

The
PALIMPSEST

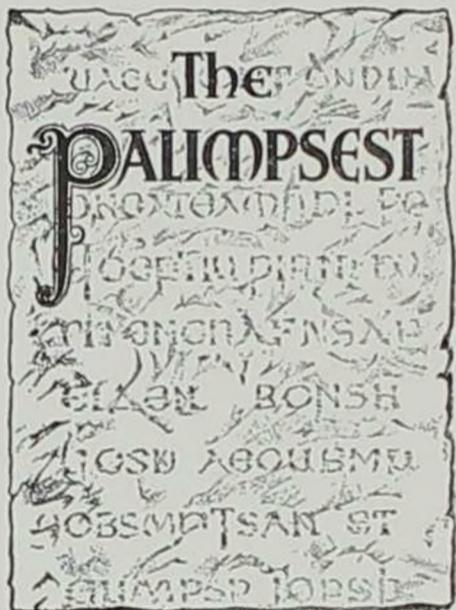


THE MINNEAPOLIS & ST. LOUIS RAILWAY

Published Monthly by
The State Historical Society of Iowa

Iowa City Iowa

JULY 1951



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.

Contents

THE MINNEAPOLIS & ST. LOUIS RAILWAY

FRANK P. DONOVAN, JR.

The Iowa Central	249
Enter the M&StL	258
The Peoria Gateway Line	266
Iowans on the M&StL	272

Cover

Front — No. 19 coming into Oskaloosa (Credit Robert Milner).

Back — Inside: Map of the M&StL lines.

Outside: The Keithsburg bridge.

CENTER SPREAD

Left: Top: "Charles Alexander" — 1880.

Center: No. 396 at Oskaloosa (Credit Robert Milner).

Bottom: "Day Express" at Albia (Credit M. B. Cooke).

Right: Top: Mikado engine — called MacArthurs on M&StL.

Center: Pacific engine — last of the old guard.

Bottom: No. 20 at Oskaloosa (Credit Robert Milner).

PICTURE CREDITS

Unless otherwise noted, the pictures for this issue were furnished by the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway.

Frank P. Donovan, Jr., is the author of *Mileposts on the Prairie: The Story of the Minneapolis & St. Paul Railway*, published in 1950 by the Simmons-Boardman Publishing Corp. of New York.

ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MATTER JULY 28 1920 AT THE POST OFFICE AT
IOWA CITY IOWA UNDER THE ACT OF AUGUST 24 1912

PRICE — 15 cents per copy; \$1.50 per year; free to Members

MEMBERSHIP — By application. Annual Dues \$3.00

ADDRESS — The State Historical Society, Iowa City, Iowa

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

VOL. XXXII

ISSUED IN JULY 1951

No. 7

Copyright 1951 by The State Historical Society of Iowa



The Iowa Central

Iowa had long dreamed of a north and south main line. Back in pre-Civil War days that prince of pioneers, Josiah B. Grinnell, headed a company to fulfill that mission. But the war came and the project was dropped. Later an energetic twosome composed of David Morgan, a New Sharon schoolteacher, and Peter Melendy, a Cedar Falls newspaper editor, gave much zeal and some capital to the enterprise. Considerable grading was done, between Albia and Oskaloosa, between Cedar Falls and Toledo, and also in the vicinity of Tama, and then, because the money ran out, the undertaking languished. What was termed the "Grandest Railroad Project of the Age" turned out to be a fiasco. It looked as if the longitudinal rail line was an empty dream. Such, however, was not the case. Today the main stem of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway cuts right through the midriff of Iowa from the Minnesota border to within a few miles of the northern rim of Missouri.

The story of the Iowa Central Railway which

eventually became the M&StL's main line in Iowa, is the old dream with new twists: a different group of backers, an altered route, and an exceedingly humble beginning. And for some forty years this section of the road was independent of the M&StL. Here's how it started.

When coal was discovered in the vicinity of Eldora the problem of cheap transportation became of paramount importance. This led to the formation of the Eldora Railroad and Coal Company on February 7, 1866, to build a railway to Ackley, sixteen miles north. At Ackley the Eldora road would connect with the east-west road which is now the Illinois Central. By July, 1868, the new road was completed, but its connection with the outside world was not entirely satisfactory. It was finally decided to build twenty-eight miles south from Eldora, to tie in with the east-west main line of the Chicago & North Western at Marshalltown. A new company, the Iowa River Railway, headed by Charles C. Gilman (who was also president of the older road), took over the Eldora line on September 1, 1868. Just before completion, on September 30, 1869, to be exact, the River Railway became the Central Railroad Company of Iowa. Now it threw away its mantle as a purely local road to carry on the tradition of Morgan and Melendy and become an important north-and-south route.

