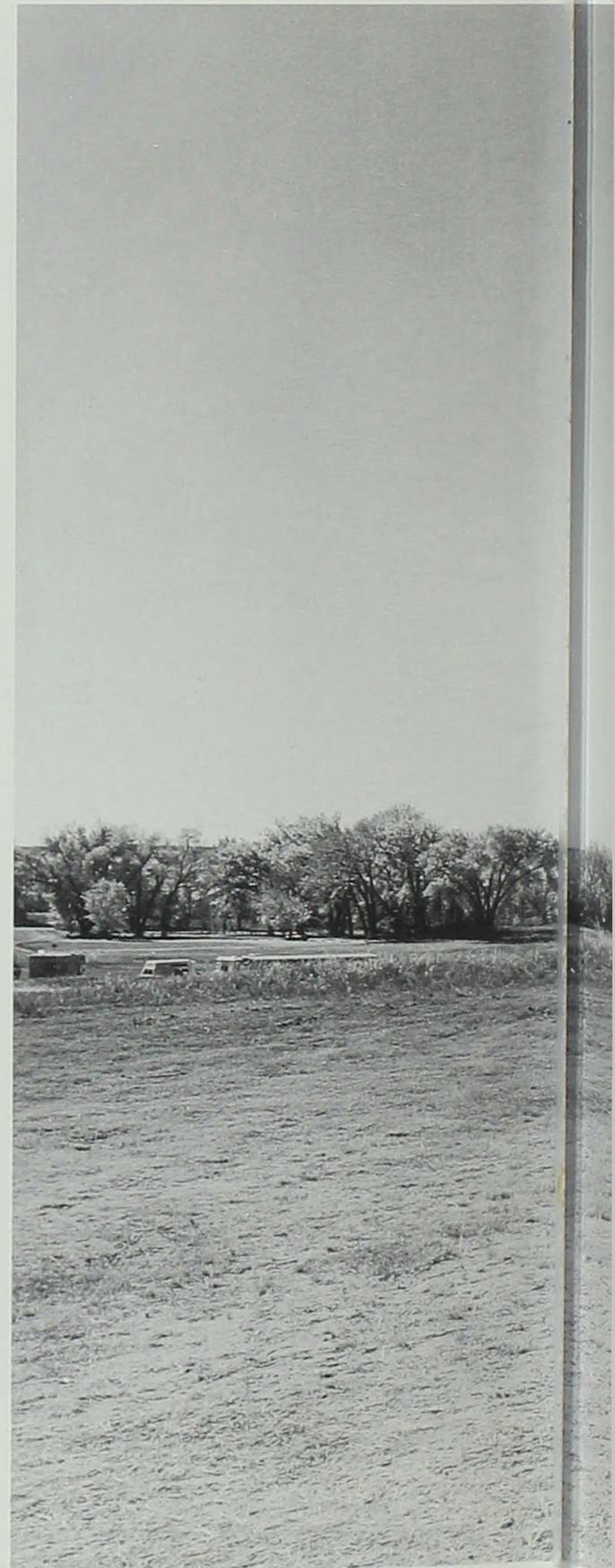
**T**ree stumps at site of Kearny City, Nebraska.

Kearny City (or Dolbytown), two miles west of Fort Kearny, was a cluster of about 15 squalid adobe huts that housed the hangers-on, dropouts, and marginal traders who often settled near military outposts. Near Fort Kearny, the Mormon Trail converged with migration trails from Independence and St. Joseph. Historians generally agree that, for the most part, the Mormon Trail ran on the north bank of the Platte, so that Mormons could maintain distance from those on the south bank—gold-seekers and other non-Mormons bound for California and Oregon. However, both groups made many crossings, to avoid high-water impasses or to buy supplies from forts or independent traders.



**B**roken guard rail, North Platte River, Lewellen, Nebraska.

A mile wide and a foot deep, the North Platte had a distinct difference from the torrid South Platte: its placid current. The shallowness surprised emigrants familiar with eastern rivers.







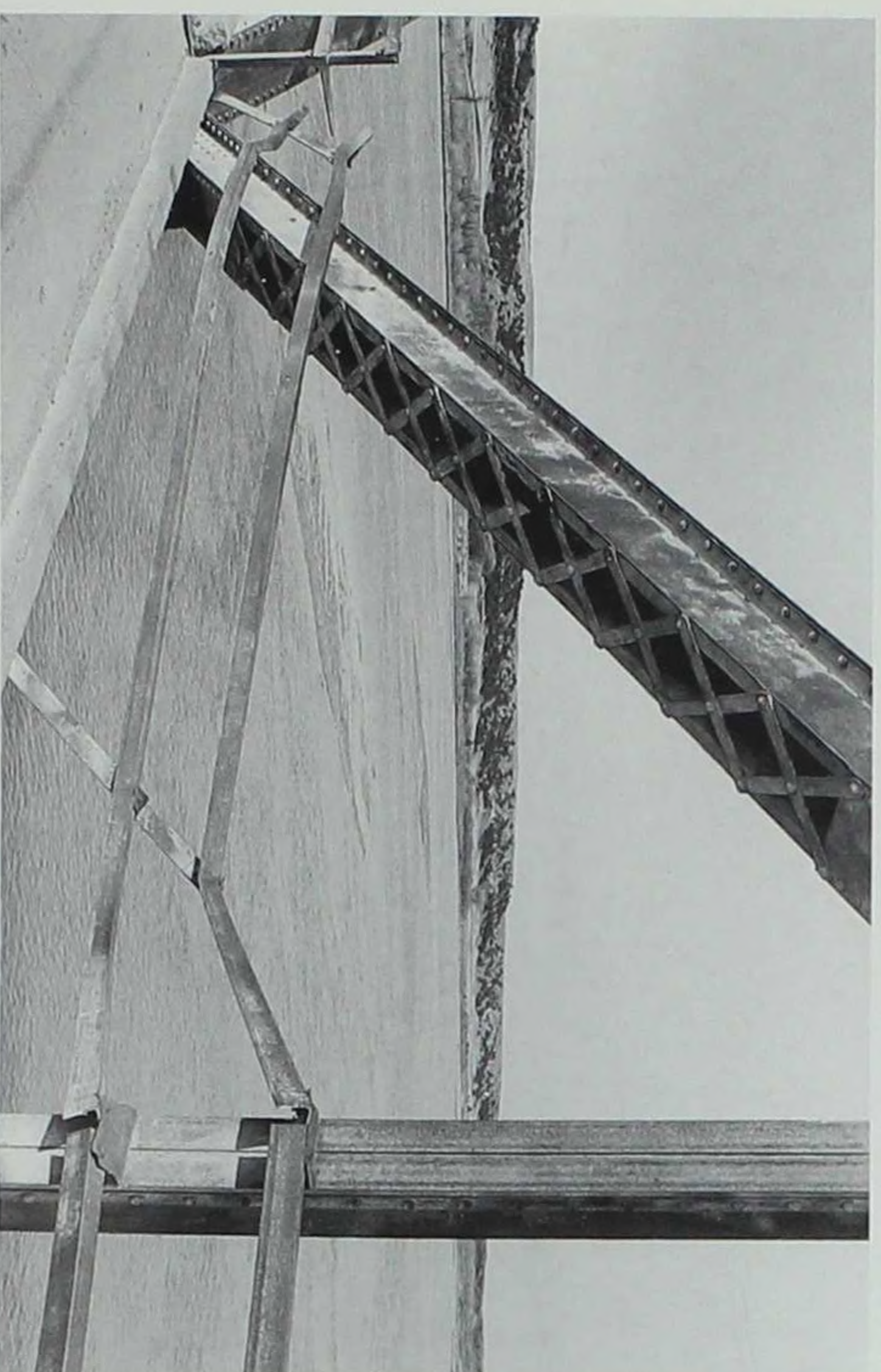
**H**ospital ruins, Fort Laramie, Wyoming.

At Fort Laramie, the Mormon Trail crossed the North Platte and joined the California-Oregon Trail. The fort was built to protect travelers and serve as a supply and repair station. An additional and historically valuable function was to keep a head count of the emigrant traffic passing through.



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*Deep ruts in sandstone, near Guernsey, Wyoming.*

These ruts show the typical approach to ascending a hill—straight up the fall line. Because the trail was not graded, wagons often tipped over if the drivers attempted to climb hills gently along a contour line. If that kind of ascent was unavoidable, however, ropes were connected to the uphill side of the wagon. Several people walked along the wagon, holding the ropes to keep the wagon as vertical as possible. The usual reason for climbing a hill like this would be to get across a ridge to the flattest route possible. River bottoms were used for campsites because of their proximity to grass and water, but the trail was usually well away from the banks. Water levels could change considerably during a migration season, wiping out sections of trail during high water.



*Emigrant grave and power plant, Douglas County, Wyoming.*

A. H. Unthank is believed to have died of cholera or dysentery and was buried here. The date on the headstone reads July 2, 1850. One week earlier he had carved his name on nearby Register Cliff, where it is still visible.

There was a general outbreak of cholera in the United States about this time, and it was intensified on the trail because of unsanitary water and water holes used by both humans and animals. Cholera could strike quickly. A person might show the first symptoms in the morning and be dead by nightfall.

Most emigrants were not buried with this much care or with a carved headstone and footstone. A more typical grave was a shallow trench about 18 inches deep, covered with a single layer of random rocks and marked with a wooden stake or cross. Another common technique was to bury the dead on the trail without a rock covering, and to then drive wagons over the site. This confused the scent for coyotes and wolves, and erased signs of digging for grave robbers after the clothing. This had mixed success; diaries comment on seeing scattered bones and freshly opened graves along the trail.

The county road visible here is on top of the trail.





