

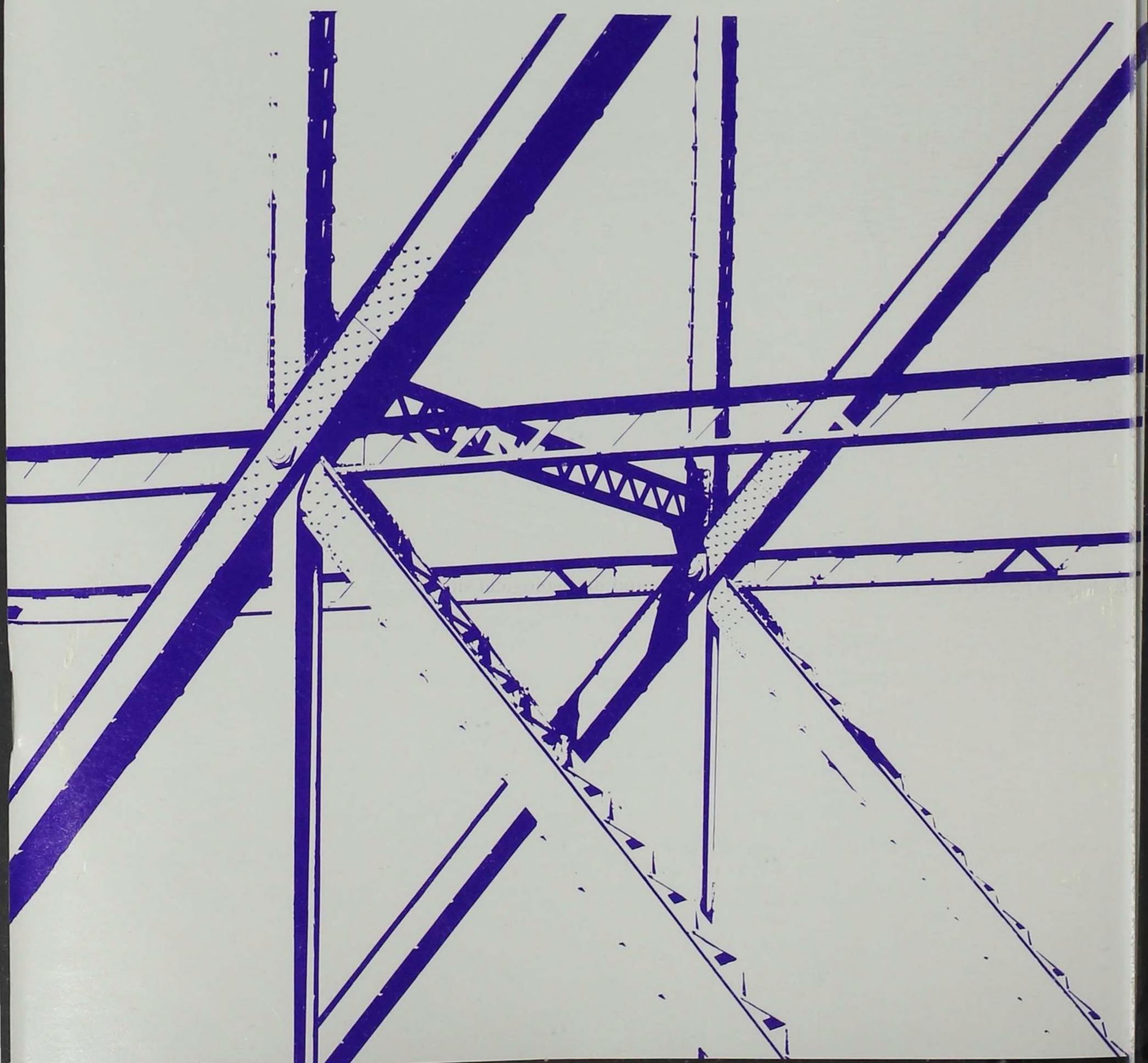
*The*

# PALIMPSEST

IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 62 NUMBER 1

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1981



Iowa State Historical Department  
State Historical Society Publications Section

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PRICE — Free to members. Single issue — \$1  
MEMBERSHIP — By application. Annual dues — \$5  
LIFE MEMBERSHIP — \$150. HUSBAND AND WIFE JOINT LIFE MEMBERSHIP — \$200  
ADDRESS INQUIRIES TO: State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, IA 52240

USISSN 0031—0360

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THE PALIMPSEST is published bimonthly by the State Historical Society in Iowa City. It is printed in Des Moines and distributed free to Society members, depositories, and exchanges. This is the January/February 1981 issue and is Number 1 of Volume 62. Second class postage paid at Iowa City.

The  
PALIMPSEST

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Peter T. Harstad, Director

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William Silag, Editor

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Cover: *Steel superstructure of the Combination Bridge in Sioux City. Completed in 1896 after seven frustrating years of construction, the new bridge opened the plains west of the Missouri River to the commerce of Sioux City's industrious merchants. It also symbolized the entire community's determination to fulfill ambitions of empire in the burgeoning economy of nineteenth-century America. The story of the Combination Bridge, told in words and pictures by Martha Bowers and Hans Muessig, begins on page 14. (from a photograph by Hans Muessig)*



*The Meaning of the Palimpsest*

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

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

# American Classic

by

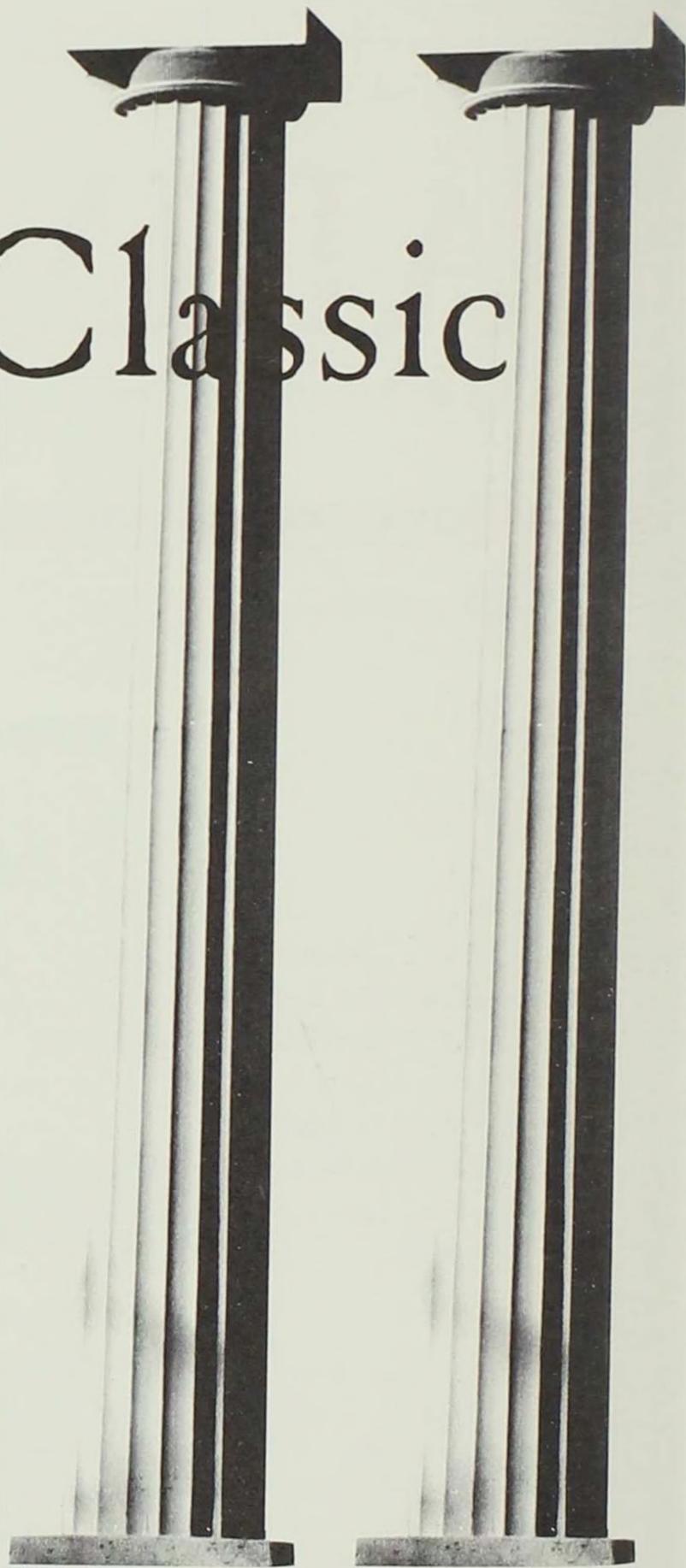
Laurence Lafore

Iowa City is a classic American town. It lies a few hundred miles from the midway point between the coasts, and it was founded almost midway in time between the beginnings of national awareness in the settlements along the Atlantic and the present day. It is in a state whose population, area, and wealth are near the median of the states. Its history is the history of the founding of American towns and of the American nation.

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We are setting out now on a tour, a tour through time and space. Any town — and any street or building, for the matter of that — is a marvelously complicated thing made up of hidden pasts, of long forgotten causes and effects. Buildings tell stories to those who can read them, and some of the stories are very long indeed. Architecture makes lasting monuments. It is the most durable of the arts, and it is also the most inclusive. A single dwelling may instruct us in the history of mankind: in the glories and sometimes the



depravities of past generations; in discoveries of engineers and chemists; in sociology and economics and taste; in the genius and folly of nations and individuals. For a building not only shelters people, it also embodies their needs and their ideas. Notions of virtue and beauty are recorded in timber, steel, and brick, and they can tell us what people have thought and done and what gods they have worshiped.

Taken together, the structures of a town reveal its personality, as a face does an individual's. Both buildings and faces are inherited, and American towns are all family albums of America's past — and of a past much older than America's. The houses and streets have family resemblances that show their descent and identify their forebears. Iowa City is a classic example of such family traits. Its history repeats, with odd precision, the history of Philadelphia, the model and archetype of American towns. Its site and name were decided in Burlington by men who had never seen the place where it would be built, as Philadelphia had been planned and "named before it was born" by William Penn in London, in 1681. By the terms of Penn's land grant from King Charles II, "a quantity of land or ground plat should be laid out for a large town or city in the most convenient place upon the river for health and navigation." The same words might well have been used by the men at Burlington, the Legislators and the Governor of the Territory who was, by appropriate coincidence, a descendant of William Penn.

Iowa City, like its ancestor, was intended to be the capital of a new province, and its plan followed with great fidelity the model that Penn had decreed for the "greene cuntry town." The network of straight streets enclosing squares, some of them left open for markets or places of wholesome recreation, reflected Penn's notions of what a healthful and convenient city should be, open and log-

ical, in contrast to the jumbled cities of England or the older American places like Boston — whose street map, it has been said, looks like a plate of spaghetti. His notion proved popular as well as logical. It determined how American townspeople would live thereafter, from Philadelphia to San Francisco.

Many other places in North America were planned as capitals of new provinces on new frontiers. For most of them their makers conceived grand projects for public buildings and broad avenues. Sometimes enthusiasm and funds ran out, as they did in Iowa City, and sometimes the seat of government was moved, as Iowa's was when the westering flow of settlers led Iowans to choose a more central capital, as it had led Pennsylvanians to do long before.

The genesis of the American towns, however, was far older than William Penn, and its antiquity justifies the word classic in another sense. The men who designed the early America were scholars. The plan of Penn's town had itself had models consciously imitated — a long line of ancestors, Spanish-American towns, medieval garrisons, and the camps and colonies of ancient Rome. Rome's settlements, like those of North America, were built on wild and rapidly moving frontiers, and some of them, too, were the provincial capitals of empire. The Romans were imitating a still older tradition of city-making, and it befits a tradition that goes back to Periclean Athens and beyond that the Capitol of the Territory of Iowa should have been provided with Doric columns that are nearly replicas of those of the Parthenon. The Americans practiced a rigorous adherence to classical architectural rules, and their public buildings, from Boston to Sacramento, recall the hope of reproducing the civic perfections of Athens in their wilderness. Iowa City is not the less American that its model was Roman and its inspiration Greek. So were the nation's.



