

The PALIMPSEST



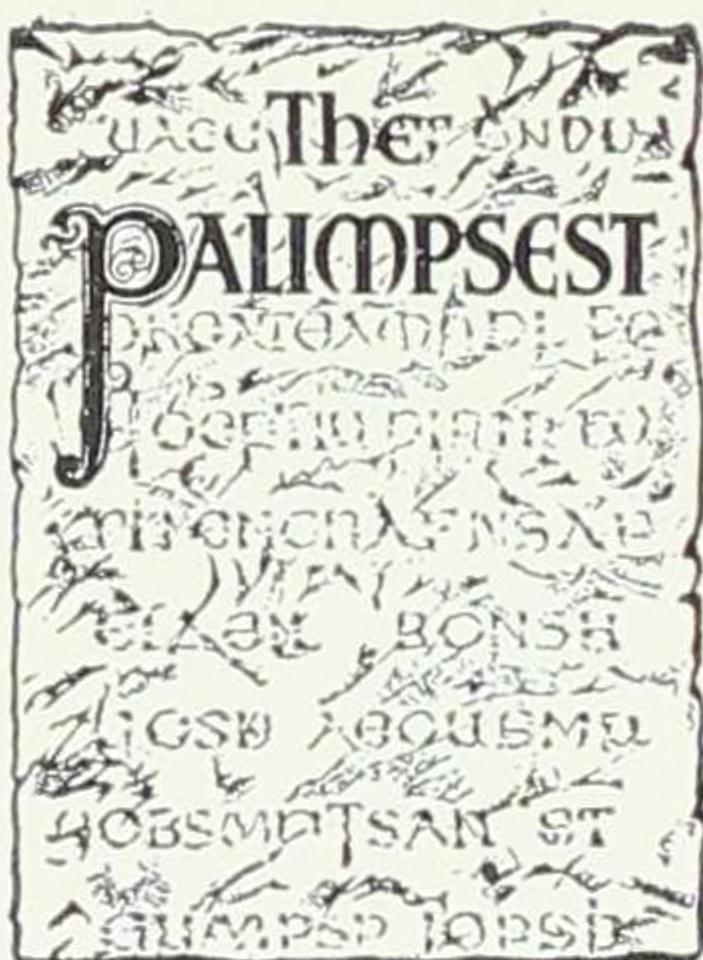
The Rock Island Rocket

The Rock Island in Iowa
Published Monthly by
The State Historical Society of Iowa

Iowa City, Iowa

SEPTEMBER 1963

SPECIAL ROCK ISLAND EDITION — FIFTY CENTS



The Meaning of Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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All illustrations, unless otherwise noted, are from the Public Relations Department of the Rock Island Railroad. Pictures furnished by the Society, or collected by the author, are specifically acknowledged. Photos on back cover show workmen cutting under track, removing old and inserting new ties, spacing and spiking ties, raising and lining track.

Author

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The following Rock Island personnel were helpful: James G. Pate, executive assistant; Ted J. Zirbes, manager of press relations; Esther M. Glasper, editor, and Edward J. Wojtas, associate editor of *The Rocket*.

ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MATTER JULY 28 1920 AT THE POST OFFICE AT
IOWA CITY IOWA UNDER THE ACT OF AUGUST 24 1912

PRICE — Included in Membership. Regular issues. 25¢; Special—50¢
MEMBERSHIP — By application. Annual Dues \$3.00
ADDRESS — The State Historical Society, Iowa City, Iowa

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

VOL. XLIV

ISSUED IN SEPTEMBER 1963

No. 9

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Iowa's First Railroad

The Rock Island was the first railroad to reach Iowa, the first to lay track in Iowa, and the first to bridge the Mississippi River. It was the second road to cross the state, and now operates more miles of railroad than any other railroad in the Hawkeye State—2,075 miles compared with 2,053 miles for the North Western. Currently it is the only road in the state featuring passenger service both east-and-west and north-and-south.

Few, if any, American railroads had such a galaxy of engineers as had the pioneer Rock Island. It served as a training school for several young men who later became distinguished engineers and national figures. Two of these engineers, who surveyed and built the line westward from the Mississippi, came back to make their homes in Iowa.

Under the direction of Chief Engineer Henry Farnam, of the newly formed Mississippi & Missouri Rail Road, Peter A. Dey and his assistant, Grenville M. Dodge, were sent to blaze the trail

of what is now the Rock Island across Iowa. Specifically, they were to survey the most feasible route for the M&M from Davenport to the Missouri River. This was in 1853, before there was a foot of railroad in the state. Their subsequent report pleased Farnam and led to further surveys and ultimately to the completion of the line to Council Bluffs years later.

The two men made an admirable team. Peter A. Dey, born in the beautiful Finger Lakes country of central New York and educated at Geneva College, entered railroading as a surveyor for the Erie. From the Erie Railroad he went to the Erie Canal, gaining valuable engineering experience all the while. Sensing greater opportunity farther west, he joined Joseph E. Sheffield and Henry Farnam, who had teamed up to build railroads in Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois. Not content with reaching Chicago, Sheffield and Farnam set their sights farther west. And Dey went with them.

It was while constructing the Chicago & Rock Island Rail Road in the prairie country beyond Chicago that Dey met and hired young Grenville M. Dodge, a twenty-one year old New Englander who had studied engineering at Norwich University in Vermont. Fired with the "railroad fever," so prevalent at that time, Dodge had come west where Dey first encountered him as a surveyor for the Illinois Central Railroad. Dodge soon became Dey's right-hand man, his "wonderful energy"

causing Dey to remark that "if I told him to do anything he did it under any and all circumstances."

Later Dey and Dodge went their separate ways, but their paths crossed many times. When they retired after gaining distinction in their respective spheres, they both came back to live along the Rock Island: Dey in Iowa City and Dodge in Council Bluffs.

It was the Chicago & Rock Island Rail Road and affiliated interests which backed the Mississippi & Missouri Rail Road, incorporated in Iowa on February 5, 1853. The M&M was essentially the western extension of the former road, which linked the two cities in its name in 1854. First president of the Mississippi & Missouri was John A. Dix, a prominent New York politician. William B. Ogden, who later gained fame as the builder of the early North Western, was vice president. Equally outstanding was Consulting Engineer John B. Jervis, well on the way to being reckoned as one of the Nation's great engineers and railway contractors. The directors included Dix, Ogden, Farnam and Sheffield plus a newcomer, Thomas C. Durant. Dr. Durant, as he was called, hailed from the Berkshires, had studied medicine in Albany, New York, and had come west about ten years later. Brilliant, unpredictable and daring, he gave up medicine for the more adventurous role of a railroad promoter and builder.

The Mississippi & Missouri was intended to go in three directions from Davenport. One line would go west through Iowa City; another would run southwest; and a third northwest. As it turned out the Iowa City line and the southwestern extension to Muscatine were built first. There was considerable discussion as to which side of the river the road would take after leaving Rock Island. Muscatine, Washington and Oskaloosa wanted the road to run on the east side to a point opposite Muscatine, where it would cross to Iowa. Iowa City and Davenport wanted the road to go directly west through their communities. The latter faction won, and Davenport became the eastern terminus.

Ground was broken in Davenport on September 1, 1853, with an elaborate ceremony witnessed by two thousand. The first shovelful was dug by Antoine Le Claire, proprietor of the popular Le Claire House, which Emerson visited in 1856. Le Claire, a 300-pound Indian and French-Canadian, at first opposed the railroad but later relented and sold part of his property for the right of way. He also purchased \$25,000 in stock in the new road, and his residence became the first passenger station. Other heavy stockholders included the town of Davenport, which subscribed to the extent of \$75,000; Scott County with \$50,000; and individuals totaling \$100,000.

On July 19, 1855, the first locomotive in Iowa

arrived at Davenport, being ferried across the Mississippi. It was an American-type (4-4-0) named *Antoine Le Claire*, with bronze statues of its corpulent namesake on two sides of the sand dome. By the end of August excursionists were riding to Walcott, a distance of twelve miles.

Construction, however, slowed down because of the retirement of Joseph Sheffield from his partnership with Henry Farnam in railroad contracting. Farnam subsequently formed a new partnership with Thomas Durant, and building went on. But the alliance was not a happy one, for Durant proved to be harder to work with than Sheffield. Construction to Iowa City was under the immediate supervision of John E. Henry.

Tracklaying not only continued on the Iowa City road but also on the Muscatine route, which left the main line at Wilton Junction. The branch to Muscatine was completed first, with a fitting ceremony in that community on November 20, 1855. The weather and the mud militated against much of a celebration, yet nearly the entire population braved the rain to witness the event.

Far more dramatic, nevertheless, was the hectic construction westward to qualify for a \$50,000 subscription from Iowa City, provided the first train reached there by January 1, 1856. Christmas day saw the rails still about two-and-a-half miles from Iowa City. As the temperature dropped, machinery froze and numbed hands and feet

greatly retarded the work. It looked for a time as if the deadline would not be met. But the citizens of Iowa City turned out to help the tracklayers under the personal supervision of Henry Farnam.

Within two hundred yards of the station the engine "froze up" to harass construction. Not to be deterred, willing hands laid temporary rails to close the gap. Others, armed with pinch bars, coaxed the "dead" locomotive, inch by inch, to the final goal. Amid cheers from railroaders, townsmen and visitors, "end of track" was reached as church bells pealed the coming of the new year. Upon completion, Charles Stickles, the locomotive engineer, dropped unconscious beside his engine and had to be carried to the depot.

On January 3, the day of the big celebration, the temperature dropped to eighteen degrees below zero. In spite of the frigid weather, a rousing welcome greeted the special train from Davenport. Crowds followed the train as it gingerly edged into Iowa City over makeshift track. A cannon boomed. After the engine stopped, a procession of warmly-clad celebrants marched to the "Old Capitol" accompanied by three bands.

Little did the crowd know that the festivities marked the end of steady construction for many years. The panic of 1857 along with management difficulties resulted in sporadic progress determined by conditions to meet Federal and State land grant bills.

Bridging the Mississippi

The same year Dey and Dodge set out to find the best route across Iowa to Omaha, Henry Farnam sponsored an unusual bill through the Illinois legislature. The bill incorporated the Railroad Bridge Company on January 17, 1853, and permitted the company to cross the Mississippi River within the state of Illinois at or near Rock Island. Farnam was president and chief engineer of the new company. Bonds of the bridge firm were guaranteed by the Chicago & Rock Island and the Mississippi & Missouri railroads.

An agreement was made with the M&M whereby it would cooperate in building the Iowa portion of the bridge. The colorful Antoine Le Claire deeded the necessary land on the west side of the river. All in all, the project involved three parts: a span across the narrow section of the river between the Illinois shore and "Rock Island," a right of way across the island, and a long bridge between the island and the Iowa shore. The boundary between the two states ran roughly down the middle of the channel, which was west of the island.

To complicate matters, the island was owned by the Federal Government. When it is realized no

bridge had heretofore been constructed across the navigable Mississippi from St. Paul to the Gulf of Mexico, the significance of the project is apparent. To the railroads it meant a new era of rapid and relatively inexpensive shipment of goods and passengers across the Nation's largest river. By contrast, ferries were cumbersome, slow and expensive. To steamboat interests it spelled the end of their supremacy on the Mississippi, which was their stronghold. Besides, a bridge was regarded as a nuisance that hampered navigation. It took little foresight to envision these "nuisances" all along the Mississippi River as railroads spread westward.

It is not surprising that river interests did not wait for the bridge to be constructed before marshalling their forces. Pressure was brought upon the Secretary of War to prevent construction on the Government's island and construction of the bridges over the river. This led the United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois to secure an injunction against the bridge firm.

The case of the *United States v. Railroad Bridge Company et al.*, came before the United States Circuit Court in July, 1855. John McLean, Assistant Justice of the Supreme Court, presided. The issue was primarily the right to cross the island, although the matter of obstruction to navigation was also involved. Judge McLean decided in favor of the Bridge Company, and the injunc-

tion was overruled. Thus round one went to the railroad.

In the interim, work continued on the wooden Howe truss bridge across the Father of Waters. The structure to span the main body of the river would have five stone piers, plus a larger, stone foundation for the draw span, to be located on the Illinois side west of the third pier. Small boats and rafts could easily navigate the 250 feet between the piers. But steamboats, with their tall smoke stacks, would be obliged to go through a narrower opening, provided by a draw-span when opened for river traffic. The entire structure was completed late in April, 1856, affording a unique gateway to Iowa.

All went well until the fateful day of May 6, when the steamboat *Effie Afton* was wrecked against the piers in attempting to pass through the bridge. The boat caught fire and was destroyed, as was part of the wooden span east of the draw, along with the draw, which likewise went up in flames. It was over four months before the bridge was sufficiently repaired to admit trains.

The owners of the *Effie Afton* lost no time in bringing suit against the Bridge Company. Notwithstanding that there was some evidence to indicate the boat might have been purposely wrecked, the river men hoped to recoup heavy damages by proving the span a menace to navigation. Each side had much at stake and buttressed their forces

for a decisive showdown. The case of *Hurd et al., v. Railroad Bridge Company* came up in the United States Circuit Court in September, 1857. Once again Justice McLean presided. A young lawyer, Abraham Lincoln, who had previously won an important case for the Illinois Central Railroad, was retained by the bridge firm. Although Lincoln and others as counsel for the defense ably acquitted themselves, the jury failed to agree and was discharged. The second round ended in a draw.

Both sides, however, knew that it was an uneasy truce, as feeling between river men and railroaders ran high. The United States House of Representatives appointed a committee to inquire into the whole affair. The committee conceded that the Rock Island bridge did pose a hazard to navigation but felt "that the courts have full and ample power to remedy any evil that may exist in that regard."

Court action was soon forthcoming when James Ward, a St. Louis steamboat operator, filed a bill in the United States Circuit Court of the Southern District of Iowa, asking that the bridge be removed. When the final hearing was held before Judge John M. Love in November, 1859, the judge upheld the complainant and declared the bridge "a common and public nuisance." Furthermore, the court ordered that the three piers and their superstructure, on the Iowa side of the bridge, be removed.

In view of this adverse decision, the Bridge Company had only one recourse before razing their bridge — at least the Iowa side of it. That was to appeal to the United States Supreme Court. The case was accordingly heard before that august body in December, 1862. In this instance the decision of the lower court was reversed, and the bridge was allowed to remain. In somewhat different words the Supreme Court reiterated the statement of Lincoln who said: "But there is a travel from east to west, whose demands are not less important than that of the river. . . . This current of travel has its rights, as well as that north and south. . . . the statement of its business during a little less than a year shows this importance. It is in evidence that from September 8, 1856, to August 8, 1857, 12,586 freight cars and 74,179 passengers passed over this bridge. . . . This shows that this bridge must be treated with respect in this court and is not to be kicked about with contempt."

The Rock Island, which built the first bridge across the Mississippi, not only won the right to keep its own bridge, but in doing so opened the way for other railroads to cross that river with impunity.

On to Council Bluffs

If it had not been for the Congressional Land Grant Act of 1856, there is no telling when the Mississippi & Missouri Rail Road would have reached Council Bluffs. The act called for alternate sections designated by odd numbers, six sections in width on each side of the track, to be owned by the railroad and developed for settlement. As it was, progress in building was so slow there was grave danger the road would have to forfeit its claim to these lands. It took the M&M over six years to build the thirty miles from Iowa City to Marengo, which it reached in 1862. The following year trains ran into Brooklyn, and in 1864 into Kellogg. By this time the company was so heavily in debt foreclosure was inevitable.

To safeguard the Federal Land Grants, assigned by Iowa, a new company was incorporated in the Hawkeye State called the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad. Known as Pacific No. 1, the new firm purchased the bankrupt M&M on July 9, 1866. It was empowered to build from Kellogg to Des Moines. Now having a clear title, which included the valuable land grants, the next step was to amalgamate the line in Illinois with that in Iowa. This was effected on August 20,

1866, by the consolidation of the Chicago & Rock Island Rail Road of Illinois with the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad, referred to as Pacific No. 2, to designate it from the previous road with the same name. Incidentally, Pacific No. 2 was chartered to construct the railroad from Des Moines to Council Bluffs. Inasmuch as this was a legal matter to insure full title to land grants, no differentiation will hereafter be made between the two companies with identical names.

When the Rock Island finally ran its first passenger train into Des Moines on September 9, 1867, it was given only a modest welcome. The city had posted a \$10,000 bonus for an early arrival, but the railroad never made it in time to collect the money. Furthermore, another line, which will be discussed later, had reached Des Moines first and had been given a lavish ovation.

In Council Bluffs, too, the Rock Island came out second best. The North Western had reached that Missouri River town two-and-a-half years earlier and consequently had hauled much of the material for building the Union Pacific. But the Rock Island hammered down its final rail in Council Bluffs on May 11, 1869, the day after the last spike was driven at Promontory Point, Utah, on the Nation's first transcontinental railroad.

To celebrate the Rock Island's arrival, John F. Tracy, who became president of the railroad after the consolidation of 1866, selected a burnished,

German silver engine to lead the procession. This was the locomotive *America*, outshopped by the Grant Works of Paterson, New Jersey, for the Paris Exposition in 1867. It had attracted so much attention the Rock Island purchased it for its new road to the West. So, when the official opening of the Council Bluffs line occurred on May 12, the resplendent *America* was out front. It, coupled to four other locomotives, pulled a train of crowded coaches and once again became the center of attraction.

While the Council Bluffs line was being built, the branch to the southwest was being extended beyond Muscatine. On September 1, 1858, the first train reached Washington, thirty-six miles from Muscatine. Washington accorded the thirteen-car special, carrying over 700 people, one of the best organized receptions in Iowa's railroad history. For over a dozen years thereafter that thriving community was end-of-track.

When the strong hand of Tracy took over the guidance of the Rock Island, its decade of indecision, mismanagement and divided control was over. He looked afar to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, a military post of considerable importance and a gateway to the great southwest. He foresaw another main line, second only to the Council Bluffs route, as the backbone of the Rock Island System. With the formation of the Chicago & South Western Railway in 1869, Tracy and his associates de-

terminated to extend the Rock Island rails to Leavenworth.

Construction in both Iowa and Missouri was pushed with such speed as to rival Farnam's record in driving the pioneer Rock Island across Illinois. The new road veered through southeastern Iowa to Lineville, whence it crossed the border to Missouri and thence to Stillings Junction, opposite Leavenworth. It took only two years to build the line, which commenced regular operation in October, 1871. With the completion of the bridge across the Missouri River in 1872 train service to Leavenworth was inaugurated. The Rock Island not only vigorously competed for business through the Omaha gateway; it also had what was to become a strategic and powerful line to the South West as well.

The "K&D"

The line which reached Des Moines first and received all the glory was the Des Moines Valley Rail Road, better known in after years as the Keokuk & Des Moines. Later to become a part of the Rock Island system, the "K&D" captured the imagination of the citizens of the new capital probably more than any other event before or since.

In the words of a contemporary paper, the people of Des Moines ". . . waited for its coming! They prayed for its coming! They talked of its coming until their tongues grew eloquent with the theme!" And when the road did come they madly proclaimed: "All doubts have fled! The great triumph has been achieved! The promised train is here today! The sun shines in a clear firmament! The day, yea, the hour of final victory has come!"

Such was the exuberance which greeted the Des Moines Valley Rail Road on August 29, 1866. The irony of the matter was that the "K&D" was a secondary line, and it played only a relatively minor role in the development of the city. Why, then, all the excitement?

Part of it may be ascribed to the "railroad fever" of the day. It must be remembered that the line was to connect Keokuk with Des Moines.

Keokuk at that time was the "Gate City" for supplies and commerce to Des Moines. Before the arrival of the railroad, boats on the Des Moines River linked these two communities, when navigation was feasible; or wagons were driven over the wild prairie.

Then, too, Des Moines was growing rapidly. It sought to have the state capital moved from Iowa City to Des Moines. To do so, however, it would have to be assured of enough votes throughout the state to adopt the Constitution of 1857 which transferred the capital from Iowa City to Des Moines. So Polk County, in which Des Moines is located, made an agreement with Lee County, where Keokuk is situated. If Lee voters would back the new Constitution, Polk in turn would materially aid the Des Moines Valley Rail Road. On the strength of this agreement Polk County subscribed to the extent of \$100,000 in the railroad, and the voters of Lee County swung the election so the capital could be moved. The result was, the people of Keokuk saw their railroad off to a good start; and Des Moines not only rejoiced in getting the state capital but also in seeing its first train.

The line started its corporate existence as the Keokuk, Fort Des Moines & Minnesota Rail Road, organized September 1, 1853. Grading began in 1855. When 4,000 ton of rail arrived by boat from New Orleans the following year, track-laying commenced. Under the supervision of

Chief Engineer Col. J. W. Otley, an Englishman, whose father, Richard Otley, held a similar post on the historic Stockton & Darlington Railway, the line made moderate progress.

In 1857 Bentonsport heard the whistle of the locomotive, and by 1861 trains were running through Ottumwa to Eddyville. The Civil War halted construction at the latter town until 1864, when the road's name was changed to the Des Moines Valley Rail Road, and track laying continued. In 1866, as we have seen, it reached Des Moines, where it was accorded one of the most elaborate and enthusiastic receptions of any railroad in Iowa.

Apparently, the Des Moines Valley exhausted its resources after reaching Iowa's capital. At any rate, nothing was done to extend the road to the Minnesota border, as outlined in the charter. Fort Dodge was particularly incensed at the inaction, for it was anxious to secure a direct line to Des Moines. Land was promised, a tax was voted to aid the road, and still the Des Moines Valley refused to build. As a last resort, the people of Fort Dodge backed rival roads, which failed to materialize, and also sought to have the Des Moines Valley land grant invalidated, to no avail.

When the road finally came to Fort Dodge, it took a circuitous course through Perry, Grand Junction, Gowrie and Tara instead of the more direct route along the Des Moines River valley.

Perhaps it was thought construction costs would be less through "Frog ponds, sloughs, muskrat houses, etc." as the Fort Dodge contingent put it, rather than along the hilly terrain adjacent to the river. But the road did come into Fort Dodge over its own rails by December, 1870.

In 1873 the road became bankrupt, and it was split in two at Des Moines and sold in parcels. The southern section went to John E. Henry of New York City, and it was soon reorganized under the name of the Keokuk & Des Moines Railway. The northern part was sold to Col. C. H. Perry to emerge as The Des Moines & Fort Dodge Railroad.

"The K&D," as it was called, proved to be the more valuable of the two, for it served as a short cut from central Iowa to Keokuk with direct connections to St. Louis. The expanding Rock Island was very much aware of its role, as was the Burlington. Rather than see it fall into the hands of its aggressive competitor, the Rock Island leased the road in 1878. As an independent line the K&D was at the mercy of its connections, but when integrated into the Rock Island its future was secure.