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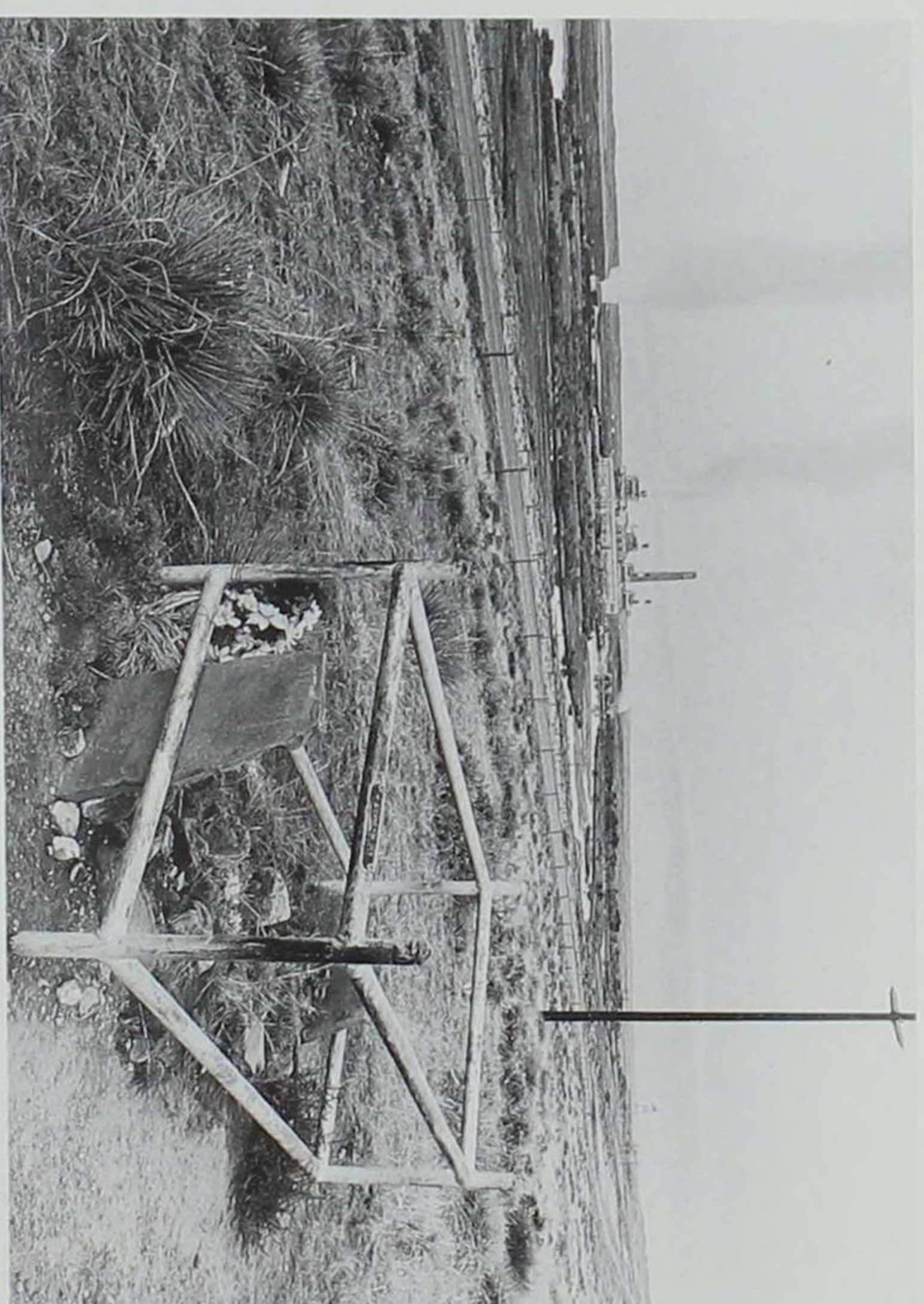
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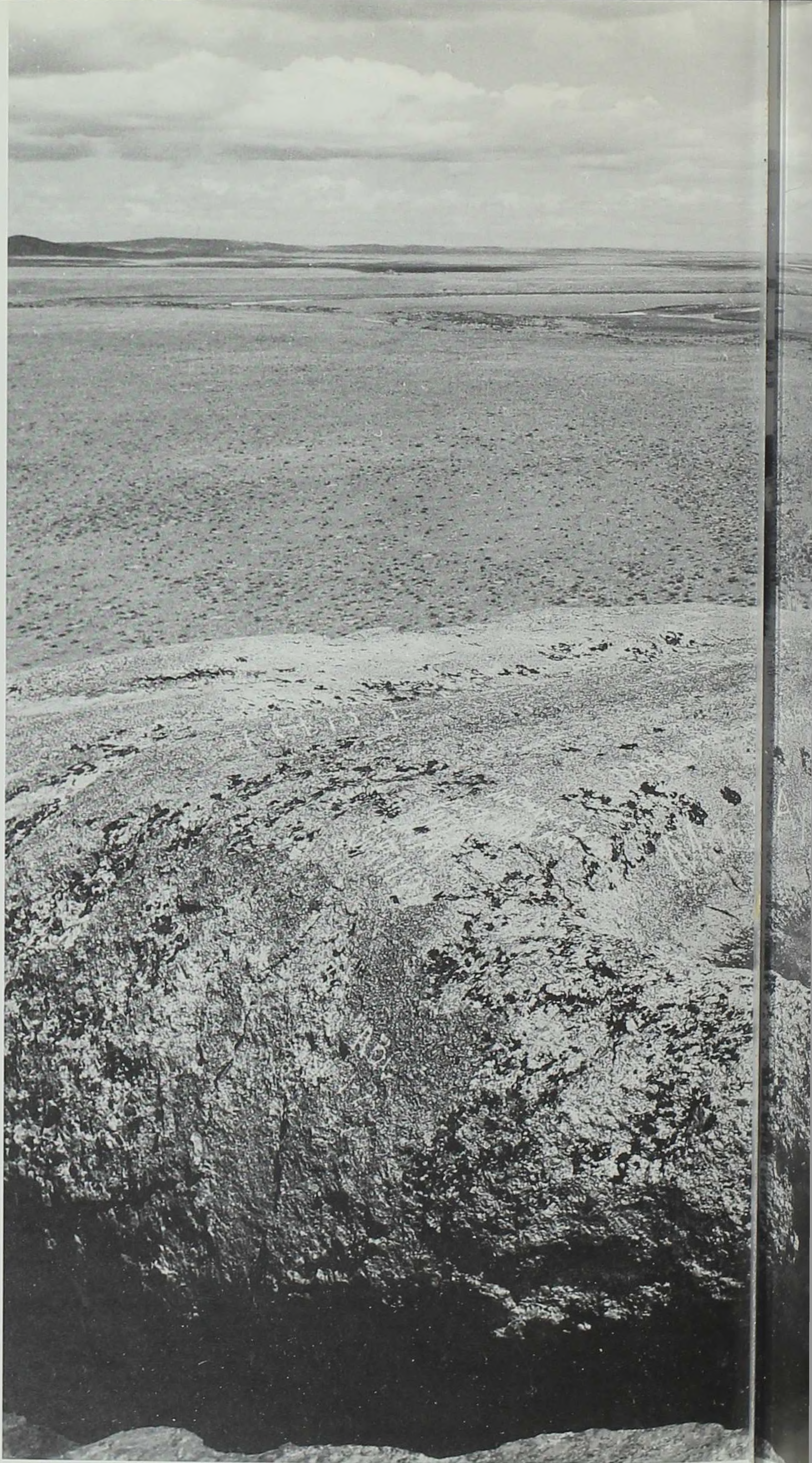
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*View from the top of Independence Rock, Wyoming. "Milo J. Ayer, age 29, 1849" graffiti.*

Independence Rock is a turtle-shaped granite rock, 200 feet high and a quarter-mile long. It looms above a high arid region, flat until this point. Its name reflects its importance as a milestone along the trail. If the rock was reached by the Fourth of July, emigrants knew they were on schedule to arrive in California before the Sierra snows began. The entire surface of the rock is peppered with graffiti, still visible today. Because the trail joined the Sweetwater River here, this was a major campsite, giving emigrants ample time to add their initials to Independence Rock.







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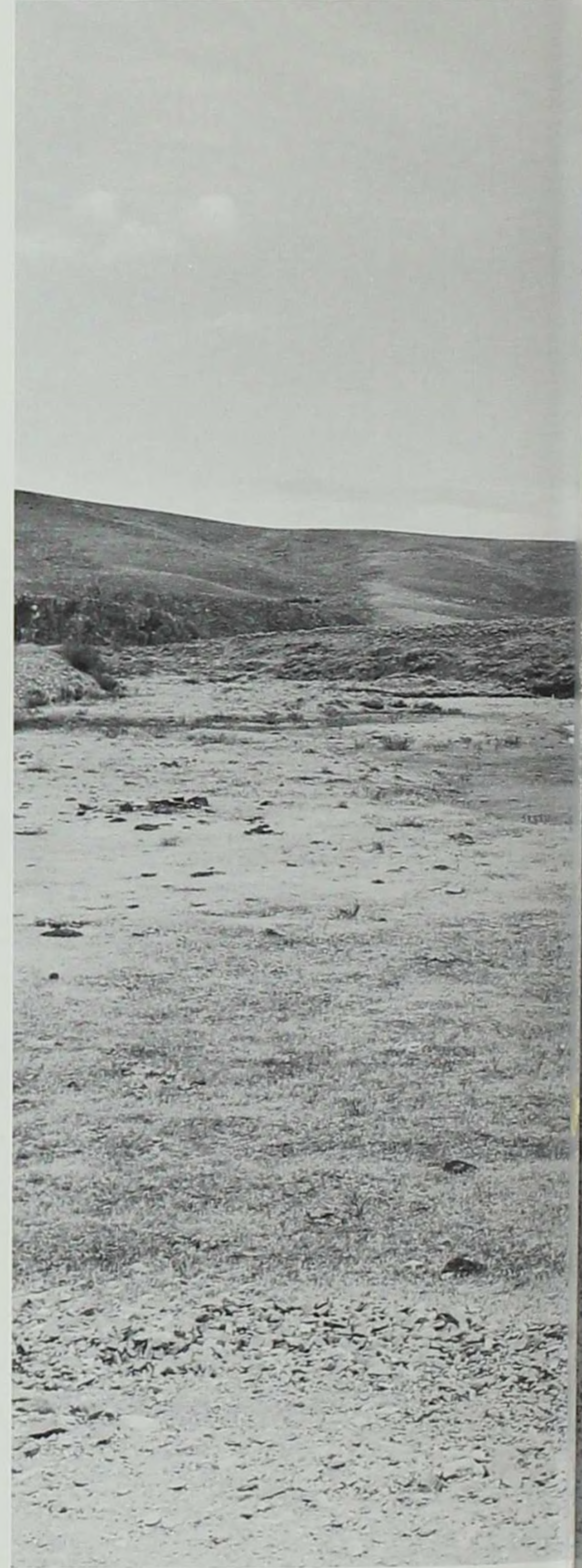
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**D**evil's Gate, Natrona County, Wyoming.

