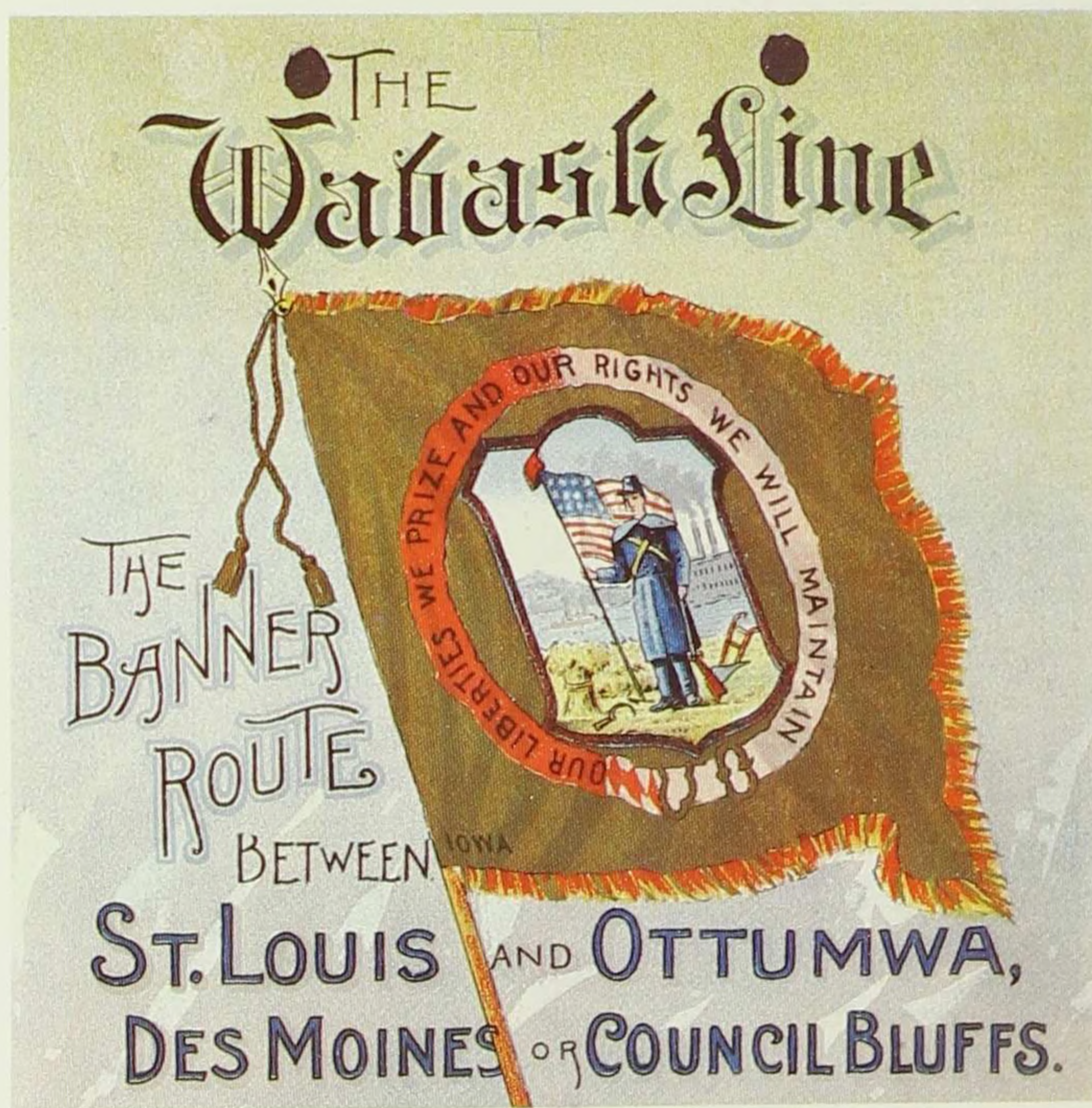


# *The* PALIMPSEST



The Wabash Banner Salutes the Hawkeye State

The Wabash in Iowa

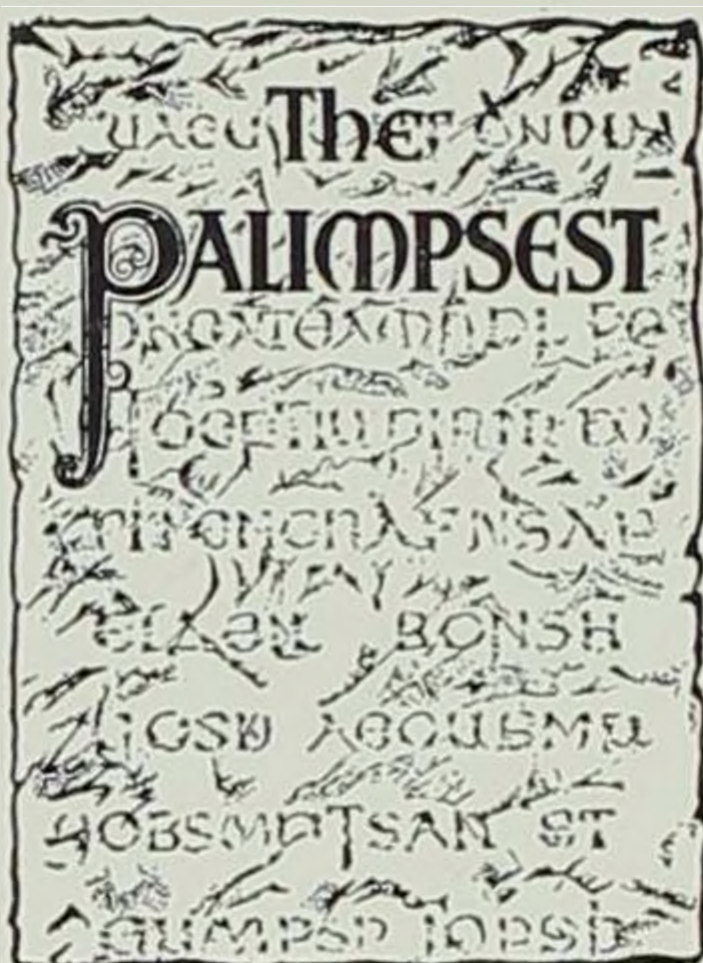
Published Monthly by

The State Historical Society of Iowa

Iowa City, Iowa

OCTOBER, 1964





## *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.

## *Contents*

### THE WABASH IN IOWA

FRANK P. DONOVAN

Building up from Missouri	369
The Wabash Reaches Omaha	375
Expansion under Gould	379
"Follow the Flag"	385
The Wabash Today	392

## *Illustrations*

All illustrations collected by the author except those in State Historical Society collections.

## *Author*

Frank P. Donovan is the author of *Mileposts on the Prairie*. He has written articles on the Minneapolis & St. Louis, the Chicago Great Western, Interurbans in Iowa, the Manchester & Oneida, Harry Bedwell—Railroad Raconteur, Iowa Railway Historical Museum, the Illinois Central in Iowa, the North Western in Iowa, the Rock Island in Iowa, and the Milwaukee in Iowa, all appearing in previous issues of THE PALIMPSEST.

THE PALIMPSEST is published monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa in Iowa City, William J. Petersen, Editor. It is printed in Iowa City and distributed free to Society members, depositories, and exchanges. This is the October, 1964, issue and is Number 10 of Volume 45. Second class postage paid at Iowa City, Iowa.

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. XLV

ISSUED IN OCTOBER 1964

No. 10

Copyright 1964 by The State Historical Society of Iowa



## Building Up From Missouri

The Wabash Railroad is famous in song and story. In his book, *The Hobo's Hornbook*, George Milburn includes a colorful ballad entitled "The Wabash Cannonball."

From the waves of the Atlantic to the wild Pacific shore;  
From the coast of California to ice-bound Labrador,  
There's a train of doozy layout that's well-known to us all—  
It's the "boes" accommodation, called the Wabash Cannonball.

Great cities of importance we reach upon our way,  
Chicago and St. Louis, Rock Island — so they say —  
Then Springfield and Decatur, Peoria — above all —  
We reach them by no other but the Wabash Cannonball.

Now listen to her rumble, now listen to her roar,  
As she echoes down the valley and tears along the shore.  
Now hear the engine's whistle and her mighty hoboes' call  
As we ride the rods and brakebeams on the Wabash Cannonball.

The legendary "Wabash Cannonball" of hobo fame stood for a mythical train which went far beyond the track of the railroad it made famous. As



a folksong the "Cannonball" had another long run in juke boxes throughout America. Either way, it is indicative of the sprawled-out Wabash system, which is the only major United States railroad with its mileage almost equally divided between the Eastern and Western Districts.

Operating from Buffalo to Omaha and Kansas City, the Wabash fell into the anomalous category of being both an "Eastern" and "Western" carrier, although technically it was grouped in the Eastern District. Furthermore, in the days of Jay Gould, the Wabash became the cornerstone of a railroad empire which very nearly reached from coast to coast.

Currently the Wabash has 209 miles of line in Iowa and serves such cities as Council Bluffs, Des Moines, Ottumwa, and Keokuk. During the zenith of Jay Gould's administration it operated about 565 miles of line in the state. Its history in Iowa and elsewhere is one of dramatic growth but followed by a series of receiverships and reorganizations. From a chaotic past, however, it has emerged to become a stable and prosperous railroad.

The beginning of the Wabash in Iowa goes back to the old North Missouri Railroad, which was building northward and westward from St. Louis. In the late 1860's, the North Missouri extended to the Iowa state line at Coatesville, Missouri. It was anxious to build to Ottumwa and



Cedar Rapids to connect with other rapidly building railroads in those communities. Ultimately the North Missouri hoped to be a part of a new through line linking St. Louis with the upper Midwest.

Plans to extend into Iowa were broached at a preliminary meeting held in Cedar Rapids on September 27, 1865, at which A. W. Fagan, of St. Louis, presided. Delegates from Iowa and Missouri formed the St. Louis & Cedar Rapids Railway to build from the terminus of the North Missouri at Coatesville to Cedar Rapids. J. P. Farley, Dubuque County, and George Gillespie, Wapello County, were the prime movers in launching the new road.

On October 23, 1865, the company was duly incorporated with H. G. Angle, of Cedar Rapids, president; C. C. Warden, of Ottumwa, vice president; and E. L. Burton, also of Ottumwa, secretary. Very little progress was made, however, until H. H. Trimble, of Bloomfield, succeeded to the presidency in the fall of 1868. By December of that year, the road built into Appanoose County and established the town of Moulton. Two years later the tracks reached Ottumwa amidst wild rejoicing.

This called for an elaborate banquet at Taylor & Blake's Hall on July 26, 1870. After the festivities a special train took the celebrants over the newly constructed route to St. Louis. Contempo-



rary accounts suggest the trip was a merry one with abundant refreshments for all.

The "Iowa extension" was operated under lease by the North Missouri; and, like the lessor, it was soon in financial straits. In 1871, Morris K. Jesup became trustee, and four years later it was reorganized as the St. Louis, Ottumwa & Cedar Rapids Railway. Meanwhile, the North Missouri had gone under the hammer to emerge as the St. Louis, Kansas City & Northern Railway, which continued to lease the Iowa road.

In spite of the "Cedar Rapids" in its name, the 43-mile road from the Missouri border to Ottumwa apparently gave up all hope of reaching the former city. Des Moines now became the objective of the St. Louis management. Then the notorious New York financier, Jay Gould, got control of the St. Louis, Kansas City & Northern, consolidated it with his other railroad holdings, and changed its name to the more embracive Wabash, St. Louis & Pacific Railway. Thereupon railway management in America, to say nothing of the public, was to witness some swift, unexpected, and far-reaching changes.

Gould wanted Des Moines in his orbit. He enlisted the support of influential people in Iowa's capital city to achieve this end. Prominent citizens, railroad builders, and business men of Des Moines all joined the "Wabash syndicate" to expedite construction. They incorporated the Des Moines



& St. Louis Railroad, January 27, 1881, which was to be built from the capital to Albia, a distance of 68 miles. On November 6, 1882, the first passenger train steamed into Des Moines from St. Louis.

