

*The*  
**PALIMPSEST**



Delta Covered Bridge — A Painting by M. L. Shipley.

**Covered Bridges in Iowa**

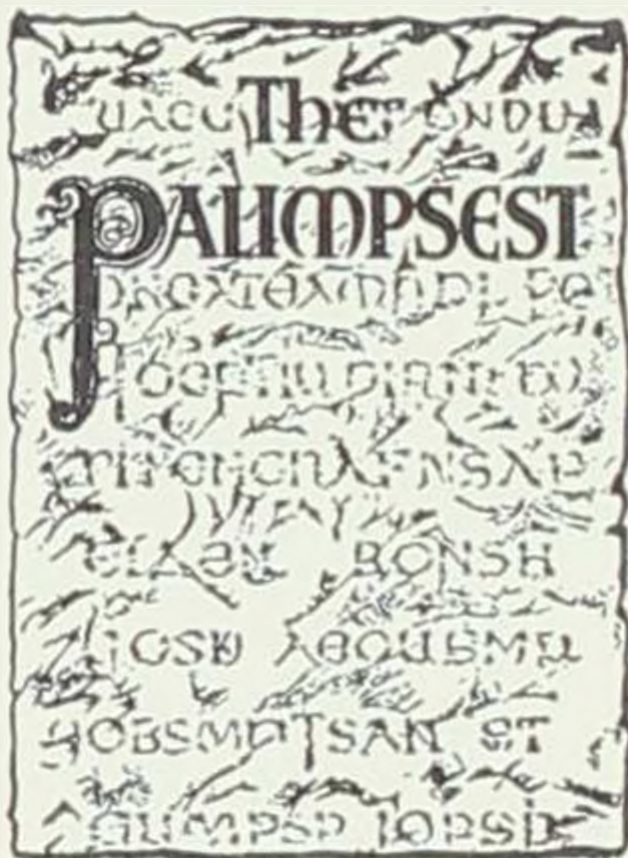
Published Monthly by

**The State Historical Society of Iowa**

Iowa City, Iowa

NOVEMBER 1970

SPECIAL NUMBER — COVERED BRIDGES — ONE DOLLAR



## *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*

### COVERED BRIDGES IN IOWA

L. O. CHEEVER

Why Were Bridges Covered?	449
Covered Bridges Come to Iowa	452
Census of Covered Bridges	466

---

## *Illustrations*

The cover painting is from the author's collection. Unless credited otherwise, the remaining illustrations were provided by Cleo R. Crawford, photographer.

## *Author*

L. O. Cheever is associate editor, State Historical Society of Iowa.

---

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 November, 1970, issue and is Number 11 of Volume 51. Second class postage paid at Iowa City, Iowa.

---

PRICE—Included in Membership. Regular issues, 50¢; Special—\$1.00

MEMBERSHIP — By application. Annual Dues \$5.00

ADDRESS — The State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue  
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

VOL. LI

ISSUED IN NOVEMBER 1970

No. 11

*Copyright 1970 by The State Historical Society of Iowa*



## Why Were Bridges Covered?

Why were bridges covered?

Stock answers of almost 200 years ago would seem to answer the question as well today:

A Pennsylvania carpenter said, "Keeps 'em dry."

A Maryland bridgebuilder felt the same way about it but his answer was more colorful: "Our bridges were covered, my dear Sir, for the same reason that our belles wore hoop skirts and crinolines—to protect the structural beauty that is seldom seen, but nevertheless appreciated."

Others, more romantically inclined, seemed to find other reasons for their existence and called them "Kissing Bridges," for obvious reasons, "Tunnels of Love," "Wishing Bridges," where the wish would be granted if one could hold his breath while going through a covered bridge. Then there was the elderly Iowan who, remembering his 1910 Sunday afternoon buggy rides, said, "Kiss your girl when you go through a covered bridge. A short peck'll do for a short bridge, but

if it's long and dark there's time enough for a hug n'squeeze."

The covered bridge made its appearance in the United States in 1805. In that year, Timothy Palmer, a shipfitter from Newburyport, Massachusetts, who had become a bridgebuilder, was erecting his Permanent Bridge over the Schuylkill in Philadelphia. A local judge, Richard Peters, suggested that the bridge would last longer if its principal parts were covered to prevent rot. Palmer accepted the suggestion and his bridge became the first covered structure in this country.

The roof and sideboards placed on covered bridges were not put there for the protection of travelers and their horses; they were not intended as protection for wagonloads of farm produce crossing the bridge; nor were they the sole protection of sweethearts strolling in the bridge's dark recesses. They did not protect the bridge's flooring. Planks were easy to replace. The covering was not used to keep the snow off.

Roofs were placed on covered bridges to keep the main beams and arches dry. Staunch as these supporting timbers might be, they would rot if left exposed, alternately, to wetting rains and scorching sun.

Among other reasons given for covering bridges were these:

To keep water from joints where it might freeze during the winter and dry up during the summer.

To keep the bridge floor dry because it was often oiled, thus becoming slippery when wet.

Such covering lent strength to the structure. The added weight would more than make up for its bulk by making the bridge more solid.

To give the bridge the appearance of a barn. It was said farm animals tended to stampede when crossing a bridge and seeing rushing water below them. The covered bridge calmed their fears.

The most common reason given was to keep snow from the roadway. This does not seem to be a very good reason nor is it logical. During horse and buggy days, the coming of winter meant that covered bridge floors had to be covered with snow so that sleighs and cutters could cross.

There are many reasons for covered bridges. However, it is important to remember that wood will last a long time in water, a long time in sunshine, but that it can not stand a mixture of the two. An uncovered wooden bridge might last ten years before needing major repairs, such as the replacement of beams. An uncovered wooden bridge treated with a chemical preservative might have a somewhat longer life. But a roofed bridge would last indefinitely.

## Covered Bridges Come to Iowa

The continuing flood of immigrants into the New England and Mid-Atlantic states in the Eighteenth Century and following the Revolutionary War, forced newcomers to look inland toward the western horizon as the location of the land that was to become their homestead. But it was not always these people who had the urge to move on. There were others who had not found what they wanted in the new world and sought new hills to climb, new lands to break to the plow.

Included in these groups heading west, in addition to farmers, were doctors, lawyers, merchants, engineers, bridgebuilders, the whole gamut of tradesmen. When they had landed in a new location and began to build, their patterns, plans, and ideas were based on things back home. The result was a duplication of the landscape that had been left behind.

Typical of these men were the bridgebuilders. Covered bridges were numerous in New Hampshire, Vermont, and neighboring states. So it was only natural that the New Englanders, when they landed in Pennsylvania, would solve the problem of crossing creeks and rivers by constructing covered bridges. The same thing

happened as the settlers reached Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and ultimately Iowa.

But crossing the Mississippi and getting to the Indian land west of it was another matter. Possibly the first white man to cross the river and settle in what is present-day Iowa was the French-Canadian, Julien Dubuque, who received permission of the Fox Indians to work the famous "Mines of Spain." Two other settlements developed during the period Dubuque was active: one in Clayton County, the other in Lee County. Explorers, French and American fur traders, and government-led expeditions crisscrossed the area or traveled along eastern and western borders, using the Mississippi and Missouri rivers as their avenues of travel.

It took a series of treaties which the government negotiated with the Indians to gradually extend the area of Iowa open to settlement. Typical of these treaties was one negotiated in 1842. By this document the Sac and Fox Indians ceded to the United States the entire central and south-central sections of Iowa, except for a strip about 65 to 75-miles wide along the western border of the territory. Other provisions called for the Indians to give possession by May 1, 1843, to the eastern half and three years to give up the western half.

At midnight on April 30, 1843, the discharge of firearms sent settlers into the newly opened land. It is said that between midnight of April 30

and sundown of May 1, at least a thousand settlers staked their claims within Wapello County alone. Even though the land had been opened the Sac and Fox were allowed certain privileges to the land they held. Fort Des Moines, at the fork of the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers, was erected in 1843 to protect the rights of the redman. The Fort was staffed with troops and a small number of men who were to provide the necessary civilian trades and services. It was among the latter group that Thomas Mitchell and Peter Newcomer were found, possibly the first to build covered bridges in the State of Iowa: Newcomer, in 1844, over Four Mile Creek and Mitchell, in the same year, over Camp Creek. As more and more settlers came, the cry for bridges increased, especially for one spanning the Mississippi—and that came in 1856 when a bridge was built over the Father of Waters at Davenport. The Mississippi had been crossed by boat and ferry; the streams of Iowa, by boat, ferry, fording, and the simplest of bridges.

It was time for the covered bridgebuilder.

In his *Covered Bridges of the Middle West*, Richard Sanders Allen says:

The abundance of good timber and the many streams to be crossed made it all possible. With the Eastern Seaboard furnishing men, energy and know-how, it was in the Middle West that covered bridge building in America reached a peak of production and perfection.



Leslie C. Swanson, in his *Covered Bridges in Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin*, also recognizes the contribution of covered bridgebuilders:

The achievements of the nation's covered bridge builders and the integral part they played in developing a great nation are a saga of engineering triumph.

Today's engineers look with awe at the century old structures still standing and say to themselves, "How did they do it?"

The early bridgebuilders, many of them unable to read or write or do the easiest of sums, were not professional engineers. But they were skilled craftsmen, usually carpenters by trade, who could design and erect a house, a church, or a town hall as easily as they could build a bridge. They built as they went. They had none of the tools of today—used the broadaxe, the adze, the wooden plane to shape the big timbers and planks, worked without nails, spikes, bolts. Their trusses were fitted together by treenails (often referred to as "trunnels,") or wooden pegs which were pounded into position.

Few early bridgebuilders had the benefit of training as an engineer. Few had been educated to work out scientific methods for calculating bridge trusses, strength or load weights. As one old fellow said, "I build a bridge 'more than strong' enough to carry the loads it may be called on to sustain." That they were pretty accurate at

their job is attested to by the six to eight-ton loads still being carried by some covered bridges.

Why did Iowans build covered bridges?

The answer to that question is simple as well as logical. Covered bridges could be constructed quickly, were durable, and cheap. Timberland was readily available and, more important, the manpower to build bridges was there. In those days farmers in a bridge construction area were happy to work off their poll tax. That was the common thing to do.

Procedures followed in building a bridge were fairly standard, except for changes caused by the truss used.

An open field was selected near the bridge site. From timbers delivered to the builder, a sample panel or part of the bridge was laid out. All the builder's skill went into this operation. The joints to be made were notched with a sharp knife rather than marked with a pencil which would be too coarse. When the panel was completed, patterns were made and used by workmen in cutting joints, using fine-toothed saws and keen chisels for accuracy.

To the bridgebuilder, truss joints had to be exact. Scarf joints, to which the long stringers were spliced, had to carry their load so that when hardwood wedges were driven home, they would be, in effect, one long solid timber. If there was an error in making the joints, there was sure to be a

settlement, a sag, when the scaffolding was taken down. Even a trifling error might cause a gradual settling later, the weakening of a truss, and a shorter life for the bridge.

Wooden pins connected the various parts. These were called treenails (or "trunnels") and were made of oak. Most builders soaked or boiled them in oil to assure durability.

The truss timbers were carefully arranged on the ground and leveled, holes were bored for the wooden pins. Again accuracy was important. It was essential that all parts fit exactly when moved into position.

While work was going on on the ground, other members of the crew were building abutments or piers. Others erected the scaffolding in the stream between the abutments or piers. On this the finished bridge timbers would be set up and supported until the last treenail was driven home. The first timbers laid were the stringers, those long pieces extending from bank to bank, from pier to pier. They were never set level. There was always a camber, or slight convexity, so that the midstream part of the stringers were several inches higher than the ends. The camber was one of the bridgebuilder's secrets of his craft. It had two uses. Without a doubt the most important was that the bridge will settle a little when the scaffolding is removed, no matter how good the joints. This settling was included in the camber-

allowance, as well as the allowance for vibration sag caused by bridge traffic.

With the bridge finished, the scaffolding removed, the bridge was ready for its first test. If it was a good bridge, it would settle a little, compacting its parts into an everlasting whole. If not, the builder was in trouble.