Devil's Gate is just eight miles from Independence Rock. The Sweetwater River cuts through this gorge, but the trail took a short detour around it. Apparently almost all who passed took the brief walk off the trail to peer into the 500-foot-deep gap. The area has several graves, and emigrant names are cut into the rocks. Diaries frequently mention this site.

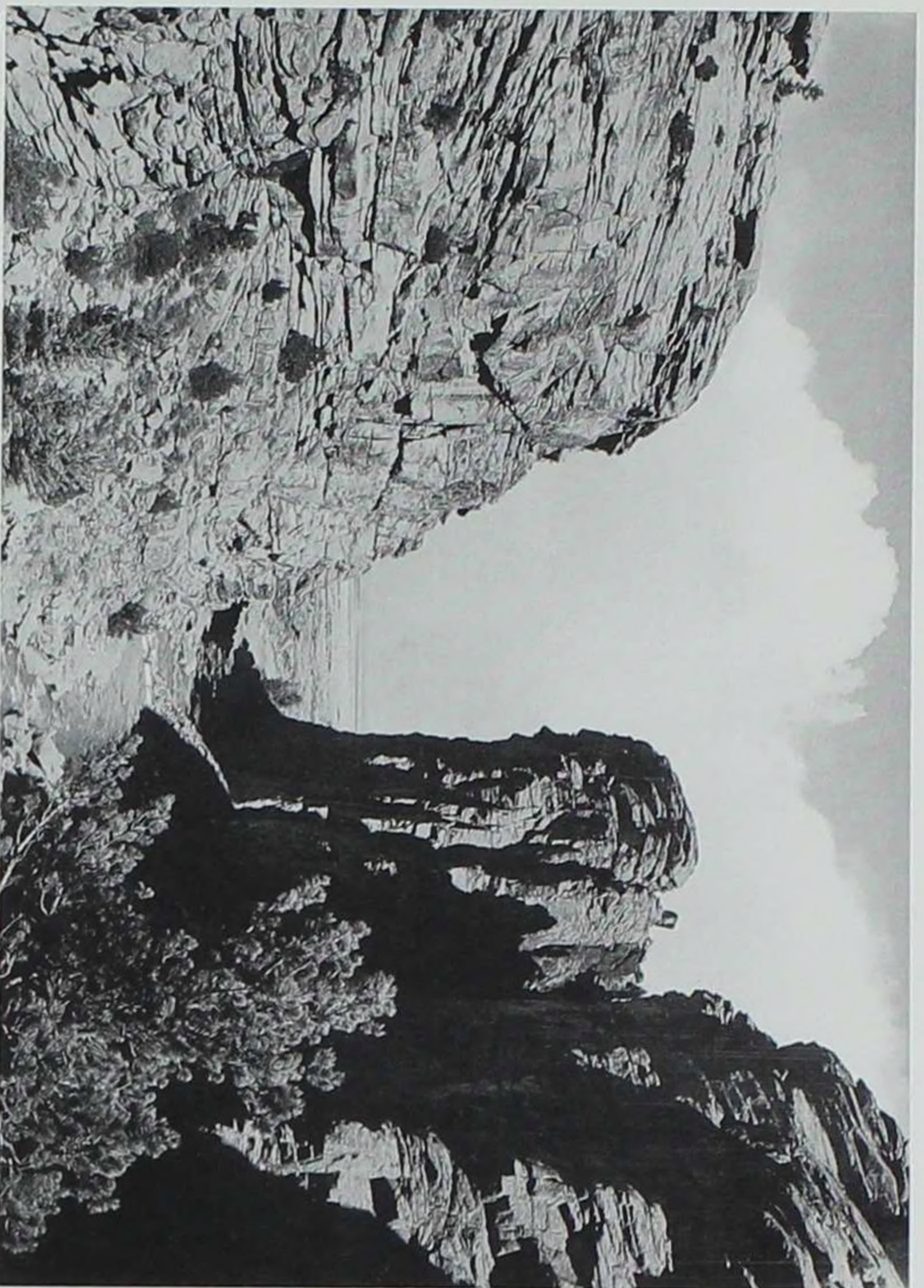




**H**andcart disaster site, Rock Creek crossing, Wyoming.

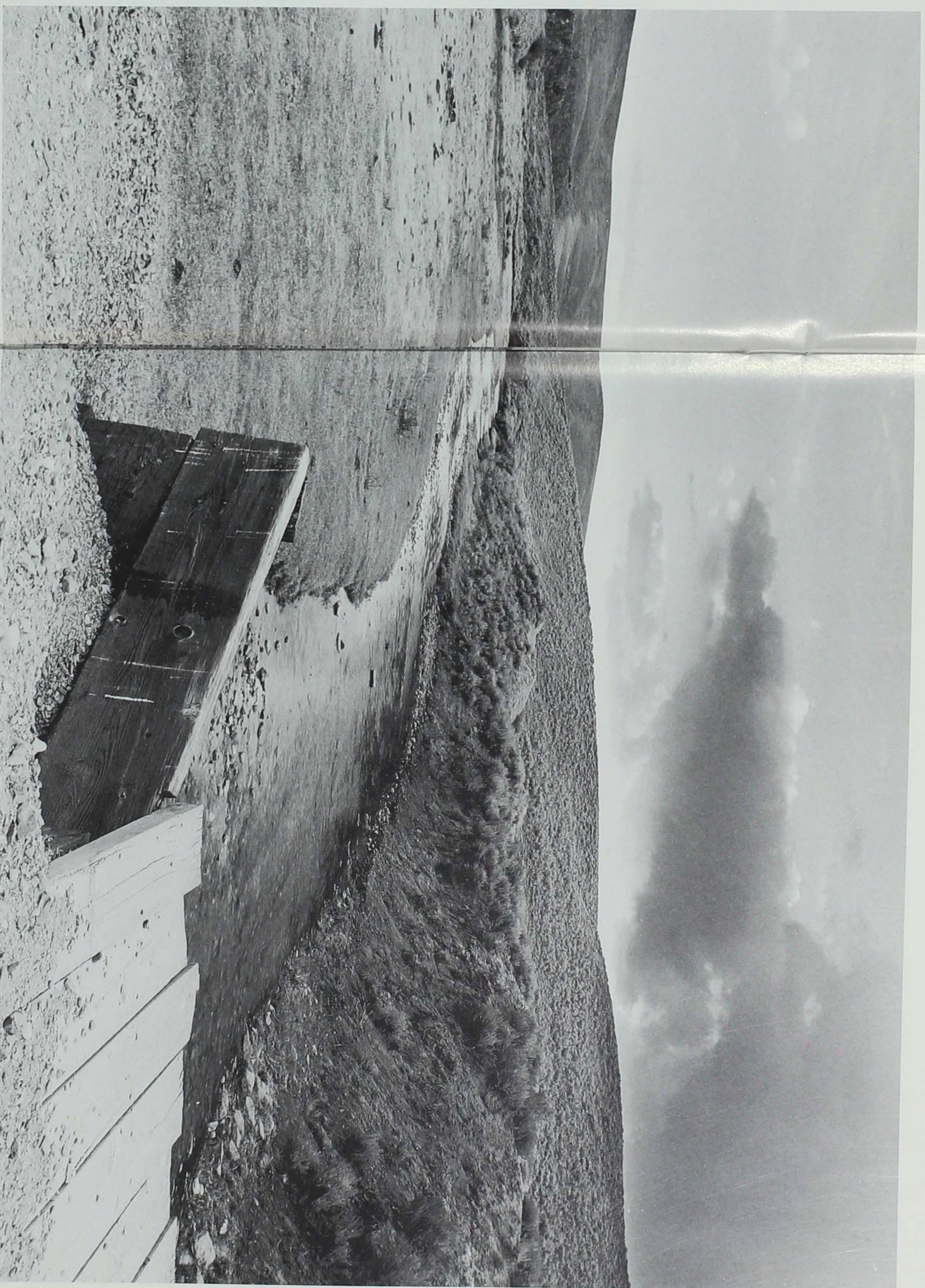
On this peaceful creek bank, 67 members of the James G. Willie Company froze to death when heavy snows started in October 1856. Over the captain's objections, this handcart company of some 400 emigrants had decided to begin their trip despite a late start.

Handcarts were used by the second major wave of Mormon migration—some 3,000 European converts from 1856 through 1860. In general, the Mormon migration was highly organized, from the recruiting efforts in the East and Europe, to the relay teams in Salt Lake that brought supplies to companies on the trail. In contrast, California and Oregon travelers were left to their own resources and had about twice the distance to go.



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Handcarts were used by the second major wave of Mormon migration—some 3,000 European converts from 1856 through 1860. In general, the Mormon migration was highly organized, from the recruiting efforts in the East and Europe, to the relay teams in Salt Lake that brought supplies to companies on the trail. In contrast, California and Oregon travelers were left to their own resources and had about twice the distance to go.



**S**outh Pass summit, Continental Divide, Lincoln County, Wyoming.

South Pass, the Continental Divide on the trail in Wyoming, was discovered in 1812 by trappers heading east from Astoria, Oregon. The land is almost flat here, and the original trail was five or six ruts wide. The large marker in the foreground was carved and placed by Ezra Meeker in 1906. He had traveled west as an emigrant 56 years earlier and made this return trip with a mule-drawn wagon to promote and popularize the trail. The distant marker, placed in 1916, reads, "Narcissa Prentiss Whitman, Elizabeth Spalding. First white women to cross this pass, July 4, 1836." They were in a missionary party heading to Oregon.



**E**xcauation of Mormon wall, Fort Bridger, Wyoming.

After crossing South Pass summit of the Continental Divide, the Mormon trail headed south to Fort Bridger. The fort began as a trading post; in 1855 the Saints purchased it, and it became an important defense and resupply station for them. The dry cobblestone strip in the foreground is part of a defensive wall, all that remains of the 1850s fort.