Branching Out

Under Tracy's administration the Rock Island pursued a policy of conservative growth. It was in better financial health than the competing North Western and nearly on a par with the energetic but stable Burlington. Indeed, from June, 1870, to June, 1873, John Tracy also headed the North Western and dictated its policies. He likewise was a strong factor in keeping the Iowa Pool intact, thereby prorating revenue between the three roads on traffic through the Omaha gateway. For over a dozen years the Pool stabilized rates and discouraged competition in Iowa.

Expansion continued all the while Tracy held office. In southern Iowa a branch was constructed from Washington, on the Leavenworth line, due west through Sigourney and Oskaloosa to Knoxville, reaching these communities in 1872, 1875 and 1876 respectively. To serve prosperous towns in the rich farm country in the vicinity of the state capital, a branch was run from Des Moines to Indianola, passing through Carlisle. It was constructed by the Des Moines, Indianola & Missouri Railroad in 1871. By the fall of 1872 the line had been extended along the Middle River Valley from Summerset to Winterset. The 26-mile addi-

tion was under the charter of the Des Moines, Winterset & South Western Railway.

The only other branch built in Iowa during Tracy's regime was the 15-mile Newton & Monroe Railroad, linking the two towns in its name by 1877. Primarily a coal road, it was a reorganization of the Iowa, Minnesota & North Pacific Railway, chartered to build to the Minnesota boundary.

It was during Tracy's presidency that Iowa had its first train robbery. The date was July 21, 1873; the place, on a remote spot on the main line in the hilly uplands near Adair. On that day No. 2, the eastward night express was expected to carry a \$75,000 shipment of gold. Anticipating the valuable bullion, Jesse James lay hidden in a bank near the right of way. Jesse and his confederates had previously loosened a rail, and as the train labored up-grade they pulled the track out of line with a stout rope.

Upon seeing the gap in the track, Engineer John Rafferty whistled for brakes with one hand and reversed the engine with the other. But it was before the widespread use of air brakes and the train could not be stopped in time. The locomotive derailed and turned over, killing Rafferty and seriously injuring his fireman. Meanwhile, two robbers rifled the express car while others in the gang relieved passengers of their money and jewelry. After the bandits galloped away with the loot, it

was estimated that they had collected about \$3000 from the head-end cars and almost as much from the 200 frightened passengers. In the words of the popular ballad:

Jesse James all alone in the rain
Stopped an' stuck up the Eas'-boun' train;
Swayed through the coaches with horns an' a tail,
Lit out with the bullion and the registered mail.

The bounty was small because the prized gold shipment had been held over for another train. It was the Rock Island's first train holdup; and, if not especially lucrative for Jesse James, it was successful as far as the desperadoes were concerned. Although a special train of armed guards was quickly dispatched from Council Bluffs to round up the criminals, and posses soon combed the state, no trace of the bandits was found.

With the coming of Hugh Riddle to the presidency in 1877 construction of feeder lines continued at an accelerated pace. Up to the first World War branch lines were considered a source of strength on any railroad. Branches made the haul by horse and wagon shorter; and, generally speaking, the road which blanketed its territory with lateral lines got most of the local traffic. For this reason the Rock Island embarked on a policy of throwing out laterals along its main line to Council Bluffs. These were short and confined to the road's legitimate corridor across Iowa. In every case the railroad was careful not to encroach upon

the Burlington's territory in the south and the North Western's to the north.

The first "lateral" west of Des Moines was from Menlo to Guthrie Center, 15 miles. It was completed by the Guthrie & Northwestern Railroad in 1880. Next came the line intersecting the main stem at Atlantic, running north to Audubon and south to Griswold. The northern lateral, built by the Atlantic & Audubon in 1878, measured 25 miles. Its southern counterpart, the Atlantic Southern, finished its 15-mile line two years afterward. The two little roads closely followed the East Nishnabotna River.

In the same pattern another lateral extended in both directions from Avoca, following the West Nishnabotna River upstream to Harlan and downstream to Carson. The upper road was completed in 1878 under the charter of the Avoca, Harlan & Northern Railroad; and the lower in 1880 by the Avoca, Macedonia & South Western Railroad.

During this period an alternative route between Davenport and Muscatine was built along the west bank of the Mississippi River. It was shorter and better constructed than the original line via Wilton and soon commanded most of the traffic. The old road between Wilton and Muscatine was relegated to local service until abandoned in 1934.

Meanwhile, the Keokuk & Des Moines continued to be leased, a rather dilapidated property 162 miles long with wheezy locomotives operating over

light iron rails. In a day when steel rails were rapidly coming into use the "K&D" had only a score of miles so equipped. Thanks to the Rock Island, money from the lessee was forthcoming to build a 4-mile branch from Mt. Zion to the Indian-named town of Keosauqua, nestled within the horseshoe bend of the Des Moines River. Constructed by the Keosauqua & Southwestern Railroad in 1880, the stub line, like the river, abounded in curves.

It will be recalled that the Des Moines & Fort Dodge was once part of the through line from Keokuk to Fort Dodge, formerly known as the Des Moines Valley Rail Road. When the Des Moines Valley was split in two, the southern part became the "K&D," and, as we have seen, it was leased by the Rock Island. But the northern segment continued an independent and orphan-like existence. Somehow it managed to finance an extension from Tara to Ruthven, passing through Rolfe and Gilmore City. The 55-mile line also served the new towns of Plover, Mallard and Curlew, named by the road's president, Charles E. Whitehead. It appears he was an avid hunter, and the names of stations reflected his choice of game, which was plentiful in that part of Iowa.

When the Rock Island later planned to run a line to the northwest corner of Iowa, the town of Gowrie on the Des Moines & Fort Dodge looked like a favorable starting place. So the DM&FtD was leased in 1887. Hardly had the road come

under Rock Island control when a court battle began to shape up between the Board of Railroad Commissioners and the DM&FtD. The trouble arose over the abandoning of a 6-mile segment of the latter road between Tara and Fort Dodge in 1878. The railroad subsequently had running rights over the Illinois Central between those two points. But passengers complained of poor connecting service and demanded the old line be reinstated. The Commission thereupon ordered the derelict line rebuilt. The railroad appealed the decision before the Iowa Supreme Court and won.

Nor did the trials of the Rock Island in leasing the DM&FtD end here. In good faith the lessee speedily constructed the Gowrie & Northwestern Railway, extending from Gowrie to Sibley, 110 miles. The entire line was in operation by November, 1900, it being built in a little more than a year. While the Rock Island officials were being congratulated on a job well done other interests began buying into the Des Moines & Fort Dodge. What was thought to be a routine extension of the lease, when the contract expired in 1904, turned out to be a bitter struggle for control. Edwin Hawley, the New York financier who headed the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad, had his associates quietly buying stock in the line. By 1905 they had control, and the M&StL forthwith leased the Des Moines & Fort Dodge. A decade later it was purchased. Thus the Rock Island ended by pay-

ing substantial trackage rights from Des Moines to Gowrie on a railroad it formerly operated!

To integrate many of the separate but controlled railroads into the expanding Rock Island, a major consolidation took place on June 2, 1880. The new consolidated company was called the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway. It took over most of the associated roads which heretofore made up the Rock Island system. In Iowa all the separate companies were absorbed with the exception of the Guthrie & North Western, the tiny Keosauqua & Southwestern, the Avoca, Harlan & Northern and the "K&D." The first two were subsequently purchased in 1890, the Avoca road in 1899 and the "K&D" not until 1924.

Up to this time the Rock Island had halted its westward building at the Missouri River. With the election of the dynamic Ransom R. Cable to the presidency in 1883, a vigorous policy of expansion beyond the "Big Muddy" took place. It soon saw the Rock Island running into Denver and Colorado Springs in the west; and to Oklahoma and Texas in the southwest.

There was one plum, nevertheless, which was yet unplucked right in Iowa. That was the profitable Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Railway, in which the Rock Island already had an interest. But Cable, never satisfied with half-way measures, wanted absolute control, and got it, with Ransom Cable as chairman of the board.

Judge Greene's Railroad

In all Iowa there was no railroad quite like the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern. Other lines might be bigger, more powerful and better known throughout the country, but in the Hawkeye State no road was held in higher esteem than the old BCR&N. To begin with, it was an Iowa enterprise, run by Iowans and having headquarters within the state. Save for the Iowa Central, no local road came anywhere near it in size. Apart from being similar in mileage, the Iowa Central was poorer in service, vastly inferior in earning power, and of far less strategic importance. There was just no comparison. The Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern was in a class by itself.

The first president and leading spirit of this big "little" railroad, originally called the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Minnesota, was George Greene, sometimes called the Benjamin Franklin of Cedar Rapids, if not of Iowa. George Greene had many talents, and he was master of every one of them. As Cyrenus Cole put it: "During his [Greene's] time there was no good thing done in Cedar Rapids of which he was not a part, and often he was all of it." With this as an introduction, let us turn to the railroad Greene did so much to foster.

It will be recalled that when the Mississippi & Missouri was organized, it had planned to construct a line to the northwest, going through Cedar Rapids and up the Cedar Valley to the Minnesota border. In the turmoil to build west and southwest, the road to Cedar Rapids had been forgotten. Other interests broached plans to run a north-and-south line through the city. On October 2, 1865, the Cedar Rapids & St. Paul Railway was incorporated to link the two cities in its title. Two years and five days later another group of promoters formed the Cedar Rapids & Burlington Railroad to build a road from Cedar Rapids through Iowa City to Burlington. Neither of these roads ever ran a train, but their backers pooled their resources and united the two companies to form the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Minnesota Railway on June 30, 1868. Instead of going through Iowa City, however, the new road elected to go farther east, through West Liberty, crossing the main line of the Rock Island at that point.

Judge George Greene, Cedar Rapids' leading citizen and among the most ardent advocates of a north-and-south artery of commerce, was the road's first president. Charles Mason, of Burlington, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Iowa, became vice president; and J. D. Cameron of Burlington the chief engineer.

Thanks to Greene, who had valuable legal and financial connections in New York, funds were

easily raised in the East. In 1869, construction started in earnest, and in five years Greene had a compact 368-mile railroad with headquarters in Cedar Rapids. Building had gone on rapidly. Columbus Junction (where it crossed the Rock Island's Leavenworth line) was reached in 1871; and the 119 miles through Cedar Rapids and Cedar Falls to Plymouth Junction was spiked down in 1872. The same year also saw a 94-mile branch from Cedar Rapids to Independence, Oelwein and Postville in the northeast, and the 31-mile Muscatine-Riverside branch in the south. The latter line bisected the main stem at Nichols, below West Liberty. Before the panic of 1873 halted further construction, a feeder line was opened between Vinton and Traer — 24 miles.

The dream of a north-south road through Iowa with Cedar Rapids as its hub was a reality. A connecting link from Burlington down the river to St. Louis was already in operation; and on the north another connection was made at Plymouth Junction with the present-day Milwaukee Road, thereby forming a through line to St. Paul.

To say that Greene was railroad-minded, Cedar Rapids-minded and Iowa-minded is not enough. George Greene was a wonderful person. Born on April 15, 1817, in Alton, Staffordshire, England, Greene's parents had moved to Buffalo, New York, when he was two years old. Orphaned at ten, Greene supported himself and helped his

two younger brothers. He gained a relatively good schooling for his day, reading law in Buffalo and meeting his expenses by working in a physician's office. Shortly after his marriage in 1838 Greene came west to the Territory of Iowa.

It was in Iowa that Greene's versatility quickly became evident. First, assisting in David Dale Owens's geological survey, then becoming one of the earliest school teachers in Linn County, Greene continued to study law as time permitted. Upon being admitted to the bar in 1840, he moved to Marion as a practicing attorney. Elected to the Territorial legislature in the fall of that year he held office until 1842 when he moved to Dubuque.

In that bustling river town he continued his law practice, published a local paper called *The Miner's Express*, and in 1847 became an Associate Justice of the Iowa Supreme Court. He left the bench in 1854 to resume practice in various parts of the state. For a time he lived in Chicago but in 1865 returned to Linn County. In Cedar Rapids his interests proliferated at an amazing rate. As a lawyer, judge, banker, publisher, mayor, churchman, nurseryman, manufacturer, railroad president, opera house owner, educator and public spirited citizen his life was full, active and meaningful. From that time on Judge Greene remained in his beloved Cedar Rapids, which he helped to found, and of which he was a pioneer mayor.

Judge Greene aided in organizing the city's first

bank and later headed the Union Bank. He published the first newspaper, owned the largest hotel (Greene's Hotel) and opened the town's earliest legitimate theatre (Greene's Opera House). His Cedar Valley Variety Steam Works, which manufactured a wide range of farm implements, aided in bringing diversified industry to the community. But this is not nearly all: he helped organize a score of institutions including a water works, a hospital and a cemetery.

A lifelong communicant, Judge Greene aided in building the Grace Episcopal Church, of which he was its first Sunday School Superintendent. He also found time to head the Cedar Rapids Collegiate Institute, the forerunner of Coe College. Best of all, however, he liked overseeing his Mound Farm, probably the first nursery in that locality. How the grand old man enjoyed showing his friends some of the 150,000 trees represented therein. Indeed, he had over 100 varieties of apple trees alone and a catalogue of the Mound Farm nurseries filled 20 pages.

If Greene can be said to have had one dominant interest, it was railroading. He was a rail enthusiast of the first order. Many and varied were the "paper" lines, surveyed, sometimes graded, but never operated, which he backed. Among them was the Dubuque & Keokuk, of which he was president. Dubbed the "Ram's Horn" because of its curious shape, the road was to go from Du-

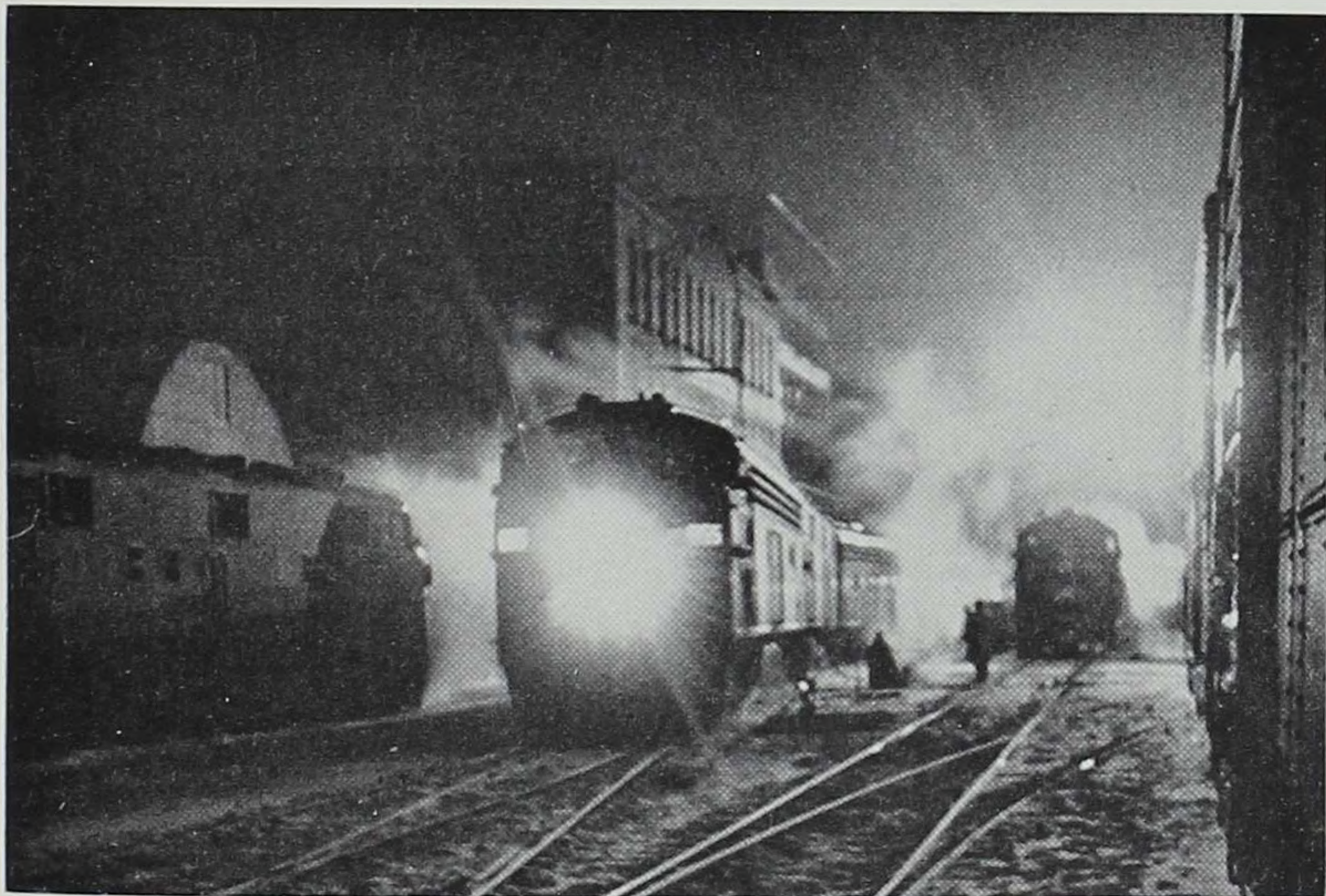
buque to Keokuk by way of Cedar Rapids and Iowa City. However, when Cedar Rapids saw its first railroad in 1856, Greene was a director and a zealous supporter. That line was the Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska, now part of the North Western system. He was president of at least a half-dozen operating railroads and actively associated in even more railroad construction companies and railroad manufacturing concerns.

While heading the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Minnesota he made many trips east to finance construction, secure rolling stock and solicit traffic. Of these business activities he kept a diary which bubbled over with his various hobbies.

One of Greene's right-hand men was Dr. John F. Ely, vice president of the railroad. He came to Cedar Rapids in 1848 shortly after getting his "MD" from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York. John's trip was occasioned by the death of his brother, Alexander, who was a prominent Cedar Rapids businessman. John, in helping his brother's widow manage the estate, found his sister-in-law and the town to his liking. He subsequently married the lady and made Cedar Rapids his home.

Closely associated with John Ely was S. L. Dows, and both were active in organizing railroad construction companies. Dows, like the doctor, was a director of the BCR&M. Finally, there was William Greene, one of the two brothers of Judge

