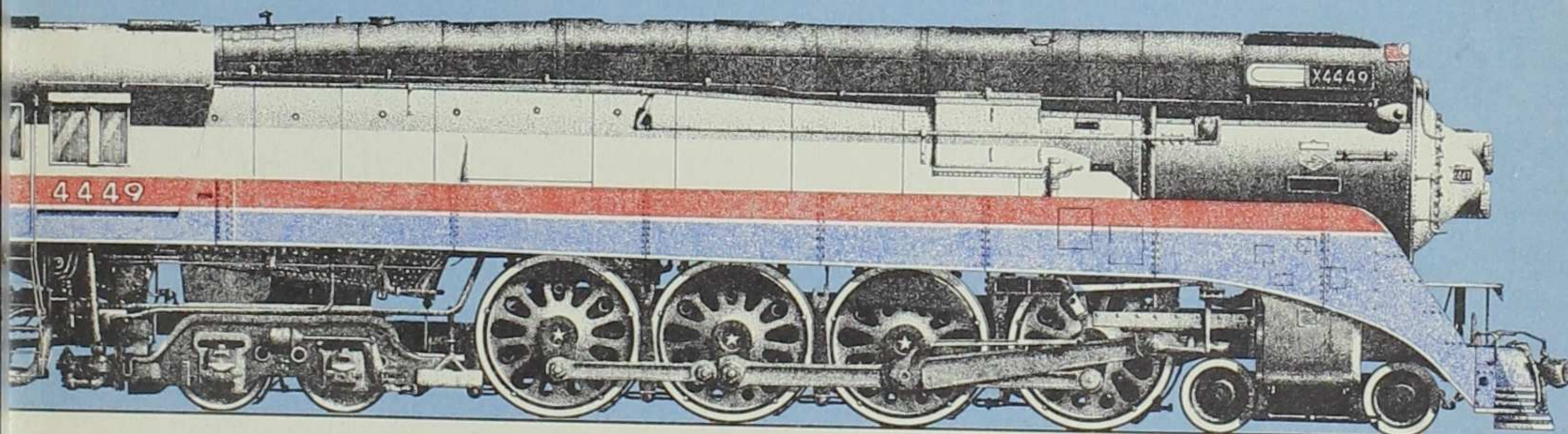


The PALIMPSEST

IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 59 NUMBER 4

JULY/AUGUST 1978



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The PALIMPSEST

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Peter T. Harstad, Director

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Charles Phillips, Editor

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Cover: A drawing by James D. Young of Locomotive 4449, Class GS-4, taken out of retirement in 1975 to pull the American "Freedom Train." For a look at steam locomotives in Iowa see page 110.

(Photo on page 98 courtesy of the Quad-City Times)



The Meaning of the 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.



In a Mist:
The Story of Bix
Beiderbecke
by
Darold J. Brown

Leon "Bix" Beiderbecke died on August 6, 1931. The New York death certificate stated that he was 28 years old, had been a musician, had died from lobar pneumonia, and that he had been born March 10, 1903 in Davenport, Iowa.

He had not rated an obituary in the *New York Times*, but the *Davenport Democrat and Leader*, on August 7, 1931, gave his death front-page coverage. No one predicted that a legend was in the making. He was to become an archetypal figure of the Jazz Age, destined to live as long as jazz itself.

Though Bix Beiderbecke certainly had a musical heritage, none of it was jazz. His great grandfather — the first Beiderbecke to come to Davenport — had been a professional organist and the leader of the Deutsche-Amerikanische Choral Society during the 1890s. Bix's mother, an accomplished pianist, gave lessons, and his uncle Al Petersen was a cornetist who led the town band. At the age of 12, Alice, Bix's older sister, was a semi-professional pianist.

A musical prodigy when he was only a toddler, Bix could pick out a tune on the piano note for note after a single hearing. He would even reproduce any "wrong notes" in the original. The local newspaper wrote him up as a celebrity. But his phenomenal ear kept him from learning how to read music. It was so easy for him to play by ear he simply did not take the time and trouble to master the printed note. His lack of formal musical training was to plague him for the rest of his life.

During his early years Bix spent much of his time at the piano. His mother and

others tried to give him lessons, but they all gave up in despair. He persisted in playing only by ear. Such a stubborn streak might account for much that is original in his music because he constantly experimented with unorthodox ideas of harmony and melody, but it showed Bix's parents he lacked the discipline for the formal study of music. They soon gave up their hopes of his someday becoming a concert pianist. Nor did the classroom much interest Bix. His only loves besides music were baseball and tennis. He just would not concentrate long enough to meet the requirements of routine schoolwork.

Although he grew into a healthy, good-looking, and well-liked young man, Bix was quiet and somewhat withdrawn. Perhaps he suffered from a lack of self-esteem because most people judged him a good-for-nothing. Because of his inability to learn piano from his mother's formal lessons, he considered himself a failure as a musician. By age 14 he was still in the fifth grade.

At the time Bix was experiencing the difficulties of growing up, another young man, Alfonso Capone, was getting to be quite well known in New York City, especially with the police department. He was later to move to Chicago. In a New Orleans home for street waifs, Louis Armstrong had just been given a trumpet to play in the home's band. Both Capone and Armstrong would put their particular stamp on the times, and Bix was to be directly influenced by both. Capone provided the places, and created the atmosphere, in which men like Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke would play their tunes — and do their drinking. The music would make Bix famous, the booze would cut short his life.

One day in 1917, probably as a joke, Bix's father brought home a new record. It was a number by the Original Dixieland Jazz

Band, featuring the cornet of one Nick La Rocca. Bix listened to it hour after hour, transfixed by La Rocca's playing. Bix's parents were aghast. It made them anything but happy to see their son so taken by jazz. Even his cornet-playing Uncle Al cautioned Bix: jazz musicmaking was no career for a man.

It is not difficult to understand why jazz was held in such low esteem in the early part of the century. Its roots run deep in two soils, growing out of the rhythms of Africa and the complex harmonies of Europe. Yet jazz is an American art form; America provided the common ground upon which these two roots could join in a single growth. The impetus for that growth came from the black man, who used jazz much as he had used his hymns and work-songs in the previous century. Dispossessed in the white man's world, jazz was almost the only thing he could call his own. And as the average white man in those days would probably never think of inviting a black into his home, so jazz musicians — black or white — were unwelcome. To a small town, middle-class family, a son's decision to embark upon a career in the world of jazz was shocking, practically scandalous. He might just as well have decided to be a pickpocket.

From about 1887 to 1917 New Orleans was Mecca for the jazz musician. Storyville, the city's notorious red-light district, employed more musicians than any other area in the country. Here the musicians found a warm welcome — in brothels and saloons. After America entered World War I in 1917 the military authorities succeeded in putting the Storyville prostitutes out of business. There was a naval base close by, and the military felt that the serviceman should not be exposed to such sordid influences.

In a more far-reaching fit of moral righteousness, federal lawmakers about this time decided to try the "noble experiment." Prohibition, the Volstead Act of 1918, became the answer to a racketeer's prayer. Bootleg-liquor traffic soon brought millions into the coffers of organized crime; Al Capone obtained the liquor concession in Chicago where he gained personal control of most brothels and speakeasies; and gangsters became the jazz musician's most appreciative audience. Many a player would find a \$50 bill stuffed in his horn.

A young cornet player, Louis Armstrong by name, was only one of the many musicians who left Storyville to come North. Blacks were leaving every part of the South to work in the war-related industries of Northern cities like Chicago, and soon the windy city was to have the largest black population in the United States — some 800,000, many of them jazz musicians or enthusiasts. There were no "mixed" bands in Chicago yet, but black and white musicians did get together on their own time to play their own brand of jazz for themselves or anybody who cared to listen. As far as the middle-class white population was concerned, jazz players stood on the lowest rung of the social ladder, working for gangsters and socializing with "colored people," but it was just these influences that gave the art of jazz its peculiarly American flavor.

Given the social stigma of the jazz-player, Bix's parents refused again and again to buy him the cornet he wanted in order to play the music they disdained. Finally, he took eight dollars he had managed to save from his allowance to buy a beat up cornet from a local hock shop. He practiced by the hour while listening to the music of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band,



Young Bix and his mother (from the Bix Beiderbecke Room courtesy Davenport Public Library).

trying to sound like Nick La Rocca, and working much harder than he had ever worked at the piano. Soon he could pick out such hits of the day as "Margie" and imitate La Rocca's solos on pieces like "Tiger Rag" and "Skeleton Jangle."

His fingering and playing of the cornet would have seemed highly unorthodox to a trained musician, but his style gave the music an extraordinary impact. He made every note beautiful not only in its relation to the musical line, but also in and of itself. He produced one of the loveliest sounds ever to come out of any kind of brass instrument, a sound all his own, a sound many other musicians would one day copy.

By June of 1921, Bix was playing to excursion parties aboard the river steamers

Majestic and *Capitol*, and taking jobs throughout the Tri-City area. He neglected his education more and more, and when he failed to graduate from high school, his parents enrolled him at Lake Forest Academy in Illinois for the term beginning September, 1921. Lake Forest was a military academy meant to "straighten out" young men unfit for regular schooling who were not bad enough for reform schools. His parents hoped Lake Forest would help Bix to complete a respectable education and forget the crazy notion of making jazz his life's work.

The academy was good enough, but it was too close to Chicago, and instead of forgetting jazz, Bix thrust himself further into the night world of big-city music. Before long he was breaking curfew at Lake Forest, sneaking out after bed-check to go into Chicago and hang around places like the Black Cat Room in the Edgewater Beach Hotel. There he met Jimmy Caldwell, who soon asked Bix to join his five-piece ensemble. Bix also met such jazz musicians as trumpeter Paul Mares, clarinetist Eddie Edwards, saxophonist Don Murray, and many others. He came to know them and, eventually, to sit in with them.

Because he played and drank until the early hours of the morning, he had little time left for sleep. Dead-tired, often hung-over in class, he found it harder than ever to "learn" anything. The Beiderbeckes might have had better luck had they picked a school somewhere else. Although his "scholastic" life was not a total loss — he did play in the school band and was active at football and tennis — his progress in the classroom was non-existent, and his miserable grades contributed to his expulsion when school authorities inevitably caught him sneaking out after curfew.

For the next 18 months or so he jobbed with local orchestras in Chicago and towns throughout Iowa and Illinois. He played with Jimmy Caldwell in "Caldwell's Jazz Jesters" and with the "Orpheum Times Revue" at the Orpheum Theatre in Chicago. He was beginning to become well-known as a very talented musician and to gain respect in music circles, but although he was getting experience, he still played only by ear — music theory remained a mystery to him.

He became a member of the Wolverine Orchestra in January, 1924. The Wolverines were a group of highly-talented musicians who made a good living playing for university dances. The orchestra made a deal with Gennett Record Company of Richmond, Indiana to cut a few records. The first two, made on February 18, 1924, were "Fidgety Feet" and "Jazz Me Blues." Hearing these today, it is clear that Bix was a standout player — he carried the group.

Bix left the Wolverines in October, 1924 to join the Jean Goldkette Victor Recording Orchestra in Detroit. Here was an orchestra with a national reputation, but Bix soon discovered he could not play the way he wanted under Eddie King, the orchestra's pear-shaped, roly-poly recording director who actually disliked jazz. He refused to let Bix do much improvisation. By December 8, Goldkette let Bix go because of his inability to read music. He could only do the highly improvisatory jazz parts, and jazz was only a small part of the orchestra's repertoire. Jean Goldkette's parting advice to Bix was that he learn the technical side of music and, more importantly, learn to read it. In the end, the stint with Goldkette was not the happiest of experiences.

Bix, now 22 and discouraged, returned to Davenport to tell his parents he was ready to finish his education. He enrolled

at the University of Iowa as an "unclassified" student. Immediately he joined an Iowa City band called "Bromo" Sulser and His Collegians. He was paid seven dollars a night. And he began to experiment with the piano, sketching a composition that would be called "In a Mist."

Seven of his 14 credit hours at Iowa were related to music. He wanted to add more music and drop the courses he was not interested in. Of course, he got a resounding "No" from the administration, as well as demands that he take military training, physical education, and freshman lectures. He simply refused. When he and a group of his more riotous friends, including football player Bill Flechenstein, got into a brawl after a night of heavy drinking at Reicharts Cafe, the university officials found their excuse — Beiderbecke and Flechenstein were expelled. Bix's college career had lasted less than three weeks.

Bix hung around Iowa City for a while, then he headed east for New York, where he would play with a very well-known group called "The Ramblers." While he was in New York, he played with top-notch musicians, but his excessive partying and drinking did little good for his health. Soon he felt the urge to return to Chicago where he could again be part of that jazz scene. There, in Charlie Straight's band, he played with the great black musicians who were pouring into the city, and unlike his stint with Goldkette, the time spent with Charlie Straight was very satisfying.

September, 1925 found Bix with Frankie "Tram" Trumbauer in an orchestra led by Adrian Rollini that played at the Arcadia Ballroom in St. Louis. In looks as well as life-styles, Bix and Tram were polar opposites, but their musical collaboration



The Wolverine Orchestra of Chicago with Bix Beiderbecke seated fourth from right (from the Bix Beiderbecke Room courtesy Davenport Public Library).

greatly benefited both men. Tram played a C-melody saxophone with a whimsical tone suited both to Bix and to the times. Bix's cornet and Tram's sax worked together in a way that made Bix always sound deadly serious, a foil for Tram's light touch.

Tram was a fantastic musician who appreciated and helped Bix whenever he could. He taught him some music theory and helped, eventually, to steer him into two of the best-paying and most famous bands of the day — once more with Jean Goldkette and, finally, with Paul Whiteman. But Tram's good-natured efforts to teach him the technical side of music may have only hastened Bix's downfall. Because he had never learned to sight read music

with any degree of facility, it was killing work for Bix as Tram coached him through the new score Whiteman gave his men each week. Unable to conform to and feel comfortable with printed music, his physical and emotional health deteriorated as his musical and psychological frustration became more intense. He felt himself doomed never to realize the elusive goal of playing his music in his own way. But at least the jobs Tram got Bix allowed him to buy a decent grade of the bootleg liquor that was steadily killing him.

Despite his difficulties with printed music, Bix had gotten on well with Charlie Straight. When real jazz playing and improvisation were called for, Bix could



Bix, fourth from left, on tour with the Jean Goldkette Orchestra (from the Bix Beiderbecke Room courtesy Davenport Public Library).

handle it. Despite, too, his lack of formal musical training and his total immersion in the shady subculture of jazz, Bix developed his abiding fondness for classical music while he lived in St. Louis. He began to use his acute musical ear to delve into piano improvisation based on conventional classical harmony. He was especially fascinated by Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Gustav Holst, and Igor Stravinsky. More and more such non-jazz composers were to influence his improvisational thinking.

The St. Louis band broke up in the spring of 1926, but Bix — with Tram — was invited to return to the Jean Goldkette Orchestra. This time around,

things would go better for Bix. Goldkette's group was, after all, probably the finest white orchestra of its time, with first-class musicians who could play both hot and sweet. Their jazz arrangements packed a wallop comparable to the most widely-known black orchestras.

But Bix continued his heavy drinking, and he ate very poorly. Musicians are not known for helping each other with drinking problems. In fact, drinking seemed to be as much a part of their lives as their music. George Avakian, a noted jazz historian, relates how Bix lived during an engagement at Hudson Lake, where he shared a broken-down cottage with Pee Wee Russell. The colorful clarinetist from St. Louis

was spiritually closer to Bix than the more business-like Trumbauer. That is, neither Bix nor Pee Wee cared much about anything except playing their music and keeping a 24-hour supply of liquor on hand at all times. They got their booze for two bucks a gallon from a pair of bare-footed hags who kept the Prohibition agents away with a dozen vicious dogs and a couple of iron shovels. The shovels were also used to dig up the crocks they buried behind the henhouse in which they lived. Bix and Pee Wee amassed a collection of empty liquor jugs and — the remnants of their staple diet — empty baked bean and sardine cans. Their back porch sagged under the weight of 30 or 40 quart bottles of milk, souring by degrees. They always meant to leave a note for the milkman, but never found pencil and paper together at the same time.

The Buick they bought did not run. They pushed it to the shack and used its hood to prop up a mirror for their morning's shave. As they explained to friends: if you live in the country, you've got to have a car.

“I couldn't tell you if there were any rugs under the dirt,” Mezz Mezzrow recalled of the shack, “but the room did have an upright piano with a bad list to the keyboard.” It was this piano that enabled Bix to explore the intricacies of harmony. He was beginning to split his musical personality: European form and discipline had started to encroach upon the freedom of the New Orleans music that had been his first great influence. Soon Bix was to record his completed solo “In a Mist,” in which the influence of the American romantic composer Edward MacDowell wins out over jazz, though certainly jazz does not disappear altogether.

Avakian suggests that “In a Mist” is crucial to an understanding of Bix. As one

probes into both man and musician, the title of this composition seems more and more appropriate. Bix never got out of a musical mist in his restless striving for something that always eluded him (though what wonderful things his search produced!). Embittered by the demands of a commercial musical world, a world on which he was never wholly to turn his back, Bix found himself deeper and deeper in a mist, depending increasingly on alcohol to lift him through each disappointment.

The only other relief was the playing itself. His early days with the Wolverines at Princeton dances had earned him many lasting fans who brought him back to play again and again. Yet he seldom talked about music with his friends. Instead, the conversation turned to subjects like the novels of P.G. Wodehouse, which were great favorites of his. He would quote long passages from any of the 48 books, correctly identifying page numbers and characters.

Bix had little to do with women. The bond among jazz musicians tended to be fraternal and exclusive. But, because he was handsome and a natural gentleman, women found Bix quite attractive despite his reticence. Their mutual love of the piano brought Bix together with a Princeton cheerleader, and one girl from St. Louis claimed that Bix had come close to marrying her. But it had just not worked out: he had as little interest in “serious” long-term relationships as he had had in the formal study of music.

By and by, the hard realities of finance overtook the Goldkette band. Reluctantly, in the fall of 1927, most of its members were let go. Bix and Tram, with some of the others, joined the Paul Whiteman organization.

For some years Whiteman had been known as “The King of Jazz,” a title that did

not sit well with the true lover of jazz. Although, in a real sense, it can be said that the slickly orthodox Whiteman never made a jazz record, he always had great jazz musicians in his orchestra. They included the likes of the Dorsey brothers, guitarist Eddie Lang, clarinetist Bill Challis, trombonist Jack Teagarden, trumpeter Bunny Berigan, vibes player Red Norvo, and the cymbal pounder who doubled as singer, Bing Crosby. Whiteman's was the largest, best-known, and best-paying orchestra of its time. His payroll often ran to \$10,000 a week, and payroll records show that Bix was paid \$200 a week in those days, a handsome remuneration indeed. (Bing Crosby was paid only \$150.)