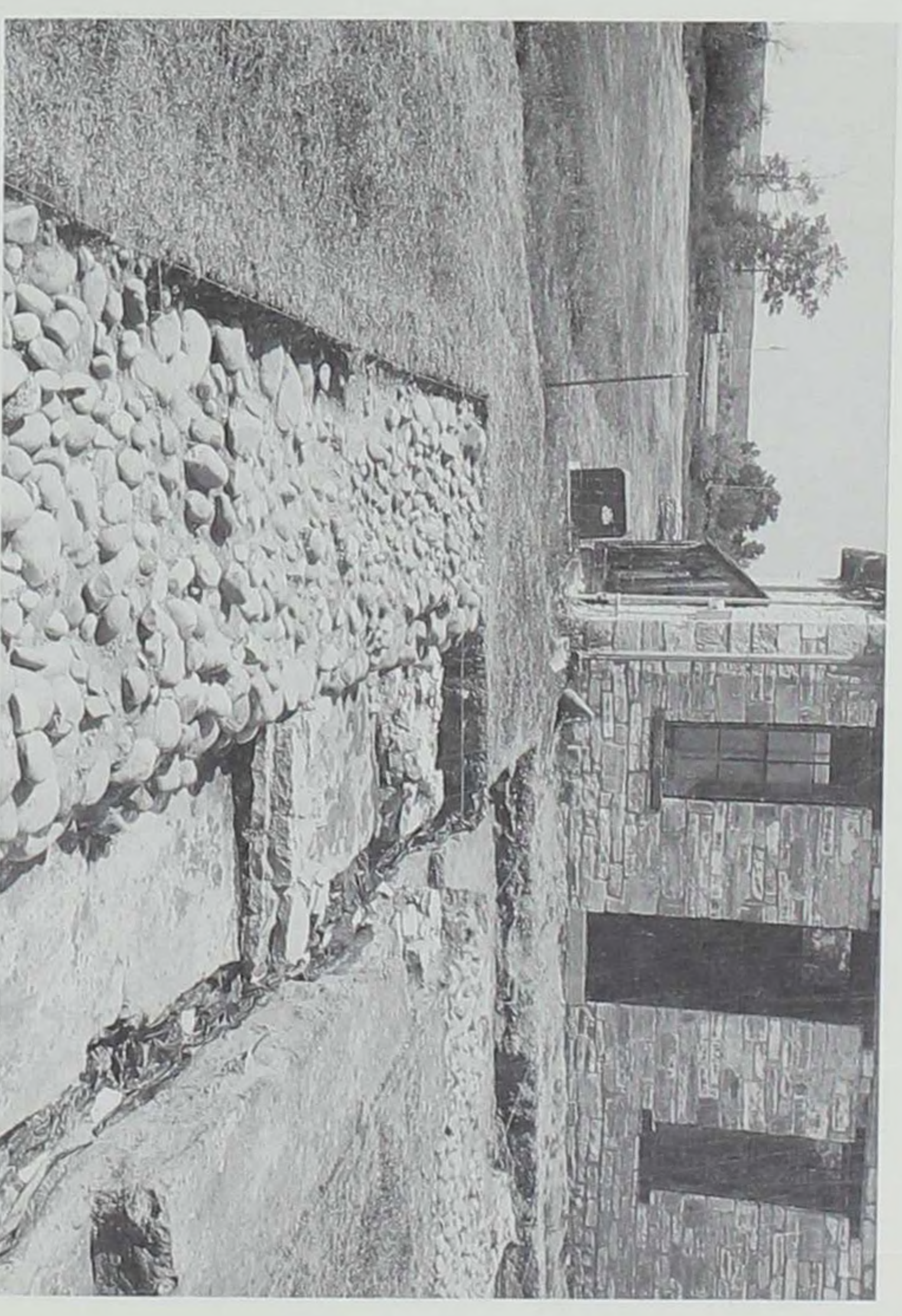
**R**ock arrow and trail, west of Fort Bridger.

This unusual rock formation in the shape of an arrow and sunk into the soil (lower right) was recently discovered on the early section of the trail leaving Fort Bridger. Pointing west and just to the right of the trail, it could have been created by Mormons, other emigrant parties, the U.S. military, or Native Americans. No mention of it has yet been found in emigrant diaries.



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*Trail through The Needles on Coyote Creek, Uinta County, Wyoming.*

About 50 miles west of Fort Bridger, The Needles takes its name from the unusual rock formations in an otherwise treeless and featureless landscape. In Mormon history this site was named "Sick Camp" after Brigham Young became ill here on July 12, 1847, and had to delay travel.

This section of trail had been opened the year before as the infamous "Hastings Cutoff" to California. The shortcut turned out to be a "long cut" and cost the Donner-Reed Party two extra months of travel and many lives. Practical as far as the Great Salt Lake, the trail became the main Mormon route in the area.



**C**ache Cave, Summit County, Utah.

A unique feature on the flat terrain of western trails, this cave was named after the practice of early trappers to cache their extra supplies. In 1847 Mormon emigrants passed by; several noted it in their journals. Carved in and around the cave are 150 names dating from the 1820s to the 1870s, and the cliffs nearby bear many more names, including members of Brigham Young's Pioneer Company.

