

The **P**ALIMPSEST

DECEMBER 1949

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

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 records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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THE PALIMPSEST

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The Dubuque Shot Tower

If the end of an ordinary shotgun shell be uncrimped, out will roll scores of shining shot, beautifully burnished, perfectly graded as to size, and absolutely round. If the shot were not uniform both as to form and substance they would go wide of the mark. Some of them would fall short of the target because their imperfections would result in a lower velocity through the air than the average of the charge. Others would be diverted from the theoretical course because they were not round. Uniformity and perfection in shot are essential.

The evolution of shot has been a long process, but the basic principle upon which they are manufactured has remained the same since pre-Revolutionary days. Shotgun pellets begin their career at the top of a shot tower where molten lead is poured into a dropping pan with a finely-perforated bottom. In Washington's time the Natural Bridge of Virginia was used as the vantage point from which molten lead was poured and the re-

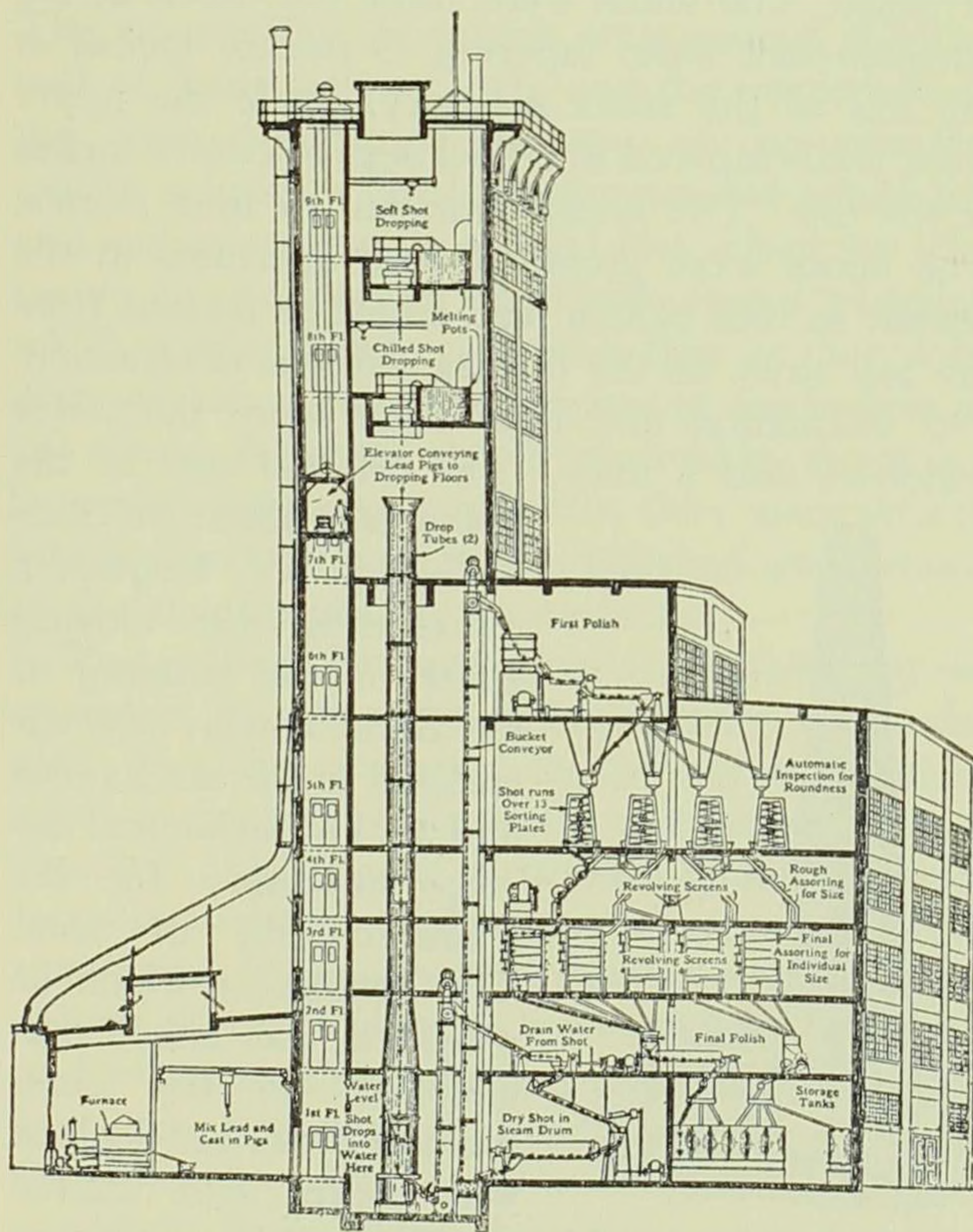
sulting pellets were picked up by hand from the stream below. Today the Winchester plant in New Haven, Connecticut, a nine-story shot tower, 154 feet in height, especially built and equipped, substitutes for the Natural Bridge. But Iowa, too, has an historic shot tower. The story of how shot was manufactured in the Hawkeye State is replete with interest.

Prior to the Civil War, Dubuque was an important lead mining center, but lead manufacturing was not well-developed. The lead ore that was mined at Dubuque would be shipped to St. Louis in pigs weighing seventy pounds each. At Herculaneum, just below St. Louis, a portion of it was made into shot.

From St. Louis the lead shot might be shipped to New York or other eastern cities, from whence residents of Dubuque could buy it only at a price much higher than that for which the finished product could have been manufactured and sold in Dubuque. To alleviate this situation and to stimulate local manufacturing, George W. Rogers and Company, in 1856, erected the now venerable old Shot Tower at Dubuque — a structure that has served well to connect the present with the past, and is worthy of a place in the annals of Iowa history.

