

## His Greatest Accomplishment

The great race between the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific had creaked off to a slow start from the eastern terminus. Although groundbreaking ceremonies had occurred at Omaha on December 2, 1863, difficulty in raising the money delayed its beginning until July 10, 1865, when the first rail was laid. At the time General Dodge became chief engineer, succeeding Peter A. Dey, only 30 miles of track had been laid; but over \$500,000 had been spent in surveys and grading.

Having gained absolute authority from Thomas C. Durant, vice president in charge of construction of the Union Pacific, Dodge organized his engineering and construction procedure with the same thoroughness he had brought to his army operations. Samuel B. Reed and James A. Evans were his construction superintendents; the Case-ment brothers, General Jack and Dan, began the incredible performance of track laying that made them famous.

On out the Platte River Valley swung the construction crews beside the marching rails. Surveyor Dodge's predictions about the logical overland route were about to come true. Buffalo paths, Indian trails, emigrant and freight routes, and the

considered evidence of over 25,000 miles of reconnaissances and 15,000 miles of instrumental surveys made by this incredible explorer merged into the ultimate line drawn across the map. Dodge wrote later:

The Lord had so constructed the country that any engineer who failed to take advantage of the great open road out the Platte Valley and then on to Salt Lake would not have been fit to belong to the profession.

The four years of his life devoted to this absorbing accomplishment must have been the most satisfactory of his career, for in the doing he realized his full capabilities. He was 35 years old when he started this work. Challenged by problems of terrain, supplies, financing, Indian raids, V.I.P. visitors, and personal difficulties with the promoters, he overcame them all.

Adding to his responsibilities were those of a Congressional seat, for his friends in Iowa had elected him in 1866 despite his inability to campaign for office as their Representative to the Fortieth Congress from the Fifth District. He managed to attend the sessions for one term. He absorbed the Washington "know-how" which made him a successful lobbyist for the rest of his life on behalf of railroads and veterans. He declined renomination in 1868.

The man who had survived the abrasive rigors of war found his resultant rude forcefulness exactly what was needed to push through a trans-

continental railway segment. Until the rails of the North Western Railroad reached Council Bluffs on January 27, 1867, all of the supplies for construction had to be brought upriver by steamboat and then carried over the railroad's own single track to the point of construction. The river boats could operate only a relatively few months of the year! Yet in 1866, 260 miles were constructed; in 1867, 240 more; in 1868, 425 miles; and 125 more to bring the rails to Promontory Point by April 1869. In addition, there were 186 miles of sidings. Bloodthirsty, vengeful Indians cost many a life of the crews and ran off countless head of stock until military escort was placed on the route. Generals Grant and Sherman worked hand-in-glove with Dodge to furnish army protection for the workers.

While the tracks unrolled westward, the matter of a bridge across the Missouri to link Council Bluffs with the initial point was under discussion. Lincoln's order establishing the eastern terminal had specified that it be within the limits of the township in Iowa opposite the town of Omaha. Council Bluffs and Dodge had fondly expected that the Union Pacific's headquarters and terminal would occupy the ground bought for this use, but Omaha had captured the prize.

Dodge designed, and in 1870-1872, constructed a bridge remarkable for its engineering features. Supports had to be anchored in bedrock. Laborers

worked inside tubes under air pressure ranging from 32 to 45 pounds per square inch. Cylinders of iron eight feet in diameter and sections 15 feet long were lowered into place, each weighing 16,650 pounds. To create the earth embankment running eastward for 9,000 feet, trains of cars carrying fill were run from the steam shovel location night and day for two years. Boats could pass under the 60-foot level of the bridge platform, which was made of 11 spans each 250 feet long. A double-track bridge replaced the structure in 1886.

The incredible story of the final few weeks before the rails of the Union Pacific met those of the Central Pacific at Promontory Point, Utah, illustrates the frenzy of the race. General Dodge's role as mediator in the terminal choice solved a critical problem.

The engines touched at last, nose to nose, on May 10, 1869. The first voice to be heard at the start of the ceremonies was that of General Dodge, who introduced the Reverend John Todd of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, who was to give the formal opening prayer. At one point in the ensuing ceremony, according to a dispatch from the *Chicago Tribune's* reporter, General Dodge responded on behalf of the Union Pacific as follows:

Gentlemen: The great Benton prophesied that some day a granite statue of Columbus would be erected on the highest peak of the Rocky Mountains pointing westward,

denoting this as the great route across the continent. You have made that prophecy this day. Accept this as the way to India.

Then came the electric climax when, before a crowd of 1,500 railroad and business dignitaries, soldiers, bandsmen, workers, newspaper reporters, and settlers, the golden spike was hammered into the silver-bound, polished laurel tie with a silverheaded spike maul by Governor Leland Stanford and driven in with enthusiasm by various other distinguished guests. The two chief engineers gave the final blows.

Telegrams were sent to President Grant, Vice President Colfax, and other officials throughout the country. Dodge did not fail to send a message to his old commander, who had been such a helpful factor in the building of the road, and he received this message in response:

Washington, May 11, 1869

General G. M. Dodge:

In common with millions, I sat yesterday and heard the mystic taps of the telegraph battery announce the nailing of the last spike in the great Pacific road. . . . All honor to you, to Durant, to Jack and Dan Casement, to Reed, and the thousands of brave fellows who have wrought out this glorious problem, spite of changes, storms, and even doubts of the incredulous, and all the obstacles you have now happily surmounted.

W. T. Sherman, General

Today this historic point is marked only by a

monument, since the railroad's route has been changed and the rails were melted for scrap in World War II.

The Union Pacific had cost \$57,000,000, some of which was suspected as accruing to the Credit Mobilier which financed the railroad. Dodge could not escape some tarring from the brush that painted its operations so black during the Congressional investigation that followed, but all his life he defended the good faith of the railroad's builders. He considered the building of the Union Pacific his greatest achievement.

Mrs. Dodge and their three daughters had been living quietly in a series of homes in Council Bluffs while General Dodge shuttled back and forth to Washington, to New York, and to end-of-track and home again. Even before the end of the railroad's construction loomed in sight, the Dodges acted to make a dream come true—their own home, to be built on a splendid site overlooking the business district, reflecting the restrained opulence of some of the East's impressive homes yet branded with the General's personal touches. Construction was started in 1869, and it was largely completed by 1870.

Dodge also managed to find time in 1869 to serve on the commissions for building of the Iowa School for the Deaf at Council Bluffs and the State Capitol at Des Moines.

After his resignation from his Union Pacific

post on January 25, 1870, he plunged immediately into the work of building the lengthy Texas Pacific as chief engineer; so all too soon his family was moved to Marshall, Texas, to be near him. They returned to Council Bluffs in 1874. Because of his railroad interests, he declined to be considered for a cabinet post as Grant's Secretary of War in 1871. That same year he became a director of the Union Pacific.

Even though Grenville Dodge might be thought to have played out the most vigorous and spectacular portion of his life by the time he was 40, the record shows that he had barely started. His monumental achievements in railroad construction and his successful financial operations which made him a millionaire several times over were pursued energetically during the next 35 years.