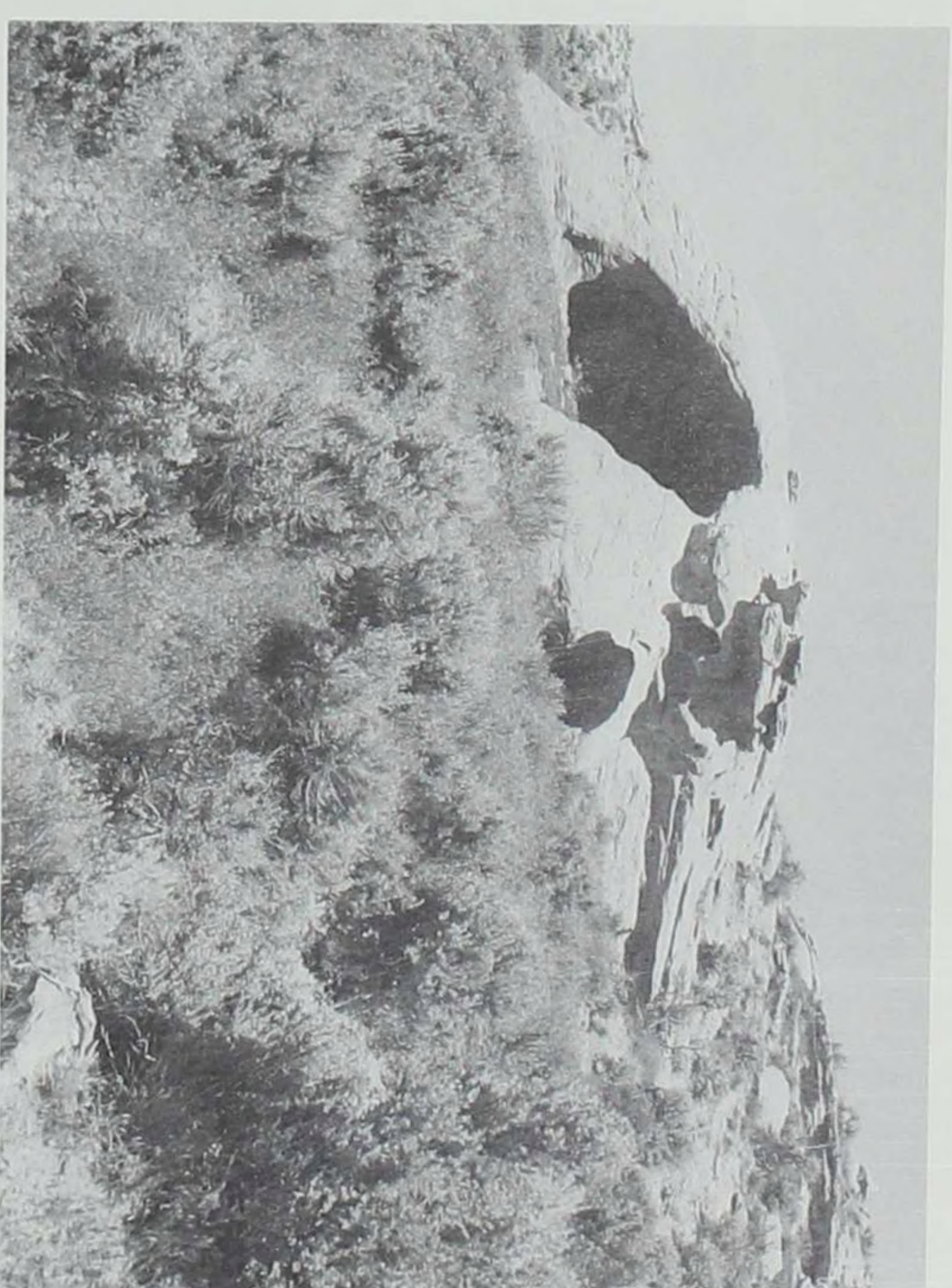




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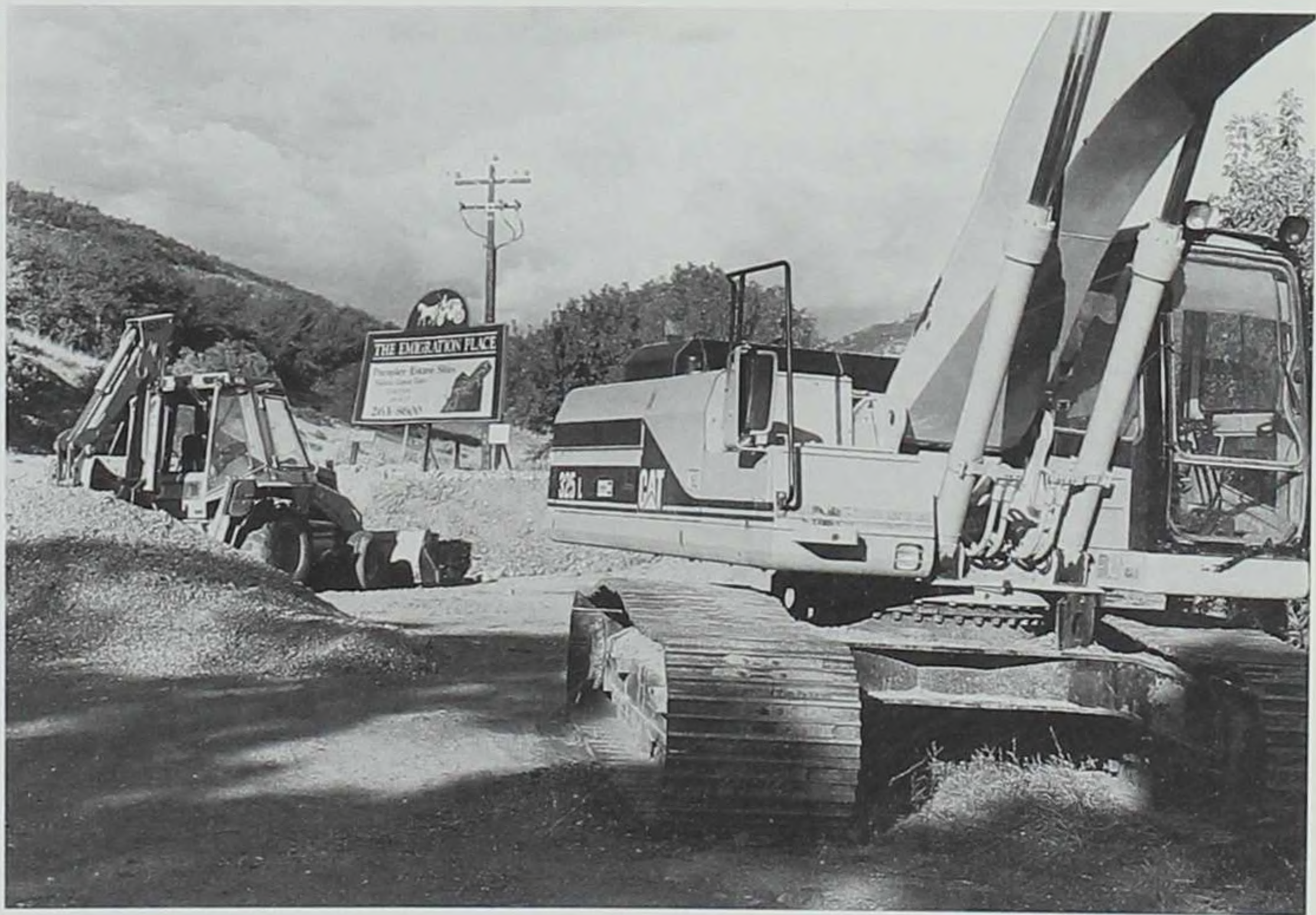
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**M**ormon breastwork above Interstate 80, Echo Canyon, Utah.

In this "narrows" section of Echo Canyon, Mormons placed this pile of rocks (in foreground) as they prepared for a federal invasion in 1857. A similar breastwork is located on the opposite side of the canyon. The Mormons also planned to dam up the small creek in the canyon to create a lake, reasoning that federal troops could be stopped easily and fired upon from this position.

Non-Mormons had stirred up the conflict through their false reports of a Mormon revolt against U.S. law. Outright bloodshed was averted, but the federal government did send troops that occupied the Salt Lake basin.



**C**onstruction site, Emigration Canyon, Utah.

Emigration Canyon was the final down slope into the Great Salt Lake Valley. This is near where Brigham Young is said to have declared, "This is the place." The mouth of this canyon is where Charles Savage photographed emigrant wagon trains nearing the Great Salt Lake.

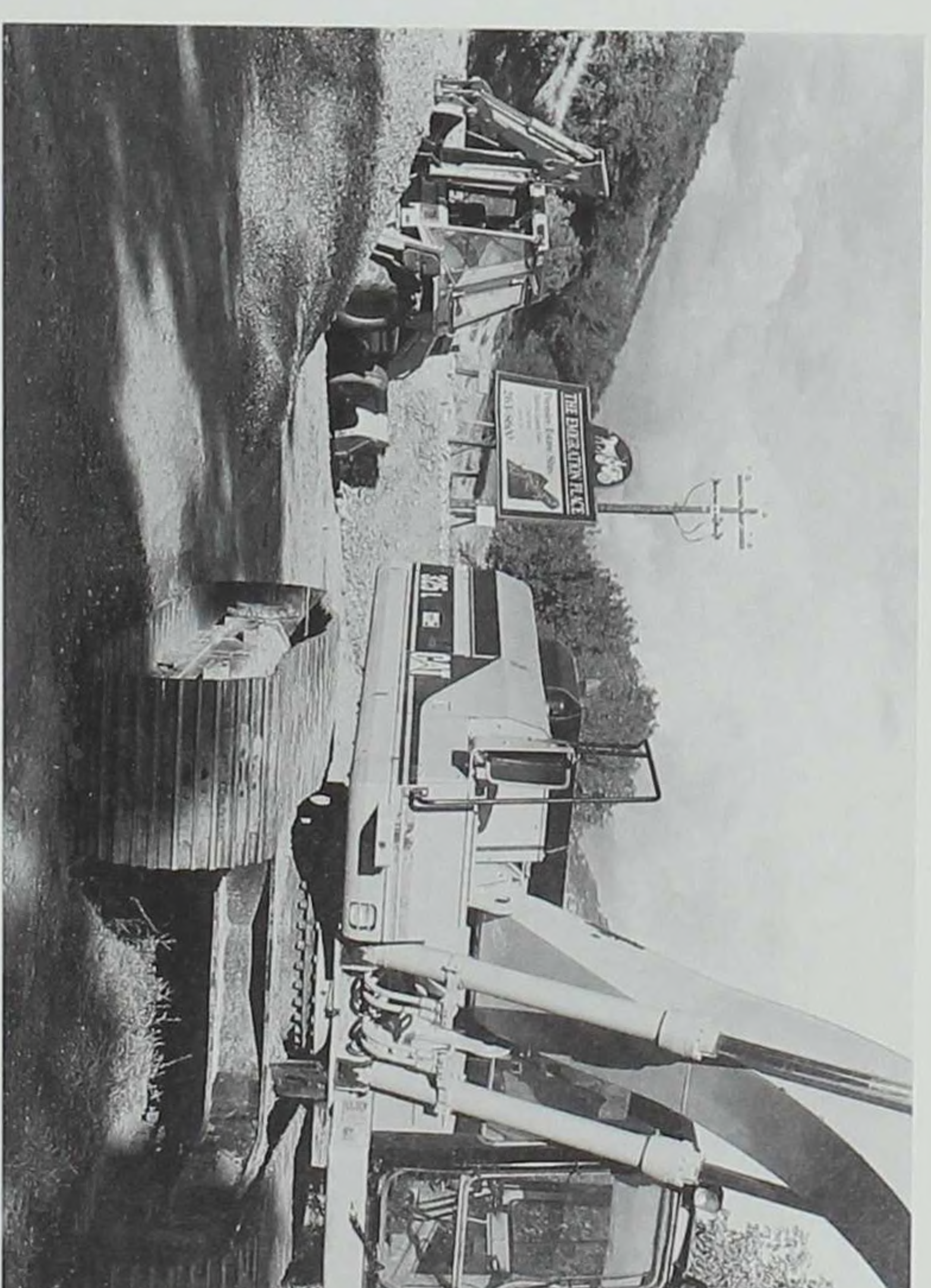
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**M**ormon Temple and fountain, Salt Lake City, Utah.

For members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a temple is not a public place for worship, but an expression of sacred space for giving sacred ordinances and endowments. The special nature of a temple indicates why the Saints completed the Nauvoo Temple, at a great cost of time, labor, materials, and money, even while knowing they would abandon the site within a year.

Selection of the site for the Salt Lake City temple in 1847 was one of the first acts of Brigham Young after reaching the valley. Construction began in 1853. After 40 years, again with tremendous expenditures in the face of adversity, the temple was dedicated. Although several architects were involved in the design, many of the main features were from the direct orders of Brigham Young.

#### NOTE ON SOURCES

Several guide books provide ample information on locating and following the trail in a standard automobile; see William E. Hill, *The Mormon Trail, Yesterday and Today* (Utah State University Press, 1996); Greg Franzwa, *The Oregon Trail Revisited* (Patrice Press, 1988); and Peter H. Delafosse, ed., *Trails of the Pioneers, a Guide to Utah's Emigrant Trails* (Utah State University, 1994). For reaching sites located on private land, assistance was provided by members of the Crossroads Chapter of the Oregon-California Trails Association.