Today the only Whiteman records sought by collectors are those from 1927 to 1929, which include Bix and Bing.

During this period, the grinding tempo of learning score after score took its toll on Bix, whose drinking — amazingly enough — had increased. In addition to his heavy schedule with Whiteman, Bix made a number of records under his own leadership in October, 1927. "Bix and His Gang" included Bill Rank (trombone), Don Murray (clarinet), Adrian Rollini (bass sax), Frank Signorelli (piano), Howdy Quicksell (banjo), and Chauncey Morehouse (drums) — all top flight musicians but not particularly steeped in jazz. Yet these were probably the freest and least inhibited records Bix was ever to make. Their style has the loose and improvisational quality that the public calls Dixieland. Although there are good solos and solid ensemble work by other musicians, one realizes today that Bix alone carried the stamp of greatness. In all the recordings, Bix does the work of three or four men. He often plays the responsive phrases to his own melodic lines, also blowing explosions of pure rhythm in his eager-



Beiderbecke home, now on the National Register, at 1934 Grand Avenue in Davenport (photo by Alan Axelrod).

ness to kick the band along. With real jazz men, Bix would not have needed to work so hard. The holes he plugs up himself would not have been there. Nevertheless, it is a special thrill to hear how he compensates for the shortcomings of his players.

On February 4, 1927 Bix recorded "Singing the Blues," which, along with King Oliver's cornet choruses on "Dippermouth Blues" and Johnny Dodd's clarinet solo on "High Society," is one of the three most celebrated solos in jazz history. Avakian describes it as a "solo of intense, brooding beauty, carefully built up to a typical tumbling break in the middle, with a surprise break explosion after it." There is hardly a jazz musician who has not learned it by heart.

Unfortunately one hears relatively little of Bix on Whiteman's commercial recordings because the 78 r.p.m. discs last only about three minutes and he had to share

the solo spots with many other talented musicians. People who have heard Bix live insist that his records do not do him justice. Early recording techniques could not capture the full essence of his sound, so that it is very difficult to judge him on the basis of what he left. The recordings made by Louis Armstrong during this period have, on the other hand, fared better with critics because he surrounded himself with less talented musicians. Certainly both Armstrong and Bix were great musicians, but Armstrong did not have to share the spotlight. It is all too easy to denigrate Bix's work with Whiteman: too little space for Bix to stretch out, overblown arrangements, unsuitable material to play, inadequate recording techniques. This criticism is unjust, at least during the orchestra's Victor recording period. Critics tend to judge Paul Whiteman in terms of his commercial success rather than on the actual merits of music. Whiteman, after all, did not set out to create a jazz ensemble. His was a popular dance orchestra, composed of the finest musicians of their day outside the classical symphony orchestra. Jazzmen became of necessity an integral part of Whiteman's kaleidoscope, and as a musical formula Whiteman's worked very well. The orchestra played with a polish, an euphony, and an engaging rhythmic lift that made people listen to popular music. Many of these Victor records have a sound and balance to be deeply admired, as they were by most musicians of Whiteman's day.

Bix's life with Whiteman was very good for a while. More and more he turned to the piano and the possibilities of modern harmony. He was able also to master some very difficult passages on cornet solos, as evidenced by his solo in the second movement of George Gershwin's *Concerto in F*.

But when Whiteman's band left Victor and started recording for Columbia records, Bix's sound suffered. Columbia's recording equipment could not capture the sound as well as Victor's had, and Bix's cornet lost its crispness and fidelity.

It is hard to say when Bix's drinking ceased to be only "heavy" and became an addiction. The Whiteman band left on its 1928 grand tour, and Bix was again drinking more than he should. A gentleman, always ready to praise good musicians, unwilling to knock the bad ones, Bix's one failing was alcohol. By 1929 he seemed at the edge of the precipice. Whiteman's radio show was packed with new tunes every week. Bix had to work harder than ever learning Whiteman's arrangements, the kind of technical and commercial work he disliked most. His drinking got so bad that Paul Whiteman sent him home to Davenport for a rest cure. He kept him on full salary for a couple of months, then on half pay for another four months. Finally, Whiteman realized Bix would never return and, reluctantly, took him off the payroll completely.

Back in Davenport, Bix was in bad shape. His family was solicitous, but also ashamed. Callers were discouraged and, as Bix seldom ventured out, he became more and more isolated. The family considered alcoholism, like jazz, a social taboo, and it felt Bix's condition was a blight on its social respectability. The family doctor suggested Bix be hospitalized and treated under strict supervision: Bix's brother drove him to Dwight, Illinois for treatment at the Keely Institute, known for its great success in treating alcoholism. He entered as a voluntary patient and was free to leave any time. But Bix did remain at the Institute for five weeks — a week longer than the normal stay. When he left, on November 18, 1929,

the doctors had to admit that his progress had been slow and his condition was still serious.

That December Bix appeared with a number of orchestras playing in various Iowa and Illinois towns, including Chicago. His chief engagement was with the Jimmy Hardin Orchestra playing at the Danceland Ballroom in Davenport. As if it were his epitaph, Hardin usually billed Bix as "the former cornetist with Paul Whiteman."

Indeed, Whiteman, ever-understanding, invited Bix to rejoin his orchestra when the two met again in April, 1930. His chair, Whiteman said, would always be waiting, any time Bix wanted it. But Bix realized that he no longer had the endurance or the stability to do the kind of commercial work Whiteman wanted. He had to decline the generous offer.

Still, he refused to give up music entirely. He joined the Dorsey Brothers band, playing for Princeton dances and smokers, for fraternity dances at Williams College in Massachusetts, and even in some recording sessions.

Then Bix got a particularly good break for a comeback. He was invited to be part of "The Camel Pleasure Hour" broadcast weekly over NBC radio. But, despite the Keely Institute, he had resumed drinking, and with a vengeance. During the broadcast of October 8, when Bix rose to play one of his famous solos, nothing came out of his horn. He was unable to recall what had happened. Everything went blank, he said.

A very few days later he was on his way back to Davenport, lonely and scared.

Yet even this crisis he somehow managed to weather, and by December, Bix was feeling well enough to visit friends. To his mother's dismay, he accepted a job playing in Trave O'Hearn's band. By mid-January, 1931 Bix seemed well on the road

DEAD IN NEW YORK



Picture of the 18-year-old Beiderbecke used in the obituary of the August 7, 1931 Davenport Democrat and Leader (photo by Alan Axelrod).

to recovery. When Paul Whiteman played on January 17 at Danceland in Davenport, he paid Bix a lengthy tribute and, after much coaxing, talked him into a solo. The musicians listened, rapt in Beiderbecke's music, and afterward Whiteman once more offered Bix a chair. Once more Bix said he was not up to it.

Note on Sources

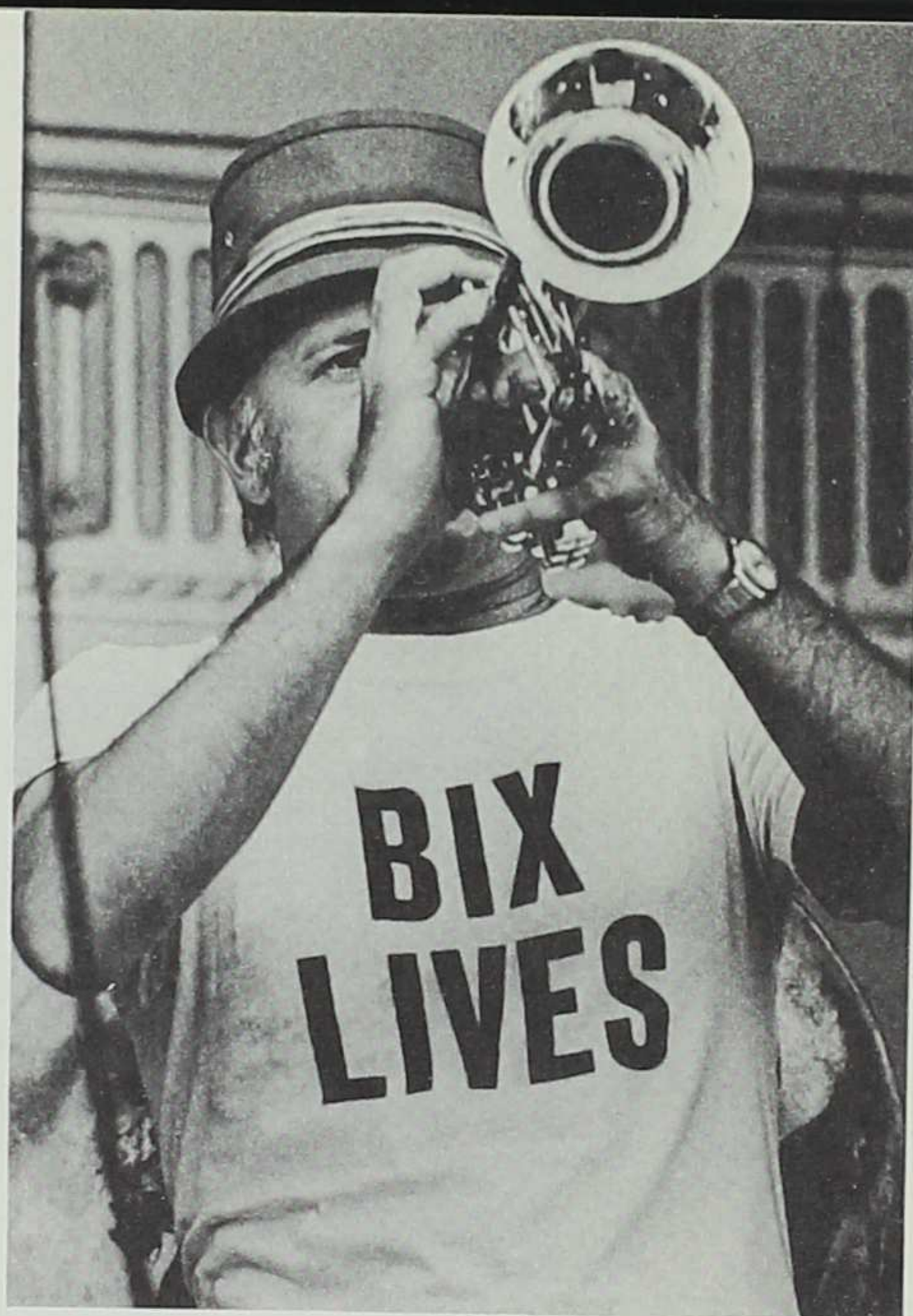
The principal sources for this article are Ralph Berton's *Remembering Bix* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974) and *Bix, Man and Legend* by Richard M. Sudhalter and Philip R. Evans (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1974). Also helpful were "The Bix Beiderbecke Story," written by George Avakian as liner notes to volumes one through three of Columbia Records' retrospective collection of Bix's music (LP Cl 844-6), and Max Harrison's essay on Bix Beiderbecke for Milestone Records' (LP M-47019).

But by March Bix decided he was ready for another crack at New York. He joined the Dorsey Brothers for more college dances, and on April 18 he copyrighted two piano pieces, "Flashes" and "In the Dark." Bill Challis tried to get Bix to join the Casa Loma band, a very slick, precisioned, polished outfit of the kind that had never suited Bix. Although he had many nagging doubts about his ability to read the complicated arrangements, he gave the band a look.

That the members of the Casa Loma Orchestra were mostly ex-Goldkette players did not boost Bix's self-confidence. Many of the orchestra's arrangements were based on ones Bix had played quite often, but he just did not have the confidence to cut through them. After four nights of constant practice, Bix gave up. And quit. And drank.

And for the first time in his life, he was broke. The money he had sent home to his sister to invest in bank stock had been lost in the market crash. Playing dates were few. Still he managed to keep his room at the 44th Street Hotel. He turned more and more to classical music and to playing the piano. He spent much time with Bill Challis, working on the score of "In a Mist" and other piano pieces Bix had sketched through the years. The going was slow; they had a jug which had to be hidden in the bathtub from Challis's sister, who shared the apartment.

His friends do not find it pleasant to recall Bix's last year — one fast, downhill slide: a few commercial dates; an ill-fated attempt to take an all-star band to Europe; a move to Queens; pneumonia. It developed from a cold he had been trying to cure for years. On August 6, 1931 Charles Beiderbecke, Bix's brother in Davenport, took a long-distance call from Frankie Trumbauer in New York. Tram told him to come to

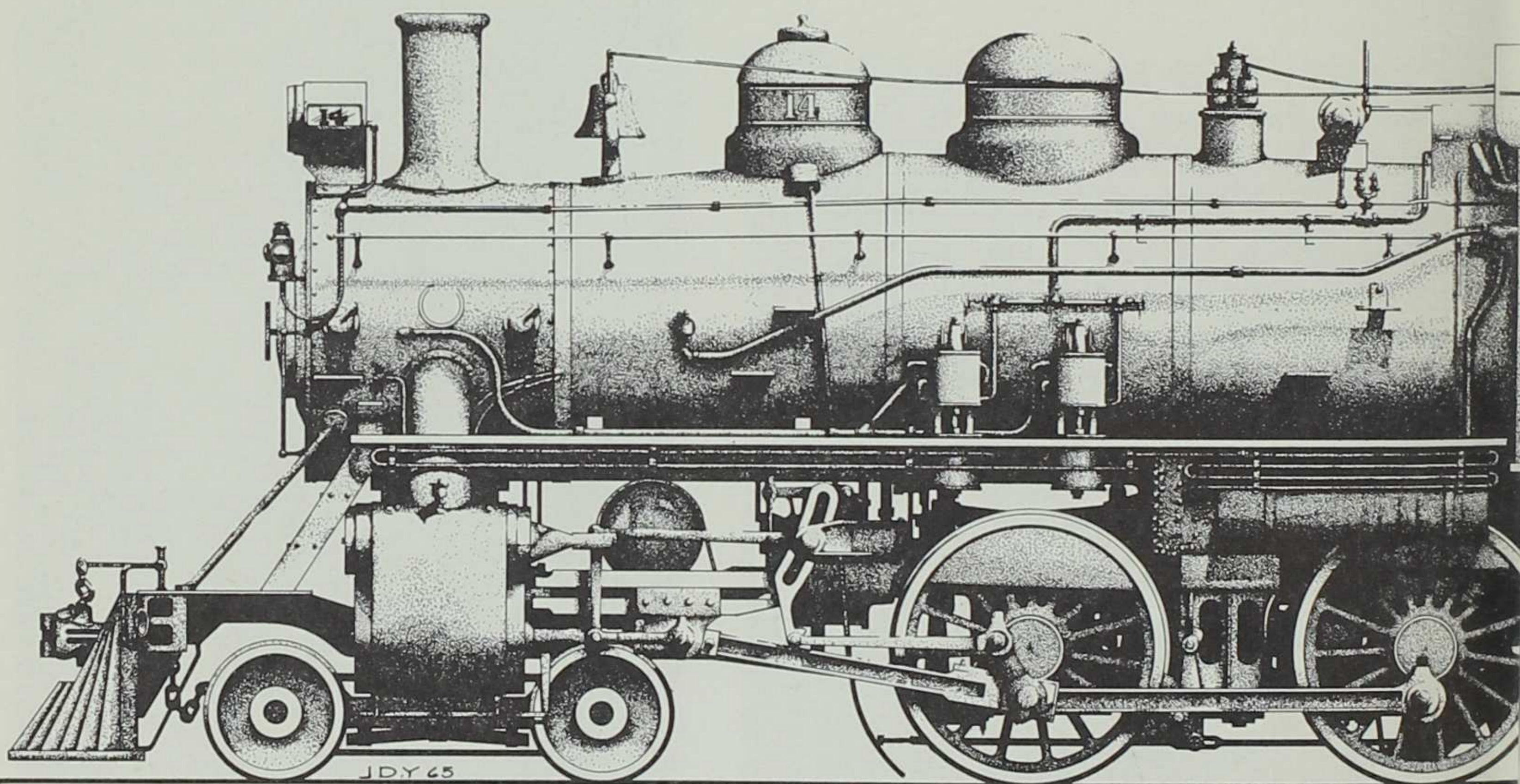


(courtesy of Quad-City Times)

New York at once. Bix was in trouble. But by the time Charles and his mother reached New York, it was too late. Dr. John James Hoberski had pronounced Bix dead.

He listed the cause of death as lobar pneumonia with edema of the brain, but privately he ventured the opinion that death was hastened by the effects of alcohol. Bix's mother and brother took his body back to Davenport with them, and he was buried in Oakdale Cemetery after one of the largest funerals anyone could remember.