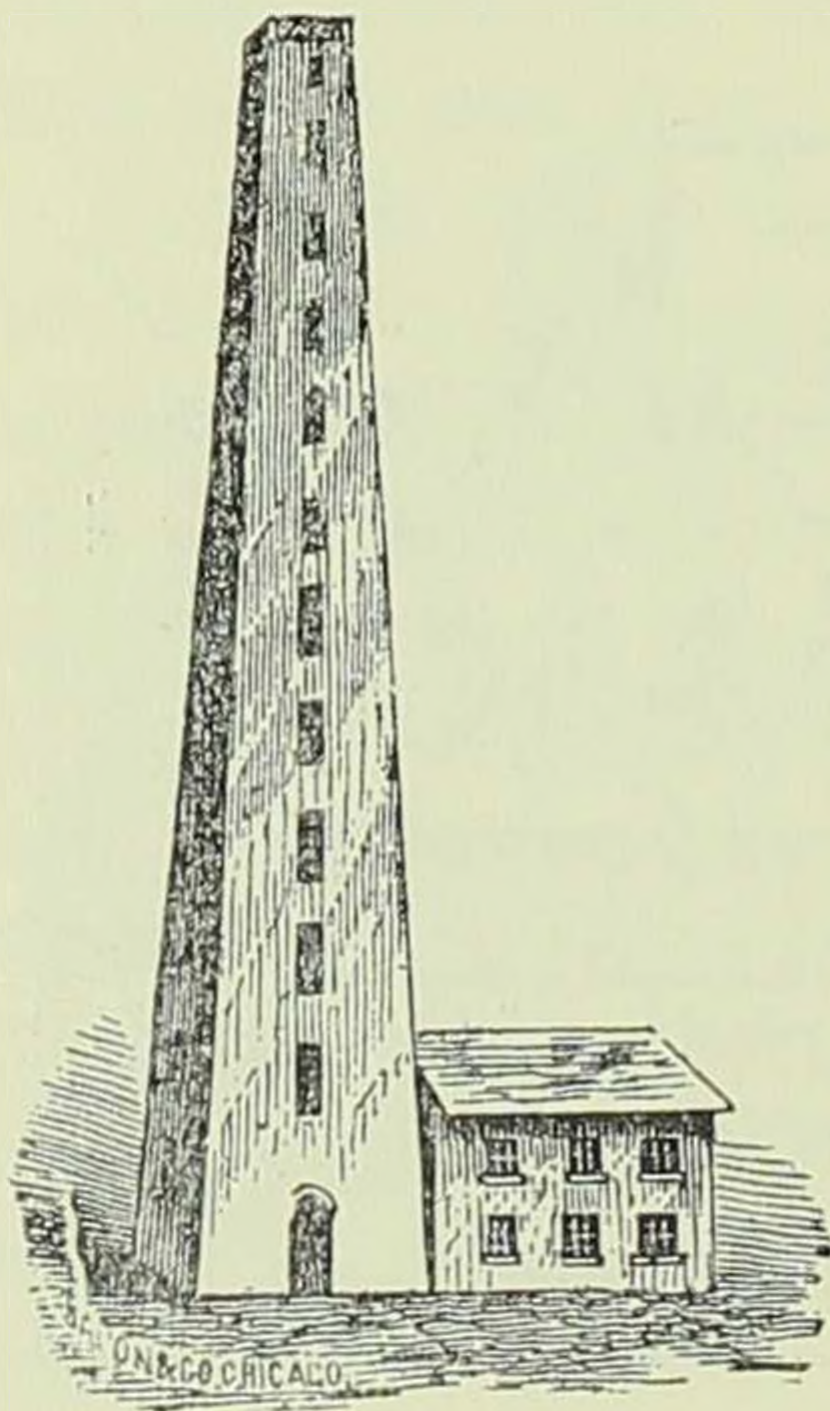
The Shot Tower was erected on what was then designated as "Tower Street," near the bank of

the Mississippi. It is now commonly referred to as being located at the corner of Fourth Street and



SCHEMATIC PLAN OF THE WINCHESTER SHOT TOWER

Commercial Avenue. Originally the structure was 150 feet in height. The first 110 feet of the obelisk were built of stone quarried from the limestone hills of Dubuque, and the remaining 40 feet were of brick. The walls were three feet thick at the nineteen-foot base, tapering to twenty inches at the top of the stone masonry, while the upper brick walls tapered to a thickness of twelve inches at the top. The tower consisted of nine stories. The floors were provided with apertures in the center, so that molten lead might be poured from the top story to the bottom without obstruction. For ventilation and light there were thirty-five windows and a door. The original cost of the tower was about \$10,000.



George W. Rogers, a gunsmith and the "moving spirit" in the building of the Shot Tower, was interested in the mechanism and in the mechanical devices necessary for the manufacturing of shot. The equipment which he provided was simple but effective. In the lower room of the tower the lead was melted and diluted

with a one-hundredth part of arsenic. This was

done to make the solution solidify more readily and more perfectly when cooling.

Drawn to the top of the tower by means of a windlass and lift, the molten metal was poured into a perforated vat or colander-like receptacle. The holes in this receptacle were spaced at intervals of about half an inch, and the magnitude of the holes determined the size of the escaping molten solution. The lead thus treated would fall in a steady stream for several feet. Then the glistening cascade would break into round globules, which hardened into pellets of shot as they were plunged into a vat of cold water at the bottom of the tower. After the shot were dried by steam in a large flat-bottomed iron kettle, they were poured into a revolving cask which polished away many of the rough spots on the surfaces.

The perfect shot were then separated from the imperfect by means of an ingeniously simple device. For this operation the pellets were raised again to the top of the tower and dropped into a "tester." This was a succession of inclined surfaces constructed in the form of steps. Between the several steps were little troughs into which the oblong and imperfect shot would fall, while the perfectly round shot, because of their greater velocity as they rushed down the incline, would jump over the troughs and be caught in a separate receiver. From there they were passed into a

"sizer" — a device similar to a chest of drawers, with apertures varying in diameter to select shot of various sizes. When the shot were assorted they were placed in twenty-five pound bags ready for shipment, or, for the "convenience of sportsmen," they were sometimes placed in sacks of twelve and a quarter pounds each.

In a modern shot tower essentially the same methods are employed as were used in the Dubuque Shot Tower more than three-quarters of a century ago. If a drop of lead is given a free fall it is formed into a perfect sphere by a combination of surface tension and air resistance. As the metal passes through the small holes of the dropping pan, it adheres to the bottom, as water does, until a drop of a certain size has formed, then it breaks loose. Therefore the holes in the suspended vat are smaller than the resulting shot. Thus a modern dropping pan is perforated with thousands of tiny holes and the downpour of molten lead forms a veritable spray.

In modern plants, too, as in the Dubuque Tower, gravity does the work of culling and sorting sizes. As the shot roll along inclined planes, the perfectly round ones gain momentum and jump the carefully adjusted gaps in the runway, while the less perfect shot are impeded and fall by the wayside. The perfect shot are then passed over revolving screens which are perforated to

sort the sizes. From beginning to end of the process of making shot there is no need for human hands to touch the shot. Just as in the old shot tower at Dubuque, gravity carries the shot from stage to stage.

Perhaps because of a lack of funds with which to operate, or it may have been for other reasons, the Dubuque Shot Tower passed into the possession of various individuals at an early date. In 1858 it was listed under the ownership of Cook and Langworthy and in 1859 it was leased to Peleg Tallman and Company. Tallman was essentially a real estate broker and not a manufacturer. Accordingly, the Tower soon "fell into the hands of J. K. Graves," a native of New Hampshire who had come to Dubuque in 1855, and entered the banking business. Later he became a successful banker, mayor of the city of Dubuque, a member of the Iowa General Assembly, and a railroad builder. But in 1859 his interests were divided between banking and the manufacturing of shot. Under the ownership of Graves the Shot Tower came into wide recognition, not only for its manufacturing interests, but for the legal controversies in which it became involved.