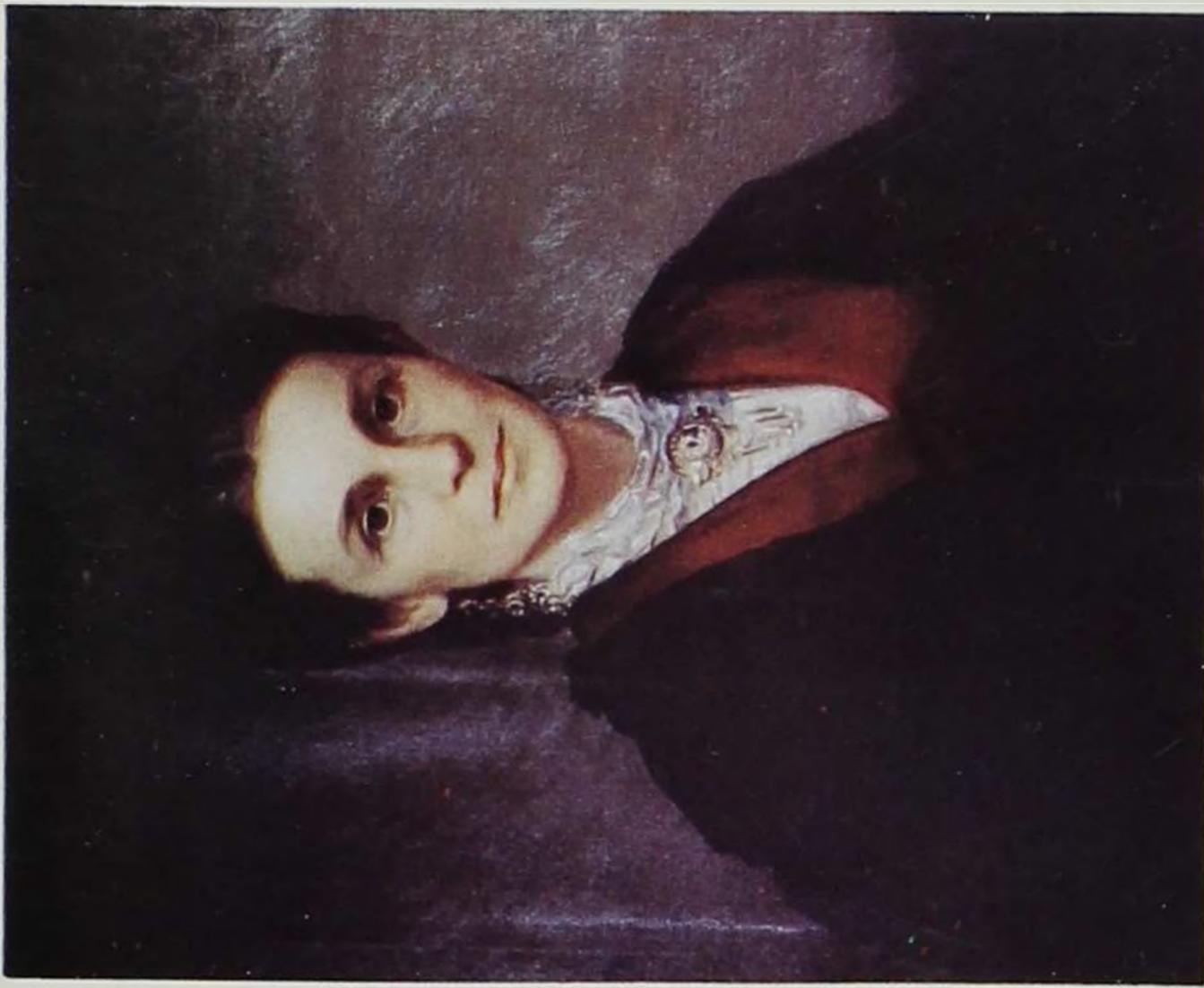
From 1873 to 1884 he was associated with Jay Gould in the railroad development of the southwest, building over 9,000 miles of track. He was often involved simultaneously with two or more ventures, not to mention holding directorships in several more. Meanwhile, each construction commission added to his land and stockholdings.

General Dodge's philosophy concerning the long-term benefits of the railroads to the country can be ascertained in this quotation from his official report on the Union Pacific's completion:

Its future is fraught with great good. It will develop a waste, will bind together the two extremes of the nation as