A great but undisciplined musical talent, his music born of his life's disorder, Bix Beiderbecke is an archetype of the jazz era. "Bix lives" is becoming a well-known phrase in Iowa — especially around Davenport where yearly jazz festivals are held in his honor. Of course he "lives" only through the more than 200 recordings and the wealth of memories he left. All things considered, maybe that is not such a bad "monument." □

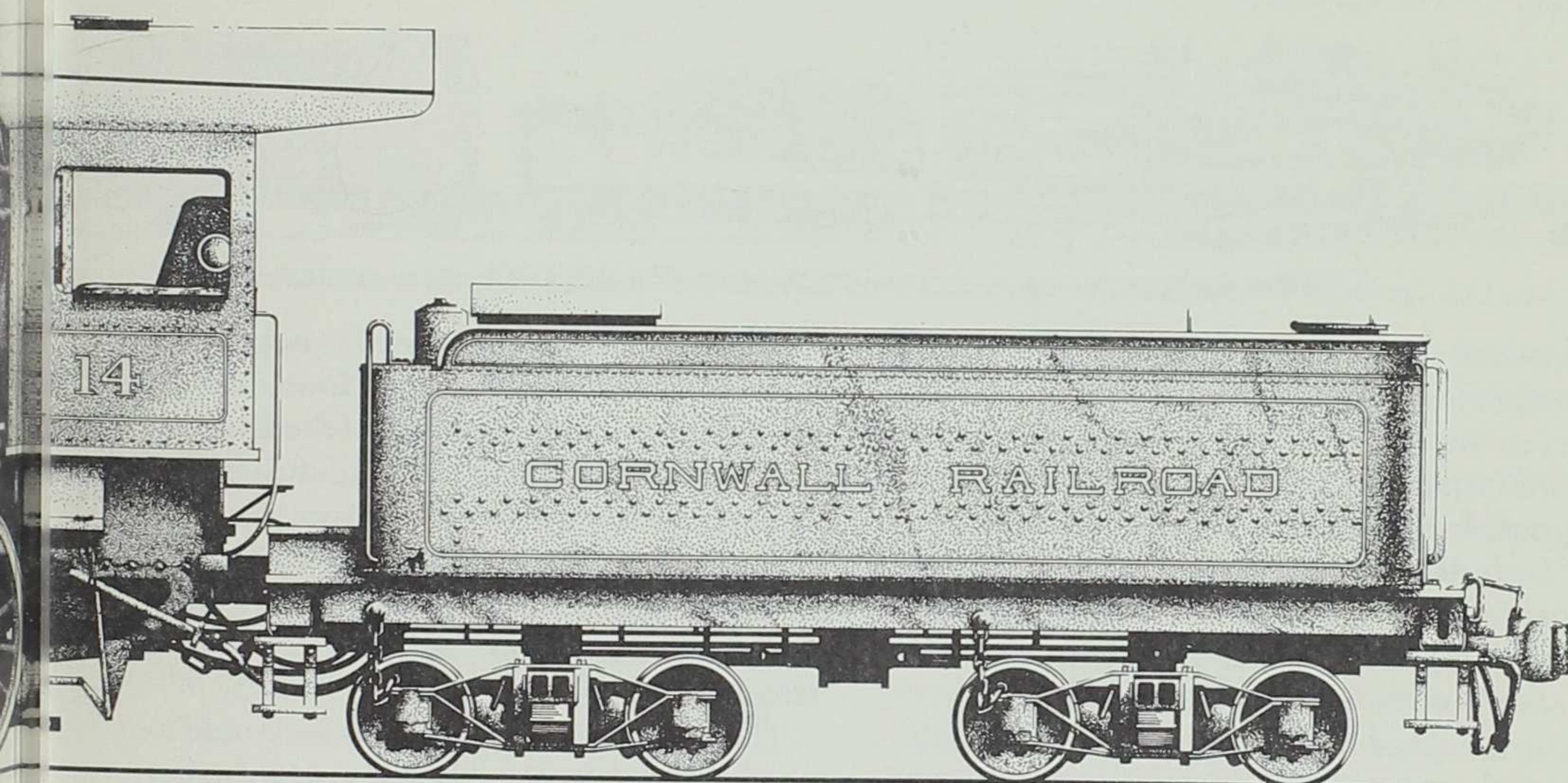


THE STEAM LOCOMOTIVE R

Text and Illustrations

by

James D. Young



The last 4-4-0 "American" type locomotive, built in 1921.

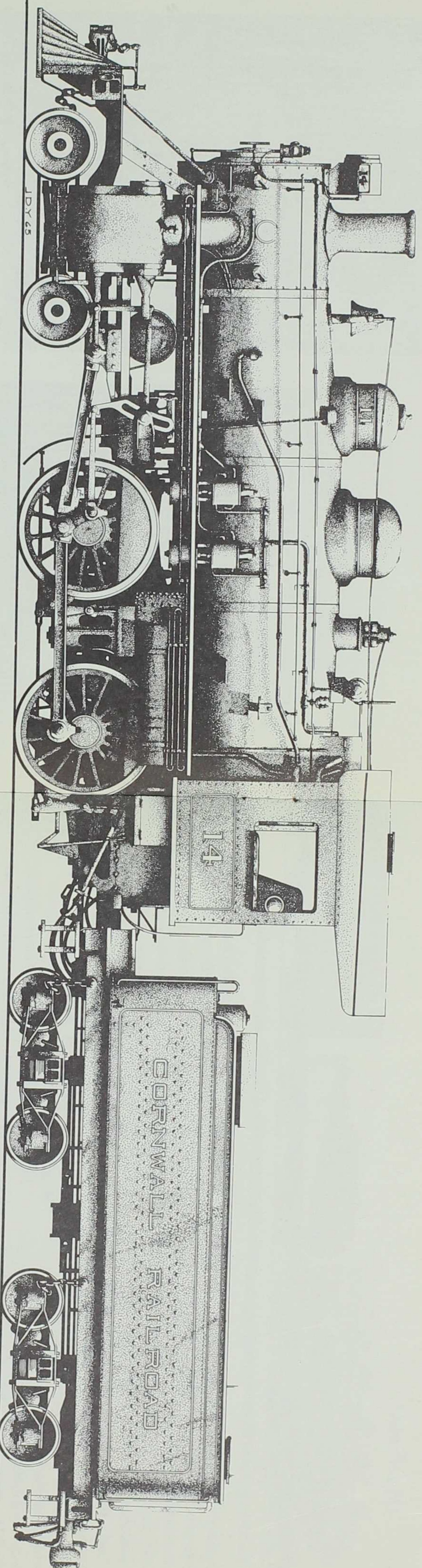
ROUND AND ABOUT IOWA

I was taking architecture and engineering courses at Pueblo Junior College in Pueblo, Colorado when I first decided to make drawings, historically accurate drawings, of steam locomotives. In those days I used to watch trains of dead locomotives being delivered to the railyards in Pueblo for scrapping. Very soon, I realized, these great machines would be little more than fading memories or, at most, vandalized hulks rusting beside some long-abandoned railroad station.

Most Iowans over 40 remember the steam locomotive as more than a means of transportation. It seemed to be a living, breathing thing, with a very real personality. Perhaps many who lived in the small towns along the right-of-way could recognize an engine by its sound alone, and even knew the engineer by how he played the whistle. And the trainmen learned the

qualities and quirks of their locomotive as they would come to know the eccentricities of a friend. If it was a poor steamer, they'd learn to coax it; if it was fine and nervous as a race horse, they'd learn to handle it. The locomotive was honest: nothing hidden. You could see all of its parts working.

The "Golden Age" of steam development began in 1925 when scientific and engineering expertise began to be applied to locomotive design. Before this the evolution of steam was pretty thoroughly a process of trial and error. The old "Q" — the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy — led the industry in locomotive development toward the end of the last century. Before 1880 the fire box that heated the locomotive's boiler rested on the frame between the rear drive wheels, as can be seen in the illustration of the Cornwall Number 14. But the "Q" introduced a set of wheels



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The Chicago Great Western and Chicago Rock Island & Pacific, two familiar railroad names in Iowa. The

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A typical engine from 1925, the product of the advanced engineering the railroads had begun to adopt, is the 2-8-2. These numbers refer to the arrangement of the locomotive's wheels: a 2-8-2 has two wheels up front, eight drivers in the middle, and two trailing wheels in the rear. By 1930 the Union Pacific was using A-12-2 9000 class locos as its standard freight "hog."

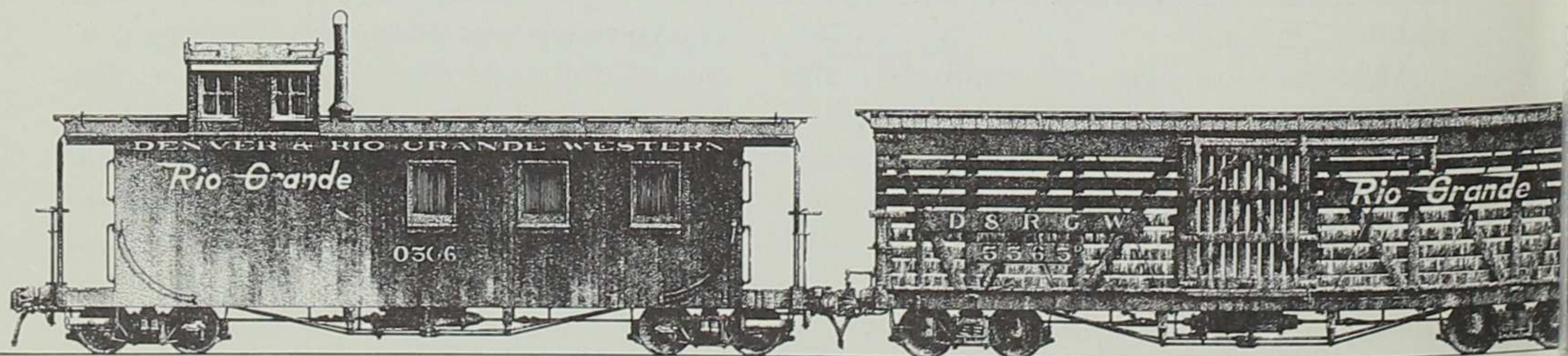
In that same year another important innovation was introduced when roller bearings were installed in axles and siderods. When these bearings became standard equipment in 1935, the Union Pacific was able to design its class 800 4-8-9 Northern to reach a sustained 110 miles per hour, although in practice the 800s cruised at 90 m.p.h. pulling 1000-ton passenger trains.

The 1930s and '40s saw the heyday of high-speed railroading, and Iowa had its share. I wish I had drawings of the Chicago and Northwestern's 4-6-4s and 4-8-4s that once roared across central Iowa. But the little Northwestern 0-6-0 yard switcher I have illustrated was a lovely little locomotive just as vital to the industry as the "Big Hogs."

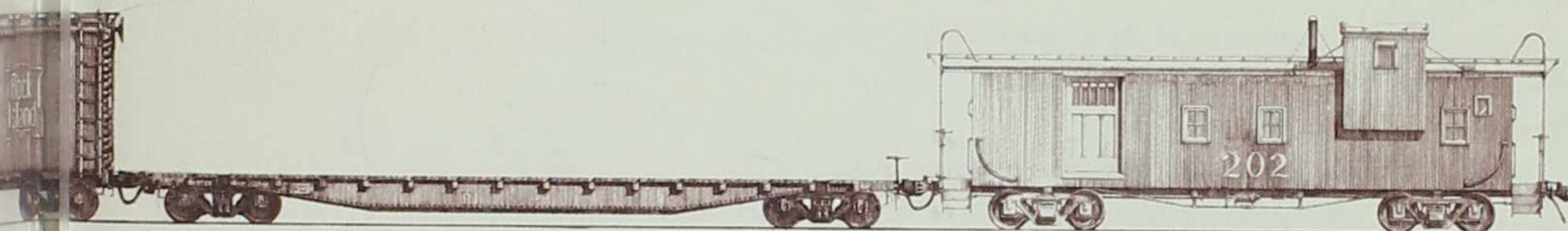
The Rock Island Line ran its fleet of general service 4-8-4 Northern — the largest such fleet in the nation — all over Iowa. Big, nicely proportioned locomotives, they could handle high-speed passenger service as well as fast freight.

Santa Fe track touched Iowa at Fort Madison on its way to Chicago. Between 1930 and '40 this road ran its high-speed 4-8-4s out of Los Angeles to La Junta, Colorado, where the 4-8-4 was exchanged for a faster 4-6-4 to complete the run to Chicago. These engines pulled the fabled Superchief at an average of 45 m.p.h. That does not sound very fast until we realize that the average included many station stops.

The "Q" ran 4-6-4s and 4-8-4s second to



Though Iowa once had narrow-gauge steam locomotives, the tracks were early changed to standard gauge.



CGW is long gone; the CRI&P is still struggling to operate as an independent railroad.

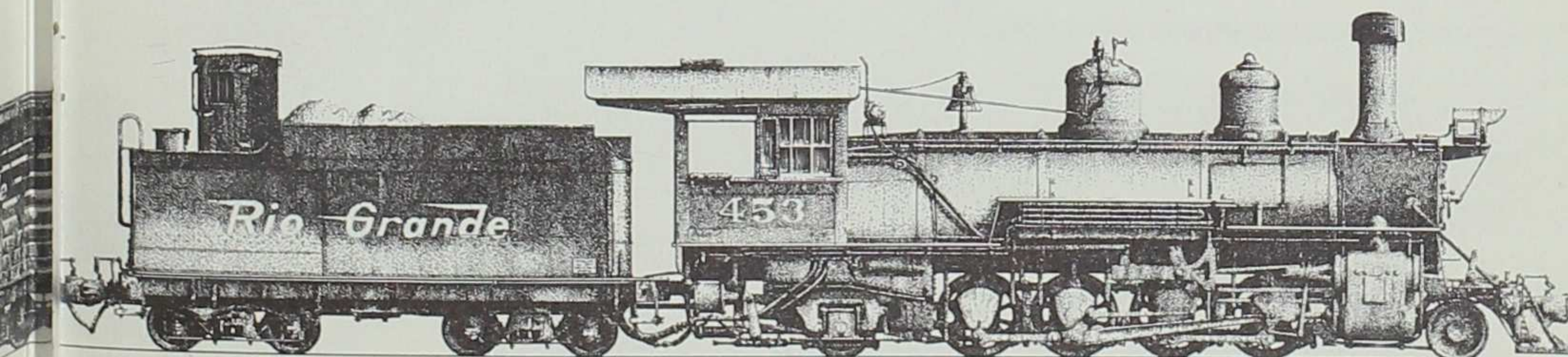
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Locomotive models with colorful names like "American," "Consolidation," "Mogul," "Atlantic," "Pacific," "Santa Fe," "Mountain," "Hudson," "Mikado" — which was renamed "MacArthur" during World War II — "Texas," and "Northern" worked throughout Iowa during the great age of steam. The huge "Texas" type 2-10-4 did have its share of problems. Its poorly balanced running gear had a lamentable habit of tearing up track so that a maintenance crew often followed the locomotive to put the track back together. This uneconomical arrangement was rectified by Theodore Olson, a Northwestern mechanical engineer, who devised a means of balancing the gear.

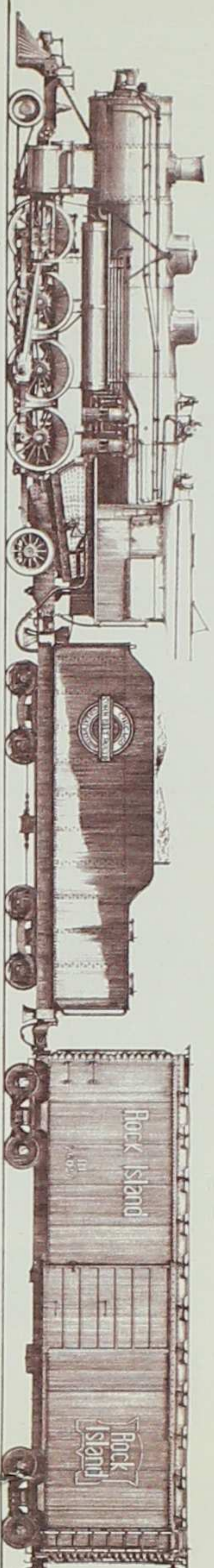
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The sound of a steam locomotive "losing its footing," its drivers slipping, straining against tons of inertia as the train begins to pull out of the station, will never be heard again in Iowa. The whistle's lonesome call of a late autumn night has vanished — except in a myriad of songs — before most of us realized what we were losing. 1975 saw the last high-performance standard-gauge steam locomotive move through Iowa. It was a former Southern Pacific fast passenger loco that had been growing moss for many years on a siding in Portland, Oregon. Locomotive 4449, class GS-4 (general service) pulled into Iowa from the northwest as the "American Freedom Train." She was laughed at by some because she had trouble negotiating a few heavy grades. But she was pulling 26 passenger cars, and a high-drivered (large wheel diameter)



This is an example of one of the best known narrow-gauge steam locomotives in the western states. The D&RGW Mikados still pull tourist trains from Durango to Silverton in southwest Colorado.