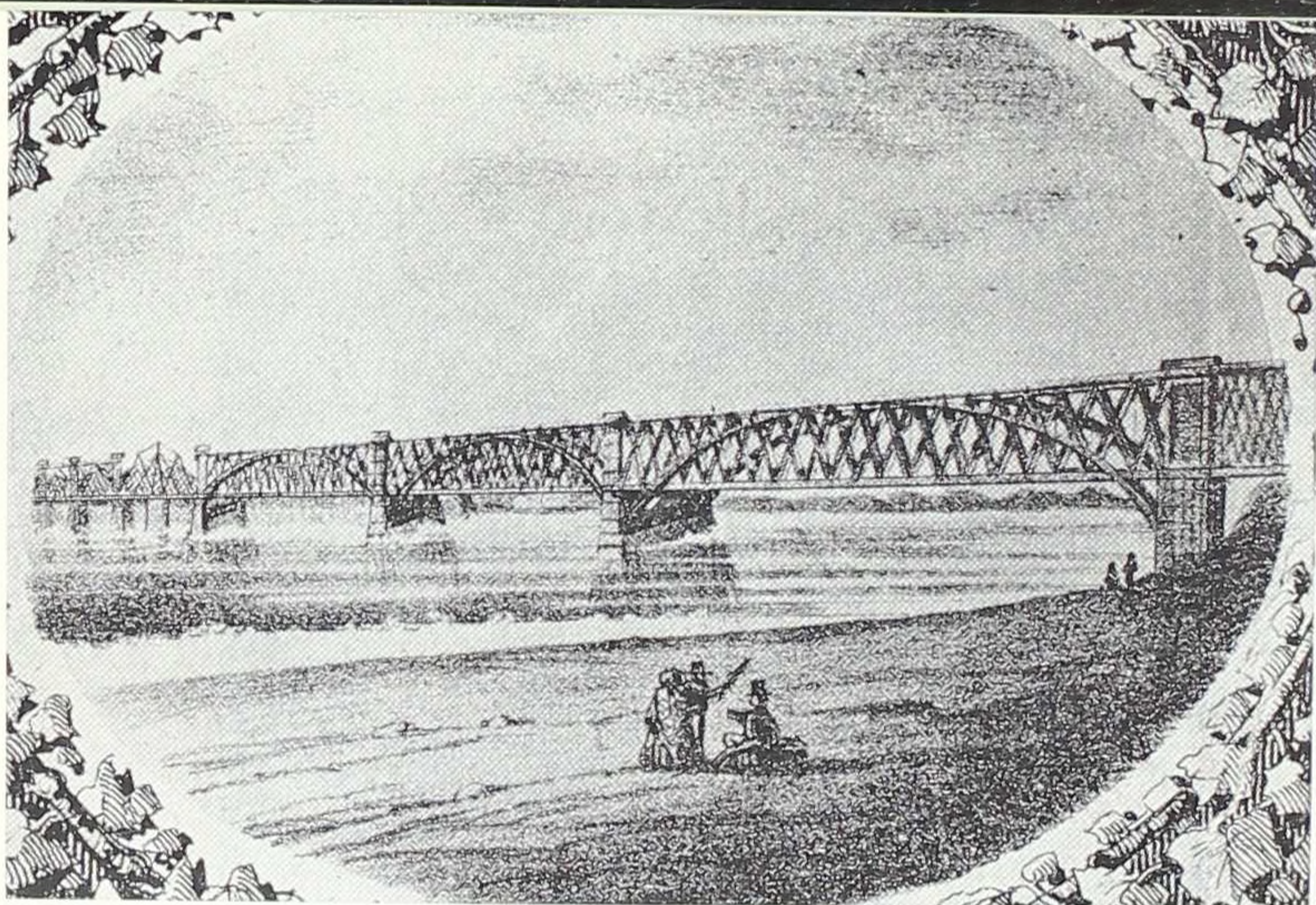
NIGHT SCENES AT ROCK ISLAND STATION IN DES MOINES



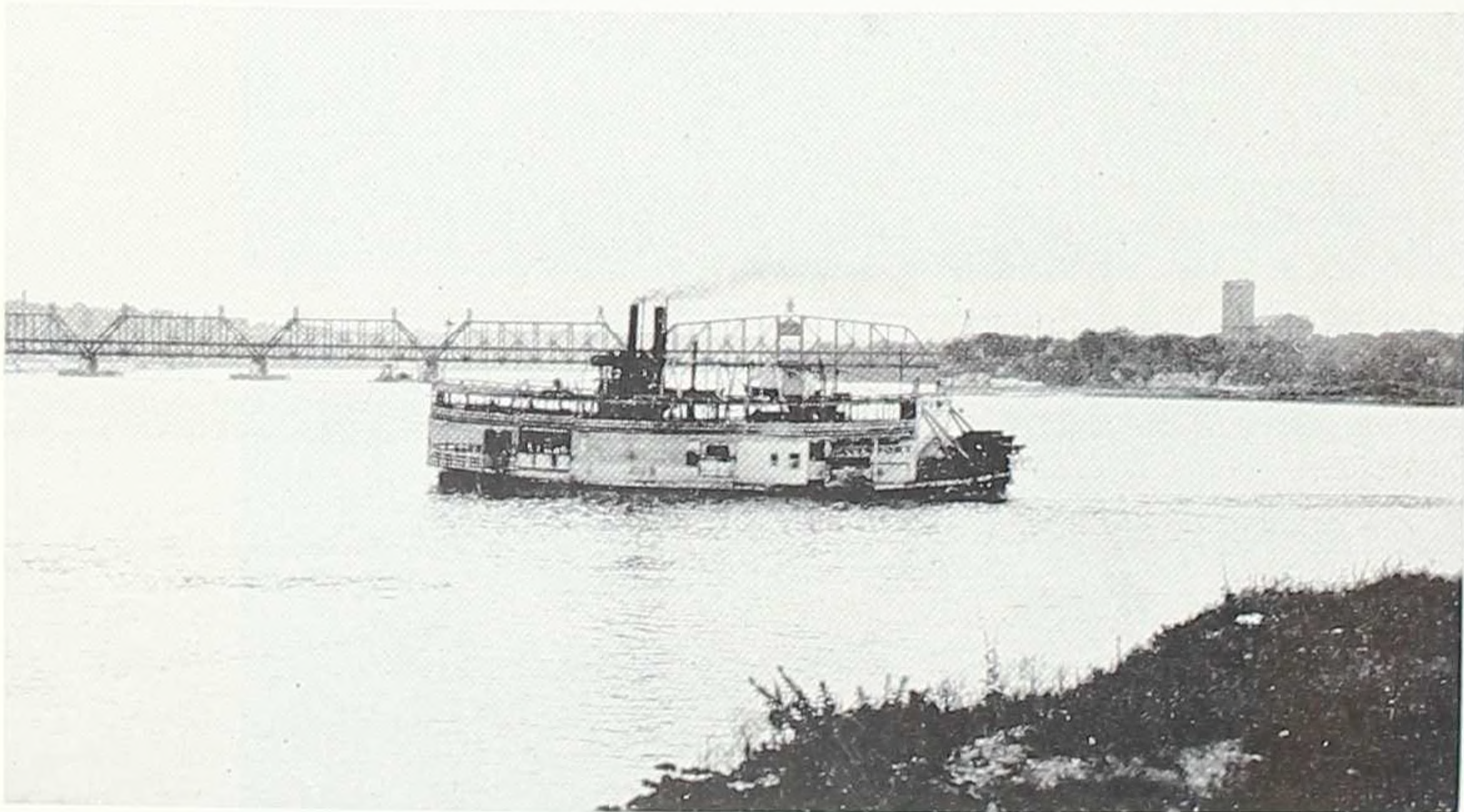
East-West and North-South *Rockets* meet in Des Moines.



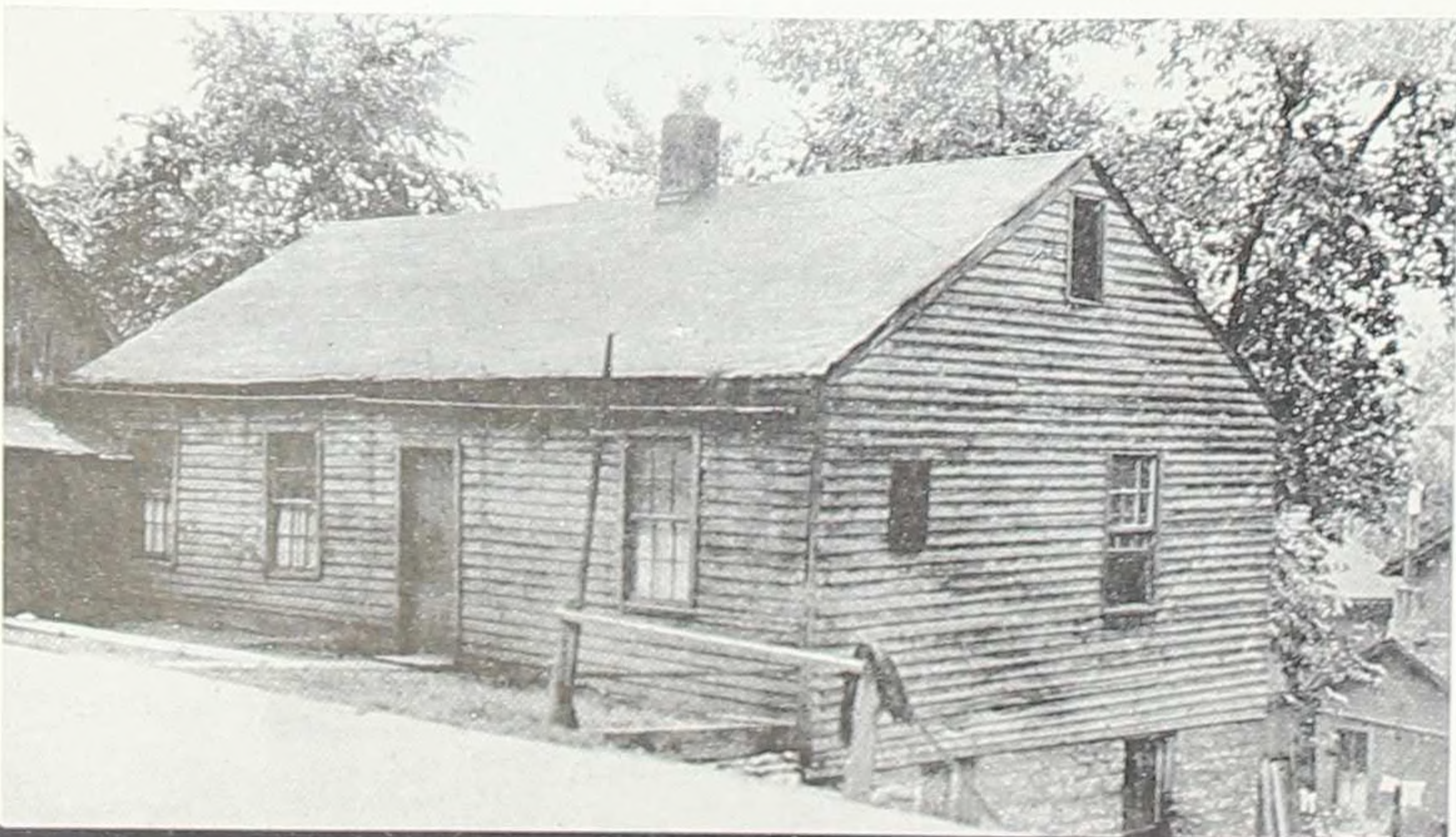
Westbound *Rocky Mountain Rocket* pauses at Des Moines on its 1,061 mile run to Denver. The Rock Island is the only railroad now hauling passengers and mail in and out of Des Moines