Few of the more than a dozen trusses patented for use in bridge building are to be found in Iowa bridges. Those found are the Burr, the Howe, and the Town lattice trusses. Some builders also used the king post and queen post to add strength.

The Burr truss, first used in 1804 at Waterford, New York, was patented in 1817, by Theodore Burr of Torrington, Connecticut. He used vertical posts, similar to the king post, and sloping braces. To this framework he bolted an arch of hewn timbers.

The Town lattice was a tightly knit crisscross web of planks, fashioned to form a solid, durable truss. This truss made the bridge rigid and distributed the strains evenly throughout, relieving the center of greater punishment than wood could bear for long. The designer was Ithiel Town, a Connecticut architect, who sold rights to his patent for a dollar a foot.

William Howe of Massachusetts was the inventor of the Howe truss, featuring vertical tension rods of iron. Wood was used for upper and lower chords, end posts, and diagonal braces.

The king post was a simple truss. It consisted of a center post with two compression pieces slanting downward and outward to the shore.

The queen post, similar to the king post, had two posts separated by upper and lower chords.

There seems to be little information available on the construction of bridges in Iowa prior to the mid-1860's. To some extent this may have resulted from changes in the county government setup. Prior to January of 1861 a county judge handled the county government. In January of 1861, an elected board of supervisors took over in each county and assumed duties formerly handled by the county judge. It was composed of one elected representative from each township. This proved to be a cumbersome body and in 1870, through state legislative action, the county board of supervisors was reduced to three members.

In the course of these changes, the lack of adequate storage space, moving from one building to another, from one town to another, fire, and other losses accounted for the disappearance of many county records. Such losses have made it difficult to check bridge and road proceedings.

Begun by Mrs. Fred Hartsook in 1933, a splendid history of Madison County bridges has been compiled. Mrs. Hartsook's research took her to the courthouse where she ran into the problem of missing records. She noted that fact in her original paper. On the whole Madison County

records have survived well—even back to 1871 when a new 3-man board took over. One of its first actions was to vote new rules for building bridges in the county. The *Madisonian* (Winter-set) commented editorially on January 12, 1870:

Our Board of Supervisors have done very well in adopting new rules to govern the erection of county bridges. There has been much complaint about the erection of county bridges, as to their stability and make. The plan by the Board does away with the stone abutments, thus saving such expense and enabling the county to build many more bridges. It is claimed that timber can be readily replaced, and that ice will affect it less than stone. They also require that bridges shall be covered. The expense of the roof is more than made up by the permanency of the bridge. Instead of the old style framing for the support of the bent, they have adopted the lattice work frame like that used to support the ceiling of our court room.

As far as records are available, it would appear that the first bridges definitely listed as being covered were constructed in Floyd and Polk counties; Keokuk County's Delta Bridge, was started in 1867 and is the oldest covered bridge still standing in Iowa; Madison County's earliest bridge was erected in 1868.

The heyday of covered bridges in Iowa was between 1865 and 1890. Iron and steel, gradually inching into the Iowa picture during the period, had just about assumed control of the bridge building industry by the turn of the century.

With only 11 surviving covered bridges to its

credit, few people realize that Iowa plays much of a part in the over-all national covered bridge picture. Iowa is in 14th place at this writing with county totals as follows:

Cerro Gordo	1
Keokuk	1
Madison	7
Marion	1*
Polk	1

(\*) Although not counted in this total, Marion County is also listed with another bridge, the Marysville span. It has been dismantled and is to be divided into two 40-foot spans. The sections then will be reconstructed in parks in Knoxville and Pella, both in Marion County. When this is done, Iowa's total will jump to 13 covered bridges.

Iowa's existing bridges are so situated that they are easy to reach. They are concentrated in a band that follows Highway 92 across the state. None of the bridges are more than a few minutes from that highway. Heading west, the first bridge is in Keokuk County, just south of Delta; next is the Hammond Bridge in Marion County; a side trip to Des Moines will locate the Owens structure, then on to Madison County, "The Covered Bridge Capitol of the Midwest," with its seven bridges. The most recent addition to the Iowa family is the Shell Rock River Bridge at Rock Falls, Cerro Gordo County, in northeast Iowa. Two other centers of covered bridge structures are to be found in Clayton and Page counties although none of the bridges are still standing.

Iowa's newspapers always have been strong advocates of covered bridges. Prior to the turn of

the century they supported the use of wood in building bridges because it was cheaper, easily available, and more convenient. Likewise, they supported covered bridges because of the protection afforded from the elements. The following appeared in the *Delaware County Union* of April 6, 1871:

COVER THE BRIDGES.—We submit to the Board of Supervisors that it would be a good plan to roof the main bridges of the county. It would add many years to their durability.

With the greater use of iron and steel for bridges, the wooden structures gradually disappeared from the scene. It was not until the 1930's that covered bridge buffs began calling attention to their disappearance. Again newspaper editors took up their cudgels with a clarion call to save the covered bridge.

Don Berry, distinguished editor-publisher of the *Indianola Record-Tribune*, has been outspoken in the battle to save covered bridges. His editorials, written for his own paper, have been reprinted widely by the state's newspapers. An outstanding photographer, his pictures of covered bridges have aided materially in his struggle. A story written by Berry was responsible for this editorial in *The Pella Chronicle* of April 3, 1947:

It was a year or two ago that Don Berry, Indianola newspaper publisher, wrote an article on covered bridges



in Warren and Marion counties and advocated their preservation . . .

Marion County has several covered bridges. Two of them span creeks on little used roads just a little south of the Pella-Knoxville road. They are picturesque in their setting on narrow, hilly, winding dirt roads and since they are wide enough and sturdy for the light traffic they should stay there and be carefully preserved against the weather and overloading. Many motorists drive these wooded roads for the pleasure of driving over and under old bridges.

Could be these bridges will have to go some day. If so, a friend suggests the bridges be moved, either by dismantling or all in one piece, to another scenic spot in the county or to a state park where, set up over a creek, folks could continue to enjoy them. How appropriately they would fit, for instance, over the streams in the Ledges State Park. It would be fun now and many times as much fun fifty years hence, to drive a spanking team hitched to a "surrey with the fringe on top" through a friendly covered bridge. Don't you think?

The following editorial appeared originally in the *Indianola Record-Tribune*. It was reprinted in the *Colfax Tribune* of February 18, 1954:

**Covered Bridge of Oldtime Can Still Be Seen in Iowa**

We were glad to see the Knoxville Express trying to arouse some interest in the preservation of the covered bridges in Marion county. That county has some of the most picturesque bridges in Iowa.

We have visited all in this state and a good many others. Nowhere do we remember a more picturesque bridge than the West Durham bridge over English Creek about seven miles northeast of Knoxville. It made us al-

most heartsick the last time we visited it to see it going to pieces, apparently from deliberate neglect.

Perhaps the Marion county supervisors do not think these bridges worth saving. Only a few years ago the Madison county supervisors felt the same way. Now Madison county is proudly proclaiming that it has the most covered bridges of any one county in the United States. It has seven. It is maintaining them and they are apparently good for many more years. Visitors are coming from far and near to see them.

These old covered bridges are a bit of the history of the pioneer days in Iowa that are worth preserving. Too often, as was the case in Warren county, they are abandoned or destroyed because of the skill of a super salesman peddling steel bridges.

A few years ago Madison county lost one of its most picturesque and useful bridges by action of the supervisors without the public being aware of the destruction until it was about over. Fortunately that is all changed and the county is gaining wide publicity and approval because it is preserving these historic structures.

In Keokuk county the Delta covered bridge over North Skunk River was erected in 1869 of native framework. A good many years later a steel bridge was built above the covered bridge. Only about five years ago, when the covered bridge was nearly 80 years old, the steel bridge was condemned and the traffic of a county trunk road detoured over the covered bridge.

Saving these bridges may be all a matter of sentiment. But who wants to live in a community without sentiment?

Success to those who would save the Marion county bridges.

Frank Miller, *Des Moines Register* cartoonist, is another newspaperman who has waged a two-

pronged battle in making Iowans aware of the bridges. He has illustrated them beautifully and written about them with feeling. Typical is this gem about Madison County's bridges in the July 1, 1958, issue of the *Register*:

Covered bridges are one of our most direct and handsome connections with the past. Their setting at the shady junctions of wooded streams and winding country roads has changed little since their construction in the late 1800's.

Iowa is lucky to have a good number of these old bridges left, and they are a pleasing and appropriate part of the state's landscape. Their handsome lines and weathered timbers fit in perfectly with Iowa's picturesque farm lands and peaceful rural history.

For practical reasons these bridges were covered to add to structural strength and to help the wood season properly and last longer. The "unofficial" theory that they were built like barns to encourage animals over streams seems quite plausible; and the cool dark interior surely was a welcome relief during hot and dusty buggy rides.

Adding to their charm is the fact that, though they belong in the realm of American antiques and horse and buggy days, they still perform their duty efficiently by getting sleek, high powered motor cars across streams.

## Census of Covered Bridges

Author has authenticating photographs for starred (\*) bridges.

### Allamakee

#### Reuben Smith Bridge

*The Waukon Standard* of November 10, 1870, covering the minutes of the Board of Supervisors October meeting, reported Mr. Stilwell of the bridge building committee had told the Board:

... We have covered the bridge at Reuben Smith's with new plank and put in all new floor joints; the bridge is one hundred and sixty feet in length costing \$250.

In Post Township, this bridge spanned the Yellow River on the Reuben Smith farm.

### Appanoose

#### Dean Covered Bridge

#### Iconium Covered Bridge

The *Centerville Daily Iowegian* issued its Progress Anniversary Edition on January 10, 1934. A covered bridge was pictured and the accompanying caption referred to two bridges:

The last of Appanoose County's two [4] covered bridges, which spanned the Chariton near Iconium. Eight years ago it was torn down, County Engineer Frank Davis directing the work. This picture was taken after a major portion of the siding had been torn away.

There was one covered bridge across the Chariton at

Dean. Many were the tales of ghosts and "bad men" who inhabited these old bridges, and the youth and even older folks, compelled to drive through them at night, often hurried unduly.

Built in 1868 of native oak, without nails, and hand-split shingles for the roof, the Iconium Bridge collapsed August 18, 1925.

#### Mud Covered Bridge

The *Iowegian* of June 26, 1953, reported that the Mud Bridge had been erected in 1868 north-east of Walnut City over Little Walnut Creek.

#### Sedan Bridge

According to the same *Iowegian* story the Sedan Covered Bridge was also erected in 1868, spanning the Chariton River.

### Black Hawk

#### Illinois Central Covered Bridge

In its centennial issue the Cedar Falls *Daily Record* pictures two bridges with this caption:

Appearing in the background behind the old steel arch bridge formerly on the Main Street crossing is the old covered wooden bridge of the Illinois Central.

### Cerro Gordo

#### Shell Rock River Bridge\*

Iowa's newest covered bridge is located in Wilkinson Pioneer Park along the Shell Rock River at Rock Falls, 10 miles northeast of Mason City.

Completed in 1969, the bridge was the idea of Les Graverson, Plymouth hardware dealer. He,

with the aid of volunteers, built it, using native oak and cottonwood lumber, sawed three miles away at the Kenneth Romney sawmill. The lattice trusses used are of cottonwood. The bridge is patterned after the Cutler-Donahoe span in Madison County.

Cost of the bridge was \$2,500, plus \$2,000 for excavating the pond beside it and building 42-foot approaches on each side. The bridge has an overall length of 134 feet, a 50-foot span, is 16 feet wide, and has a 10-foot clearance.

#### Clayton

##### Dunsmore Covered Bridge\*

The following notice appeared in the *Clayton County Journal* of August 4, 1875:

Notice is hereby given that bids will be received at the Auditor's Office until 1 o'clock P.M., on

Saturday, August 14th, 1875,

for the building of a Howe Truss Bridge of 90 feet span (or other plan or style acceptable to the Board of Supervisors), and for the covering of the same. Also for two Stone Piers or Abutments, to be 14 feet in height above low water. Bids may be for superstructure and piers, or for either. The above bridge and piers are to be built across the Maquoketa River, on the road from Strawberry Point to Garden Prairie, near center Section 30, Cass Township.