At the outset Graves manufactured shot in sufficient quantities to become a formidable competitor of a St. Louis shot manufacturing company. In 1862 Chadbourne and Forster of St. Louis

sought to eliminate this competition by purchasing the Dubuque Shot Tower. The purchase was made with the stipulation that Graves would not "erect another tower" for the manufacturing of shot in the Dubuque area. At the time of the purchase there was a rumor that the purchasers contemplated the investment of additional funds to develop the shot manufacturing industry in Dubuque. But despite the rumors there was no such promise, and obviously no such intent on the part of the purchasers. Indeed, quite the opposite view was expressed very vividly in *The Dubuque Daily Times* of July 27, 1862.

"The day before yesterday," said the *Times*, "Messrs. Chadbourne & Forster of St. Louis, paid \$3,000 for the Dubuque Shot Tower, for the purpose of having a troublesome rival out of the way. Although they promised to expend \$5,000 on it and set it at work, in order to pacify many dissatisfied business men in the city, they of course do not intend to do any such thing. No, they privately informed their agents that they intend to board up the windows, take out the machinery, lock the door and throw the key into the river. Rather than have another sack of shot made in Dubuque, said they, we will put a keg of powder under the tower and blow it higher than Gilde-roy's kite."

It is further reported that the day after the pur-

chase was completed and the property transferred, the wholesale price of shot, throughout the entire northwest, advanced twenty-five cents per sack. Chadbourne and Forster, it was said, manufactured 1,000 sacks of shot per day, thus bringing into their treasury an additional profit of \$250 per day — a sum sufficient to pay the purchase price of the Dubuque Tower in twelve days.

The attitude of Dubuque businessmen toward the new purchasers was not a kindly one. Yet it was frankly admitted that purchasers have "a perfect right to buy up their rivals in business, and make as much money as they can." But the incident was not to be passed over lightly. No sooner was the Shot Tower sold than a party of Dubuque residents, with Graves as one of the sponsors, took a wagonload of all the necessary implements and started out to experiment with an idea that had been current in Dubuque for some time.

Graves and his party had melting pots, lead, ladles, ropes, tubs, and firewood. Going out to the western edge of Dubuque they soon came to an open shaft of an abandoned lead mine about 140 feet in depth. A short distance from the shaft they built a fire and proceeded to melt a quantity of tempered lead. Attaching ropes to a washtub partly filled with water, they let it down to the bottom of the pit. This was for the purpose of catching the pellets of lead they were about to

pour forth. A sieve was adjusted at the ground level above the tub and molten lead was poured through in the same manner as had been pursued at the Shot Tower.

When the tub was slowly and laboriously drawn to the surface, and the contents examined, there were exclamations of joy. "Hurrah! It's a success!" one of the party declared. Soon other abandoned mines were sought, and for a time it appeared that this improvised method of manufacturing shot in abandoned mine shafts might furnish real competition in the shot-producing industry. The purchasers of the Shot Tower sought to restrain the manufacture of shot by this method, but they were unsuccessful. It was not expedient for them to buy all of the abandoned mine shafts in the Dubuque area, and so for several years shot manufacturing by this method flourished in Dubuque.

Meanwhile the old Shot Tower on the bank of the Mississippi River witnessed many changes. In 1874 John Deery obtained permission from the owners to place on top of the tower "an equestrian statue of Andrew Jackson." The statue, made of wood, it is said, was the work of Thomas Kavanaugh, and was set in place by John Dreyhouse. Towering above the city and overlooking the Father of Waters, the statue remained until, badly weathered and worn, it was removed in 1881.

In later years the old Shot Tower was used by the Standard Lumber Company as a watchtower. In the river front fire of 1911 much of the inside framework of the historic structure was destroyed. Since then the tower has served only as "a habitation for sparrows and pigeons." But it is worthy to be dedicated to a more noble purpose.

Subsequent to the fire, the site of the Tower was known as "block 7 of Dubuque Harbor Improvement Company's Addition to Dubuque," and it was planned that it should become a part of the Allison-Henderson Memorial Park. But, alas, well-laid plans sometimes go awry. And so the old Tower has stood through the years, awaiting the time when interested citizens should rescue it from oblivion.

When a good man serves his fellows, we honor him; when he retires, we give him praise. So may it be with our historic landmarks. In the printed page, in pictures, in story, and in memory, the Old Shot Tower still lives and holds a place unique in the annals of Iowa history. Serving as a connecting link between the pioneer past and the present, representing an industry that once prospered in Dubuque, the Shot Tower has witnessed the influx of immigrant hordes, the growth of the grain trade, the development of the rafting and lumbering industry, the coming of the railroad, the bridging of the Mississippi, the fearful ravages of fire

and flood, and scores of other dramatic events.

The Shot Tower saw the arrival of Abraham Lincoln at Dubuque in 1859. It was there to greet Amos Bronson Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Wendell Phillips, Mark Twain, and a host of other eminent visitors. The Shot Tower was a familiar sight to the Langworthy brothers, to Austin Adams, David B. Henderson, William Boyd Allison, and many other distinguished citizens of Dubuque. It has stood sentinel-like to welcome the return of soldiers and sailors of four wars — the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II. It is, indeed, an historic Iowa landmark that should be preserved for the edification of future generations.

ROGER SULLIVAN and J. A. SWISHER

The Plattsmouth Crossing

River valleys have always been of great importance as arteries of transportation and commerce. In pioneer days they were routes of reconnaissance and exploration into the hinterland where usually no other paths of travel were available. As new regions developed the river valleys were frequently followed by the immigrants and later by railroads and modern highways.

In the Middle West the valleys of the Ohio, the Mississippi, and the Missouri dominated the pattern of early settlement. Beyond the wide Missouri, the great Platte River valley stretched westward for nearly a thousand miles toward the Pacific. This valley was destined soon to become the chief trail to the far west, and later, upon the advent of the "iron horse," the principal route of mass transcontinental travel.

Building feverishly across the prairies of Iowa after the Civil War, several railroads converged upon the town of Council Bluffs, which Abraham Lincoln had designated in 1862 as the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad. One important road, however, the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad, subsidiary of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy, followed a more south-

erly route across the state, heading directly for the mouth of the Platte River, some twenty miles below the Union Pacific junction at Council Bluffs. Apparently it was the strategy of this line to bypass the "Bluffs" and Omaha, and to follow a more direct route to the West.

The "Plattsmouth Crossing" of the Missouri River has always been considered an important one. In early days there was keen competition between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Nebraska City, Plattsmouth, and Omaha, Nebraska, as to which might eventually inherit the lion's share of the rapidly developing transcontinental business, and thus eventually become located upon the chief travel route to the far west. This matter, it seems, was at last definitely settled when Lincoln designated Council Bluffs as the point of origin of the Union Pacific Railroad.