First
Mississippi
Bridge at
Davenport

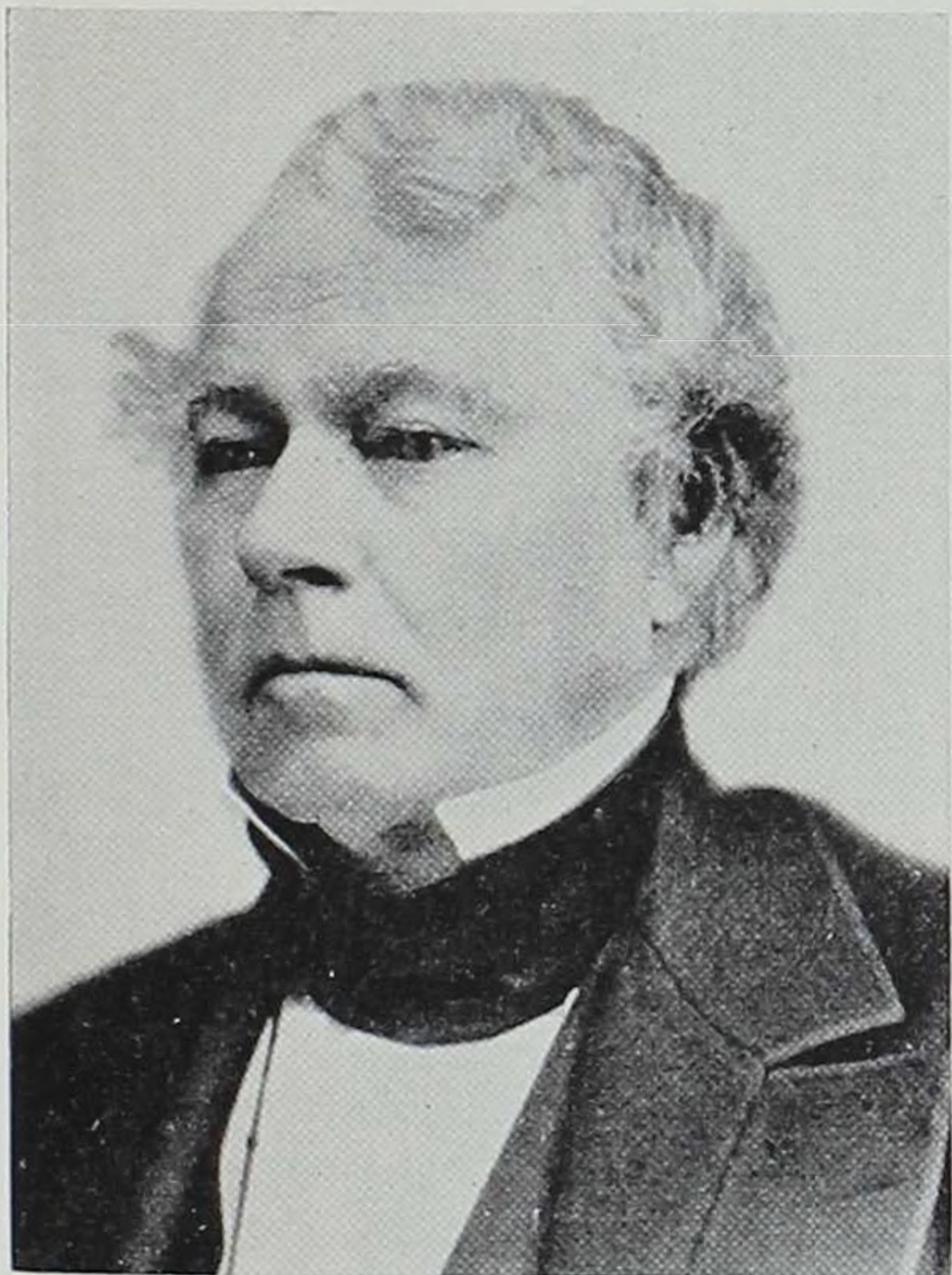


Ferry
at
Davenport

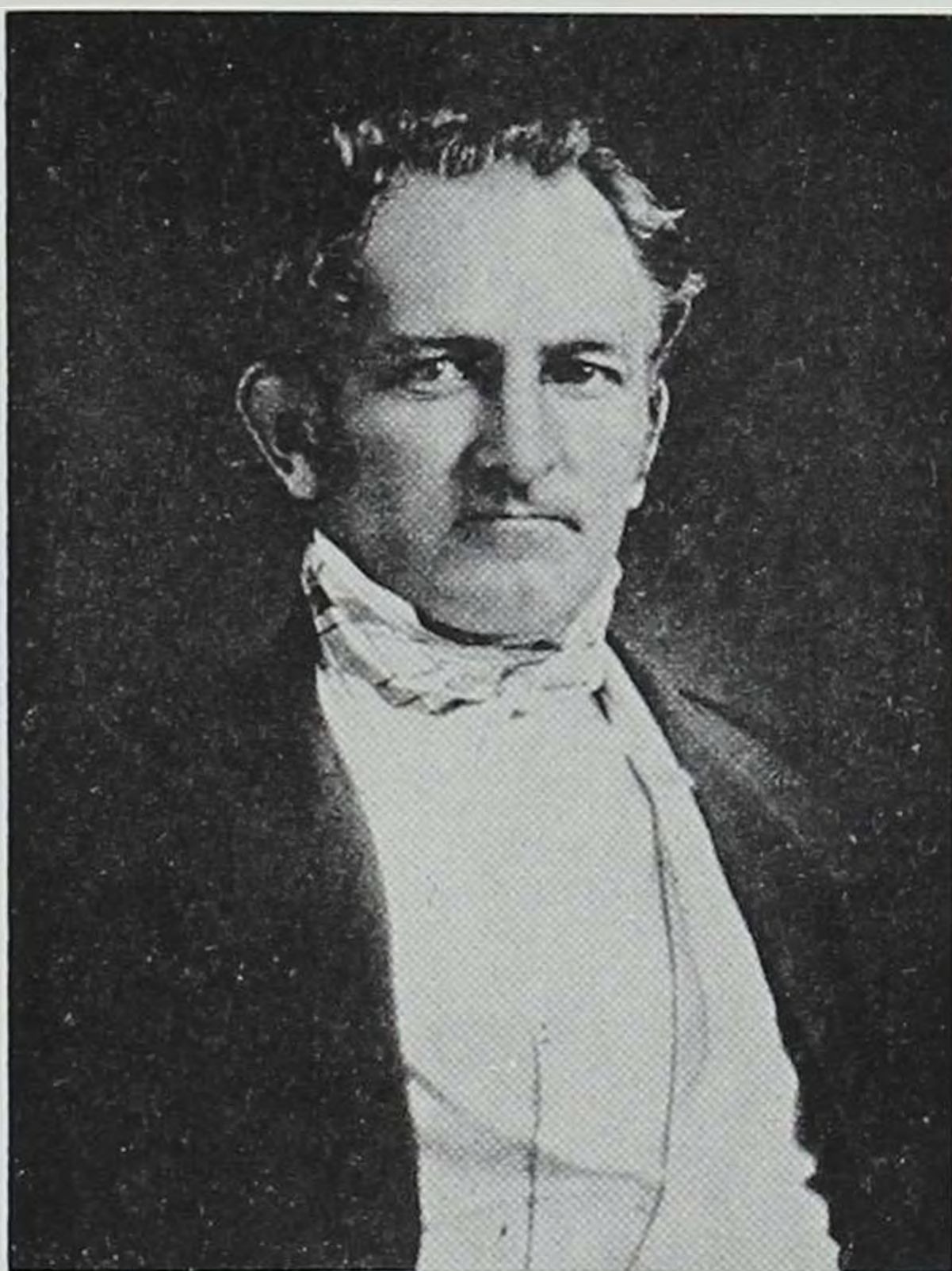


Antoine
LeClaire
Home —
First
Depot
in Iowa

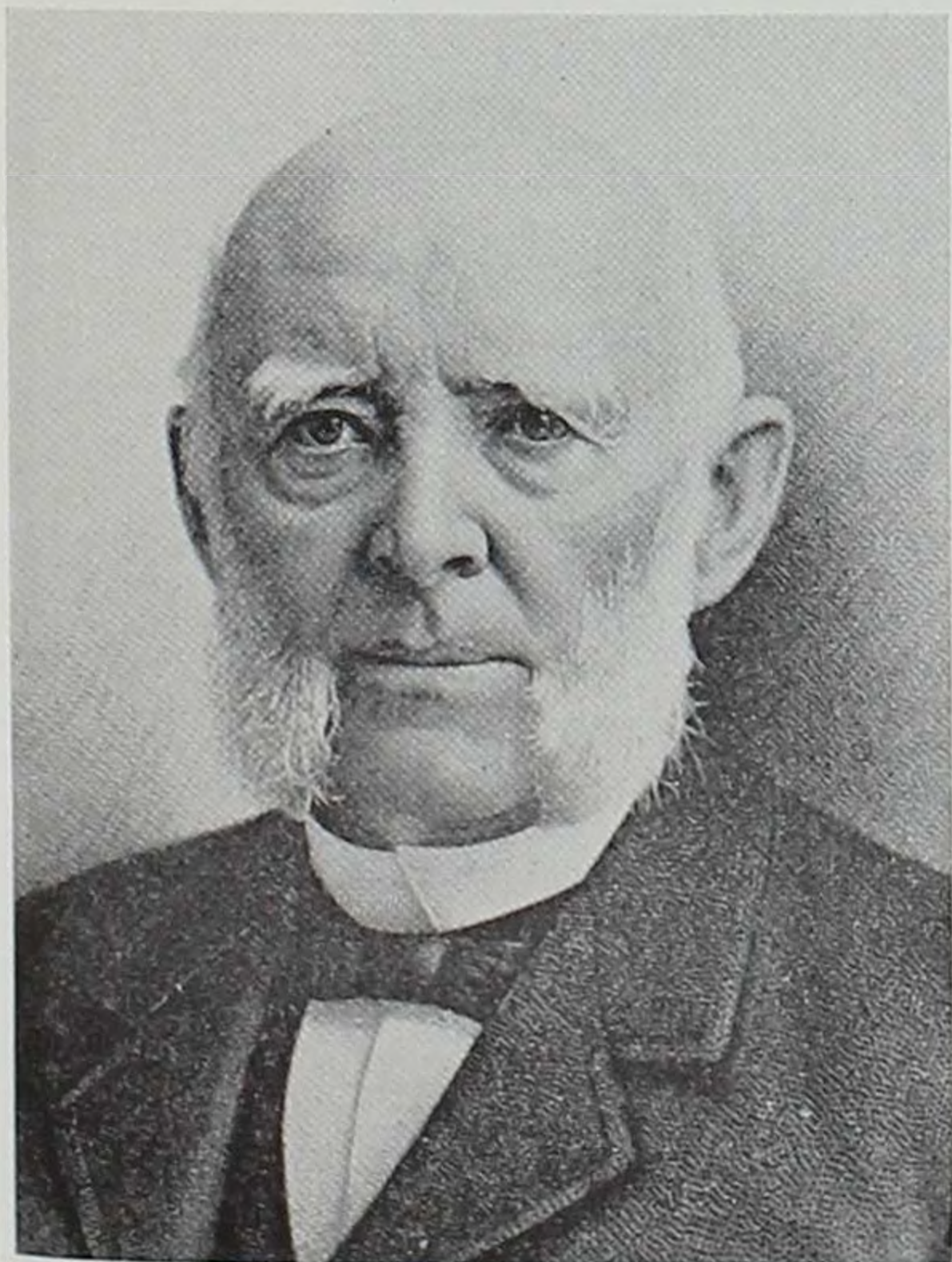
BUILDERS OF THE ROCK ISLAND



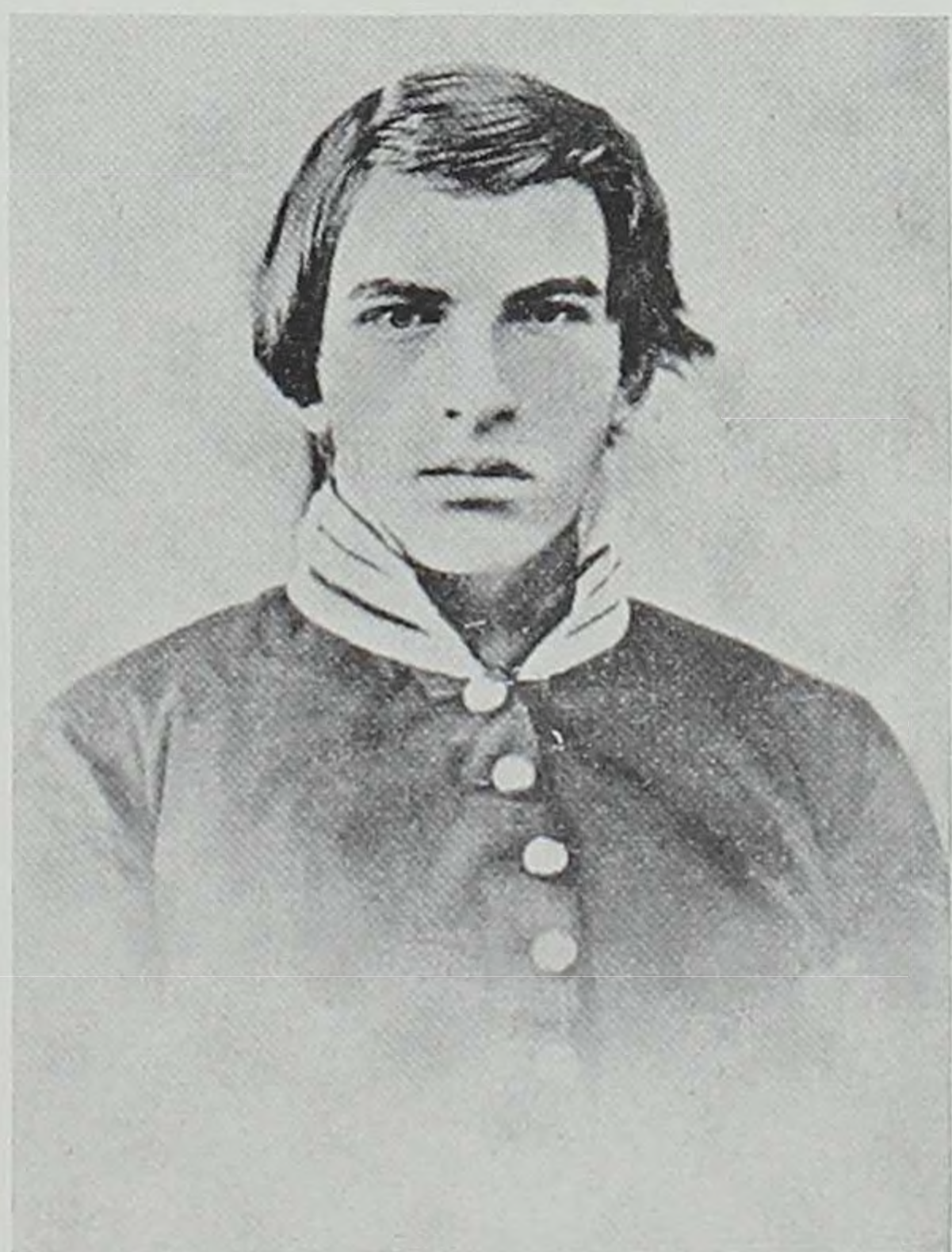
JOSEPH SHEFFIELD



HENRY FARNAM

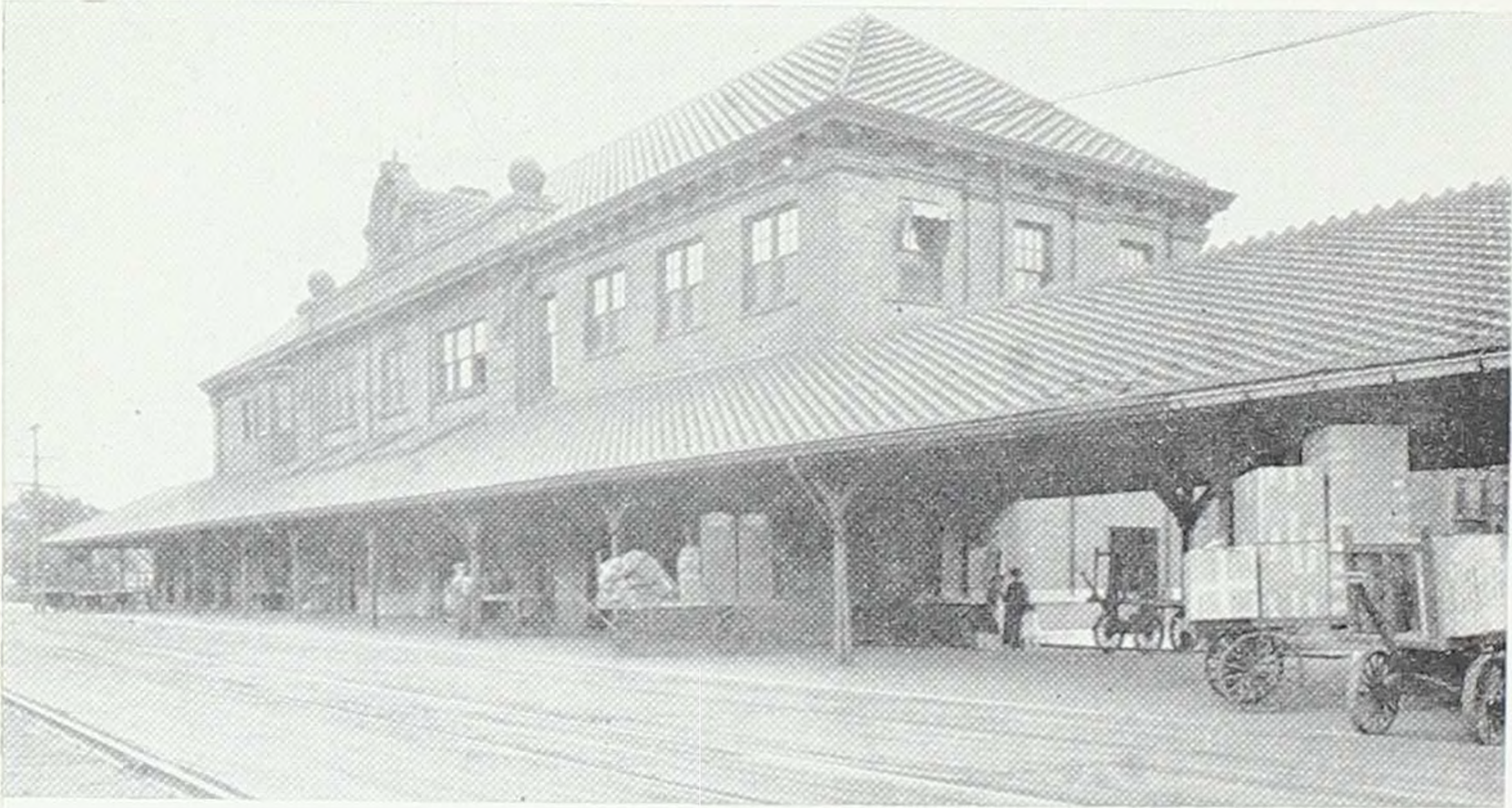


PETER A. DEY

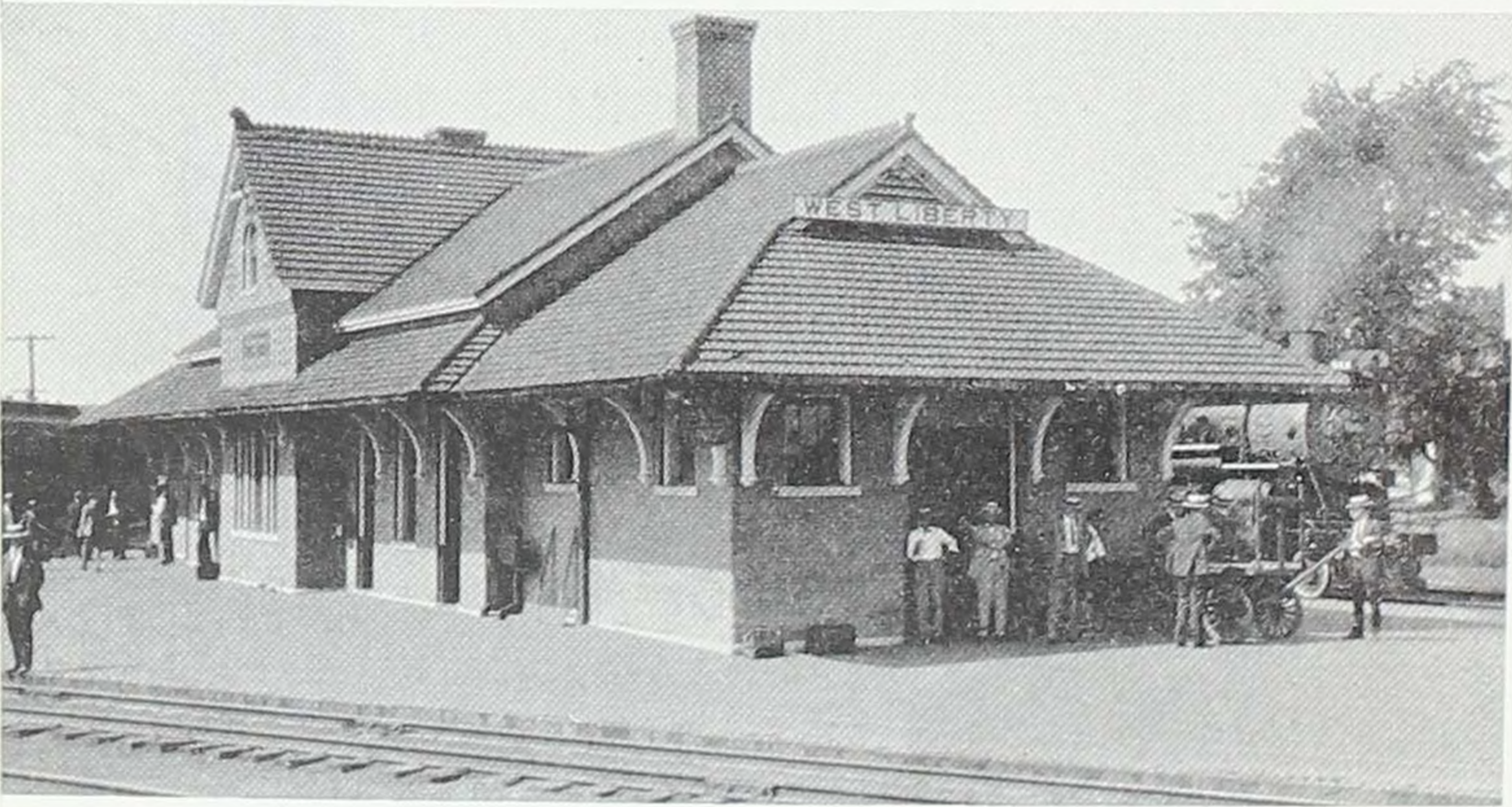


GRENVILLE M. DODGE

DEPOTS — REAL AND FANCIFUL



Davenport



West Liberty



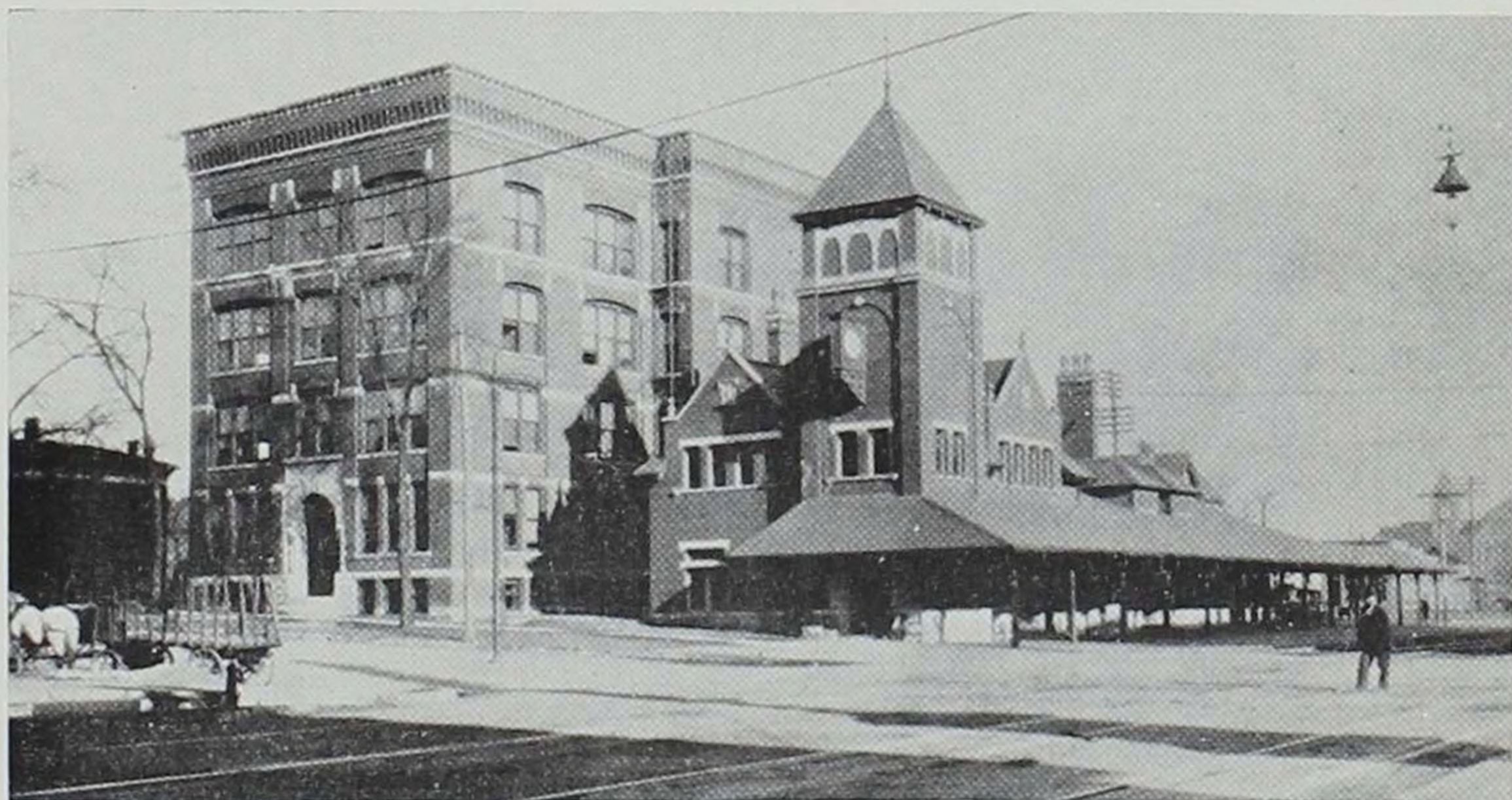
Muscatine

CENTER OF COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

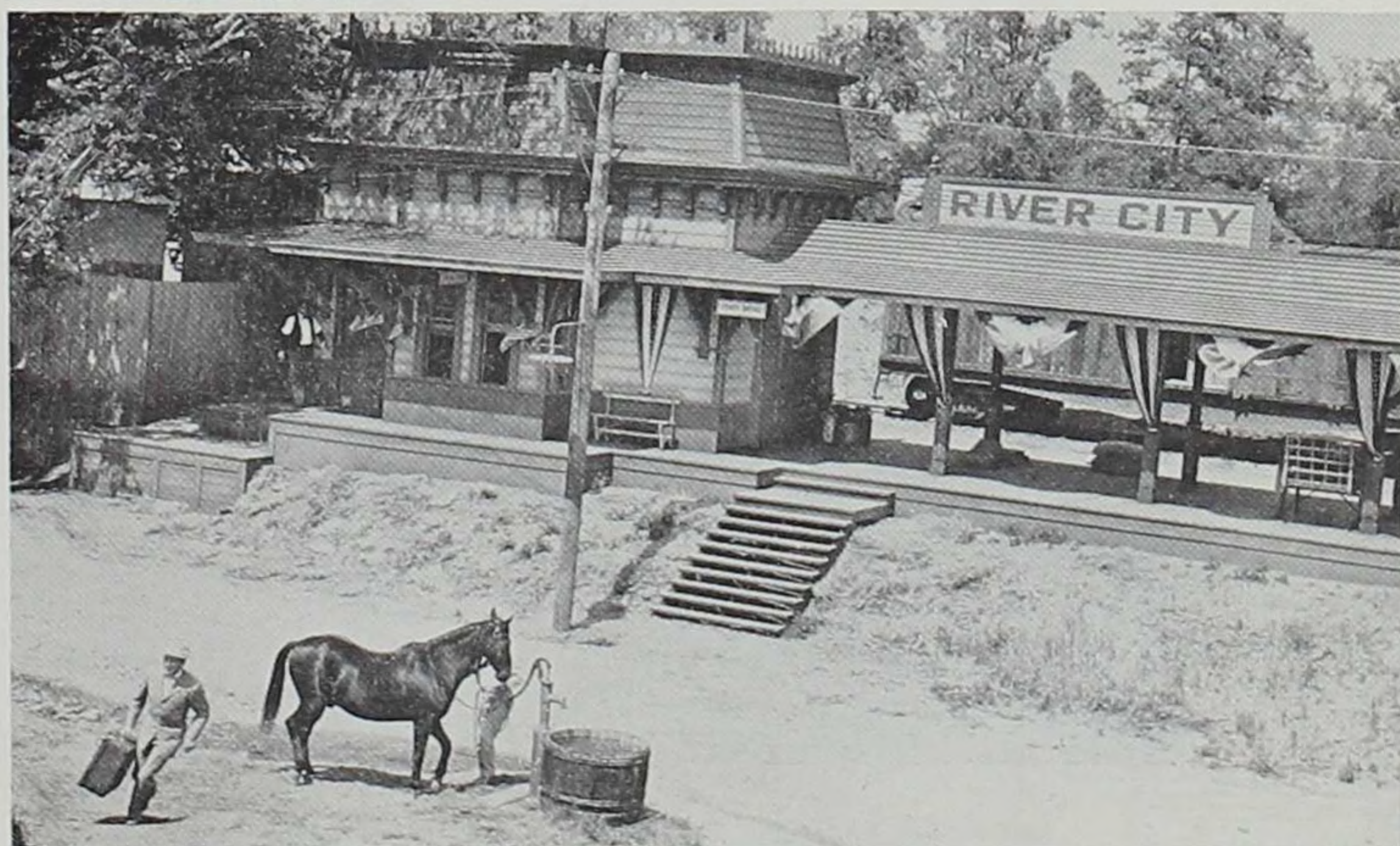
Iowa City



Cedar Rapids

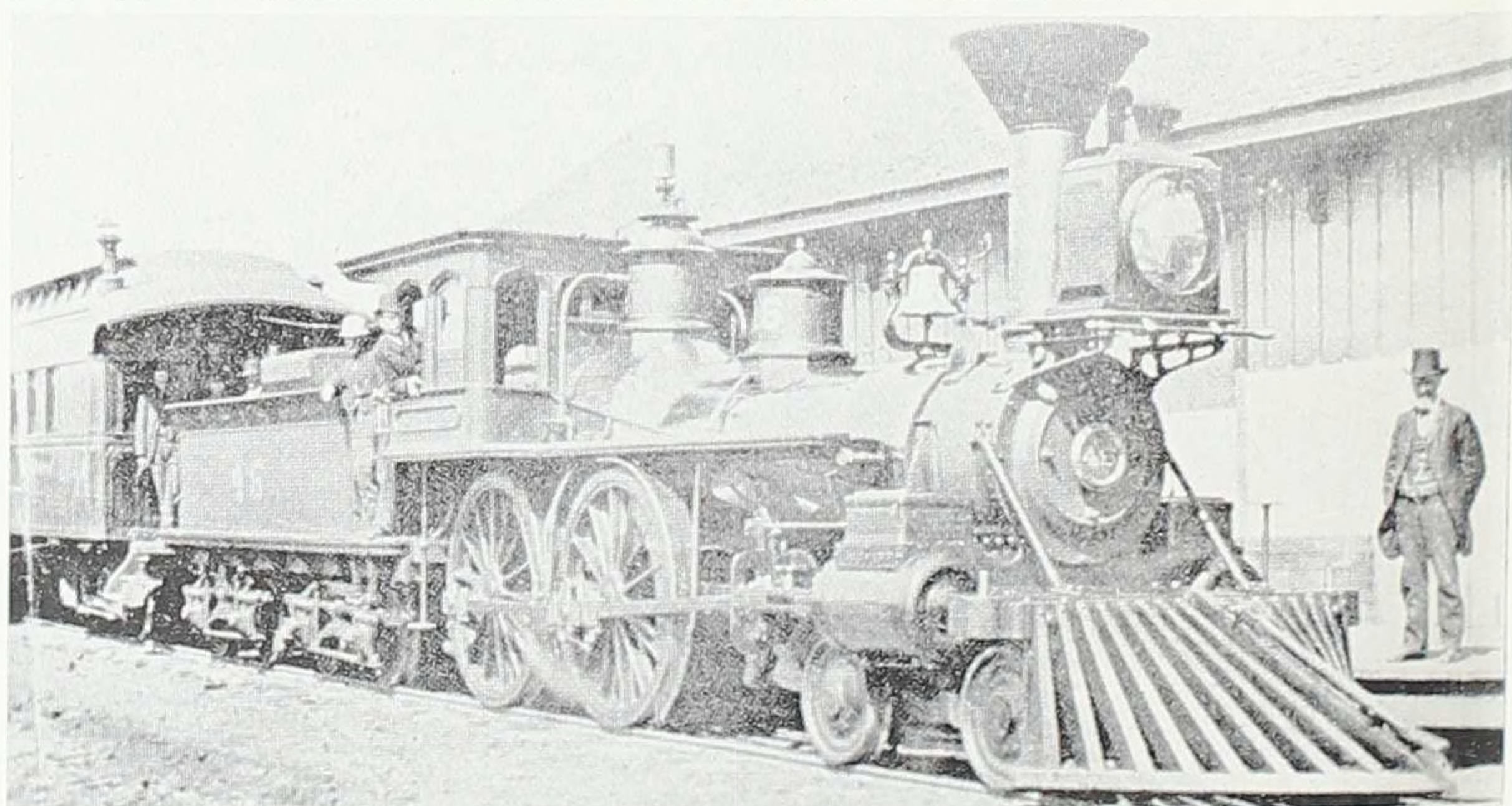
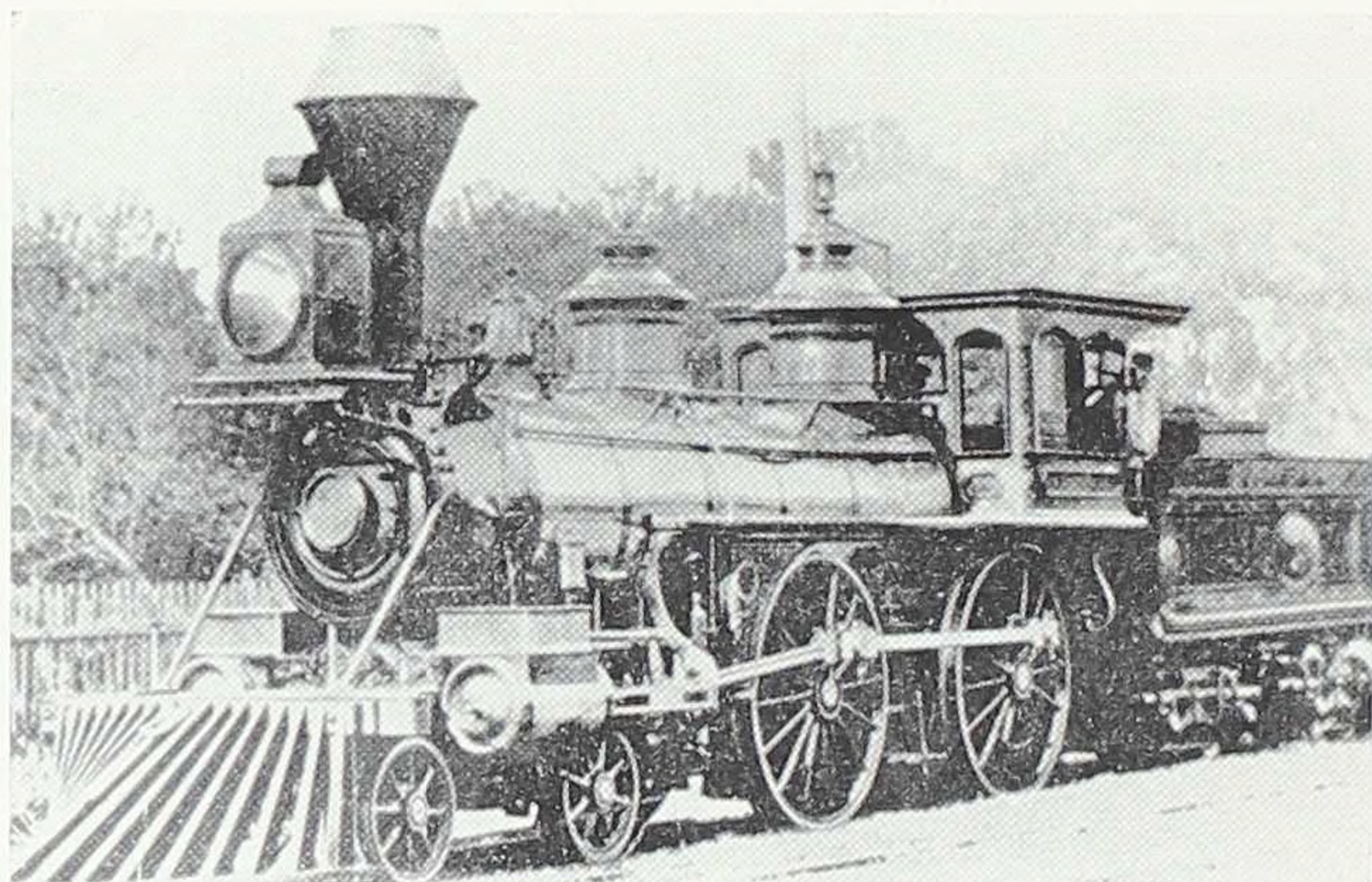