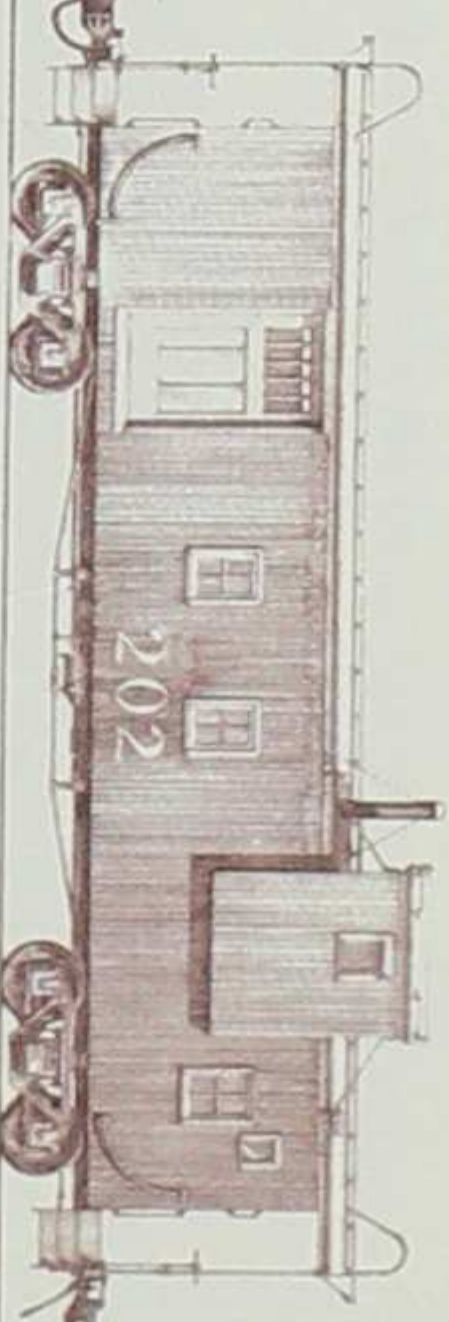


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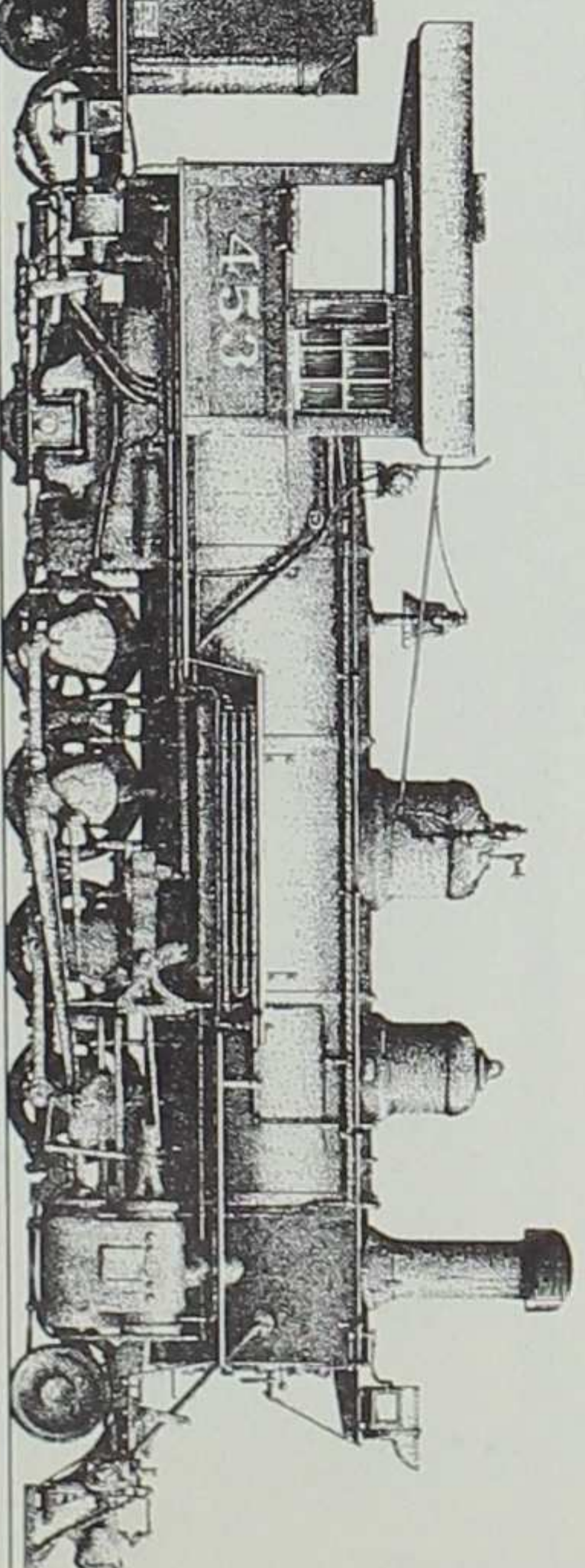
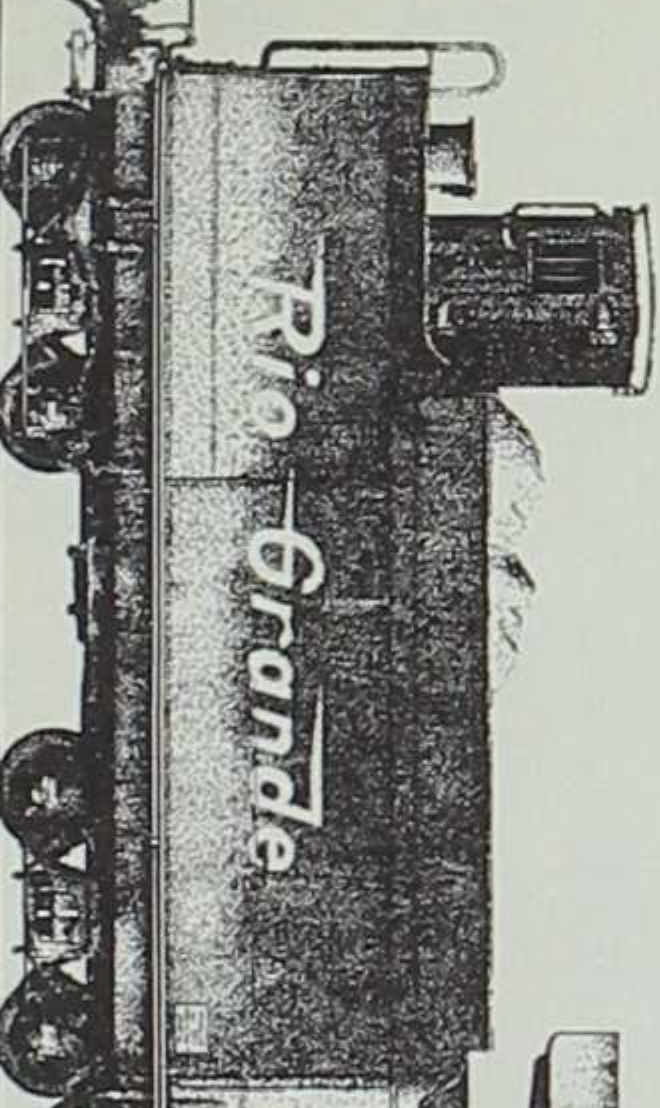
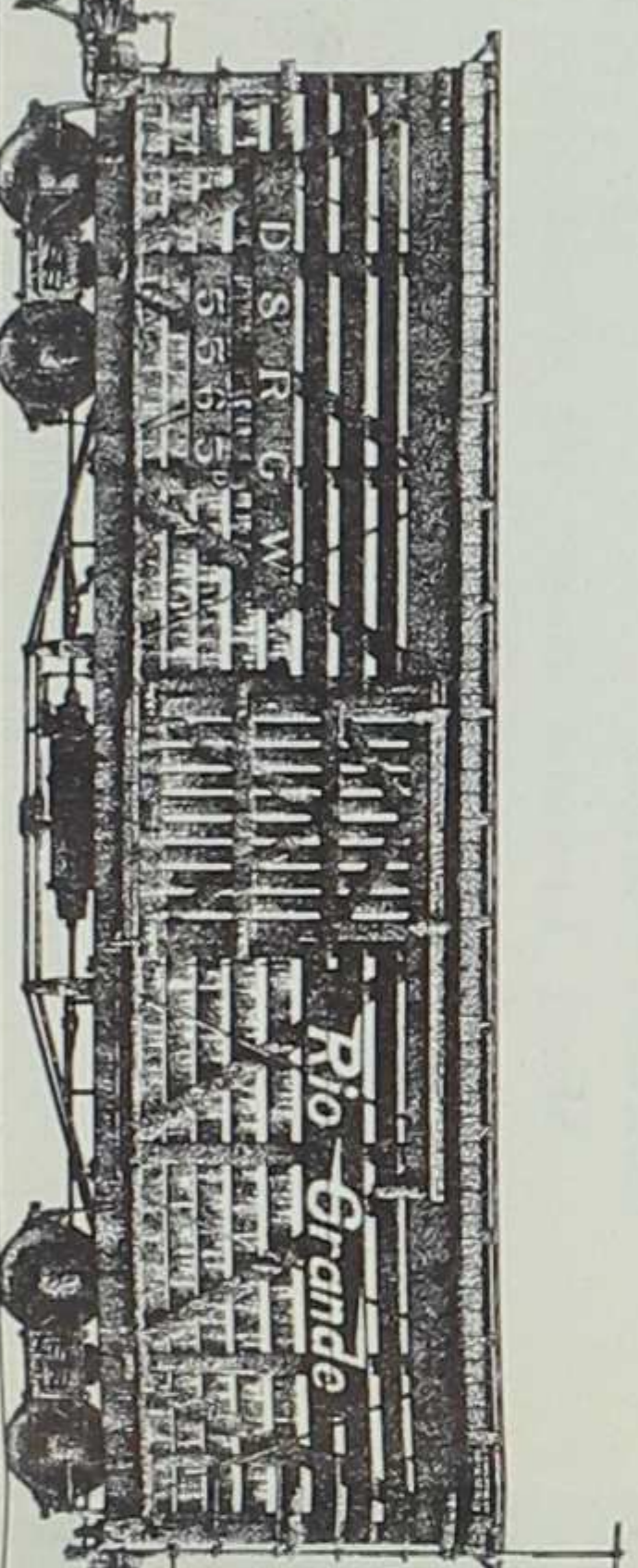
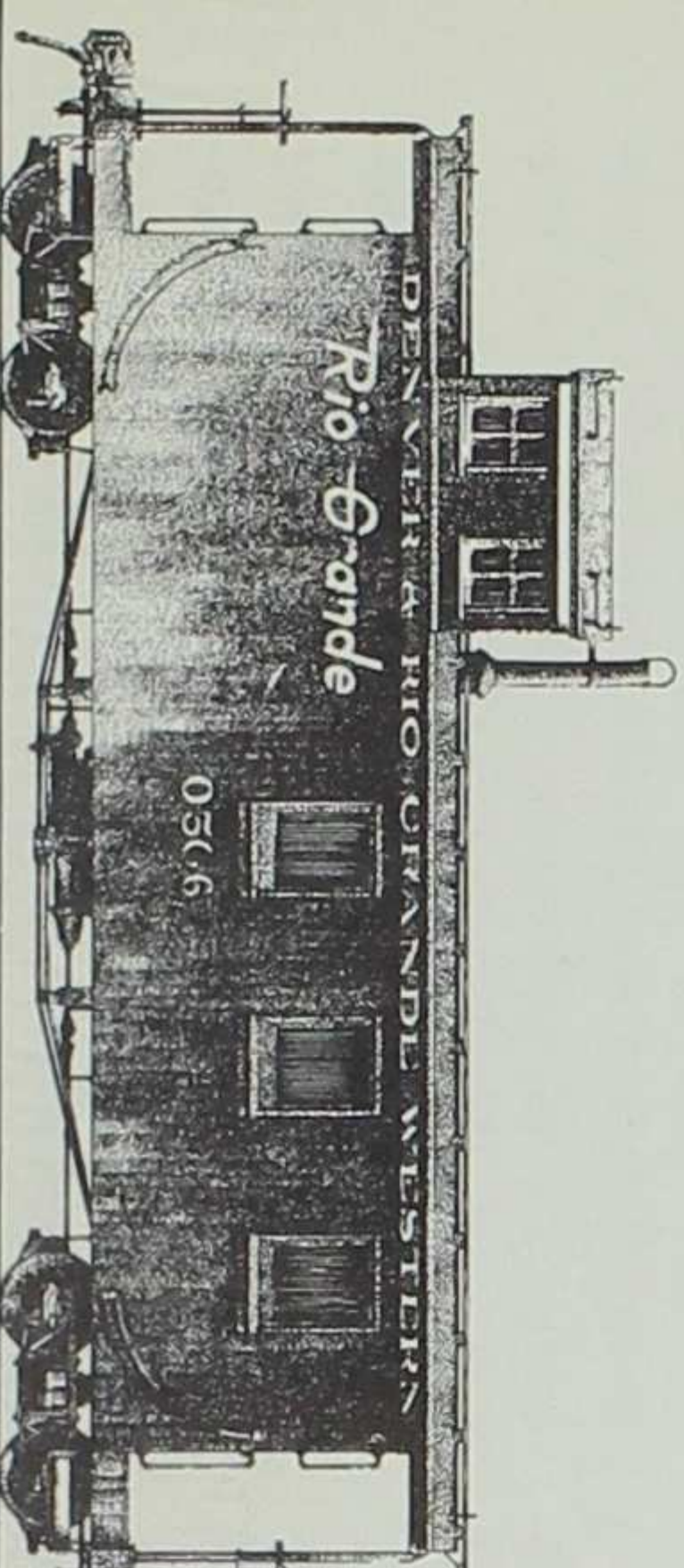
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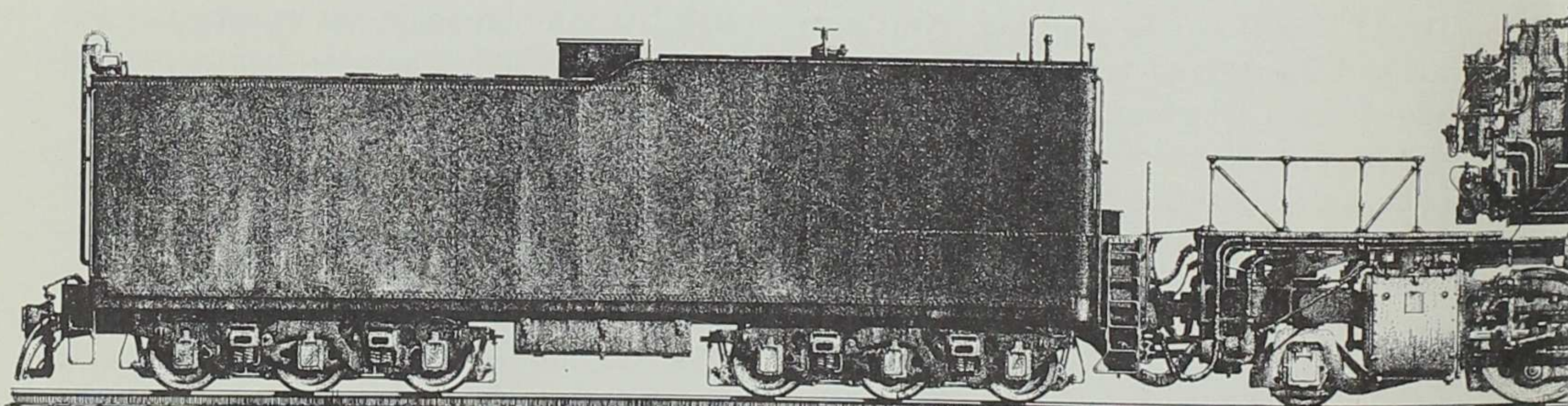


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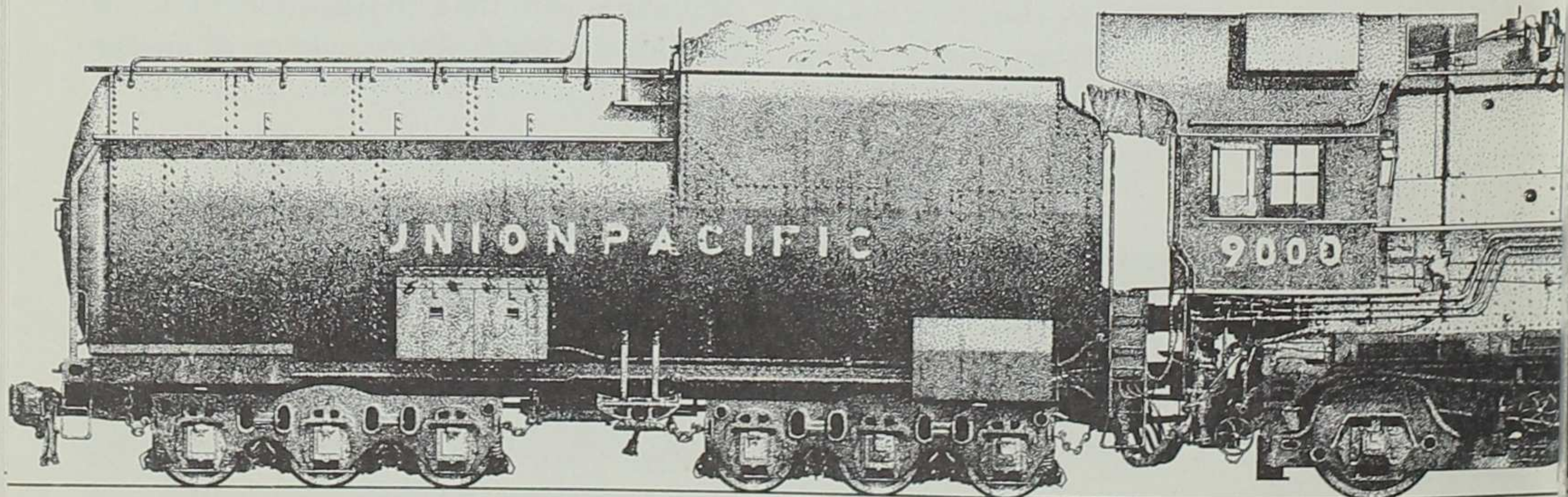
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That was the last of the oldtimers to come through Iowa. Although a few steam locomotives are in very limited operation elsewhere, giving children an experience they would otherwise never know, Iowans must now travel outside of the state to see what remains of mainline superpower steam. □

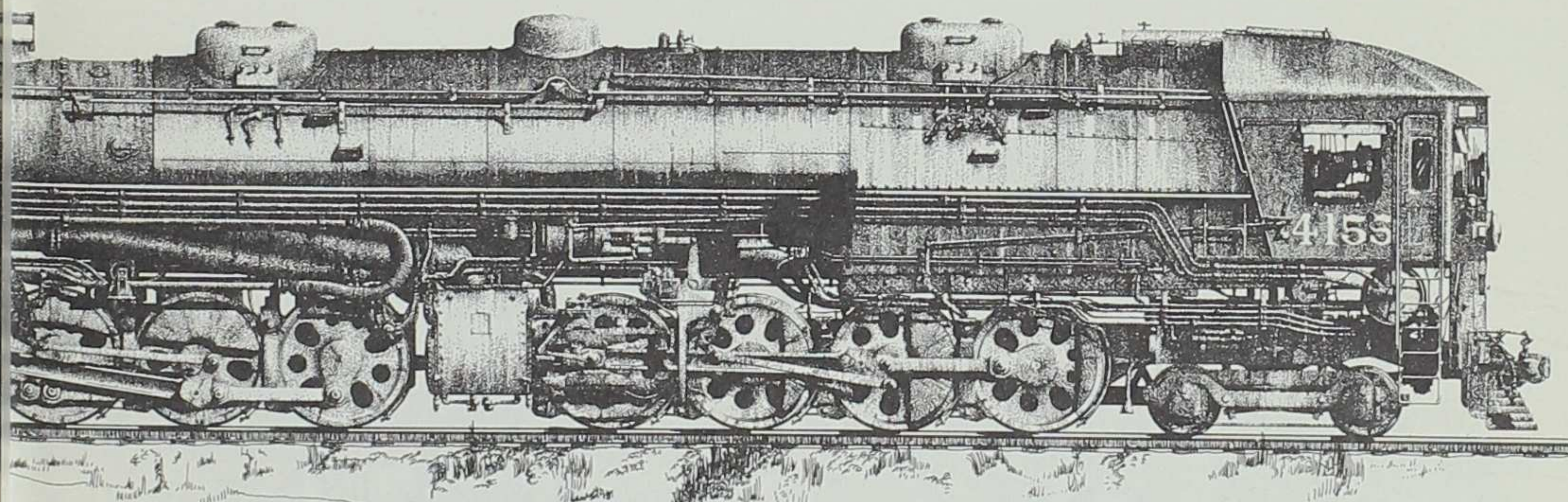
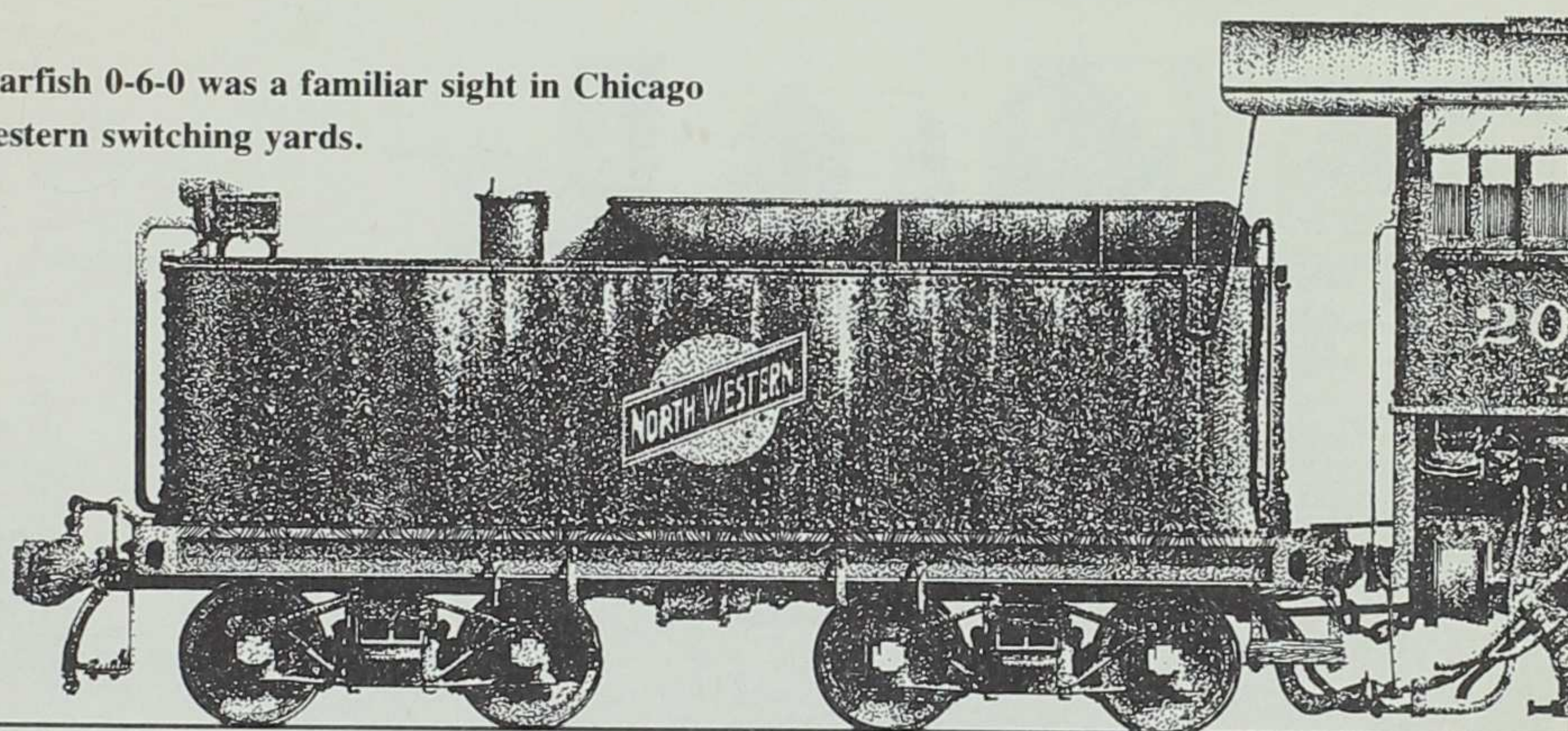