*Most of the earliest houses were log cabins or shed-like frame structures with rough shingle siding. But stone, the local yellow sandstone (which was judged more durable than the white limestone of the Old Capitol), was also used. The little house at 614 North Johnson Street (above) shows what many of the early stone houses must have looked like. In*

*1846, it was owned by Almon Barnes and was probably built by him then or a little earlier. It is a rectangle of the simplest sort, and it looks much like farmhouses in older parts of the country, wherever there was native building stone to be found. The transom-light was a feature of old Colonial houses, but the very low-pitched roof is novel; in the East*





*the early houses generally had steep roofs with gables that formed right triangles, permitting the use of the top story for bedrooms or attic space. The low-pitched roofs in Iowa, which sacrifice space that could have been added at little extra cost or labor, may reflect the hazards of high winds.*

*Plum Grove (left), the beautiful house of Robert Lucas, Iowa's first Territorial Governor, was built in 1844. Along with its pleasant grounds it was restored in 1946. The exterior is very plain, almost bare, but the proportions are admirable. It represents, better than anything else in Iowa City, a great American tradition inherited from England, whither, in turn, it had come originally from the ancient world via Renaissance Italy and seventeenth-century Holland. Red brick, light-colored wood, multi-paned windows, forthright moldings and eaves, and simple dignity were the hallmarks of great houses in Philadelphia, Williamsburg, and*

*Boston. Plum Grove, which is open to the public, is at the end of Carroll Street, a dead end off Kirkwood Avenue.*

*The house at 829 Kirkwood Avenue (above), illustrates the transition from America's Georgian colonial tradition, so handsomely embodied in Plum Grove, to the Victorian idea of "richness" that supplanted it. It was built in the 1870s, a generation later than Plum Grove. The basic forms are similar, with the red brick and gables, but elaboration and distortion is already well-advanced. The height of ceilings, and accordingly of outside walls, has begun to rise. Heavy lintels have appeared. Bracketing — still quite modest — has appeared on the eaves. A veranda and bay windows have been added. The floorplan has become more complicated. Symmetry has been abandoned. The determinants of the first stage of the Victorian house are all there, although in rudimentary and dignified form.*

*The Gothic Revival flourished as people tired of classical restraint and formality and became beguiled by what were hazily called the Middle Ages. Gothic houses were romantically nostalgic, but until much later nobody thought to try to imitate literally the very expensive kind of masonry and stone-carving that had been the most conspicuous features of the originals. One Gothic fashion was for steep-roofed rustic "cottages," which were intended to — and indeed did — exude charm, although the Middle Ages were only very faintly perceptible. A brick*



*dwelling at 704 Reno Street (above), built in 1870 next to the city cemetery (to which its decidedly ecclesiastical design seems suitable) is much simpler, but as well as any house in Iowa*

*City it shows the attraction that Gothic windows had for people, and that they can give to what is really just an ordinary Basic House a characteristic twist and charm.*



*Loggias on the magnificent house at 513 Summit Street (left), built in 1883. Its inspirations are very diverse: classical, Italian, traces of French and Gothic. But their very multiplicity, together with the fact that they are skillfully fitted in to strong, dominant structural patterns, assures the triumph of Shape over Siliness. The details do not intrude. The house has preserved, alone on Summit Street, the iron fence that was so general a feature of more opulent neighborhoods and was important in drawing a line between privacy and the prevailing prospect of a public park.*

*The house at 935 East College Street (right) was built in 1893 from mail order plans sold at a cost of five dollars. Madly eclectic, combining in random profusion ten or twelve entirely different schools of design, and very badly proportioned, it excites the fascination that often attaches to unselfconscious absurdity.*



*From borrowings and imitations, from frauds and fads, from miscalculations and mistakes, and from the underlying good sense that dictated uninterrupted adherence to a simple and native-born basic building, there emerged by the end of the nineteenth century a kind of domestic architecture entirely original and entirely Midwestern, a frame house with wide porches and gables, and with only superficial variations of ornament and detail. At 128 Fairchild Street (left), at the corner of Dubuque Street, stands one of the clearest, and handsomest, examples of a paradigm house, born of varied ancestors but admirably adapted to the physical requirements of the Iowa climate and the spiritual and aesthetic requirements of what Meredith Willson called "the Iowa way."*



*In the 1890s the Classic Revival began. It appeared first in the form of another style adapted from the past, that of the monumental buildings of imperial Rome. In most such Romanoid buildings the varied textures, the elaborate details, and the grandiose shapes of late Victorian design were still very noticeable. But presently the designs would merge with those inspired by the enthusiasm for reborn Georgian. In the house at 624 South Summit Street (above), built in the early '90s, the rebirth of the Georgian tradition is prophesied. The air of massiveness, like the large plate glass windows, is still very nineteenth century, but the siding is red brick — the Georgian trademark — instead of clapboard*

*and shingles. Ornament is fairly low-keyed, and there is some effort at architectural balance. Symmetry and coherence are about to resume their long ascendancy, and within ten years the houses of the '70s and '80s will be called "hideous" by the younger generation.*

*The President's House, 102 Church Street (below), has a superb view over the valley of the Iowa, and a regal presence. Its ostentatious neo-Georgian exterior is a trifle awkward, as were many of the early twentieth-century efforts to re-create the great houses of the Colonial era. It seems slightly alien to that most egalitarian of all American institutions, a state university. It was built in 1908.*

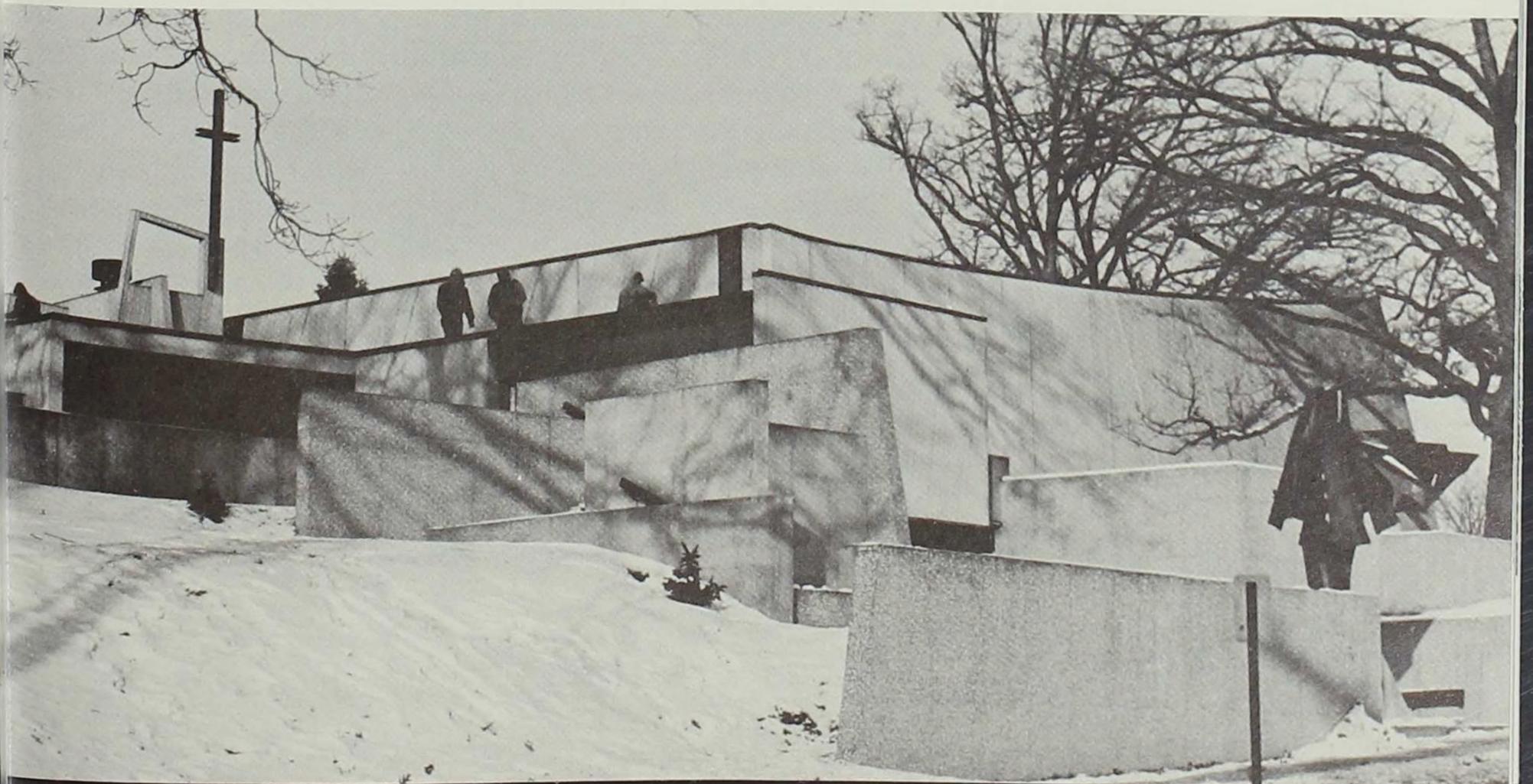




*The University Psychopathic Hospital (left), on Newton Road, built in 1920. It reflects the Tudor (sixteenth-century English) sort of design popular at the time for schools, churches, hospitals, and shops. Casements, bay windows, ornamental sandstone dressings, chimneys, steep-pitched roofs, little dormers, and construction in rose-colored brick, are all sufficiently authentic to mitigate the quite untypical expanse of blank wall and the rather slick, overtidy design.*

*Saint Thomas More, on North Riverside Drive near Park Street (below). Built in 1962, Saint Thomas is dedicated to the martyr-scholar who was beheaded in 1535 by Henry VIII, after serving as his Lord Chancellor, for refusing to acknowledge under oath that the sovereign was the supreme governor of the Christian Church in England. He was one of the great writers and thinkers of his time, witty, urbane, a leader of the new humanist learning of the Renaissance.*

*"A man for all seasons," the sponsor and friend of new ideas, he is appropriately commemorated in a building that is one of the most extreme and successful examples of Modern Architecture in the city. It imitates no past and aspires to no "style." Its visual impact is entirely the product of the shapes and textures of reinforced concrete and the clever adjustment of the building to the contour of the land.*



# IOWA'S HANDWRITTEN NEWSPAPERS

by  
Roy  
Alden  
Atwood

**J**ournalism flourished in frontier Iowa. By 1844, Iowa Territory boasted ten newspapers, including the well-known Burlington *Hawk-Eye*. But while readers in Davenport, Iowa City, Bloomington, and Fort Madison enjoyed the convenience of printed news, the citizens of Washington followed current events by means of three handwritten newspapers — Daniel Stover's *Quarterly Visitor*, Samuel James' *Domestic Quarterly Review*, and the *Washington Shark*, co-edited by Nathan Littler and Richard McMillan. The popularity of these newspapers, which appeared ten years in advance of the first local printing press, attested to the hunger of Washington readers for word of local and national events.

Unfortunately, just one of the handwritten newspapers survives, the second issue of Stov-

er's *Visitor*, dated June 1844. Modelled on conventionally printed papers, the *Visitor* offered news, feature stories, and editorials on matters of local interest. Four pages long, with three columns on each page, the paper displayed Daniel Stover's superb penmanship. Most of the handwriting was less than a quarter-inch in height, yet the letters were precisely drawn and quite legible. Of course, the *Visitor's* editor did not produce more than a few copies of each issue. These were intended to be purchased and read aloud to groups of people in and around frontier Washington.

Stover's *Quarterly Visitor* not only patterned itself on printed newspapers, it also ran stories and anecdotes of general interest from other printed Iowa newspapers. In the surviving copy, two items appeared from the Bloomington *Herald*. One was a news story about the "discoveries of Prof. Morse in Electro Magnetism," in which it was noted that "electric fluid will travel at the rate of 288,000 miles, equal to nearly 12 x the circumference of the globe, in one second." Another item was an aphorism lifted from the Burlington *Hawk-Eye*: "Woman is said to be like a Jew's harp, because she is nothing without a tongue, and must be pressed to the lips," to which Stover added, "Then she is music for the soul."

Editor Stover's reporting of activities in Washington included short factual items and feature articles about local weddings, deaths, weather, and farming accidents. He also recognized his readers' desire for entertainment and education in a newspaper, and so he scattered a variety of poems, short moralistic sketches, and biographies of American statesmen throughout the paper's four pages. The front page was devoted to entertaining musings about such diverse topics as female delicacy and beauty, memories of youth, and lively poems about human virtues.

# ITEMS

## Serious Accident.

A butcher boy in New York says that he has often heard of the "fore quarters of the Globe" but that he never heard any one say anything about the "hind quarters!"

The annual crop of cotton in the United States is 2,800,000 bales, of which there is about 300,000 bales manufactured annually into fabrics in the United States, the balance is exported.

There is raised annually in the western States 350 millions of bushels of wheat, making 63 millions of barrels of flour.

A small boy one day starting out to catch some fish, on leaving the house, his mother told him to "fish for perch!" After fishing some time, he pulled out a cat fish, being much provoked, he pulled off the cat fish his hook and dashed it back into the water, saying - "When I go a-bating, I go a-bating! but when I go a-perching, I go a-perishing!"

In 1843 there was <sup>carried</sup> up, and down the Mississippi River 250 millions of dollars worth of property, 100 millions of which was agricultural products.

It is said that women are <sup>in no place</sup> commanded to kiss the men in the scriptures, except in the "Golden Rule," which says, - "Do unto men, as you would have them to do unto you." (That's a positive injunction.)

Woman is said to be like a jaw sharp, because she is nothing without a tongue, and must be pressed to the lips. (Then she is music for the soul.)

Answer to a "puzzle" in "It is now": Read, first, from left to right, then from right to left, line about, as - "O! may those hearts by love united, &c."

"Expense, hair, and few bad!" - as the pig said when he broke through his sty.

"Why do you not hold your head as I do?" enquired an aristocratic lawyer, of a laboring farmer, - "Squire," replied the farmer, "look at that field of grain, all the valuable heads hang down like mine, while <sup>they</sup> that have nothing in them, stand upright like yours."

This was certainly a diverting, and good hit.

Iowa: The meaning of the word Iowa, is, "Land of delights." It is Indian origin, and not supposed in beauty and convenience for use.

### High Water.

By the late news, we received intelligence that the Mississippi River has receded from the wharf of St. Louis 12 miles, and now runs along the Illinois Bluffs, the Missouri has been so high that the bank opposite its mouth was washed away, and let the main channel of the River, through the American Bottom, and comes into the River

Mr. John Jackson was drowned in Crooked Creek 18 miles south of this place, on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of June. The particulars of the case are as follows. Mr. J. was building a barn in that region, and had come up home on the 18<sup>th</sup>, he went back on the 18<sup>th</sup> and on the 19<sup>th</sup> he with six or seven other men went in a swimming in the Creek at being very high, he and 2 others were great looking about in the bottom where the water was 3 or 4 feet deep, as they could only swim a few links, and he unavoidably got into a deep hole, and strangled, and drowned. The good swimmers were in the main creek 40 or 50 rods off, but were so frightened, when they got to where he was sunk that they were unable to do any thing, and he was not raised for one hour, so that he could not be brought to life. His father was drowned in a similar way 4 years ago.

On hearing of the accident the Washington Lyceum met at the room of Mr. Sturges, to go in to some arrangement to have the corpse brought to town as this was the only association to which he belonged.

On motion of Mr. Harrison, - Mr. Baldwin, Horston, and S. C. Stover were appointed to bring up the corpse.