This decision, it must be noted, did not deter the Burlington from continuing to take advantage of the more direct route from Plattsmouth to the Rockies via Lincoln, particularly in handling its through-freight traffic. While this traffic pattern for freight is still in operation, all through-passenger business is now routed via Omaha, an important connection productive of considerable passenger revenue.

From the advent of the white man the Platte seems to have left an indelible impression on ex-

plorers and cartographers. William Deslisle located what is undoubtedly the Platte on his maps of 1703 and 1718. Victor Collot in 1796 declared the "river Plate" was as "large as the Missouri, and runs with such rapidity, that oars and poles are insufficient to resist the current; the only mode of going up is by towing . . ., its waters are white and of a chalky color; the lands through which it flows are also chalky; its banks are bordered by small bare slopes, and the aspect of the country is in general dry and barren."

Lewis and Clark arrived at the lower mouth of the "Great River Platt" on July 21, 1804. They found the "velocity" of its current "much more rapid than the Missourie" and ascended it with great "dificuelty" a mile above its mouth. Stephen H. Long arrived at the mouth of the Platte on September 15, 1819. He noted that in periods of flood the Platte poured a greater volume of water into the junction with the Missouri than did the Big Muddy itself. Above the Platte, which is the largest tributary of the Missouri, the scenery of the Big Muddy changes and becomes more interesting. According to Reuben Gold Thwaites the mouth of the Platte was taken as the line between the "upper" and "lower" Missouri. Small wonder that the surveyors for the Burlington railroad and the Plattsmouth crossing should be quick to recognize the Platte as the Gateway to the West.

In the years that followed, other notable Americans visited the mouth of the Platte. In 1842 John C. Fremont camped for one night on the projecting bluff located just below the present site of Plattsmouth at a place still known as Fremont's Point. Six years later, in 1848, Libeas Coon appeared on the scene and commenced operating the first ferry at Plattsmouth. This was the beginning of a crossing which ever since has been important.

Two early railroads, before their consolidation, figured prominently in the history of the "Plattsmouth Crossing": the Council Bluffs and St. Joseph Railroad along the Iowa side of the Missouri, and the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad in Iowa. The latter headed westward from Burlington to meet and connect at Plattsmouth with a new company, the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad in Nebraska, and thence to proceed westward from this point.

On May 19, 1858, an organizing convention for the Council Bluffs and St. Joseph Railroad was held in the "Bluffs." Ground was broken for the construction of the railroad about a mile south of town on November 7, 1859. After many delays and reorganization, the line was finally completed to St. Joseph in July, 1868, where connection was made with roads which were already completed into St. Louis and Hannibal.

Meanwhile, the Burlington and Missouri River

Railroad in Iowa had been completed to Ottumwa on September 1, 1859. Further westward progress was temporarily halted by the Civil War, but in 1865 the road once more began to push onward across southern Iowa toward the Missouri. The last spike was driven at Glenwood in November, 1869, and service was opened to East Platts-mouth (Plattsville) on January 1, 1870. On December 4, 1869, the first Burlington train was operated into Council Bluffs over the Council Bluffs and St. Joseph line, via Pacific Junction. Regular service, however, between Council Bluffs and the East over the Burlington, was not inaugurated until January 3, 1870.

On July 4, 1869, to the accompaniment of a "brass band and a parade," ground was broken at Plattsmouth for the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad in Nebraska, on which services were opened to Lincoln on July 26, 1870. There being then no bridge or adequate ferry service at Plattsmouth capable of handling the rapidly increasing rail business, it became imperative that the company provide their own facilities.

Accordingly the road procured a transfer boat, or car-ferry, the *Vice President*, which was built on the Ohio River at Jeffersonville, Indiana, probably in 1873. Captain Peter Mann supervised the construction of the boat. When completed it was brought to Plattsmouth to enter the railroad serv-

ice. On its first voyage it carried a deckload of lime or cement in barrels from Louisville, Kentucky, to St. Joseph, Missouri. The cargo was unloaded by Negroes "driving old-fashioned two-wheeled drays, having a long tailboard and drawn by a mule."

The journey from St. Joseph to Plattsmouth was "made light, and took about two days. When we rounded Fremont Point, — blew the whistle for town, about half the population of Plattsmouth was gathered on the river bank at the foot of Main Street to greet the new arrival." The *Vice President* had a carrying capacity of five freight cars or three passenger coaches, and thus could handle considerable traffic in a day. It was manned by a crew consisting of "a captain, pilot, clerk, two engineers, two firemen, six deck hands, cook and night watchman. The captain's cabin was on the right side, and the clerk's cabin was on the left side, forward of the wheel house. The kitchen and dining room were on the left side, and bunk room on the right side back of the wheel house," furnishing commodious quarters for all hands.

The rapidly increasing flow of traffic to the West during the late 1870's soon convinced railroad officials of the necessity of the immediate construction of a bridge at Plattsmouth to replace the ferry which was fast becoming inadequate to

handle the business. The attendant delays were both annoying and costly. This project was undertaken in 1879, with George L. Morrison as Chief Engineer in charge of construction, upon authority of a charter granted ten years previously by the state legislature of Iowa.

The Plattsmouth bridge, the finest built over the river to that time, crossed the Missouri River several miles below its confluence with the Platte. It was unique in several respects. It was the second ever built of steel, the first having been built the preceding year by the Alton railroad across the Missouri River at Glasgow, Missouri. The steel employed in construction was made by the "Hay" process, an invention of the illustrious Abram Tuston Hay of Burlington, Iowa, who contributed much to metallurgical progress. Previous to this time, iron had been the metal used in bridge building, but iron frequently crystallized, became brittle, and broke without warning, with disastrous results.

From a description given by Chief Engineer George L. Morrison to J. A. McMurphy of Plattsmouth, we learn that the bridge consisted of five spans — two large spans of 400 feet each, and three "deck spans" of 200 feet each, resting on six stone and concrete piers. In addition, on the east side there were 1,560 feet of iron viaduct, 1,440 feet of which consisted of 48 spans of 30 feet each.

The bridge floor was uniform on both the iron viaduct and the five spans. On "track stringers" which were spaced nine feet apart, nine inch square oak ties were spaced fifteen inches apart. These ties, twelve feet long, were locked in place by oak guard rails ten inches square. On these ties the railroad tracks were laid. A foot-walk of two inch oak planks was built on each side of the bridge, and a wire cable for a hand rail was strung through upright iron stanchions placed at 25 foot intervals.

The cost of the bridge as reported for taxation was \$600,000. Its super-structure and sub-structure were designed by Chief Engineer George L. Morrison. The two longer spans were built by the Keystone Bridge Company of Pittsburgh.

The erection of a structure of such magnitude, in those early days before the invention and perfection of modern erecting machinery, was no small undertaking, presenting many serious problems to be handled by the engineers and construction foremen in charge of the work. After the piers were completed, a temporary trestle was built to support the permanent structure while in the process of erection. The ever-present ominous hazard of high waters caused the builders many anxious moments, but construction went forward with high efficiency and dispatch, and was finally finished about as scheduled.