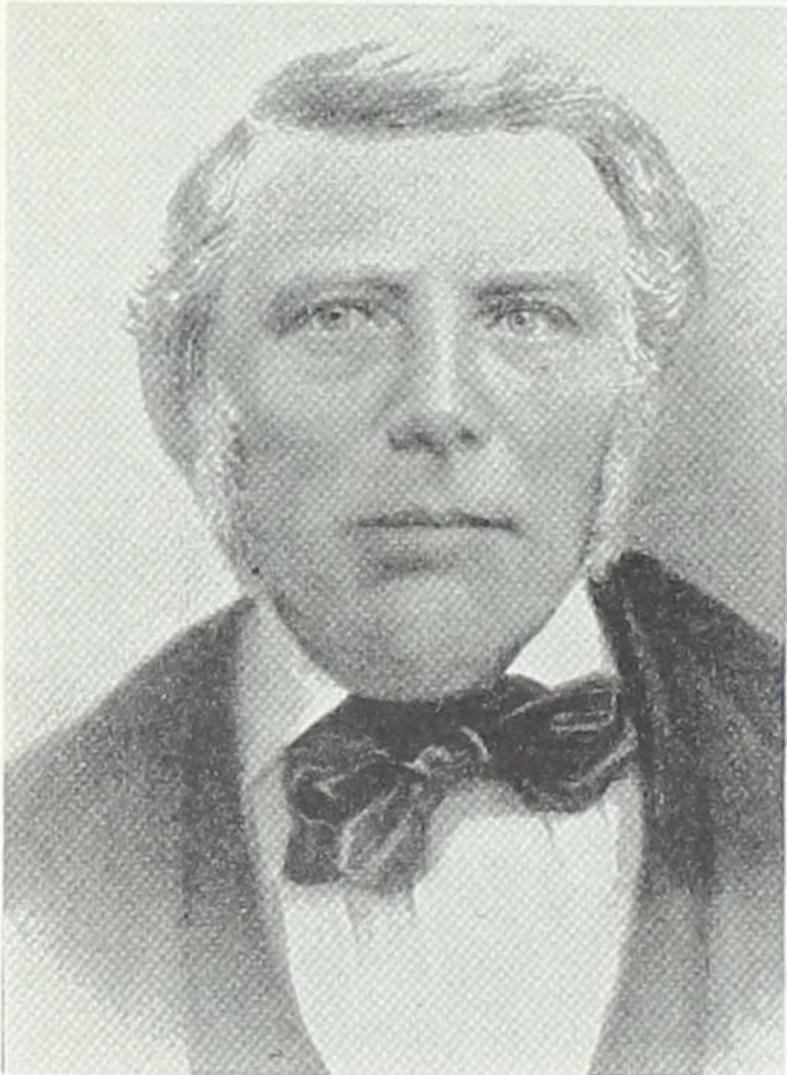
GRENVILLE MELLEN DODGE



*Union Pacific Railroad Photos*

MRS. GRENVILLE M. DODGE

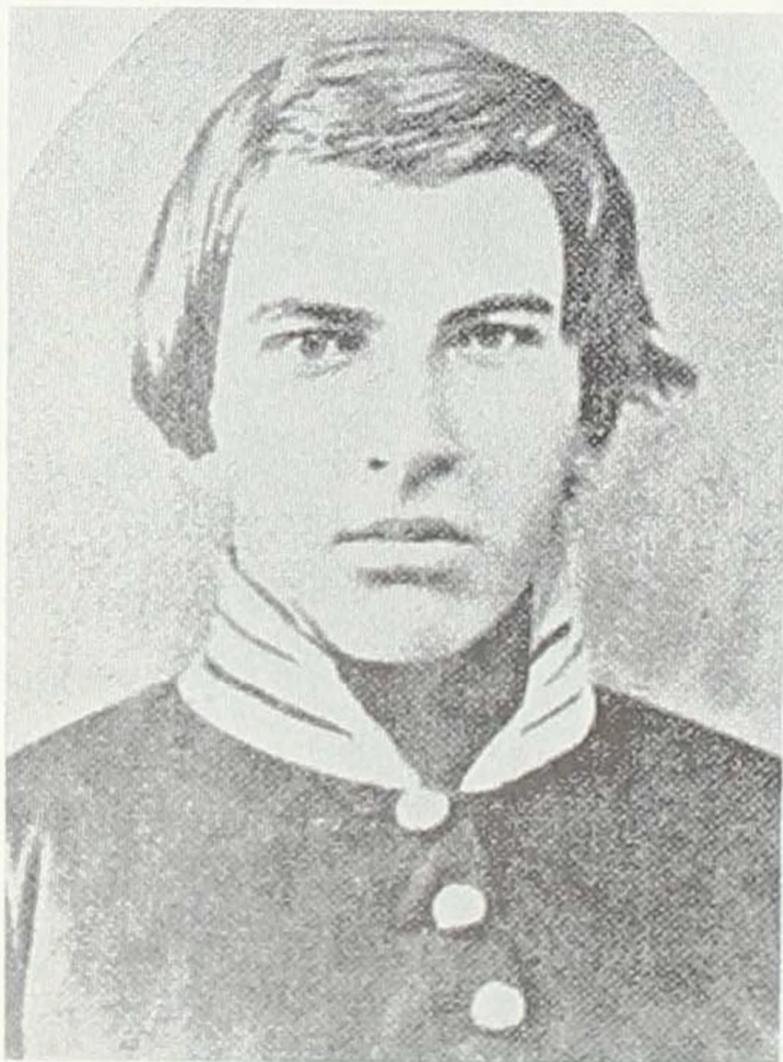
PARENTS OF GRENVILLE M. DODGE



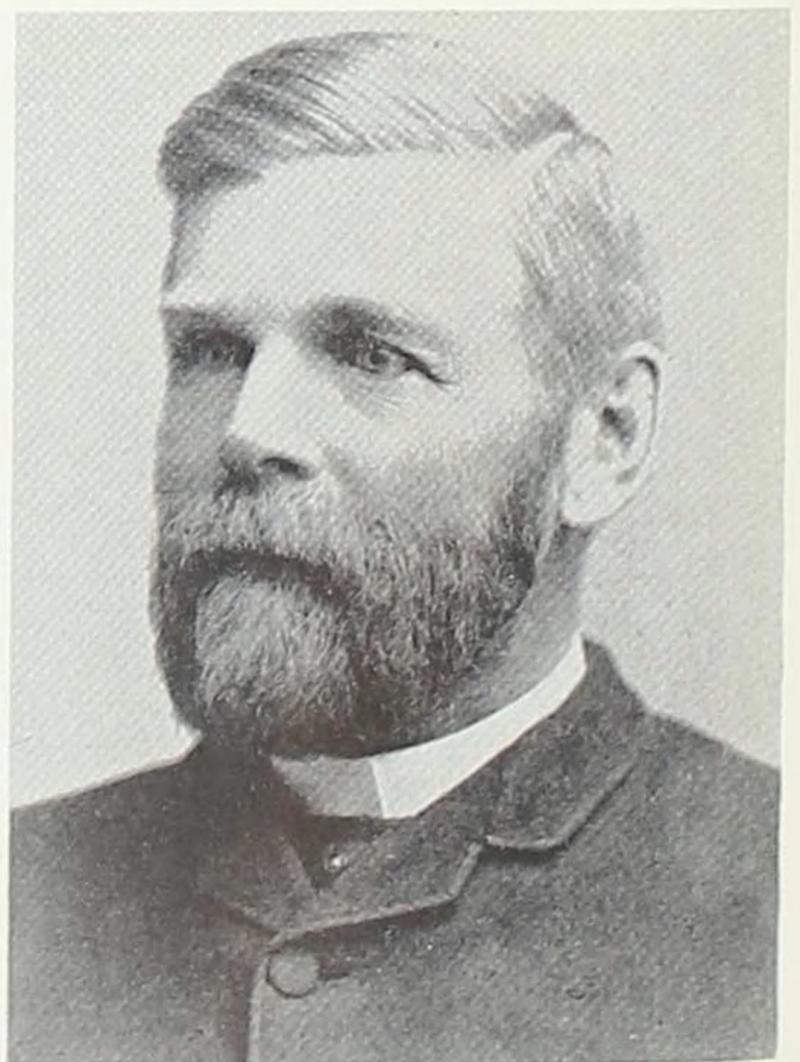
SYLVANUS DODGE



JULIA PHILLIPS DODGE



GRENVILLE M. DODGE  
as a Norwich cadet.

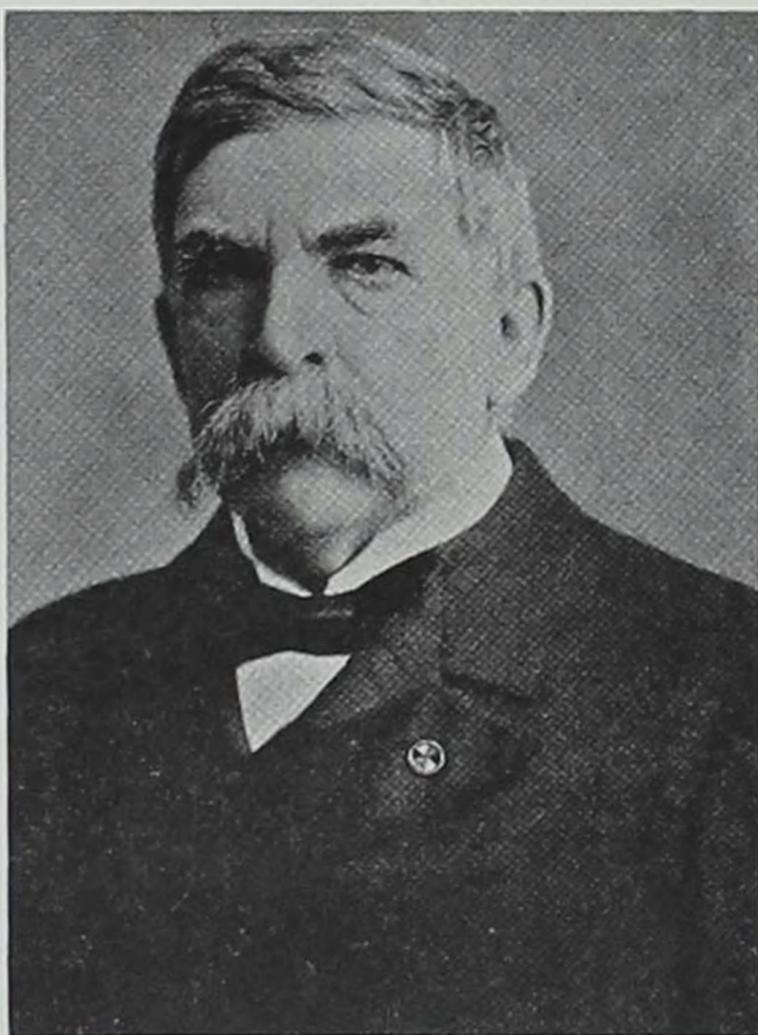


NATHAN DODGE, the  
younger brother of Grenville.

*Council Bluffs Free Public Library Photos*



GRENVILLE M. DODGE  
in Civil War uniform.

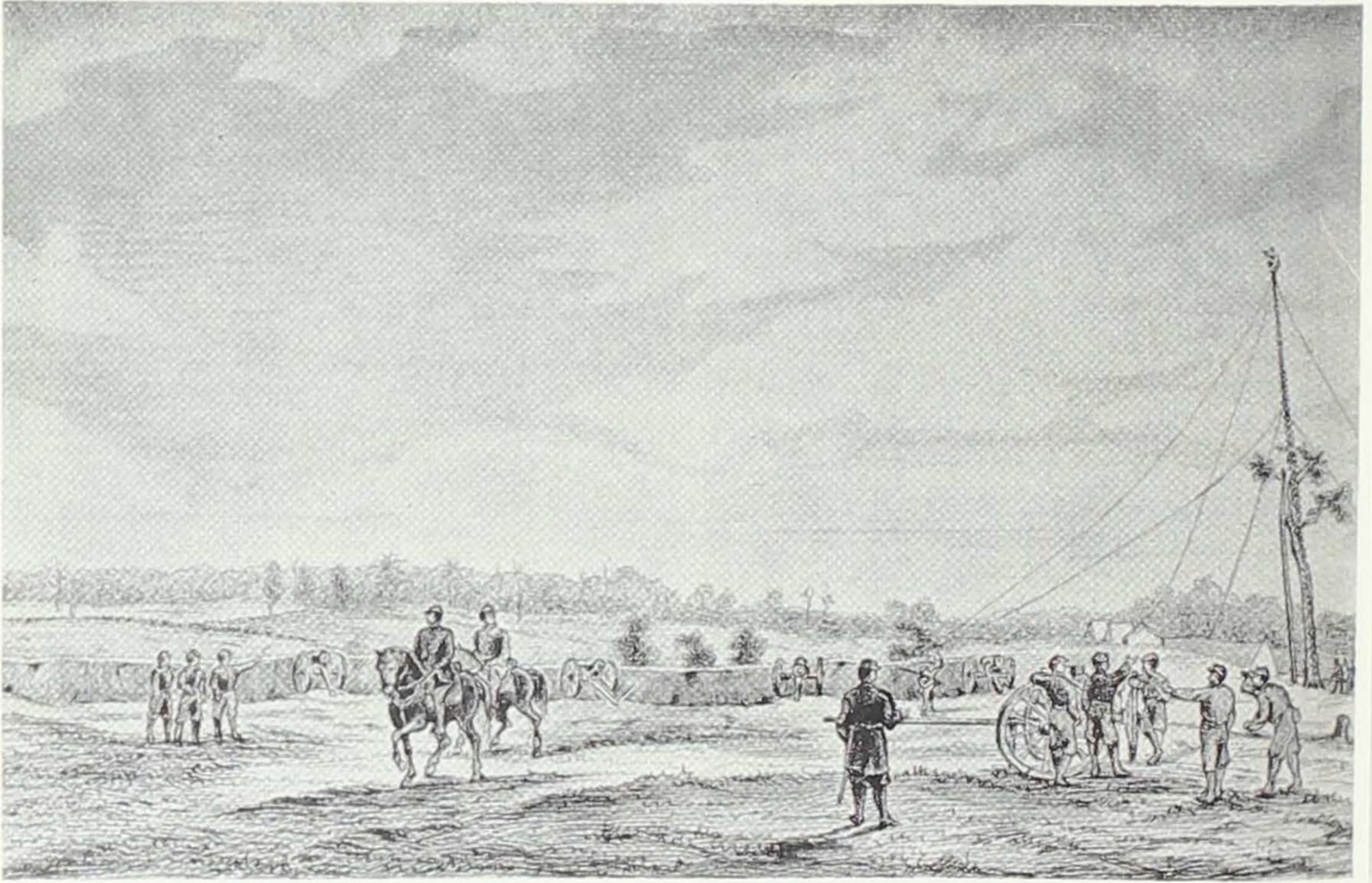


GRENVILLE M. DODGE  
in his declining years.