Marshalltown welcomed the formal opening of

the new road by a gala celebration on January 7, 1870. Indeed, the shops and general offices were to be removed later from Eldora to Marshalltown, and the latter town had reason to be proud. The road athwart central Iowa would be operated from *central* Iowa at Marshalltown. Great things were expected of the new company, for the cross-state vertical line was to become — and finally did become — a reality.

Physically, the north-and-south route from Mason City to Albia was completed in 1872, but it was many years before it came into its own economically, financially, and strategically. For the next three decades the road was to remain in precarious financial condition with a round of receiverships, shifts in management, and constant name-changing. During the mid-seventies Isaac M. Cate succeeded Gilman to the presidency, and shortly afterward Josiah B. Grinnell was appointed receiver. Grinnell's hectic trusteeship lasted only about two years when he was superseded by H. L. Morrill. Finally on May 5, 1879, the road emerged from the court's hands as the Central Iowa Railway.

The Iowa road was dubbed the "Hook and Eye" because in the early timetables the initial "C" was placed on its back across the top of the "I" so that the former initial resembled a hook and the latter an eye. The railway continued to expand during periods of solvency. Apparently the char-

ter forbade building branches, for all the offshoots from the main stem were constructed by separate companies and then sold to the Central Iowa. Most important of these additions was the New Sharon Coal Valley and Eastern, incorporated January 29, 1880. By January 7 of '82 the name was changed to the high-sounding Chicago, Burlington and Pacific, and on April 1 of the same year the road was sold to the Central Iowa. Eighteen-eighty-two also saw the completion of the road from Oskaloosa to the west bank of the Mississippi opposite Keithsburg, Illinois.

Meantime dirt was flying in Illinois. The old Peoria and Farmington Railway (chartered March 27, 1869) was purchased by the Central Iowa Railway (of Illinois), and it was pushing westward to the "Father of Waters." In 1883 the Central-Iowa-of-Illinois line started operating from Peoria to Keithsburg, 88 miles.

To cross the Mississippi a small paddle-wheel steamer, the *William Osborn*, churned its way from shore to shore with its quota of four freight cars. When the river was frozen — well, passengers either walked across, or they, together with freight, rode on sleighs. At least one winter, however, when navigation ceased, the pioneer railroaders constructed a temporary wooden trestle. When the ice melted in the spring the jerry-built trestle was removed so that river traffic could be resumed. The first permanent bridge was com-

pleted at Oakville in 1886. It had eight spans of through-truss design and a 362-foot swing draw.

Here, then, was the Central Iowa's route very much as it is today: from Mason City through Marshalltown and Oskaloosa to Keithsburg and Peoria in Illinois. The northern terminus, as we have said, was at Mason City, but this was later extended northward to Manly in Worth County. The gap between the latter town and Albert Lea, Minnesota, was closed in 1877 when the M&StL and the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern (now the Rock Island) finished a joint line linking the two communities.

By the mid-eighties all the branches had sprouted and grown and were duly absorbed by the Central Iowa. They included the 22-mile Belmond line veering off the main stem at Hampton; the 34-mile Story City Branch running westward from Minerva Junction (near Marshalltown); the 26-mile State Center feeder from Newburg; the 14-mile stub out of the old Grinnell & Montezuma Junction to Montezuma; and finally the 28-mile branch to Newton running north-northwest from New Sharon. All and all, the Central Iowa had a system of nearly 500 miles, less than 100 of them outside the Hawkeye State.

Such a railroad patrimony purchased and absorbed throughout the years needed a coat of arms or a trade-mark to lend prestige and distinction. So thought J. P. Nourse, the general passenger

agent. Action followed inspiration, and the road's official emblem made its debut in the May, 1887, timetable. Like Mark Twain's map it was truly the only one of its kind.