The bridge when completed was subjected to severe tests before it was accepted from the contractors. The *Plattsmouth Daily Democrat* of August 30, 1880, reported that the test was made by eight locomotives which were run simultaneously onto each of the two 400 foot spans. "First to cross the bridge was the special train of the B. & M. R. R. consisting of coach 15 and locomotive 17 with Chas. Patterson as engineer and Wood conductor. Following that came the C. B. & Q. special train with locomotive 270; Andrew Johnson, engineer; dining car San Francisco, Frank Drury in charge; Pullman car Rochester, and special coach No. 50.

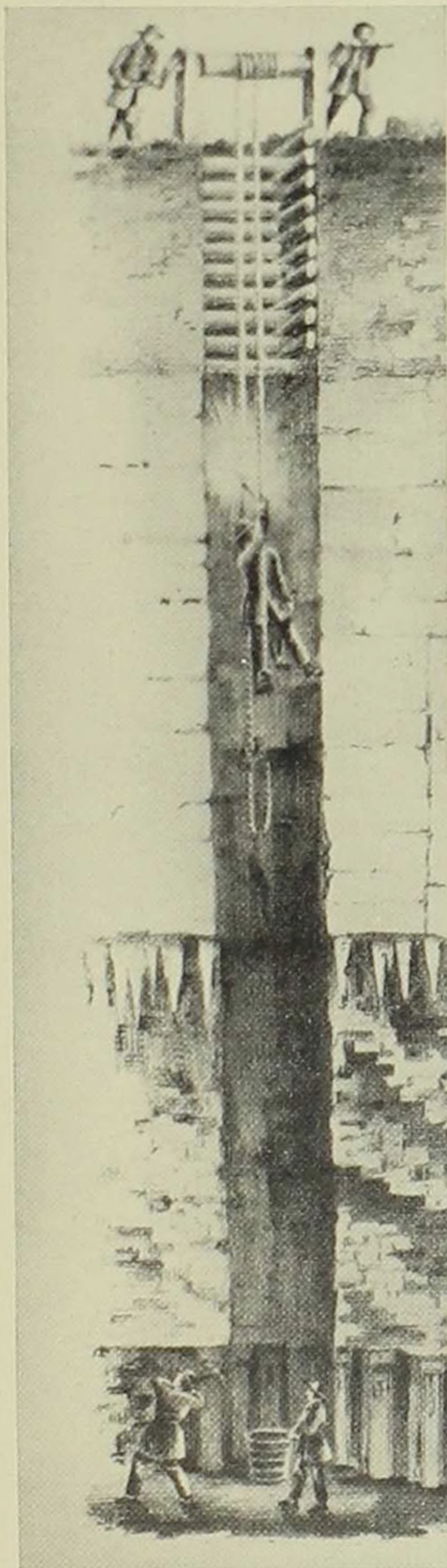
"The test engines then followed in two sections, four in each, up the long grade on the Iowa side, and when near the east end of the first span they coupled the sections together, making eight in all, and ran on the span, occupying 320 feet of the 400 feet length of span. They halted there while civil engineers with levels and instruments noted the deflection caused by the enormous weight placed upon the spans, and found that it settled in the centre only three and one-sixteenth inches, under a weight of 440 tons.

"After the locomotives were run off the span, it resumed its former position, which shows that the steel of which it is made is both tenacious and elastic, an admirable combination of qualities.

The next one west was tested in the same manner, and after it was proved safe the bridge was pronounced accepted and ready for regular traffic. All the whistles on steamboats and locomotives at once were sounded and the chorus of twenty or more blended and echoed over the Missouri bluffs.

"It was a grand sight and well repaid the lookers-on to see those powerful locomotives, of 440 tons aggregate weight, standing on the spans, and thousands were there to see it from Plattsmouth and adjoining cities. We noted Judge McDill, of the Iowa board of railroad commissioners; Hon. Wm. Hale, of Glenwood; also Mr. A. Gottlieb, of Pittsburg, who is president of the Keystone Bridge Co.

"Altogether, it was a proud event in the history of the city of Plattsmouth, and the queen city of our state (Lincoln) will soon feel, I trust, the benefit of this bridge, which connects her with the C., B. & Q. system of railway, and to the east." — "It was my good fortune," states the reporter, "to ride from Plattsmouth to Lincoln with Superintendents Thompson and McConniff and Superintendent of Telegraph Yates on the steam hand-car; and we jogged along at the average rate of twenty miles an hour with Engineer Cummings at the throttle and the brake, arriving here at 5:30 p. m." The photograph artists also improved the time and secured good negatives of the scene.