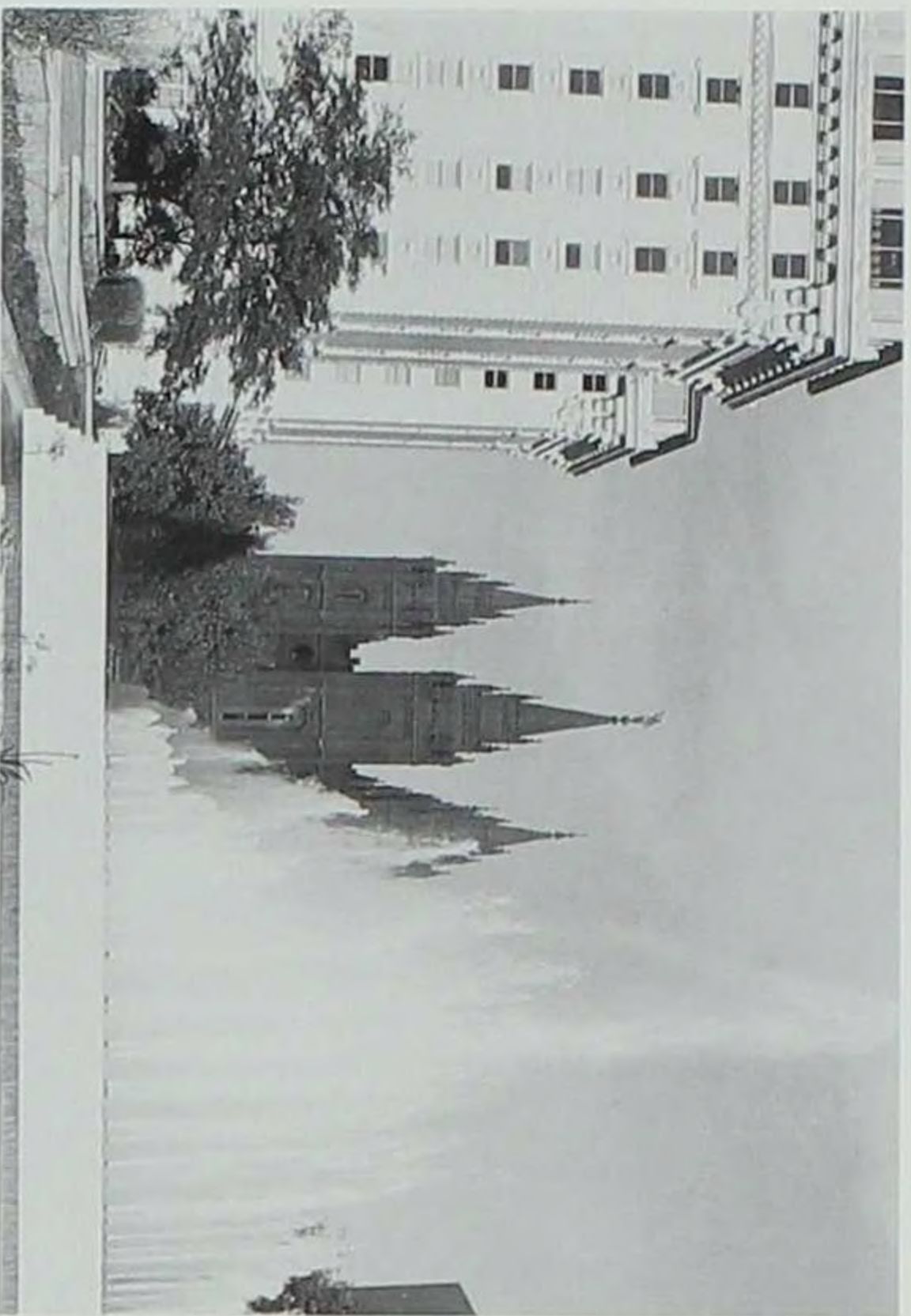
For more on Iowa trail sites and a self-guiding tour brochure, contact the Iowa Mormon Trails Association, Delores Birkland, president (PO Box 174, Moravia, Iowa 52571, phone 515-724-3777). See also Susan Easton Black and William G. Hartley, eds., *The Iowa Mormon Trail: Legacy of Faith and Courage* (Orem, Utah: Helix Publishing, 1997); and John D. Unruh, Jr., *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979, 1993). See also Summer 1996 *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*.





*View of Great Salt Lake and Antelope Island, looking west.*

The Great Salt Lake Valley signified the end of the trail for some 70,000 Latter-day Saints who traveled along the Mormon Trail from 1846 to 1869. The enormous lake moderates the temperatures of an otherwise very hot region of the West. Westerly winds cross the lake, cool, and then graze Salt Lake City. From the Wasatch Mountains, several substantial rivers descend into the valley, bringing fresh water. With time, the Wasatch range also became a back stop and trap for the smog created by that same city. Nevertheless, today—as 150 years ago—this unusual congruence of natural resources makes an ideal location for a city in an otherwise hostile land. ❖



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## "The Finest Warehouse West of Chicago" Bishop's Block in Dubuque

by Carmen Tschofen

Architect Franklin D. Hyde worked hard. In late 19th-century Dubuque, commissions flew into his office. A house on the hill here, a public elevator up the bluffs there, commercial business buildings, factories, a hotel, a school, and dozens more private homes enlivened the growing town. All told, well over a hundred structures built between 1879 and 1893 have been attributed to Hyde. His influence on the face of Dubuque still lingers today, particularly in the downtown area.

Hyde's legacy in Dubuque is architecture brewed of art, craft, and finance. A master of the preeminent building styles of the era, Hyde also knew how to attract clients of means and social prominence in an era

of financial growth. Thus, an imposing downtown warehouse commissioned by Bishop (and entrepreneur) John Hennessey fell easily in Hyde's purview.

This Victorian Romanesque structure was known as "Bishop's Block" even before completion in 1889. With its decorative Main Street facade, its considerable mass anchoring the base of lower Main Street, and its pointed turret visible from the Mississippi

This image of the Bishop's Block warehouse building (above) appeared with pictures of several other imposing structures showcased in an 1891 souvenir book of Dubuque. Artist and publisher Alexander Simplot considered these buildings evidence that Dubuque "will maintain her position as the commercial metropolis of Iowa." The building still stands today.



River bluffs, Bishop's Block presented an immediately recognizable "architectural advertisement" for Hyde, as well as for Bishop Hennessey and the businesses that would occupy the building. But while Bishop's Block would exemplify Hyde's mastery of architectural fashion and business savvy, it would also be one of the last, big hurrahs of commercial Victorian architecture in Dubuque, and virtually the swan song of Hyde's Iowa career.

Born in Maine in 1849, Hyde was raised in Wisconsin and Minnesota and studied architecture in St. Paul, Minneapolis, Chicago, and Boston. He arrived in Dubuque in January 1878, after 16 years as an assistant to several "nationally prominent architects," according to literature published by town boosters. Set up for business in the Bradley Block at the southwest corner of Seventh and Main, Hyde began promoting himself as "Architect and Building Superintendent," willing and able to design or remodel public and private buildings. By 1887, the *Dubuque Business Annual and Trade Review* hailed Hyde as "a pronounced architect of the first order" and considered him "by taste, natural talent, education and experience . . . peculiarly fitted to give satisfaction in his line" with business "rapidly increasing with him." Industries of Dubuque applauded his design and construction as "new and substantial, contributing strength, utility and elegance."

Hyde's career leading up to Bishop's Block followed a route similar to that of other prolific architects of his era. Like his contemporary Richard Morris Hunt, who catered to wealthy East Coast industrialists

PHOTOGRAPHED AT DUBUQUE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY BY THOMAS GOODMAN

F. D. HYDE,  
**ARCHITECT**  
 AND  
 BUILDING SUPERINTENDENT,  
 Room 6, Bradley Block,  
 DUBUQUE, IOWA.

Designs and Working Drawings Prepared for  
 all kinds of Buildings, Interior  
 Decorations, &c.

CORRESPONDENCE SOLICITED.

Hyde advertised his architectural business in the 1886 *Dubuque Business Annual and Trade Review*.

SHSI (IOWA CITY)



This French Second Empire home, designed by Hyde in 1879 for Dubuque entrepreneur Jesse P. Farley, helped launch his successful career in Dubuque. Farley sold it to the Sisters of St. Francis in 1892 after he suffered business losses. It became known as the Mary of the Angels Home.

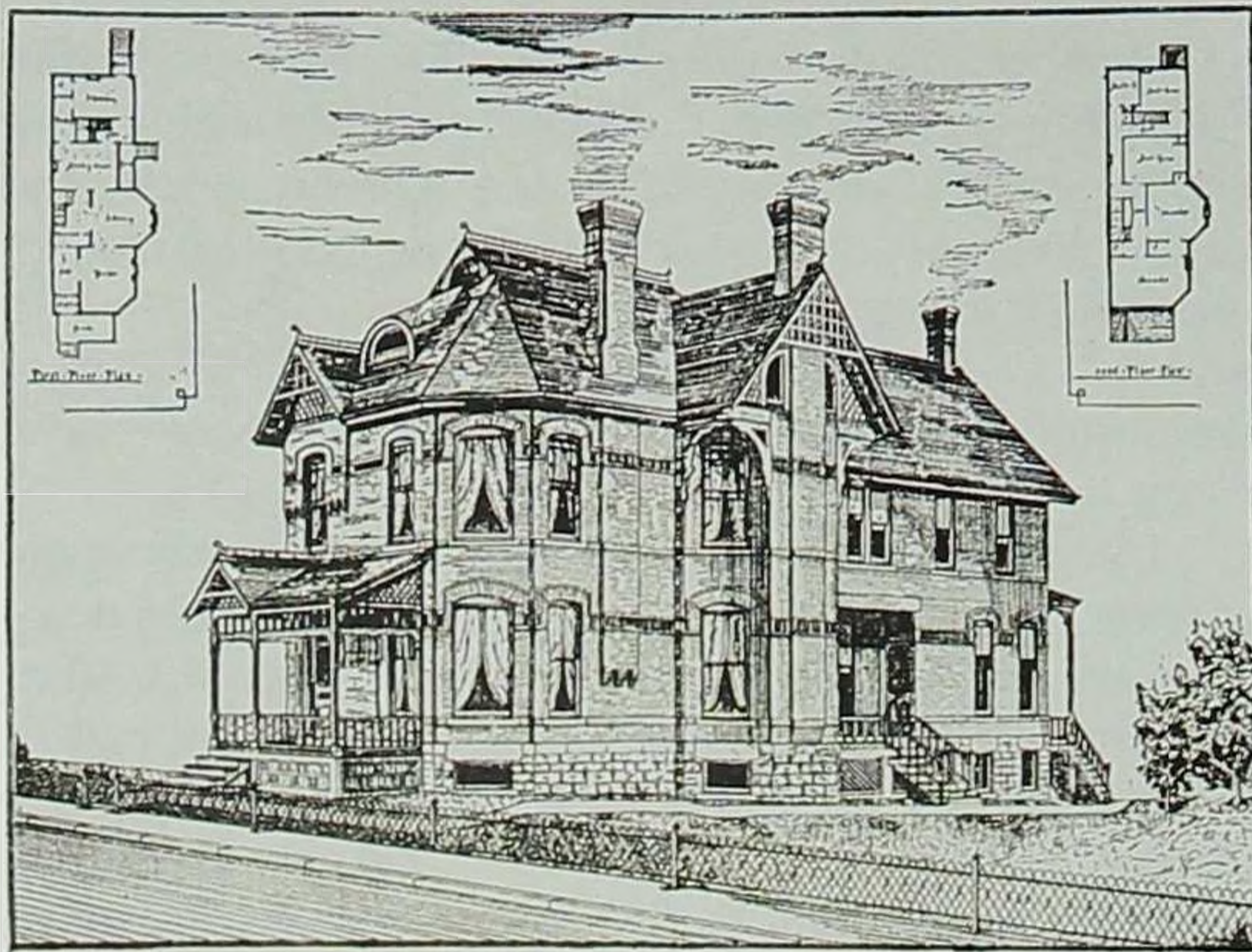
by designing their commercial and residential structures, Hyde received multiple commissions from Dubuque's business elite for commercial blocks, manufacturing establishments, and private homes. An auspicious early commission for a French Second Empire home built in 1879 for Jesse P. Farley set the tone for Hyde's clientele; a local entrepreneur, Farley held railroad and river shipping interests and served as a three-time Dubuque mayor.