On motion of Mr. Baldwin a committee of 3 he appointed to see to the grave and funeral. On motion of Mr. Sturges the members of the Lyceum wear scope on the left and 15 days.

## OBITUARY.

Died in this place, on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of June H. A. Stone, Sheriff of Ohio County, after a short illness. The death of Mr. Stone is much lamented by all those acquainted with him. He came here in early settlement of the county, and has been Sheriff of the county for four years. His death will not only be felt by his father, husband, and neighbours, but as a business man. He left behind him a blooming widow, and a prosperous family, to lament his early departure from this life.

## HYMENEAL.

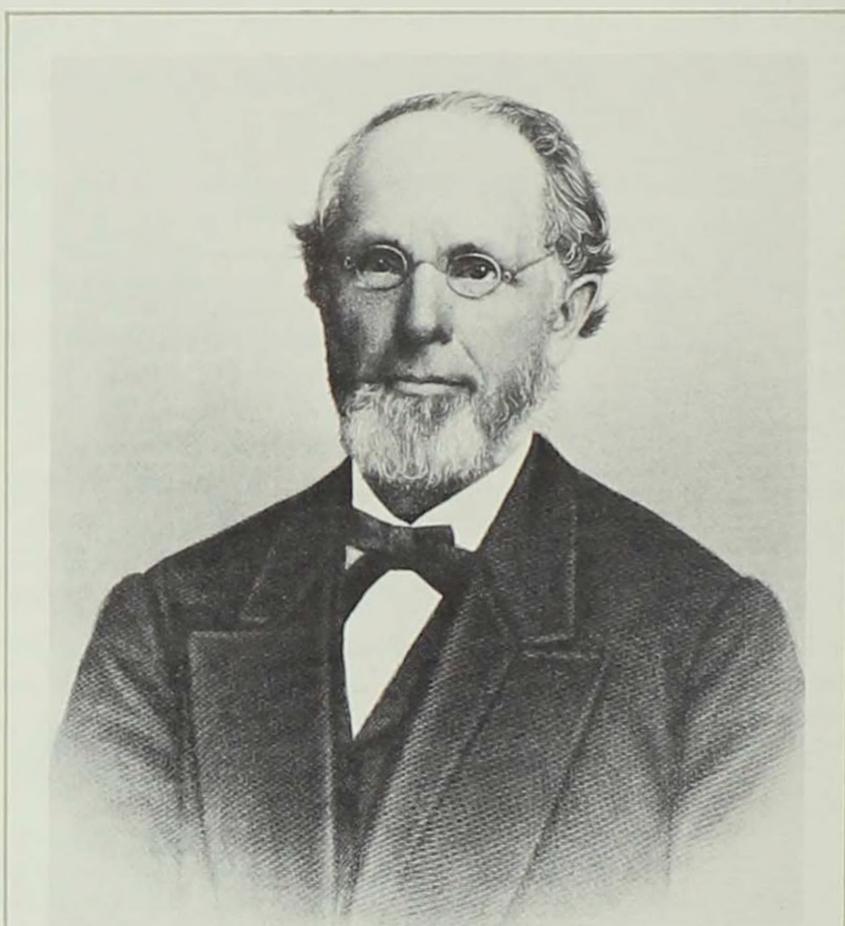
Married in this place, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March Mr. Joseph Beck, to Miss Elizabeth Jackson. In receiving the above notice, we also received the usual "winters compliment," as he can not print without cake. Mr. Beck is a carpenter by trade, and will make an economical husband - man - and good neighbour.

Married on Dutch Creek on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April. Mr. William Cloughman of this place, to Miss Martha Augustine, all C. is a practicing Attorney of the 2<sup>d</sup> Judicial District of this Territory. Married on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of April at Iowa City Mr. S. C. Snowbridge to Miss Mrs. Willson, widow of the late Mr. Willson's Blacksmith of

Like most newspapers of its day, the *Visitor* had a large bannerhead at the top of the front page with its name sketched in bold lettering. It also had uncharacteristically large and neatly drawn headlines for each story and item throughout the paper. The *Visitor* apparently experienced deadline problems in its second issue, as Stover explained in "An Apology" that the "paper was not issued as soon as we did intend, as we were on a tour to [Central Iowa] when our 'press and type' should have been plying." It was his intent, at least, that the *Visitor* be published on a regular schedule. In Stover's published apology, he referred to his "patrons" but it is unclear whether or not the paper actually had any paid subscriptions or if this was just wishful thinking. Stover offered few hints as to the manner in which the *Visitor* was distributed, how many copies were prepared, or what sort of readership it enjoyed.

In any case, Stover clearly intended his publication for consumption by the residents of Washington and its environs. Committed to "General and Particular Intelligence," the *Visitor* met the community's need for a local organ to serve as a recorder of births, deaths, significant events, and light-hearted reflections — without any advertising announcements. Although the *Visitor* contained some politically oriented material, it was primarily interested in local news for local people.

Mention of the *Visitor's* local competition, the *Domestic Quarterly Review*, sometimes cropped up in the pages of Stover's paper, and not always in a complimentary light. In one editorial, Stover attacked Samuel James, editor of the *Review*, claiming that James' policy of being "neutral in politics" was deceptive and dangerous. Such a policy, according to Stover, was "like dipping water from a pool with a gourd, cut open on both sides; what comes in one side, goes out the other." He concluded his rebuke of James' paper and politics with one last gibe:



Samuel James, editor of the *Domestic Quarterly Review* (SHSI)

*With all good feeling toward the Editor of the Review, we hope it is but assumed sentiments softened by words, to make his clamorous noise agreeable to the minds of his good old Whig & Tyler friends.*

Although Stover was apparently the more politically aggressive of the two men, James — not Stover — later became a career politician in Iowa.

**D**aniel Stover had come to Iowa Territory in 1839 from Indiana and had settled in Iowa City with his brother, George R. Stover. They moved to Washington shortly afterward. During his years in the small frontier community, Stover was a businessman and possibly a store owner; his brother worked as his business partner and also had a legal practice. The editor was active in Democratic politics, serving as secretary of the state Democratic convention in 1844. At the convention, he was nominated for the position of county clerk. Sometime later in the

year, Stover moved to Sigourney, the county seat of Keokuk County, along with rival newspaper editor, Samuel James.

James was also involved in Iowa territorial politics. Appointed clerk of the district court in Keokuk County in 1844, James issued the first copies of his handwritten newspaper in the same year. In the premier issue of the *Domestic Quarterly Review*, James described the newspaper as "a complete family, Young Lady or Gentleman's newspaper" devoted to "Literature, Amusement and Particular Intelligence." According to a county history, the first *Review* met these expectations:

*On the first page was the Carrier's address, a well written document, which was followed with a short but sensible article directed to the town loafers. An original and amusing ghost story occupied the remainder of the first and nearly half of the second page. The remainder of the second page and part of the third was occupied by an address delivered before the Young Men's Lyceum.*

In Sigourney, James served as the city's first postmaster, holding that post from 1855 until President Lincoln's assassination in 1865. He continued his newspaper avocation when he served as interim editor and co-editor of the *Keokuk County News* during his second term as postmaster under Lincoln.

One of the editors of the other handwritten newspaper, Nathan Littler of the Washington *Shark*, was also active in public life. Littler served at various times as the constable of Washington, as a representative in Iowa's General Assembly, and as a justice of the peace. While editing the *Shark*, he wrote an early history of Washington County and later worked as a correspondent for the reorganized *Washington County Press*. Littler's co-editor, Richard B. McMillan, held public office as county assessor, township clerk, state legislator, and county superintendent,

but did not pursue his career in newspapers after his involvement with the *Shark*.

Unlike its two rivals, the *Shark* may have come closer to a gossip sheet than a newspaper. Pseudonyms were frequently used in its reports and the editors maintained their own anonymity. Readership was limited to those who could gather in public places, for the editors prepared just one copy of each issue of the *Shark*. Littler reported that this lone copy "was directed to some one whom the editors felt would give it widest publicity. Usually, when the paper came, its owner would go to the most frequented store in town, and taking his seat on a stool or nail keg, would proceed to read it to the crowd that quickly assembled."

Why Washington editors chose to publish papers in the absence of a printing press is uncertain, but several explanations are plausible. Each of them had political interests, and the newspapers may have been designed to advance their respective careers in public life, or improve Washington's status as a "paperless" county seat. Furthermore, all of the editors were close to the business whirl of the community, and may have been trying to attract additional commerce to Washington. Finally, because of the isolated nature of the pioneer community itself, the editors may have turned to handwritten newspapers as one means of recreating the cultural life they had traded for the opportunities of the Iowa frontier. □

#### Note on Sources

County histories, printed newspapers, and the surviving copy of the Washington *Quarterly Visitor* provided information for this article, which was presented as a paper to the History Division of the Association for Education in Journalism at its annual convention in Boston, August 1980. A fully annotated version of the article appears in the Summer 1980 issue of *Journalism History*.

The author wishes to thank Professors Carolyn Stewart Dyer, John Soloski, and John Erickson, all of the University of Iowa, for their advice and comments on earlier drafts of the article.

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# SPANNING THE MISSOURI

“Is it possible that the fable of Aladdin and his lamp is no longer a fable but a fact? It must be so,” declared the toastmaster. “The bridge is there, an arch of steel spanning the mighty Missouri — how was it done? — it seems like a miracle.” On this frigid January evening in 1896, A. W. Erwin’s happy listeners were inclined to agree with him. Sioux City’s new Pacific Short Line Bridge, which had opened for traffic a few hours earlier, seemed less the work of men than the gift of a genie. Begun in 1889, the bridge’s construction had proved to be a study in frustration, and after six years of false starts, law suits, and business failures, many Sioux Citians had pinned their hopes for its completion on the supernatural.

The completed bridge was a peerless engineering triumph. The second of two spans built to carry railroad traffic across the Missouri River at Sioux City, the Pacific Short Line Bridge rested originally on the rather fragile financial schemes of one Donald McLean, a railroad adventurer with an uncanny ability to “get capital.” Although his capital eventually proved to exist mostly on paper, McLean wooed local businessmen with a package deal that would not only open the territory of northern Nebraska to commercial development by Sioux City firms, but also provide them with a direct rail line to Salt Lake City and the Pacific Coast. To John Peirce and other investors, still smarting over the routing of the transcontinental railroad through rival Council Bluffs back in 1868, the possibilities afforded by McLean’s scheme outweighed any concerns they may have had about his reputation.

Progress on the bridge was rapid at first.

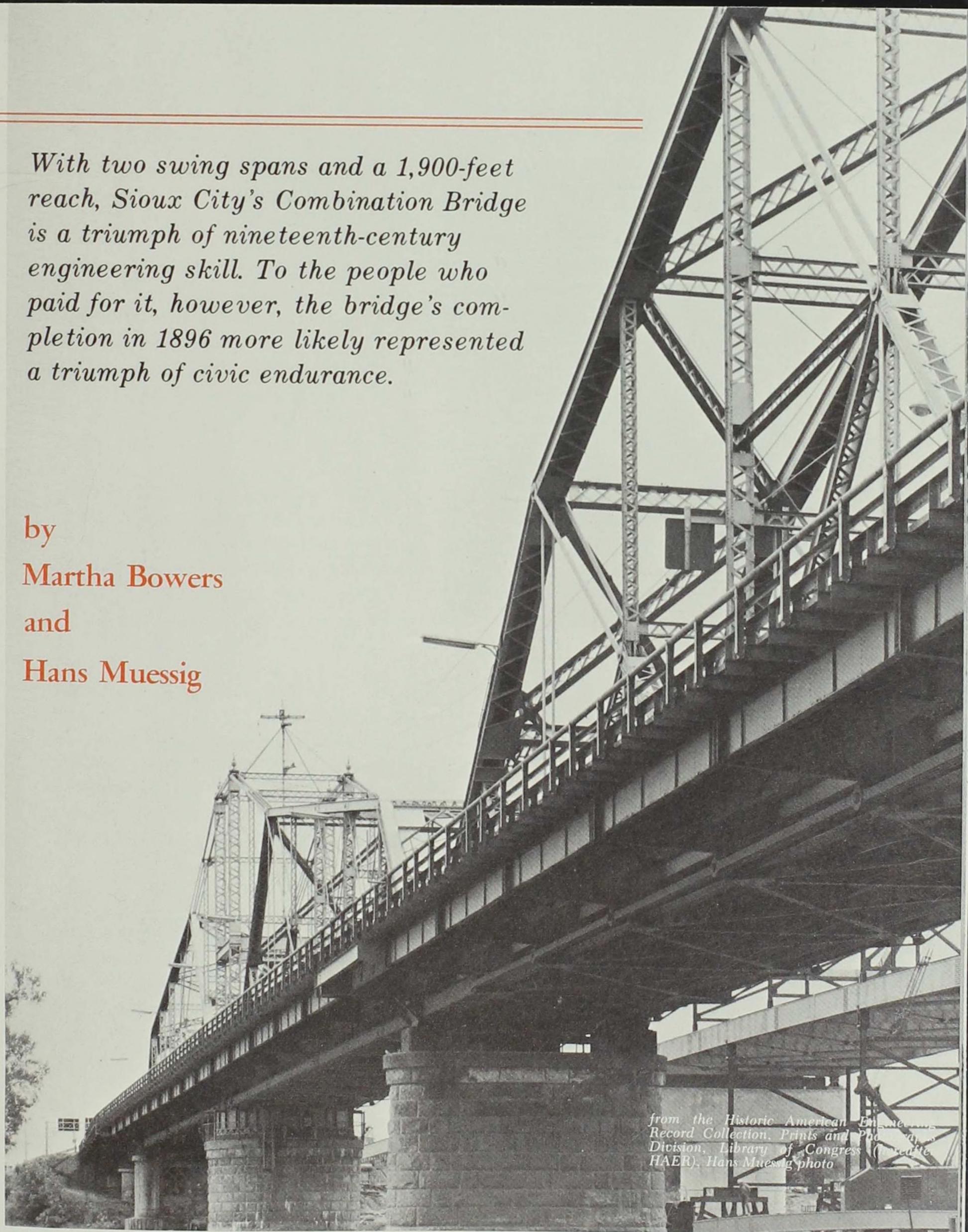
Soundings and engineering surveys began in the fall of 1889, soon after the incorporation of the Pacific Short Line Company. At the same time, the PSL erected a temporary railroad bridge to carry construction materials across to the Nebraska side. By the summer of 1890, contracts were awarded to Sooy-smith and Company and the Phoenix Bridge Company to execute designs by James A. L. Waddell, Phoenix’s western agent. Plans called for a low bridge featuring draw spans at either end, with approaches at First Street in Sioux City and in South Sioux City, Nebraska. It would be a “combination bridge,” meaning simply that it would bear horse and pedestrian as well as railroad and streetcar traffic, all on one level (see the drawing on page 17).