DAVID DALE OWEN
LEAD MINING AT DUBUQUE

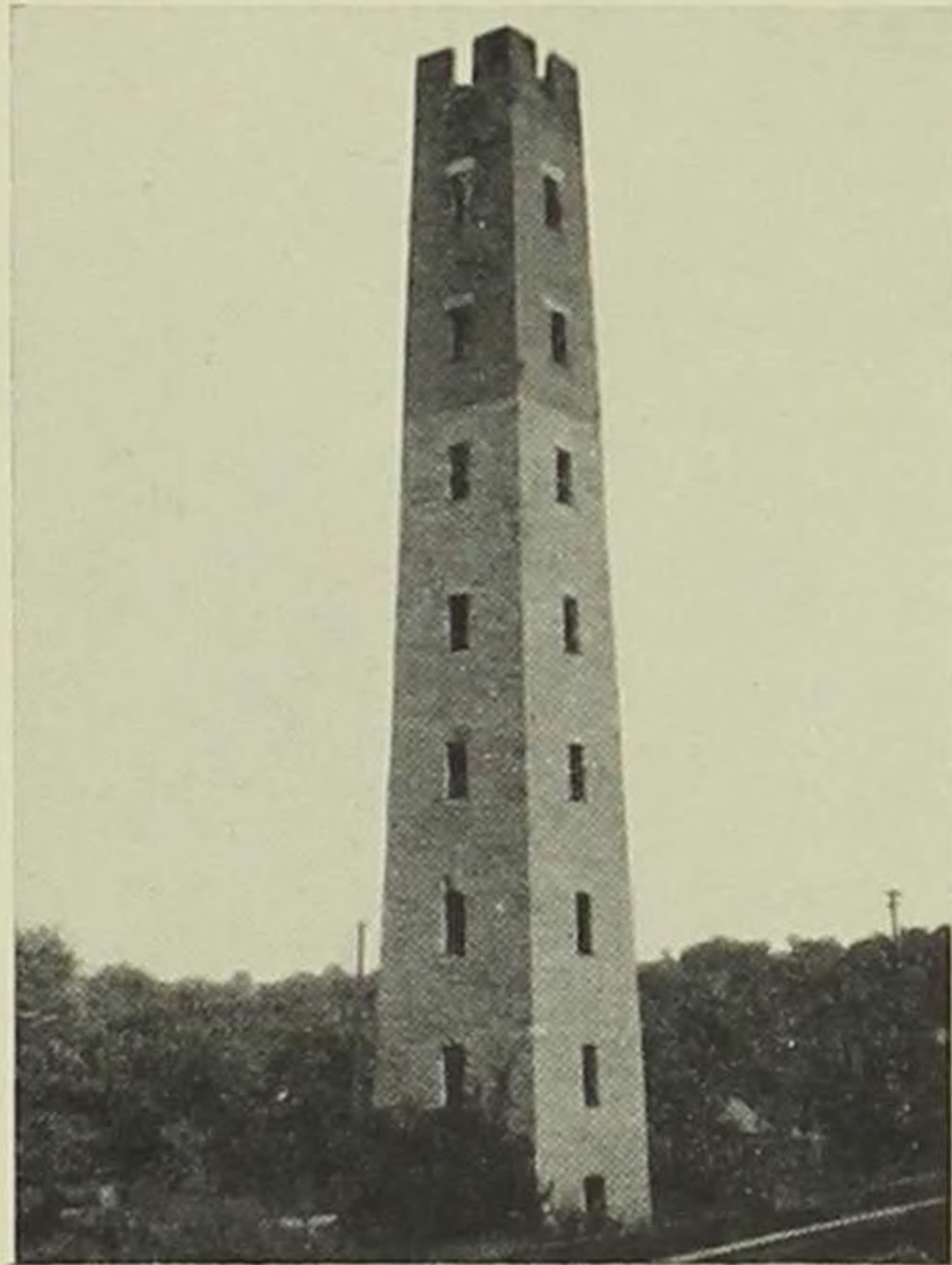
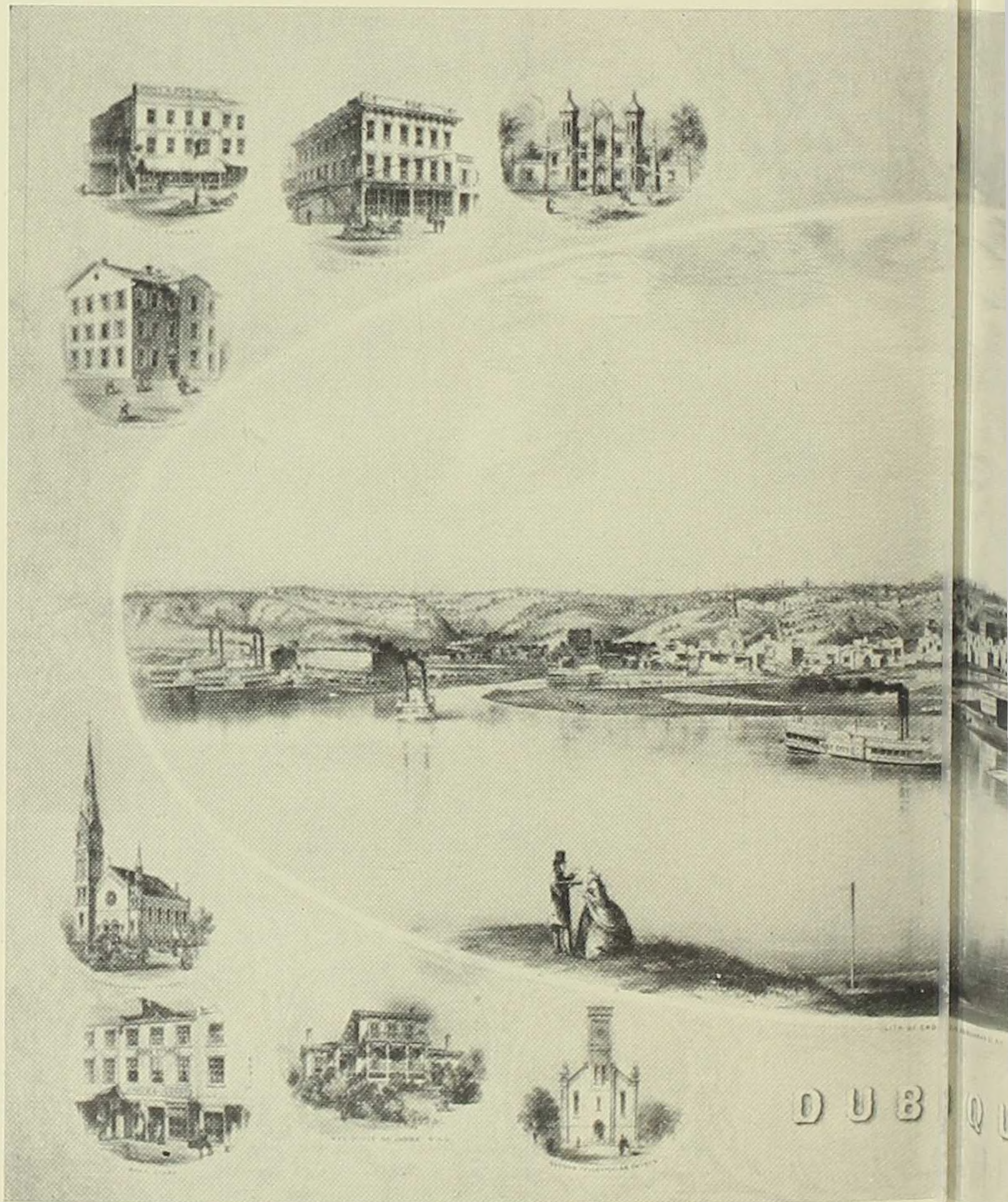
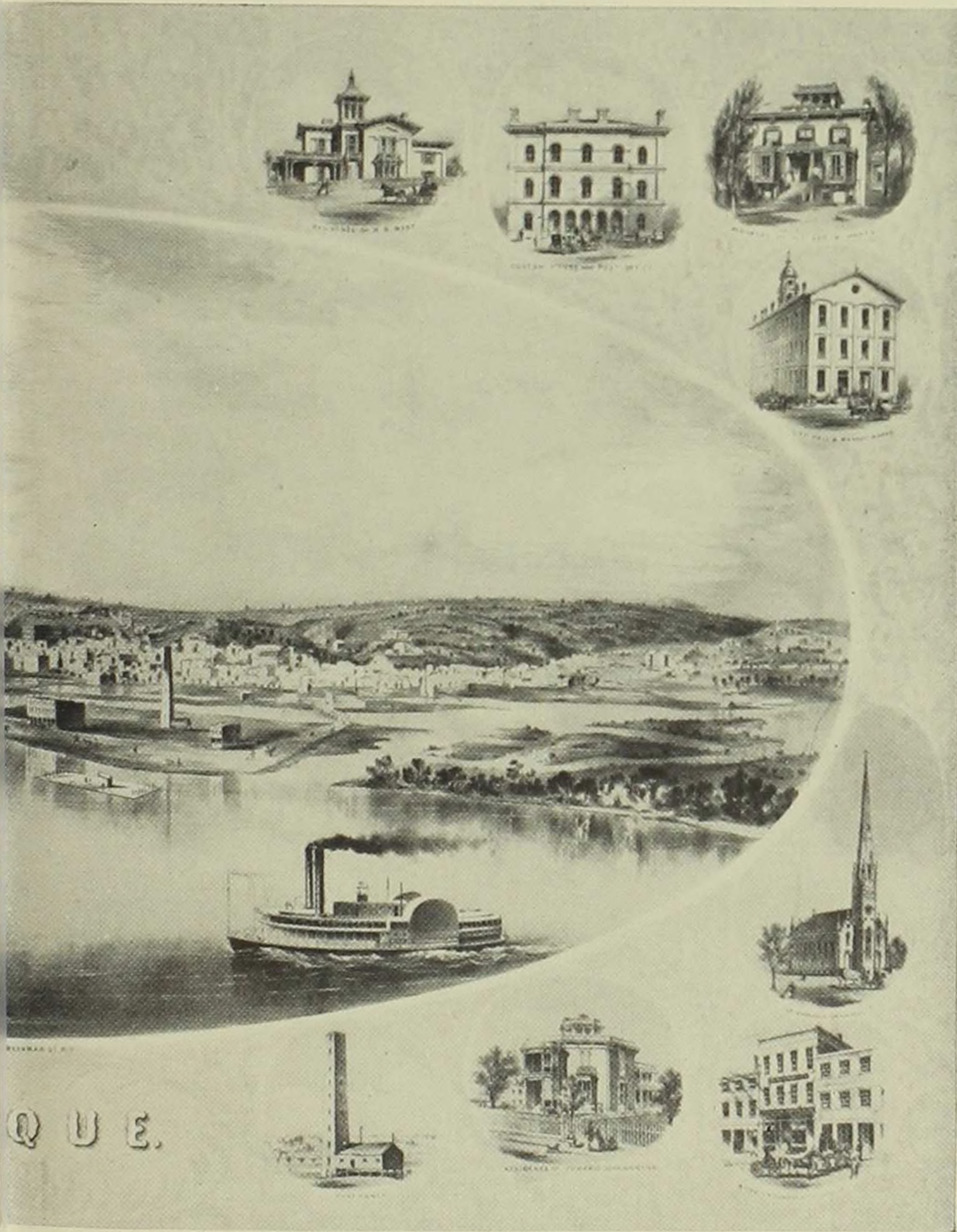