Ostensibly, the Des Moines & St. Louis was a local road. James S. Clarkson, who had been editor of the *Iowa State Register* and postmaster of the city, headed the enterprise. John S. Runnells, also of Des Moines, served as vice president. Secretary of the road was Frederick M. Hubbell, who was active in promoting narrow-gauge lines radiating from the city. Probably the best known of all was Jefferson S. Polk, treasurer of the company. He was a leading figure in building a 3-foot gauge line to Adel and in later years fostered the construction of interurban electric lines as well as local trolley routes in Des Moines. But behind these men was the wily brain of Gould. From the time of its completion, the Des Moines line was operated under lease by the Wabash.

The Wabash now had an outlet to Des Moines over its own rails and in conjunction with affiliated roads. It was at best a patchwork of local lines haphazardly linked together. From Des Moines to Albia trains operated over the Des Moines & St. Louis, thence on Francis Drake's Centerville, Moravia & Albia Railway to Centerville; and from the latter point over the Missouri, Iowa & Nebraska Railway to Wabash rails at Glenwood Junction, Missouri, a few miles south of the Iowa-Missouri



state line. The remainder of the way to St. Louis was, of course, over the Wabash.

In May, 1883, Jay Gould with a party of Wabash executives visited Des Moines. One can visualize the shy, reticent financier coldly inspecting the railroad facilities. Not given to comment, his mind was always active as to ways and means of building up his railroad empire. Whatever may be thought of his business ethics, it was he who did much to bring the Wabash to Des Moines. He had plans for extensive expansion in Iowa, one of which was in southwestern Iowa, where the Wabash had built into Council Bluffs.



## The Wabash Reaches Omaha

Omaha loomed large as an objective for the Wabash since it was an important gateway after the first transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869. Previous to this event, a predecessor of the Wabash linked St. Louis with Kansas City. But it was not until the Council Bluffs & St. Louis Railway was incorporated, September 2, 1878, that the way was made clear to tap the Omaha gateway. This line was constructed from Council Bluffs to the Iowa-Missouri border between July, 1878, and October 11, 1879. At the border it connected with a branch running through Pattonsburg, Missouri, to Brunswick, on the main stem between St. Louis and Kansas City.

The pattern of control was much the same as on the extensions to Ottumwa and Des Moines. The Council Bluffs & St. Louis was operated under lease by the St. Louis, Kansas City & Northern and afterward by its successor, the Wabash, St. Louis & Pacific. Also, according to pattern, the Council Bluffs road went into receivership, and it was reorganized as the Omaha & St. Louis Railway in 1887. It operated the line from Council Bluffs to Pattonsburg, Missouri, a distance of 143 miles.



Little is known about the early corporate history of the Council Bluffs road for it was run by the Wabash as its "Omaha Division." With the reorganization of the company as the Omaha & St. Louis Railway, however, it issued a separate report to the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners. From this report it is noted that five townships in Page County, three in Miller County, and one in Fremont County voted an aggregate of \$144,834 to aid in building the original line. Nevertheless, by 1889, out of the road's \$4,500,000 capital stock only one share was held in Iowa and that had a market price of \$25. The lone shareholder was W. H. M. Pusey, a resident of Council Bluffs.

Most of the executives, along with an overwhelming majority of shareholders, lived in New York City. The only officers from Iowa during this time were General Manager F. M. Gault and Auditor W. L. Bedison, both of whom resided in Council Bluffs. All the directors were from New York City except the solitary Iowa stockholder — Pusey.

In 1889 the road had 144 employees in Iowa. Apart from officers, the best paid men were locomotive engineers who averaged \$5.25 a day, and the lowest on the scale were sectionmen whose average pay was \$1.10. None of the rolling stock had automatic couplers although such devices had made their appearance on many roads by this time. Gross earnings, from operation for the year ended



June 30, 1889, were \$455,509, of which approximately twenty-nine per cent came from passenger train operation.

At the time the road was being constructed to Council Bluffs, a feeder line was built from Roseberry, Missouri, to Clarinda under the auspices of the St. Louis, Kansas City & Northern. The 21-mile short line, called the Clarinda & St. Louis Railway, was paralleled by a branch of the Burlington and had little economic justification. The little railroad struggled along for a dozen years, went into receivership in 1886, and was dismantled four years afterward.

By the time the Wabash reached Council Bluffs, Jay Gould had gained control of the system. Now he was in a position to shunt Wabash traffic from the East to connections at Omaha or at Kansas City. He made the most of this by cutting rates and making favorable traffic agreements through either gateway as it seemed expedient. As one who had controlled the Union Pacific and still had a heavy investment in that line, he was in a good position to bargain. By playing one gateway against the other, Gould jeopardized the rate structures in the Midwest. In having the only through line from the West to eastern points, such as Toledo and Detroit, he upset standard traffic patterns and wrought havoc in established rates and routings.

One never knew where Gould would strike



next. Ruthless and calculating, he was a wizard in finance and a past master in getting control of railroads. He was equally adept in getting out from under, if they went bankrupt, and coming in by the back door again to regain control under more auspicious circumstances.

By the end of 1881, after a barrage of rate-cutting, Gould had forced his way into the Iowa Pool. This association had been formed by all the other trunk lines entering Council Bluffs to stabilize rates. Once in the Pool, the Wabash proceeded to cut rates as it had from outside the Pool. Not content with his lines to Council Bluffs, Des Moines and Ottumwa, Gould sought to invade the Burlington territory across southern Iowa.



## Expansion Under Gould

A glance at the map shows the Wabash's line between Council Bluffs and Chicago is long and circuitous, dipping down as it does into northern Missouri. The Burlington, North Western, and Rock Island railroads, on the contrary, had more direct lines between these points. Gould was as aware of this drawback to his company as he was that the Milwaukee was also pushing its rails across Iowa to Council Bluffs, which it completed in 1882.

Gould knew it would not be feasible to build an additional line all the way across Iowa in the face of well-entrenched competition. There was another alternative, however, which he often had recourse to elsewhere. That was to buy a secondary railroad and extend it to suit his purpose. Gould was an old hand in stringing railroads together by getting control and then merging, leasing, and building until he came up with a new through line. As often as not the "through" road would be hastily built and poorly maintained, but it served to harass its competitors and extend the "Wizard of Wall Street's" railroad dominion.

Gould had his eye on the 142-mile Missouri, Iowa & Nebraska Railway, which extended from



Keokuk through the northeastern corner of Missouri to the Iowa communities of Centerville, Corydon, Humeston, and Van Wert. From Van Wert to Shenandoah, on the Wabash's line to Council Bluffs, it was only ninety-five miles. Thus, by extending the short line a little less than a hundred miles westward, the Wabash would have a shorter route from Council Bluffs to Chicago and other eastern points.

It should be noted that the Wabash also served Keokuk. It entered that river town, in 1871, by a bridge across the Mississippi River, on which it had trackage rights. From Keokuk a branch extended down to the main line of the Wabash at Bluffs, Illinois, seventy-five miles to the southeast.

Meanwhile, the Burlington became alarmed over Gould's designs. It was generally understood that southern Iowa was strictly Burlington preserves. But there was no stopping the obstreperous Gould. The Burlington tried to get control of the Missouri, Iowa & Nebraska first; but was outgeneralled by the quick-thinking, fast-acting Wabash president. Once having gained controlling interest in this shortline, Gould had it leased to the Wabash. Then he set out to close the gap by extending the Missouri, Iowa & Nebraska westward to Shenandoah.

Here he was checkmated by Charles Perkins of the Burlington, who threatened reprisal by building into Wabash territory elsewhere. Gould then



compromised by granting the Burlington a half-interest in the extension. The connecting line, known as the Humeston & Shenandoah Railroad, was thereby completed as a joint enterprise in 1882. It reduced the Wabash's mileage from Council Bluffs to Chicago by nearly 100 miles.

Another sidelight on these developments was that General Francis M. Drake, who headed the Missouri, Iowa & Nebraska, was also president of the little road linking Centerville with Albia. Known as the Centerville, Moravia & Albia Railroad, it was leased to the Missouri, Iowa & Nebraska and operated in conjunction with the latter company. In 1880, however, the Wabash leased the Moravia line. In so doing it gave the Wabash a through route from Des Moines to St. Louis over affiliated roads, as we have previously seen.

During this period Gould sought to strengthen his hold in south-central Iowa by leasing the narrow gauge line running from Waukee to Panora, a distance of twenty-eight miles. Jefferson S. Polk, who was active in extending the Wabash to Des Moines, headed the shortline. The 3-foot gauge carrier was leased to the Wabash in 1881. At that time it was known as the Des Moines North Western.

To bring the narrow gauge into Des Moines, a new company was formed in 1881 and partly financed by Gould interests. Under the impressive title of the St. Louis, Des Moines & Northern, it



built from Des Moines to Waukeez, with a branch from Clive to Boone. The 42-mile road was completed in 1882. For many years the great railroad builder and Civil War general, Grenville M. Dodge, headed the company. Dodge was also active in extending the Gould lines in the southwestern part of the country.

The new management planned to run the narrow gauge up into the Storm Lake region, and considerable grading was done in that area. But, after extending the rails from Panora to Fonda, the Wabash went into receivership with a resounding crash in 1884. Thereafter, Gould's empire began to crumble.

The two narrow gauge lines reverted to their owners and, after a round of bankruptcy, they were merged into one company and widened to standard gauge. In 1894 the Milwaukee Road gained controlling interest and, five years afterward, purchased the shortline. Today the ex-narrow gauge lines perform the important function of bringing the Milwaukee into Des Moines over two separate routes.

Jay Gould's "short cut across Iowa" never lived up to its expectation, and even under Wabash management retained the status of a branch line. After the Wabash bankruptcy the Missouri, Iowa & Nebraska was reorganized and run independently as the Keokuk & Western Railroad. Later it was taken over by the Burlington and run as a



secondary line. In recent years it has undergone piecemeal dismemberment until nothing remains west of Centerville except for a 13-mile stretch between Corydon and Humeston and a shorter stub connecting Clearfield and Merle.

As for the Albia and Centerville road, it eked out a precarious existence when cast adrift by the Wabash. General Drake, who later became Governor of Iowa, continued to head the shortline for many years. After his death it was electrified and operated as an interurban electric railroad. The line north of Moravia was later abandoned, but the rest of the property operates today for freight service only as the Southern Iowa Railway.

With the shrinkage of mileage in Iowa occasioned by receivership, the Wabash Railroad's Des Moines-Albia line no longer connected with the rest of the system through affiliated roads. Fortunately, the Rock Island had a connection between the Des Moines and the Ottumwa branches of the Wabash. Arrangements were made for running rights over the Rock Island from Harvey, on the Des Moines line, to Ottumwa via Givin, a distance of thirty-seven miles. While a round-about routing, it served to keep the Wabash system in lower Iowa united. For many years afterward, however, the track between Harvey and Albia remained unused because of light traffic and competition from a parallel and better equipped line of the Burlington.