Under a hodgepodge of arms, hands, circles, and bands came this descriptive gobbledegook: "An excutcheon, inverted, or PER PALLY BENDY, AZURE, Nebuly on an annulet sable, between four hands gules, One hand rampant gardant, three hands grabant, and all hands around. Our motto will be, 'The Handy Line' — (Battle cry Hi! Hi! Hi!, the last syllable prolonged.)"

It took the foreclosure of 1888 to get rid of this nonsense; and the Iowa Central Railway, the new company, henceforth operated without a coat of arms or a battle cry. Incidentally this was the last name-change the road had as an independent company.

To recapitulate, the lineage of the Iowa Central begins with the Eldora Railroad and Coal Company which in succession became the Iowa River Railway, Central Railroad Company of Iowa, Central Iowa Railway, and finally the Iowa Central. Another Iowa road, the Chicago, Burlington and Pacific, came into the fold in 1882. About the same time the Peoria & Farmington (an Illinois road) came under Iowa Central interests and was soon completed from Peoria to the Mississippi at Keithsburg.

In common with most roads near the end of the

nineteenth century the Iowa Central was quick to make traffic alliances at terminals. These alliances depended on the road's presidents who came and went with the ups and downs of management. When Cate ruled at Marshalltown — and he held office for about a dozen years — the Milwaukee Road was the favored route from Mason City to the Twin Cities. Cate's short-term successors, Alfred Sully and Elijah Smith, made little change, but when A. B. Stickney gained control he promptly made the northern connection his own Minnesota & North-western, now the Chicago Great Western.

The Iowa Central had long pioneered in through passenger trains, and its Twin City-St. Louis service, in connection with the Milwaukee on the north and the Wabash on the south, achieved considerable popularity. But Stickney did more. Being an audacious and independent thinker, and above all an individualist, he had his own ideas. They were, to say the least, far ahead of his time. Today we think of through sleepers from the east to points west of the Mississippi as being the brain-child of Robert R. Young of the Chesapeake & Ohio. Not so. In the mid-eighties Alpheus Beede Stickney inaugurated cross-country "Woodruff Chair and Sleeping Cars" from the capital of Minnesota to the capital of Ohio.

Before me I have a yellowing timetable dated November 7, 1886. It shows Train No. 4 leaving

Minneapolis at 6:30 p. m. (St. Paul at 7:05) and arriving at Columbus, Ohio, at 4:10 a. m. two days later. The routing: Minnesota & Northwestern and the Central Iowa to Peoria, Illinois, thence the Indiana, Bloomington & Western (now the New York Central) to destination. Returning on No. 1, passengers left the Buckeye capital at 9:00 a. m., and at 8:30 on the evening of the second day they arrived in the Mill City.

When Russell Sage, the New York financier, replaced Stickney in 1890, the northern connection reverted to the Milwaukee. Sage and General Francis M. Drake, onetime governor of Iowa, were active in the management of the Centreville [*sic*], Moravia & Albia Railroad which the Iowa Central operated until 1910. This road, which linked all the towns in its title, was subsequently electrified and is now an interurban freight line controlled by the Iowa Southern Utilities.

The Sage regime, although not outstanding in itself, produced some very able railroaders. General Manager C. H. Ackert in later years left the old Hook and Eye to head the Southern Railway, and Master Mechanic John Player went from Marshalltown to a similar position on the far-flung Santa Fe system. Along with "home guards" the Iowa Central always had a large quota of "boomers." Indeed it is said with a measure of truth that one "never saw the same crew twice." Itinerant railroaders from coast to coast often took a hitch

on the Hook and then settled elsewhere. Never a wealthy road and at times run-down, it did the best it could with the equipment at hand. If a man passed muster on the Iowa Central he was trained for the exigencies of railroading almost anywhere.

When Sage relinquished the presidency in 1897 he was followed by Horace J. Morse and then a year or so later by Robert J. Kimball. In the coming era of big business and consolidations, the Iowa Central would have to buy or be bought. Clearly the former was out of the question. That was the status of the "Marshalltown Route," as Iowans affectionately called their home road, as the new century dawned.

Enter the M&StL

When Edwin Hawley became president of the Minneapolis & St. Louis in 1896 that road was little more than a local enterprise. When Hawley died sixteen years later the M&StL had become an important Midwestern carrier, serving four states, and had quadrupled in mileage. The very backbone of the enlarged M&StL was, and is today, the mileage in the Hawkeye State, more than half of which was the Iowa Central.