Although speed was to have been a hallmark of the project, in the fall of 1890 — with the first pier caisson ready to be sunk — the delays began. In November the *Sioux City Journal* reported that McLean was in financial trouble; in December he was broke. Construction ceased. Following months of negotiations arranged by Sioux City’s A. S. Garretson, the builders resumed work in May 1891, but by August the reorganized company was in trouble again. With George Wickersham, Garretson this time bought the company outright — for \$2 million — but was unable to send the builders back to work until December 1892. Their rapid progress through the winter months suddenly halted in April 1893 when floodwaters destroyed a tramway connecting two bridge piers. Financial calamity followed natural disaster within days; on April 28 Garretson announced that his company had succumbed to the national business panic triggered by agricultural depression, mone-

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*With two swing spans and a 1,900-foot reach, Sioux City's Combination Bridge is a triumph of nineteenth-century engineering skill. To the people who paid for it, however, the bridge's completion in 1896 more likely represented a triumph of civic endurance.*

by  
Martha Bowers  
and  
Hans Muessig



*from the Historic American Engineering Record Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress (recreated by HAER), Hans Muessig photo*

HAER (from the files of the Sioux City Journal)



James A. L. Waddell, chief engineer and designer of the Pacific Short Line Bridge, was born in Port Hope, Ontario in 1854. Graduating from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1875, Waddell worked as a civil engineer and professor of engineering, both in the United States and in Japan. In 1887, he estab-

lished an engineering practice in Kansas City, doubling as western agent for the Phoenix Bridge Company of Pennsylvania. Many years later he moved to New York City, where he died in 1938.

Waddell is considered one of America's foremost bridge engineers in the era of long-span structures. The Pacific Short Line Bridge, with its two swing spans, was among his earliest designs. He is particularly known for the development of the modern vertical-lift bridge, his first being the Halstead Street Bridge in Chicago (1895). He also served as consulting engineer for Chicago's elevated railway (1896), which today defines that city's central business district — the Loop. Waddell's later work includes the Newark Bay Bridge (1926), the 3,720-foot cantilever bridge at Cairo, Illinois (1929), and the Anthony Wayne High Level Bridge at Toledo, Ohio (1931).

Waddell wrote extensively about the mechanics and economics of bridge-building. Among his publications are *Designing Ordinary Highway Bridges* (1884) and *Bridge Engineering* (1916).

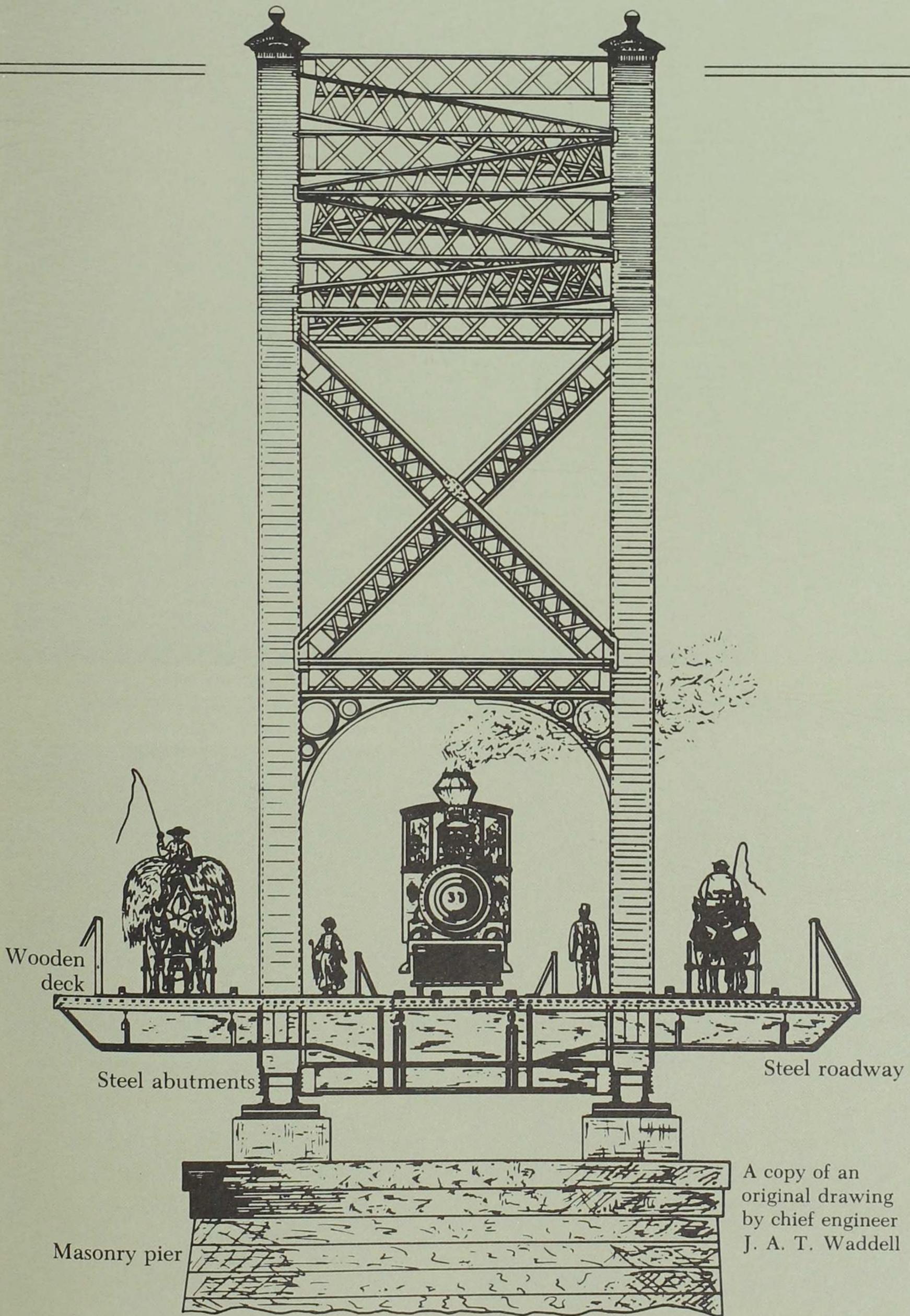
tary problems, and overspeculation.

His faith in the bridge unshaken, Garretson attempted still another reorganization two months later. This effort, aided by his creditors, was named the Combination Bridge Company. With a 2 percent tax approved by Sioux City voters (amounting to about \$300,000) and a 10 percent assessment of the company's \$4 million in stock, the bridge building resumed in June 1895. Revised contracts with SooySmith and the Phoenix Bridge Company required four days to negotiate because the new company

wanted the bridge finished as quickly as possible. Indeed, reported Chief Engineer Waddell, he had agreed "to do a piece of work unprecedented in the history of civil engineering" — in just eight months!

#### Note on Sources

This article is based on a report by Dennett, Muessig and Associates, Ltd. for the Iowa Department of Transportation. The report and accompanying photographs and drawings are now included in the Historic American Engineering Record collections of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

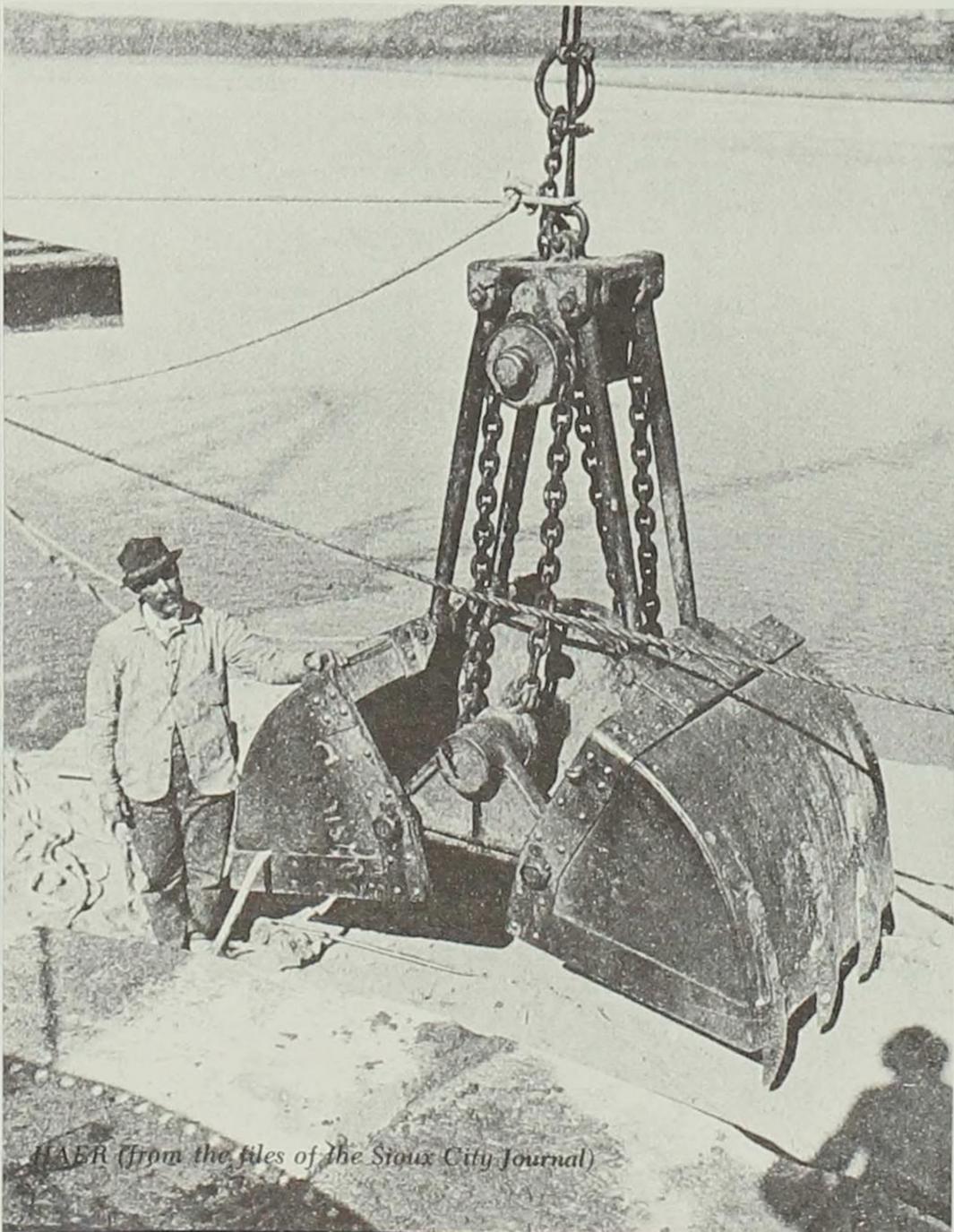


A copy of an original drawing by chief engineer J. A. T. Waddell



*Caisson for Pier No. 7 July 29 05  
Shortly after Launching*

*HAER (from the files of the Sioux City Journal)*



*HAER (from the files of the Sioux City Journal)*

The task of building the Combination Bridge required both engineering skill and physical courage, as workers had to handle heavy machinery above and below the water line. At left is a dredging bucket used in preliminary excavations. Later, steel caissons are towed into position on the river (above). Working in the caissons was probably the most dangerous phase of the bridgebuilding. Teams of "sandhogs" — enclosed within a pressurized chamber eight feet high — removed gravel, sand, and mud under the caisson, clearing its path to bedrock below. A system of pipes carried the muck out of the chamber and into the water.