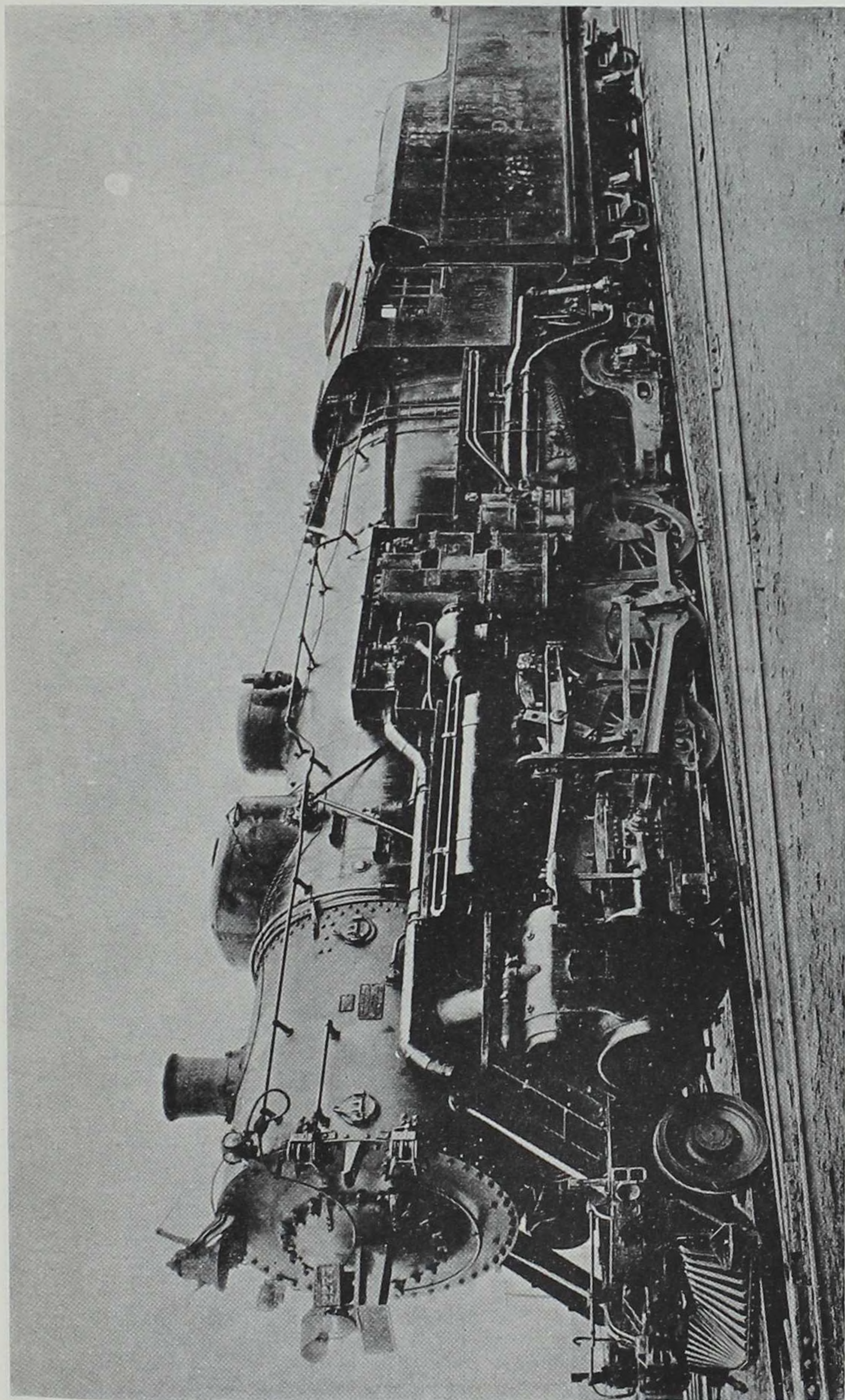


Detouring Des Moines-St. Louis trains via Ottumwa, nevertheless, turned out to be slow, cumbersome, and in many ways unsatisfactory. The solution was, of course, to build a short, direct route between Albia and Moulton. This was finally done by incorporating the Moulton, Albia & Des Moines Railroad, in 1899, to construct the desired link. The 28-mile road was completed that year and promptly sold to the Wabash. The new line closely followed the abandoned right of way of the Burlington from Albia to Moravia; and from Hilton to Moravia it actually used the old roadbed.

The region between Albia and Centerville is awash with memories of mines and miners, for coal hauling was once a major source of revenue. Extensive mine branches and spurs formerly dotted the area when mining was at its peak. The Wabash's once-flourishing coal trackage south and west of Tracy was locally known as the "Pumpkin Vine." While much of the mining is no longer profitable, the Tracy yard still has enough trackage to handle 110 cars.

Perhaps there was no comparable area in Iowa that had such a welter of partly-built railroads paralleling each other. The region abounds in derelict branches, abandoned mine spurs, and defunct electric railways.





Courtesy Wabash Railroad

Type: Mikado Whyte Symbol: 2-8-2. Wabash Class: K-3. Service: Freight. Builder: American. Year: 1923. Tractive Power: 76,899 lbs. Cylinders: 27" x 32". Weight of Engine and Tender: 537,500 lbs. Steam Pressure: 210 lbs.





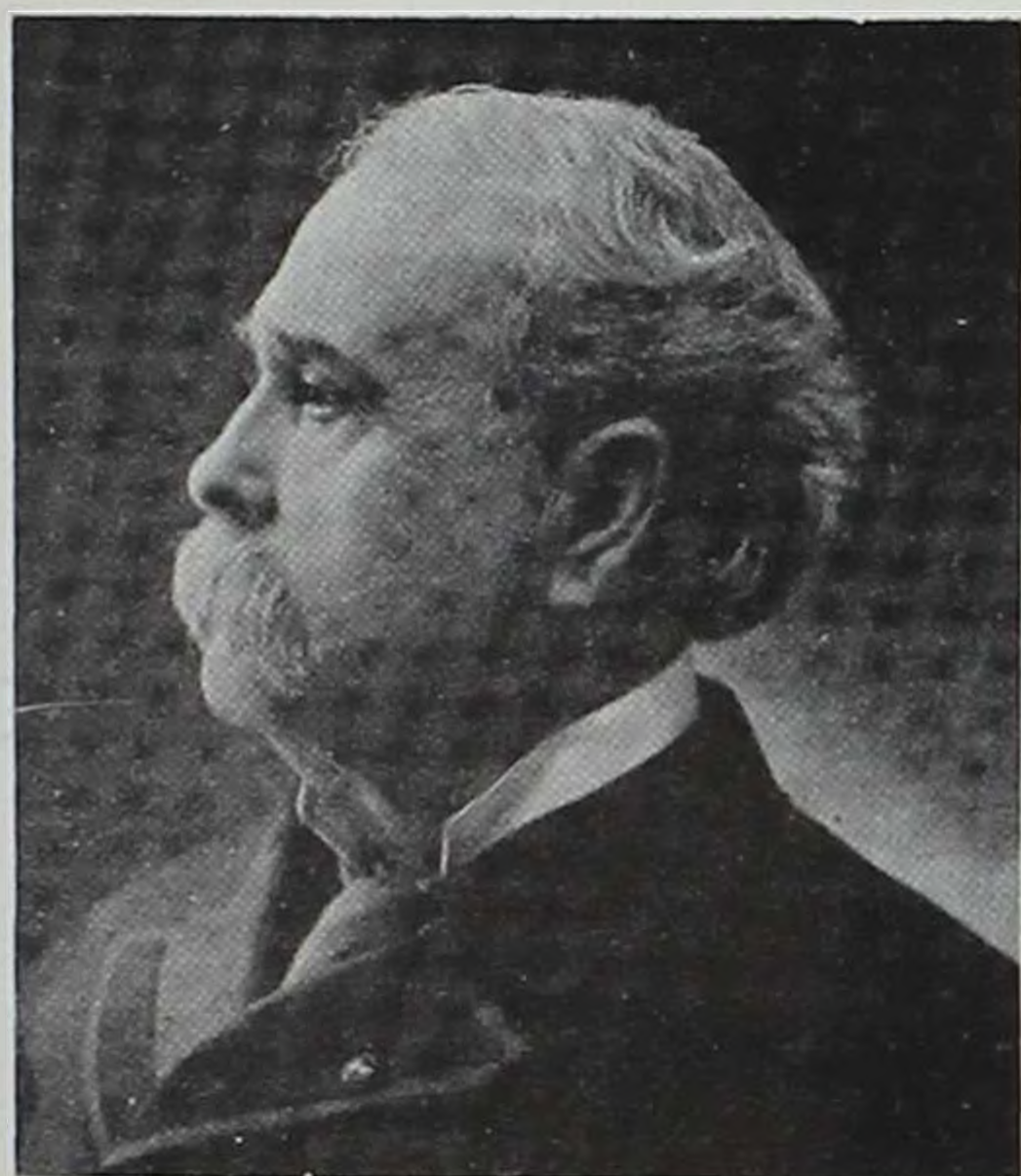
Grahame Hardy Collection

Time Table covers of the Wabash for the years 1882 and 1886.