Hawley was quick to sense the importance of the Iowa Central as a complement to the "Louie," as the M&StL was nicknamed. Both roads as separate units were relatively weak. United they would have considerable economic and strategic value. By 1900 fifty-year-old Edwin Hawley, a New Yorker, had acquired control of the Hook and Eye, and not long afterward key M&StL executives held similar positions on the Iowa Central. Incidentally, up until the turn of the century, Hawley was unheard of as a railroad officer and financier. After heading the Minnesota and Iowa roads, however, he became known in business circles and on the Street as a shrewd, practical railroader. And well he might, for in a dozen years Hawley and Hawley men controlled the Alton,

the Toledo, St. Louis & Western, the St. Louis-San Francisco, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas, and the Chesapeake & Ohio. Indeed at the time of his death he is said to have amassed a fortune of thirty million dollars. But the fact remains: it was the Louie and the Hook which gave him his start to fame and fortune.

Unlike Russell Sage, Hawley was a builder, for every property under his control was improved. The Iowa Central was no exception. One of the first major improvement jobs of the new management was the grade relocation on School House Hill. Today one can still see remains of the old right of way between Searsboro and Oak Grove just east of the present track. Again, modern (at that time) motive power was purchased, and the passenger service speeded up. Hawley sensed the importance of Peoria as a gateway to by-pass the congested Chicago terminal area.

During Hawley's administration the second (and present) Mississippi River bridge was built. The old structure was far too light for the increased traffic and heavier equipment. Furthermore it required the tedious business of spacing engines several cars apart in a train rather than coupled together when "doubleheading." In this way the weight was more evenly distributed and the pioneer bridge given a reprieve. But the old span had to go, and it, along with a nearby bridge across Blackhawk Chute, was replaced during

1909-1910. The structure across the main channel of the Mississippi, extending from Blackhawk Island to the Illinois shore, is 2,304 feet in length. A lift-span, on the Keithsburg side, permits passage of boats and barges. The smaller bridge from Blackhawk Island to the Iowa mainland measures 1,506 feet. Total cost of the entire project was \$725,000. Some piers of the old bridge may still be seen about 60 feet downstream from the present Mississippi structure.

Even though the actual merger of the Iowa Central with the M&StL did not take place until 1912, the two roads were operated very much as if they were one system. Hawley, a laconic, aloof individual, had his equally terse and down-to-business lieutenant, L Ferman Day, boss the Iowa Central. (Day, whose first name was just plain "L," always insisted that it be unadorned by a period.) He for many years was vice-president and general manager of both the M&StL and the Iowa Central. "LFD" became to all intents and purposes chief of the combined roads, since Hawley spent most of his time in New York looking after other properties.

A word, now, about the other M&StL lines in Iowa. Back on July 22, 1876, some farmers and other local folk incorporated the Fort Dodge and Fort Ridgeley Railroad and Telegraph Company to lay rails from Fort Dodge to the northern boundary of Webster County. Meantime, an M&StL-

sponsored road, called the Minnesota and Iowa Southern, was building south from Albert Lea, Minnesota, to meet the Fort Ridgeley line. Finally, on April 20, 1881, both companies were merged into the M&StL, making a through line linking Albert Lea with Fort Dodge. The next year the Louie built what was jocosely called the Mud Line from Fort Dodge to Angus. It was so named because the track was built right on the prairie with God's brown earth as ballast. Unfortunately, the once-thriving mining operations in Angus had already started to decline when the Louie made its southern terminus there. A miners' strike in 1884, followed by the panic of '93, just about decimated the population. At the present time Angus is very nearly a ghost town, and all mining operations have long since been abandoned.

At Angus the M&StL connected with the Des Moines and Fort Dodge Railroad and had trackage rights over it to the state capital. The DM&FtD, by the way, was a successor to one of the earliest roads in Iowa: the Keokuk, Fort Des Moines & Minnesota Railroad, incorporated in 1854, and later known as the Des Moines Valley Railroad.

At the beginning of the century the M&StL's line, Winthrop to New Ulm, Minnesota, was extended southward to Estherville, Spencer, and Storm Lake. Known as the Southwestern Exten-

sion, the line was projected to Omaha but it never reached that goal. At this juncture Hawley and Day cast a covetous eye on the Des Moines and Fort Dodge, a ward of the Rock Island. The DM & FtD operated from Des Moines through Tara to Ruthven. From Tara to Fort Dodge, six miles, the road had trackage rights over the Illinois Central.