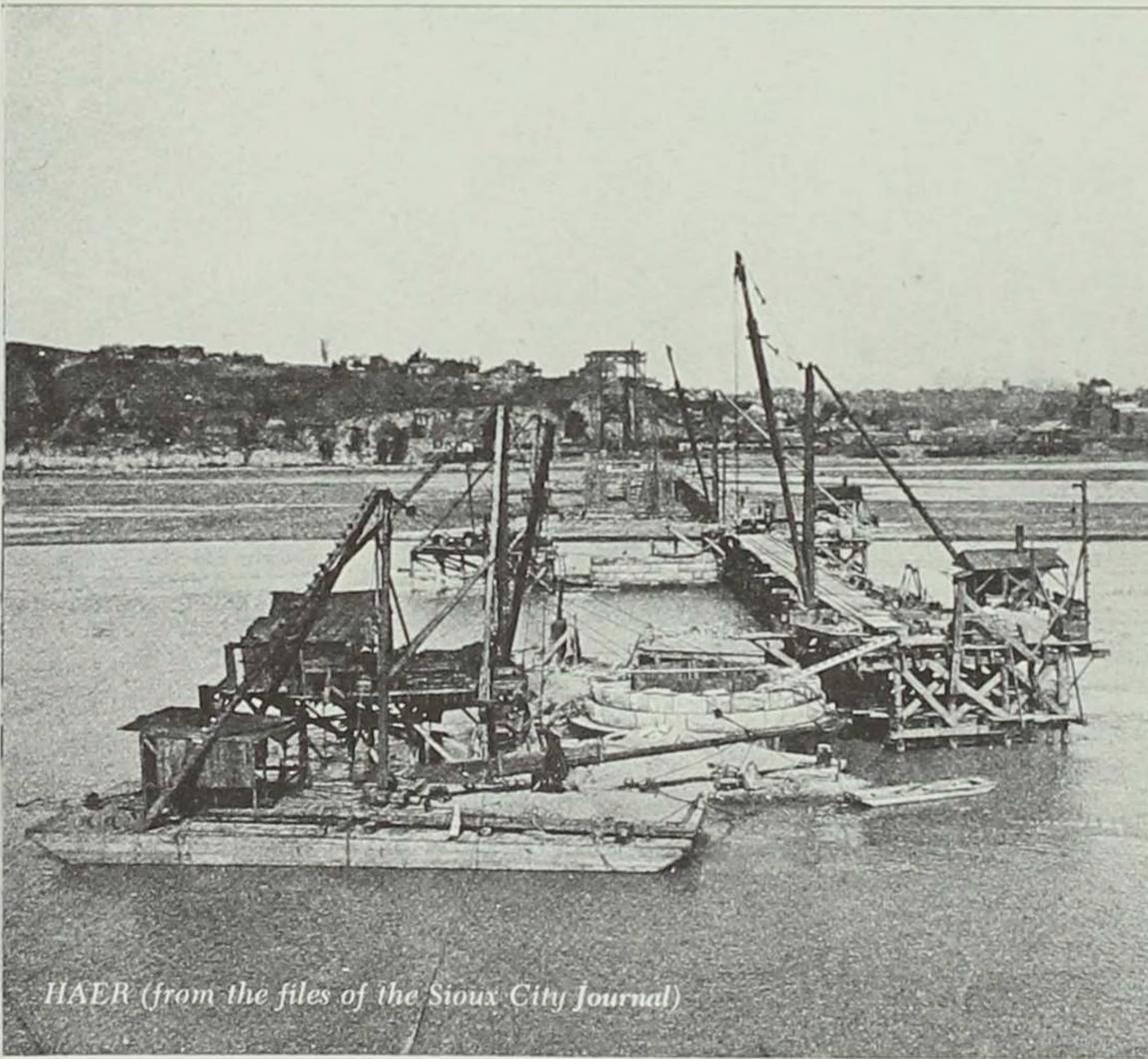


HAER (from the files of the Sioux City Journal)

*A continuing problem in the underwater work was decompression sickness — commonly known as “the bends” — caused by a too-rapid reduction in air pressure as sandhogs ascended from the depths. Treatment with oxygen — and a good hot meal — restored vigor to men stricken with the bends. (Markings on original photographs.)*



HAER (from the files of the Sioux City Journal)

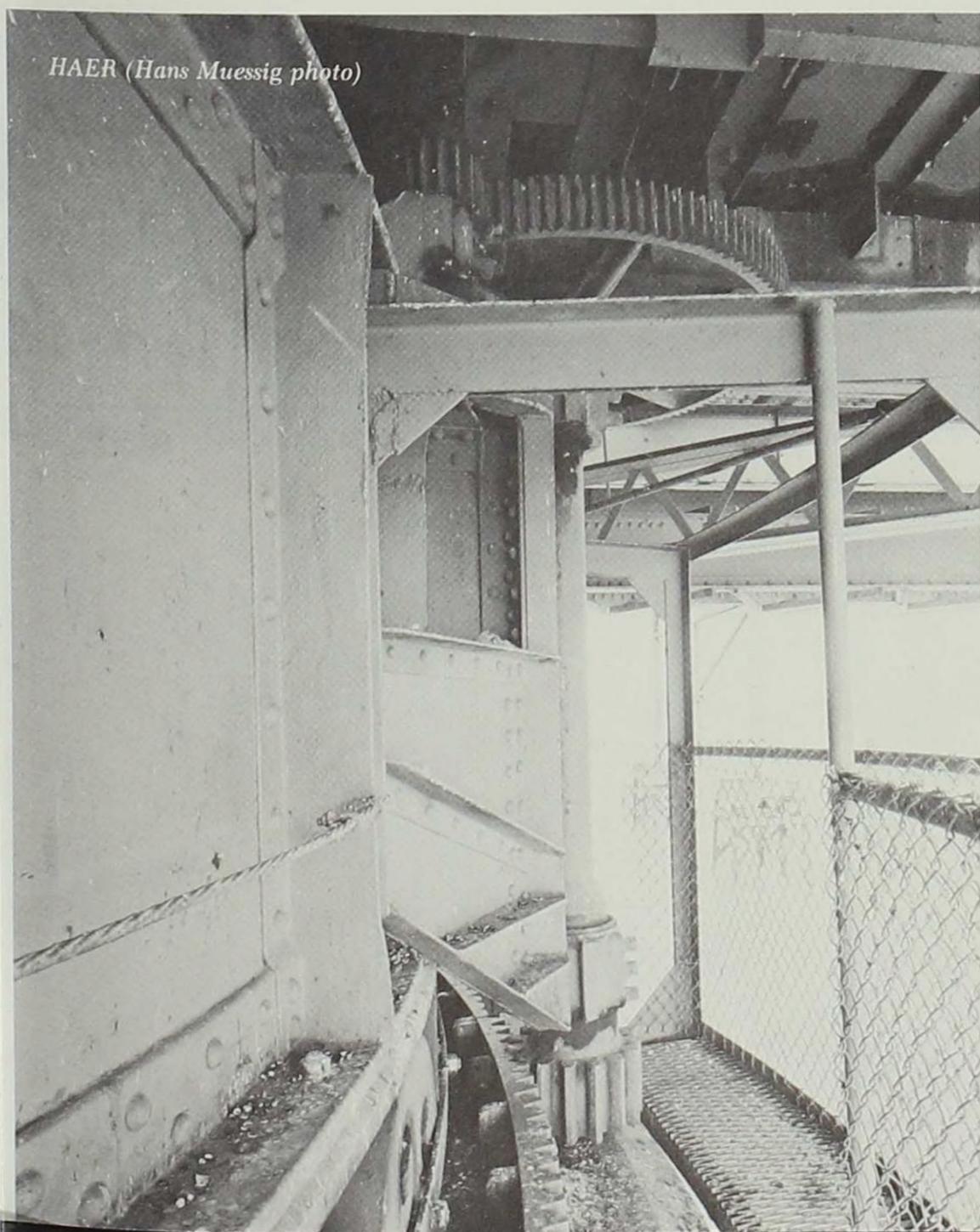




Once the caisson reached bedrock, it was filled with concrete, forming the pier's foundation. Sandhogs then paved the pier (lower left), and prepared it for structural steel.

Two of the bridge's six piers required power stations for the swing spans, pictured under construction (upper left). Soon afterward, construction progress accelerated as crews worked around the clock on the steel superstructure (upper right). Illuminated by huge arc lights, laborers carried structural pieces out onto the bridge during the night in preparation for the next day's work.

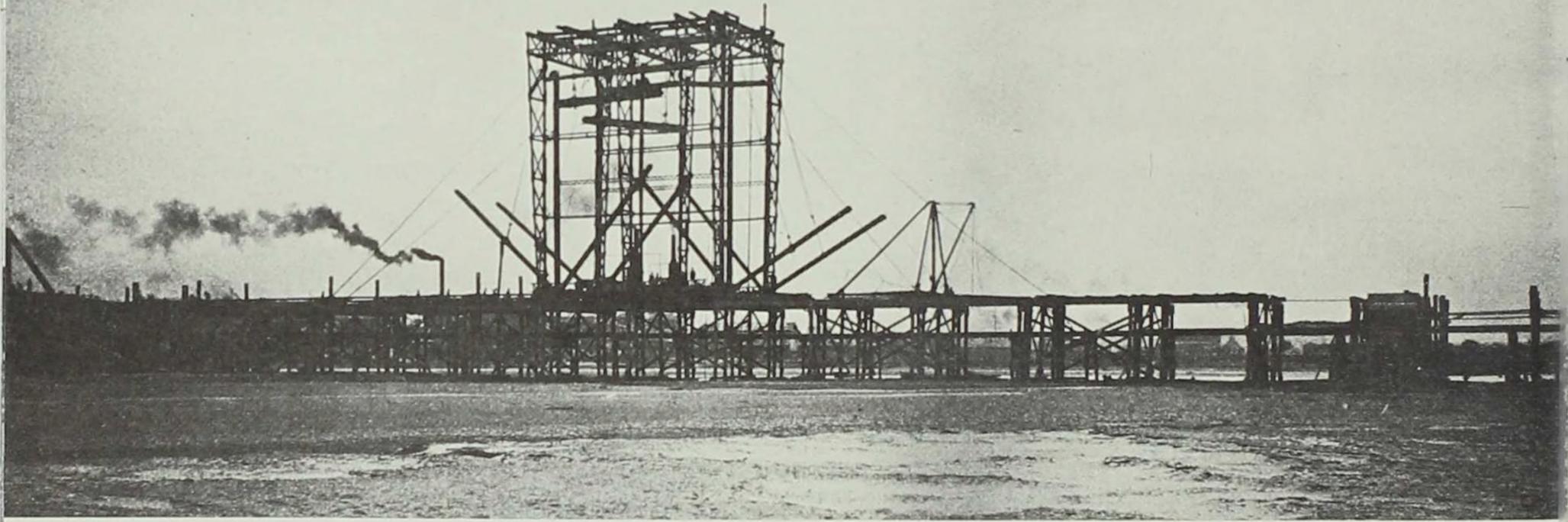
The Iowa draw span rests on steel rollers fitted between cast iron tracks (lower right) turned by a rack and pinion system anchored to the pier. Driven by two capstans — originally operated by four men but later powered by electric engines — the swing spans could be lifted and rotated out of the way of oncoming river traffic.



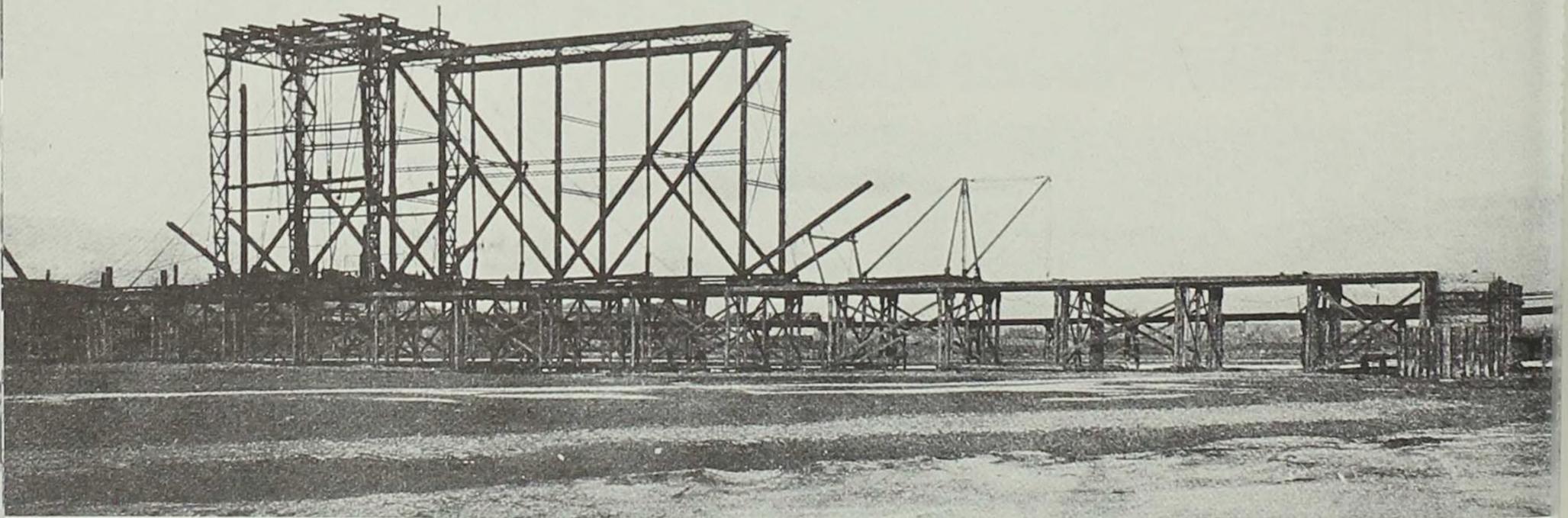
HAER (Hans Muessig photo)