Never used in Iowa's flat land, this mountain-type locomotive had its cab forward to keep the crew ahead

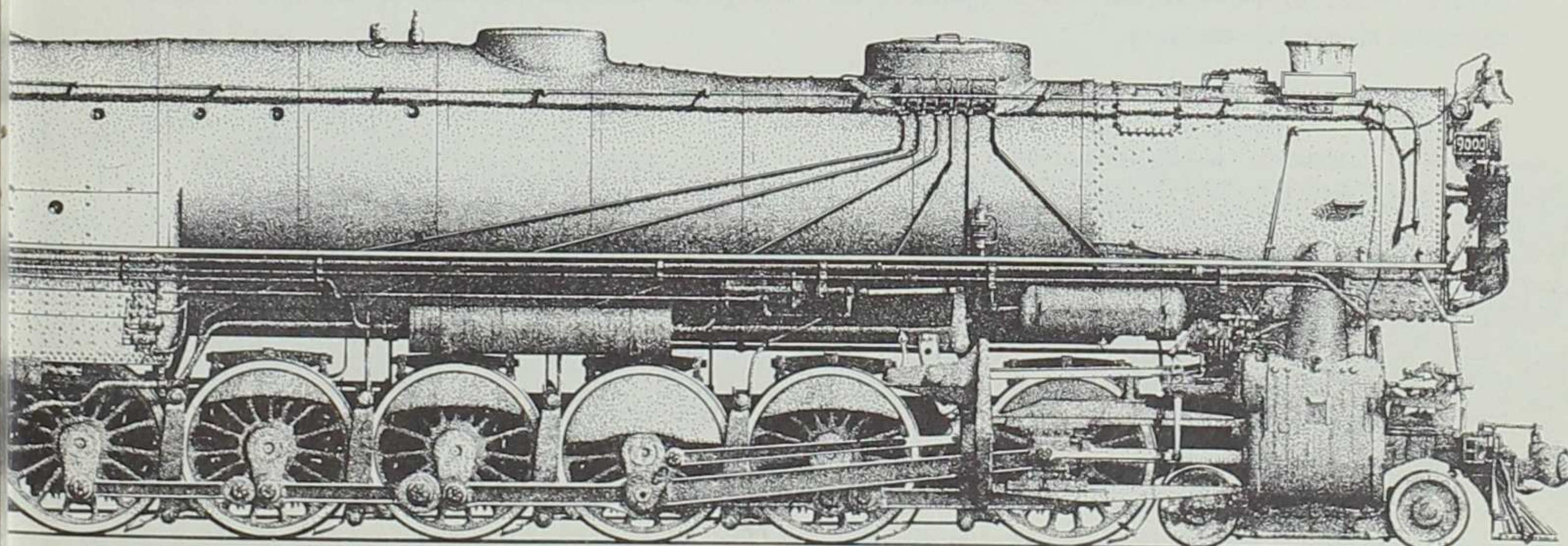


A Union Pacific standard "freight hog" A-12-2,

This dwarfish 0-6-0 was a familiar sight in Chicago Northwestern switching yards.



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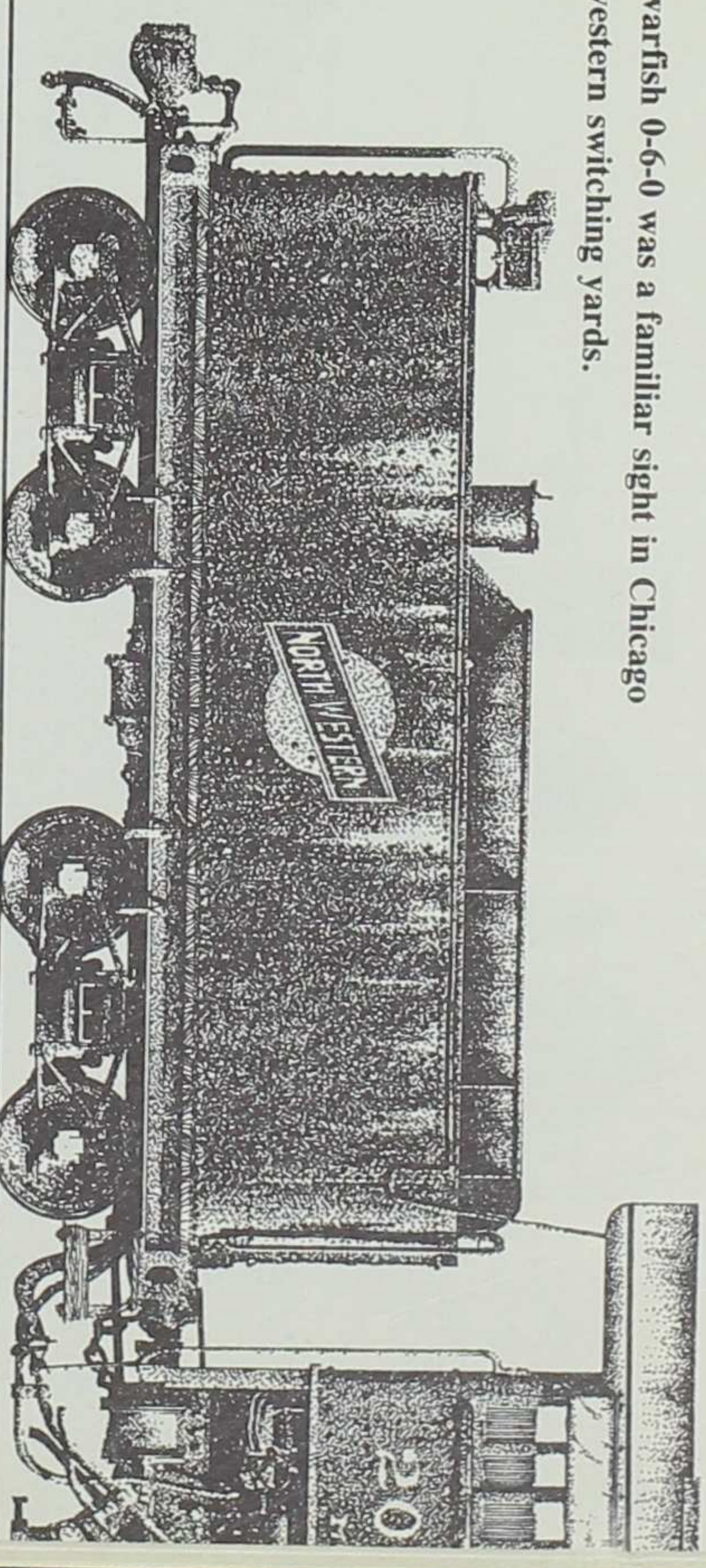
9000-class locomotive, introduced in 1930.

JDY 71 N°4 1/2 INK

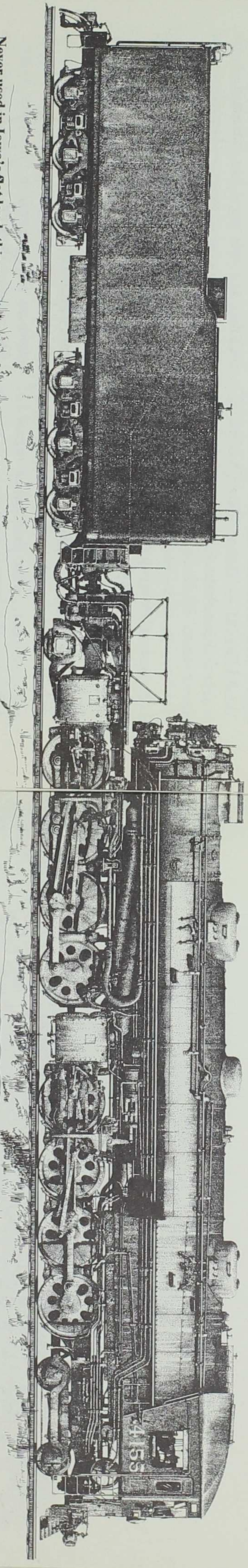
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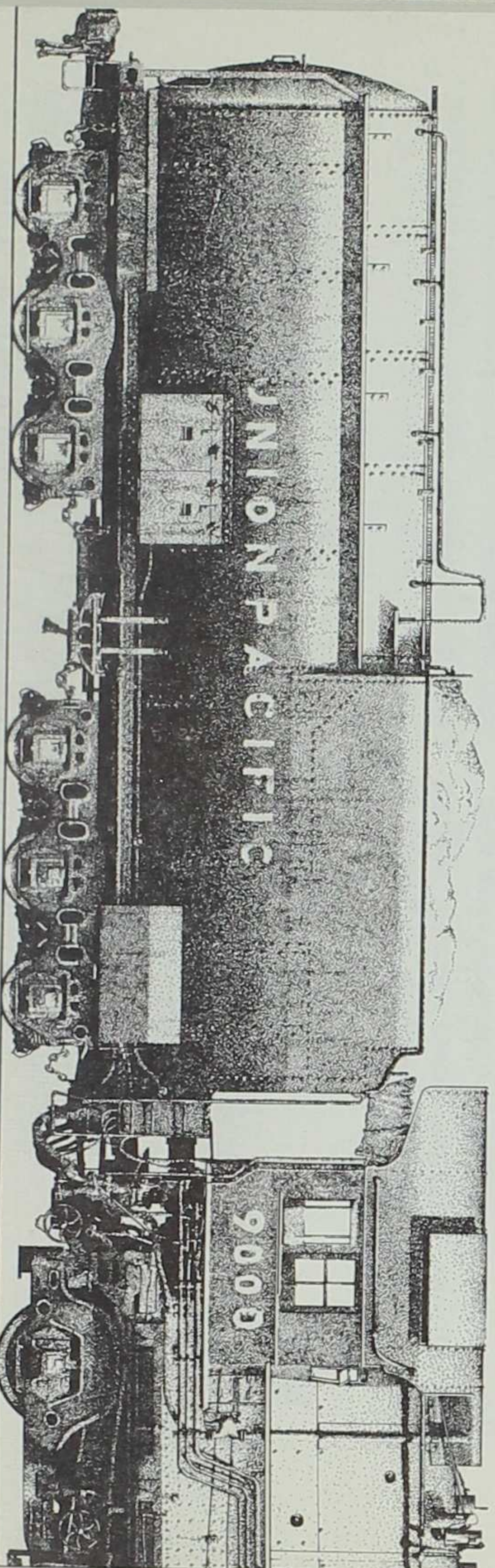
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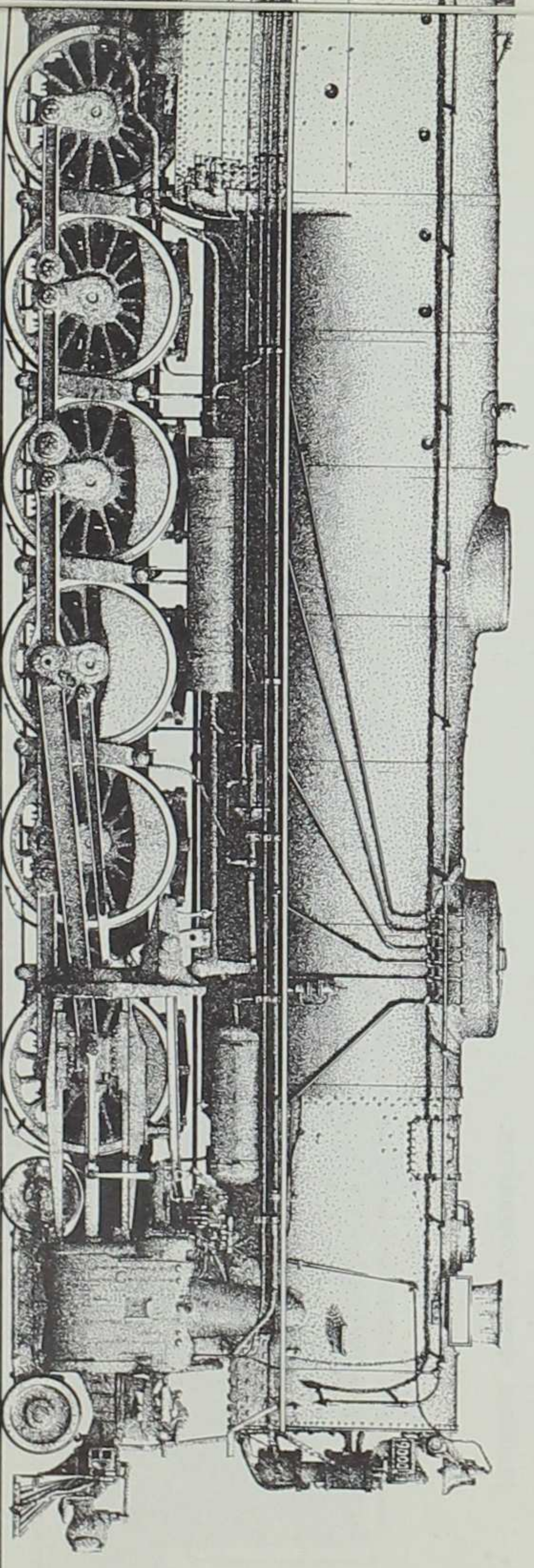
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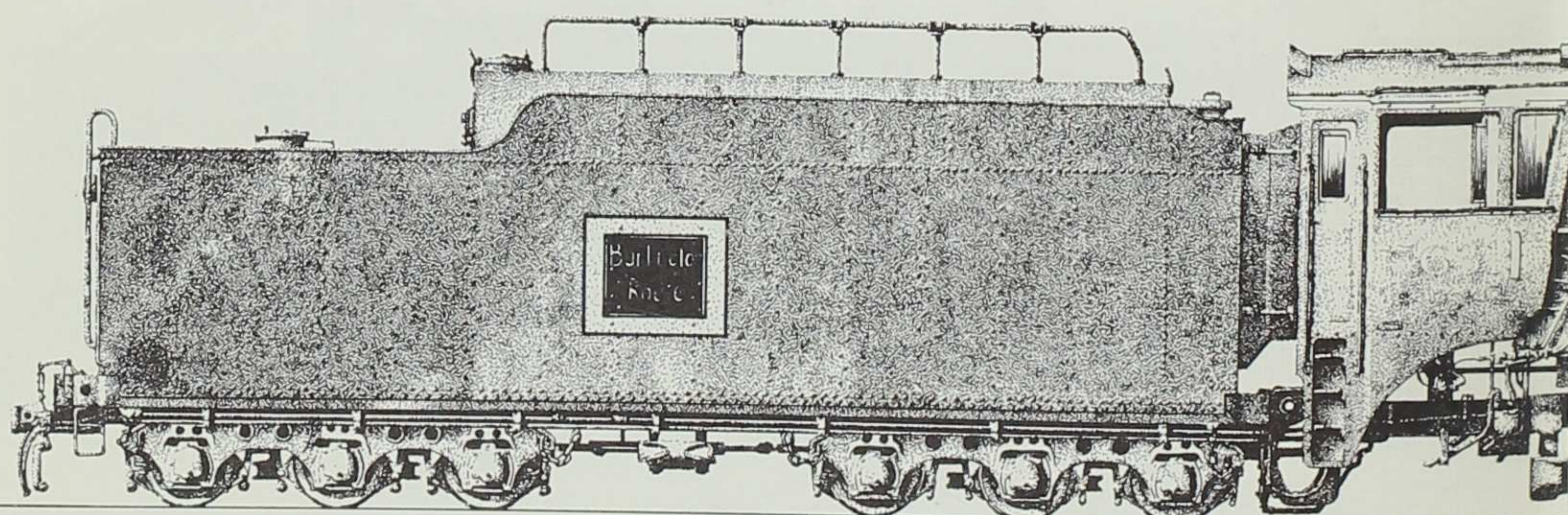
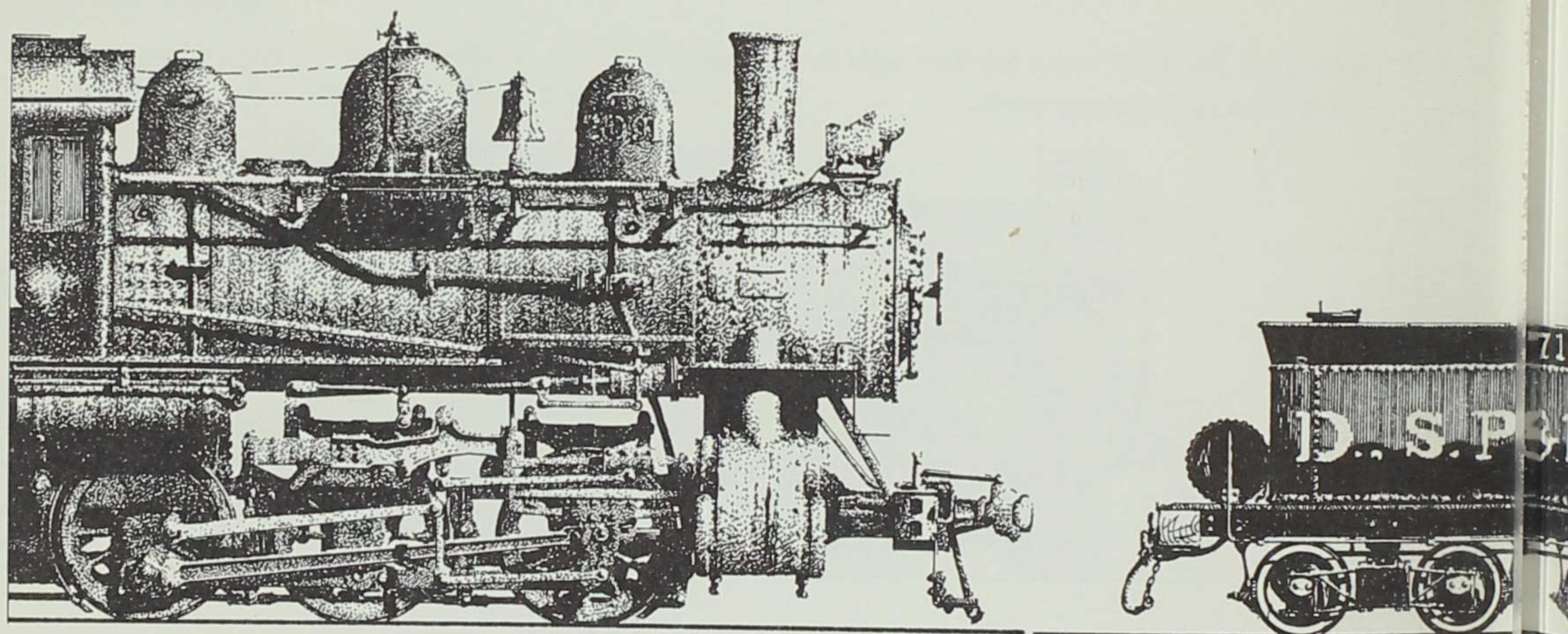
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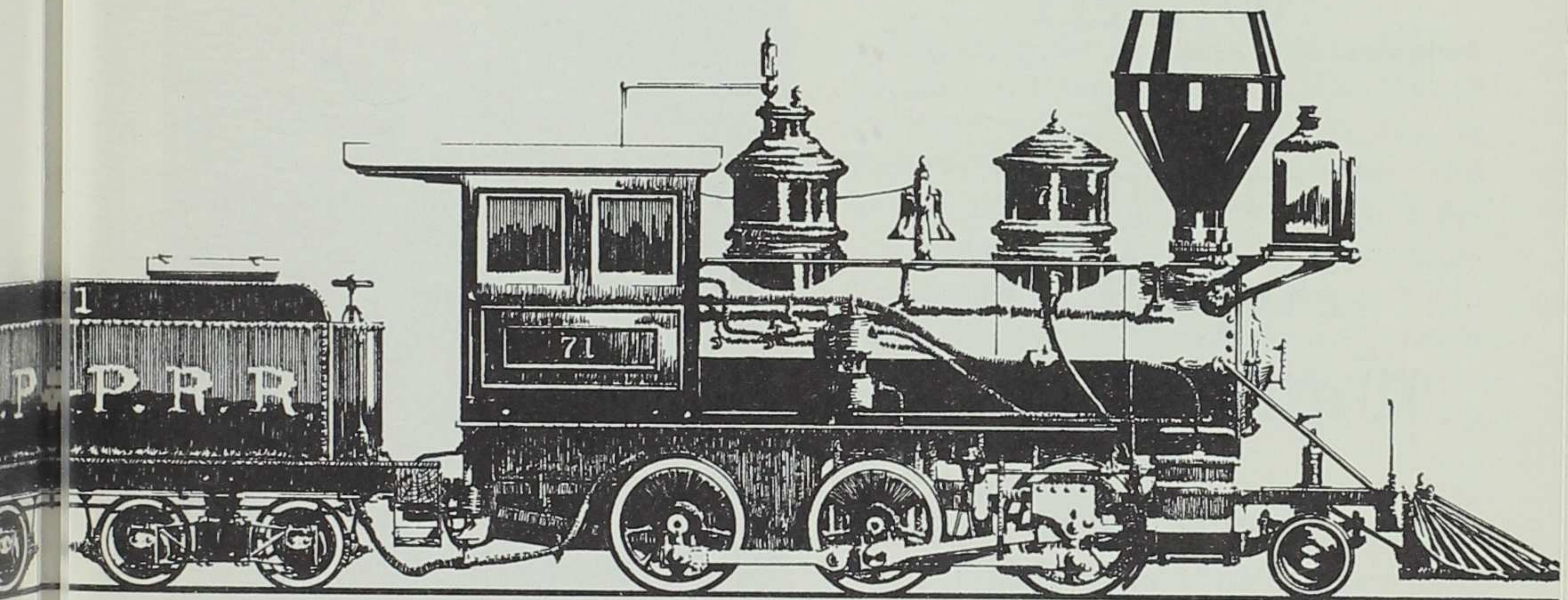