Courtesy Wabash Railroad

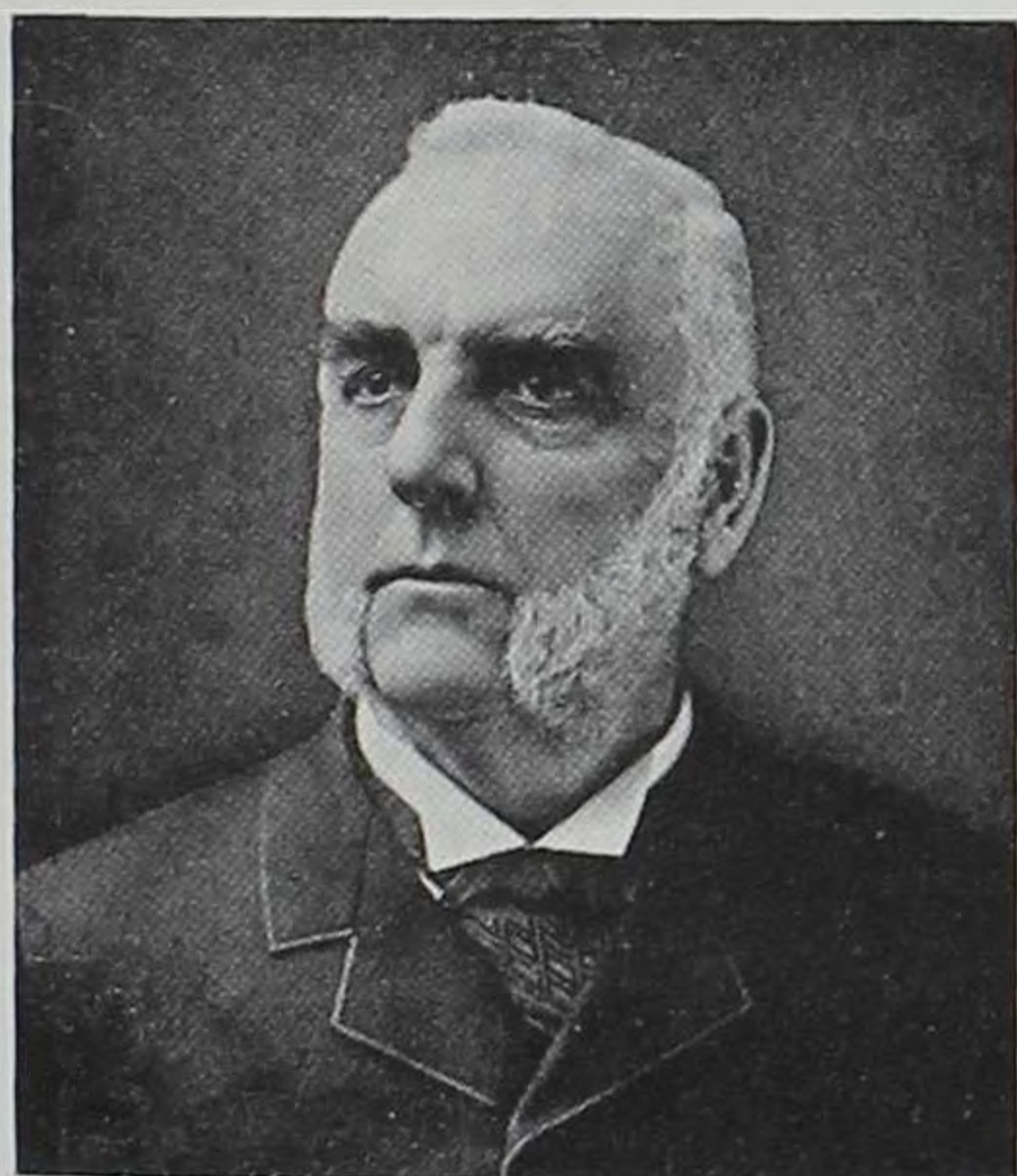




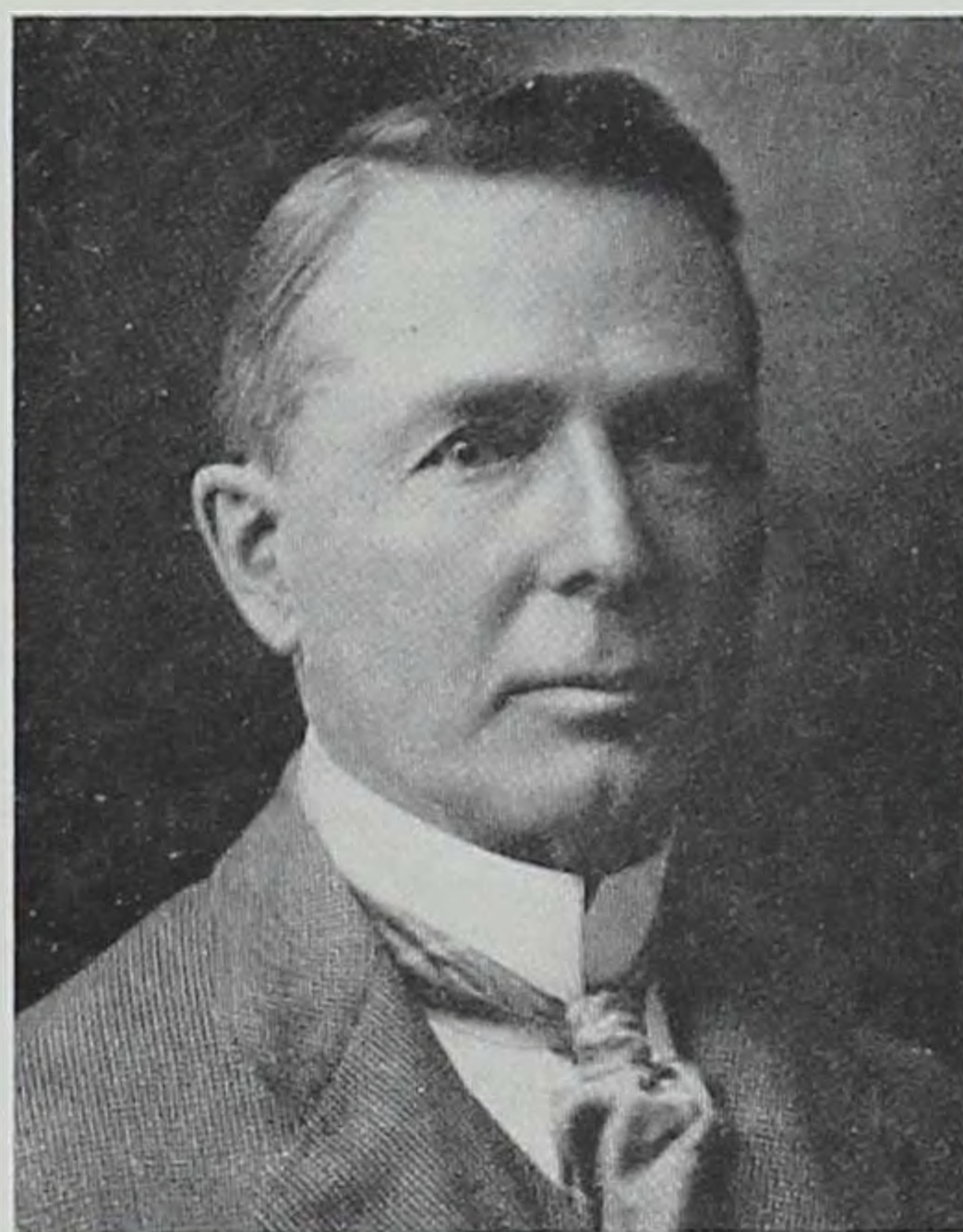
FRANCIS M. DRAKE  
Centerville



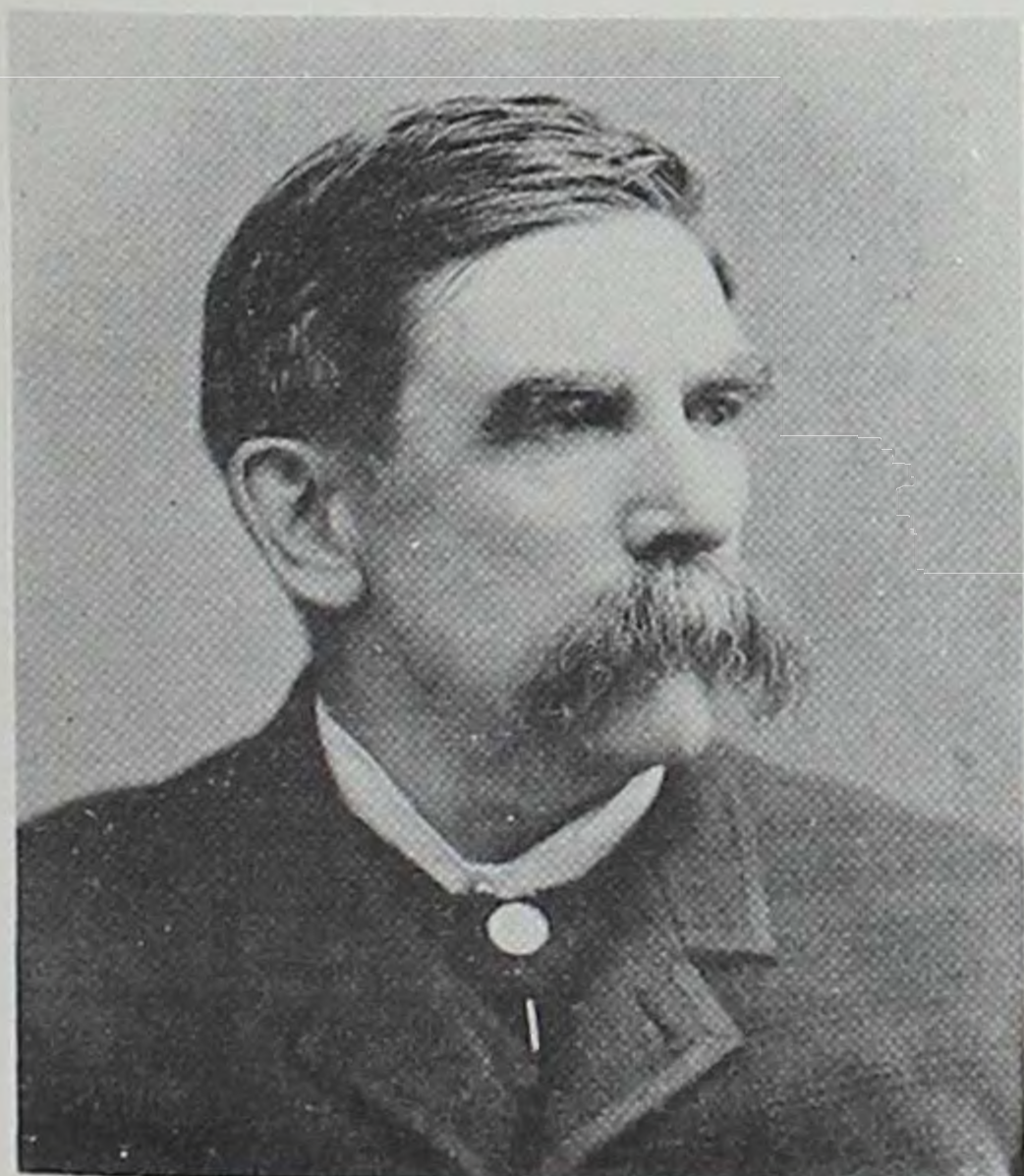
JEFFERSON S. POLK  
Des Moines



WILLIAM H. M. PUSEY  
Council Bluffs



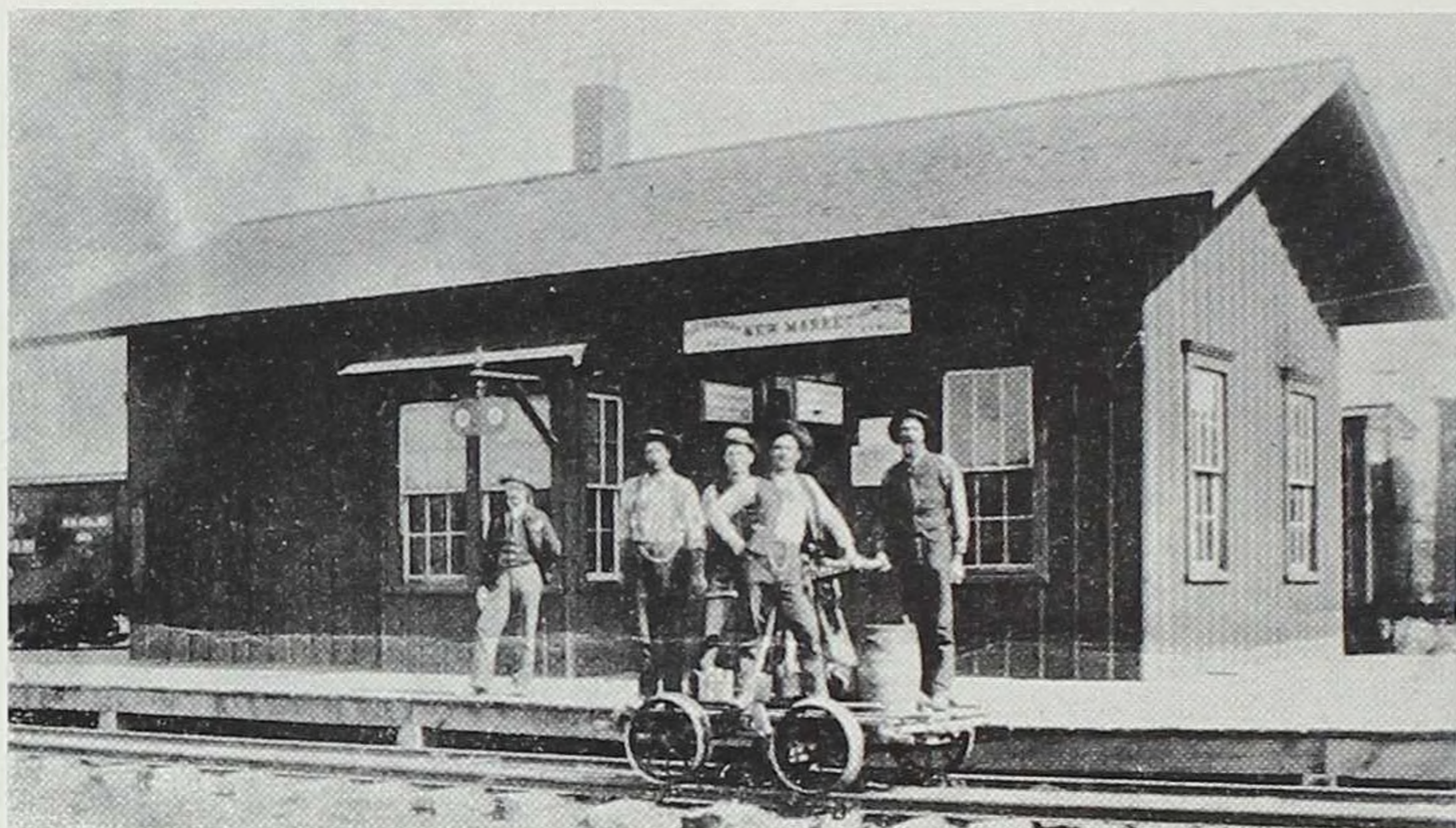
FREDERICK M. HUBBELL  
Des Moines



Pictures of Hubbell and Polk are from L. F. Andrews *Pioneers of Polk County, Iowa* (1908); Drake from S. Thompson Lewis *Biographical and Genealogical History of Appanoose Counties, Iowa* (1903); Pusey is from *Biographical History of Pottawattamie County, Iowa* (1891); Dodge from the State Historical Society Collections.