Hyde's many commissions for private homes thereafter exemplified the era's most desirable residential styles, in particular the Queen Anne and Gothic Revival forms. Overall, Hyde masterfully applied the creative eclecticism of the mid- and late 19th century to homes throughout the growing city of Dubuque, gaining praise—and more business—from community leaders.

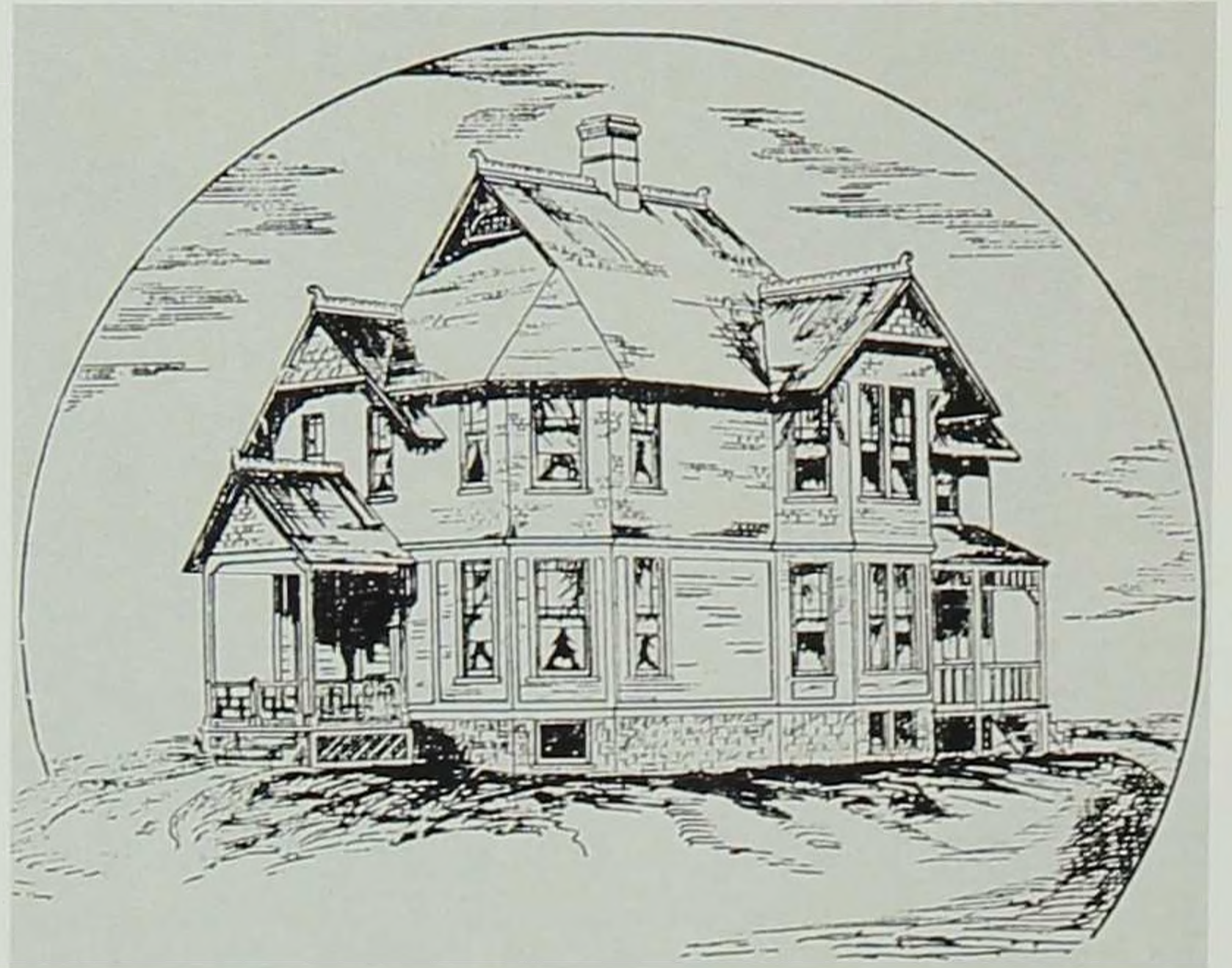
The business easily transferred to the commercial sphere, and Hyde's commercial structures best demonstrate his obvious versatility as an architect. Outside Dubuque, his commissions included school additions, churches, wards for the mentally ill, a university dining hall, banks, and hotels. Within Dubuque, Hyde's commissions added to the town's infrastructure, including stables for the Dubuque Omnibus Company (in 1883), a brick pumping station for the Water Works Company (1888), and the Fourth Street



BOTH SKETCHES FROM DUBUQUE, THE KEY CITY OF IOWA (1889)



RESIDENCE OF A. J. PARKER.  
F. D. HYDE, Architect.



RESIDENCE OF H. L. CONGAR.  
F. D. HYDE, Architect.



**A**mong the elegant Dubuque homes designed by Hyde were these Victorian giants: above, an 1883 Eastlake-style home for B.B. Richards, owner of a boot and shoe factory; "Greystone" (top left) built for wagon manufacturer A.A. Cooper; and homes for A. J. Parker and H.L. Congar (bottom left). More homes designed by Hyde appear on page 96.

Elevator (1887). Replacing an earlier one destroyed by fire, Hyde's elevator carried pedestrians up one of Dubuque's daunting hills "as if one were set afloat in mid air," and inspired the *Dubuque Trade Review* to rhapsodize over the Swiss-cottage style elevator station, with reception hall, lookout porch, and "pleasure balcony."

Dubuque's Main Street, an area significant throughout the town's history, would also profit from Hyde's designs and remodeling. Dubuque's early promotional name of the "Key City of Iowa" bespoke the town's desire to serve as a trade center for the Midwest. In particular, lower Main Street supported considerable commercial development beginning in the territorial period because of the area's easy access to multiple transportation possibilities. By 1838, the military road from Iowa City ended there. Mississippi ferries and riverboats plied the town's harbors. With the addition of rail service in 1855, commercial development boomed. Retail buildings, small manufactories, wholesale warehouses, hotels, and taverns sprang up in the inviting blocks stretching from First to Sixth, just south of the town's business district.

By the time Hyde arrived in the late 1870s and continuing through the next decade, Main Street space was at such a premium that local newspapers noted the need to tear down old buildings to make room for new construction. Commercial and warehouse structures began to replace the buildings below Third Street. Hyde made his mark, creating a storefront for the Thedinga Block (1880); a pressed-brick front and extension to a J.F. Steiner store (1884); a four-story warehouse (1885) and a five-story factory (1890) for wagon manufacturer A.A. Cooper; and the Horr Block building (circa 1884) and the Staples and Vibber Block (1887). All were fine examples of Victorian styles, with Gothic Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne features. Perhaps one of his most unique Main Street commissions came from Hyde Clark, who first wanted a roller-skating rink but then changed his request to a natatorium for indoor swimming.

In 1887 and 1889, Hyde received commissions that would dominate lower Main Street for the next decade. One was the design and construction of the new Hotel Julien at Second and Main. A massive construction of Gothic Revival roof lines, Queen Anne turrets,



**Hyde designed the Hotel Julien for A. A. Cooper. Together with the Bishop's Block building (opposite), the hotel would dominate lower Main Street in the late 19th century.**

oriel windows, and Richardsonian stonework, the hotel clearly served as a focal point until fire destroyed it two decades later.

Franklin Hyde's second commission on lower Main Street was for Bishop's Block, begun in 1887 and finished in 1889. Like many of Hyde's works, Bishop's Block was one of several commissions for a single person. A native of Ireland, Bishop John Hennessey was consecrated as Dubuque's third Roman Catholic bishop in 1865. He established new schools, churches, and convents throughout Iowa, and speculated in real estate and business ventures in the Dubuque area, buying or building dozens of structures around Dubuque. He had called on Hyde to create at least two sizable residential buildings before the Bishop's Block commission.

Hennessey's selection of the lower Main Street site, which was adjacent to a harbor, a main road, and a railroad and therefore at the virtual hub of transportation access in the city, was ideal for a warehouse that required delivery and shipment of wholesale goods. Trains would follow the course of the Ice Harbor just off the eastern side of the building, and a larger Illinois Central depot had just replaced the existing depot immediately to the southeast. Streetcar tracks and later an Illinois Central spur ran through the area, linking Bishop's Block with a wagon repository, agricultural implements shop, harness shop, bakery, candy factory, book bindery, flour and grain operation, boarding houses, and other nearby enterprises.

Bishop Hennessey apparently had not decided on the warehouse's specific future occupants while it was under construction. But it was built to accommodate the heftiest equipment or goods: "The walls and timbers are as strong as they could be built, and the flooring laid with the heaviest planking," commented the *Dubuque Herald* in 1887. "The building will support as much of the heaviest kind of merchandise as can be crowded into it." This superior construction has assisted in maintaining the building's integrity to this day.

In designing Bishop's Block, Hyde applied the same fashionable Victorian building styles reflected in his residential structures, and appropriately selected Victorian Romanesque for this commercial structure of considerable size and mass. The building's composition—a two-part block divided horizontally into a clearly defined street-level zone with large windows for pedestrians, and a more removed, brick and terra cotta facade on the second, multi-story zone above—is yet today the most common design for commercial buildings.

The building's five-story height followed national tendencies to build upward, as limited urban space encouraged increasingly vertical construction. (The inclusion of two elevators made this height practical.) On the street level, iron construction supported the masonry above the large windows. Inside, load-bearing iron posts added support. The closely spaced windows on the upper stories were a common modification to Victorian commercial buildings, bringing ample light into upper office or warehouse spaces.