Built in Iowa, the 4-8-4 Northern was typical of the Burlington Route, and the last of the "Q's" long line of excellent steam locomotives.

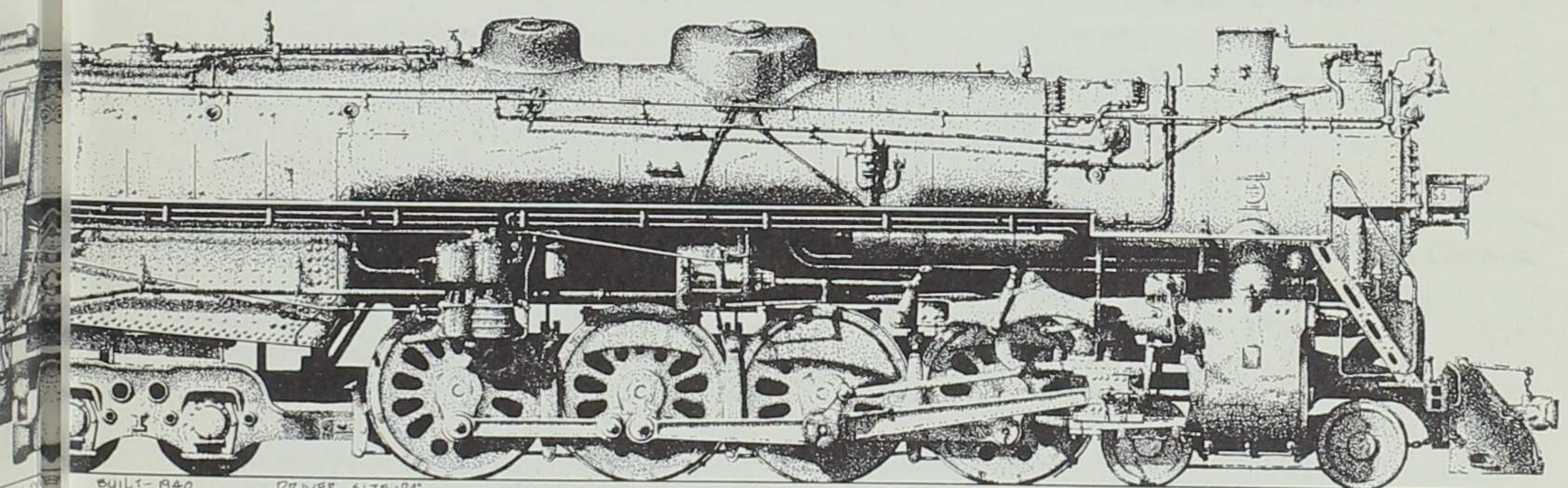
CHICAGO, BURLINGTON & QUINCY '05b' 4-8-4 NORTHEEN



Never successful with articulated steam locomotives, the AT&SF (Atcheson, Topeka & Santa Fe) was "Texas" type. Its boiler pressure was 310 pounds, its driver diameter 74 inches, and its horsepower — at



Despite its toy-like appearance, the 2-6-0 Mogul enjoyed a long life of general service for the Denver, South Park & Pacific's narrow-gauge line in Colorado.

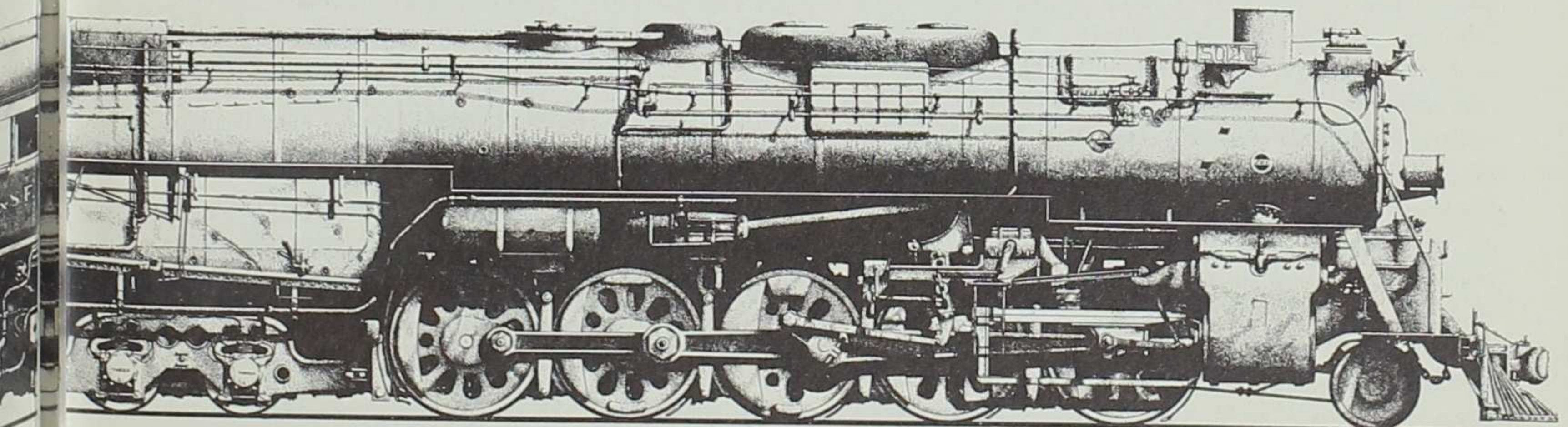


BUILT-1940

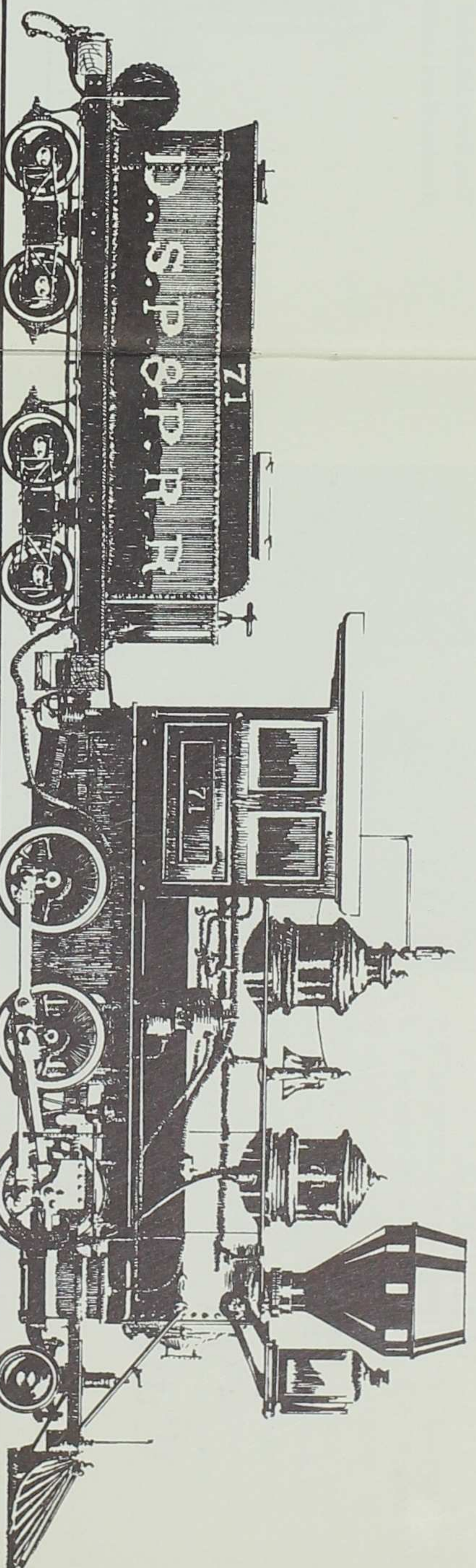
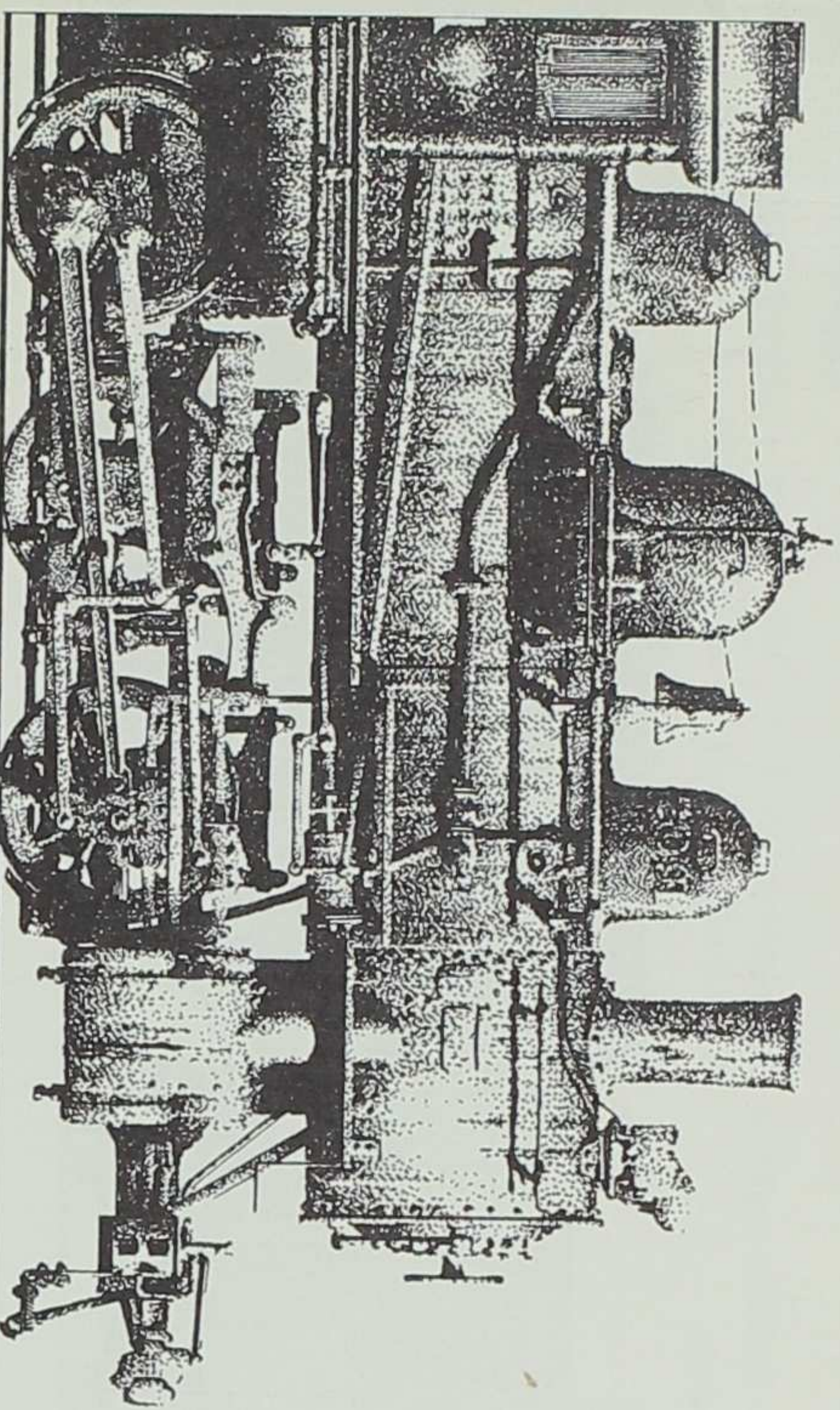
DENVER SIZE-74"
BOILER PRESSURE-250 POUNDS