Mason City
home of
"The Music
Man"

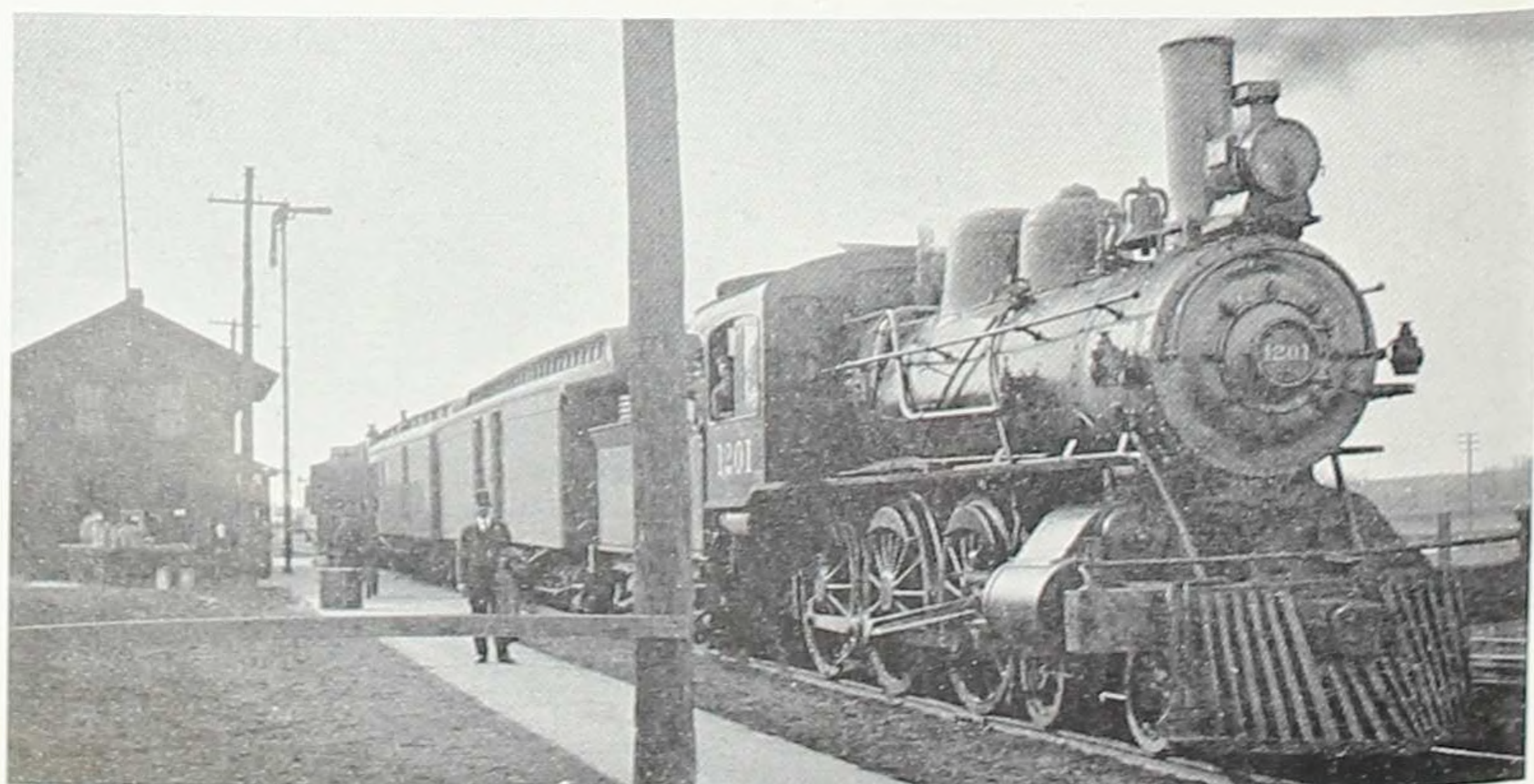


THE STEAM AGE

Famous
Silver Engine
America
Exhibited at
Paris Exhibition
— Purchased
by Rock Island
in 1869.



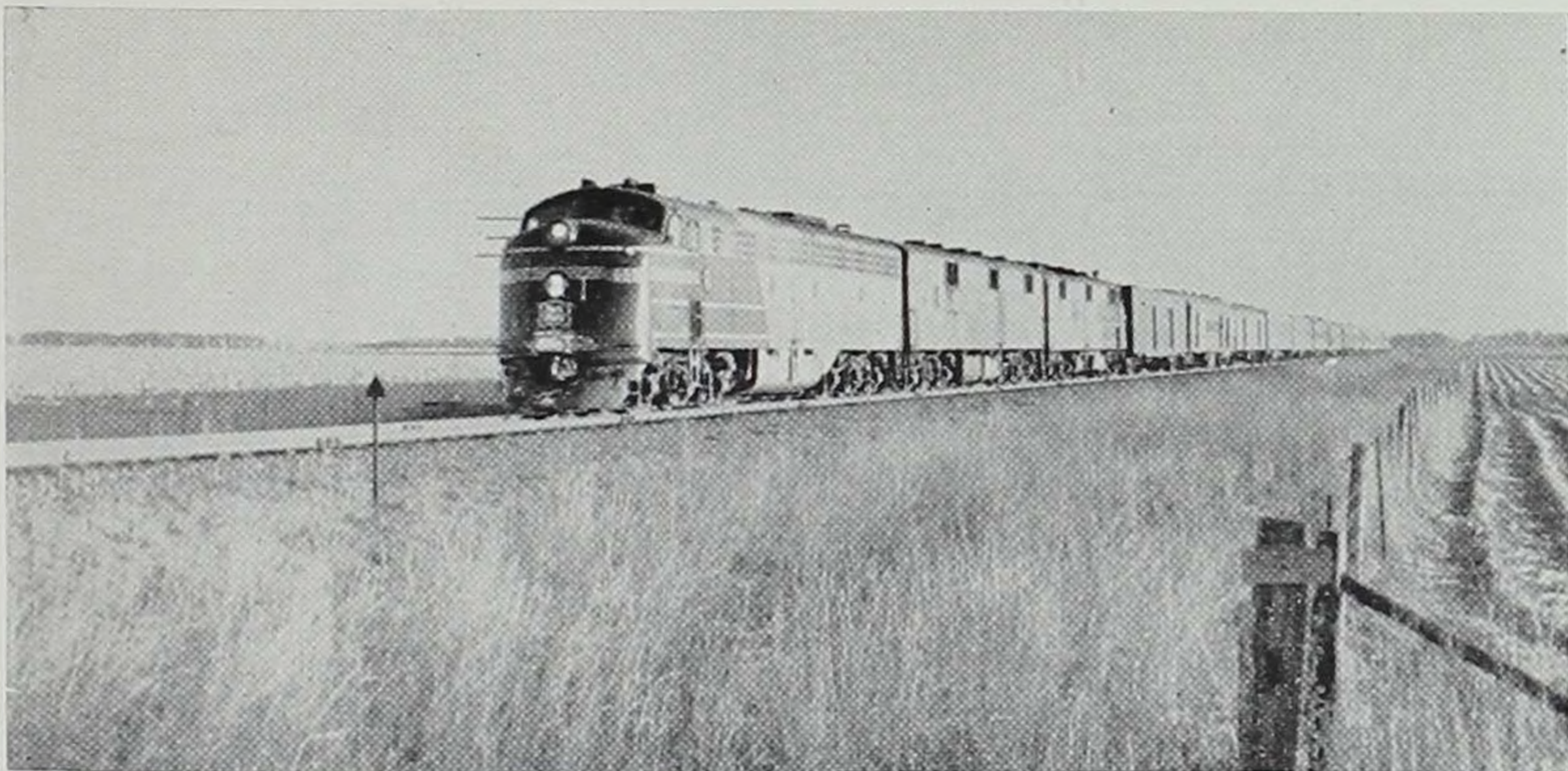
Early train at Indianola in 1881.



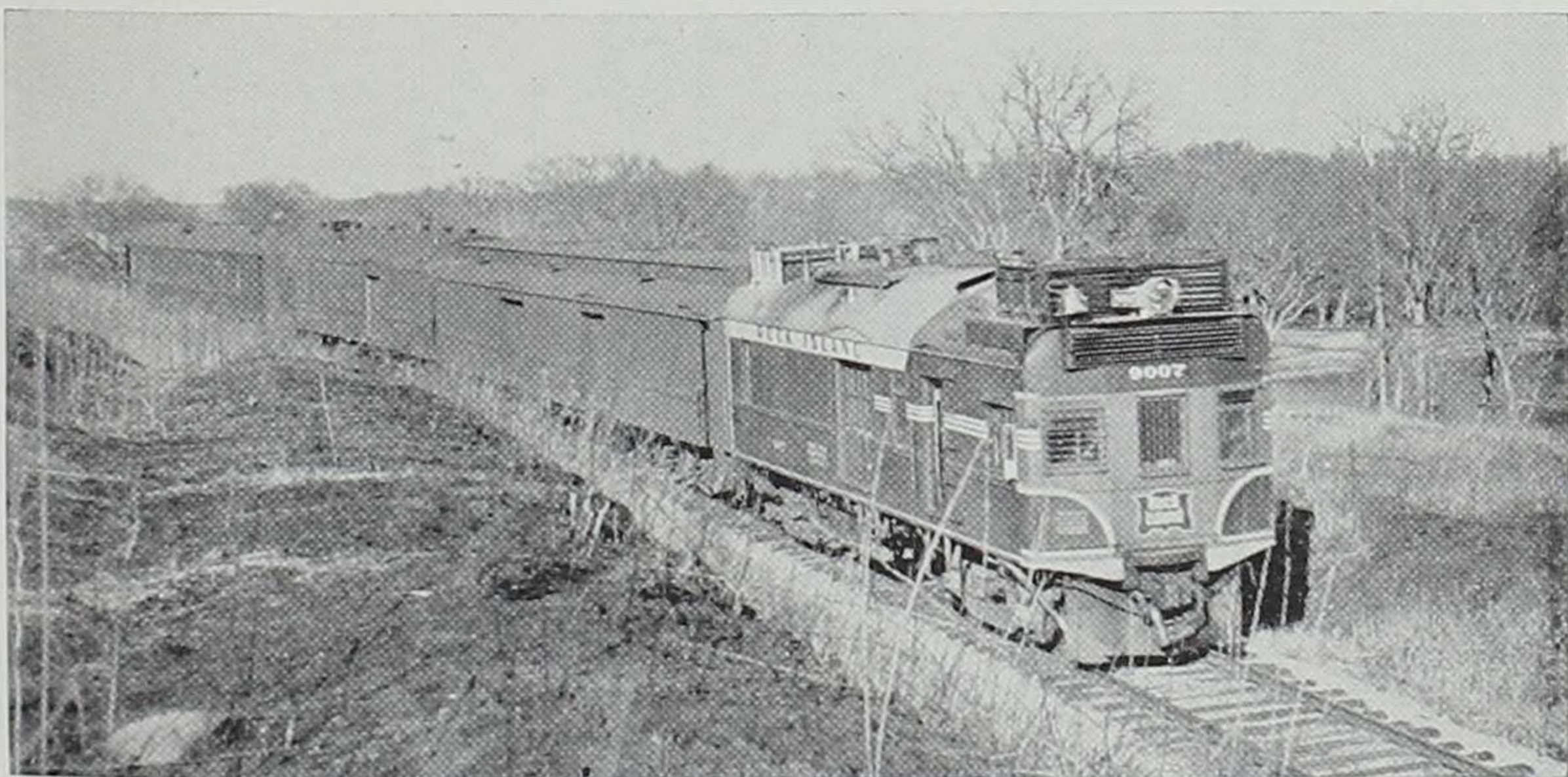
Middle and lower photos from V. P. Vander Maas Collection

Ten-wheeler at Reinbeck on Watertown line of BCR&N.

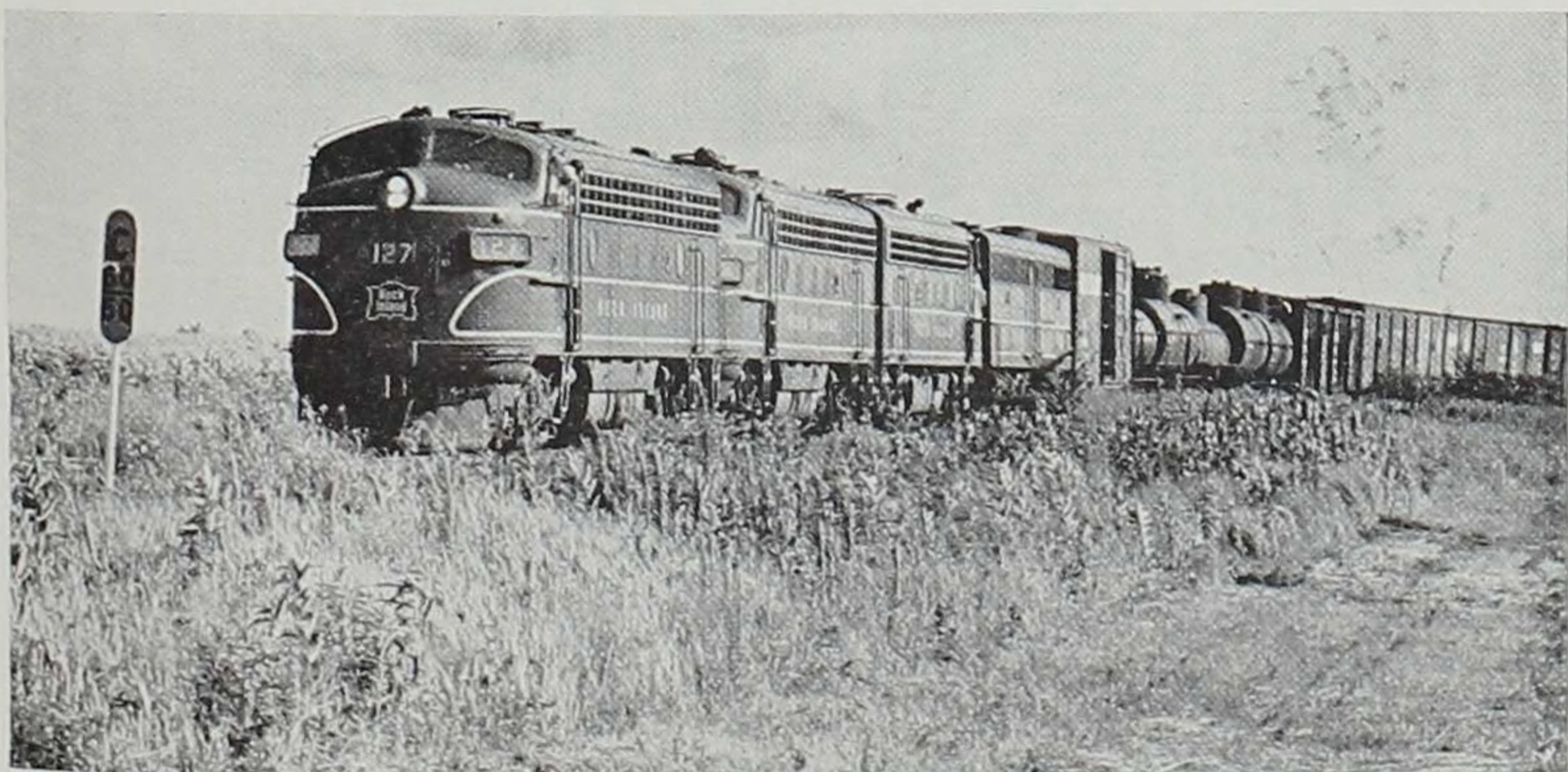
THE DIESEL AGE



Twin-Star Rocket near Kensett on way to Houston.

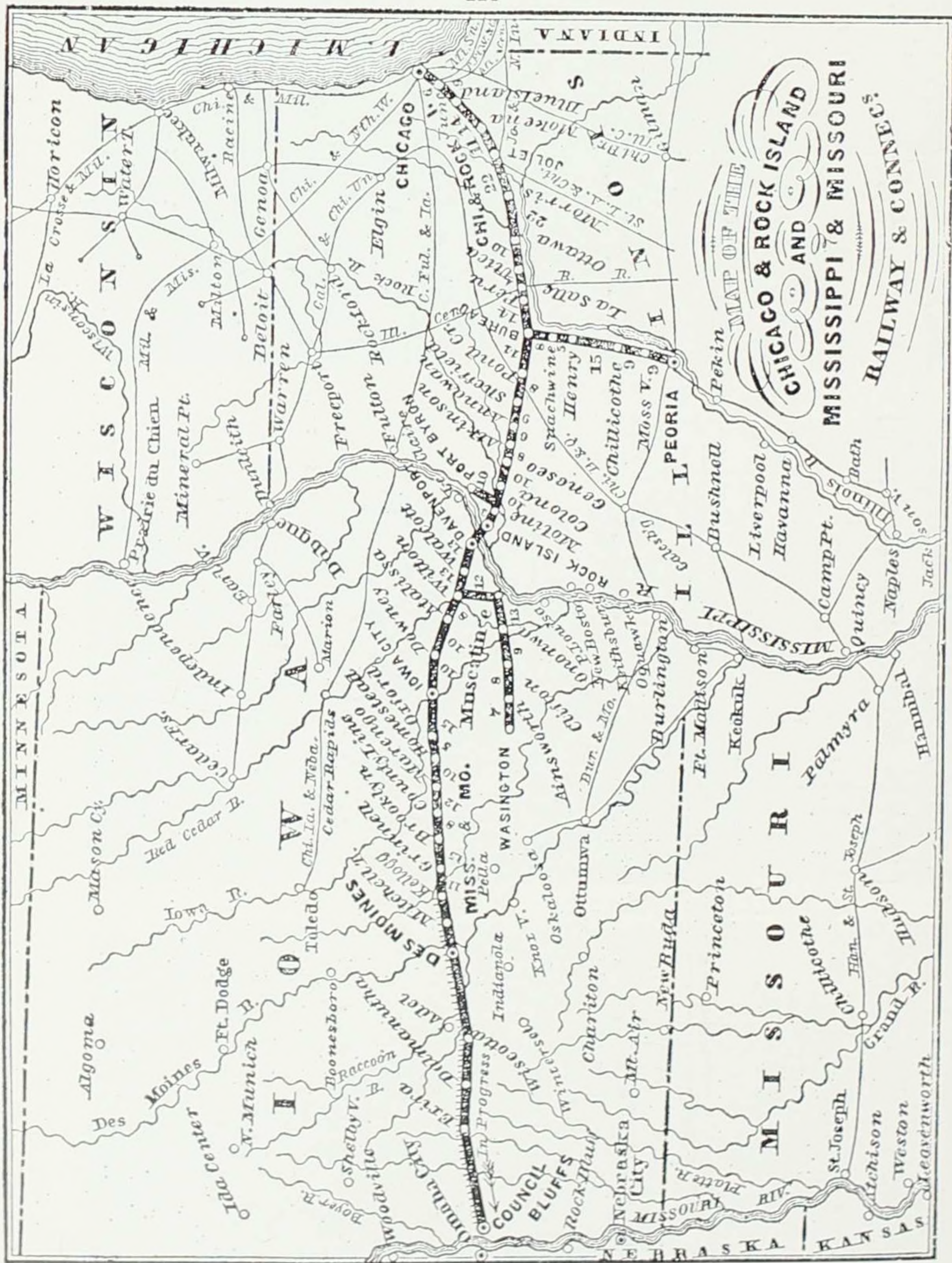


Local passenger train near Graettinger in 1954.



Photos courtesy Don Hofsommer

Fast Rocket freight in southern Iowa.



Map from Appleton's Illustrated Railway and Steam Navigation Guide. The 1865 edition contained seventy-five railway maps and much information about the towns and villages through which the trains passed in the United States and Canada.

From State Historical Society Library

CHICAGO AND ROCK ISLAND RAILWAY LINE,

Composed of Chicago & R. I., Peoria & Bureau Valley, and Mississippi & Missouri R'ways.

CHAS. W. DURANT, Pres., and JOHN F. TRACY, Vice-Pres. Chicago & R. I. Railway, Chicago. JOHN A. DIX, Pres. Missis. & Missouri Railway, New York. G. H. BEARDSLEY, Asst. Gen. Supt., Chicago. W. H. WHITMAN, and A. KIMBALL, Asst. Supts., Rock Island, Iowa. EVERETT ST. JOHN, Chief Ticket Clerk, and LEWIS VIELIE, Chief Freight Clerk, Chicago, Ill. [Sept. 18.]

[ADVERTISEMENT.]

THE CHICAGO AND ROCK ISLAND RAILWAY LINE is the only Direct Route from Chicago to Joliet, La Salle, Peoria, Rock Island, Davenport, Muscatine, Washington, Iowa City, Des Moines, Council Bluffs, Omaha, Denver City, and all points in Central and Western Iowa and Nebraska.

Passenger Depot, cor. Van Buren and Sherman Streets, Chicago.

An EXPRESS TRAIN leaves Chicago daily, running through to Kellogg and Washington without change of cars, at the Mississippi; making direct connections at La Salle with trains of the Illinois Central Railway for Dubuque, Galena, Cairo, St. Louis, and intermediate points; at Peoria, with the Peoria, Oquawka and Burlington Railway for Galesburg and Burlington; at Grinnell and Washington, with Western Stage Co.'s Line of Mail Stages to Oskaloosa, Pella, Knoxville, Indianola, Fort des Moines, Winterset, Council Bluffs, Omaha City, Denver City, and all the principal places in Central and Western Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska.

THROUGH TICKETS, via this Line, can be procured at all the principal Railway offices in the United States and Canada.

G. H. BEARDSLEY,
Asst Gen'l Supt.

CONNECTIONS.

- ¹ Railways diverging from Chicago.
- ² Junction of Mich. Sou. Railway.
- ³ Junc. of Joliet & Nor. Indiana, and Chicago, Alton & St. Louis Railways.
- ⁴ Crossing of Ill. Central Railway.
- ⁵ Peoria & Bureau Val. Railway.
- ⁶ Crossing of Peoria & Oquawka Railway.
- ⁷ Crossing of Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railway.