Through a clever stock-buying coup the Hawley interests wrested control of the Des Moines road from the Rock Island. The M&StL leased it in 1905 and ten years later took title. Since Ruthven is only thirteen miles from Spencer, it was a simple matter to get running rights over the Milwaukee Road between these two points; by so doing it linked the Southwestern Extension with the so-called Central Division serving Fort Dodge and Des Moines.

Summing up: The M&StL in Iowa began as the Fort Dodge and Fort Ridgeley Railroad and Telegraph Company which was taken over by the Louie in 1881. That same year the Minnesota and Iowa Southern was also merged into the M&StL. By 1900 M&StL interests controlled the Iowa Central (but did not own it), and in 1905 the Louie leased the Des Moines and Fort Dodge. In 1912 the M&StL purchased the Iowa Central, and in 1915 the Des Moines and Fort Dodge was also bought.

To most people in Iowa this railroad strategy

was an academic subject; they were interested in train service and events directly concerning their community. Circuses and state fairs, then as now, were stellar attractions. And the Des Moines line was a favorite routing for circus trains on their circuits from the Iowa capital to Minneapolis, or vice versa. Occasionally, their unorthodox cargo posed some problems. Such was the case in the late nineties when a northbound circus special came to an unscheduled stop between Humboldt and Luverne. The Sellars' injector on the engine would not pump water, and the gauge showed the boiler nearly empty. The enginemen were at a loss to explain the deficiency of water. Something was amiss. At this point Fireman George Nelson glanced back over the train. There he espied the trunk of an elephant extending out of the end-door of a stock car and down into the tank of the tender. Getting a trunkful, the large pachyderm then playfully proceeded to squirt water along the right of way. Mr. Nelson, I may add, is still living and can vouch for the authenticity of this story.

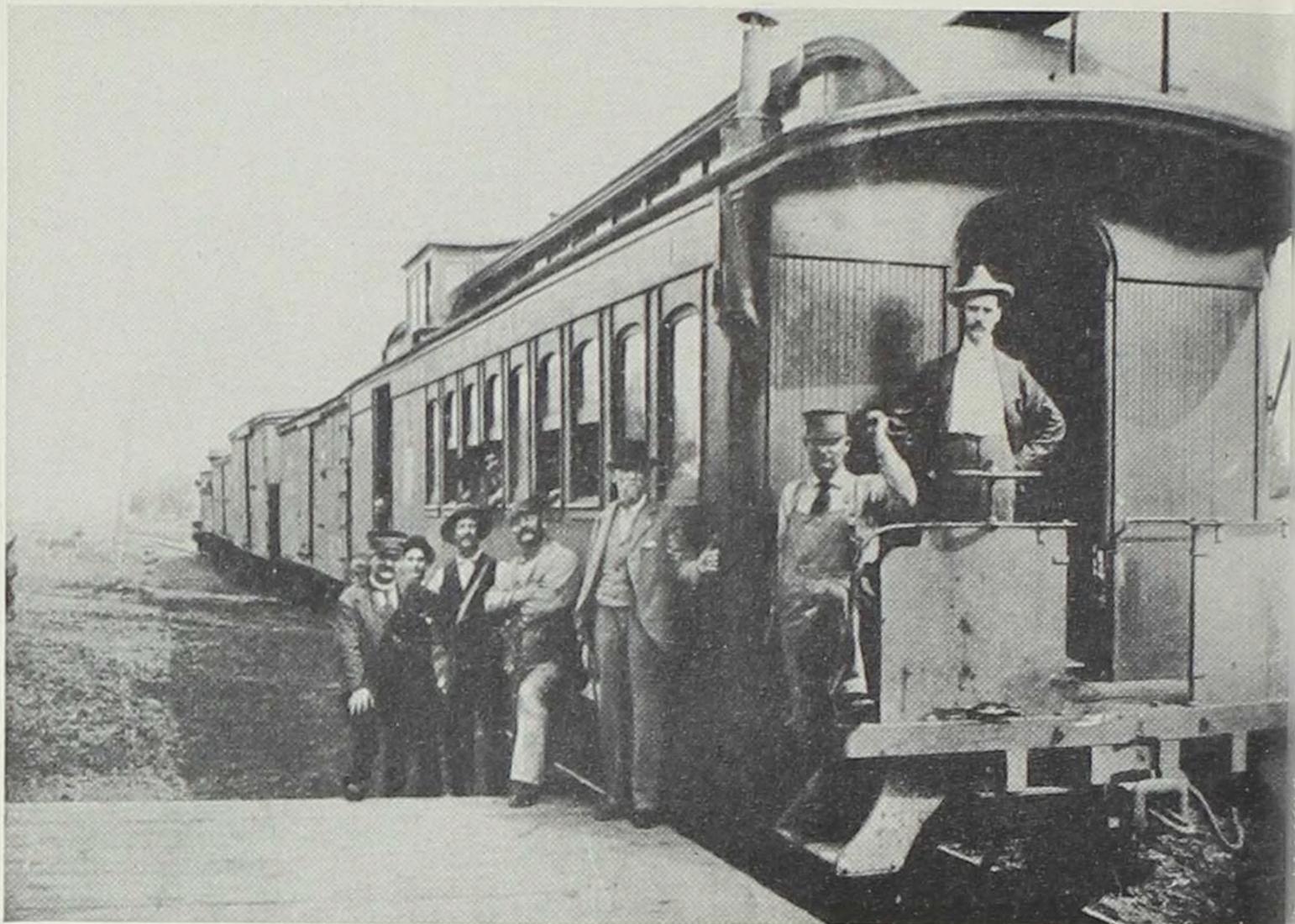
Several years later, being hard pressed for motive power, the M&StL leased a few "compound" freight locomotives, that is, engines having both high and low pressure cylinders, from the Soo Line. They were more complex and, to the uninitiated, harder to "steam" than the normal or "simple" engines heretofore used on the Louie. As a result, many freights had to double the Iowa and