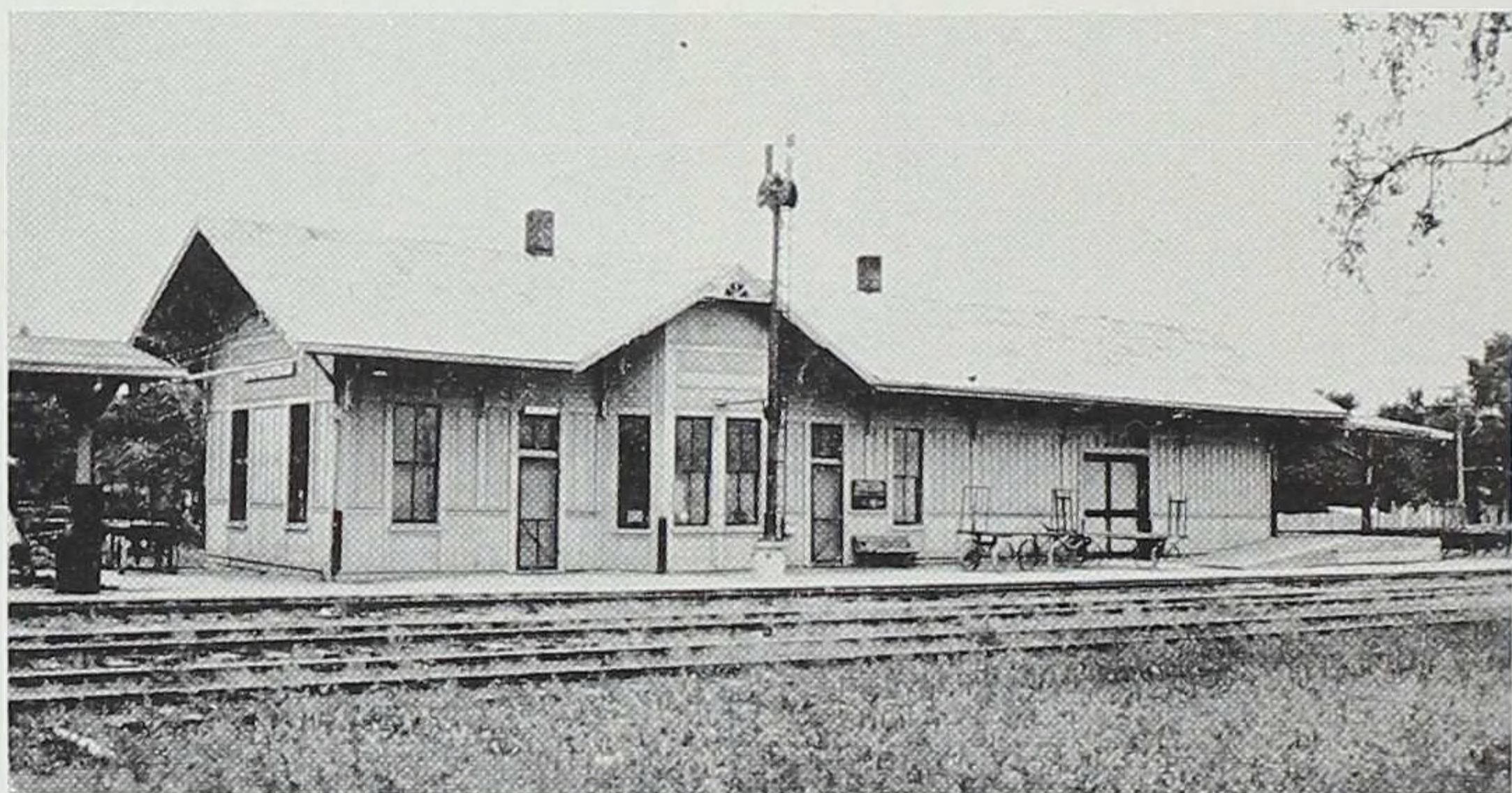
(Left)  
GRENVILLE M. DODGE  
Council Bluffs





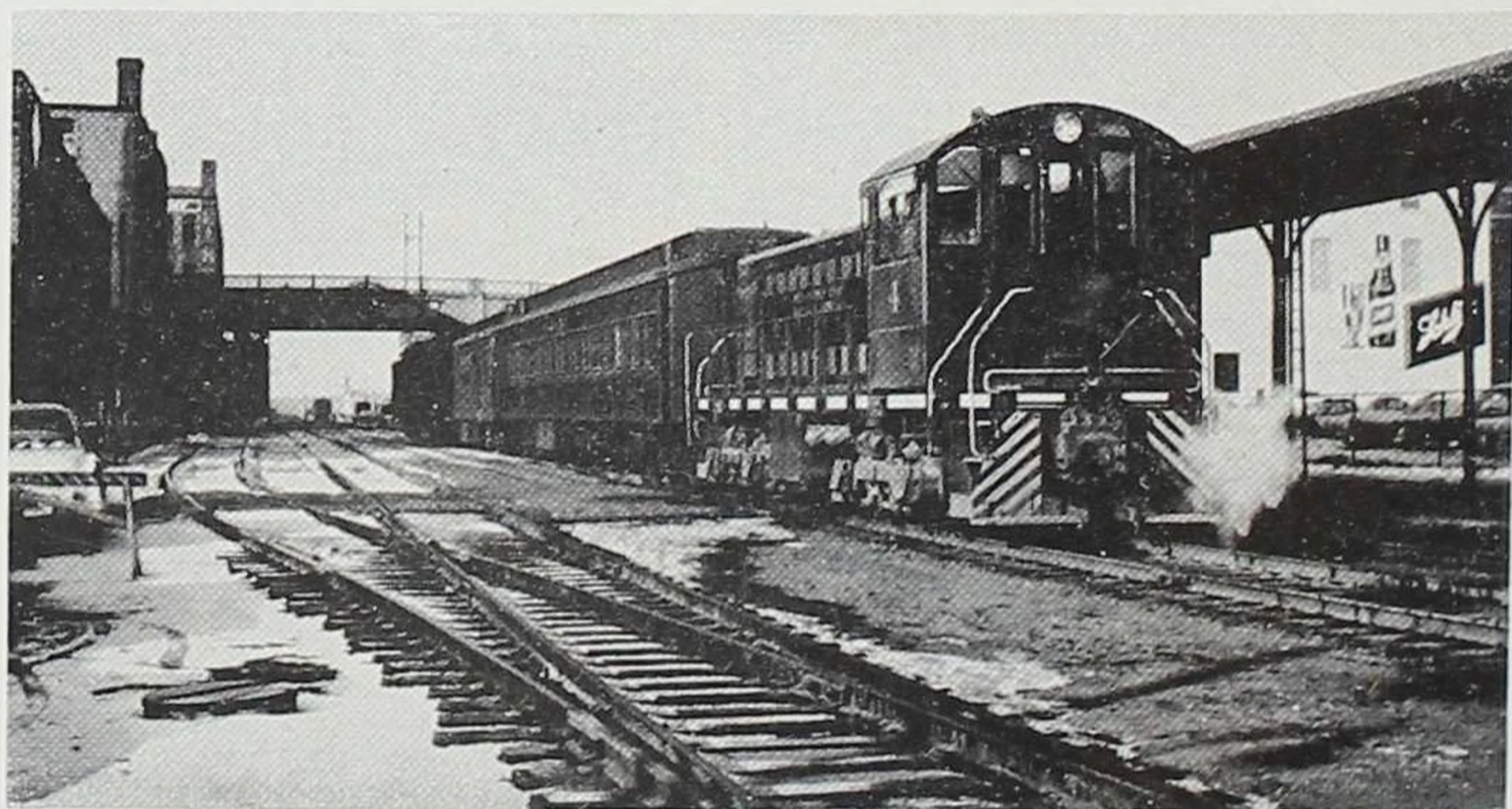
Bernard Corbin Collection

New Market Station on the Wabash.



Bernard Corbin Collection

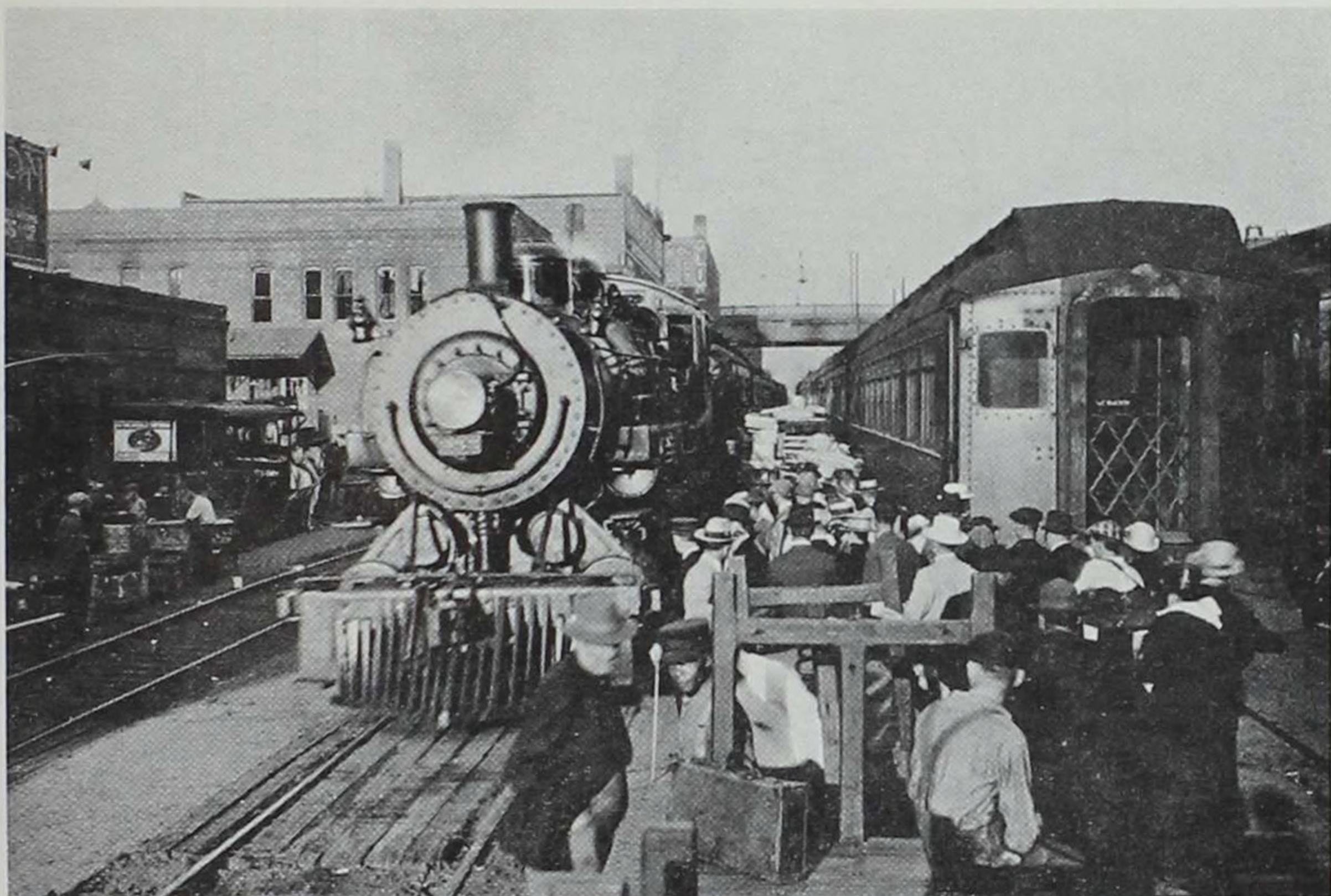
Shenandoah Station on the Council Bluffs Line.



R. D. Sims Collection

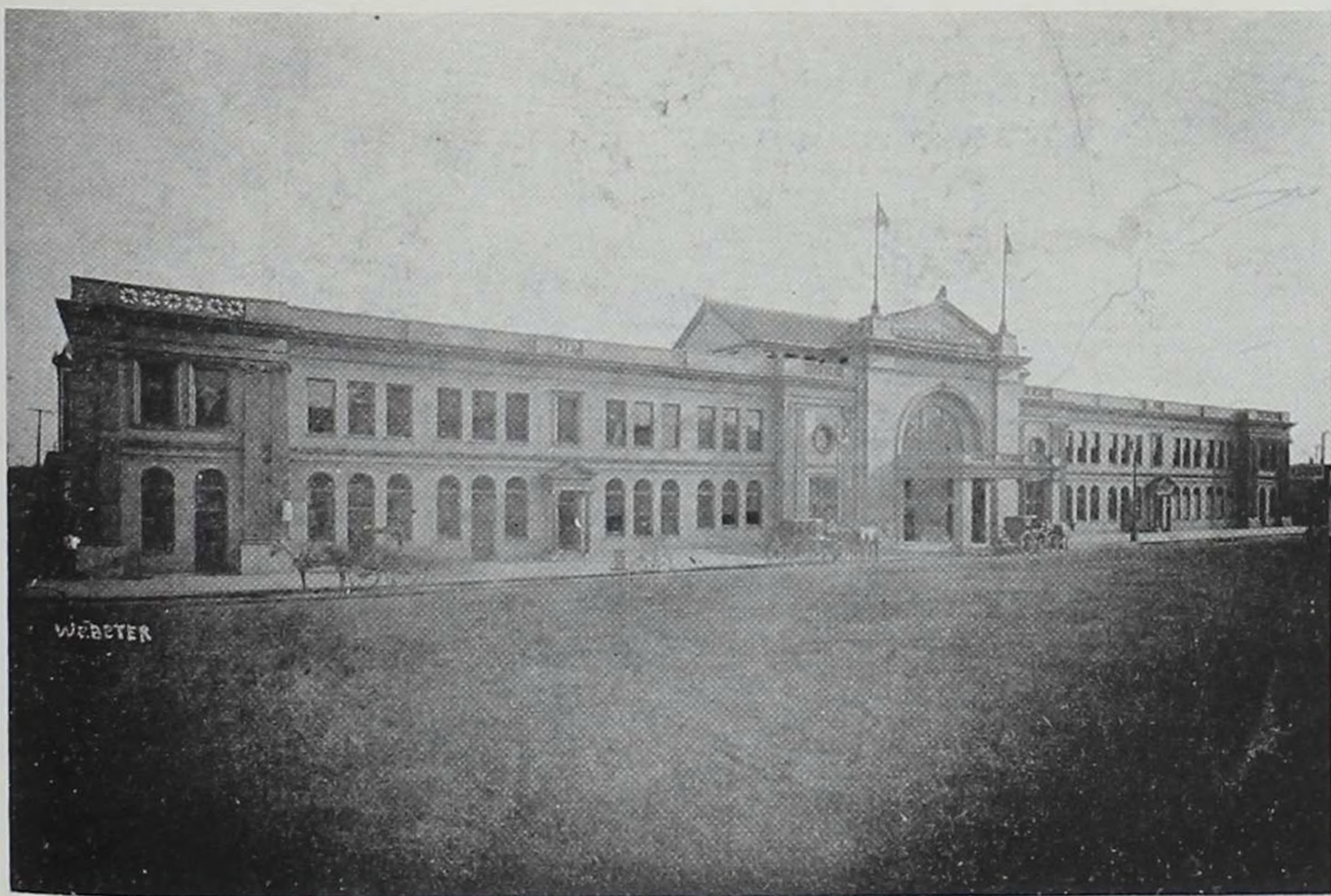
Des Moines Union Locomotive No. 4 switching Wabash train at Union Depot in February, 1959.