Way Fares, about three cents per mile.

Acc. Exp. Mail. Mls.				STATIONS.		Mls. Exp. Mail. Acc.			
P. M.	P. M.	A. M.		LEAVE	ARRIVE	A. M.	P. M.	A. M.	
4 45	9 00	9 00	0	Chicago ¹	315	5 00	4 30	9 50	
5 10	9 25	9 25	7	Junction ²	308		4 05	9 25	
5 35	9 55	9 50	16	Blue Island	299	4 10	3 40	9 00	
5 58		10 10	23	Bremen	292		3 20	8 35	
6 13		10 25	30	Mokena	285		3 05	8 17	
6 45	11 10	10 55	40	Joliet ³	275	2 47	2 40	7 45	
P. M.	11 45	11 20	51	Minooka	264	2 18	2 10	A. M.	
	12 15	11 45	62	Morris	253	1 45	1 45		
		12 10	72	Seneca	243	1 15	1 20		
	1 00	12 22	77	Marseilles	238	1 00	1 05		
	1 20	12 45	84	Ottawa	231	12 40	12 45		
	1 45	1 10	94	Utica	221	12 15	12 20		
	1 55	1 20	99	La Salle ⁴	216	12 00	12 05		
	2 05	1 30	100	Peru	215	11 50	11 55		
		1 55	110	Trenton	205		11 30		
	2 55	2 25	114	Bureau	201	11 15	11 20		
	3 00	2 25	114	Bureau ⁵		11 00	11 00		
	3 30	2 45	122	Snatchwine		10 05	10 32		
	3 50	3 00	128	Henry		9 45	10 15		
	4 18	3 20	134	Lacon		9 20	9 58		
	4 50	3 40	142	Chillicothe		8 50	9 35		
	5 25	4 05	151	Mossville		8 20	9 10		
	6 00	4 30	161	Peoria ⁶		7 45	8 45		
	3 17	2 45	122	Tiskilwa	193	10 37	10 40		
	3 34	3 03	129	Pond Creek ⁷	186	10 20	10 20		
	3 56	3 25	137	Sheffield	178	10 00	10 00		
	4 20	3 50	146	Annawan	169	9 35	9 35		
	4 35	4 05	152	Atkinson	163	9 20	9 20		
	4 55	4 25	159	Geneseo	156	9 00	9 00		
	5 25	4 55	170	Colona	145	8 33	8 35		
	5 54	5 24	179	Moline	136	8 06	8 06		
	6 00	5 30	182	Rock Island	133	8 00	8 00		
	6 05	5 35	184	Davenport	131	7 45	7 35		
	6 45	5 50	196	Walcott	118	7 00	A. M.		
	7 25	P. M.	201	Fulton	114	6 48			
	7 40		203	Durant	111	6 40			
	7 50		209	Wilton	106	6 25			
	8 05								
	8 10		209	Wilton		6 20			
	9 10		222	Muscatine		5 15			
	9 55		234	Ononwa		3 55			
	10 40		244	Clifton		8 18			
	11 05		252	Ainsworth		2 52			
	11 30		259	Washington		2 30			
	8 20		212	Moscow	102	6 10			
	8 35		217	Atalissa	97	5 55			
	8 50		222	West Liberty	92	5 40			
	9 35		238	Iowa City	76	5 00			
	10 10		253	Oxford	61	4 10			
	10 55		269	Marengo	46	3 25			
	11 20		281	Victor	33	2 50			
	11 40		289	Brooklyn	26	2 30			
	12 25		304	Grinnell	11	1 50			
	1 00		315	Kellogg	0	1 15			
P. M.				ARRIVE	LEAVE	P. M.			

Going West—Chicago to Rock Island and Kellogg.

Going East—Kellogg to Rock Island and Chicago.

From State Historical Society Library

Stations on the Rock Island from Chicago to Kellogg in Appleton Illustrated Railway Guide for 1865.



(Our Stations will accept shares in Shares.)

Souvenir "Bill of Fare" of "The Great Rock Island Route" around 1890.

PUT THIS IN YOUR POCKET.

Breakfast and Supper.

BROILED AND FRIED.

Beef Steak, Plain, with Mushrooms, with Tomato Sauce.
Breakfast Bacon. Sausage. Mutton Chops, Plain or Breaded.
Calves Liver, with Salt Pork. Sugar-Cured Ham.

FISH. Salt Mackerel.
Lake Whitefish.

OYSTERS. Fried. Raw.

MISCELLANEOUS. Codfish Balls.
Fried Mush. Stewed Chicken.
Stewed Kidneys.

COLD. Pork and Beans.
Beef Tongue.

EGGS. Scrambled.
Fried. Omelets, Plain, with Ham, with Herbs, with Cheese, with Tomatoes.

VEGETABLES. Saratoga Chips.
Stewed Potatoes.

BREAD. Maple Syrup.
Vienna Bread. Buckwheat Cakes. Hot Rolls. Hot Corn Bread.
Plain Toast. Buttered Toast. Milk Toast. Oatmeal Porridge.

Peaches. Green Gages.
English Breakfast Tea. Black and Green Tea.
Coffee. Chocolate. Iced Milk.

GUESTS WILL PLEASE EXERCISE PATIENCE, AS THE DISHES ARE COOKED AFTER THE ORDER IS GIVEN.

ALL MEALS SEVENTY-FIVE CTS.

A BOTTLE OF FINE FRENCH WINE

Is served, if desired, with each meal, for an additional 15 cts.

PUT THIS IN YOUR POCKET.

WINE LIST.

CHAMPAGNE.			
Mumm's Ex. Dry,	Qts. \$3.50	Pts. \$2.00	
Chapin & Gore, 47, Ex. Dry,	Qts. 2.50	" 1.50	
CLARET.			
St. Julien,	Qts. \$1.50	Pts. \$1.00	
Medoc,		" 30	
BURGUNDY.			
Sauternes,	Qts. \$1.50	Pts. \$1.00	
RHINE.			
Barsac,		Hf. pts. 25	
BRANDY.			
Hennessey,		Per flask, \$1.00	
WHISKY.			
Sour Mash,		Per flask, .60	
" Cocktails,		" .60	
Gin Cocktails,		" .60	
Bass' Ale,		Per bottle, .40	
Ginger Ale,		" .25	
Hathorn Water,		" .25	
Apollinaris,		" .25	
Export Beer,		" .15	

CHOICEST BRANDS OF IMPORTED AND DOMESTIC CIGARS.

ALL MEALS ON THIS TRAIN

—ARE—

SERVED IN DINING CARS,

—WITH—

Ample Time to Enjoy Them.

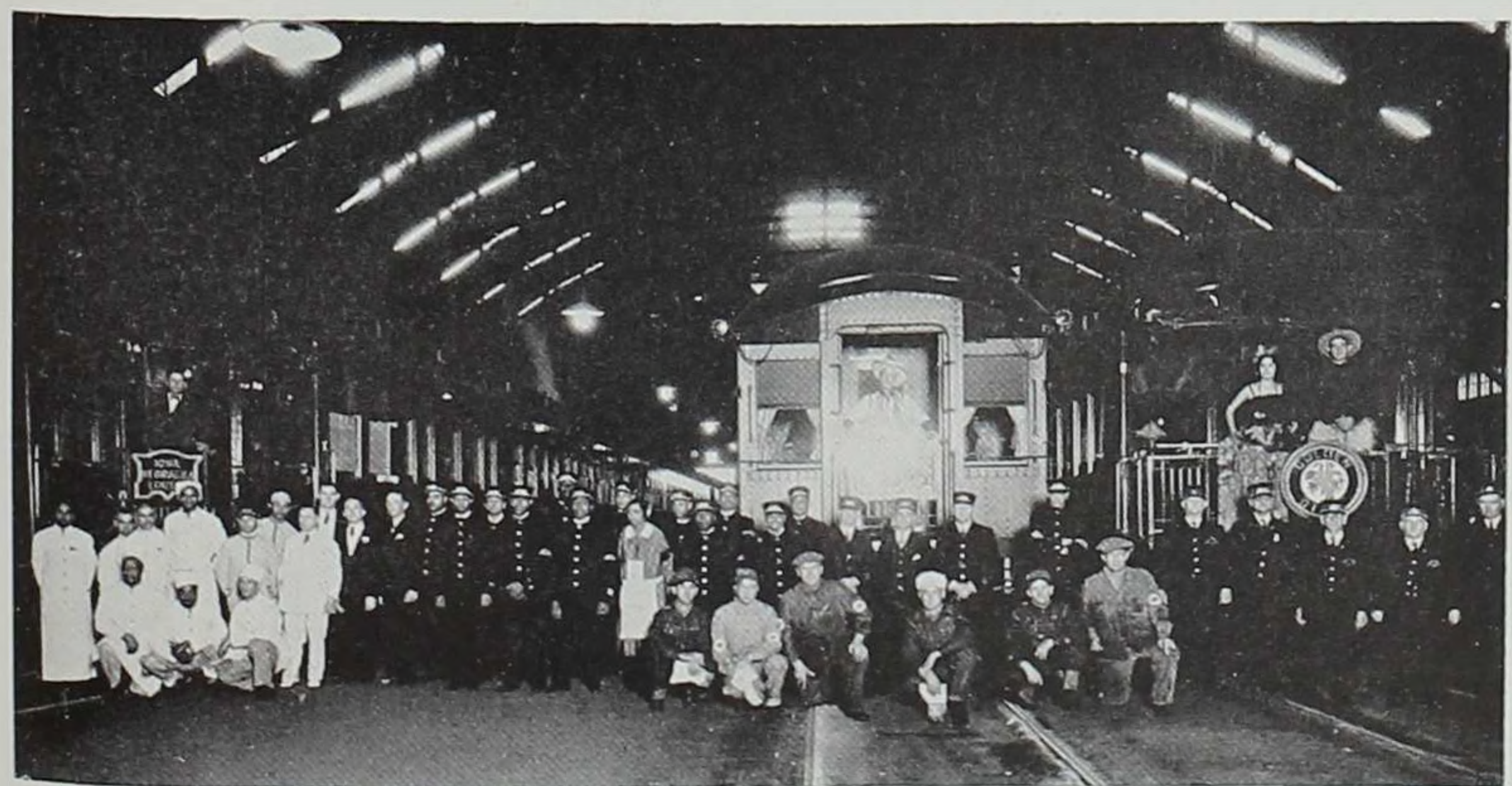
From State Historical Society Library



Business bar *Ellendale* used by C. J. Ives, President of BCR&N.



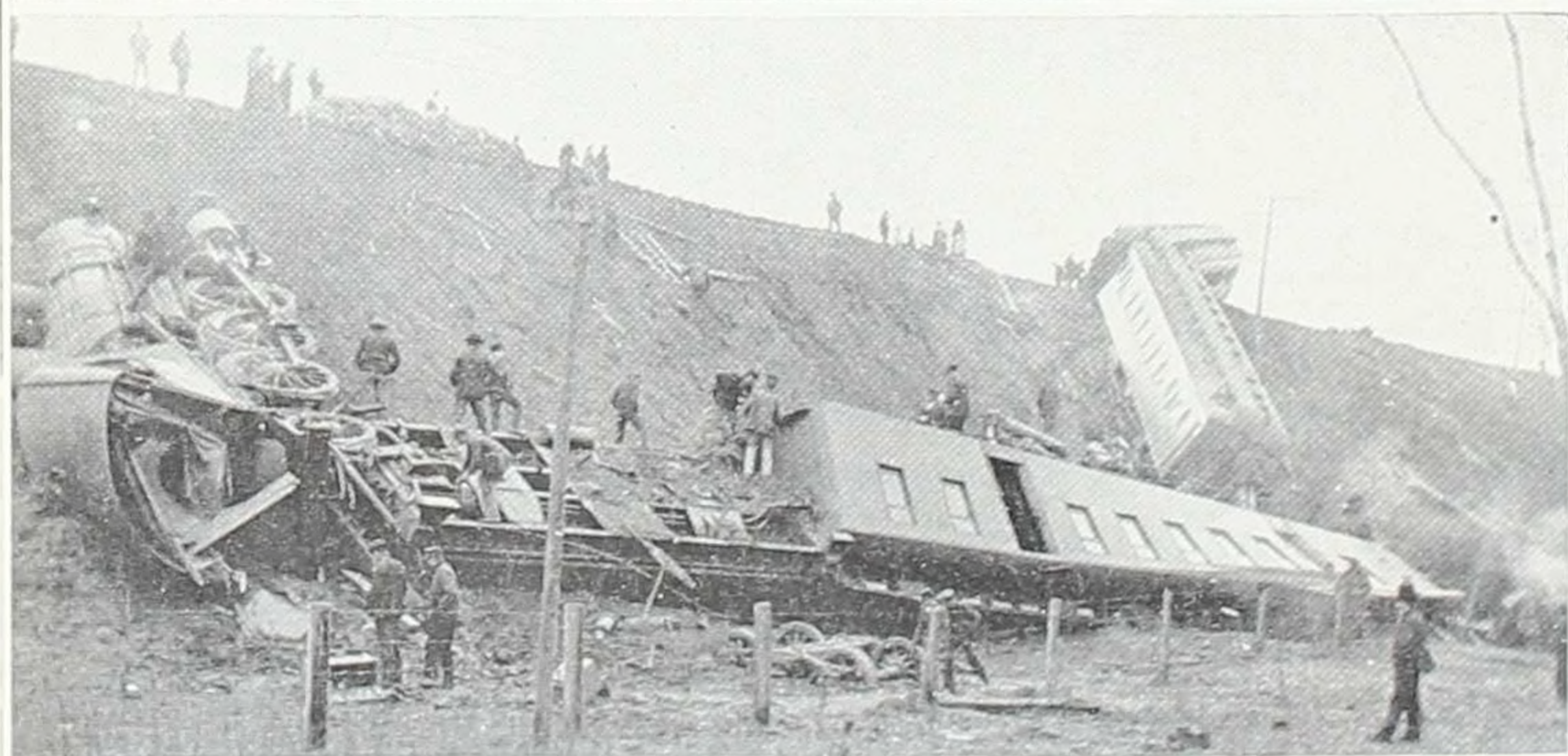
New engines for *Golden State*, *Rocky Mountain*, and *Iowa-Nebraska Limiteds* in 1929.



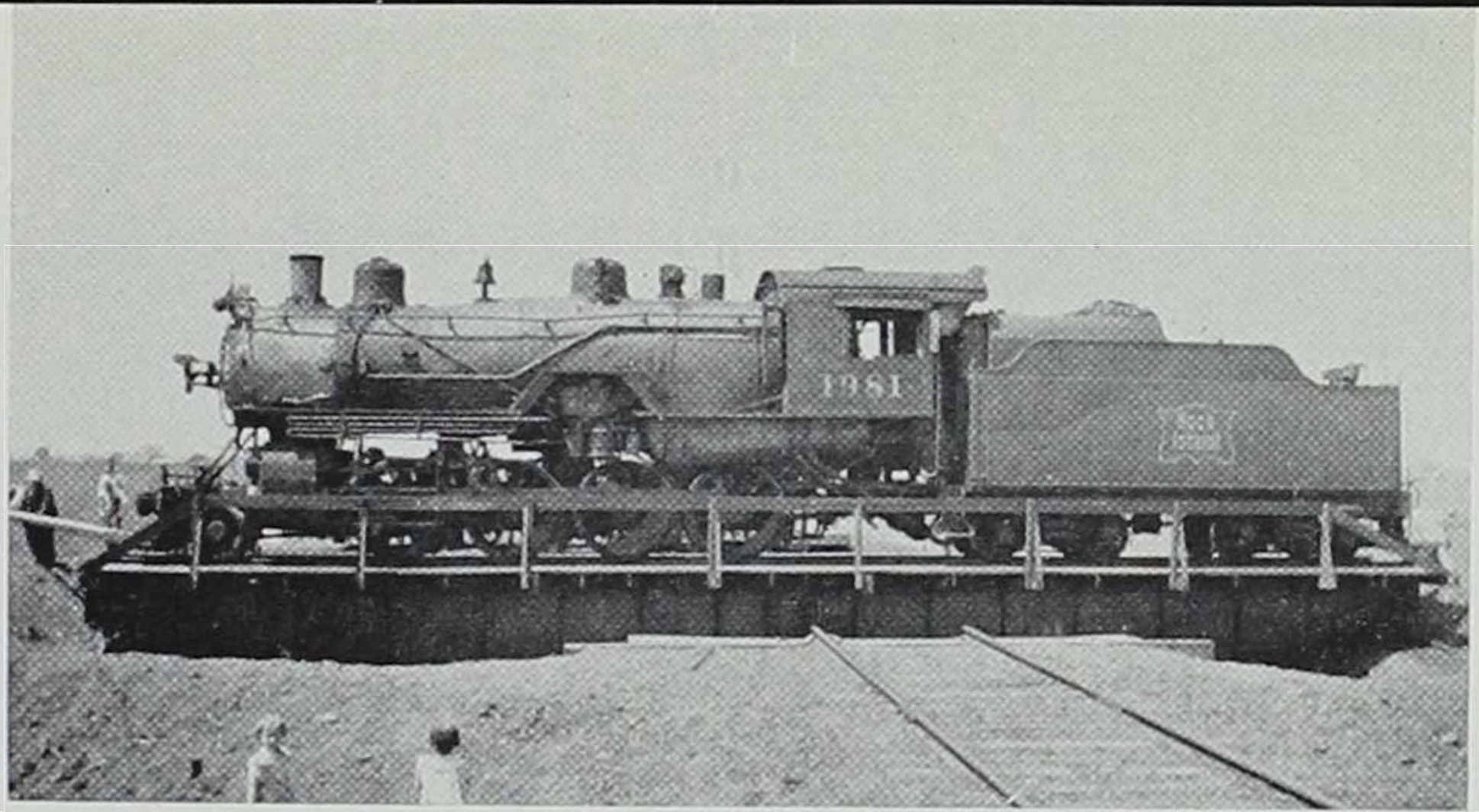
Crews of the three new trains exhibited in Chicago — Sept. 6, 1929.



WRECKS
Though not common, do occur, such as those near Amana, Letts, and Washburn.