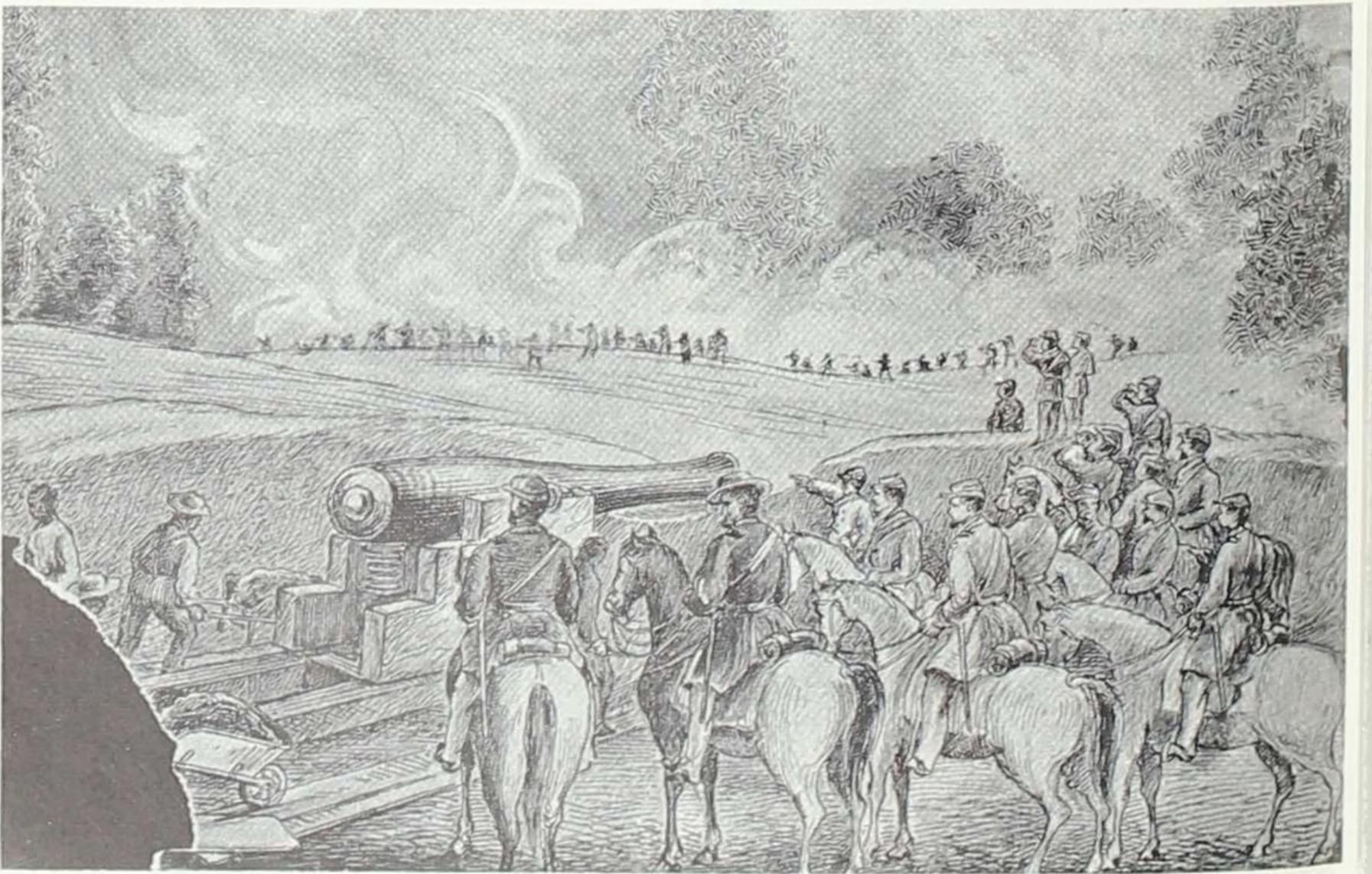
MRS. RUTH ANNE DODGE  
wife of Grenville M. Dodge.

*Union Pacific Railroad Photos*



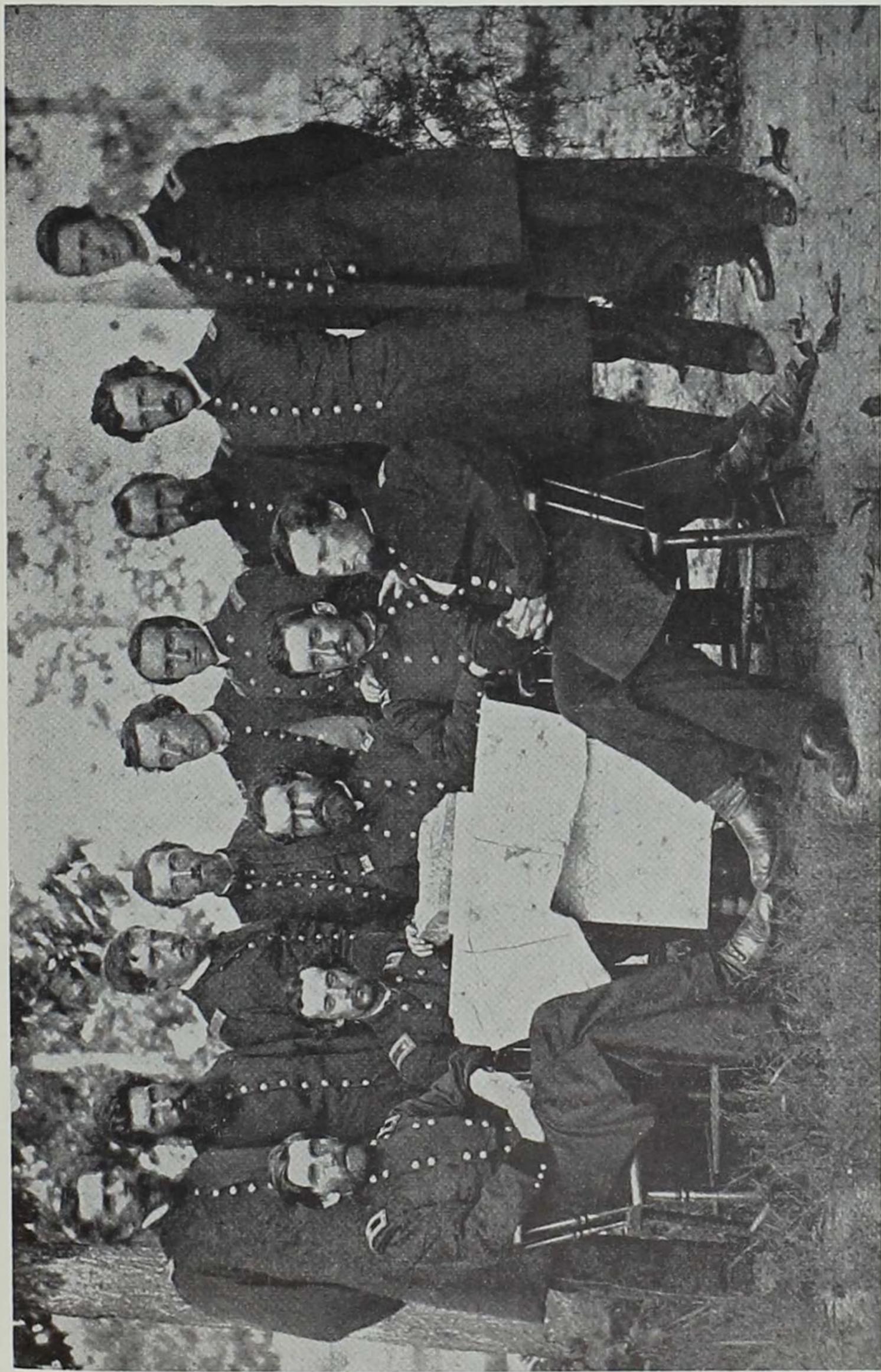
*Courtesy Clayton J. Metz*

Looking into Corinth from General Pope's observation post.



*Courtesy Mrs. Jeanne O'Hanlon*

Hurriedly erecting earthworks during battle at Corinth.



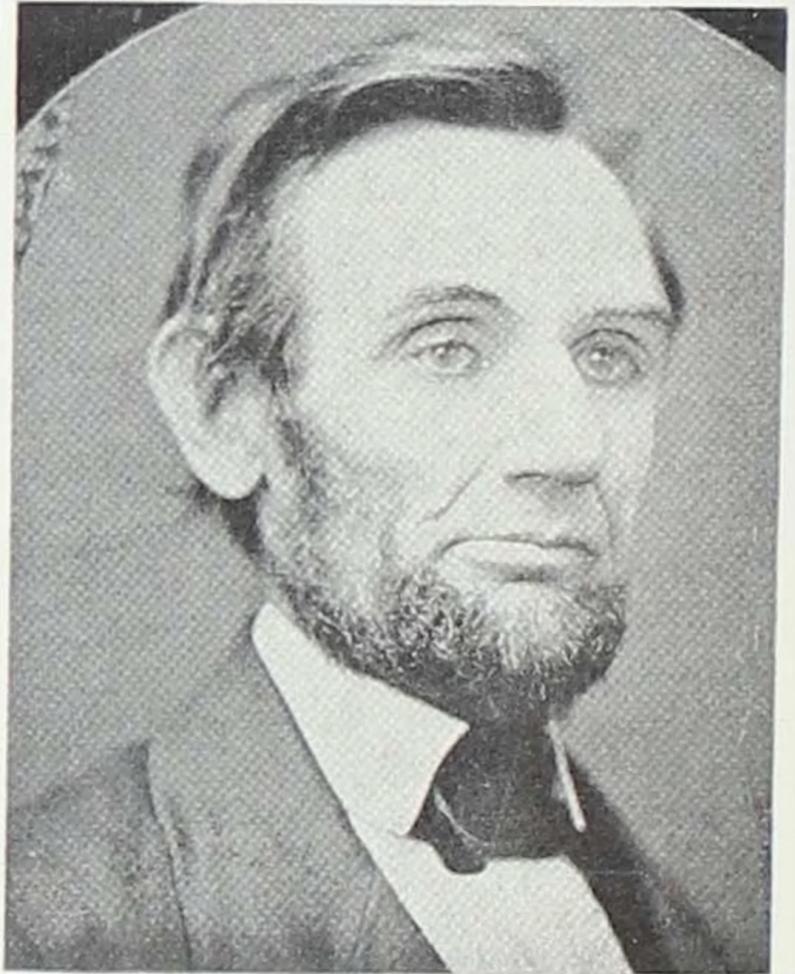
*Union Pacific Railroad Photo*

Major General Grenville M. Dodge and his staff at Corinth, Mississippi. Left Wing of the 16th Army Corps in 1863. Dodge is seated on left and directly behind him stands Colonel C. C. Carpenter, later governor of Iowa.