M. Uriell, Comr.

The Clayton County Board of Supervisors in their September, 1875, meeting "Ordered that the Auditor draw warrants on order of M. Uriell for

building piers and bridge across Maquoketa River, on road from Strawberry Point to Thomas Dunsmore's."

Taken out by the flood of 1920, the bridge was salvaged and hauled to Strawberry Point where L. H. Oldfather used the lumber in constructing a storage shed. It is still in use.

#### Elk Creek Bridge

Spanning Elk Creek, on the road from Edgewood to Colesburg, this bridge was built in 1890 by Stalnaker and Coonfare.

Although it was washed out only once—in the Bonney flood of 1896—it has a sad history. The Bonneys, husband and wife, were swept away with their home. The man's body was found as the waters subsided but it was 20 years before traces of the woman's body were found a short distance from the bridge.

#### Elkport Bridge

The *Clayton County Journal* (Elkader) of June 16, 1869, reported the minutes of a regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors. This resolution passed:

*Resolved*, That the sum of \$500 is appropriated for the purpose of covering bridge across Turkey at Elkport. Adopted.

#### McNamara's Covered Bridge

Spanned the Volga River at McNamara's [ford]. (See *Otisville Covered Bridge*.)

**Mederville Covered Bridge\***

Before it was replaced by a modern concrete and steel structure in 1918 this covered bridge was the longest single span bridge in Iowa and one of the highest in the country.

It soared 75 to 80 feet above the waterline of the Volga River and had an incredible length of 255 feet without a single center supporting pier, possibly the longest such span in the Midwest.

Dr. L. A. Meder, a dentist in Elkader, recalled in 1969 that "Boys used this bridge as a playground both summer and winter. In winter they coasted down the steep hills and across the bridge floor, which had been covered with snow to permit cutters and sleighs to use it."

**Milwaukee Railroad Bridge**

The Milwaukee Railroad used a covered bridge in its crossing of the Volga River at Littleport. (*Les Swanson believes there may have been other covered bridges used inasmuch as the Milwaukee crossed the Volga many times as it rolled across Clayton County.*)

**Motor Covered Bridge**

The *Clayton County Journal* (Elkader) of September 16, 1868, reports this petition was placed before the Board of Supervisors:

Petition of John Thompson and others asking for one thousand dollars to cover bridge at Motor across Turkey river. On motion laid on table.

Records were not found showing disposition of



this petition; nor is there corroborating evidence that Motor ever had a covered bridge.

#### Osborne Covered Bridge\*

A covered bridge spanning the Volga at Osborne may be the one reported by Grace Maier, Littleport librarian. She said it was on the highway between Littleport and Elkport.

#### Osterdock Covered Bridge

The *Clayton County Journal* (Elkader) of September 16, 1868, covering the September meeting of the Board of Supervisors, reported the passage of this resolution:

*Resolved*, That the sum of Five thousand dollars be and the same is hereby appropriated out of the Bridge fund for the completion of a Bridge at Osterdock's Ferry, upon condition that the commissioners appointed to contract for or expend the above appropriation, file with the Co. Clerk a sufficient bond that they will complete said bridge and the approaches thereto in a good and substantial manner; said work to be approved by a committee appointed by the Board, and that the Swamp Land Fund transferred shall be applied on said appropriation; said Bridge and approaches to be completed before the 1st day of September, 1869, and that the Clerk be authorized to issue warrants to said commissioners when such bond is filed and approved by him. Adopted.

There is no indication that this bridge was covered. However, this notice appearing in the *Journal* of February 16, 1876, is evidence that it was:

The undersigned will receive proposals until March 1st, 1876, for repairing the bridge on Turkey river, at Oster-

dock, Clayton County, Iowa. The bridge wants new chords above and below, and covering with shingle roof, and sides boarded up with dressed lumber and cracks battened. All to be finished by the 1st day of July 1876. Direct communications to

Isaac Otis, comr.

Elkport, Clayton County, Iowa

#### Otis Bridge\*

The covered bridge at Otis' Mill spanned Elk Creek about two miles south of Elkport. It was on a road heading west. This bridge was dismantled in 1905 and reassembled about three miles further south on the same creek, about a quarter of a mile east of the Brookshier farm.

The disastrous flood of 1925 wiped out many of the bridges in the area but the one near Brookshier's escaped with only minor damage. It was razed in 1937 after being washed out in the flood of 1933.

#### Otis Bridge

This covered bridge spanned the Volga near Elkport. (See *Otisville Covered Bridge*.)

#### Otisville Covered Bridge

*The Elkader Register* of May 14, 1873, carried this notice:

Notice is hereby given that sealed proposals will be received at the Auditor's office until the first Monday in June, 1873, to cover the main spans of the following bridges:

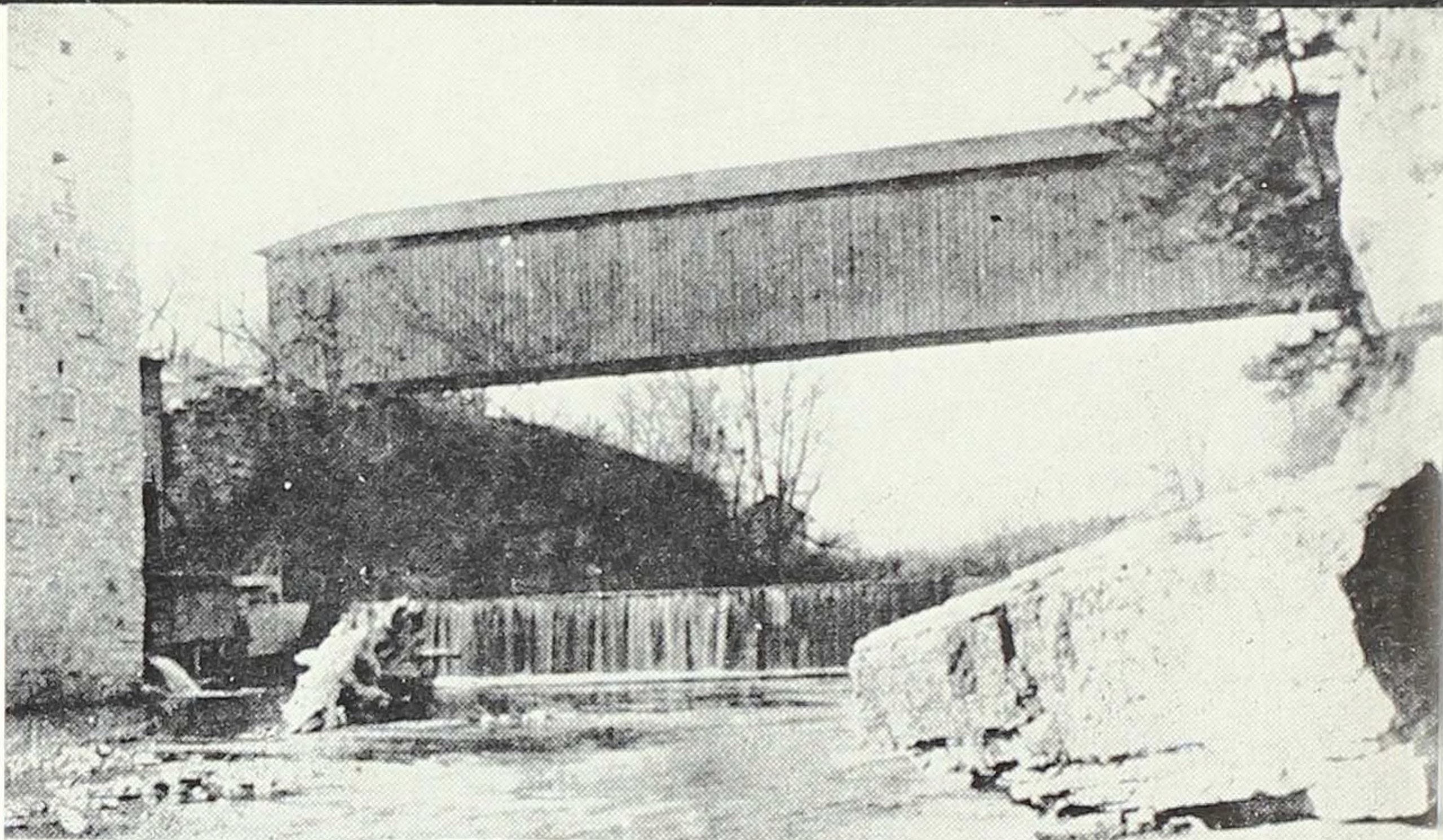
Bridge across Elk Creek, at Otis' Mill;



Hammond Covered Bridge — Marion County. *(Photograph by Sperry)*



Cutler-Donahoe Bridge — Madison County.