Des Moines Union Railroad Photo

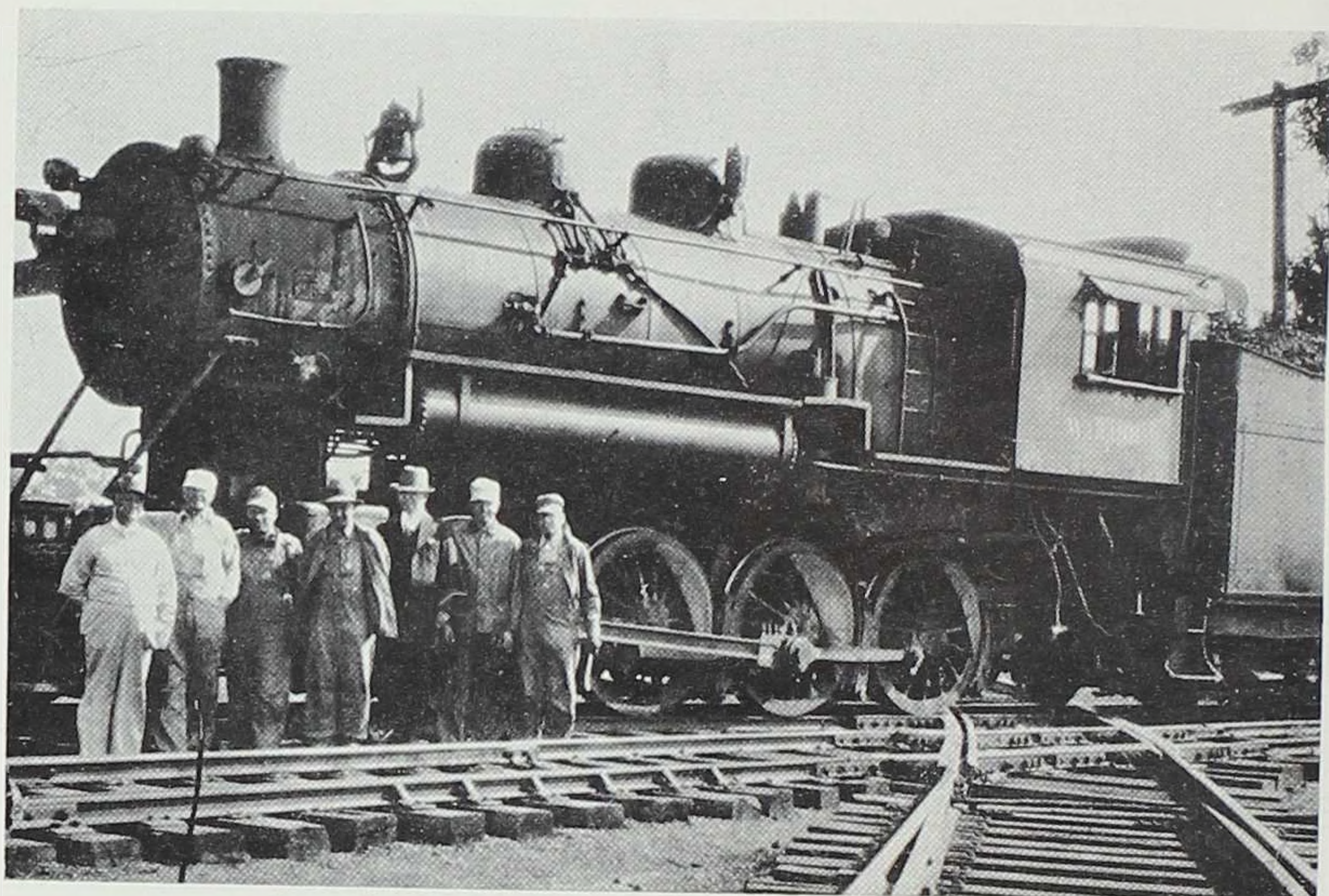
A busy morning at the Union Depot on August 27, 1918. At left is Great Western No. 1 ready to leave for Kansas City; on the right No. 4 on same road destined for the Twin Cities.



Des Moines Union Railroad Photo

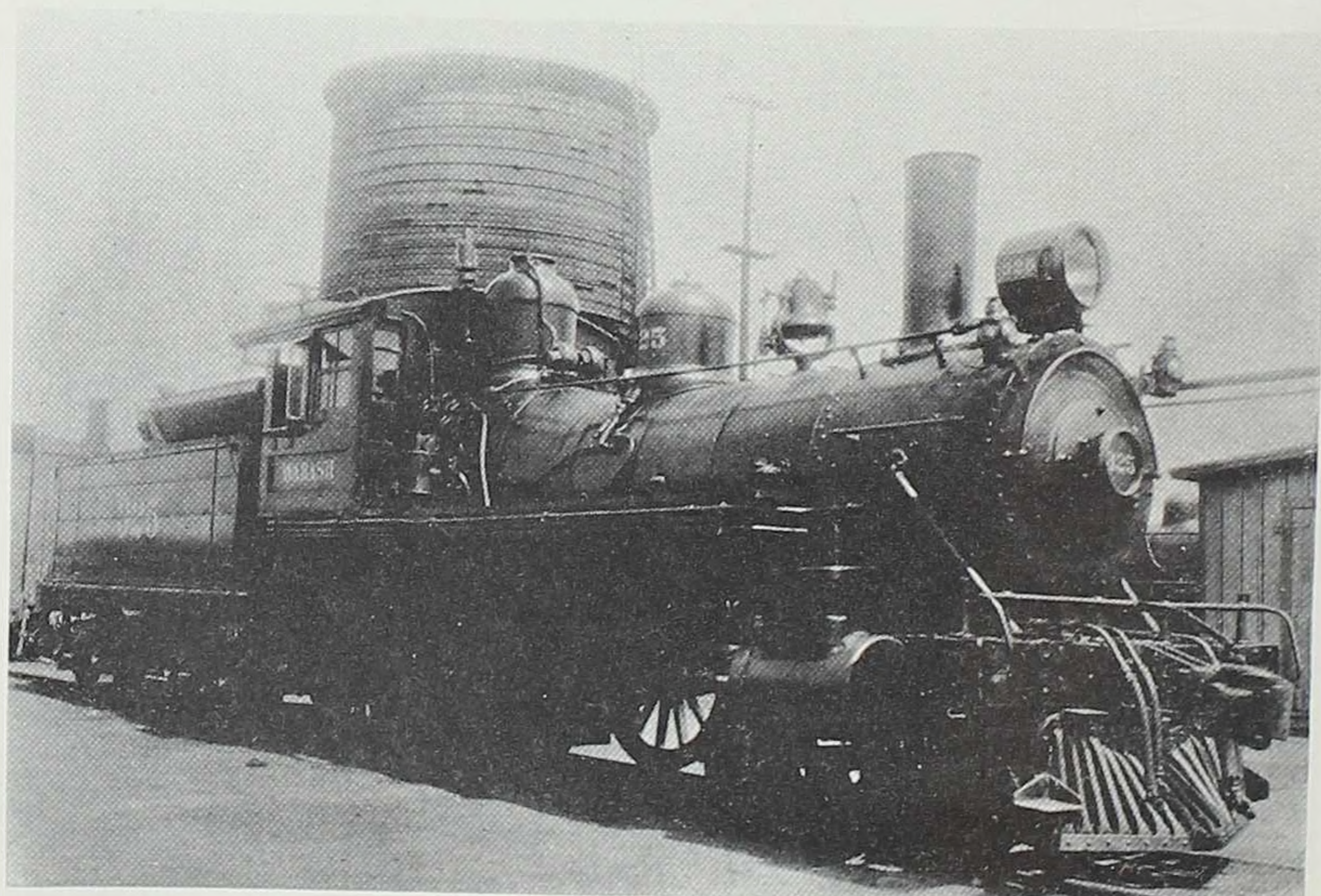
Des Moines Union Depot as it looked shortly after completion. The structure was built in 1898, and once served five railroads including the Minneapolis & St. Louis and the Des Moines, Iowa Falls & Northern.





Roger Grant Collection

Yard crew poses in front of Consolidation type locomotive on the diamond where the Wabash crosses the Milwaukee in Ottumwa. Picture about 1920.



Courtesy Wabash Railroad

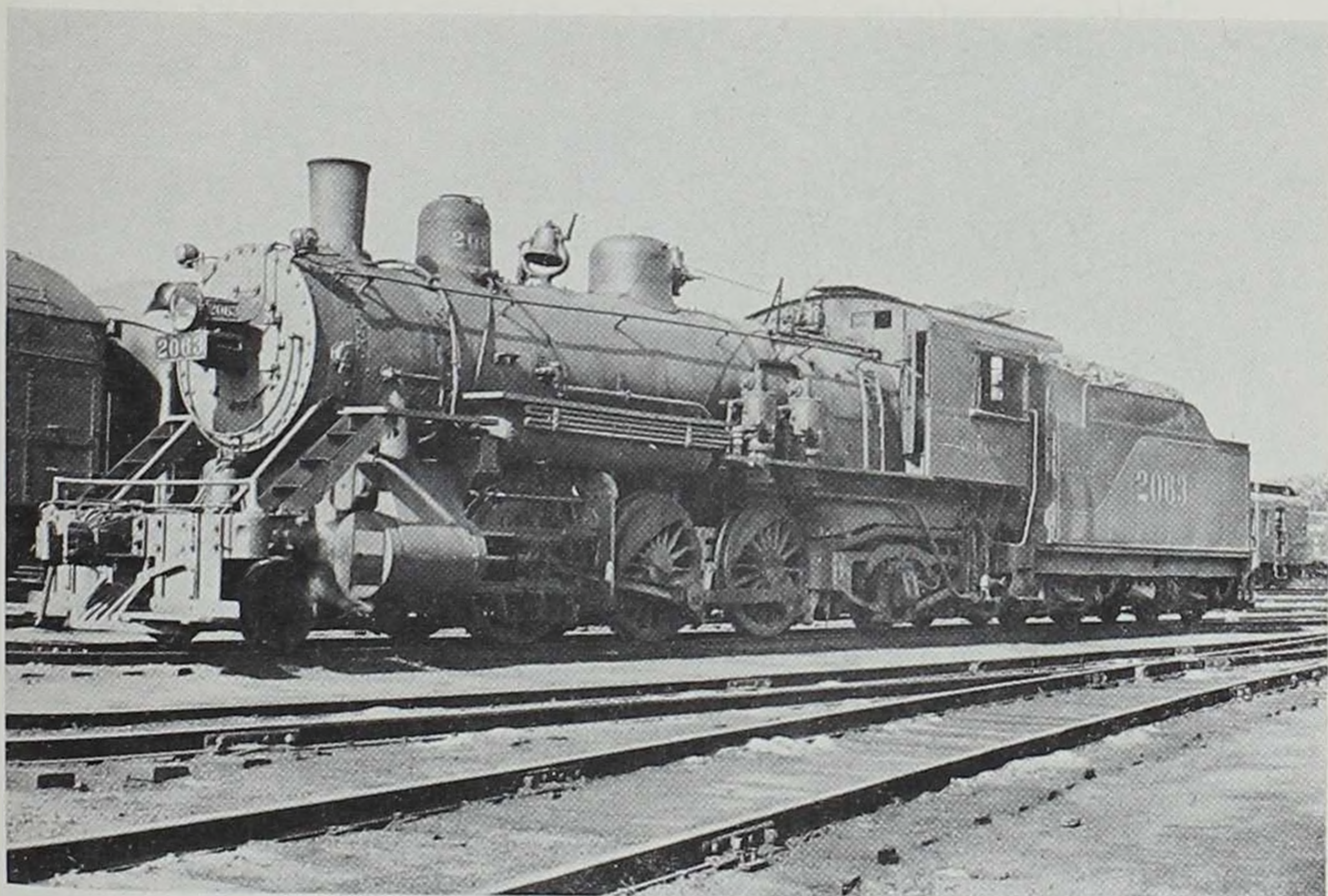
The American Standard, or 4-4-0 type locomotive, was once extensively used by the Wabash in Iowa.