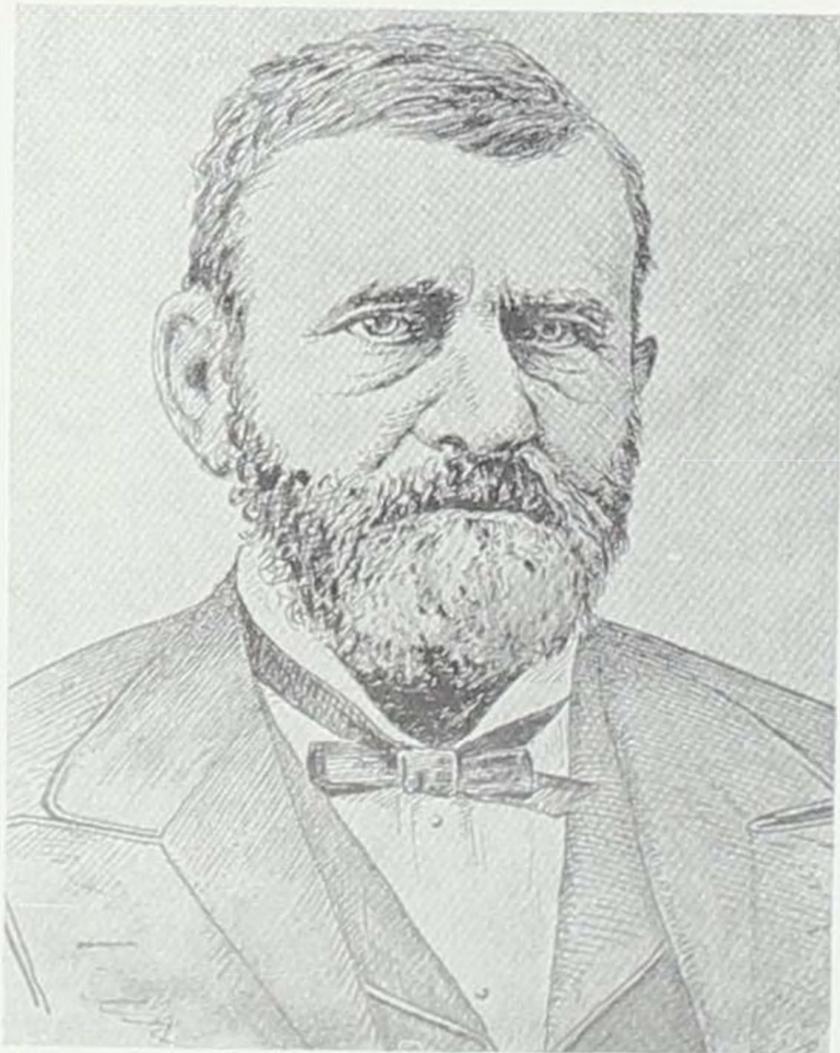
SOME NOTABLE DODGE FRIENDS



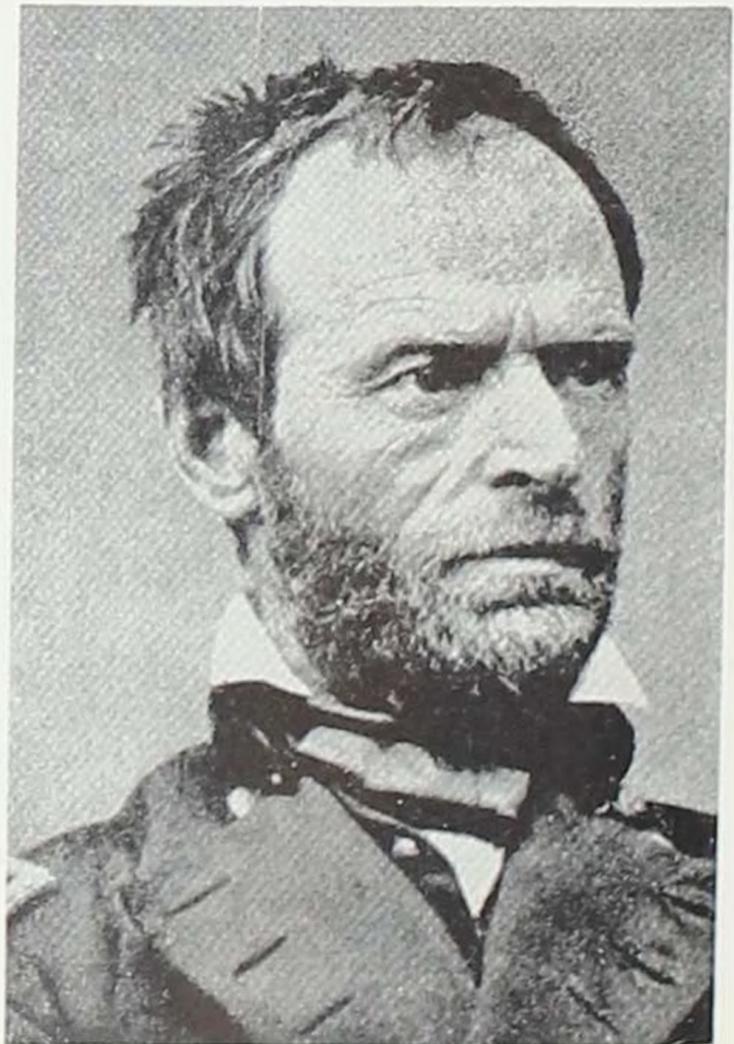
SAMUEL JORDAN KIRKWOOD  
War Governor of Iowa.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN  
heeded Dodge's advice.



ULYSSES S. GRANT  
warm Dodge supporter.



WILLIAM TECUMSEH SHERMAN  
close Dodge associate.

*Union Pacific Railroad Photos*



Major-General Grenville M. Dodge  
GRAND MARSHAL

GRANT MONUMENT MUNICIPAL INAUGURAL PARADE

To commemorate the completion of the Grant Monument and its  
acceptance by the City of New York on April 27<sup>th</sup> 1897.

From souvenir program of Iowa Society of New York



Front hall entrance showing circular staircase.



*Union Pacific Railroad Photos*  
Ornate front parlor with vivid purple wallpaper.