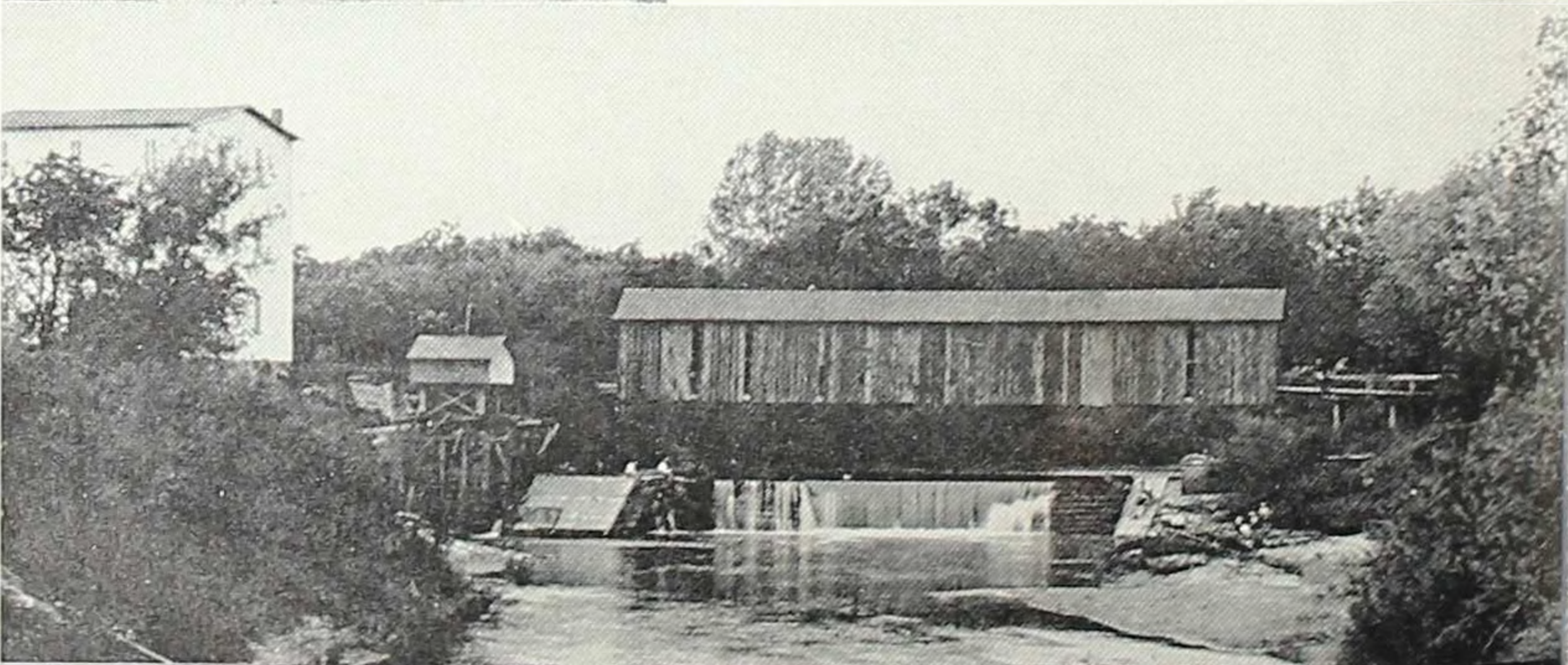


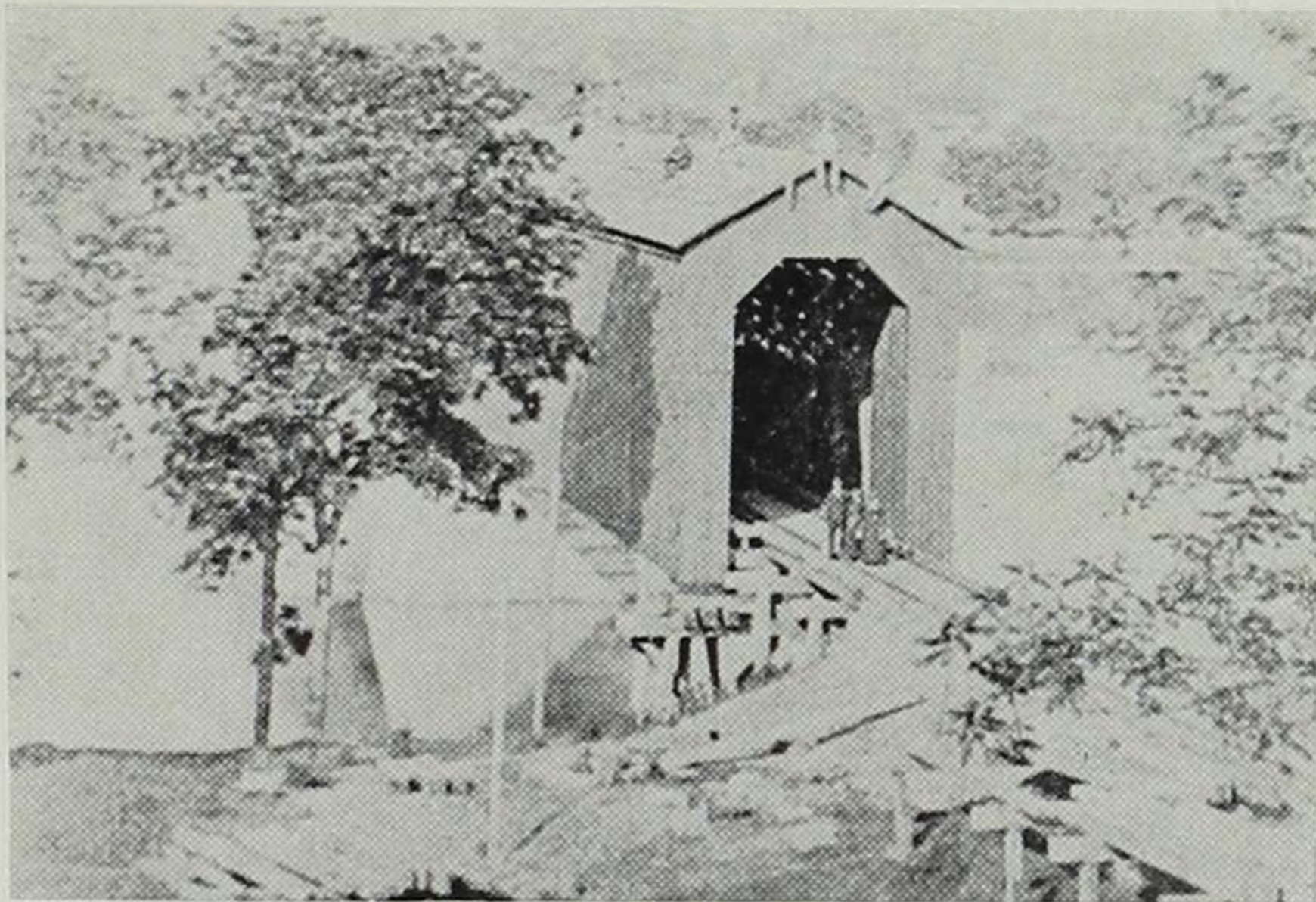
(Above) Clayton County's Mederville Covered Bridge, soaring 75-80 feet in the air, had an incredible length of 255 feet without a center supporting pier. It was the longest single span bridge in Iowa and one of the highest in the country. (Photograph from Les Swanson.)



(Left) Before it was dismantled, the Marysville bridge looked like this. Now it is to be divided and 40-foot sections will go to Knoxville and Pella covered bridge fans who will rebuild and place the bridges in local parks.

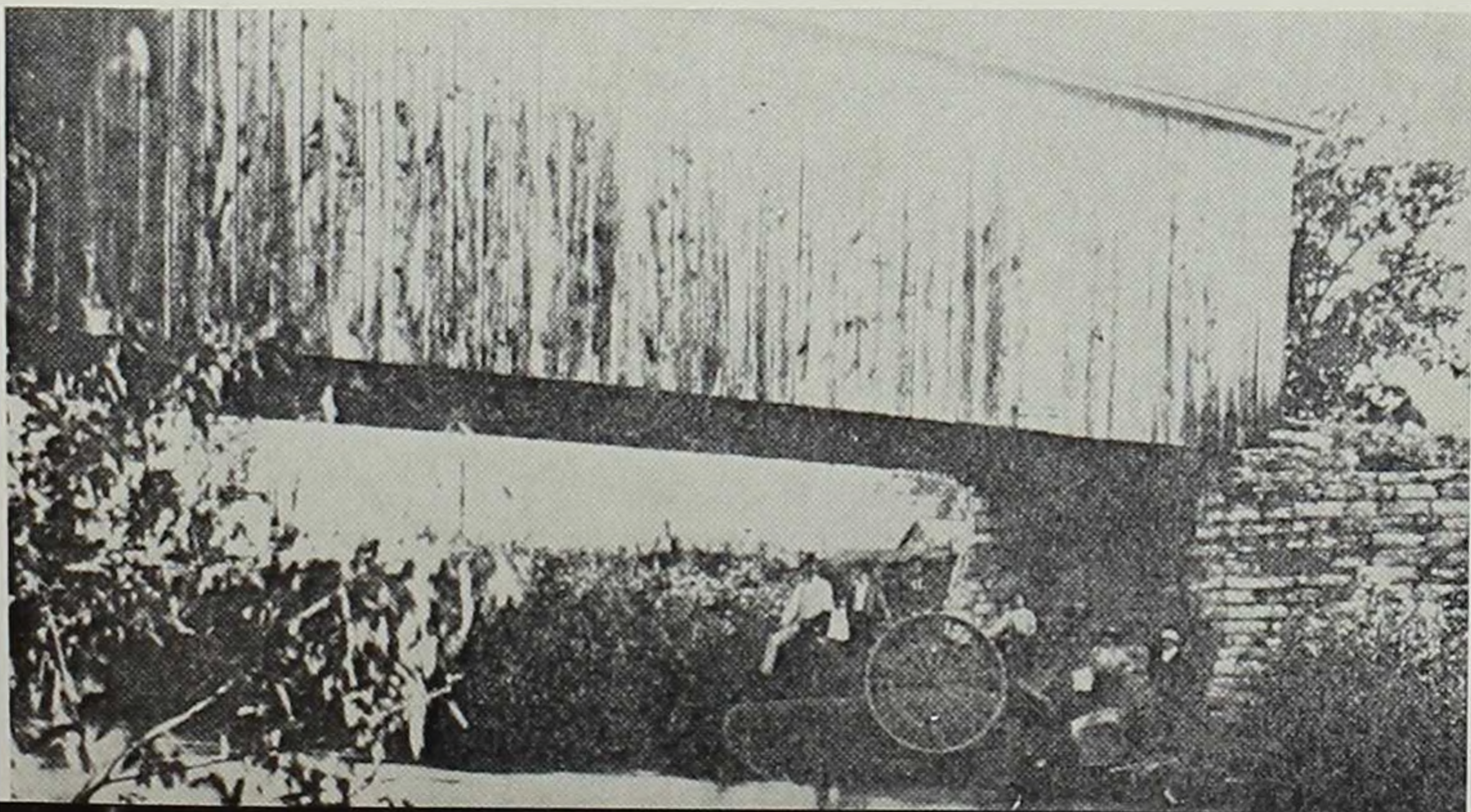
(Below) The Shambaugh Covered Bridge and Shambaugh Mill (left) in Page County. (Photograph from George Woolson.)

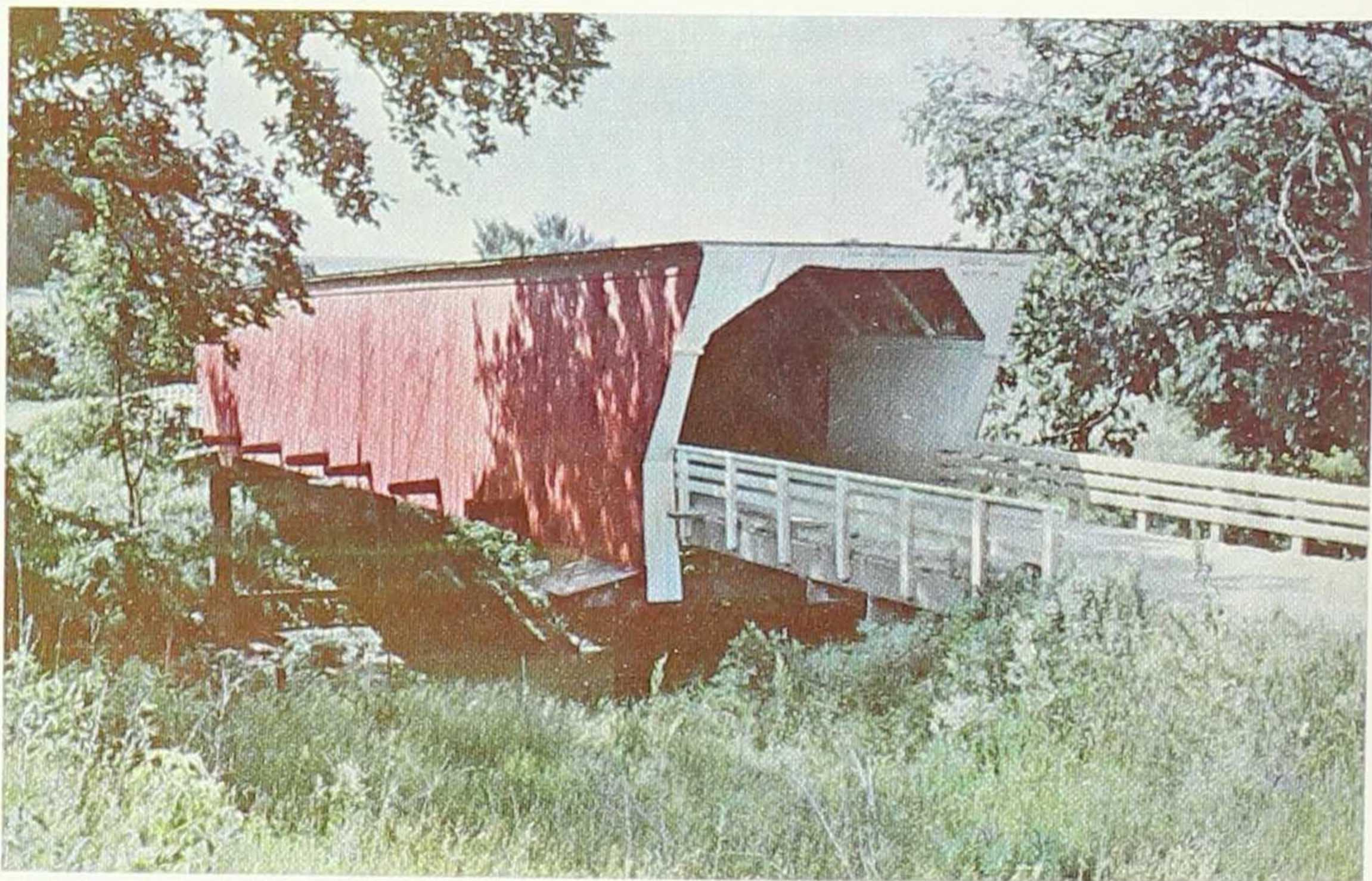




The Burlington Railroad's covered bridge across the Des Moines River at Farmington was believed to be one of the world's longest covered railroad bridges when erected in 1871. (*Photograph from Thelma Moreland.*)

A tragic accident is pictured here. A threshing machine dropped through the floor of the Volga City Bridge on July 24, 1898, killing two brothers. A third brother jumped to safety. (*Photograph from Les Swanson.*)





Roseman Covered Bridge — Madison County.