The First Fixed Span, October 5-13, 1895

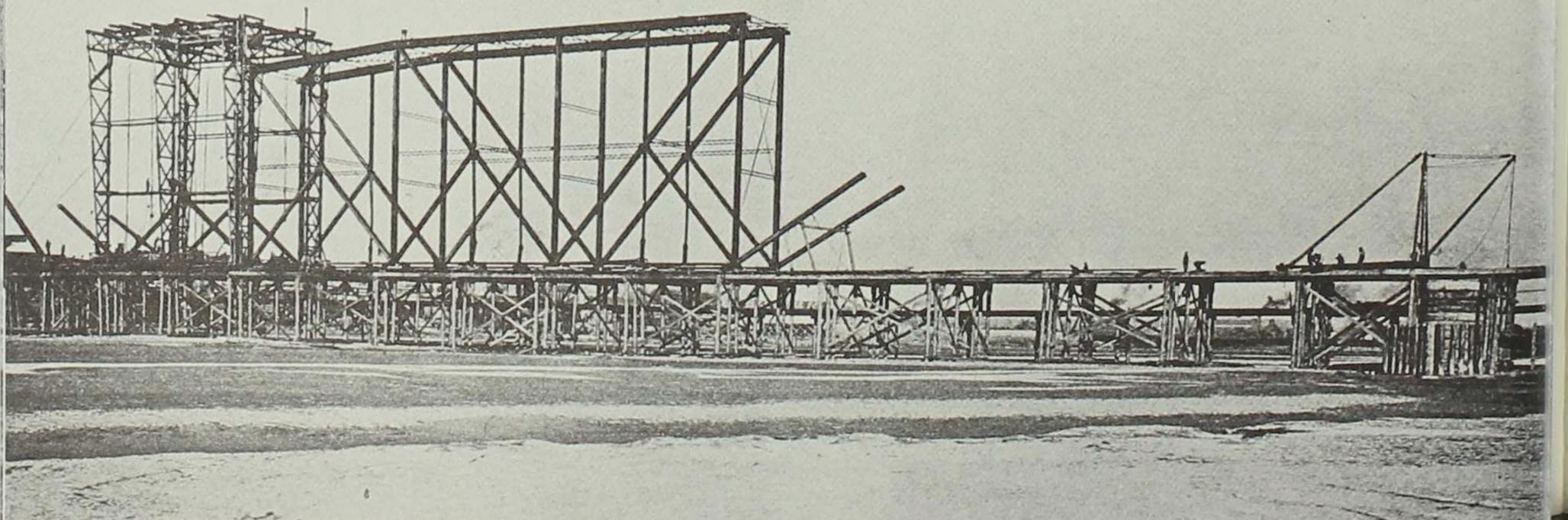
October 5, 1895



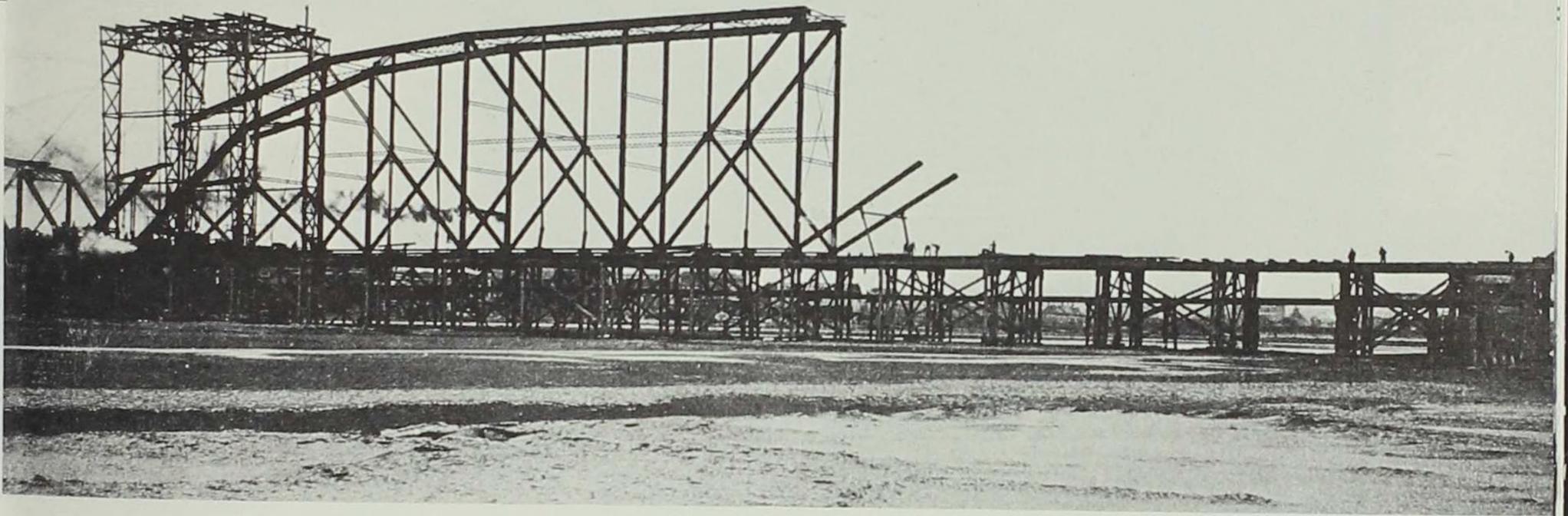
October 7, 1895



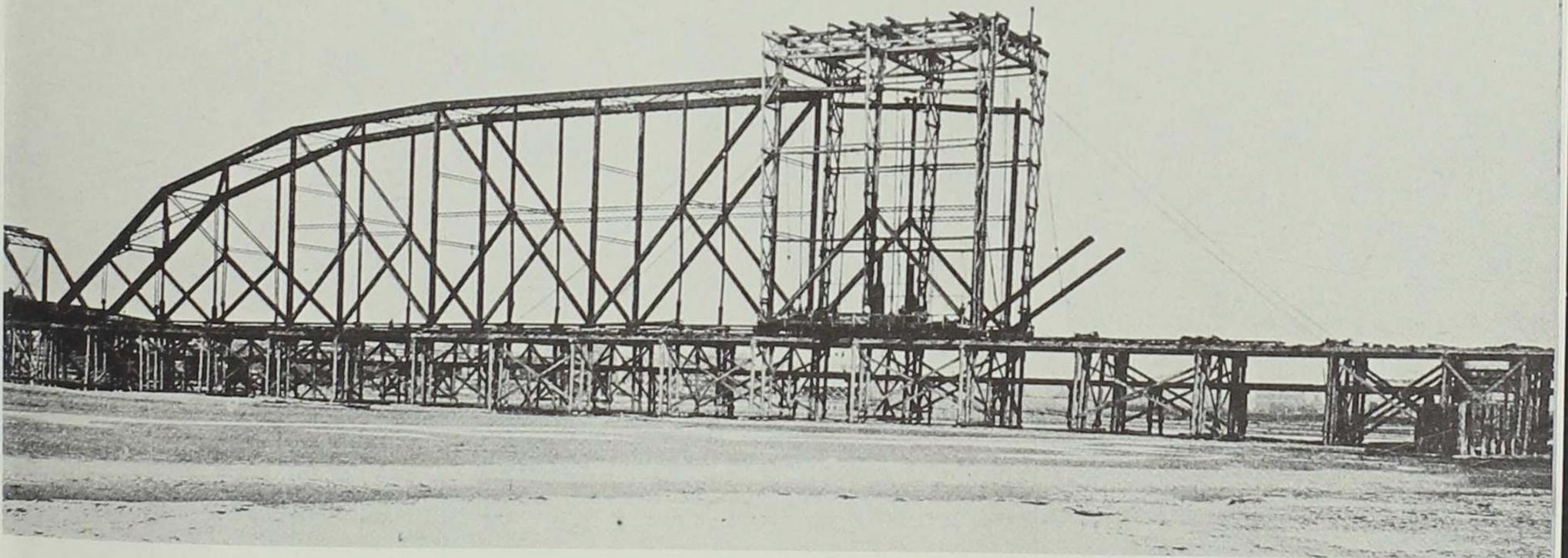
October 8, 1895



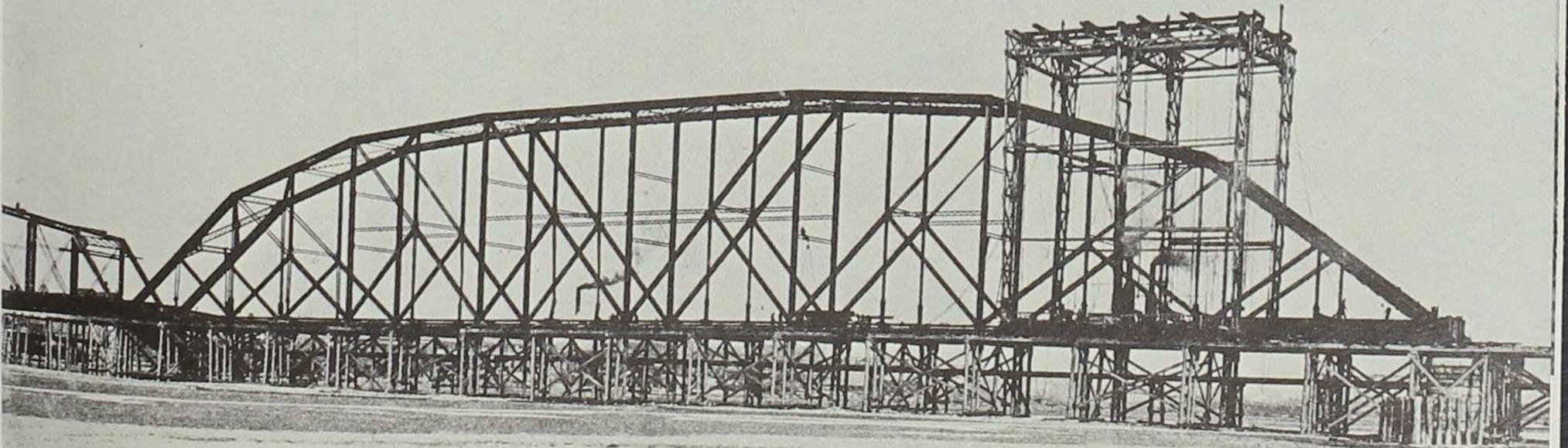
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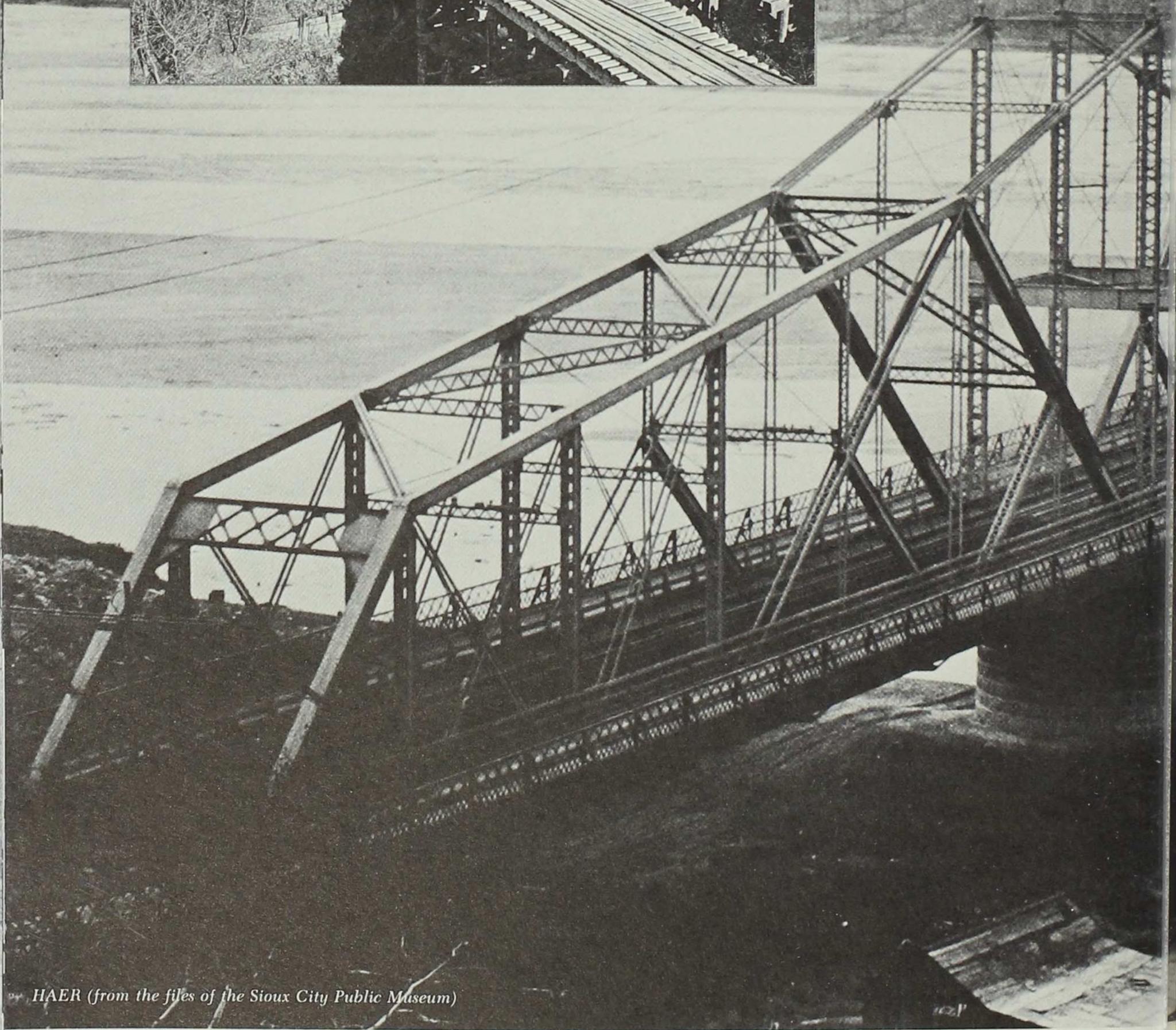
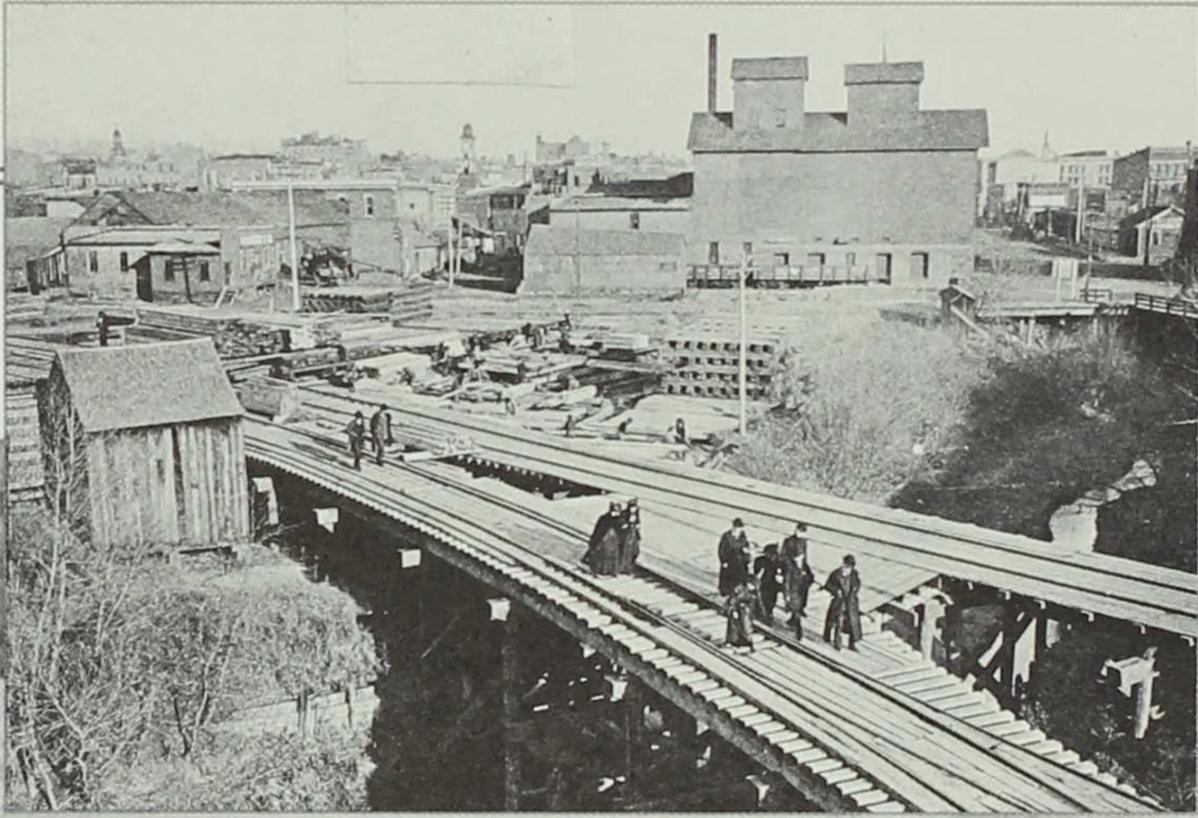
October 10, 1895