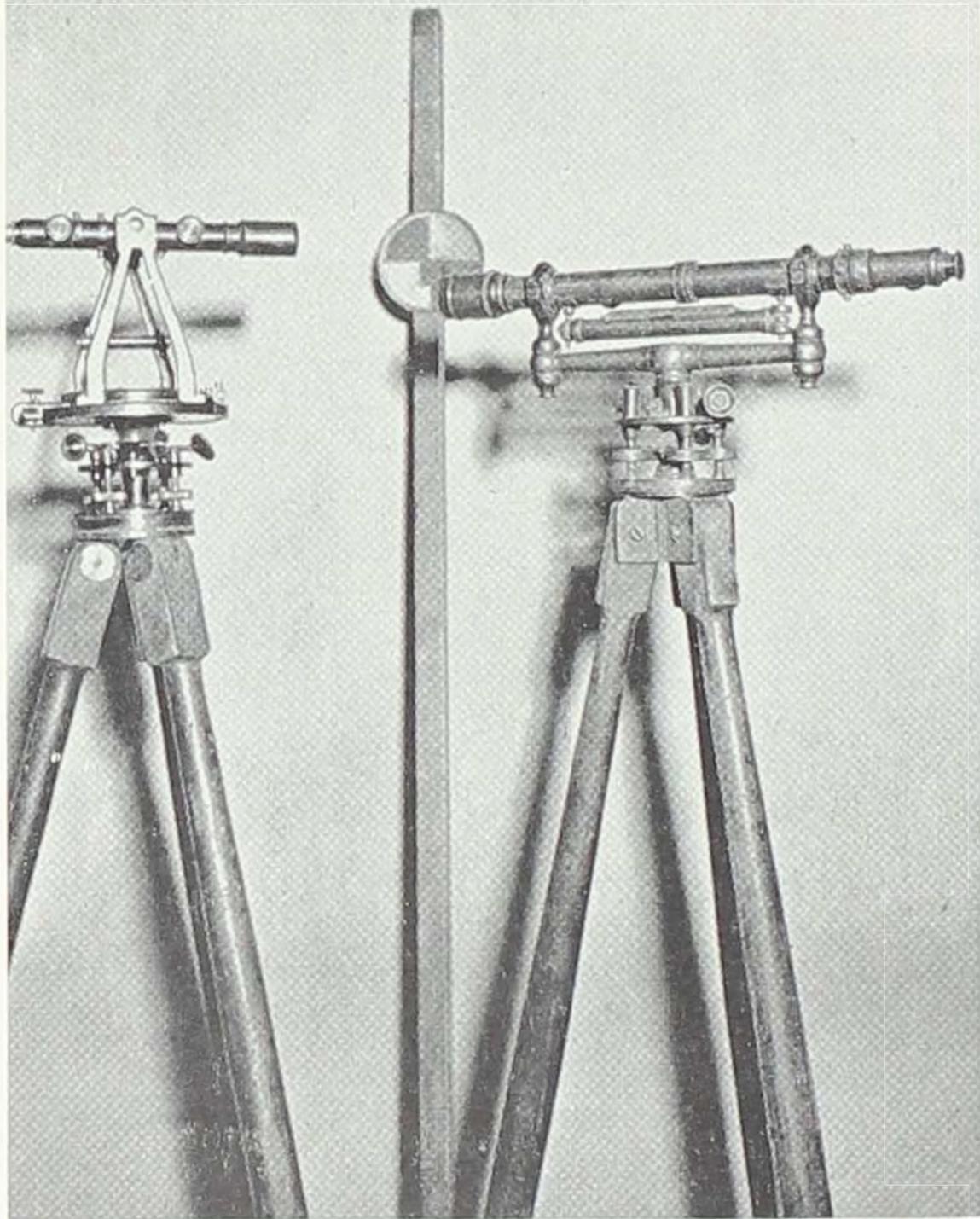


Books and pictures filled the library wall.

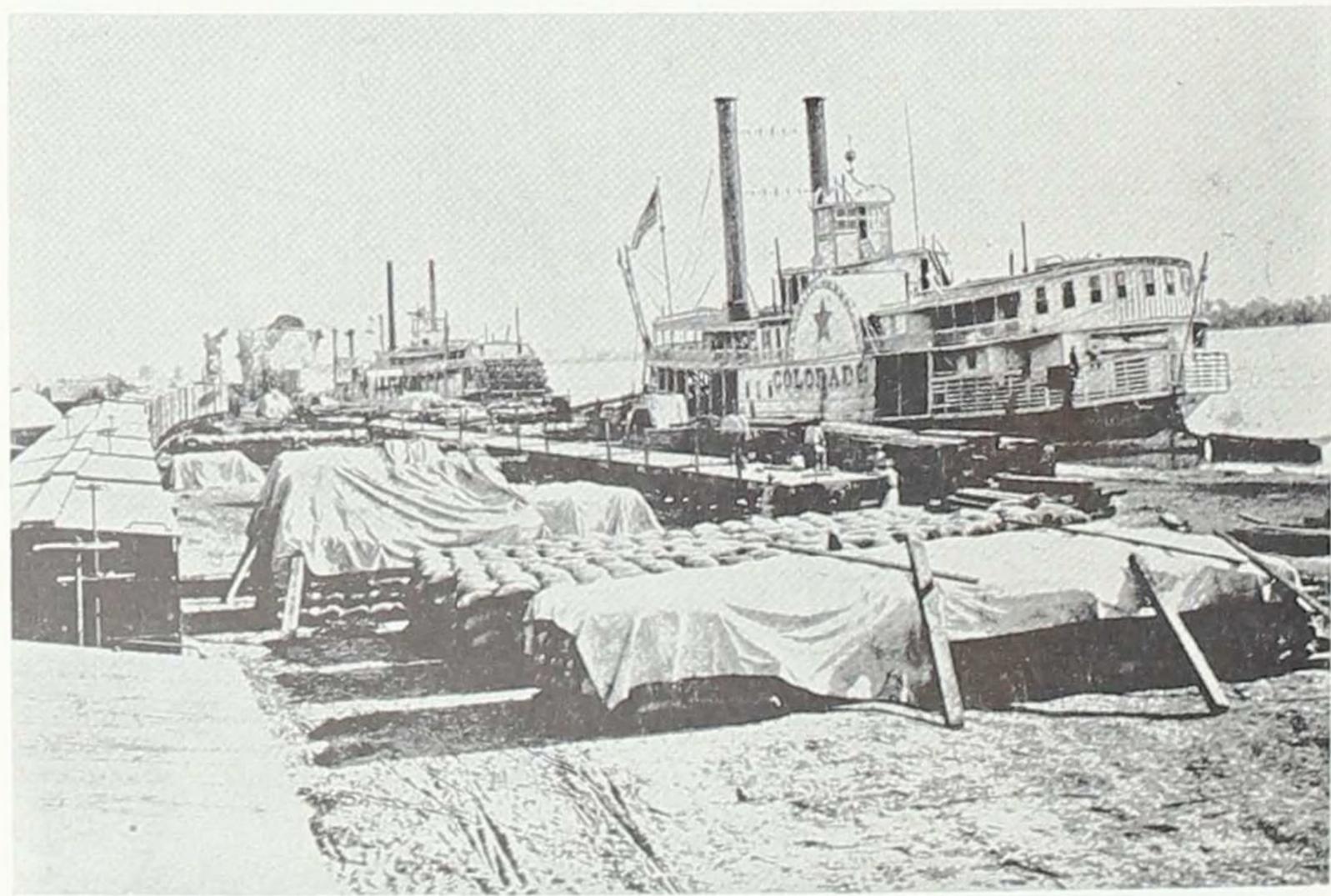


*Union Pacific Railroad Photos*

Convivial friends gathered round the festive board.

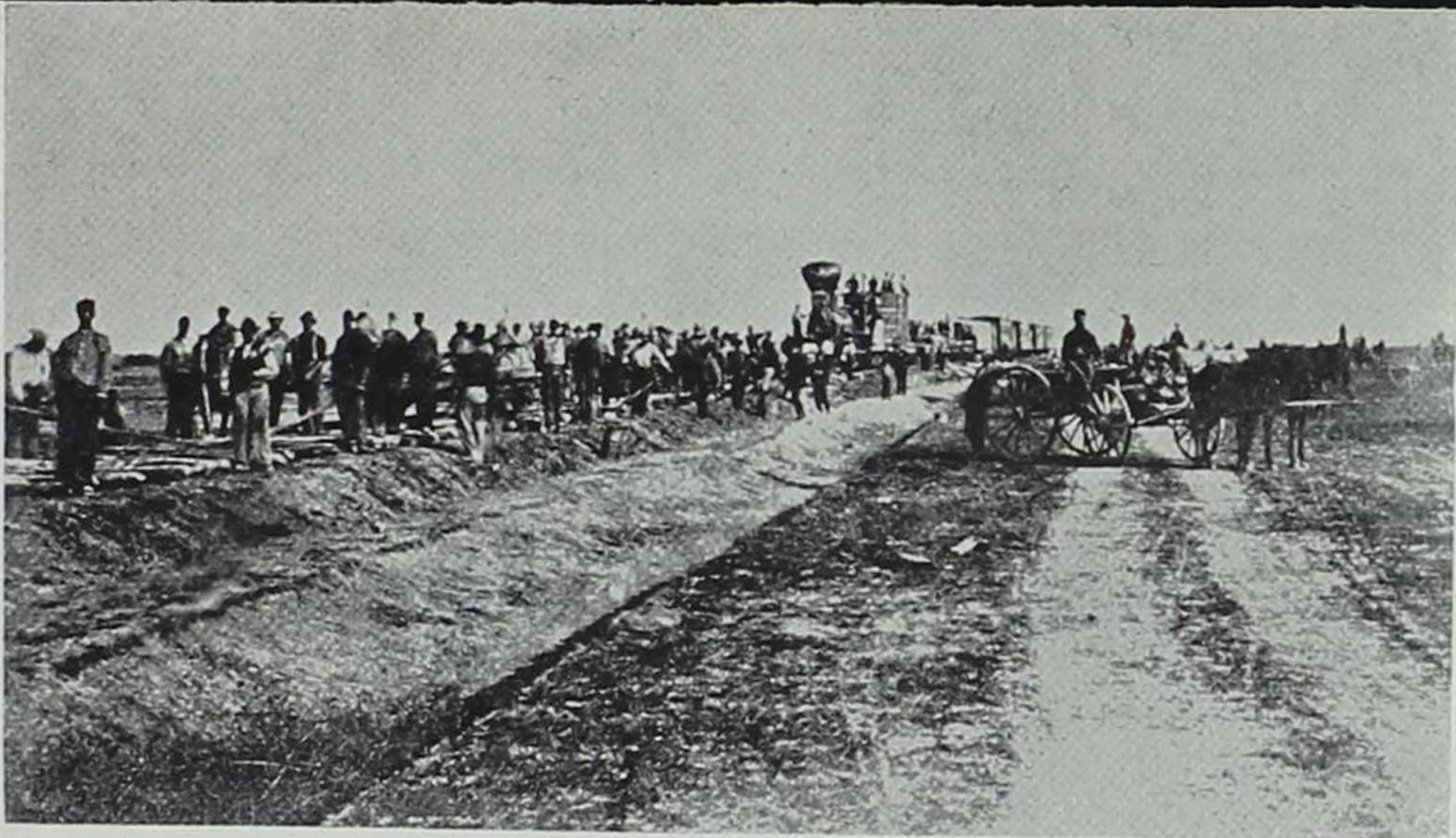


Surveying instruments used by G. M. Dodge. Now on display at Union Pacific Railroad Museum in Omaha.