Minnesota hills. Finally a dispatcher demanded to know why the compounds could not pull their tonnage ratings. The answer promptly came back from one conductor, stating he had:

Forty cars of coal,
Twenty cars of beer,
A compound engine, and —
A simple engineer.

It is hard to realize that the M&StL once did a spanking short-haul passenger business. Most of the local riders on the Louie, as on nearly every other American railroad, now have their own automobiles. But in the horse and buggy era such locales as Albia, Oskaloosa, Marshalltown, and Fort Dodge had busy depots with lunch counters. Now only Albia and Fort Dodge sport eating facilities. In addition lunches could be had at Livermore and Hampton. All the passengers had to do was tell the conductor in advance. He would wire ahead and have basket lunches waiting at the depot. One could have country fried chicken, a generous cut of roast beef or hot pork with vegetables, a salad, rolls, and steaming coffee. The price: 50c.

On the Iowa Central, trains were chartered at the drop of a hat. Many a ball team, lodge, or church group had its special for a big game, a trip down the Mississippi from Keithsburg, Illinois, or just an outing to some choice picnic ground. Once every year, too, the Hook ran special trains and extra cars to Oskaloosa where the Quakers had



Credit Robert Milnes
IOWA CENTRAL TRAIN AT OSKALOOSA IN THE 1890'S



THE OLD IOWA CENTRAL BLACKSMITH SHOP, MARSHALLTOWN

Central Iowa
RAILWAY
MARSHALLTOWN ROUTE.

LOCAL TIME CARD,
IN EFFECT JULY 18, 1886.

The Direct and only Through Car Line
TO
PEORIA,
AND ALL POINTS IN
Central Illinois,
INDIANA, OHIO,
AND
THE EAST.

THE SHORTEST AND BEST ROUTE
BETWEEN
St. Paul, Minneapolis, St. Louis
AND
KANSAS CITY.

E. L. DUDLEY, General Manager. P. MOORE, Gen. Pass. and Tkt. Agent.

**IOWA
CENTRAL
ROUTE**

Short Line
Between
**St. PAUL,
MINNEAPOLIS,
St. LOUIS,
Kansas City, Peoria**
The Pacific Slope,
And All Points
**NORTH, SOUTH,
EAST and WEST.**

C. H. ACKERT, General Manager. A. F. BARKS, Traffic Manager.
THOS. P. BARRY, Asst. General Passenger Agent.
MARSHALLTOWN, IOWA.