PHOTO BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN
DUBUQUE SHOT TOWER



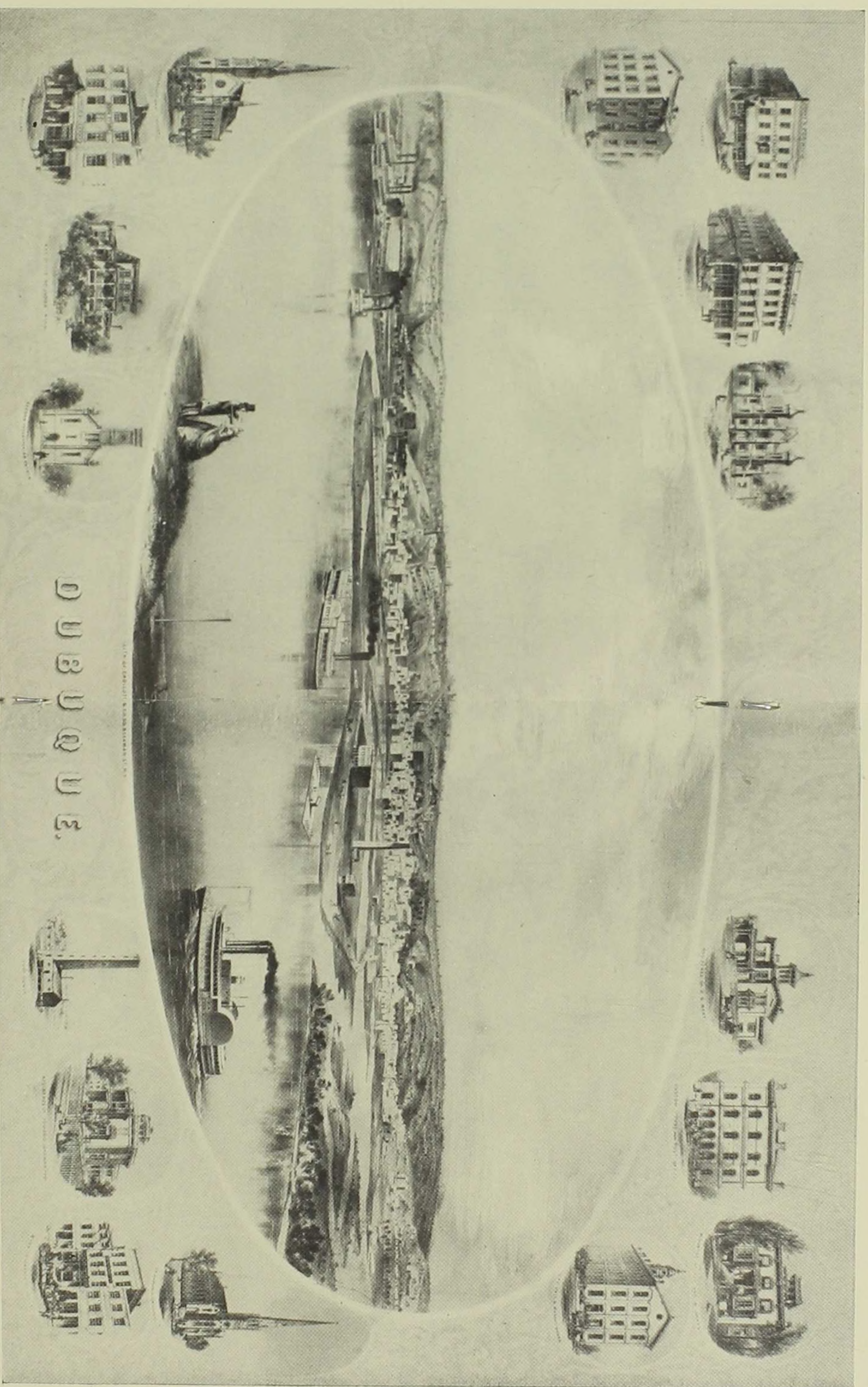
Buildings Listed Clockwise from bottom right: Second Presbyterian Church; Residence of Judge King; Book Store; Congregational Church; Public School Building; Root's Gallery; Jones Block; City High School. Boats identified: Pembina, Canada, Grey Eagle, Key City, Hawkeye State.