*Union Pacific Railroad Photos*

Until the North Western Railroad reached Council Bluffs in January 1867, railroad equipment and supplies were brought upstream by steamboat from St. Louis or from the Hannibal and St. Joe Railroad terminal at St. Joseph, Missouri.



Under the supervision of Grenville M. Dodge, railroad construction proceeded across Nebraska at a phenomenal speed.

Blank No. 1.

0177  
**THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY.**

The rules of this Company require that all messages received for transmission, shall be written on the message blanks of the Company, under and subject to the conditions printed thereon, which conditions have been agreed to by the sender of the following message.

THOS. T. ECKERT, Gen'l Sup't, }  
 New York. }  
 WILLIAM ORTON, Pres't. }  
 O. H. PALMER, Sec'y. } New York.

117 Dated Promontory Utah via Omaha 1869

Received at May 9

To Oliver Ames  
 Pres't.

Copy of telegram from Grenville M. Dodge to Oliver Ames advising him of the completion of the Union Pacific to Promontory Point, Utah.

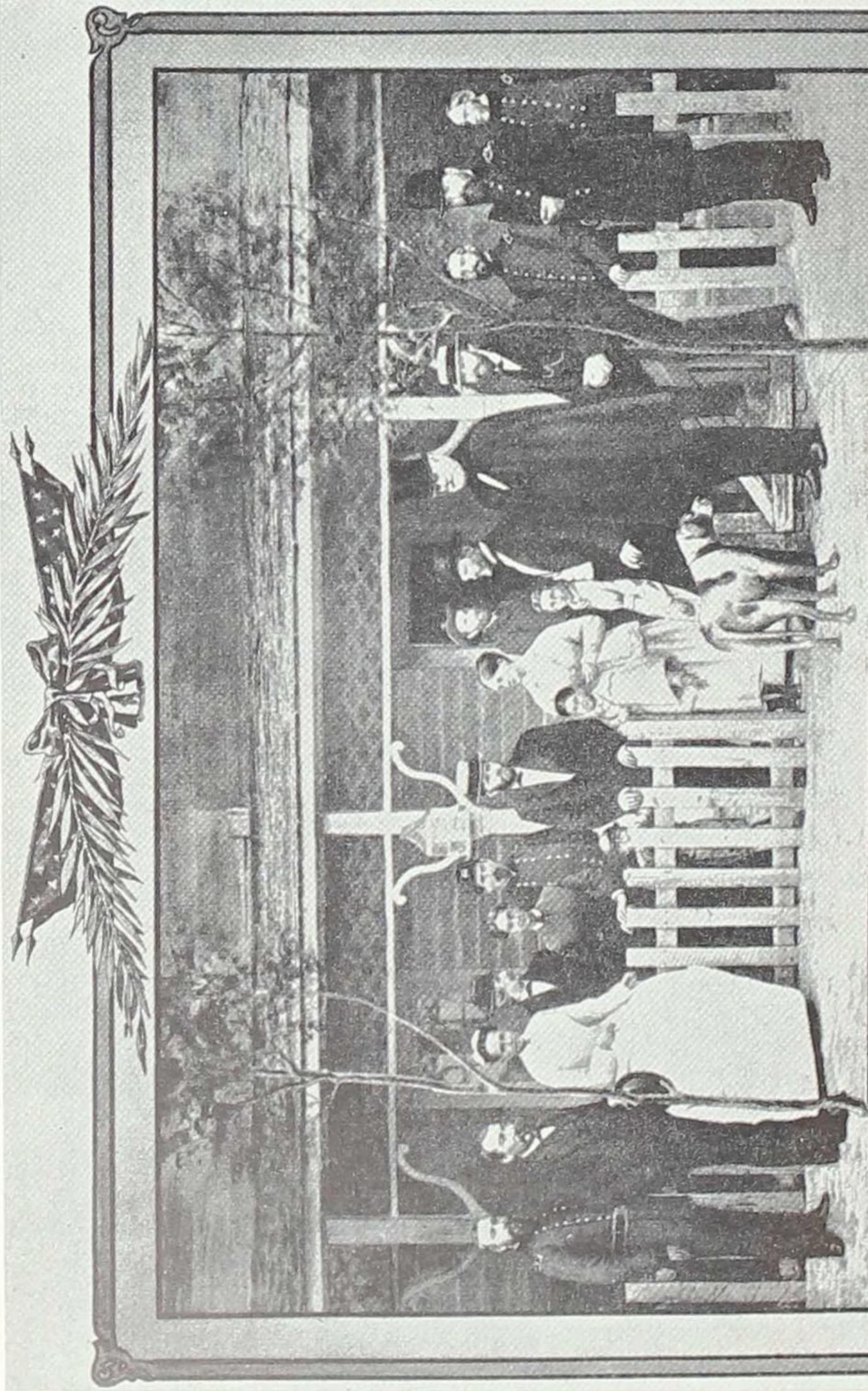
Union Pacific Railroad Photos

You can make affidavit of completion of road to Promontory Summit.

G. M. Dodge  
 Chf Engr

11.400000

Rec'd May 10



**A Memorable Gathering of Illustrious U.S. Army Officers**

to meet GENERAL GREENVILLE M. DODGE, Chief Engineer of the Union Pacific Railway, at the time of its successful completion over the first range of mountains to Laramie Plains

*The scene shows the group in front of the officers' quarters at Fort Sanders, U.S. Army Post, in Laramie City, Wyoming Territory, in the fall of 1867. Commencing on the left, and in order, the following officers and others are named as they stand:*

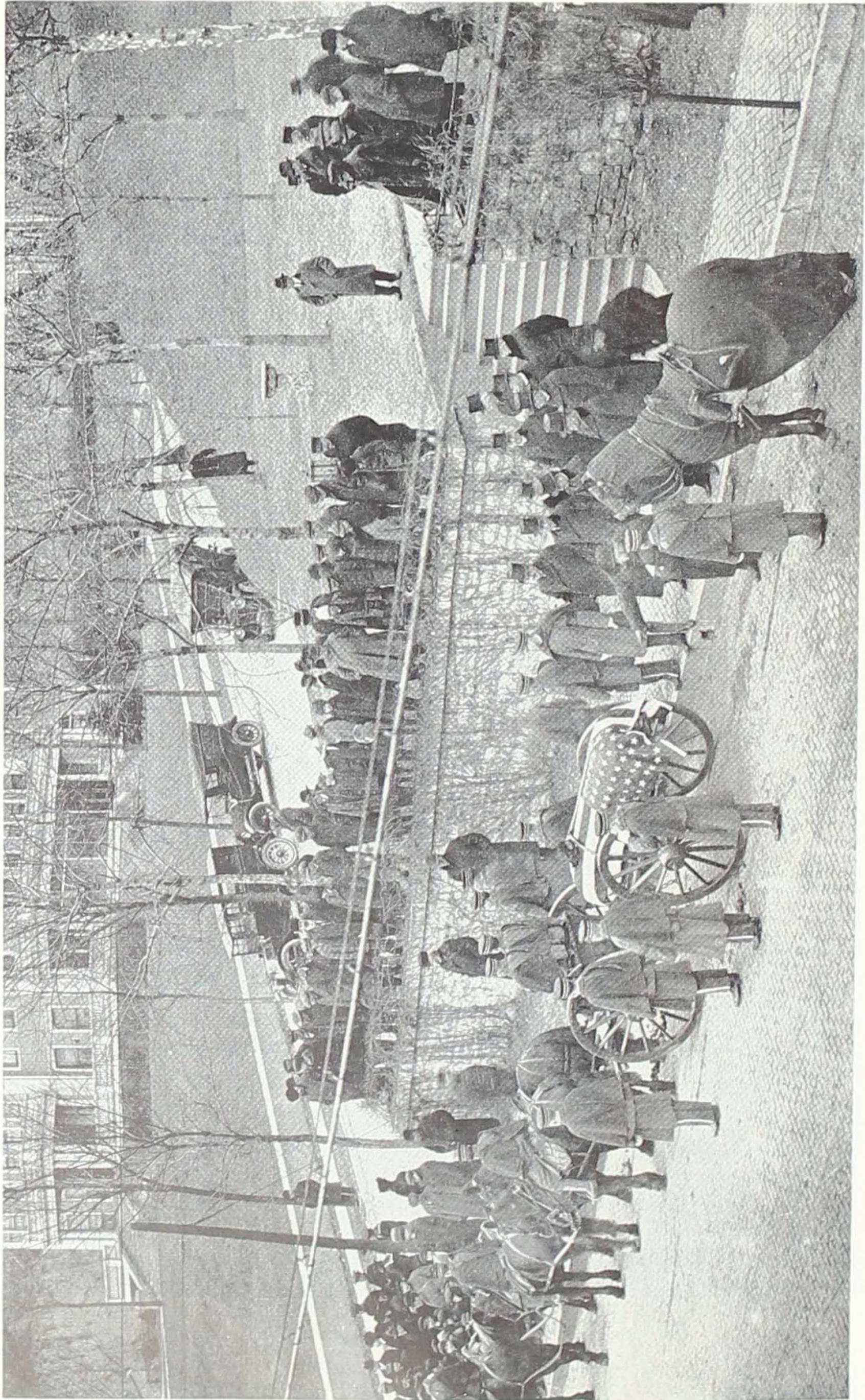
General August Kautz, Major-General Philip H. Sheridan, Mrs. Potter, General Frederick Dent, Mrs. Gibbon, General John Gibbon, Master John Gibbon, General U.S. Grant, Kate Gibbon, Mrs. Kilburn, Allie Potter, General Grenville M. Dodge, Chief Engineer of the Union Pacific Railway (in the center), Lieut-General Wm. T. Sherman, General Wm. S. Harney, Dr. T. C. Durant, President of the Construction Co. building the Union Pacific Railway, General Adam Stemmer, General Joseph C. Potter and General Louis C. Hunt.