NUMBER 2 OF 1/4" INK SERIES

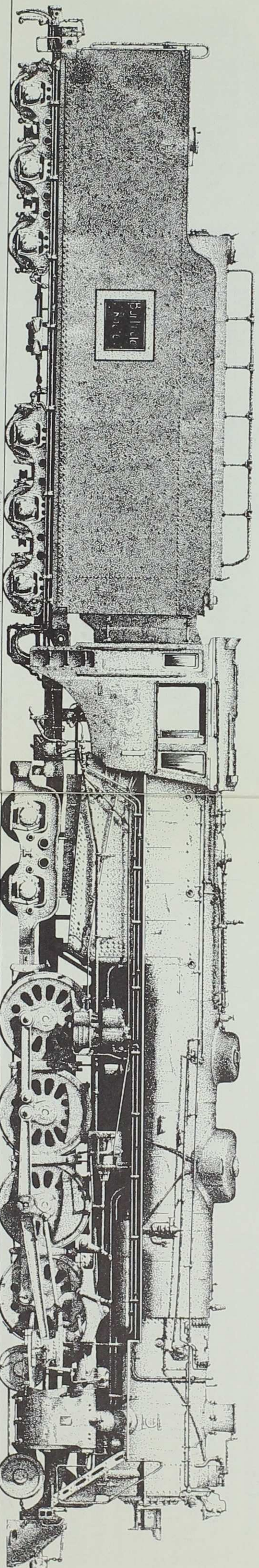
JIM YOUNG 1991



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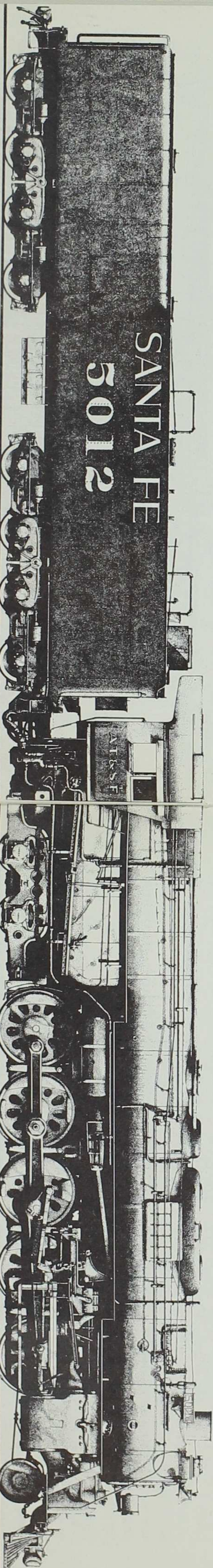
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CHICAGO, BURLINGTON & QUINCY "Q5" 4-8-4 NORTHERN TYPE

BUILT 1940 POWER 4,125 HP BOILER PRESSURE 250 POUNDS

NUMBER 2 OF 14 INK STEELS

JAN YOUNG 1981



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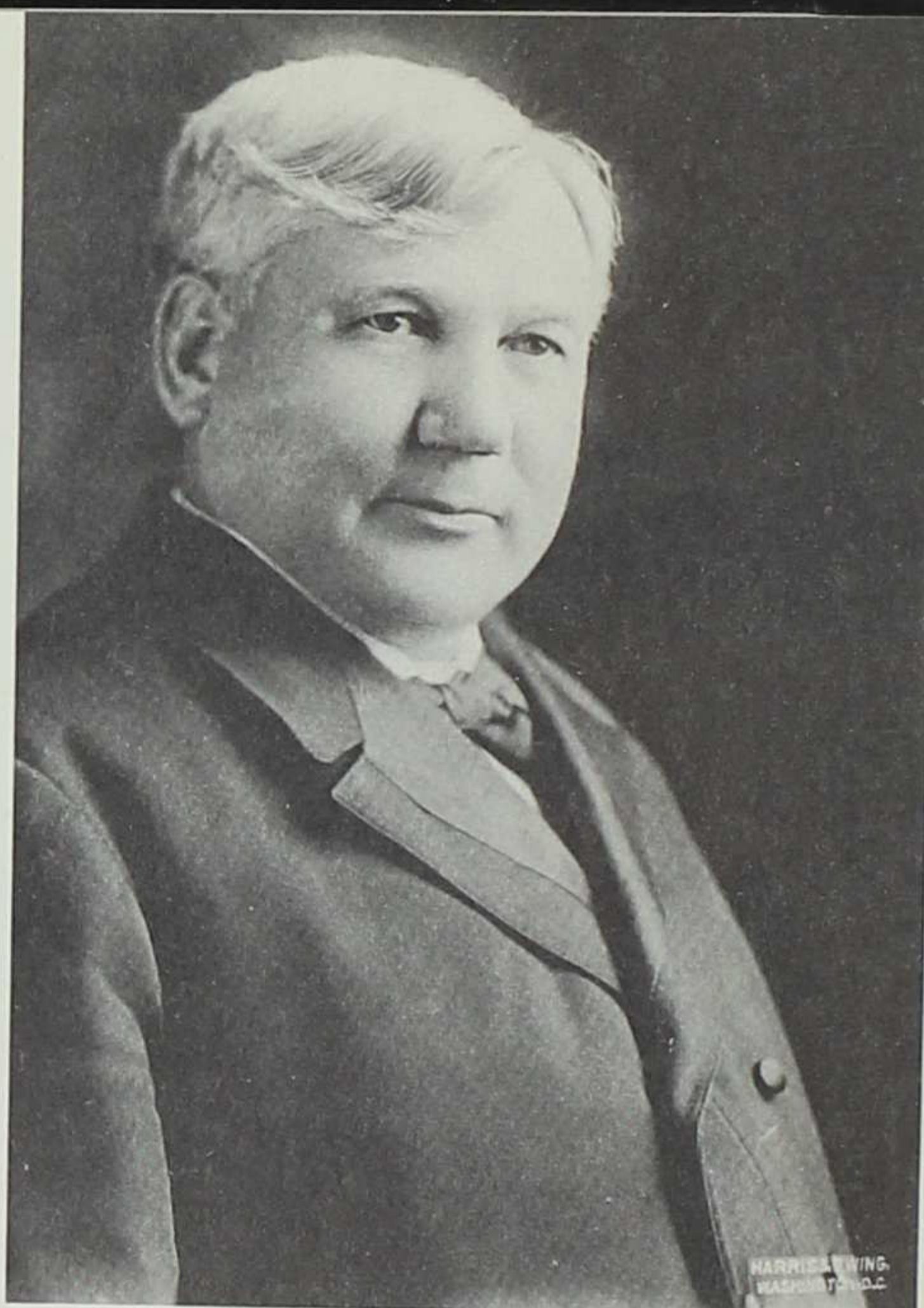
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Gilbert N. Haugen, Apprentice Congressman

by
Bonnie Michael

Gilbert N. Haugen is probably best known for the agricultural legislation he co-sponsored with Senator Charles L. McNary of Oregon in the late 1920s. Twice passed by Congress, and twice vetoed, the bill arranged to dispose of agricultural surplus by a process of dumping it on foreign markets and making up the loss to farmers with an equalization fee to producers. McNary-Haugenism, an idea too advanced for its time, became a kind of faith in agricultural circles and lent much energy to the farm legislation of the New Deal. But if the New Deal brought to fruition Haugen's work for equity, it also ended his half-century career as a Republican officeholder when he was defeated in the Roosevelt-Democratic landslide of 1932.

The son of Norwegian emigrants, Haugen built a loyal constituency of rural north-central Iowans and retained for a generation their confidence and their votes. These voters lived in the old Fourth District, which included Worth, Mitchell, Winneshek, Allamakee, Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Chickasaw, Fayette, and Clayton counties, before Buchanan and Delaware were added in 1931. They returned to office again and again a politician known for his industry, integrity, party loyalty, regularity on most issues, and an ability to make and keep friends inside and outside the party. He began his 34 years of continuous service in the United States House of Representatives on March 4, 1899. What follows is an account of his early days in office, a very auspicious time for young Republicans, given



Gilbert N. Haugen

the powerful "Iowa Delegation" in both houses and the new speaker, David B. Henderson of Iowa. The freshman year for any Congressman, past or present, is important not only for the high-ranking friends and opportune connections he makes, but also for the way he comes to terms with the day-to-day concerns of those who elected him. Accordingly, the following article, while it sets Haugen in the context of the Congress, chronicles the humbler, but often more colorful activity of handling the folks back home.

The article is a selection from a book-length manuscript biography of Gilbert N. Haugen by Peter T. Harstad and Bonnie Michael. Since this area of the biography fell primarily to Bonnie Michael, her name appears as author.

—Ed.

The Capital

I H. Wheeler, Iowa newspaperman and political advisor, spurred on Haugen in his political career by explaining the advantages of holding congressional office. "It is better than being a governor for if you are a good man, it lasts a lifetime," he noted prophetically. "It is highly honorable and influential. It opens all the honors and high places. The salary is \$5,000 per annum or

\$10,000 per term, besides mileage and other advantages. But the privilege and right to live in Washington and be an American lawmaker is greater than to be a European lord and is absolutely above money value." In his office in the Northwood Bank, Haugen surveyed the stacks of mail that were the first fruits of his victory. Along with congratulatory messages came a flood of requests for his attention and services, including urgent letters about post office matters. Most of the latter he referred to Congressman Thomas Updegraff, the incumbent from Haugen's district; he refused to take sides in such matters until he began his term and looked into things himself.

As the mail piled up, Haugen realized that an early item of business must be the hiring of a secretary. Representatives received \$125 a month for clerk hire. Since freshman congressmen usually held no committee chairmanships (which qualified them for additional staff), Haugen could hire only one person at government expense. Numerous applications arrived for this position. December 16, 1898 Haugen received a letter from Merton E. Comstock, Thomas Updegraff's secretary. "I do not want, nor do I intend, to bore you in the matter of my appointment as your private sec'y," wrote Comstock, "but I do not want my claims to suffer for want of push on my part . . . Of the desirability of having somebody of experience here, there can be no question." Comstock tactfully avoided reference to Haugen's own inexperience, choosing instead to offer the new congressman some helpful advice "in regard to combinations in the House, which controls the House patronage." Haugen chose Comstock, rejecting other applicants for the post, including J.H. Wheeler. "Mert" proved himself an invaluable aide. Not only

did he grasp the workings of Washington, but he was intimately involved in Fourth District politics. Born and reared in Fayette County where his father and brothers were officeholders and active Republican workers, he was a better politician than typist. His Iowa background gave him other valuable skills: during congressional recess, he sometimes put up hay or supervised sheep shearing on one of Haugen's numerous farms.

Haugen made another valuable ally in the months following his election. The defeated Congressman Thomas Updegraff, ever after a faithful supporter and friend, urged Haugen to get in touch with James A. Smith of Osage. "I found him at all times the wisest, best and most loyal friend I ever had," Updegraff wrote. "He makes no trouble but goes and does things and dont cackle either before or after laying an egg."

Haugen found Smith to be as skilled a political analyst as Updegraff had promised. Smith, a prosperous Mitchell County businessman, was grateful for Haugen's interest. He aspired to the State senatorial seat shared by Mitchell, Worth, and Winnebago counties. Haugen, the acknowledged leader of the Worth County delegation, willingly assisted in Smith's nomination and the defeat of the Forest City ring. For many years Smith served as Haugen's most astute political advisor.

Another letter to the new Congressman introduced a West Union native, Carrie Harrison. Miss Harrison, a botanical clerk in the Bureau of Plant Industry of the Department of Agriculture, advised Haugen to seek a place on the Agriculture Committee, where "there are a half dozen questions, the settling of any one would make a man famous. . . ." An indefatigable correspondent, she kept in communication with most of the Iowans in Congress, never

hesitating to offer unsolicited political advice or to lobby for favorite causes. Garrulous and often tiresome, Miss Harrison was nonetheless an important political contact. She introduced Haugen to many Iowans in Washington, including Milton Updegraff, an astronomer, and Seaman Knapp, the "father of agricultural extension work." She knew how to get sample ornamental shrubs to send to Haugen's constituents, or to arrange for botanical collections to go to colleges in his district. In exchange, she asked his help in her frequent altercations with her superiors. A widower with two attractive children, Haugen quickly became Miss Harrison's favorite politician. She cooked Sunday dinners for him whenever she could pry him away from the office, entertained his children, and even hinted broadly that girls the age of Norma Haugen needed mothers. Her loyalty and affection for the Congressman never flagged.

Haugen had been preparing for Washington and congressional service for a long time. During his years in the Iowa General Assembly he kept scrapbooks on national issues and followed the debates closely, particularly on the currency question. He continued his self-education, filling memobooks with notes on everything from marketing statistics to words he wished to add to his vocabulary.

He also made preparations of a more practical kind. Mindful of style and status, Haugen ordered from Brown Brothers, Merchant Tailors, Minneapolis a new dress suit, a business suit, a vest, and an overcoat for a total of \$125 — a high price, but worth it for clothes from the same tailors who made suits for Knute Nelson of Minnesota, the best-known Norwegian-American of the time. Haugen had good reason for wishing to make a good impression. The congressional delegation he was joining was

one of the most powerful and influential in the nation. Every one of the returning Iowa senators and representatives held at least one committee chairmanship; several of them moved among the highest ranks of the nation's policymakers.

The undisputed leader of the Iowa delegation was Senator William Boyd Allison of Dubuque. Since his election to the House of Representatives in 1862 and his switch to the Senate in 1872, Allison had acquired remarkable legislative and political power. He chaired the Republican caucus, the Steering Committee, and was a member of the influential Committee on Committees. As chairman of the Committee on Appropriations he controlled the government pursestrings, but his real power lay in an unofficial role. Allison and three other members of the Senate Finance Committee — Nelson Aldrich of Rhode Island, Orville Platt of Connecticut, and John C. Spooner of Wisconsin — held such extraordinary influence on all matters political and financial that they were referred to simply as "The Four."

Iowa's junior Senator John H. Gear was one of the first Iowans to join the Republican party. Elected mayor of Burlington as a Republican in 1863, he served as Governor of Iowa, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury under President Harrison, and in the House of Representatives before his election to the Senate in 1895, where he chaired the Committee on Pacific Railroads.

The House delegation in 1899 included six veteran congressmen and five newcomers. All were Republicans, elected to a House so solidly Republican that some of the new men had to be seated on the Democratic side of the aisle.

Senior in service among Iowa Republicans was William P. Hepburn of Clarinda, first elected to the House in 1881. In 1899

he chaired the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee. John A.T. Hull of Des Moines was chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs and John F. Lacey of Oskaloosa was chairman of the Committee on Public Lands. Robert G. Cousins of Tipton, chairman of the Committee on Expenditures in the Treasury Department, was less noted for his legislative achievements than for his polished oratory. Many Iowans considered the youngest of the returning members, Jonathan P. Dolliver, to be the most promising. Dolliver of Fort Dodge, barely 40 in 1899, was beginning his fifth term in the House. Quick-minded and hard-working, Dolliver took his legislative work seriously, but his reputation was largely built upon his consummate skill as an orator. When the House was not in session he traveled the Chautauqua Circuit. David B. Henderson of Dubuque, whose initial service began the term after Hepburn's, held more power than any Iowan in the House as chairman of the Judiciary Committee and member of the powerful Rules Committee.

In April 1899, Representative Henderson wrote to Haugen about a matter of mutual interest. It appeared that Thomas Reed, the Speaker of the House, would retire from Congress, and Henderson wanted to run for the speakership. Haugen wired back his enthusiastic support.

The Iowa delegation was to meet in Des Moines May 17, 1899, ostensibly to attend the cornerstone-laying for the Historical Building, but actually to plan strategy for Henderson's bid. Other meetings were planned, but were cancelled when Henderson amassed sufficient support. The official vote and the ceremony installing the new speaker were scheduled for December 4. Many Iowans wrote to Haugen requesting tickets to the gallery. Carrie Harrison

wrote asking him to take charge of her gift to the new speaker. "A club that I belong to at West Union," she wrote, "have sent a flag staff from wood growing on the U.I.U. [Upper Iowa University] campus. I shall add the flag and if you will see that it is properly placed & tell . . . Col Henderson about it I shall be obliged."

Haugen benefited from Henderson's new position. "My assignments on the committees are very satisfactory," he wrote to Dow Simmonds, "being placed pretty well to the top: the highest of the new members, and ahead of several old members on the Agriculture and War Claims committee; and have been designated as chairman of the sub-committee of Farm and Dairy Products, Seeds and Plants; also member of sub-committee of Agl. Experiment Stations." He said this was unusually good treatment for a new man. "Our 'Dave' took excellent care of the Iowa members."

Haugen settled down quickly to the legislative routine and immersed himself in his work. The long work days and detailed committee work pleased him. He managed the many obligations of office with the same dexterity he had demonstrated as a young man juggling his many business ventures. Though late hours were "fashionable" in the Capital, he continued in his Iowa habit of rising early. His attendance at committee meetings and House sessions was exemplary, and his constituents were pleased with his prompt replies to their letters. Assisted by the able Comstock, he successfully dispatched each new task to his critics' begrudging surprise. His popularity with his constituents grew even more when the currency debate began in the House. Fourth District voters were concerned about the currency issue. In the late 1890s William Jennings Bryan and his followers were still advocating an

expanded money supply. Iowans elected Republicans to represent them in Congress in 1898, among other reasons because they assured the voters of their commitment to orthodox economic views including the gold standard. During the campaign Haugen had assured his voters of his orthodoxy; now he wrote home that the administration's currency bill was sure to pass, thanks to the votes of "every republican and quite a number of sound-money democrats."

Though he enjoyed his new role, Haugen missed his family and friends in Northwood. To his old friend Knudt Cleophas he admitted, "One cannot help feeling a little home-sick at times." The children missed their father, too. Norma wrote that Lauritz had asked his grandmother which direction Washington was so he could throw a kiss to his father. Unfortunately, the neighbor's barn stood between the kiss and the Capital. "[W]e told him that their (Ringham's) cow got them all and he didn't think it was quite fair." Despite Haugen's initial loneliness, he cancelled plans to return to Iowa during the holiday recess fearful lest the small-pox epidemic leave him quarantined in Northwood.

In April, 1900 Haugen sent a parcel to the boys at the bank containing cigars "from the President," and "a few other souvenirs." The latter proved to be bottles of champagne for his annual birthday party, this year to be conducted without the honored guest. Dow Simmonds and Timothy L. Ringham, Haugen's banking associates, informed Haugen of the event: "Saturday 4/28/1900, the bold Vikings of the land of the Midnight Sun salted by the Saurkraut of Germany and pepered by Yankeedom convened in the rooms of the Northwood Bkg. Co. at an exceedingly erly hour to partake of your princley generosity

We smoked the pipe of peace. We dranked the cup of cheer and at 12:30 it was most unanimously 'hic' agreed that 'hic' Haugen was bigger man 'nor' Dewey and 'hic' the best man on the Iowa dellegation in Congress and that the Northwood Banking Co. overshadowed the National City Bank of N.Y. or the Treas of the U.S."

At age 41, Haugen made his first speech in the House. His subject was of intense interest to the Fourth District — oleomargarine. At the turn of the century, Iowa led all states in butter production, accounting for one-tenth of the nation's supply. Iowa's 780 creameries were integral to this impressive record. As a farmer and early leader in the cooperative creamery movement, Haugen thoroughly understood and backed the dairy industry. But rapid increases in the manufacture, sale, and consumption of oleomargarine alarmed dairy farmers and butter makers. "Oleo," or "butterine" as it was also called, then consisted of animal fat combined with a small amount of cotton-seed oil. Giant meat packers such as Armour & Co., resented by farmers for their control of livestock markets, produced much of the nation's oleomargarine.