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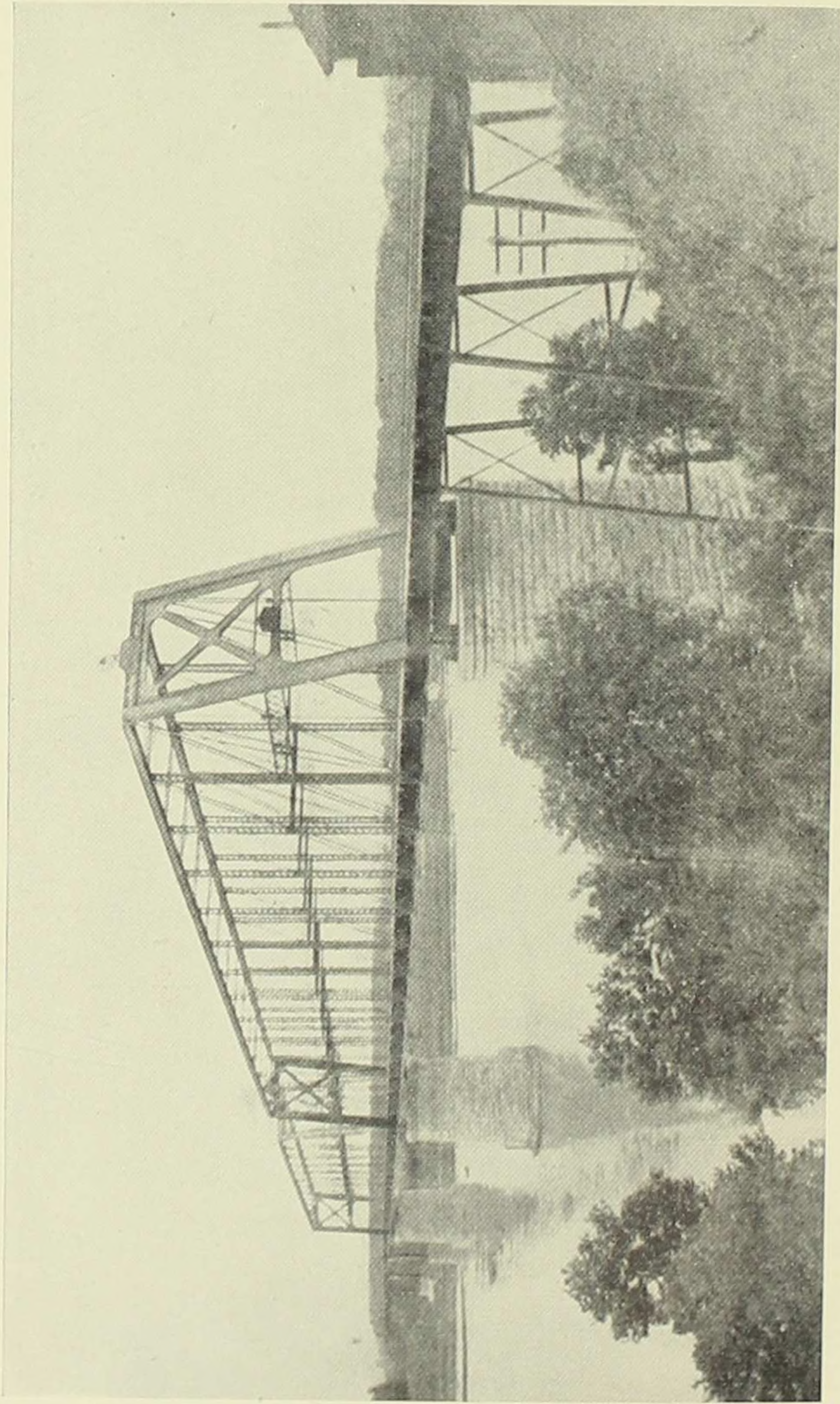
LITHOGRAPH BY ENDICOTT & CO. IN THE LIBRARY OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Buildings Listed Clockwise from top left: Residence of R. S. West; Custom House and Post Office; Residence of Gen. Geo. W. Jones; City Hall and Market House; St. Raphaels Cathedral; Aetna Insurance Co. Office; Residence of Edward Langworthy; Shot Tower.



Buildings Listed Clockwise from bottom right: Second Presbyterian Church; Residence of Judge King; Book Store; Congregational Church; Public School Building; Root's Gallery; Jones Block; City High School. Boats identified: Pembina, Canada, Grey Eagle, Key City, Hawkeye State.

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COURTESY BEN HUR WILSON

PLATTSMOUTH BRIDGE FROM NEBRASKA SIDE

"It is certainly a source of regret," stated the *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, "that circumstances prevented the attendance of our talented townsman, A. T. Hay, Esq., at the 'opening' of the famous Hay steel bridge over the Missouri at Plattsmouth. Without him the exercises were like the play of Hamlet with Hamlet omitted."

Afterwards, the long wooden trestle approaches at both ends were gradually filled with earth from the deep cut on the Nebraska side of the river. The bridge continued in service until the close of the century, when heavier motive power on the rails made its replacement with a stronger structure imperative. The new bridge was built in 1903, and the two 400-foot spans of the old one removed and re-erected over the Des Moines River in Marion County on the Oskaloosa "branch" of the Burlington which connected with the Albia-Des Moines line at Tracy. One 200-foot span was shortened to 175 feet and erected over the West Fork of the Grand River near Albany, Missouri, in 1907, and is still in service.

Upon the abandonment of the Albia-Des Moines line by the Burlington, the bridge was acquired as a freight cut-off and operated by the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad until their grade across the Des Moines "bottoms" was washed out by the great flood of 1947. Business

on the line was not sufficient to warrant the cost of replacing the grade, and so application has been made to the Interstate Commerce Commission for permission to abandon the "branch."

In the event this permission is granted, unless steps are immediately taken to save it, one of America's historic bridges will soon be sold and dismantled for scrap steel. Only a short time ago, engineers tested the structure for deterioration, and every member of it rang as true, under the test hammer, as the day it was built. So impressed were the engineers by this performance, that samples were cut from the sloping end members, to be tested in the laboratories in order to determine "what manner of steel" could thus withstand the ravages of time. This alone is, indeed, proof of the remarkable quality of the "Hay Steel" process, and the inventive genius of the man whose brains and ingenuity made it possible.

BEN HUR WILSON

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The State Historical Society of Iowa

IOWA CITY IOWA

Established by the Pioneers in 1857

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The Bulletins of Information

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the State Historical Society may be secured through election by the Board of Curators. The annual dues are \$3.00. Members may be enrolled as Life Members upon the payment of \$100.00. Persons who were members of the Society prior to March 1, 1948, may be enrolled as Life Members upon payment of \$50.00.

Address all Communications to

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN, Superintendent

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

Iowa City Iowa