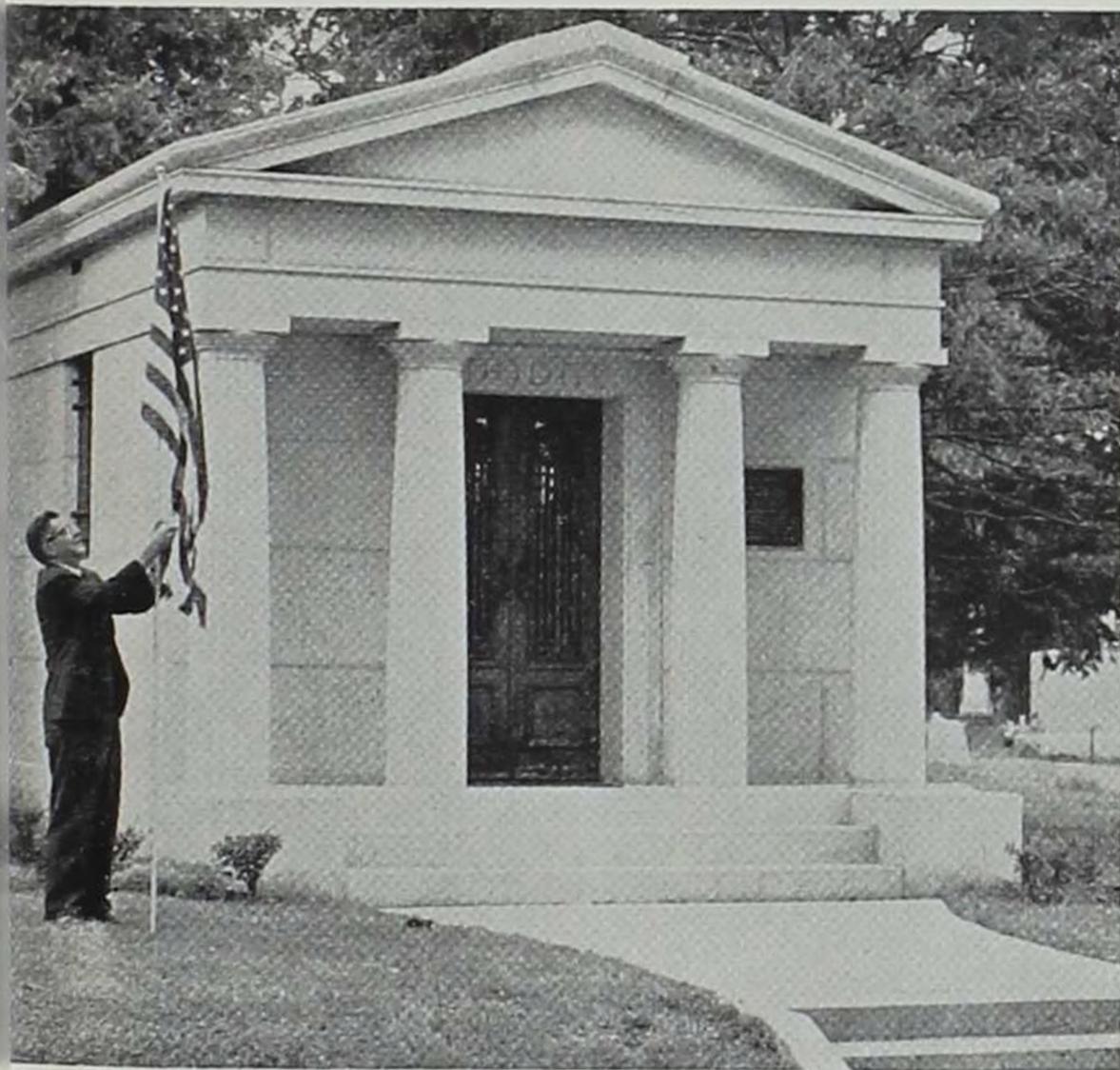


*Union Pacific Railroad Photo*

The dramatic meeting of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific engines at Promontory Point, Utah, on May 10, 1869. Leaders from the East and West were on hand to witness the driving of the Golden Spike and other ceremonies.



The funeral cortege leaving the Dodge Home in Council Bluffs on January 7, 1916, was one of the most solemn and impressive ever held in Iowa. *Council Bluffs Free Public Library Photo*



The Dodge Mausoleum in Walnut Hill Cemetery in Council Bluffs.



Ruth Anne Dodge Memorial, near Fairview Cemetery, sculptured by Daniel Chester French.



*Council Bluffs Nonpareil Photos*

Crowd gathered before the Dodge Home at Council Bluffs on September 22, 1964, on the occasion of its designation as a Registered National Historic Landmark.

The photograph showing the Dodge Home at Council Bluffs on January 7, 1916, was one of the most solemn and impressive ever held in Iowa.



Guests often overflowed into the back parlor.



*Union Pacific Railroad Photos*

General Dodge's bedroom was typical of the era.

one, will stimulate intercourse and trade, and bring harmony, prosperity and wealth to the two coasts. A proper policy . . . will bring to the road the trade of the two oceans and will give it all the business it can accommodate; while the local trade will increase gradually until the mining, grazing and agricultural regions through which it passes will build up . . .

In the years between 1874 and 1879, Dodge made annual trips to Europe for his health as well as to study and observe railroad construction methods. He was consulted by the engineers of Germany and Italy who were building the St. Gotthard Tunnel through the Alps. The French sought his advice when they were considering building a system of cheap railways. The Chinese sought his services in 1884, but their overtures came at an inopportune time. On another trip in 1892 he met with Russian engineers at Stockholm with the intention of selling them on American methods, but cholera in Russia and the officials' unsatisfactory attitude cooled his enthusiasm. Occupying a place of honor in his household from then on, however, was a handsome set of plates given him by the Czar.

When President Grant went to Europe on the first leg of his 1877 round-the-world trip, Dodge and his family were in Paris at the same time, living in a house on the Boulevard Houseman. Grant was lionized in Paris, to the point that he would seek refuge at Dodge's house to escape the persistent attention. Annie Dodge, now 11 years

old, proved a diverting companion for Grant, who delighted in taking her to the Punch and Judy shows.

A hint of the regard which President Grant's family felt for Dodge was evidenced in his post as Grand Marshal of the parade and dedication of Grant's Tomb in April 1897. Dodge spent over a month making arrangements for what was the most extensive parade ever held in New York. Three million people watched the five-hour review, which was conducted with characteristic Dodge precision. It was the least he could do for a man to whom he had always been intensely loyal. That same year he acted as Chief Marshal of the Military Grand Division at the inauguration of President McKinley.

Tendered a commission in the Spanish-American War after volunteering his services, Dodge regretfully recognized his shortcomings at the age of 67 and left the field to younger men. His opportunity to serve the government came following the end of hostilities when McKinley appointed him president of a commission to investigate the conduct of the War Department in supplying and accommodating troops. It was a distasteful assignment. After seven months of hearings, the commission's report excusing the War Department on the grounds of the country's unpreparedness satisfied none of the critics.

After the war's end, Dodge became associated

with Sir William Van Horne, president of the Canadian Pacific, in plans to construct a railroad in Cuba. They succeeded in building from Santa Clara to Santiago by 1903, a \$10,000,000 project, before being stopped by an insurrection.

At the age of 75, after his physicians had revealed the presence of organic disease, Dodge bowed to the demands of his body and began to relinquish many of the responsibilities he had carried so long. His thoughts turned more and more to the home he had left in Council Bluffs when his expanding career took him to New York and Wall Street. He resolved to return "home" to Council Bluffs.

GENEVIEVE P. MAUCK