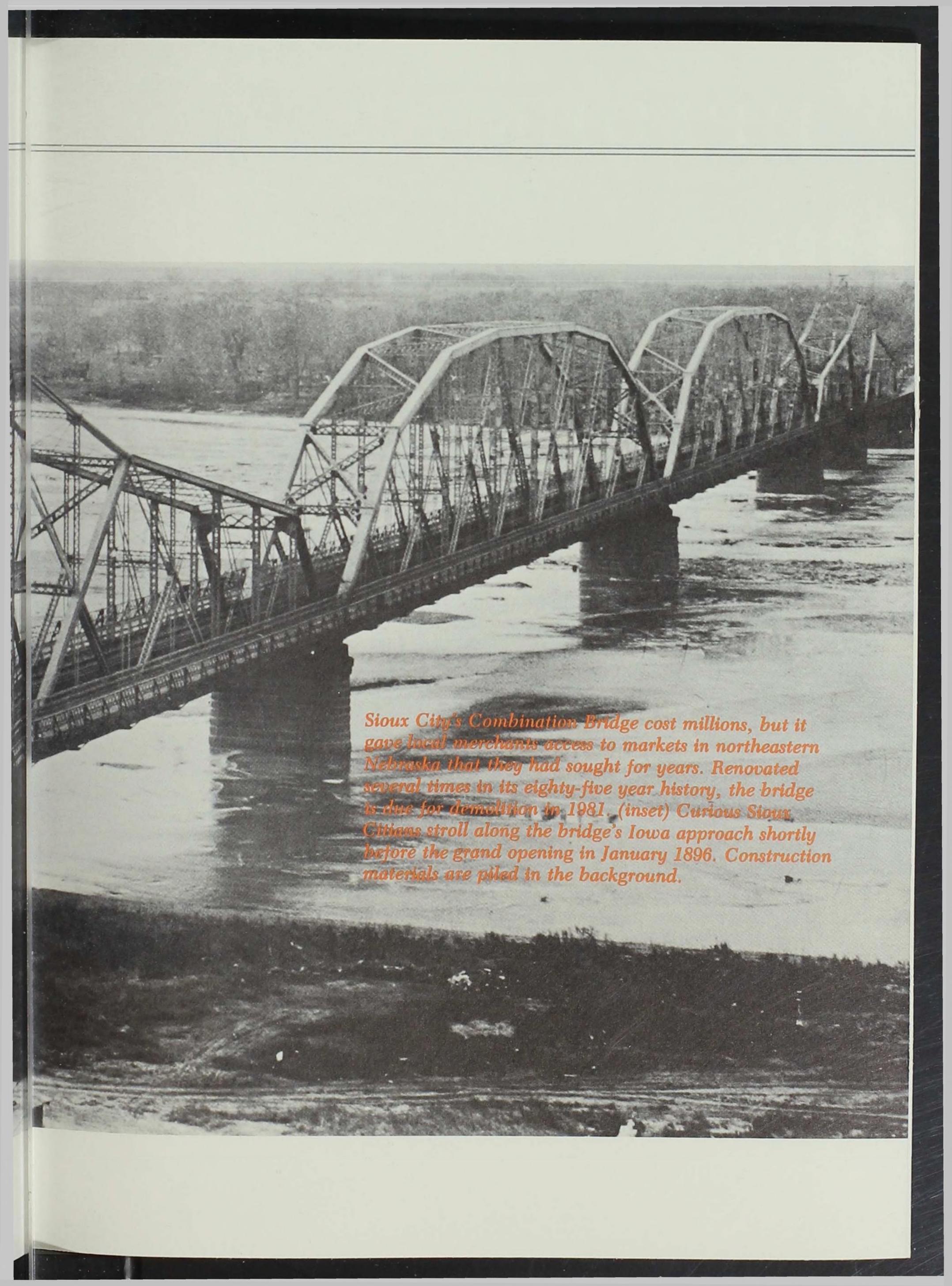
October 13, 1895



HAER (from the files of the Sioux City Journal)



HAER (from the files of the Sioux City Public Museum)



*Sioux City's Combination Bridge cost millions, but it gave local merchants access to markets in northeastern Nebraska that they had sought for years. Renovated several times in its eighty-five year history, the bridge is due for demolition in 1981. (inset) Curious Sioux Citizens stroll along the bridge's Iowa approach shortly before the grand opening in January 1896. Construction materials are piled in the background.*

# EPIDEMIC!



## Iowa Fights the Spanish Influenza

by  
William H.  
Cumberland

As the Allied armies crushed the last German offensive in the late summer of 1918, most of the world's people looked forward to a period of peace and prosperity. The World War was about to end. But even before the armistice of November 11, a new enemy was sweeping the globe which would kill twenty million people, twice as many as those killed in the war. Five hundred thousand of these deaths would occur in the United States. The new enemy was the "Spanish Influenza," the most virulent form of in-

fluenza yet encountered on either side of the Atlantic.

The 1918 epidemic almost certainly did not originate in Spain. Yet because Spain, as a non-belligerent, did not impose war-time censorship restrictions, its eight million influenza cases became the focus of worldwide attention. Quickly enough, however, the disease infested populations on both sides of the Atlantic. In early September, the epidemic reached the United States, and soon cities across the nation reported mounting numbers of cases. Everywhere the symptoms were the same: first a chill, then high fever, headache and backache, reddening and running of the nose and eyes, and dull muscular pain. The overall effect was one of general prostration, for which doctors at first had no remedy other than bedrest.

Cases of the disease first appeared in Iowa late in September, in Des Moines and at nearby Camp Dodge, with scattered reports from other communities. With sudden fury the epidemic then moved westward, to Sioux City and other towns. Throughout the state, municipal officials prepared to fight the disease by closing or curtailing services at public accommodations. The owners of theatres, movie houses, dance halls, pool rooms, skating rinks, and outdoor athletic facilities reduced their hours or closed completely in the course of the next several weeks. Such closings were particularly extensive in the state's larger cities, where even churches and Sunday schools complied with the practice.

The disease itself baffled contemporary physicians. Though a growing number of medical authorities suspected that a filterable virus was responsible — a hypothesis that was confirmed in 1933 after extensive study — there was no consensus among physicians as to either the cause or the cure during the postwar epidemic. As one might expect, however, all sorts of alleged remedies soon appeared. Several vaccines, including one developed at the Mayo Clinic and tested in Sioux City and Cedar Rapids, produced uncertain results, but people in the latter city proved so eager to try it that the demand for the Mayo vaccine quickly outran the supply. The consequence here, as elsewhere, was the proliferation of less scientific remedies. In Sioux City, whose city ordinance forbade the consumption of liquor, a physician's statement entitled the bearer to receive "medicinal" whiskey issued by the municipal police department. In keeping with public sentiment on the eve of national prohibition, no person was allowed more than a quart, and—a local newspaper assured its readers—"they were watched."



*An emergency hospital set up in the gymnasium at Iowa State University during the influenza epidemic of 1918 (courtesy Iowa State University Archives)*

## 1500 CASES SPANISH FLU IN CAMP DODGE

Spread of Suspected Cases Has  
Forced an Enlargement of  
Hospital Room.

### MANY UNDER OBSERVATION

Suspected Cases Continue to  
Pour Into the Camp Base  
Hospital.

## QUARANTINE'S LID SETTLES OVER CITY

Proclamation Makes Effective  
Today Measure to Prevent  
Epidemic's Spread.

### PUT LID ON FOR TWO WEEKS

Committee Will Meet Daily to  
Outline Further Action if  
Necessary.

*News of the epidemic in  
Iowa began to appear in  
the Des Moines Register in  
October 1918.*

Apparently there were no scientific inquiries to verify the effectiveness of the whiskey cure, or the many others that appeared as the disease spread across the Hawkeye State. These included treatment with kerosene, onions, mustard poultices, lemon juice, turpentine linament, buttercloth breath strainers, and a variety of other hot and cold applications. Despite physicians' warnings, the epidemic promoted plenty of quackery, even after the appearance of more reliable treatments for flu symptoms, including the recently introduced VICK'S VAPORUB®, which was widely advertised during the months of the epidemic.

Public health officials moved uncertainly in their efforts to combat the disease. Some Des Moines hospitals, reluctant to accept flu victims, had to be ordered to do so by a special committee set up by the State Board of Health. Dr. Guilford Sumner, secretary of the Board, sent five thousand circulars and ten thousand booklets describing the flu and proper management procedures to Iowa physicians, newspapers, and government officials. Sumner also issued a communique to the surgeon general urging him to impose a thirty-day quarantine in Iowa. Although the surgeon general rejected this advice, many Iowa communities—including the hard-hit city of Des Moines—declared quarantines at their own volition. Throughout the crisis, Board of Health representatives and municipal officials throughout the state worked tirelessly to coordinate programs aimed at stemming the epidemic.

Despite their efforts, the battle against the Spanish flu achieved only partial success. Much of the problem lay in the officials' inability to convince the public of the seriousness of the disease. In Des Moines, a number of business and labor groups charged that the Board of Health and its Flu Committee over-reacted to news of the epidemic's casualty figures. Department store owners were especially vocal in expressing their confidence in the generally good health of Des Moines citizens. And to reduce customers' anxieties, the owners had store nurses check their employees each morning; there was, they insisted, no evidence of the flu among them. Nevertheless, the city-wide quarantine hurt local business and dramatically reduced the number of outside visitors to Des Moines.

Legally, of course, the Iowa State Board of Health could do no more than to advise local communities, distribute information on the uncertain preventative measures, and recommend the quarantines. The state provided no funds and

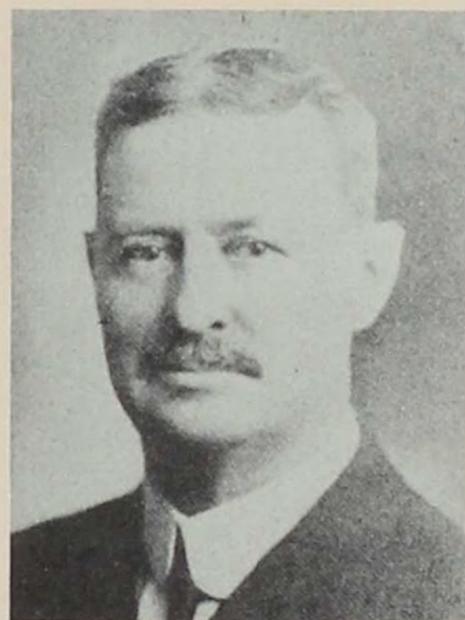
scant regulatory means for officials to monitor the progress of public health programs. Vaccines were sent to local doctors, and emergency care facilities were established wherever space and local resources allowed, but the state left it to the counties to bear most of the costs, including the expense of treating indigents afflicted with the illness. The financial and administrative strain of dealing with a disease that would eventually attack one-fourth of the state's population was enormous. And because young adults suffered in disproportionate numbers, there were sharp rises in the numbers of children orphaned—another problem with which the local communities had to contend. Thus, the epidemic's impact was felt for years after the crisis ended, both in social terms and with respect to the physical aftereffects—including weakening of the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys—experienced by the flu's victims.

Given the seriousness of the epidemic and the lack of medical knowledge concerning the disease, rumors ran rampant among the people of Iowa. At Camp Dodge, for example, it was alleged that several doctors and nurses had been found guilty of injecting Spanish influenza germs into their patients, and that the culprits had been court-martialed and shot. The story, of course, had no foundation in fact. Another rumor had it that fifty black enlisted men, all victims of the disease, were buried in a mass grave located behind the hospital at the army base. This too was a fiction.

**I**n about five weeks, the crisis abated somewhat, and most Iowa communities experienced a decline in the number of cases reported each day. The epidemic had apparently peaked. At Camp Dodge and elsewhere, quarantines were lifted and life returned to normal. Schools reopened, the football season resumed, and civic life regained its routine course. On November 4, in a final tribute to the flu's victims, Camp Dodge held services for the men and women—numbering more than seven hundred—who had died before they could go “Over There.”