Courtesy Wabash Railroad

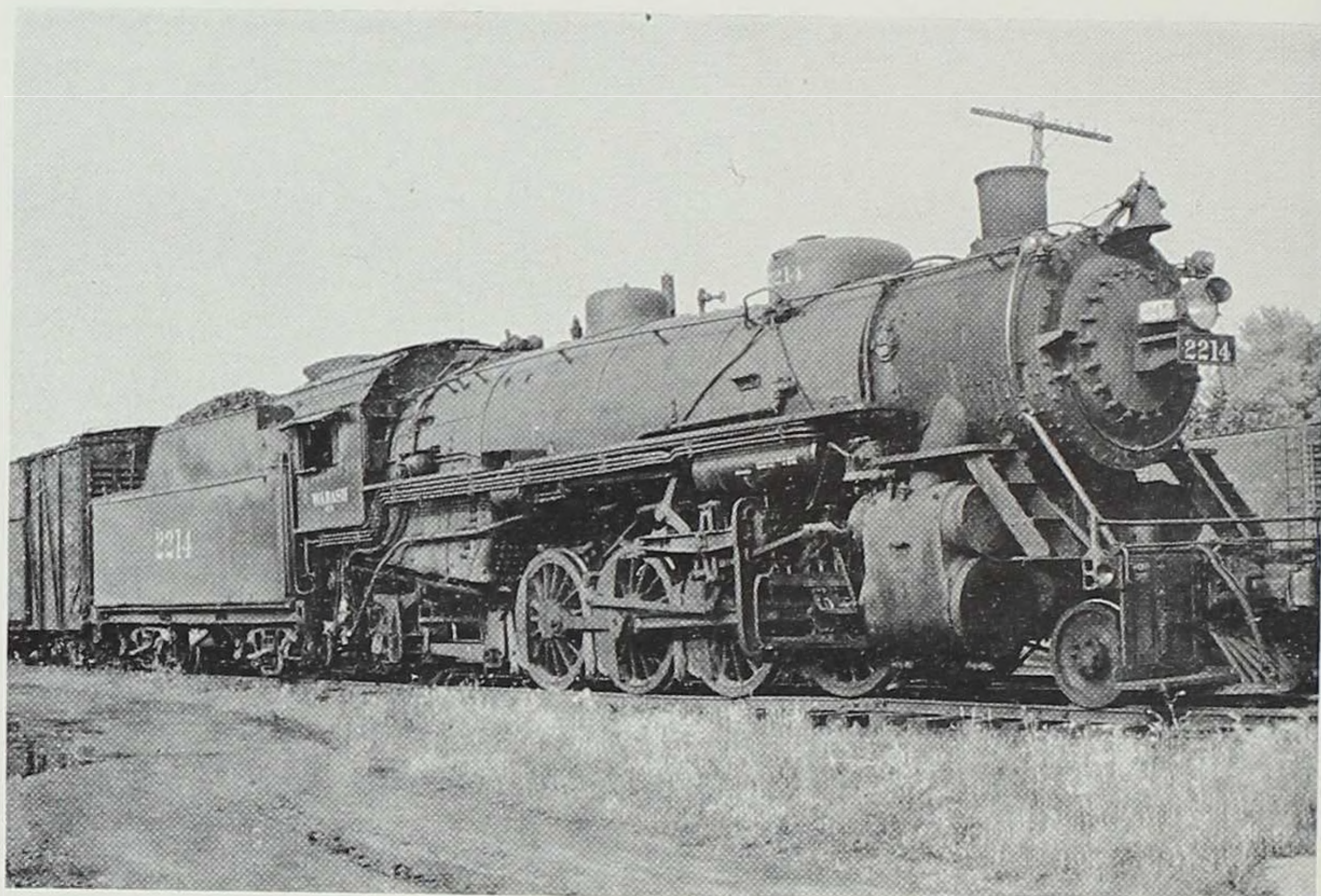
Last steam engine operated by the Wabash. This 2-6-0 built by Rhode Island in 1899, made its final run over the Keokuk Branch on January 28, 1955.



L. J. Hendricks Collection: Ted Gay Photo

Veteran Prairie type engine pictured in Des Moines in summer of 1939.





John B. Allen Collection

This powerful Baldwin-built Mikado taken at Albia was formerly operated on the Western Pacific before it came to the Wabash.



Courtesy Wabash Railroad

Electro-Motive 1500 h. p. GP-7's are currently very much in favor on the Des Moines line.



## "Follow The Flag"

For years the Wabash Railroad has had a banner with the inscription "Wabash" emblazoned on it and the catch line "Follow the Flag" written above it. Passengers were urged to "follow the flag" when it came to traveling in Wabash territory. The banner came to be regarded as a colophon for speedy, dependable service.

In bygone days the Wabash featured luxurious name-trains from St. Louis through Council Bluffs and Omaha to West Coast points. Although Omaha never had the stature of Kansas City as the Wabash's western gateway, Omaha was still very important to the railroad.

During the latter part of Jay Gould's domination of the Union Pacific he had a merry time shunting passengers and freight to the Wabash at Council Bluffs. When engaged in his classic rate wars with the Union Pacific's other Omaha connections, Gould suddenly, and often without warning, shifted traffic to the all-Wabash route to Toledo and other eastern points. Being outside the Iowa Pool until the last few years of ineffective existence, Gould used the Wabash as a tool to outwit his federated rivals.

Since it originated less traffic than other roads



of comparable size, the Wabash management aggressively sought inter-line traffic. From time to time it boasted of through sleepers to San Francisco on its Omaha line in conjunction with the Union Pacific and Southern Pacific. Then, too, when the old Wabash, St. Louis & Pacific had its first diner, this luxurious car was used exclusively on the "fast train" to and from St. Louis and run in and out of Council Bluffs.

In the late 1940's one could take the *Omaha Limited*, which carried a sleeper for San Francisco, from St. Louis at 7:50 p.m. The train arrived in Council Bluffs at 8:01 the next morning and 20 minutes later pulled into Omaha. Here the West Coast pullman was set out and recoupled to the historic *Overland Limited* of the Union Pacific. Two mornings afterward the *Overland Limited* arrived at the Southern Pacific's Oakland pier, where an awaiting ferry took it to the foot of Market Street in San Francisco.

The Wabash train stopped at all stations in Iowa. A citizen of Strahan (population 50), for example, could board the sleeper for the Golden Gate as readily as a passenger from a big city. Rural communities appreciated the Wabash's readiness to stop the limited "on flag," whereas most other roads would not deign to call at such a tiny community.

Better known to Iowans, however, was the service to Des Moines. To reach the Capital City



from St. Louis was quite an undertaking. We have seen the Wabash line built from Des Moines to Albia in 1882. From the latter town the south-bound train for St. Louis was shunted over the uncertain rails of the affiliated Centerville, Moravia & Albia to Centerville. Here it was again switched, this time to the Wabash-controlled Missouri, Iowa & Nebraska road for a 21-mile run to Glenwood Junction, Missouri. At the Junction the cars were finally returned to Wabash rails for the rest of the way to St. Louis.

The trip between Des Moines and St. Louis was something of an adventure, or an ordeal, depending on how one looked at it. By the time a passenger experienced traveling over the 56-pound rails of the unballasted Centerville, Moravia & Albia road, he was conditioned to branch-line railroading at its worst.

When, at a later date, through trains were detoured via the Rock Island between Harvey and Ottumwa, this lengthened the mileage of the Des Moines-St. Louis route. Although the track may have been a shade better than the Albia route, no one boasted of the amenities of riding this line. When the Wabash completed its short cut between Albia and Moulton, however, the new all-Wabash route became increasingly popular.

Passengerwise, the Des Moines branch reached its zenith after through coach and pullman service was inaugurated between St. Louis and the Twin



Cities in 1902. This was in connection with the Minneapolis & St. Louis-Iowa Central route by way of Albia and Albert Lea, Minnesota.

Always on the alert for more traffic, the Wabash was eager to join hands with the Minneapolis & St. Louis, which controlled the Iowa Central, in fostering joint through service. For its part, the Minneapolis & St. Louis wanted to continue its St. Louis service, and the road conducted a spirited contest for the best name for a new train to operate in conjunction with the Wabash. Out of about a thousand entries L. F. Day, vice president of the Minneapolis & St. Louis and A. B. Cutts, its general passenger agent, selected the *North Star Limited*. For over three decades the *North Star* proved to be a popular train in the Midwest.

It proudly began operation with "electrically-lighted sleepers and chair cars" and high caliber "dining car service" by way of Albia. As late as 1932 the dinner menu included a wide variety of selections at moderate cost. Passengers had the choice of chicken à la king, broiled steak, fried chicken, grilled lamb chops on toast, loin pork chops sauté with fried apple, omelette with bacon or chopped ham, and ham or bacon with eggs. Two fresh vegetables were included along with a salad, bread and butter, a beverage; and for dessert, lemon cream pie, apple pie, or ice cream. The tab: \$1.50.

To advertise the *North Star* as well as to pro-



vide a new insignia for the railroad, the Minneapolis & St. Louis had a caricature of a man running. His head, arms, and legs protruded from a large circle. Within the circle-bands was the name of the railroad, and, serving as a spoke was a rectangular block on which was inscribed: "Albert Lea Route." Underneath the feet of the little fellow was the legend "The Road that Runs." The comical insignia was designed by the well-known Minneapolis caricaturist, Charles L. Bartholomew, generally known as "Bart." It was widely used and served to identify the Minneapolis & St. Louis

ST. PAUL  
MINNEAPOLIS  
Chaska  
Waterville  
Waseca  
ALBERT LEA  
Mason City  
Sheffield  
Hampton  
Marshalltown  
Pickering  
Grinnell  
Oskaloosa  
ALBIA  
Moulton  
Glenwood  
Kirksville  
Mason  
MOBERLY  
Mexico  
Gilmere  
ST. LOUIS

ST. L. CENTRAL  
WABASH

## The "North Star Limited"

A NEW TRAIN  
BETWEEN

# St. Paul - Minneapolis AND St. Louis

ELECTRIC LIGHTED SLEEPERS AND CHAIR CARS.  
DINING CAR SERVICE



to the traveling public, as did the more orthodox flag of the Wabash.

The *North Star Limited*, in addition to its St. Louis-Twin Cities consist, provided sleepers and



coaches between St. Louis and Des Moines. At one time it also had a Des Moines-Kansas City sleeper. The *North Star* was finally withdrawn in 1938, but Wabash continued its Des Moines sleeper until the late 1950's. Then, when the Wabash dropped its coach service on the branch September 30, 1959, it marked the final Wabash passenger train out of the Des Moines Union Station. Mr. R. E. Hughes, who called the first train from that station in 1898, came out of retirement to call the last.

The imposing block-long, two-story stone and brick building was jointly owned by the Wabash and the Milwaukee railroads. Besides the owning lines, it had the Burlington and the Great Western as tenants. In 1905 fifty trains used the station weekdays. One by one, however, its users gave up passenger service into Des Moines or moved their facilities elsewhere. The Great Western erected its own depot in the 1950's (and later abandoned passenger service), and around the same period the Milwaukee and the Burlington withdrew their branch-line passenger runs into the city.

With the closing of Union Station only the nearby Rock Island depot was left to sell tickets on that road — the sole passenger line operating trains in or out of Des Moines. Incidentally, about two-thirds of the Union Station Building has been razed. What is left is occupied by the local offices



of the Wabash and Milwaukee railroads, Western Weighing & Inspection Bureau, and the headquarters of the Des Moines Union Railway.