Turntable
Lone Tree



Modern
Truss Bridge
at Avoca



Rock Island
Gravel Pit
Graettinger,
1915

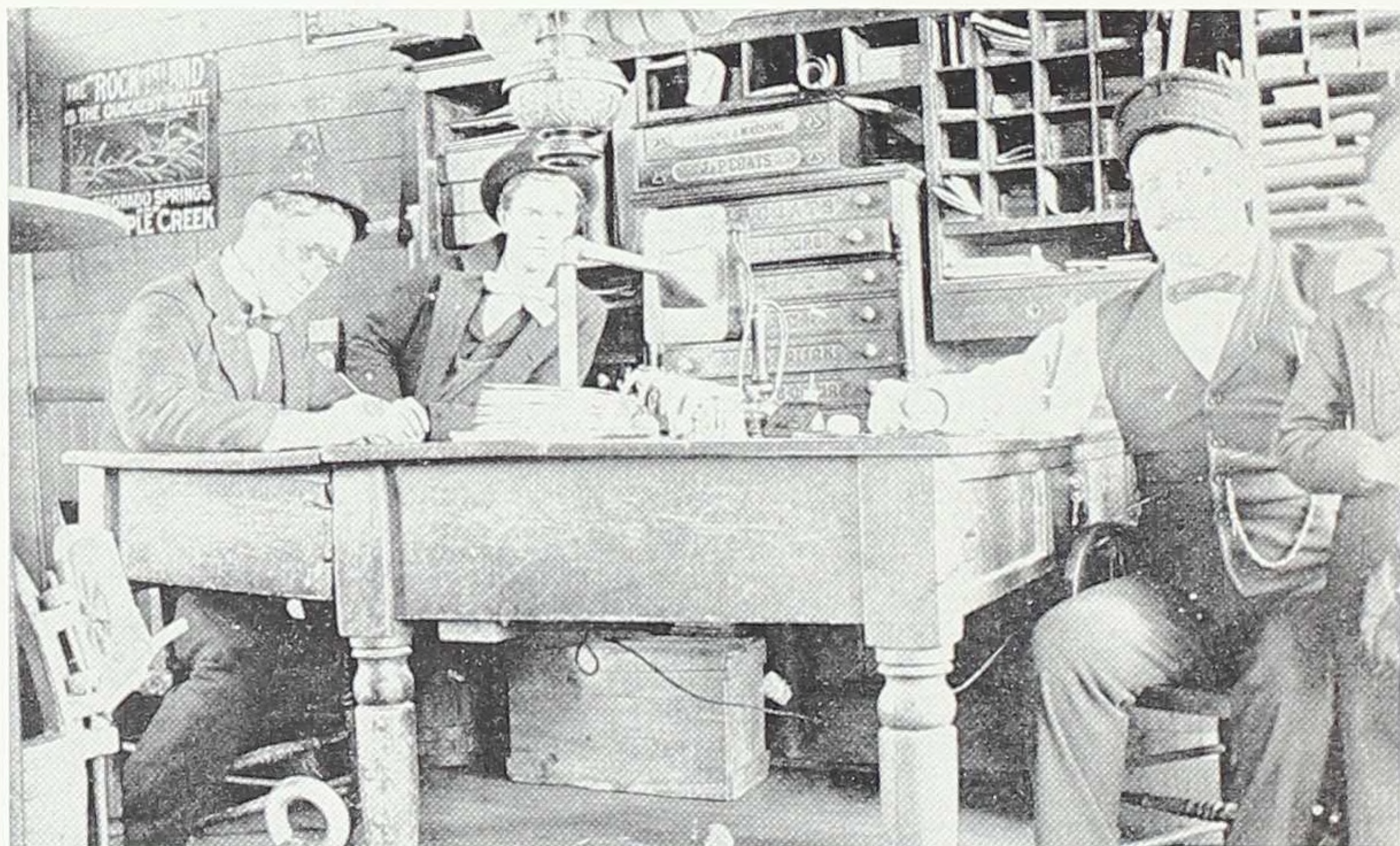


Hunt Collection

Building
Atlantic
Cutoff



WAITING FOR THE TRAIN



Old
Ticket
Office



Milk
Train
Days

*Penningroth
Collection*



Carload
of
Cabbage

*Schmitt
Collection*

loading Cabbage Cars
J. W. Rummells, Nichols, Ia.
Aug 8, 1916 - 1271

FOR FREIGHT, FOR PASSENGERS, FOR FUN

Freight
Train



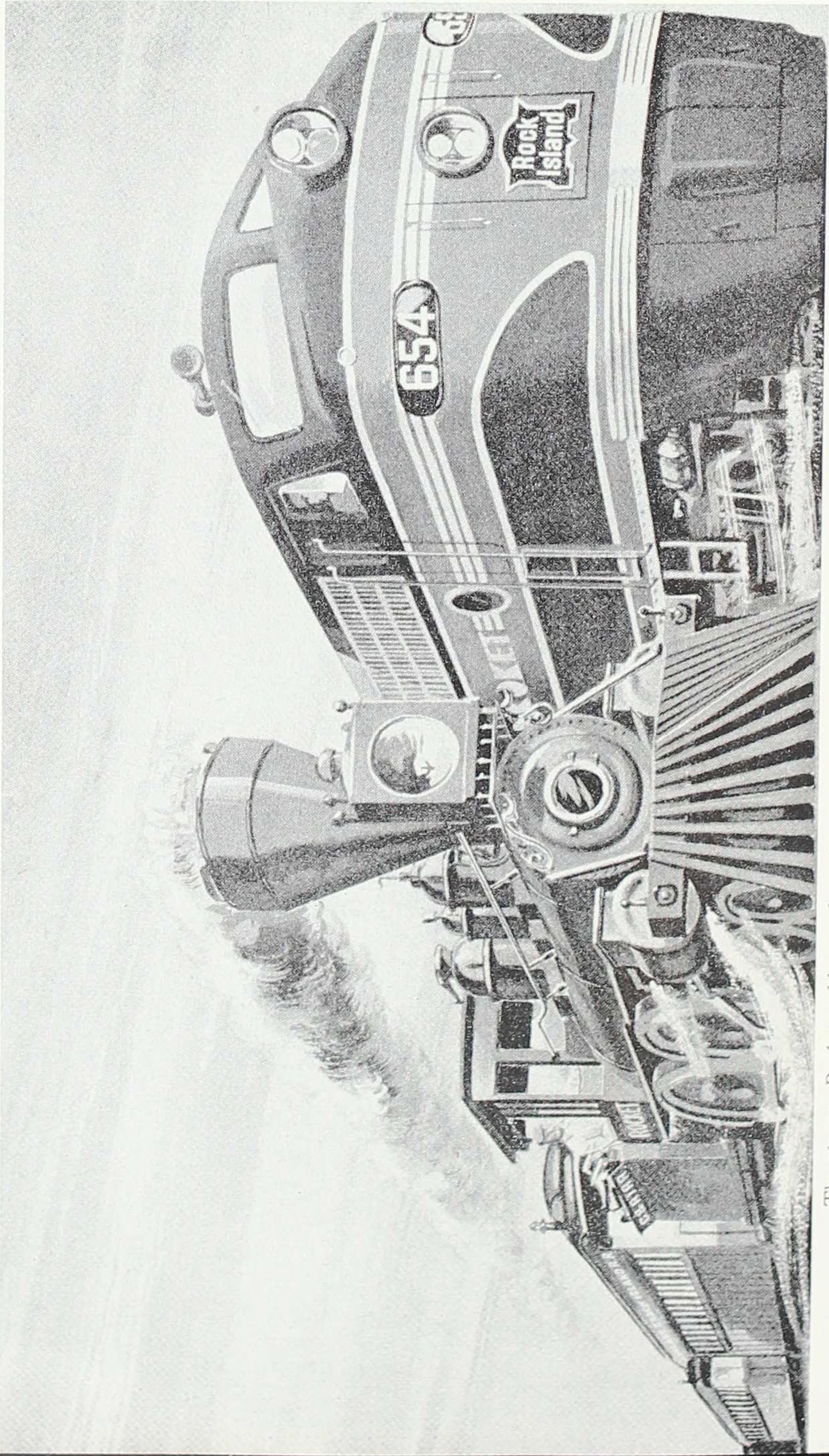
Fourth of
July, 1910
Lone Tree



*Yakish
Collection*

Waiting
for the
Hoover
Special
West
Branch





The pioneer *Rocket* and her swift modern successor exemplify over a century of service to Iowans.

Greene, who became general superintendent of the road. In later years William headed the Cedar Rapids & Marion City Railway, which went by the Coe College campus. In fact, all these men played an important part in launching the school.

Unfortunately, the BCR&M suffered reverses after the panic of 1873, which resulted in a change of management and receivership. The ubiquitous John I. Blair saw his chance to get control of the road, and for a time Blair interests dominated its management. Nevertheless, the company defaulted on its bonds, and in May, 1875, W. W. Walker was appointed provisional receiver. Two months later General Edward F. Winslow superseded him as permanent receiver. This was the first and only receivership in the road's history.

An interesting sidelight on that trying period is that the bankrupt railroad paid its shopmen not in cash but by checks, which might be delayed in payment for an extended time. While not a legal tender, these checks were generally accepted by local merchants. The vendors got into the habit of calling the men "Time-checkers" and the area in which they lived the "Time Check" district. To this day some of the older residents still refer to the northern end of the west side, where the railroaders resided, as the "Time Check" section.

The property was reorganized in 1876 as the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Railroad, and became one of the best-managed lines in Iowa.

B. C. R. & N.

The Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern (incorporated in Iowa on June 27, 1876) had as its heritage a strategic 368-mile railroad — all in Iowa. When the property was purchased outright by the Rock Island in 1903, it had grown to be a 1,310-mile system, located in three states. Its main stem ran from Burlington through Cedar Rapids and Waterloo to Albert Lea, Minnesota. Another line ran northwest through Emmetsburg and Sibley, thence crossing the corner of Minnesota to Watertown, South Dakota. Branches veered off the main line at various points, serving Iowa City and Montezuma on the south, Clinton on the east, Decorah up in the northeast corner, and Estherville in northwestern Iowa.

First president of the road was Fred Taylor of New York, who represented Eastern financial interests. But the man "on location" who ran the railroad was General Edward F. Winslow, who had formerly been appointed receiver of the old BCR&M when he was only 38. Irked when he was not made president of the new company, the Civil War veteran gave up his post as vice president and general superintendent to head the expanding St. Louis-San Francisco Railroad in

1880. That year, too, Judge Joshua Tracy of Burlington, general solicitor of the BCR&N, replaced Taylor as chief executive. The people of Cedar Rapids breathed a sigh of relief when their home road was once again run by Iowans.

It was Charles J. Ives, however, who provided the continuity of leadership and sound business judgment which made "The Iowa Route" an outstanding railroad in the Midwest. From 1884 to its sale in 1903, Ives shaped the destiny of the carrier as its president and general superintendent. A strict disciplinarian with a somewhat austere exterior, he was highly respected for his honesty and fairness. Reared a New Englander, there was always a trace of Green Mountain reserve in his makeup.

Born in Rutland County, Vermont, October 4, 1831, Ives came west and entered railroad service as a clerk on what is now the Burlington Railroad. After working in stations at Mt. Pleasant and Ottumwa, he was sent to Burlington. There he saw the rapid progress being made on Judge Greene's new railroad and sensed greater opportunities for advancement in that company. In July, 1870, Ives was clerking for Greene. Ives' knowledge of traffic and station accounting led to steady promotion. He soon became general freight agent, then general passenger and freight agent and, in 1875, superintendent. By 1879 he was general superintendent; five years later, president.

While Ives elected to remain with the BCR&N, others found the road a valuable training school leading to railroad advancement elsewhere. Most notable was A. L. Mohler, whose background in clerking on the North Western and the Burlington closely resembled that of Ives. Mohler likewise changed from the Burlington to the old BCR&M, being with the latter from 1871 to 1882. He rose from traveling auditor to general freight agent, when he left to go with a forerunner of the Great Northern. Other roads followed, including a stint as general manager of the Minneapolis & St. Louis, until he changed to the Union Pacific and subsequently became its president. To have worked on the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern was generally considered to be the hallmark of a good railroader.

The late 1870's saw new construction, although it was not until the next decade that vigorous expansion ensued. The most important item on the earlier agenda was the opening of the famous Albert Lea Route in 1877. By building a 5-mile extension from Plymouth Junction to Manly Junction, the BCR&N hooked up with the Iowa Central Railway. From Manly, trackage rights were had over the latter road to Northwood; and from Northwood the BCR&N built its own track to the Minnesota border, where it connected with the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad for Albert Lea and the Twin Cities.

Here was the beginning of a new through line from the Twin Cities, via Albert Lea, Cedar Rapids and Burlington, to St. Louis. South of Burlington the train ran over the present Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad to the Missouri metropolis. For years the *St. Louis Special* was a popular train, having Pullmans, dining cars and coaches on the 587-mile run. Another Limited, known as the *Cannon Ball*, ran between the Twin cities and Chicago, operating over the Rock Island from West Liberty to the Windy City. Despite its circuitous route, it competed with five other railroads, all having more direct lines between the same destinations.

Travelers and the connecting roads could depend on the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern to keep its trains on time. Punctuality was a fetish with the Old Man in Cedar Rapids. It was not by chance that Charles Ives had the dual position of president and general superintendent. He was as well-posted on train operation as he was on finance.

Whereas the Burlington-Albert Lea line was distinctly "high iron" and the pride of the BCR&N, the branch from Clinton through Elmira to Iowa City was "hojack," shabby as a poor relation. It had little economic importance, probably never earned its keep, and was abandoned in sections between 1928 and 1943. The Elmira-Iowa City segment was opened in 1877; and the re-

mainder of the route to Clinton, in 1883. The road, like many other branches, was constructed by separate companies later absorbed by the BCR&N. (For details see chart at end of chapter giving names of individual companies, dates of construction and name sequence.)

Another secondary line, built by the Iowa City & Western, ran south from Iowa City to Iowa Jct., thence west to Montezuma. A short branch from Thornburg to What Cheer was also part of the road. It was on the IC&W that a young man of 19, fresh out of the State University of Iowa, got his first railroad job as a rodman. He was John M. Brown, who later surveyed many more miles of the BCR&N before retiring after 50 years of service in 1929. Brown afterward became division engineer of the system, and after it was purchased by the Rock Island, he was made assistant to the president of the latter company.

The bulk of new construction in the 1880's was done under the auspices of the Cedar Rapids, Iowa Falls & Northwestern Railway, incorporated in Iowa on June 4, 1880. It was affiliated with the BCR&N, although not absorbed by the bigger company until 1902. We have seen that the BCR&N had a branch from Vinton to Traer, which was extended to Holland in 1877. From Holland the CRIF&NW took over and built in a general northwesterly direction through Iowa Falls to Clarion in 1880. The next year rails led

to Emmetsburg, and by 1882 trains were running through Livermore, Estherville and Lake Park to Worthington, Minnesota.

In 1884 the biggest jump of all was made when a 174-mile extension was opened from Lake Park through Sibley to Watertown, South Dakota. A branch was also built from Worthington to connect with the Watertown line at Hardwick, Minnesota. To tap the packing center of Sioux Falls, a road was run eastward from that city through Rock Rapids, Iowa, thence to Ellsworth, Minnesota, on the Watertown line. It was completed in 1886.

Meanwhile, in central Iowa, a branch was slowly extending up from the Watertown line at Dows through Belmond, Garner and Forest City to Armstrong. An extension was built by an affiliated road from Garner to Titonka (in Kossuth County), crossing the Des Moines & Fort Dodge Railroad at Hayfield. For a time trains ran over the DM&FtD until the Garner-Forest City segment was completed in 1895. Service from Dows to Armstrong (including running rights over the DM&FtD) was in operation by 1892.

Incidentally, the last track built by the BCR&N was the branch from Albert Lea to Estherville. This line went westward to Lakota, then over the already constructed road to Armstrong, from whence it was extended to Estherville in 1900.

To round out the picture, mention should be made of the Postville Junction-Decorah branch

completed in 1884; the 6-mile stub from Waverly Junction to Waverly, opened in 1886; and the ill-fated Davenport-Bennett line finished in 1890. The last mentioned road was built by the Davenport, Iowa & Dakota Railroad, long in name and short in expectation. About half of the 28-mile diagonal route was abandoned in 1925; and the remainder, which was mostly in Cedar County, was scrapped in 1943. The only other abandonments associated with the BCR&N are the Muscatine-Riverside branch, which ceased operation (except for the short Nichols-Lone Tree sector) in 1938; and the little Thornburg-What Cheer feeder which gave up in 1957. By 1958 the Nichols-Lone Tree segment had passed into history.

In reviewing the extensive expansion between 1880 and 1890, the Watertown line stands out as a somewhat incongruous extension for a basic Iowa railroad. It seemed out of character and in many ways it was. What is the explanation? The answer is found in the Rock Island, and especially in the overlordship of its aggressive president Ransom R. Cable.

Since the late 1870's the Rock Island had had a substantial interest in the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern. This was increased until by 1885 it had a majority of the BCR&N's outstanding capital stock and, accordingly, dictated the road's policies. Cable, in the meantime, had embarked on a bold policy of expanding the Rock Island and

its associated roads. During this period the Rock Island also controlled the Minneapolis & St. Louis, and for several years Cable headed the Mill City road. Cable had the M&StL built westward to Watertown. Cable strengthened the Albert Lea Route by closely integrating the BCR&N with the M&StL. In short, Cable wanted to make the M&StL a strong arm of his growing Rock Island. By extending the BCR&N into Watertown, it would further coordinate the M&StL with the Rock Island and give the latter a short cut to the grain country of the Northwest. The M&StL later went bankrupt, and Cable's aim to bring it into the Rock Island fold never materialized.

Notwithstanding this sortie into Dakota, the BCR&N was primarily an Iowa railroad; and few had more affection for it than the people of its home state. Herbert Hoover had fond memories of that road as a boy in West Branch. He says in his *Memoirs*:

I have mentioned the Burlington track. It was an inspiring place. It was ballasted with glacial gravels where, by hard search, you discovered gems of agate and fossil coral which could, with infinite backaches, be polished on the grindstone.

When Hoover's reminiscences appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*, one reader took exception to the name "Burlington," averring that the distinguished ex-president had confused the local line with the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, generally

referred to as the Burlington Railroad. Since the CB&Q did not go anywhere near West Branch, Hoover seemingly was in error. Then along came another letter from a railway mail clerk who had serviced West Branch on his run. He said that Hoover was right and his critic wrong. The Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern was, indeed, locally referred to as "The Burlington."

An almost forgotten phase of BCR&N history is the role it played in making the Lake Okoboji-Spirit Lake region a popular vacation resort. It built to the lake area in 1882, and the Milwaukee Road came the following year. While the promotional activities of the two roads overlapped, the BCR&N stressed Spirit Lake because it followed that body of water for several miles. The Milwaukee, on the other hand, confined its efforts more to Okoboji on the south, which its line bisected.

Hardly had the cars arrived at Orleans, located near the isthmus between the two lakes, when the BCR&N began to exploit the region. It brought the steamboat *Alpha* up from Burlington and promptly put it in service on Spirit Lake. Having a capacity of 40 passengers, the boat soon did a thriving business. On hot summer days excursionists came from all along the line to disembark at Orleans, where they boarded the *Alpha* for a refreshing cruise on the big lake.

So successful was the undertaking that the rail-

road built an ornate three-story hotel to accommodate the tourists. Called the *Orleans*, it had two hundred guest rooms with one door leading to the corridor and another door opening onto the spacious veranda. The latter afforded "a grand promenade three thousand feet long and sixteen feet wide." The hotel had nine towers, in keeping with the "gingerbread" architecture of the period. It was opened with an elaborate ceremony on June 16, 1883, over which S. L. Dows was the presiding officer.

To provide lake cruises in keeping with the luxurious hotel, the BCR&N launched a new boat in 1884. Appropriately named the *Queen*, it was built by Iowa Iron Works in Dubuque and sent to Orleans for assembly. Much of the woodwork was milled in the road's own passenger car shops in Cedar Rapids. The *Queen* was the first steel-hulled vessel on the lakes. She was a beautiful smooth running craft, equalled (but not excelled) by the Milwaukee's *Ben Lennox*, launched the same year on Lake Okoboji. Both boats had a capacity of about 250 passengers.

The commodious hotel, however, proved to be too expensive for most tourists; and the steamboats had difficulty in navigating the isthmus between the lakes, due to water receding nearly every year. By 1898 the lakes were about eight feet lower than the high-water mark of 1882. As the water dropped so did the patronage of the

hotel and the boats. Other factors, such as the depression of 1893, militated against costly vacations and fashionable hotels.

The day of special trains to the state's most exclusive watering place had run its course. The hotel was razed in 1899, and the *Queen* was sold to outside interests two years afterward. The *Queen*, however, has continued to blow her whistle for over sixty years; a pleasant reminder of a glorious era that was, and can never be again.

Time was running out also on the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern as a separate entity. In 1902 the Rock Island leased the road and the next year purchased it. Charles Ives, who had been with the railroad almost from its inception, signed the papers conveying the entire property to the Rock Island. Now in his seventies, alert of mind and able of body, he presented a commanding appearance. A trim, close cropped beard added dignity to the occasion as he laid down his pen, ending his long career on Iowa's last major independent railroad.

Table A BURLINGTON, CEDAR RAPIDS & NORTHERN RY.

<i>Completion Date</i>	<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>Company Constructing Line</i>
1870	Burlington to Columbus Jct.		Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Minnesota Ry.
1871	Columbus Jct. to Cedar Falls		Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Minnesota Ry.
1872	Cedar Falls to Plymouth Jct.		Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Minnesota Ry.
1877	Plymouth Jct. to Manly Jct.		Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Ry.
1877	Northwood to Iowa-Minn. State Line		Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Ry.
		DAVENPORT BRANCH	
1890	Davenport to Bennett		Davenport, Iowa & Dakota RR
		ESTHERVILLE BRANCH	
1898	Armstrong to Estherville		Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Ry.
1900	Germania (Lakota) to Albert Lea, Minn.		Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Ry.
		MILWAUKEE DIVISION	
1872	Linn to Postville		Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Minnesota Ry.
1884	Postville Jct. to Decorah		Chicago, Decorah & Minnesota Ry.
		MUSCATINE DIVISION	
1872	Muscatine to Riverside		Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Minnesota Ry.
		PACIFIC DIVISION	
1873	Vinton to Traer		Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Minnesota Ry.
1877	Traer to Holland		Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Ry.
		TITONKA BRANCH	
1898	Hayfield to Titonka		Cedar Rapids, Garner & Northwestern Ry.
		WAVERLY BRANCH	
1886	Waverly Jct. to Waverly		Waverly Short Line

Table B CEDAR RAPIDS & CLINTON RY.

Completion Date	From	To	Company Constructing Line
1877	Elmira to Iowa City		Chicago, Clinton & Western RR
1877	Clinton westward (18 miles)		Chicago, Clinton & Western RR
1879-1883	Elmira to 18 miles west of Clinton		Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Ry.
CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA FALLS & NORTHWESTERN RY.			
1880	Holland to Clarion		Cedar Rapids, Iowa Falls & Northwestern Ry.
1881	Clarion to Emmetsburg		Cedar Rapids, Iowa Falls & Northwestern Ry.
1882	Emmetsburg to Lake Park		Cedar Rapids, Iowa Falls & Northwestern Ry.
1884	Lake Park to Watertown, S. Dak., via Sibley		Cedar Rapids, Iowa Falls & Northwestern Ry.
ARMSTRONG BRANCH			
1884	Dows to Hayfield		Cedar Rapids, Iowa Falls & Northwestern Ry.
1895	Hayfield to Forest City		Cedar Rapids, Iowa Falls & Northwestern Ry.
1892	Forest City to Armstrong		Chicago & Iowa Western Ry.
SIOUX FALLS BRANCH			
1886	Ellsworth, Minn., via Rock Rapids to Sioux Falls, S. Dak.		Cedar Rapids, Iowa Falls & Northwestern Ry.
WORTHINGTON BRANCH			
1882	Lake Park to Worthington, Minn.		Cedar Rapids, Iowa Falls & Northwestern Ry.
1900	Worthington, Minn., to Hardwick, Minn.		Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Ry.
IOWA CITY & WESTERN RY.			
1880	Iowa City to Montezuma		Iowa City & Western Ry.
1880	Thornburg to What Cheer		Iowa City & Western Ry.

Table C

NAME SEQUENCE OF RAILROADS MAKING
UP THE BURLINGTON, CEDAR RAPIDS
& NORTHERN RAILWAY

Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Minnesota Railway conveyed
to Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Railway in
1876

Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Railway conveyed
to Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway in 1903

Cedar Rapids and Clinton Railway conveyed to Burling-
ton, Cedar Rapids & Northern Railway in 1902

Cedar Rapids, Garner & Northwestern Railway conveyed
to Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Railway in
1902

Cedar Rapids, Iowa Falls & Northwestern Railway con-
veyed to Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Railway
in 1902

Chicago & Iowa Western Railway conveyed to Cedar
Rapids, Iowa Falls & Northwestern Railway in 1894

Chicago, Clinton & Western Rail Road conveyed to Burl-
ington, Cedar Rapids & Northern in 1879, thence to
Cedar Rapids & Clinton Railway in 1883

Chicago, Decorah & Minnesota Railway conveyed to
Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Railway in 1902

Iowa City & Western Railway conveyed to Burlington,
Cedar Rapids & Northern Railway in 1902

Davenport, Iowa & Dakota Rail Road conveyed to Burl-
ington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Railway in 1892

Waverly Short Line conveyed to Burlington, Cedar Rap-
ids & Northern Railway in 1902

Disaster and Its Aftermath

At the turn of the century the Rock Island was recognized as a profitable, well-run railroad. Its management was stable, its credit good. It continued to pay modest dividends all through the panic of 1893. The road had a favorable rating on the Big Board and a good reputation in Iowa and in the fourteen states it served. Unlike the Burlington, its stock was not closely held. In fact, the setting was just right for a group of speculators to get control, inflate the capitalization and reap quick, unwarranted profits. That is exactly what took place.

In 1901 a group of promoters, which *Fortune* calls "The Big Four from the Prairies," bought heavily into the road. The quartet — also known as the Reid-Moore Syndicate — was composed of Daniel G. Reid; William H. Moore; his brother, J. Hobart Moore, and W. B. Leeds. William Moore, leader of the syndicate, made a fortune in organizing the National Biscuit and Diamond Match companies. The four had been active in organizing independent steel companies and having them absorbed into United States Steel. Thus, with the necessary means, they soon had firm control of the Rock Island.

It is not necessary to go into the financial picture painted by the new operators except to state they formed a pyramid of holding companies. In the words of Stuart Daggett, in his *Railroad Reorganization*, they had "three companies, of which one was to operate the railroad, one was to hold the stock of the operating company, and one was to hold the stock of the company which held the stock of the operating company!"