Unfortunately, the decline in casualties was only a momentary hiatus, for within weeks the epidemic revived. The second wave of Spanish flu struck fifty thousand Iowans, killing four thousand of them. Davenport was especially hard hit; local papers reported that by Christmas the disease had taken “over six times as many Davenport lives as all the devilish devices of the bloody Hun.”

Throughout the state, officials resumed the siege tactics



## SUMNER ASKS IOWA TO FIGHT THE FLU

State Health Secretary Says  
Thirty Days Necessary to  
Exterminate Plague.

**SUMNER SUGGESTS.**  
Closing of public meetings of  
all kinds.  
Abstinence from public travel.  
Cessation of visiting from  
house to house.  
Staying at home and avoiding  
crowds as much as possible.  
Observance of these rules for  
at least thirty days.

*State Board of Health  
Secretary Dr. G. H. Sum-  
ner issued a flurry of news  
dispatches to counter pub-  
lic apathy about the  
threat posed by the flu in  
Iowa.*

## FLU LID ON AT DAVENPORT

Public Schools and Dances Are  
Ordered Closed at Once.

DAVENPORT, Ia., Dec. 2.—All public schools were ordered closed today by the local board of health by reason of the flu epidemic. The ban is also placed on dances, Sunday schools, moving picture houses, theaters and churches will be closed later if deemed advisable. A month ago a sweeping order was issued affecting all lines of business as well as school gatherings.

The general impression at this time is that the former ban was lifted too early. All the Davenport hospitals are filled to overflowing. The emergency hospital in the Turner hall building, established during the former outbreak of the plague, will be reopened. A call for nurses has been sent to Chicago.

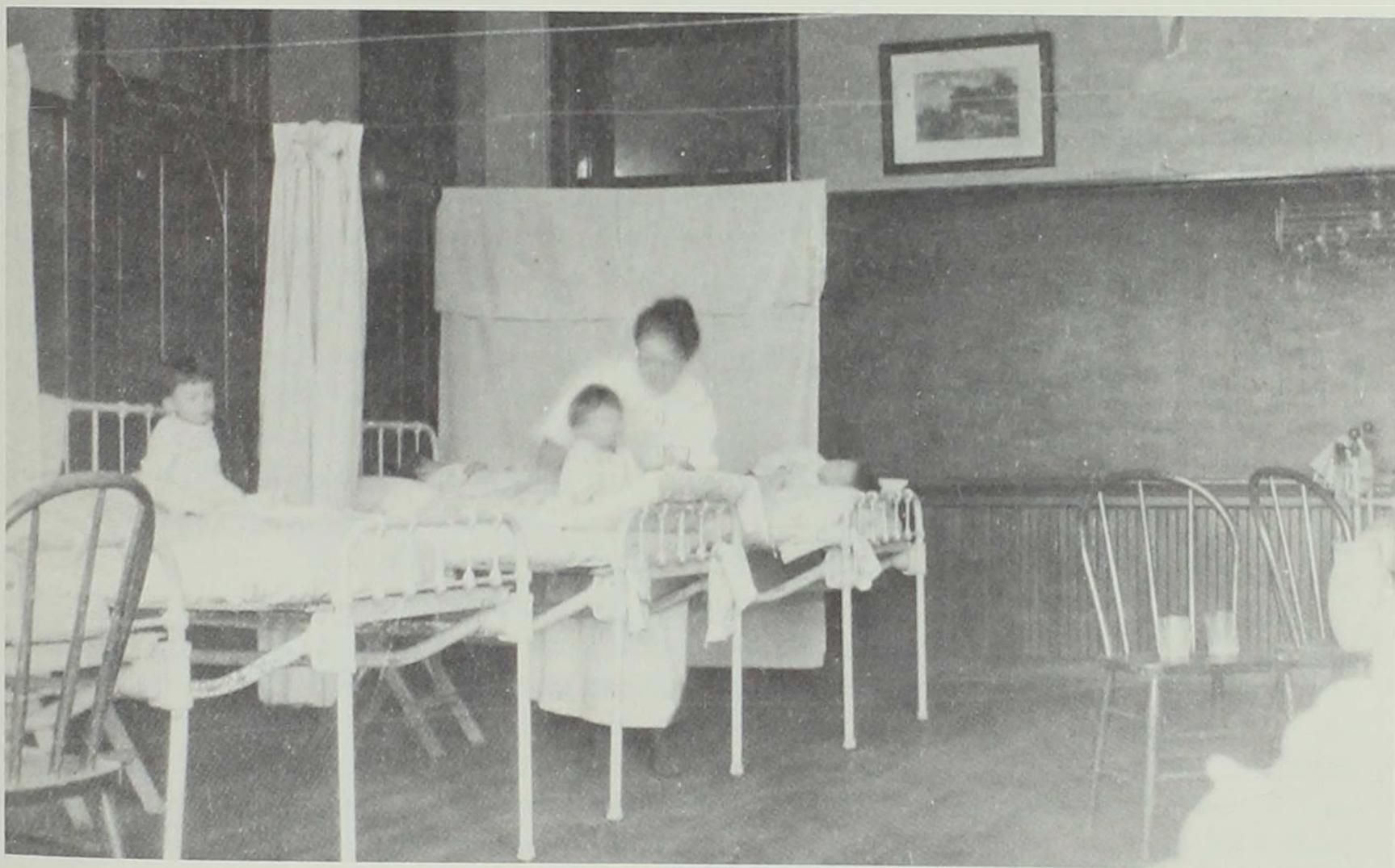
*The epidemic's second wave hit hardest in Davenport.*

developed earlier in the fall. In Des Moines, the Flu Committee required all persons attending public functions after 6:00 P.M. to wear masks. Barbers, elevator operators, and clerks were ordered to wear them at all times. As usual, many citizens protested these measures; movie house operators joined the department store owners in energetic opposition to the Board of Health's mandates, but to no avail. The city was of necessity shutting down again. The public schools, closed indefinitely in November, made no effort to reopen until after Christmas.

While it proved difficult to enforce the mask ordinances—and impossible to keep people from gathering—the epidemic's second wave convinced most people in Iowa that the influenza posed a serious threat to the state's population. Initial resentment and disrespect toward the regulations were perhaps understandable, since previous efforts to cure or prevent the disease had been futile. Moreover, people in 1918 ignored public health strictures because they were preoccupied with other things: the end of the war, the armistice, and the impending peace conference. Such events repeatedly crowded the epidemic off the newspapers' front pages and kept readers distracted by the drama of international postwar politics. But when Davenport began to report proportionately more flu cases than either Chicago or St. Louis, and when other Iowa communities witnessed sudden declines in commercial activity, resistance to public health warnings ceased. Closures of businesses and factories sent a message to the public in a way that even school closings had failed to do in previous months.

The second influenza wave began to subside shortly before Christmas. On December 16, Des Moines dropped its quarantine, though local businesses, schools, churches, and other public facilities were slow to resume normal operations. Davenport waited till Christmas Eve to rescind its flu restrictions, and may have been somewhat hasty at that. In early January, seven hundred fifty new cases appeared there in a three-day period. Still, the worst was over, and news of the Spanish flu slipped quietly into the newspapers' back pages.

**I**n its sweep across the globe, the Spanish influenza of 1918 killed and maimed without regard for wealth or social status. There is some evidence that the young were more prone to contract the disease than were their elders, and it is certain that crowded conditions such as those at



Camp Dodge and Fort Des Moines provided a breeding ground for the illness. In Iowa and elsewhere, mortality rates among closely quartered military personnel were much higher than among the civilian population. Other than these items of information, however, historians face difficulties in generalizing about the epidemic. Iowa officials, overworked as they were in the days of the crisis, did not take great care in documenting the incidence or seriousness of the flu among the state's residents. Reports by physicians to local boards of health often arrived with incomplete information, and some never arrived at all. Furthermore, many flu cases never came to the attention of Iowa's medical practitioners. As a result, statistical data gathered during the epidemic provides only a rough estimate of the total number of victims. For example, the Iowa State Board of Health listed 42,797 cases of the flu during October 1918, but for some reason the procedure for listing victims seems to have been curtailed in subsequent months. Annual mortality figures, in which we may place more confidence, record 6,543 influenza-related deaths in 1918 and 1,183 in 1919. To the extent that these and other state figures are accurate, it would appear that Iowa suffered fewer deaths than did many states.

*Classrooms at the Bud School in Des Moines were converted to hospital wards at the peak of the epidemic in late autumn 1918 (SHSI)*

As noted, much of this good fortune should be ascribed to luck, for Iowans were not particularly conscientious in following the recommendations of public health officials. City councils, boards of health, and local flu committees complained continually about the lack of public cooperation. Hysteria alternated with indifference, and indifference resulted in a general reluctance to abide by the terms of protective regulations. People simply refused to wear masks, businesses resisted restrictions, and owners of public entertainment facilities protested all efforts at government regulation of their operations. As a result, thousands of people needlessly exposed themselves to possible infection. To make matters worse, critics and proponents of public health measures wasted days and weeks in wrangling over the manner in which such measures were to be imposed. Disgusted by such contentiousness, Dr. Sumner at one point complained that "it is remarkable how zealous the public will be in demanding the most drastic rules and regulations be enforced in case of [a] hog cholera scare, and yet when an epidemic is raging which is jeopardizing the lives of whole communities, many of the same people will manifest the utmost indifference." □

*One of a series of bulletins issued by the Iowa State Board of Health during the epidemic. This one appeared in the Des Moines Register on October 15.*

#### Note on Sources

Much of the information used in this article was gleaned from items on the epidemic published in the winter of 1918-1919 in the newspapers in Des Moines, Davenport, Sioux City, and Cedar Rapids. Also useful were Alfred W. Crosby, *Epidemic and Peace, 1918*, selected issues of the *Journal of the Iowa State Medical Society* and the *American Journal of Public Health*, and the annual reports of the Iowa State Board of Health.

A fully annotated version of this article is on file at the State Historical Society.

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IOWA STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

# INFLUENZA

## How to Avoid It---How to Care for Those Who Have It

The following suggestions of the Iowa State Board of Health may prove of immeasurable value to any man or woman who will read, remember and act upon them in the present great emergency. The counsel here set forth was prepared by the Massachusetts State Department of Health, after consultation with some of the ablest medical men in America. If you will follow the instructions of this official bulletin you will be doing your duty to your fellowmen, to your country and to yourself.

### What to Do Until the Doctor Comes

If you feel a sudden chill, followed by muscular pain, headache, backache, unusual tiredness and fever go to bed at once.

See that there is enough bed clothing to keep you warm.

Open all windows in your bedroom and keep them open at all times, except in rainy weather.

Take medicine to open the bowels freely.

Take some nourishing food such as milk, egg-and-milk or broth every four hours.

Stay in bed until a physician tells you that it is safe to get up.

Allow no one else to sleep in the same room.

Protect others by sneezing or coughing into handkerchiefs or cloths, which should be boiled or burned.

Insist that whoever gives you water or food or enters the sick room for any other purpose shall wear a gauze mask, which may be obtained from the Red Cross or may be made at home of four to six folds of gauze and which should cover the nose and mouth and be tied behind the head.

Remember that these masks must be kept clean, must be put on outside the sick room, must not be handled after they are tied on and must be boiled thirty minutes and thoroughly dried every time they are taken off.

#### To Householders

Keep out of the sick room unless attendance is necessary.

Do not handle articles coming from the sick room until they are boiled.

Allow no visitors, and do not go visiting.

Call a doctor for all inmates who show signs of beginning sickness.

The usual symptoms are: Inflamed and watery eyes, discharging nose, backache, headache, muscular pain, and fever.

Keep away from crowded places, such as "movies," theatres, street cars.

See to it that your children are kept warm and dry, both night and day.

Have sufficient fire in your home to dispense the dampness.

Open your windows at night. If cool weather prevails, add extra bed clothing.

#### To Workers

Walk to work if possible.

Avoid the person who coughs or sneezes.

Wash your hands before eating.

Make full use of all available sunshine.

Do not use a common towel. It spreads disease.

Should you cough or sneeze, cover nose and mouth with a handkerchief.

Keep out of crowded places. Walk in the open air rather than go to crowded places of amusement.

Sleep is necessary for wellbeing—avoid over-exertion. Eat good, clean food.

Keep away from houses where there are cases of influenza.

If sick, no matter how slightly, see a physician.

If you have had influenza, stay in bed until your doctor says you can safely get up.

#### To Nurses

Keep clean. Isolate your patients.

When in attendance upon patients, wear a mask which will cover both the nose and the mouth. When the mask is once in place, do not handle it.

Change the mask every two hours. Owing to the secretory of gauze, boil for ½ hour and rinse, then use the gauze again.

Wash your hands each time you come in contact with the patient. Use bichloride of mercury, 1-1000, or Liquor Cresol compound, 1-100, for hand disinfection.

Obtain at least seven hours' sleep in each twenty-four hours. Eat plenty of good, clean food.

Walk in the fresh air daily.

Sleep with your windows open.

Insist that the patient cough, sneeze or expectorate into cloths that may be disinfected or burned.

Boil all dishes. Keep patients warm.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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**WILLIAM H. CUMBERLAND**, Professor of History at Buena Vista College, is a native of Vinton. He received his B.A. at the University of Dubuque and his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in history at the University of Iowa. Cumberland has been at Buena Vista College since 1958 and has served as Social Science Division

Chairperson. His article on Sioux City Mayor Wallace Short appeared in the September/October 1980 issue of *The Palimpsest*.

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*THE PALIMPSEST is published bimonthly by the State Historical Society in Iowa City. Second class postage paid at Iowa City, Iowa. Postmaster: send address changes to State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.*

USISSN 0031—0360

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