Holliwell Covered Bridge — Madison County.

*(Photo by Es-N-Len.)*



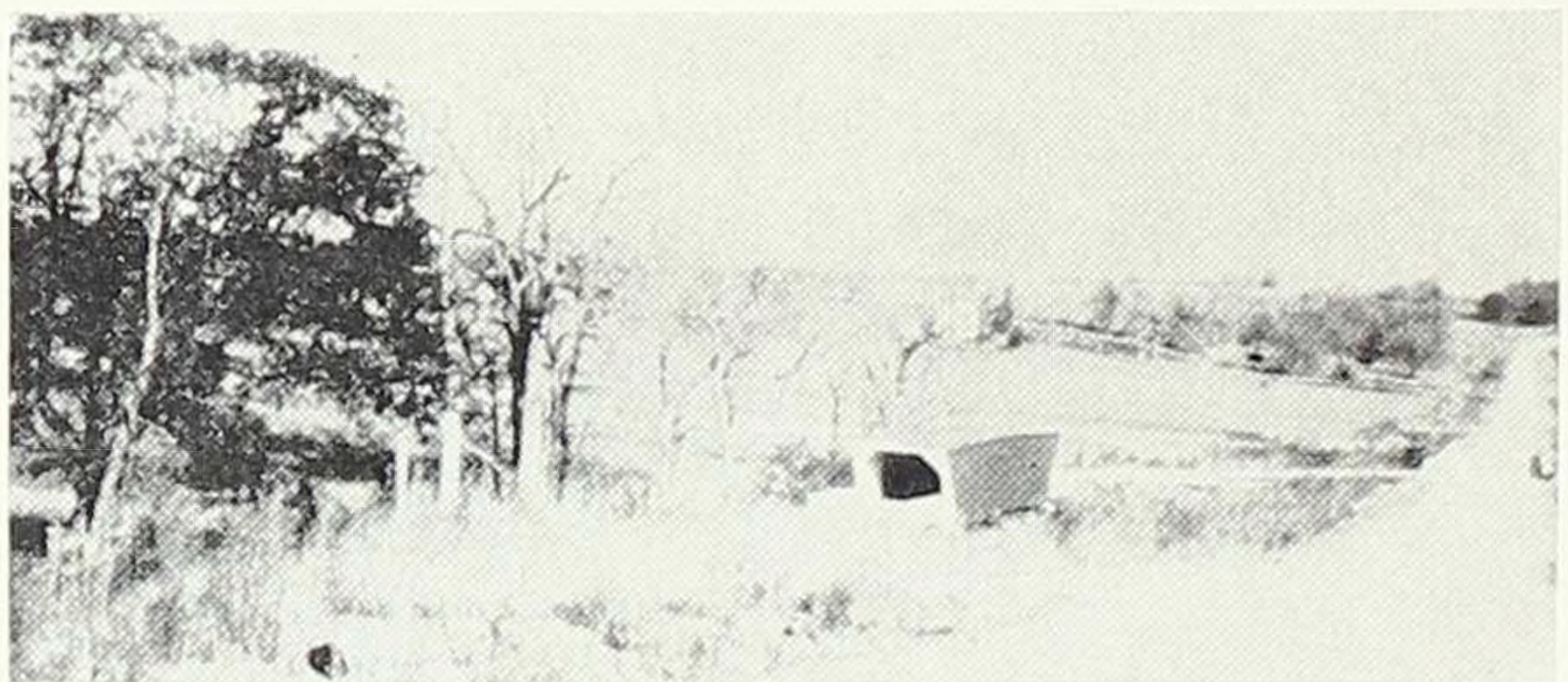
Imes Covered Bridge — Madison County.



McBride Covered Bridge — Madison County.



The pitched roof Cutler-Donahoe Bridge passes the flat-roofed Cedar Bridge on its 18-mile trip to the Winterset City Park in August of 1970. (*Winterset Madisionian Photograph.*)

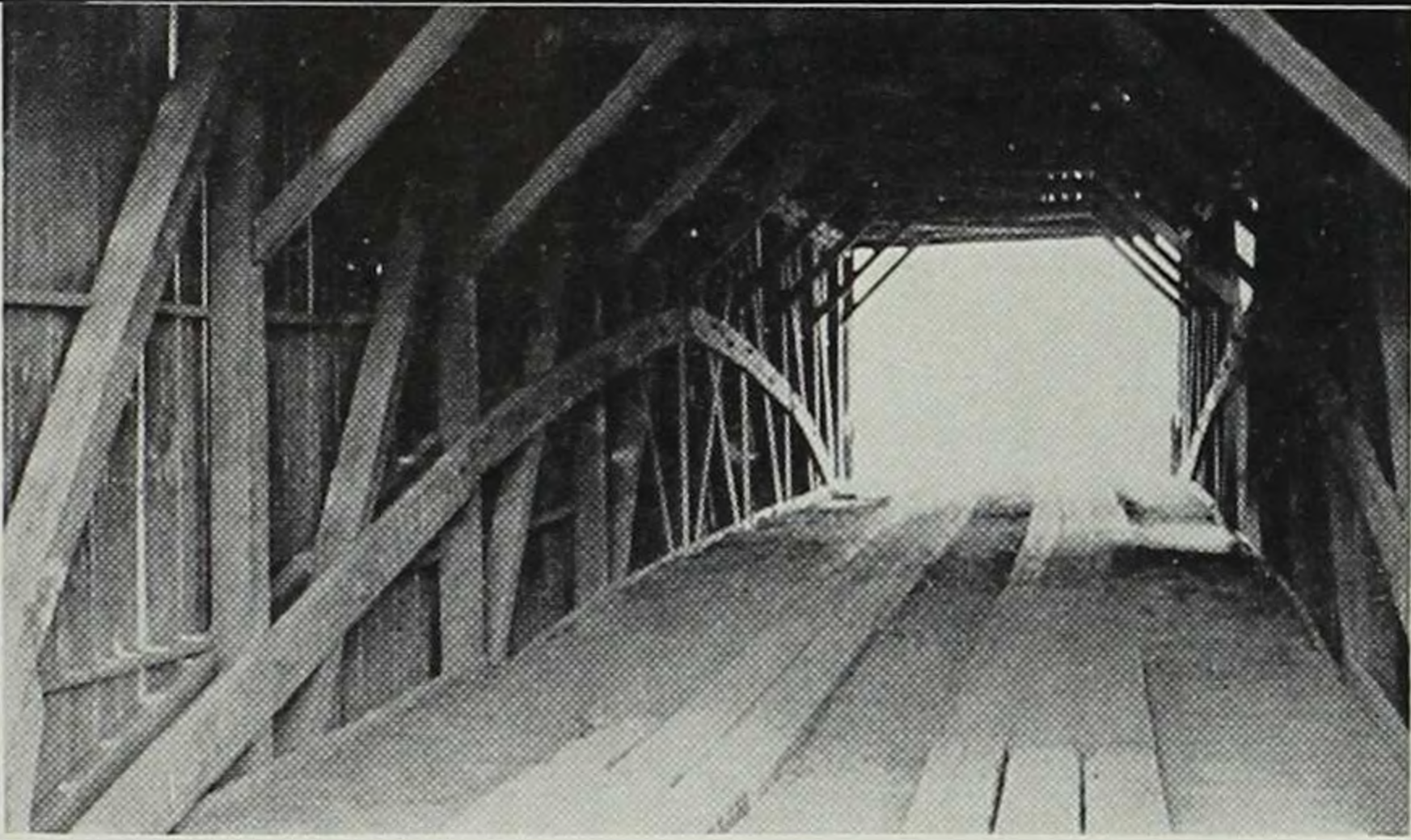


The McBride Bridge, bypassed by a new highway, is open for travel.

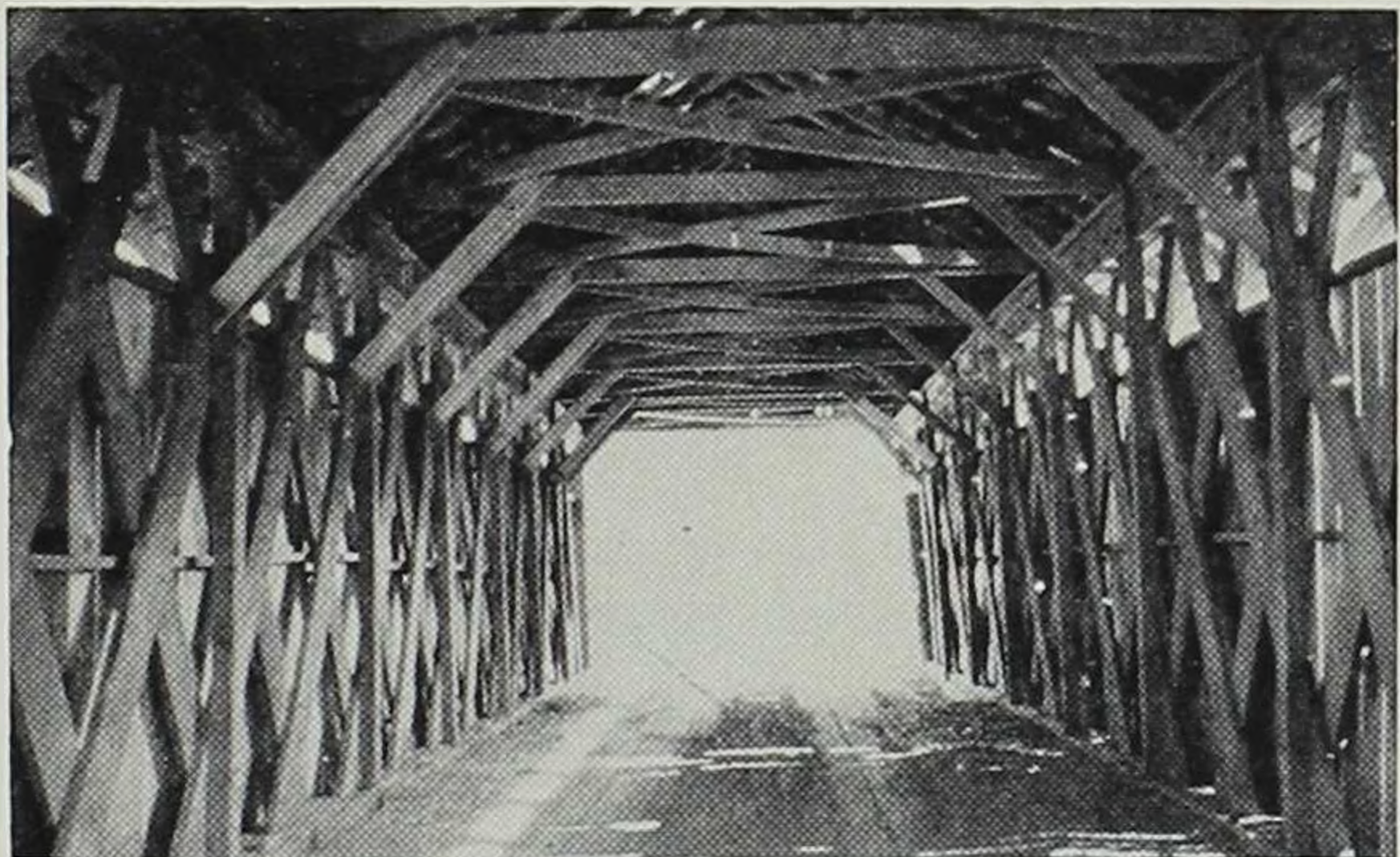
A 20-acre park became home for the Cedar Bridge after it was bypassed by the new road, under construction left. (*Winterset Madisionian Photograph.*)