Addressing Speaker Henderson, Haugen began his maiden speech of December 7, 1900 with a barrage of statistics: "Mr. Speaker, we are confronted with the fact that the manufacture and sale of oleomargarine has grown from the insignificant sum of 21,513,537 pounds in 1888 to 83,000,000 in 1899, and to the enormous sum of 107,045,028 in the past year, a gain of 500 per cent in twelve years." Haugen explained his support of the "Grout bill" to prohibit the coloration of oleomargarine. "Purity and wholesomeness is the purpose of this legislation, and a protection to pure-butter producers against fraudulent

competition, as well as to reduce the price of oleomargarine to its consumers — that is, when sold in its natural color, and for what it is." The butter industry, he told the House members, deserved protection from "fraud and deception."

Haugen did not oppose the manufacture of oleo, only its sale to unwitting consumers as butter. He dramatized the need for legislation by buying in Chicago samples of several products labeled creamery butter, then having them analyzed in Department of Agriculture laboratories. Four of these samples proved to be oleo. Pointing out that 32 states already prohibited the coloration of margarine, Haugen concluded that "justice and the welfare of the public demands the passage of this bill." The "Grout bill" became law, but did not settle the oleo controversy that raged throughout Haugen's early career. His defense of butter and insistence upon accurate labeling were popular stands back home. Copies of the oleo speech were circulated in subsequent election campaigns.

Some congressmen loathed committee work; Haugen enjoyed it thoroughly. He spent long hours behind the scenes, reveling in the mountain of statistics generated by some bills. Besides butter, his chief concerns during his first term were a bill quarantining imported nursery stock and one promoting the sugar beet industry (destined to become important in the Mason City area economy).

When the agricultural appropriation bill came up for consideration, Haugen again took the floor. Francis W. Cushman, congressman from the State of Washington, wrote to him afterwards: "I was present in the House on the day you turned loose on the Agricultural Bill. You had been so quiet prior to that that I looked upon you as the silent man — but I know better now."

The Constituency

As busy as the new congressman was with committee work and sessions of the House of Representatives, he soon found that his legislative duties were only one part of his responsibilities. His constituents wanted a voice in the lawmaking process and had elected him to take a firm stand on currency reform and other issues of vital concern. They also expected him to represent them in another sense: they wished him to be their agent with the growing federal bureaucracy. Though northeast Iowa was a long train ride from the nation's capital, the area's businessmen, its newspaper editors, its farmers, its dairymen felt the influence of federal laws and agencies. All manner of citizens had business with the federal government: Civil War veterans wanting pensions, rural dwellers wanting mail delivery, young people wanting government jobs. In 1904 Haugen estimated that three-fourths of his correspondence was in reply to such requests for assistance.

Many constituents wrote to request government publications. In Iowa, agricultural subjects were the most popular, though many people received the *Congressional Record* regularly to keep up on the political debate. Each member of congress received the same allotment of the available publications with no considerations given to the differing needs of constituencies. Congressmen from the farm states ran out of the agricultural yearbooks and the other Iowa "best seller," *Diseases of the Horse*, while urban members let their copies pile up. Sometimes a trade could be effected by transferring an allotment from one member to another, but it was time-consuming and difficult to arrange. Haugen's new secretary Mert Comstock, experienced in Washington's ways, introduced Haugen to a

House Folding Room employee — George W. Perkins — who would arrange a trade for nearly any agricultural publication for a modest fee. At Perkins's request, an urban congressman would transfer publications to Haugen's account, receiving other books or even cash in exchange. Perkins's services were widely used — when Haugen introduced him to Wisconsin Congressman Herman Dahle, Perkins offered as references four members of the Wisconsin delegation with whom he had accounts.

Once the books were acquired, by legitimate allotment or through George Perkins's blackmarket, the Congressman's problems were not over. He still had to decipher requests like the following:

Dear sir

I must write you a few linds that I would like to get a book from you that you sent to Frank V. Kinkor and you send to him free and so you send me one for me Please send me one and be so good and gave it on post offies as soon as you can.

Haugen kept careful track of his dealings with his constituents. One of the useful devices was an alphabetical index listing all persons receiving publications. After checking the current volume, he mailed Kinkor's friend a copy of the *Agricultural Yearbook*.

Books were only one of the items dispensed. When the bass were "most all caught out" of the mill pond at Waucoma, Congressman Haugen forwarded to the United States Commission of Fish and Fisheries a request for fish to restock the pond. No one in the district found fault with free fish; the sending of free garden seeds was more controversial. Opponents of the practice charged it was a wasteful and expensive method for incumbents to curry favor with their constituents. Members

used their charm (and their connections) to obtain a few more seed packets from the Department of Agriculture. Local postmasters supplied Haugen with names of "good Republicans." Comstock addressed the postage-free franks, and the operation became a major undertaking. In 1904, with fellow-Iowan James Wilson as Secretary of Agriculture, Haugen's consignment included 16,941 packages of vegetable seeds, 2,805 flower seed packets, 30 packages of grass seed, 105 trees, 40 grapevines, 150 strawberry plants and two packages of clover.

The Decorah *Public Opinion*, a paper hostile to Congressman Haugen, included some commentary on the practice in 1902. "Hip, Hip, Hoorah! Whoopee! Our package of seeds has come! Lettuce, muskmelon, parsley, tomato, parsnip! We take back every word we have said." To this the editor of the *Fayette Iowa Postal Card* replied in the May 8 issue, "The receipt of a package of seeds from a Congressman always affects some editors like laughing gas and sends them into small, amusing spasms of exhilaration. The P.O. is scarcely entitled to a dozen mustard seed. But Haugen has a generous disposition."

Other recipients were more grateful. W.C. Eichmeier of Rockford reported his parsnips "elegant." Cate Hunter of Lime Springs said her seeds were "splendid" and proudly noted that she had won first prize at the fair. Bulbs and shrubs were reserved for special supporters. K.T. Anderson of Waterville properly expressed the pride that came with one of the rarer special gifts when he wrote: "My wife and I are very much obliged to you for the pictures and that box of bulbs you sent us. My wife very near jumped out of her shoes when she got the box opened and saw what was in it; you ought to seen her she grew about a foot."

Sometimes the town Democrats, though accustomed to being in the minority in rural Iowa, felt left out at seed time. In 1902, Haugen received a letter from a "friend and supporter" in Hesper suggesting that he send to a Democratic farmer who had expressed regret at being passed over, some seeds, a yearbook, and a copy of the oleo speech. The friend pointed out that the farmer "has three sons who are voters and a favor to the old gentleman might gain a vote or two." Haugen promptly added the name to his mailing list.

The list of items available from the government changed and grew through the years. Each item had its own government form and attendant problems. The end of the Spanish-American War added another bonus. August Huene, mayor of Guttenberg, wrote to Congressman Haugen May 26, 1899 to request a cannon for the city's river front park. Not to be outdone, West Union and Calmar citizens also applied.

Haugen discovered that shipping cannons was more troublesome than sending agricultural bulletins. Transportation was difficult to arrange and shipping times uncertain. Local sponsors were responsible for constructing the concrete base and usually did so long before the cannon arrived. In Decorah the eager townspeople prepared their pedestal on the courthouse lawn only to find when the cannon arrived that it did not fit — the Army had sent them the wrong plans. When the last cannon had been shipped and mounted, Haugen could breathe a sigh of relief. He had rounded up enough guns to please everyone; 17 cannons graced Fourth District towns.

By far the most time-consuming service performed for constituents was interceding in their behalf with the various departments of the federal government. In sheer

numbers, pensioners were the most numerous and troublesome supplicants. Disability pensions for veterans of the Civil War and the Spanish-American War required not only physical examination by a Pension Examining Board of doctors, but also affidavits by former comrades. Witnesses to events that took place during the Civil War were difficult for an elderly veteran to recall, let alone locate. Attorneys handled cases for those who could afford it, but the bulk of the work fell to the local congressmen. Helping with pensions was an absolute necessity to keep the goodwill of the people in the district who had to assume support of an ailing old soldier or his widow if a pension failed to come through. In 1904 Haugen estimated he had been in "constant correspondence with 1100 soldiers in his district." "Constant" correspondence was a fitting description. Not only were there numerous proofs and documents to be supplied, but the department was notoriously slow. Some cases stood "pending" five years or more; many took several years to arrange, even with the most conscientious help.

When Comstock was not occupied at the Pension Commission he was likely in communication with the Superintendent of the Rural Free Delivery System. Rural mail delivery was begun in 1896 on an experimental basis. Immediately popular, the service was expanded until, by 1904, letterboxes with red signal flags were a common sight along country roads. To establish a route, rural residents filed an application with their congressman. Enclosed with the request for mail service was a map of the proposed route and a petition with the signatures of the prospective patrons. Once the application was forwarded to the Postmaster General, the citizens had only to wait for the government inspector

to travel the route, recommend changes or choose between disputed routes, and to approve or disapprove the application.

During the first five years of service, the Postal Department received thousands of requests. Congressmen and postal inspectors were hard pressed to keep up with the demand for routes and inspections, and rural patrons grew impatient with the long waits. Years later, speaking to a convention of rural carriers, Congressman Haugen recalled working until 2:00 a.m. to respond to the flood of rural delivery mail, only to be interrupted by a petitioner who had tracked the Congressman to his hotel to plead for early establishment of his mail route.

Which route to inspect first was a matter of considerable political import. The inspectors were willing to leave the entire matter to the congressman, though this was never revealed to the anxious patrons, many of whom had already ordered their newspaper subscriptions and their new mailboxes. George Nash wrote Haugen that he noticed Chickasaw County got its route established in three months while Floyd County routes had been pending over a year. "Chickasaw Co. is a close Co. Politically while Floyd is strong Republican," he observed. "So there may be a little politics mixed up with this."

There was more than a little politics involved. Because local dissatisfaction with congressional services was often blamed for the short tenures of members from the Fourth District, Haugen was eager to provide his district with as many routes as possible, as quickly as possible. Before the crucial 1902 election, Haugen used every means possible to cajole the Department into sending an inspector for an extended stay. He ensured the willingness of the inspector by providing him thoughtful com-

forts, like boxes of cigars and blue-point oysters at Christmas time. Thus won over, the inspector improved Haugen's chances at the polls by telling the patrons that their route was being inspected early through the influence of their congressman. In nonpivotal precincts the wait was long. One irate constituent lost his patience and wrote Haugen a caustic complaint. A day later he wrote Haugen a humble apology. "If I had had a little more patience," he wrote, "I would not have did it. The Establisher came the day after I wrote you, and established our route."

On rare occasions, the inspectors came too early to suit patrons. The postmaster of Elkader wrote Haugen one wet spring asking him to delay the inspector's visit until the roads again became passable. Sometimes natural disasters caused the abandonment of planned routes. Spring flooding in 1902 washed out many bridges in Allamakee County. Faced with the prospect of rebuilding bridges and "Every Mill Dam in the County" the citizens realized that mail delivery would have to be postponed another year. Thanking Haugen for his trouble, Edward Roese of Elon commented sadly that "the elements" had disapproved their application.

The most infamous privilege of a representative at the turn of the century was his patronage privilege. Despite early attempts at reform, many jobs could still be dispersed to faithful supporters. This "spoils system" operated by definite rules. The party holding the presidency controlled the positions. When representatives in Congress were of the same party they controlled appointments within their districts, and usually (together with the senators of the same party) decided on appointments in the state at large. If the congressman was of the opposing party, ap-

pointments were made by a senator of the proper affiliation or, if there were none, by some political manager or even by the defeated candidate for the congressional seat.

A few key positions fell to each district, but in sheer numbers the most significant appointments were the postmasterships. In a large town, the postmastership was a lucrative position. In smaller towns the income was a welcome supplement to the earnings of a storekeeper or often, a beleaguered newspaper editor. The postmaster was the congressman's local political officer. He or she was expected to be the congressman's eyes and ears, sensing the public mood and advising him of local dissatisfactions. It was the postmaster who provided lists of local Republicans to receive seeds, bulletins, and circular letters and saw to the signing of the congressman's nomination papers at election time.

Despite obvious political advantages, the system was not without hazards to the incumbent. He could not choose a candidate solely for political considerations since a bad choice could alienate an entire community if the postmaster, however politically adept, gave the town poor service or was abrasive. In fact, postmasterships were generally considered to be the eventual downfall of all congressmen. Every time a postmaster was chosen, the supporters of the losing candidate were disgruntled. Enough disgruntled factions meant instant support for a congressman's challenger. Post office contests were not only hotly disputed, they were also local political battles. It was difficult for a congressman in

Washington, D.C. to analyze a disagreement correctly in a small town unfamiliar to him. The common practice, and the one Haugen originally followed, was to consult trusted friends from the area involved. After several bad mistakes, he learned that these men had their own biases and could not always be counted upon to give the advice best for Haugen.

The decision made, the timing of the appointment became crucial. Losing factions needed time to cool down before a congressional election, though postponing a decision too long could fuel a controversy and leave even greater numbers of voters dissatisfied. The *West Union Argo* of August 22, 1900 made light of the dilemma. "Congressman Haugen, of the Fourth district, is finding the Mason City post office a hard nut to crack. The term of the present postmaster, a Cleveland appointee, long since expired, but Mr. Haugen has not yet mustered up the courage to make a selection. . . . Meanwhile Mr. Miller, the present incumbent, has changed his political affiliations and is said to be an out and out Republican."

In 1902, Haugen hit upon a successful technique for handling the volatile post office appointments. His new campaign organization was drawn from every county in the district. He turned over to this group the post office battles that were jeopardizing his renomination. Working with the local party supporters and agreeing as a group on a candidate, they avoided personal bias and were generally successful. After the election he continued to consult them.

A few mistakes inevitably occurred. In 1903 he failed to reappoint L.L. Cole, the son of the editor of the local newspaper, *The Iowa Postal Card*. Editor O.C. Cole had been one of Haugen's most enthusi-

Note on Sources

An annotated copy of this article is available in the files of the Division of the State Historical Society. Most of the references are to items in the Society's Haugen Collection. A 72-page "Inventory of the Gilbert Haugen Papers" may now be consulted or purchased at the Society.

astic supporters during the 1902 campaign, and he had expected his son's appointment as reward for his services. The elder Cole never forgave Haugen for the slight. In the columns of his paper, he never again referred to Haugen by name, though it was not difficult to understand his allusions. In 1904, he commented on a Decorah paper's assertion that the Fourth District congressman was "growing stronger in Washington and at home" by adding: "May be, same as an onion." He took the opportunity to remind his readers that "not all black and white animals are domestic kittens."

For constituents who sought Haugen's help, he was more than their governmental contact. For many, he represented ultimate authority: the man with the answer to any question; the means to any worthy end. In 1900 a Rockwell woman wrote him in great anguish. She had had no word from her brother, a soldier in Manila, for many months. Newspaper accounts of the Philippine insurrection listed a similar name among the dead and wounded. "I didn't know what else to do or who to write to unless it would be you, that may be you might find out for us whether he is dead or alive." Comstock went immediately to the War Department, and on February 12 the Congressman reported to Miss Jones that her brother had not been wounded and was now on duty in the interior. He included a corrected address and closed, "I am glad to do this small favor for you, and am still more pleased to hear that your brother is not dead or wounded."

Other personal problems were not so easily solved. In August, 1901 Haugen received a letter from George Anundson, the son of an acquaintance. Young Anundson's health was "failing fast," he wrote. He had been persuaded by a friend to lie about his age and enlist in the Marine Corps, but

after three months of military life, he was so ill he expected he would not live much longer. The Navy Department was reluctant to release the youngster, even after learning his true age. "The Marine Corps is considerably short of authorized enlisted strength," the official communication read. As for his health, the Assistant Secretary dismissed the concern with a curt reply: "The Surgeon at the Naval Hospital at Norfolk reports that Private Anundson was admitted to the Hospital August 12, 1901 with venereal disease, and that he will probably be ready for duty in about two weeks." George's father, who wrote frequently, was worried the boy might desert if he was not honorably discharged. After numerous visits and exchanges of letters, the Department agreed to discharge the boy "by purchase." His father paid \$100 and by February 22 George was on his way home, intending to stop over in Washington to thank Haugen. Instead of a thank you, the Congressman got a call from the police station. George, having spent the money he had been given for the trip to Iowa, had been arrested for vagrancy. Haugen saw to the boy's release and advanced him money for the trip home. His grateful father thanked Haugen once again for his help, admitting reluctantly that George was "generally free with money." Personal concerns were not trivial to the persons involved, or to a congressman who had to run for election every two years. In 1902 a key factor in Haugen's renomination was the campaign work of J.H. Anundson.

Whether it was settling a wager about whether Theodore Roosevelt was "Methodist or Lutheran" or a request from the city of Dubuque to have a gunboat named in its honor, Iowans were sure to get a prompt reply. Whenever Haugen was in Iowa he carried a memobook and jotted

down the names and requests of people he encountered. Once, when he lost a memo-book, he wrote a friend in Rockford asking him to locate "a doctor or a dentist, who has an office east of the hotel not far from the bridge" who had inquired about a pension for a soldier's orphan. Haugen had "looked into the matter" and enclosed a reply to be delivered "to the proper person."

Even Haugen's critics acknowledged his care. Fred Biermann, Democratic editor of the *Decorah Journal*, wrote an editorial in 1926 admitting that "G.N. Haugen is a good letter writer. He is a good man to secure any information or material in Washington any constituent may write for. . . ." To Biermann such matters were unrelated to a congressman's purpose and insignificant compared to a congressman's legislative duties. Haugen did not agree. March 11, 1904, in answer to a report listing him among 191 congressmen and senators who had tried to intercede with the Postal Department on constituents' behalf, Haugen defended his intervention. The House committee that released the report made clear that the legislators named had broken no laws, nor had they or their con-

stituents received benefits except those to which they were entitled. As Haugen spoke — through the *Congressional Record* — to his colleagues in the House and to the voters at home, he made no apologies. "It is as much the duty of a Member of Congress to look after the interests of his constituents in the Departments as it is to come here and take part in the deliberations of this House. . . . I have been in constant correspondence with all of the Departments, persistently and conscientiously urging and demanding recognition for my district — my people — their claims." This bold declaration explained his responsiveness, his almost paternal concern, and, in part, his political longevity. When in later years, the machinery of government became more complex and the federal bureaucracy grew in size and impersonality, his insistence that each constituent mattered was almost an anachronism. When he broadened his "constituency" to include all the farmers in America in the 1920s, it was an outgrowth of this concern, rather than from any particular political ideology. □

CONTRIBUTORS

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The State Historical Society of Iowa is a Division of the Iowa State Historical Department, a state agency created by the Sixty-fifth General Assembly. Along with the Society the Department includes a Division of Historical Museum and Archives (formerly Iowa Department of History and Archives) and a Division of Historic Preservation.