Each exterior wall reflected its varied form and function. On the west side facing Main Street (the primary facade), huge showcase windows advertised merchandise, and entrance doors beckoned pedestrians. Brick piers stretched from the sidewalk to the roof, dividing the front of the building into six bays. On top of the single block of limestone that formed each pier foundation, a red terra cotta pedestal decorated with a floral and shell motif led into courses of brick. The piers continued visually all the way above the roof line, capped by parapets of double-stacked terra cotta pyramids. Hyde and other

**Finished in 1889 and still standing today, Bishop's Block continues to reflect Franklin Hyde's knowledge of significant building styles and artistic values of the late 19th century.**



PHOTO BY THOMAS GOODMAN

Victorian commercial architects frequently used terra cotta because it could be cast into almost any form to add ornamental and picturesque detail.

As one rounded the building's northwest corner, a large terra cotta tile set just above the foundation caught one's eye; the tile bore the date "1887" in free-flowing Moorish script. Five stories above, a turret capped by a steeply pitched witch's cap softened the angle formed by the west and north walls, taking form through several courses of brick corbeling that began about the fourth floor.

On the north side, facing First Street, the upper four stories resembled the Main Street side in form and decoration but were divided into eight bays instead of six. Chimneys rose above the roof line over the second bay from each end.

The east side, or rear of the building, served as the "working side," with double doors for loading and unloading goods and access to train tracks. The south side was entirely without openings; one third of that side shared a wall with a neighboring building.

Inside Bishop's Block, beaded and painted wainscoting on the first floor walls suggest that this area was used as office or retail space. A heavy masonry wall divided the first floor into two long rooms. Decorative caps on the cast-iron support columns spread into fan-like beams on the ceiling. Elevator shafts and stairwells connected rear doors and the loading dock to the upper stories, where iron columns supported large, open warehouse spaces.

In Bishop's Block, Hyde created a prime example of a late Victorian-era warehouse, one that combined the latest technologies with Victorian sensibilities and

PHOTO BY THOMAS GOODMAN



**T**erra cotta lent itself well to decorative flourishes, such as this cornerstone bearing the date construction began.

FROM DUBUQUE, IOWA, ON THE MISSISSIPPI, SHSI (IOWA CITY)



**W**agons wait at a loading dock on the north side of Bishop's Block, facing First Street. A series of grocery wholesalers (M. M. Walker, John T. Hancock, and Western Grocery Company) occupied the building until the 1950s.

tastes. But the economic challenges of the coming years would greatly limit similar construction, and alter Hyde's career as well.

The financial panics of the 1890s considerably slowed commercial development in Dubuque, and, at what appears to be the pinnacle of his career, Hyde disappears from local records, apparently leaving town. If this was a purely business-related decision, it was not without foreshadowing.

As early as 1885, Hyde had remarked in the midwestern architecture journal *Inland Architect and Builder* (to which he was a regular contributor) that, given economic difficulties, "Building outlook not good." In 1886 he worried that the country's labor difficulties would hinder the building trades, although he noted no immediate ill effects for his business besides a general rise in prices. But following a boom in 1889, the national Panic of 1893 clearly affected his business; his reporting of new commissions in *Inland Architect* reflected only a handful of contracts.

As the 1893 panic spread to Dubuque's business leaders and entrepreneurs, it appears that Hyde, active in national professional organizations and still in mid-career at age 43, was able to make a transition to more fertile professional fields. Hyde's name reappears in New York, where he is credited as the archi-

PHOTO BY THOMAS GOODMAN



**B**rick piers, which define the bays on the west facade, are still ornamented with rich terra cotta detailing.

tect of a Gothic Revival railroad station built in Rochester in 1905, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**21**nlike Hyde, Bishop's Block did not disappear from the local scene. From 1889 until the 1950s, it housed three different wholesale grocers and continued thereafter as a warehouse. Today, Bishop's Block is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a significant example of Franklin D. Hyde's prolific architectural career in Dubuque and as a high-style commercial warehouse in the once-thriving 19th-century market district on Dubuque's lower Main Street. Long considered one of Dubuque's most imposing structures, it became a local success story of adaptive reuse as affordable housing when the current owner, Gleichman & Company, Inc., rehabilitated the building in 1994 and turned it into apartments.

Although a new access street curving off Highways 61 and 151 has created a dead end to Main Street a few buildings past Bishop's Block, automobile traffic can access it from the north and west. Bishop's Block is adjacent to Old Main Historic District, a concentration of architecturally significant 19th-century commercial buildings; many of them now house antique and second-hand shops and other retail operations.

In 1887, the *Dubuque Herald* extolled, "This magnificent building is the finest warehouse west of Chicago, and is constructed to last for years." As elegant as warehouses ever come, Bishop's Block has indeed lasted—110 years and counting. ❖

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*Carmen Tschofen lives in the Minneapolis suburbs. As a consultant specializing in history education and interpretation of historic and cultural resources, she most recently designed and authored an interdisciplinary local history curriculum for the Faribault Public Schools. This article is adapted from the 1993 nomination of Bishop's Block to the National Register of Historic Places, authored by Tschofen and produced by Tallgrass Historians L.C.*

#### NOTE ON SOURCES

A wide array of local sources, including the many publications on Dubuque's rich architectural heritage, was used for the 1993 National Register of Historic Places nomination of Bishop's Block, which was the foundation of this article. Special thanks to Michael Gibson (Director, Center for Dubuque History, Loras College), Dubuque photographer Thomas Goodman, Pam Myhre-Gonyier (Dubuque Historic Preservation staff person), Tacie Campbell and Bob Wiederaenders (Dubuque County Historical Society), and Kevin Moist (*Iowa Heritage Illustrated* editorial assistant) for assistance with this article. Annotations are held in *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* production files (SHSI-Iowa City).

# Franklin Hyde's Houses



Several of the houses designed by Franklin Hyde still grace the streets of Dubuque. Many are in the city's historic districts. For a walking or driving tour of Hyde's work, consider these houses, listed here by original owner's name and construction date. Please note that these are private homes, viewable from sidewalk and street only. —*The Editor*

- Linwood Cemetery, two-story brick superintendent's house (1885).

#### *Cathedral Historic District*

- Jesse P. Farley house, 6th and Bluff (1879). Farley sold the French Second Empire house to the Sisters of St. Francis in 1892 after business losses. With several additions by later prominent city architects, it became known as the Mary of the Angels Home.

- Bishop John Hennessey house (shown above), 2nd and

Bluff (1884). Queen Anne rowhouse built for two sisters of Bishop Hennessey (for whom Bishop's Block is named).

#### *Jackson Park Historic District*

- B.B. Richards house, 1492 Locust (1883). Eastlake-style home for owner of a boot and shoe factory.



- J. Herod double house, 1687-1691 Main (1885).

- D.C. Cram house, 396 W. 17th (1887). Original cladding was brick on first story, shingles on second.

#### *West 11th Street Historic District*

- M.M. Walker house (shown below), 1155 Grove Terrace (circa 1884). Walker was a wholesale grocer and the first tenant of Bishop's Block.

- Benton M. Harger house, 1207 Grove Terrace (1890, with architect W. H. Castner). Gothic-style additions and alterations for book and stationery dealer.

#### *Langworthy Historic District*

- Lester C. Bissell, 900 West Third Street (1891, with architect W.H. Castner). Queen Anne style; originally featured ten-room Moorish interior, three-story open stairwell, and ballroom.

BOTH PHOTOS BY THOMAS GOODMAN



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# Iowa Heritage Illustrated

# One in a Million

Among the millions of items in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa is this pipe organ at the Union Sunday School in Clermont in northeast Iowa. In 1858, transplanted New Englanders in Clermont built a red brick Presbyterian church. In 1873 the church was renamed the Union Sunday School and was an interdenominational meeting place for young members of many different congregations. Regular meetings were held there until 1966. The Union Sunday School also housed one of the first circulating libraries west of the Mississippi.

Built in 1896, this is the largest Kimball pipe organ in the United States. W.W. Kimball Organ Company in Chicago was a well-known manufacturer of organs at the time, and is still in existence, now also manufacturing pianos.

The organ has 1,554 pneumatic pipes (some over 19 feet high), a keyboard of two manuals with 61 notes, and a flat pedal board of 30 notes and 23 stops. The organ had to be hand pumped until 1910 when an electric blower was installed. (It may still be operated manually.)

The organ was a gift from Iowa's 12th governor, William Larrabee, to his daughter Anna. Anna was the organist at Union Sunday School for over 60 years. (Larrabee is remembered through other State Historical Society sites in Clermont, including the Clermont Museum and Montauk, the governor's mansion.) Both the Union Sunday School and the Kimball pipe organ are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

To commemorate the 100th an-



SHSI: JOAN LIFFRING-ZUG COLLECTION (IOWA CITY)

niversary of the organ in 1996, the Iowa Chapter of the Questers Club (a national club devoted to the preservation of antiques) adopted the organ as their project and donated \$3,000 towards repairs—the same amount that Larrabee paid to purchase the organ in 1896.

The State Historical Society of Iowa, in conjunction with the Clermont Historical Society, maintains

Union Sunday School and the organ. Together they sponsor a series of organ recitals each year. The recitals feature a variety of distinguished musicians, many of whom are native Iowans. Look for the new 1998 schedule to be announced in early March.

—Stacy Peterson  
Editorial Assistant  
State Historical Society of Iowa

**Mark your calendar for these  
Kimball pipe organ recitals in 1997**

Sept. 28, 2:30 p.m. Organist: August Knoll.  
Oct. 26, 2:30 p.m. Organist: Jack Moelman.  
Tea follows recital.  
Dec. 14, 2:00 p.m. Annual Vespers Service.

For more information on Union Sunday School, please contact:

Montauk Historical Site  
P.O. Box 372  
Clermont, Iowa 52135  
319-423-7173

SHSI RICH COLLECTION (IOWA CITY)



**W**hat's a front porch without hammocks and houseplants, rocking chairs and children? Above, young Helen White poses on the porch of Nellie and Joseph Rich's home in Iowa City. This issue of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* salutes the front porch—as an architectural structure that adds character, invites conversation, and encourages community.

Also in this issue, readers will relive the trek west through dramatic landscape photography of the Mormon Trail, and tour the streets of late 19th-century Dubuque through the Victorian architecture of Franklin Hyde.