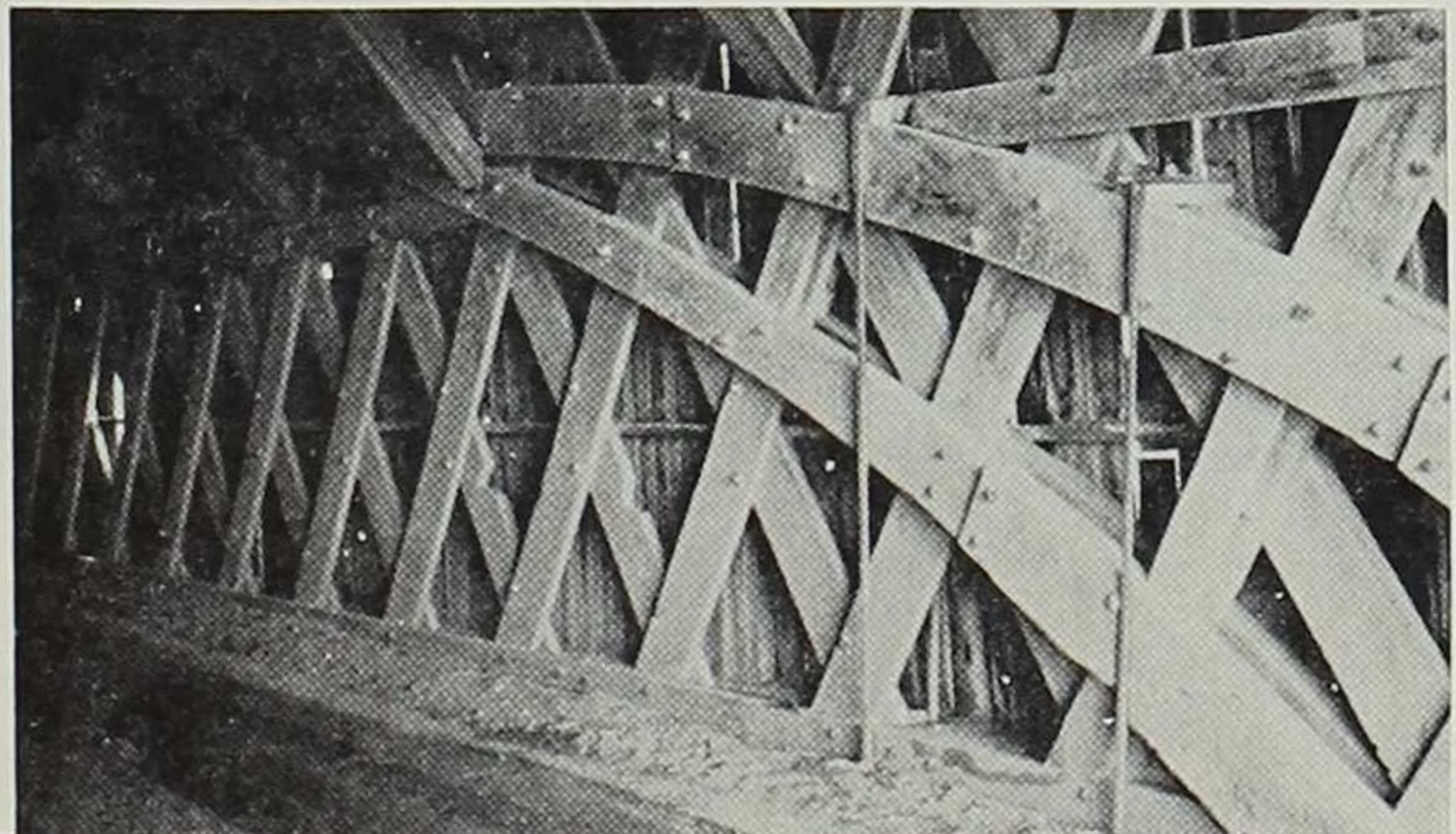


The Burr arch truss was used in building the Delta Bridge.



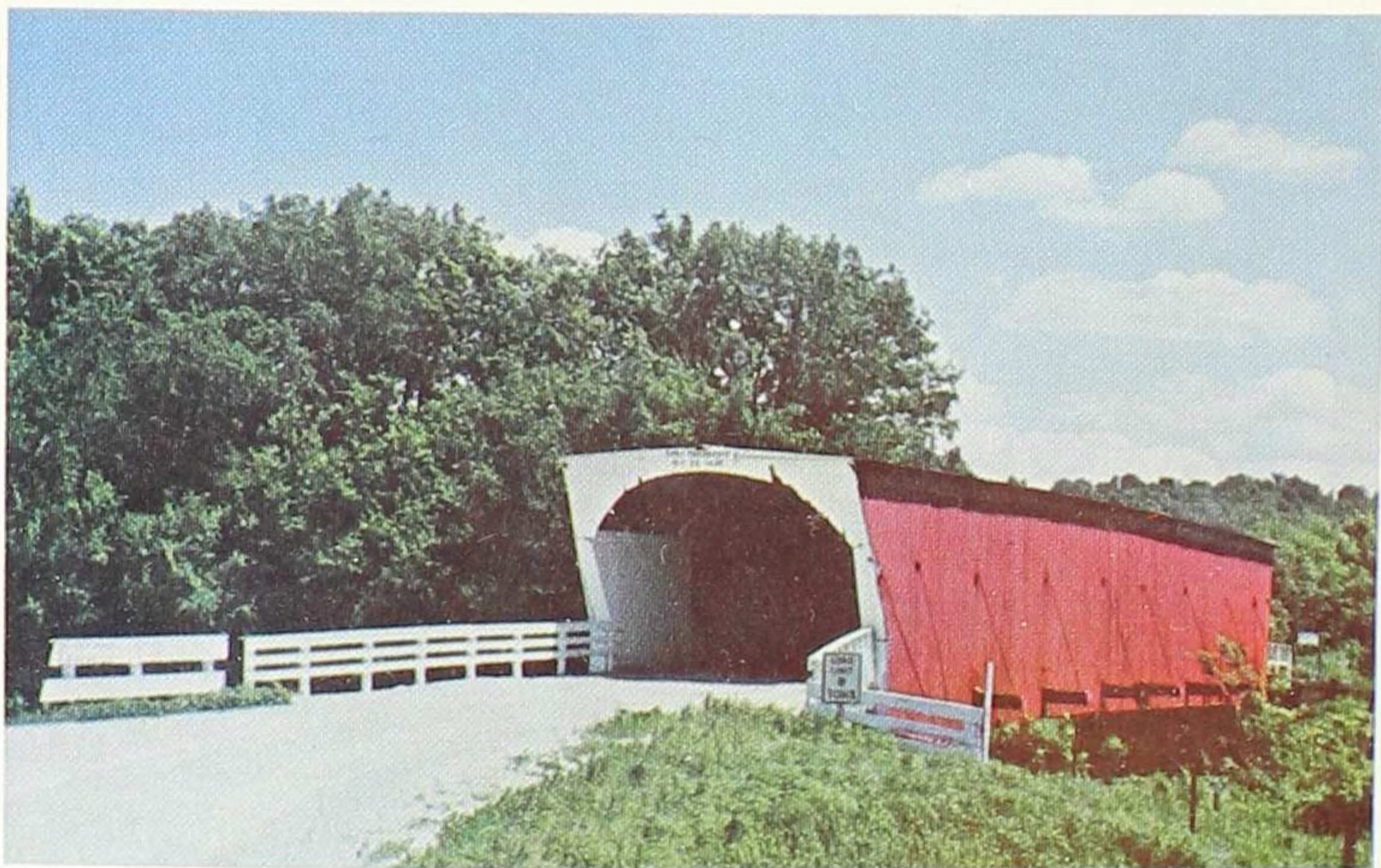
The Town lattice truss is shown in the Cutler-Donahoe Bridge. Trunnell pins, rather than bolts, were used in what remains of the original structure.

A close-up of the Town truss, with additional arches, used in erecting the Holliwell Bridge.





Cedar Lake or Casper Bridge — Madison County.



Hogback Bridge — Madison County.

Bridge across Volga river near Elkport, and at McNamara's with stock side boards, battened, and roof of 1st class shingles.

The Board reserves the right to reject any or all bids.  
M. Garber, Auditor.

Directly south of Elkport spanning Elk Creek, the Otisville Bridge was washed out in 1933.

#### Volga City Covered Bridge\*

The tragedy in connection with this bridge has overshadowed its history—and there is little of that. Volga City's correspondent to the *Dubuque Daily Times* tells of the mishap in the July 24, 1898, issue:

It has been an unusual week for accidents since Tuesday last. The most frightful one occurred Thursday evening [July 12, 1898] about 7 o'clock, when George and John Schuchman met death by their traction engine crashing through the large bridge that spans the Volga river at this point. Another brother, Fred Schuchman, was saved by jumping. The dead men have lived in this region for years, and until lately were proprietors of the large wagon works and saw mill. They leave families.

#### Dallas

##### Mill Slough Covered Bridge

This bridge spanned the North Raccoon River and mill slough at the north edge of Adel. Built in 1875, it was in constant use until replaced by a concrete structure in 1915. The road it served is now U. S. Route 169. Florence Clark, Adel librarian, says a Mr. Moffatt was the builder.

**Delaware****Worthington Covered Bridge**

Built in 1889 by the Dubuque & South Western R.R., this covered bridge spanned the North Fork of the Maquoketa at Worthington. It was washed out by the flood of June 14, 1925, which caused so much damage at Cascade.

The D&SW later became part of the Milwaukee Road. While Worthington is in Dubuque County, this bridge was in Delaware County.

**Floyd****Nora Springs Bridge**

A wooden bridge was built across the Shell Rock River at Nora Springs in 1868. It was erected at a cost of \$2,500 and was replaced in 1870.

**Rockford Bridge**

A wooden Howe truss bridge was built over the Shell Rock at Rockford in 1865. It was built partly at the expense of the county and partly at the expense of Rockford citizens. It was taken down in 1875.

**Marble Rock Bridge**

The first bridge spanning the Shell Rock River in Union Township was completed at Marble Rock in January of 1869. It was a Howe truss bridge. A. Spaulding of Cedar Falls built the 210-foot single span structure. It was condemned by the supervisors in February of 1875.

*(These Floyd County bridges are listed in the*

*History of Floyd County, published by Interstate Publishing Co., 1882.)*

### Hamilton

#### Boone River Bridge

Lorene M. Q. Hall wrote in the June 8, 1957, issue of Webster City's *Daily Freeman-Journal*:

First bridge in Webster City over the Boone river was on East Dubuque Street . . . Being washed out, it was replaced in the early 1870's by the combination wood and iron covered bridge which served until 1891.

### Henry

#### Abbey Covered Bridge

The *Henry County Press* of Mount Pleasant, on October 3, 1873, records from the September meeting of the Board of Supervisors:

The reports and vouchers of O. H. P. Buchanan, commissioner to superintend the building of a bridge across Big creek on the road to Oakland Mills; . . . were presented, examined and approved.

The *Free Press*, also of Mount Pleasant, on January 29, 1874, picked up this information during the Board's January meeting:

In the matter of bids received for covering the new bridge across Big Creek at Abbey's Ford, Ordered, That it be referred to William Allen, to report as soon as possible.

On April 16, 1874, the *Free Press* again reports on a Board meeting:

Ordered, that a warrant be drawn on the Bridge Fund, in favor of Wm. Allen, for the sum of four hundred forty-

seven dollars, to be expended in covering bridge over Big Creek, near J. B. Abbey's.

#### Hochreiter Bridge\*

The *Henry County Press* of February 24, 1869, told of this petition submitted to the Board:

Petition of Wm. R. Harkness and others for an appropriation to aid in building a bridge across Crooked Creek, east of the school house in Winfield; committee recommended that an appropriation of three hundred dollars be granted for this purpose, and that the Clerk issue an order on the Bridge Fund for that amount payable to J. B. Cook, under whose supervision the same shall be expended.