It may be appropriate to add that the Wabash passenger trains which once served Ottumwa and Keokuk have long since made their final runs. They were early casualties of automobile and motor bus competition.

The Wabash, however, still continues to carry coaches on its fast freights between St. Louis and Council Bluffs. Equipped with reclining seats and air-conditioned, they are perhaps the fastest and most comfortable "mixed trains" in the country.



## The Wabash Today

Tall switch stands (about the height of a locomotive headlight), short freights, and a profusion of motive power ranging from American Standards, Ten Wheelers, Atlantics and Pacifics, to Moguls, Prairies, and Mikados, all of which once characterized Wabash operation. They have gone along with nearly all passenger trains in Iowa. But a heritage of fast running and highly competent dispatching is still a Wabash tradition. On the Wabash an operating man must know how to "highball." This is just as true today for freights as for the more colorful limiteds of yesteryear.

In Iowa the road's fastest "Cannon Ball" freights are the hotshots to and from Council Bluffs. Carded as No. 211 westward and 214 eastward, they run at passenger-train speed. The former departs from St. Louis at 6:30 p.m. and arrives in Council Bluffs at 8:10 the next morning. Its eastern counterpart leaves the Bluffs at 8:45 at night and pulls into St. Louis at 8:55 a.m. There is also a tri-weekly time freight operating in each direction between Moberly, Missouri, and Council Bluffs. The light 56-pound rails of the original line in Iowa have been replaced by 90-pounders laid on gravel ballast.



The Des Moines line has always had time freights, even when trackage rights were over the Rock Island for part of the way. The road bravely advertised "fast freights" when they were routed via Harvey, Givin, and Ottumwa. The best time on this circuitous route from Moberly to Des Moines appears to have been about sixteen hours. When the Wabash built its short cut from Moulton to Albia, the service was greatly accelerated. Today, with its modern diesel power, the Moberly-Des Moines "Red Ball" freights make the run in six and one-half hours. The branch has been upgraded to what the Wabash calls a "secondary main line."

The Ottumwa branch is serviced by way freights, as is the mile of track of the Keokuk line in Iowa. The latter comes into the state from Illinois on a bridge spanning the Mississippi River, over which it has trackage rights. It was built under the name of The Toledo, Wabash & Western Railroad.

In the pre-automobile era numerous short lines funnelled a modest amount of traffic to the Iowa lines of the Wabash. This was particularly true of the Council Bluffs branch. At Neoga, about five miles southeast of Council Bluffs, it interchanged with the Iowa & Omaha Short Line Railroad. This company built a 12-mile road from Treynor, with trackage rights over the Wabash into Council Bluffs. The little carrier never showed



a profit, and it quit in 1916 after operating only five years.

Another short-lived feeder was the Iowa & Southwestern Railway. It was built to connect Clarinda and College Springs with the Wabash at Blanchard, near the Missouri state line. Although Clarinda was on a branch of the Burlington, the town wanted another railroad. In the late 1870's it had hoped the Wabash's line to Council Bluffs would pass through Clarinda. Instead, the Wabash veered to the west through Shenandoah whereupon the citizens of Clarinda helped finance the old Clarinda & St. Louis Railway, which was built from Roseberry, Missouri, under Wabash auspices. But after a decade of checkered existence the track was taken up in 1890.

Still hoping for an outlet on the Wabash, the people of Clarinda, aided by subscriptions from College Springs, financed the Iowa & Southwestern. The 17-mile line, opened in 1912, soon went bankrupt. Operation ceased in 1916, and the road was subsequently abandoned.

A shorter connection but one having a much longer life-span was the Tabor & Northern Railway. It interchanged with the Wabash at Malvern and ran in a southwestern direction to Tabor, a distance of 8.79 miles. The road was organized late in 1887 and opened in 1889. Never a money-maker, the line managed to keep operating for some forty-five years. With the closing of Tabor



College in 1927, and the completion of a paved highway paralleling its line two years later, the handwriting was on the wall. When the shortline sought permission to quit in 1934, no opposition was voiced and the Interstate Commerce Commission promptly gave its approval. Such is the doleful history of feeder lines which mushroomed along the Wabash in southwestern Iowa.

The Wabash proper has had only one shortline abandoned but no curtailment of service in the state. This concerns the Des Moines branch and its peculiar relationship to a parallel line of the Burlington. Both the Wabash and the Burlington ran almost adjacent to each other for a score of miles on their Albia-Des Moines lines. This duplication vexed the United States Railroad Administration when it operated the roads during World War I. According to veteran employees, the United States Railroad Administration ordered that the Wabash run its trains over the Burlington from Albia to the Monroe County line just north of Lovilia. The Burlington, on the other hand, shunted its trains over Wabash rails from the county line to Tracy.

After the conflict both roads returned to their respective lines. Then came the depression of 1929; and in the interest of economy, the two roads took a hard look at their parallel tracks. They decided to revert to the wartime practice of using parts of each other's lines to the best advan-



tage. Thus, in a 50-50 change-over, the Wabash took up its 11-mile segment between Albia and the Monroe County line; and the Burlington dismantled its eleven miles of track north of the county line to Tracy.

Another change is imminent when the Red Rock Dam is slated to be completed about 1967 on the Des Moines River above Harvey. It is expected the Wabash will use the Burlington rails between Harvey and Swan. At Swan a bridge is to be constructed across the Des Moines River, which will take the Burlington to the Wabash's current line on the east side of the waterway to a point below Runnells. Both the Wabash and the Burlington would use this partly relocated line as a joint route into Des Moines. The Wabash, of course, would then abandon that part of its branch between the new bridge and Harvey. The Burlington for its part would take out its line from Swan to Des Moines.

The Wabash has now purchased all its Iowa lines outright, and they have been completely integrated into its system. The parent company, like its components, has been in and out of receivership, emerging with a change of name each time. It is not necessary to go into details here except to say that the Wabash, St. Louis & Pacific was reorganized in 1889 as The Wabash Railroad. In a 1915 reorganization, the "Railroad" was changed to "Railway." Following insolvency during the



Great Depression of the 1930's the road came back on a firm financial footing in 1942 as the Wabash Railroad, which it is today.

The story of the Wabash in Iowa is not complete without some mention of the Des Moines Union Railway, which furnishes terminal facilities in the Capital City. The Union Railway is a joint facility of the Wabash and the Milwaukee railroads, and it has forty-two miles of valuable industry and terminal tracks. The Union was incorporated in 1884 by the railroads now embodied in the Wabash and the Milwaukee railroad systems which served Des Moines and vicinity. Frederick M. Hubbell, Jefferson S. Polk, and Grenville M. Dodge were the leading promoters of the enterprise. The Union purchased that portion of the Wabash's branch within the city to Chesterfield (also known as Wabash Junction), a distance of 2.40 miles.

The Union was part of a little railroad dynasty created by Fred Hubbell during this period. He likewise was instrumental in building the narrow gauge lines from Des Moines to Boone, and Des Moines to Panora which, as we have seen, were once a part of the Wabash system. He also helped build the 3-foot gauge line from Des Moines to Ames and Jewell, which afterward became the Des Moines branch of the great North Western Railroad.

In addition, Hubbell formed the Des Moines



Terminal Company in 1902. This tiny carrier, which has ten miles of track in the factory district, is really a railroad within a railroad. It is operated by the Des Moines Union and is essentially a part of that line. For years the Tom Thumb road assessed a fee of \$1.00 for every loaded car it interchanged with the Union. This and other factors led to protracted litigation which lasted over a period of twenty-five years. In 1932, however, the Iowa Supreme Court ruled that the rate of compensation must be negotiated. Thus, the long court fight between the Hubbell estate, representing the Terminal Company, and the Union Railway, backed by the Wabash and Milwaukee railroads, ended.

The Des Moines Union performs practically all the terminal work for the Wabash (as well as the Milwaukee) in Des Moines, and it is an important adjunct to the system. Its diesel switchers are constantly shunting freight cars to and from 160 industries in Iowa's largest city. Currently its motive power consists of a 660-horsepower Alco, which it owns, a 1000-HP EMD leased from the Wabash, and a 1000-HP Alco plus a 1200-HP EMD leased from the Milwaukee.

In Council Bluffs the Wabash has its own freight house, whereas in Ottumwa it is a joint facility with the Milwaukee. South Ottumwa, however, is served exclusively by Wabash tracks. In Keokuk the road's traffic is handled at the Rock



Island's freight house. But no matter what arrangement is made to expedite freight, the Wabash lines in Council Bluffs, Des Moines, Ottumwa, and Keokuk are as essential to the railroad as a whole as they are to the communities they serve. Iowa shippers will continue to "Follow the Flag" in the future as they have in the past.



## WABASH, ST. LOUIS AND PACIFIC RAILWAY.

**Main Line of Road.**—(1) Toledo, O., *via* St. Louis, to Kan. City, Mo. 712.5 miles.

Other Lines East of the Mississippi:	(2) <i>Quincy</i> : Decatur to Quincy, Ill. ....	152.0 m.	
	(3) <i>Hannibal</i> : Bluffs, Ill., to Hannibal, Mo.	49.9 "	
	(4) <i>Pittsfield</i> : Maysville to Pittsfield, Ill. ....	6.2 "	
	(5) <i>Keokuk</i> : Clayton, Ill., to Elvaston, Ill. .	34.5 "	
	(6) <i>Edw'dsville</i> : Edw'dsville to E. Crossing, Ill.	10.2 "	
	(7) <i>Detroit</i> : Detroit, Mich., to Logansport, Ind.	213.8 "	
	(8) <i>Ind'apolis</i> : Mich. City, Ind., to Ind'apolis.	161.0 "	
	(9) <i>Covington</i> : Attica, Ind., to Covington, Ind.	14.5 "	
	(10) <i>Le Roy</i> : W. Leb., Ind., to Le Roy, Ind. (3 ft.)	75.7 "	
	(11) <i>Paris</i> : Danville, Ill., to St. Francisville, Ill.	109.3 "	
	(12) <i>Cairo</i> : Vincennes, Ind., to Cairo, Ill. ....	158.0 "	
	(13) <i>Jacksonville</i> : Hollis, Ill., to Jack'ville, Ill.	75.3 "	
	(14) <i>Havana</i> : Springfield, Ill., to Havana, Ill.	47.2 "	
	(15) <i>Streator</i> : Streator, Ill., to Allamont, Ill.	156.5 "	
	(16) <i>Effingham</i> : Shumway to Effingham, Ill.	8.5 "	
	(17) <i>Chicago</i> : Strawn, Ill., to Chicago, Ill. ....	99.7 "	
	(18) <i>Havana</i> : Urbana to Havana, Ill. ....	102.2 "	
	(19) <i>Monticello</i> : White Heath to Decatur, Ill. .	29.7 "	
	(20) <i>Keokuk</i> : Lafayette, Ind., to Keokuk, Ind.	246.7 "	
	(21) <i>Warsaw</i> : Hamilton, Ill., to Warsaw, Ill.	5.0 "	
	(22) <i>Burlington</i> : La Harpe, Ill., to Bur'gton, Ia.	19.7 "	—1,775.6
Other Lines West of the Mississippi:	(23) <i>Ferguson</i> : St. Louis to Ferguson, Mo. ...	10.4 m.	
	(24) <i>Columbia</i> : Centralia, Mo., to Columbia, Mo.	21.8 "	
	(25) <i>Glasgow</i> : Salisbury to Glasgow, Mo. ....	15.9 "	
	(26) <i>Ottumwa</i> : Moberly, Mo., to Ottumwa, Ia.	131.0 "	
	(27) <i>Omaha</i> : Bruns'k, Mo., to Council Bluffs, Ia.	224.4 "	
	(28) <i>Clarinda</i> : Roseberry, Mo., to Clarinda, Ia.	21.5 "	
	(29) <i>St. Joseph</i> : N. Lex'gton, Mo., to St. Jos., Mo.	77.1 "	
	(30) <i>Trenton</i> : W. Quincy, Mo., to Trenton, Mo.	135.9 "	
	(31) <i>Humeston</i> : Keokuk, Ia., to Humeston, Ia.	131.0 "	
	(32) <i>Albia</i> : Relay, Ia., to Albia, Ia. ....	24.0 "	
	(33) <i>Des Moines</i> : Jefferson to D'Moines, Ia. (3 ft.)	66.9 "	— 859.9 miles.

Poor's Manual of the Railroads of the United States (1882)