Never a compact system, the Rock Island soon became a hodgepodge of newly-built, merged and controlled roads without pattern and seemingly without plan. The system leaped from 7,123 miles of line in 1903 to 14,270 miles in 1907. Into the patchwork came the Chicago & Alton, the St. Louis-San Francisco and the Chicago & Eastern Illinois. In an effort to make the sprawled-out Rock Island a transcontinental, the Moores bought into the Lehigh Valley and the Lake Erie & Western through an affiliated syndicate.

The top-heavy, over-capitalized, over-expanded road finally went into receivership in 1915. Two years later it emerged from court control with its debts scaled hardly at all. Then it struggled along for another sixteen years until it sought protection of the courts again in 1933. The Big Four from the Prairies had left the Rock Island in such a financial state as to haunt it for nearly three decades.

During the Reid-Moore administration, how-

ever, there were some extensions made which became valuable assets to the Rock Island. One was the building of a short, direct line from the Twin Cities to Kansas City. This later became a new route, cutting through mid-America all the way from Minneapolis-St. Paul to the Gulf of Mexico.

The first item of improvement was the extension of the Rock Island over its own rails and by trackage rights from Albert Lea to the Twin cities. In comparison with the Minneapolis & St. Louis route, the new line had fewer curves and easier grades, which made for faster and more economical operation. When the extension was completed in 1902, through trains between St. Louis and the Twin Cities, operated jointly by the Rock Island and the Burlington, no longer used the M&StL from the Iowa-Minnesota border to Minneapolis.

This was fine for trips to St. Louis, but what about Kansas City? To reach the latter metropolis from principal cities in Minnesota, all passengers and freight routed over the Rock Island had to make a V-shaped detour to southeastern Iowa, thence southwest to Kansas City. Such a routing was costly, inconvenient and time consuming. To eliminate the roundabout passage, a short cut through Des Moines was commenced in 1901 and completed by 1913. It was the last significant railroad extension in Iowa.

The segment north of Des Moines was built by two companies. The Des Moines, Iowa Falls &

Northern Railway constructed the 70-mile line from the capital to Iowa Falls in 1903. Another firm called the St. Paul & Des Moines Railroad completed the line from Iowa Falls to Clear Lake Junction in 1909. The remainder of the route to Manly was secured by trackage rights over the Great Western.

South of Des Moines, the track from Carlisle to Allerton was largely built by the Rock Island's own construction crews. Work was started in 1911 and finished two years afterward. All the above-mentioned lines were acquired by the St. Paul & Kansas City Short Line Railroad, incorporated in Iowa on February 18, 1911. Also included in the purchase was the pioneer Des Moines Western Railway's line from Des Moines to West Des Moines (then called Valley Junction).

Although operated as an integral part of the Rock Island, the "Short Line," as it was called, was not formally purchased by the railroad until 1922. The name was perpetuated by the *Short Line Express*, which ran between the Twin Cities and Kansas City until March of 1958.

In 1922, when the Rock Island reached its 70th birthday, it decided to commemorate the occasion by a system-wide series of celebrations. Moreover, all the ceremonies were to be held the same day — October 10th. Each one followed the same pattern: a tree was planted and a stone marker

dedicated to a loyal employee, living or dead, or one who had been killed in the line of duty. Altogether over one hundred trees and monuments were used for this purpose, of which thirty-three of each were singled out for Iowa. Never in the history of American railroading has there been such a far-flung, coordinated effort made to commemorate an anniversary.

The men so honored run the gamut from section hands to presidents, with superintendents predominating, of which there are nine in Iowa. The presidents represented are James Grant of the pioneer Chicago & Rock Island Rail Road, George Greene and Charles J. Ives of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern, or its predecessor company. Markers in Davenport, Cedar Rapids and Burlington, respectively, are inscribed to these executives. Two of the road's great engineers, Grenville M. Dodge and Peter A. Dey, are remembered by stone markers in Council Bluffs and in Iowa City. Also in Iowa City is a tree and stone for Chief Surgeon William D. Middleton, whose Iowa-born grandson of the same name has carried on the railroad tradition by writing a beautifully illustrated volume entitled *The Interurban Era*.

The trees and monuments located in Iowa are:

Burlington: Charles J. Ives, president, BCR&N
Cedar Falls: William H. Given, superintendent
Cedar Rapids: George Greene, president, BCR&M
Cedar Rapids: Thomas H. Simmons, general freight agent

Centerville: Orin F. Young, trainmaster
Council Bluffs: Grenville M. Dodge, assistant engineer
Davenport: James Grant, president, C&RI
Davenport: Abel Kimball, superintendent
Des Moines: Charles N. Gilmore, superintendent
Eldon: Charles M. Martin, conductor
Estherville: Patrick Howe, roadmaster
Fairfield: Arial B. Copley, superintendent
Indianola: C. B. McLaughlin, agent
Iowa City: Peter A. Dey, chief engineer
Iowa City: William D. Middleton, chief surgeon
Iowa Falls: E. Olin Soule, traveling passenger agent
Manly: Wendell H. Stillwell, superintendent
Melcher: Charles T. Ames, superintendent
Marengo: Cornelius T. O'Brien, locomotive engineer
Mitchellville: Charles W. Jones, general manager
Montezuma: John Holmquist, master carpenter
Muscatine: Julius M. McCoskey, locomotive engineer
Newton: James Clifton, section foreman
Nichols: Frederick P. Washburn, conductor
Oskaloosa: John Givin, superintendent
Spirit Lake: Robert Mather, vice president
Stuart: Carroll Wright, attorney
Vinton: Irving Mitchell, dairy agent
Washburn: F. H. Tisdale, locomotive engineer
Washington: Robert Shields, roadmaster
West Liberty: Everett St. John, general manager
What Cheer: George A. Merrill, superintendent
Wilton: Benjamin B. Brayton, superintendent

The Great Rock Island Route

Throughout the years the Rock Island has had (and still has) more through-passenger trains going in more directions in Iowa than any other railroad. With Des Moines as the hub, trains radiate in all directions. "The Great Rock Island Route," as the road was called, meant just that to Iowans.

A glance at the timetable during the palmy days of 1927, when America was riding the crest of prosperity, reveals a profusion of named trains. Going east and west through Des Moines was the *Rocky Mountain Limited*. Linking Chicago with Denver and Colorado Springs, it carried a full complement of Pullman accommodations along with "Barber and Valet Service." For passengers going from the Windy City to San Francisco there was the *Colorado Express*, with through sleepers in conjunction with the Denver & Rio Grande-Southern Pacific route beyond Denver.

North and south, the *Mid Continent Special* backed into the busy Des Moines station just before midnight on its way north and shortly after midnight on the trip south. While the city slumbered, the red brick depot was agog with activity. The *Mid Continent* carried sleepers between the Twin Cities and Dallas and a 12 section drawing

room and compartment car from Minneapolis to Los Angeles via Kansas City. There were also set-out Pullmans for Des Moines and Kansas City. In addition, the *Firefly* and the *Short Line Express* were likewise popular coach and Pullman trains shuttling between Minneapolis and Kansas City via Des Moines.

The pride of the road, however, was the much-publicized *Golden State Limited*, which cut across Iowa from Davenport to Allerton on its way between Chicago and Los Angeles. Operated over the famed "Golden State Route" in conjunction with the Southern Pacific west of Santa Rosa, New Mexico, the crack train was advertised as "extra fare, extra fine." It featured the plushiest and most luxurious Pullman accommodations from Chicago to Los Angeles, along with sleepers for San Diego and Santa Barbara. For folks of modest means there was *The Apache*, a secondary train to Los Angeles, consisting of standard and tourist sleepers and coaches.

The Rock Island spelled travel and romance to many a boy, but to none more so than to James Norman Hall. The man who co-authored *Mutiny On the Bounty*, and other adventures of the high seas, found as much enchantment down at the Colfax depot in his teens as he did in later years while living in Tahiti. Hall, who was an airplane pilot in World War I, yet never drove an automobile, loved trains. In his autobiography, *My Island*

Home, he tells about his nocturnal escapades in riding to Grinnell:

Number Six was due at Colfax at 10:45 P.M., but a good five minutes before that time it appeared around the curve westward, at the top of the Mitchellville grade, six miles away. The headlight proclaimed the glory of its coming, and the first faraway whistle was like a call to adventure in the summer night, sending shivers of delight up and down the spines of three of us more than ready to respond to it — Buller Sharpe, "Preacher" Stahl, son of the Methodist minister, and myself. Number Six took water at Colfax, and we waited beneath the water tank about fifty yards past the end of the station. We would hear the fireman climb onto the tender and pull down the iron spout with the canvas nozzle attached; then silence, save for the plash of water pouring in and the gentle yet powerful breathing of the engine. Presently up went the spout, spilling the water remaining in it onto the ground just beyond where we were concealed. Then came the "high-ball" — the most stirring of signals — two short sharp blasts of the whistle. Peering out from behind the post supporting the water tank we would see the conductor swinging his lantern from the station platform. The fireman gave a pull at the bell rope; the great wheels began to move, and at the first mighty "hough!" of the engine we skipped out, leaped on the pilot — or "cowcatcher" as it is called by the uninitiated — and vanished into the pool of darkness just beneath the headlight.

A letter from a Rock Island official to "The Mayor, Colfax, Iowa" informing him of the "confirmed pilot jumpers," put an end "to those wonderful journeys." But Hall to the end of his life never ceased to have a fondness for railroads,

especially the Rock Island. In his book *Under A Thatched Roof* he has a fine essay on "Trains" with nostalgic references to his boyhood on the Rock Island's main line. Again, from an earlier volume, *On the Stream of Travel*, one learns of his informal education imparted by wandering vagrants, traveling hoboes and other "itinerant professors" as they sojourned at Colfax between trains.

The Rock Island has been celebrated in story, song, motion picture and drama until it has become an institution in Iowa. Phil Stong's homespun novel, *Village Tale*, has its setting along the Keokuk and Des Moines Division. A little local train, called the "Kaydee," runs through the story as a quaint fixture in the life of the rural community. Who has not heard *Rock Island Line* ("is a mighty good road"), an old Negro work song, in its spirited recordings?

In the realm of motion pictures, *Rock Island Trail* recounts the building of the railroad westward. It was released by Republic Pictures in 1950 and is based on the historical novel, *A Yankee Dared*, by Frank J. Nevins. Far more popular, however, is the motion picture, *The Music Man*, starring Robert Preston and Shirley Jones. It will be recalled, the inimitable "music man" came to River City (Mason City) on a Rock Island train to peddle his "seventy-six trombones" and to organize a town band. The Warner Broth-

ers picture was the outgrowth of a Broadway hit of the same name written by Meredith Willson, who was born in Mason City. Great pains were taken in filming the picture to make the "River City" depot look like its prototype in Mason City as it appeared around the turn of the century.

Many people in Iowa remember the excursion trains which the Rock Island ran for various public functions. On the "Pea Vine," as the Decorah Branch was locally known, there were special trains to the horse races at Independence. Racing enthusiasts came on excursions from many parts of the Midwest to Charley Williams' kite-shaped track in Rush Park. Here some of the Nation's swiftest pacers and trotters raced on the "Fastest Track on Earth." Conductor R. C. Hubler recalls the exciting days when trainloads of passengers came up the branch to see the world-famous harness horses vie for rich prizes.

Excursions are rare today, with the exception of football extras, which still bring record crowds to Iowa City. When Iowa beat Wisconsin in 1960 the Rock Island ran four, long specials carrying a total of 3,516 people. They came from Des Moines, Manly and the Quad Cities, handling the mass movement smoothly and without strain. Going to and from the game by train is still a tradition for three generations of football fans and old grads.

Line Relocation and Modernization

During the depression of the 1930's the Rock Island deteriorated physically, its morale was low and its finances precarious. Unfavorable economic conditions together with a heritage of burdensome fixed charges brought on the road's trusteeship in 1933. Things could hardly have been worse when John Dow Farrington left his post as general manager of the Burlington's lines in Texas to become chief operating officer of the Rock Island in 1936. Farrington, together with William H. Hillis, whom he brought in from the Burlington to become his assistant, set out to rebuild and modernize the run-down railroad. Rehabilitation began on all fronts, but the coming of the streamlined *Rockets* did more to usher in a new era in the public's mind than did any other single item.

When the *Des Moines Rocket* first came to Iowa City in 1937 (carrying the present PALIMPSEST editor and his bride home from their honeymoon) there were literally thousands of people lined along the track to see the silvery new streamliner. Two years later the *Rocky Mountain Rocket* was in service on an accelerated schedule between Chicago and Denver. In 1945 the road put the *Twin Star Rocket* in operation on the

1,363-mile run from Minneapolis to Houston. Serving Des Moines on its long course through the middle of America, the *Twin Star* attracted new passengers; and even today it is consistently well filled regardless of the season.

The last of the modernized fleet of passenger trains was the *Golden State*, which the road completely streamlined and placed on a 45-hour schedule between Chicago and Los Angeles on January 4, 1948. It superseded the somewhat shabby *Golden State Limited* and clipped over four hours from the running time. Diesel streamliners first came to replace steam in passenger service. Then the road gradually dieselized its freights thereby speeding up all trains. For example, in 1946, when the new "Rocket Freight" was instituted between the Twin Cities and Texas Gulf points, via Des Moines and Kansas City, it cut 24 hours from existing schedules.

Hand in hand with speeding up trains came extensive relocation on a system-wide basis. In Iowa, both the main stem to Omaha and the southwestern route to Kansas City and New Mexico abounded in troublesome curves and uneconomical grades.

Work began initially on the southwestern route, of which some 82 miles of new line was built. This was done in seven sections, reducing the total length by eleven miles. In the particularly bad section between a point east of Paris westward to

Centerville, a new 22-mile line shortened the route by 3.87 miles and reduced the grades from 1 per cent by 0.50 per cent. Relocation of the entire line including the Ainsworth to Brighton segment was completed on August 15, 1947.

The next big relocation project was the Atlantic Cutoff, finished in 1953. When completed, the new line resembled the string of a bow; and the old line the bow itself. From Council Bluffs to Atlantic the old route went north through Shelby, Avoca and Walnut, whereas the relocated line went through Hancock, shortening the run by ten miles. The Cutoff utilized 11 miles of the Great Western from a point just beyond Council Bluffs to Peter. The original line was subsequently abandoned except for the section between Shelby and Walnut, which is operated as a branch.

In 1954 six miles of new road was constructed near Adair, eliminating considerable curvature and complementing the Atlantic Cutoff. Again, on the other side of Des Moines about 1.50 miles of new line eliminated a stretch of difficult curves and grades near Colfax. All in all, the relocation projects in Iowa and elsewhere were of such magnitude that *Fortune* magazine sent Gilbert Burck, its top railroad authority, to do a comprehensive article on the Rock Island's rehabilitation in its December, 1944 issue.

Another aspect of the rejuvenated railroad concerned pruning branches which were unremuner-

ative and a drain on the company's finances. Foremost of these was the old Cedar Rapids & Clinton Railway, once a part of the BCR&N. This branch was totally abandoned, but the Rock Island did not pull out of Clinton. Instead, it secured trackage rights over the Davenport, Rock Island & Northwestern Railway between Davenport and Clinton.

In 1948 the Rock Island emerged from trusteeship "with a wide-open throttle and signal lights all green," as William E. Hayes put it in his *Iron Road to Empire*. John Farrington headed the reorganized company.

The Rock Island is now prosperous, efficient and modern. Much of its major lines in Iowa are protected by Centralized Traffic Control and automatic blocks signals. Although the significant relocation projects had been completed, the road built a new 11-mile branch from Earlham to Winterset in 1958. This took the place of the former Winterset-Summerset line, which was scrapped the same year. The relocated branch is shorter and has fewer grades and curves than the line it supplanted.

Current president of the Rock Island is R. Ellis Johnson, who started railroading as a file clerk on the Missouri Pacific at Osawatomie, Kansas, at fifteen. Eleven years later he switched to the Rock Island and has been with it ever since. He has held nearly every job in the operating department,

which included being assistant general manager and later general manager with headquarters in Des Moines, from 1950 to 1953.

Unlike some other Iowa railroads, the Rock Island is very much in the passenger business, and the *Rockets* continue to crisscross the state. With its major line relocations and up-to-date plant no road in Iowa has done more to re-equip itself for today's requirements and tomorrow's needs. The state's first railroad is still pioneering to maintain its enviable role in hauling freight and passengers with economy and dispatch.

Today, in 1963, the Rock Island Line continues to keep abreast of modern Iowa by providing efficient freight and passenger service. For example, in addition to its regular Rocket Freight service, piggyback — the carrying of highway trailers on railroad flat cars — is growing more muscular at a steady pace. The Rock Island offers this service to shippers to and from Iowa City, Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Davenport and Council Bluffs on a daily basis.

The *Rocky Mountain Rocket* to Denver and Colorado Springs operates through Davenport, Iowa City, Grinnell, Newton, Des Moines, Atlantic and Council Bluffs. Another fine train, the *Des Moines Rocket* is an all-Iowa special and provides daily service between Chicago and Des Moines. Other passenger trains popular with Iowans, are *Corn Belt Rocket* to Omaha and the

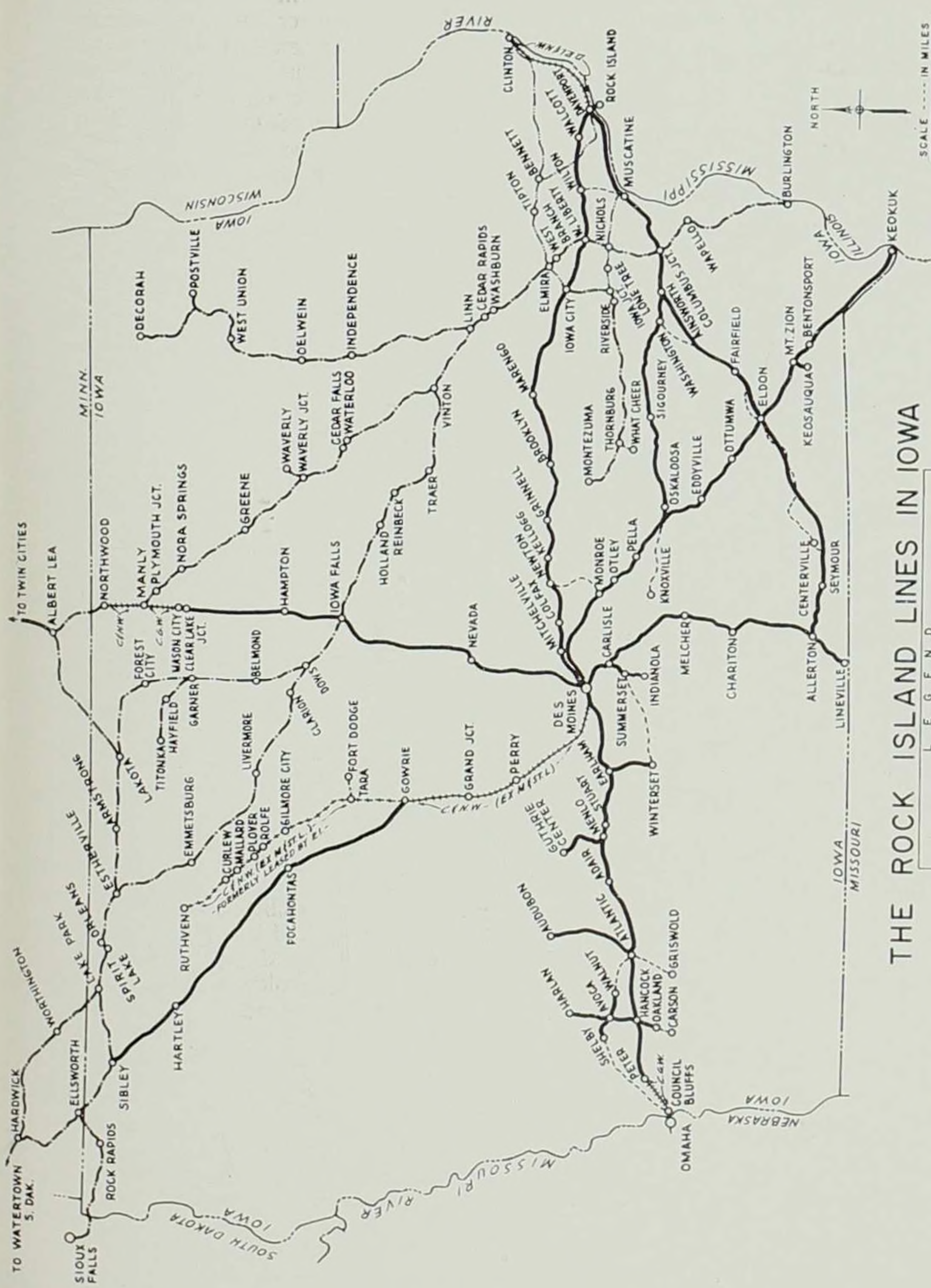
Twin Star Rocket which ties Iowa to Minneapolis-St. Paul on the north and to Dallas, Fort Worth and Houston in the south.

Throughout its history, the Rock Island Lines, like so many other pioneer railroads, have seen the face of America change many times. It not only has witnessed great events in history, but has been an inseparable partner in the development of the thousands of communities it serves in Iowa and in thirteen other states along nearly 8,000 miles of railroad.

Significant technological advancements have been made by the Rock Island during its 111 years of operation. A long list of railroading "firsts" can rightfully be claimed by the company through the years. Among the more notable is the first use of microwave in its vast communications network; introduction of especially adapted electronic computers in its automated yards at Silvis, Illinois, and Armourdale, Kansas, and in its administrative functions. Says R. Ellis Johnson, president:

In 1963 we are convinced that the Rock Island is a 111-year-old youngster capable of accommodating on its own system, and through its multi-interchange arrangements with other railroads, the transportation needs of all its customers.

We are proud of our high-speed Rocket freights, piggy-back hotshots and our fleet of Rocket passenger trains. Our railroad is imbued with a progressive spirit and it is our proud boast that no finer employees can be found anywhere.



THE ROCK ISLAND LINES IN IOWA

- LEGEND**
- ROCK ISLAND LINES IN OPERATION
 - - - ROCK ISLAND LINES ABANDONED
 - BURLINGTON, CEDAR RAPIDS & NORTHERN RY.
 - BURLINGTON, CEDAR RAPIDS & NORTHERN RY. - ABANDONED
 - +++++ ROCK ISLAND TRACKAGE RIGHTS - (OWNING ROAD NOTED WITH INITIALS)
- NOTE: BURLINGTON, CEDAR RAPIDS & NORTHERN RY. TRACKAGE IS NOW A PART OF ROCK ISLAND LINES

SCALE --- IN MILES
0 5 10 20 30 40

MAP DRAWN BY —
NORMAN F. PODAS, JR.
JULY 1963