The report was agreed to, the bridge built, and it was washed out early in the flood of 1869. The Board, meeting in September, noted:

Bridge petition of John Werts and others asking that an appropriation be made to replace or repair the bridge known as Hochreiter Bridge in Scott Township.

It was reported as having been rebuilt on January 3, 1870. The work was done by a committee of citizens of the local road district, A. Beason, J. Hall and C. S. Young.

Sam Kepper, present owner of the land on which the bridge stood, says it was dismantled in January of 1916.

#### K-Line Covered Bridge

The *Henry County Press* in its "From Oakland" column, reported on September 23, 1868:

"The railroad bridge company are at work on the abutments for the bridge over the Skunk river . . ."  
 The bridge was sold by the Keokuk Northern Railroad Company early in 1869. There is some doubt that it was covered at this time. The line using the bridge in 1886 was chartered as the Iowa Northern Central in that year. The name was changed to St. Louis, Keokuk and Northwestern; then to the St. Louis, Keokuk & Western Railroad Company. When the last run was made on January 26, 1932, the bridge was covered.

#### Mud Creek Covered Bridge

The *Free Press* of Mount Pleasant reports the approval of this resolution by the Board of Supervisors at its September, 1874, meeting:

The report of Commissioner Allen, appointed to superintend the building of a covered bridge across Mud Creek on the Agency Road near Lowell, with receipts from J. M. Grubb, for \$735.00, being the cost of said bridge, was examined and approved.

#### Red Covered Bridge

This bridge, south of Salem, spanned Little Cedar Creek, on the old road between Fort Madison and the Indian Agency east of Ottumwa. Built in 1875, it was swept off its foundation in the flood of 1905. It was restored and lasted until another flood took care of it in the 1930's or '40's.

### Iowa

#### Amana Bridge

"The long, covered, wooden bridge, with its

tracery of carved initials, is out of the picture, along with its lesser quaint contemporaries," wrote Bertha M. H. Shambaugh in her book, *Amana That Was and Amana That Is*. Her statement only lends credence to the view of some old-timers that there was a covered bridge over the Iowa River between Homestead and Amana.

### Keokuk

#### Delta Covered Bridge\*

This 76-foot span over the North Skunk River was erected in 1867 by Joseph Merryfield and James Harlan. Maxon Randall was chairman of the Board of Supervisors which authorized the bridge. He had lived in Pennsylvania and probably is responsible for the Delta Bridge being patterned after the Pennsylvania Dutch bridges of the East. It is possibly the oldest bridge of this type erected west of the Mississippi.

Burr arch truss was the type of construction used in this bridge and the first roof was made of home-made shingles, or shakes. Pennsylvania bridges had a distinctive interior arch support which is clearly visible in the Delta Bridge. The cost was \$1,620, plus \$500 raised by popular subscription. It was built without a covering, but a year later the Keokuk County Board appropriated an additional \$350 for enclosing it.

When it was allowed to deteriorate, residents of Delta in 1955 joined with officials who authorized use of county funds in the restoration of the



bridge. The cost of repairs at this time exceeded the cost of the original structure, \$1,850. The Delta Bridge is now restricted to foot traffic only in reaching a small public park.

It is said that bridges of the Delta type were "built by the mile and sold by the yard" by energetic Yankee salesmen working in the Midwest.

### Madison

#### Afton Bridge

Eli Cox was the builder of the Afton Bridge. It was erected in 1872 at a cost of \$1,800, with neighboring citizens building 30 feet of apron. It was located on Middle River.

The bridge was taken out by an ice jam in the spring flood of 1924. It was replaced by an iron bridge which fell into the river in 1947's flood. A concrete bridge is now in use.

#### Backbone Bridge\*

Backbone Bridge was first mentioned in 1871 when W. H. Lewis was authorized to have it repaired. It was located near the end of the tunnel east of Pammel Park and was a victim of the flood of July 4, 1876. In April of 1877, it was reported that "The new bridge at Backbone is now in use." In August of 1878 the bridge was taken down and put up again "on or near where the road crosses Middle River."

There is some question as to whether or not this was a covered bridge when moved. It was after

that and remained so until it burned on July 8, 1914. In its later years it had been used for hay and grain storage and was a convenient place for political caucuses.

#### Brown Bridge

Brown Bridge, spanning North River, was probably built in 1868 by J. P. Clark. True to its name, it was painted brown. It was also known as the Ballentine, Walker, or Fletcher Bridge, after families who had lived near the bridge at one time or another. Brown Bridge is said to have been dismantled in the 1930's.

It was at this bridge that Jimmy Donahue was shot by vigilantes who were guarding the bridge in an effort to capture a jail breaker, Davies, in 1896. Jimmy, only a lad, came upon the bridge riding a horse and did not halt when ordered. He was nursed to recovery by sympathizing neighbors and schoolteachers. It should be noted that Jimmy was not a member of the Donahoe family for whom the Cutler-Donahoe Bridge was named. His daughter, Mrs. Margaret O'Neal of Winterset, still had the hat her father was wearing [in 1970] that night and it is riddled with buckshot.

#### Cedar or Casper Bridge\*

Also called the Storrs Bridge, it was built by H. P. Jones over the North River after completion of the Roseman Bridge in 1883. It is a Town lattice type bridge, as were most of the bridges built

by Jones. It was ordered by the supervisors in 1877 and completed in 1883. The bridge was moved to the Cedar Creek crossing in 1920 when changes in Highway Number 169 required a more substantial bridge.

A bridge and road bypassing Cedar Covered Bridge was built in 1964. The old road to the bridge, 150 yards away, was left open to sight-seers. In 1965 a 20-acre park, centering around this famous old landmark, was completed.

#### Cooper's Ford Bridge

An appropriation was made in June of 1877 for a bridge at Cooper's Ford. This must have been the second bridge at this location because the minutes of a Board meeting in 1886 specify, "that a bridge to be built at Cottonwood Ford on the North Branch must be like the one at Cooper's Ford."

It was probably built in 1878 with Eli Cox as the contractor. It was washed out in the spring flood of 1898.

In order to produce the curve the span required, Cox is reported to have searched the woods for crooked trees until he found one meeting his requirements.

#### Cox Covered Bridge

The Cox Bridge, the first covered bridge built in Madison County, was erected by Eli Cox in 1868, possibly assisted by his sons, John, George,

and Alfred. Cox built the bridge under contract with the county. His homestead was just south of the crossing. The Cox family built several of Madison County's bridges.

Spanning the North River, the bridge was torn down in 1913. It was removed because it was believed that the piers were placed so as to obstruct the flow of the stream. But when the new bridge was completed, the old piers were left.

#### Cutler-Donahoe Bridge\*

Authorized in September of 1870, nothing was heard of this bridge until William Anderson was authorized to accept it in June of 1871. It was built by Eli Cox over the North River on the old Donahoe road near Bevington. He used trunnell pins instead of iron bolts in what remains of the original structure, as did J. P. Clark in the McBride Bridge. The Cutler-Donahoe and Imes spans have pitched roofs; the remaining Madison County bridges have the flat-top roof, a peculiarity in this section of the Midwest.

This bridge now rests in a natural setting in Winterset's City Park, where it is open to foot traffic only. It had been moved 18 miles from its original location in August of 1970. The bridge had been declared impassable and had been bypassed by an iron bridge.

#### Hogback Bridge\*

Another Jones bridge, it was built over the

North River in 1884. A board containing the names of all the workmen was placed in the bridge. It was the last of the surviving bridges to be built.

#### Holliwell Bridge\*

The first Holliwell Bridge, built in 1854-55 over the Middle River, was not covered. It was carried away during a flood and when rebuilt in 1880 it was covered. It was moved to Sulgrove on North River to replace a bridge that had fallen.

Holliwell was built by H. P. Jones and G. K. Foster, using the Town/arch and arched queen post type of construction. The two center top beams are 39 feet long and arc from 9 feet to 13.2 feet above the floor. The two end top beams are 16 feet long and arc from zero to 9 feet above the floor. The total length is 110 feet, while the approach spans a total of 60 feet, a total of 170 feet, probably the longest Madison County bridge.

#### Imes or King Bridge\*

Also called the Munger or Mills, the Imes Bridge is of Town lattice with queen post construction. While W. H. Lewis was authorized to accept the bridge in June of 1871, the builder was probably J. P. Clark. The Board of Supervisors voted a bridge at Wilkins Ford on Middle River in January of 1870. There was considerable agitation about the location, delaying completion of the bridge. In September of 1887 it was moved to the Imes crossing of the Clanton, where it stands.

It is one of two with the original pitched roof.

#### King, McMillan, or Welch Bridge

Voted in 1877 and built over Badger Creek in 1878, this was the smallest of the county's bridges.

Built under the supervision of Milton Wilson, J. P. Clark received final payment for the bridge in June of 1878.

It was too narrow for the passage of large tractors and threshing outfits. Timbers were removed from time to time and the bridge had disappeared by the late 1920's.

#### Klingensmith Bridge

H. P. Jones is said to have been the builder of this bridge. Also called the Bennett Bridge, it spanned the North Branch in Madison Township. It was removed not long after 1933.

#### McBride or Burger Bridge\*

Also known as the Wiggins Bridge, this structure was voted in June of 1870 and accepted the following year. It was built by J. P. Clark over North Branch at a cost of \$1,700; later another \$175 was allowed to complete it. There were noticeable differences in this bridge and the Brown, both built by Clark. It was probably due to a ruling by the Board of Supervisors in January of 1870 that timber should be emphasized instead of stone and that bridges should be covered inasmuch as the "permanency of the bridge more

than compensated for the extra expense of adding a roof over it."

A concrete bridge was built over a new channel of the North Branch in 1966, bypassing the McBride Bridge. It was left standing "high and dry." However, it is open for traffic.

#### Rhyno's Ford Bridge

An allowance of \$1,600 was made for this bridge and the contract let to L. W. Winkley in April of 1872. The bridge spanned Clanton Creek in South Township.

#### Rose, or Dunmire Bridge

In August of 1871 a bridge was built across North River in the Rose neighborhood. It was 45 feet long with approaches of 7 feet on one end and 30 feet on the other. It was covered and painted at a cost of \$900. The Board named E. H. Conger to receive it.

This bridge was torn down about 1912.

It was pretty well determined late in 1970 that this was the bridge known as the Dunmire Covered Bridge. It was in Jackson Township, about eight miles south of Dexter.

#### Roseman Bridge\*

Also called Oak Grove Bridge, this structure was voted in 1877, but H. P. Jones, the contractor, did not begin construction until 1883, after he had completed Cedar Bridge. Roseman Bridge is 113 feet long and spans Middle River, five miles west

of Pammel State Park. This is another Town lattice with queen post bridge.

It is sometimes called the "haunted bridge."

### Mahaska

#### Warren's Mill Bridge

*The Weekly Oskaloosa Herald* of January 12, 1865, commenting on the actions taken at the January meeting of the Board of Supervisors, said:

J. Rhinehart, W. R. Ankeney and P. G. Butler, were appointed a committee to confer with Mr. Woodruff the contractor for covering the bridge at Warren's Mill, and see what settlement can be made.

At its June meeting, Board members again considered the Warren's Mill project and the *Herald* reported:

An appropriation of \$1000 was made to aid in the construction of a bridge across the South Skunk River at R. B. Warren's mill.

### Marion

#### Birch Mill Bridge

C. B. Campbell, Knoxville, mentioned this bridge but did not spot it as to location. It may be one of the nine bridges the late Edgar R. Harlan reported as being "still in use in Marion County." In the October 8, 1933, issue of *The Des Moines Register*, Harlan commented further:

Three of the covered bridges are near Knoxville over the Tracy and Whitebreast creeks, two are west of Harvey, Ia., over English creek, and four are near Marysville over North Cedar and South Cedar creeks.



**Durham Bridge\***

Durham Bridge was built over English Creek about a mile northwest of Harvey in 1880. Of Town lattice construction it had a span of 55 feet. It was destroyed by fire October 2, 1965. Firemen and officials at the scene said the fire was probably set.

In the mid-1950's the bridge had been rehabilitated as a tourist attraction. Four 18-inch I-beams were placed under the floor to take some of the weight from the wooden trusses. The bridge floor had been renewed in 1964.

After the fire the floor was repaired and it was converted into a conventional bridge.

**East Durham Bridge**

Bridging English Creek, the East Durham structure was about a mile and a half west of the Durham span. It was demolished in 1958 after it had been bypassed by a new road.

**Fawcett Bridge**

This bridge was washed out by the high waters of White Breast Creek on May 3, 1944. It was some distance south of the Overton Bridge, also on the White Breast.

**Hammond Bridge\***

Spanning North Cedar Creek south of Attica, the Hammond Bridge was built in 1870. It is a 60-foot Town lattice bridge.

**Howell Bridge**

Built about 1886, this bridge spanned the Des Moines River on the Pella-Knoxville road. It was originally 600 feet wide, but heavy floods cut a 400-foot channel on the north approach. A steel addition was built onto the old bridge, giving it a total span of 1,000 feet. (*Reported in a letter by John Vander Linden to the Pella Chronicle, March 24, 1949.*)

**Marysville Bridge\***

Built originally three and a half miles north of Dallas on White Breast Creek in the summer of 1891, this bridge was first known as the Davis Covered Bridge. In 1926 it was dismantled, each piece of timber numbered, and then trucked to Marysville where it was rebuilt over South Cedar Creek. When the bridge came on hard times it was formally transferred by Marion County to the Red Rock Lake Association in 1968.

It has been dismantled again and a 40-foot length has been turned over to the Knoxville Covered Bridge Fans, who will reconstruct and place it in the Marion County Park in Knoxville. The other 40-feet will go to bridge fans in Pella for restoration in a park there.

**Overton Bridge**

Washed out by the high waters of White Breast Creek on May 3, 1944, the Overton Bridge was built in the late 1890's. It was an all-wood structure with sides six feet high.

**Red Bridge**

Another bridge was reported by John Vander Linden to the *Pella Chronicle* in his letter dated March 24, 1949. He says the bridge was built in 1897 and went into the river the following spring because of high water. He did not locate the bridge or name the river it spanned.

**Page****Clarinda Bridge**

A covered Howe truss bridge was built in 1876. It spanned the West Nodaway River.

**Couch Bridge**

A Howe truss bridge was built in 1877, spanning the East Nodaway River.

**Franklin Grove Bridge**

This is the only covered bridge listed for the Nishnabotna. The Howe truss Franklin Grove Bridge was built in 1872.

Wallace A. Lindburg remembers driving over this bridge as a boy, and that "It was exciting and rather spooky." He thinks the bridge was replaced between 1905 and 1908.

**Hawleyville Bridge**

This was the first bridge built in Page County, in 1857-'58. It was built by John McLean and A. P. Richardson who received \$700 for the job. The bridge spanned the East Nodaway River.

**LaPorte Bridge\***

This bridge spanned the West Nodaway River

about four miles north of Clarinda, near the North Mills Post Office. Raymond & Campbell, one of four firms bidding on the bridge, were awarded the contract to build the bridge at a cost of \$20.40 for each foot of the 100-foot structure.

It was built in 1875 by order of the Board of Supervisors, composed of John X. Griffith, George McCullough, and Samuel Gorman. The bridge stood until the river channel was changed and water no longer flowed under the bridge. It was sold, December 19, 1924, for \$300 and demolished for its lumber.

#### Morsman Station Bridge

Spanning the West Nodaway River, this was a covered Howe truss bridge built in 1880.

#### Nixon Bridge

The Nixon Bridge, a Howe truss structure, was built over the East Nodaway in 1874.

#### Pace Bridge

The Pace Bridge, a Howe truss bridge, was rebuilt over the East Nodaway in 1879.

#### Shambaugh Bridge\*

The bridge at Shambaugh Mill was moved from its foundation in the flood of the West Nodaway in September of 1876. It was rebuilt in 1877 as a Howe truss bridge.

The mill was owned by James Shambaugh and stood until 1898 when it was struck by lightning.

## Polk

## Old Covered Bridge or Old First Street Bridge

The first bridge across the Raccoon River at the "Point" was built in 1862 by Dr. M. P. Turner. It was a toll bridge. It was carried away by an ice jam in 1865. It was rebuilt in the same year by Dr. Turner with financial help from people living south of the Raccoon. It was given to the City of Des Moines in 1868 and was to be free to the public "forever and forever." Condemned by the city, the old bridge was torn down in 1871. A new covered, wooden bridge was built at the same location in 1872. When the streetcar line was extended to Sevastopol, it crossed the Raccoon on this structure. Many times between 1885 and 1912 the old bridge was condemned but it refused to give up life until the course of the Raccoon River was changed in 1912.

Possibly heralding the end for the old bridge was this paragraph from *The Des Moines Capital* of March 29, 1912:

. . . The Raccoon river is on its annual rampage also. Last night it was found necessary to close the old covered bridge at First street. The south pier of the antiquated structure was weakened by the severe buffeting it received and police ordered the bridge closed . . .

## Owens Covered Bridge\*

Located on an old road abandoned in 1940, Owens Covered Bridge not only suffered the indignity of having its road re-routed, but having the channel of the North River, which it spanned,

straightened, leaving the bridge high and dry, in a dense timberland, and on private property.

The bridge was forgotten until the senior class of Carlisle High School, in 1959, undertook as its contribution to the community the project of attempting to restore the old bridge. The students interested the Polk County Conservation Board in the bridge and in 1968 it was moved to a small arm of a lake in Yeader Creek County Park on the southeastern edge of Des Moines. This location is about seven miles from its previous location over North River near Carlisle.

The Owens bridge was built by Sam Gray in 1887 or 1888. It is also known as the Person Bridge because Charles Person owned the land acquired by Gordon and Frederic Owens.

#### Toll Bridge

The first bridge over the Des Moines River at Walnut Street was erected by Judge T. H. Napier. A Howe truss structure, it was opened to the public on October 23, 1866, as a toll bridge. It became a free bridge in November of 1867. Temporarily repaired after the eastern truss was broken by a stampede of horses, it was replaced in 1871.

#### Story

##### Indian Creek Bridge

*The Story County Representative* of September 15, 1870, reports that the Board of Supervisors at its September meeting passed this resolution:

*Resolved*, That fifty dollars be appropriated out of the bridge fund to buy lumber to recover bridge across East Indian creek in New Albany Tp., and that the same be placed in the hands of the Road Supervisors . . .

### Van Buren

#### Burlington Covered Bridge\*

Until 1904 or 1906, an old covered wooden bridge, owned by the Burlington & Southwestern Railway, spanned the Des Moines River at Farmington. It was believed to be the world's longest covered railroad bridge at the time of construction.

*The Bloomfield Democrat*, on April 20, 1871, noted: "Bridge over Des Moines at Farmington contracted for . . ." On July 13, the *Democrat* gave these figures for new bridge: "825 feet in length between shore abutments—Howe trusses resting on four massive stone piers. Piers built of stones from Sagetown Quarries." Even Burlington's *Hawk-Eye* got excited and on July 20, 1871, reported the new bridge "will be completed on July 22. Rail will be laid across the bridge on July 29."

Thelma Moreland, Farmington historian, reports that William Franklin McLintock, Burlington Railroad bridge boss, engineered the building of the bridge. Mrs. McLintock was a Farmington resident until a few years ago.

### Warren

#### Bell's Farm Road Bridge

The *Warren County Leader* (Indianola) for

January 19, 1871, reported this action by the Supervisors:

Your committee appointed to superintend the letting and building of a bridge across North River at Bell's farm would now report:

Your committee met Sept. 12th, selected the site and let contract to P. Bucklew for \$700.00 in addition to amount subscribed. Said bridge is a high sided lattice bridge, 70 foot span, 30 feet apron on the North and 25 feet on the South end, all of good pine material. We received said bridge in November . . ."

#### Churchville Bridge

The *Warren County Leader* (Indianola) of September 15, 1870, reports the following resolution was passed by the Board:

*Resolved* by the Board of Supervisors of Warren County, Iowa that there be appropriated from the bridge fund the sum of \$500 for the purpose of enclosing and covering the bridge across Middle River, south of Churchville, Warren County, Iowa. Said bridge to be high sided.

Later on a motion was made which reduced the appropriation to \$100.

#### McGinnis Ford Bridge

The *Warren County Leader* (Indianola) of September 12, 1872, noted this resolution passed by the Board at its September meeting:

*Resolved*, by the Board of Supervisors of Warren County, Iowa, that an appropriation of one hundred and fifty dollars (\$150) out of the bridge fund be made to aid in building a bridge over Clanton creek near the resi-



dence of Alexander McGinnis to be expended under the supervision of John Wood and B. C. Berry . . ."

Berry told the Board on January 15, 1873:

I contracted with Mr. McCarty for the building of a low latticed bridge fifty feet span for the sum of five hundred and twenty-five (\$525) dollars, including a subscription of one hundred and ninety-five (\$195) dollars from parties interested, that the work has been completed according to contract, and Orders for three hundred and thirty (\$330) have been issued to contractor. I would further recommend that an allowance of nine dollars and forty cents (\$9.40) be allowed the contractor for extra bolts furnished for said bridge . . .

#### Middle River Bridge

Blanche Seid Lanning reported in a letter to J. A. Wymore, written May 25, 1959, that "There was a covered bridge across Middle River about a mile south of the Owens Bridge." She also indicated that the bridge was torn down between 1900 and 1902.

#### North River Bridge

Mrs. Lanning also said in the same letter, "There was another covered bridge across North River at what is now Carlisle Park." This, too, was probably dismantled between 1900 and 1902.

#### Otter Creek Bridge

In part the minutes of the September, 1870, meeting of the Board of Supervisors were reported in the September 15 issue of the *Leader*:

The undersigned committee appointed to contract for and superintend the building of a bridge across Otter creek on the Hammondsburg and Osceola road would report that they contracted with Thos. Barrett for an enclosed lattice bridge of seven feet sides, fifty feet span, and sixty feet approaches, all of pine, for \$805. Said bridge is completed in a good and substantial manner and warrants have been issued on the bridge fund to the contractor to the amount of \$805 less \$25 for timber sold to him.

Committeemen were H. B. Starbuck and A. Smith.

#### Spaulding's Bridge

This bridge spanned South River, about a mile above the State Road Bridge. (*Reported by Don Berry.*)

#### State Road Bridge

This bridge was located south of Indianola and bridged the South River. (*Reported by Berry.*)

#### Summerset Bridge

Spanned Middle River. (*Reported by Berry.*)

### Wayne

#### Seymour Bridge

The *Centerville Daily Iowegian* in its story of June 26, 1953, noted a covered bridge at Seymour.

## Acknowledgments

Our thanks go to the many people who have aided in our search for Iowa's covered bridges of the past as well as the present. Among those who supplied the results of their own research, contributed information, or provided pictures were: Leslie C. Swanson, Moline, Ill., whose book on covered bridges in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin is now in its second edition; Clee R. Crawford, now of State Center but formerly a resident of Winterset, a photographer par excellence as far as covered bridges are concerned; George D. Woolson, *Clarinda Herald-Journal*, Don L. Berry, 90-year-old newspaperman and photographer of Indianola, Al Efner of the *Ottumwa Courier*, and a host of others. Mrs. Fred Hartsook, whose account of Madison County bridges has made further research on that county unnecessary, should not be overlooked. Nor should the late G. M. Ludwig of Tiffin, who left much valuable information in his notes.

If you have information or knowledge of covered bridges mentioned, or not mentioned, please contact the author. For each bridge, he is interested in the bridge's name, location, creek or river spanned, builder and date of construction, length of bridge proper, approaches, date of disappearance, historic facts, and stories which may have developed around certain bridges.

Use this address to reach the author: State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

L. O. CHEEVER



Iowa's newest covered bridge, completed in 1969, is located in Cerro Gordo County, near Rock Falls.



Cutler-Donahoe Bridge, in its old location, wore its winter coat well.