NOVEMBER 1910

**MINNEAPOLIS
AND
ST. LOUIS
IOWA
CENTRAL**



ELECTRIC LIGHTED TRAINS

WINTER EDITION, 1902-1905

**THE MINNEAPOLIS & ST. LOUIS
RAILROAD CO.**

**ALBERT LEA
ROUTE**



**NEW SHORT LINE
TO CHICAGO**

M. SWENEY, Gen'l. Superintendent. L. F. DAY, S. & D. Div. Manager. A. B. CUTTS, Gen'l. Pass. & Tkt. Agt.
GENERAL OFFICE, MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.

**THE MINNEAPOLIS & ST. LOUIS
RAILROAD CO.**

**THE
PEORIA
GATEWAY
LINE**

Time Tables

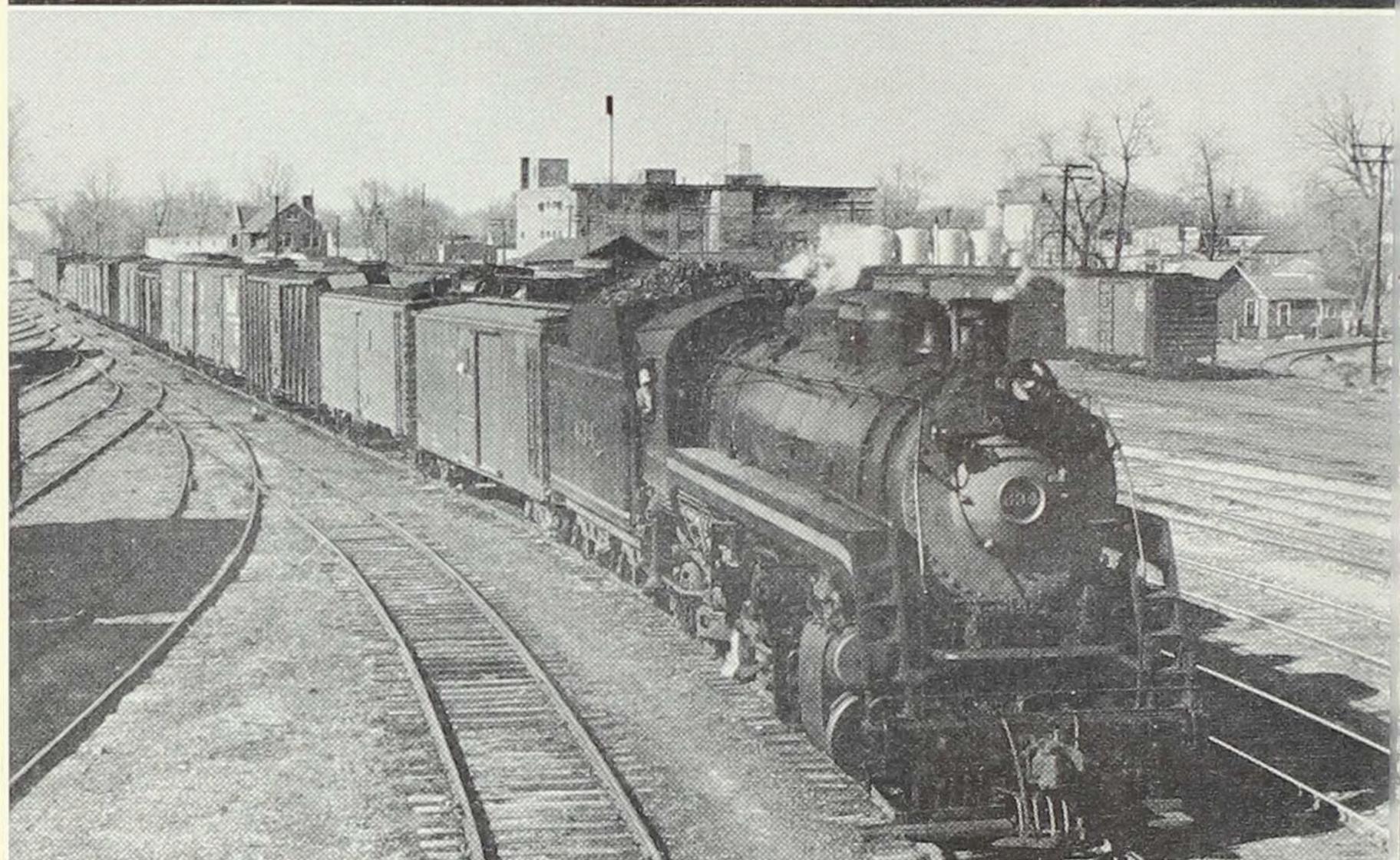
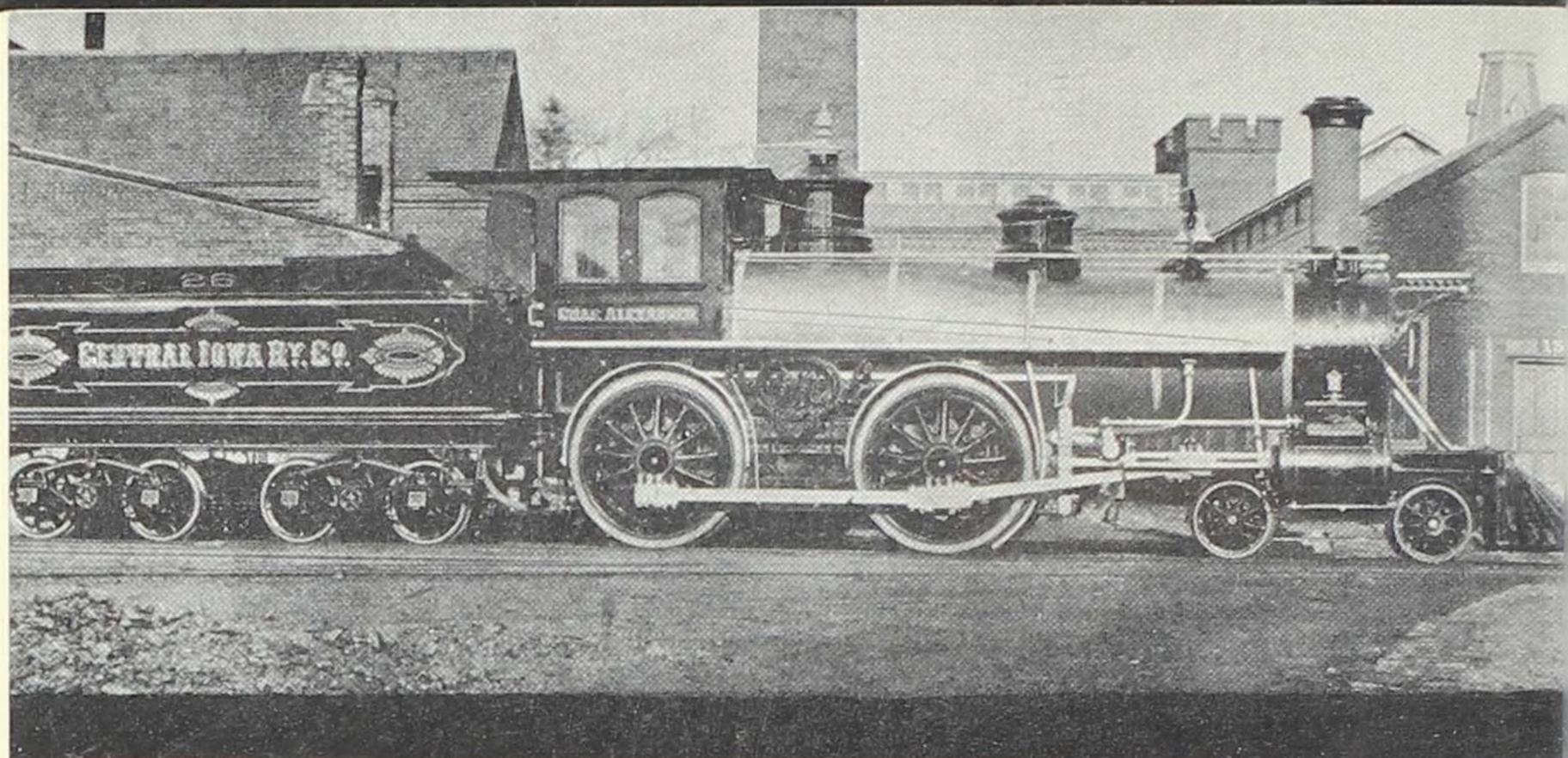
	Pages
Des Moines Line	6-7
St. Louis Line	12
Watertown-Aberdeen Line	9
Peoria Line	10-11

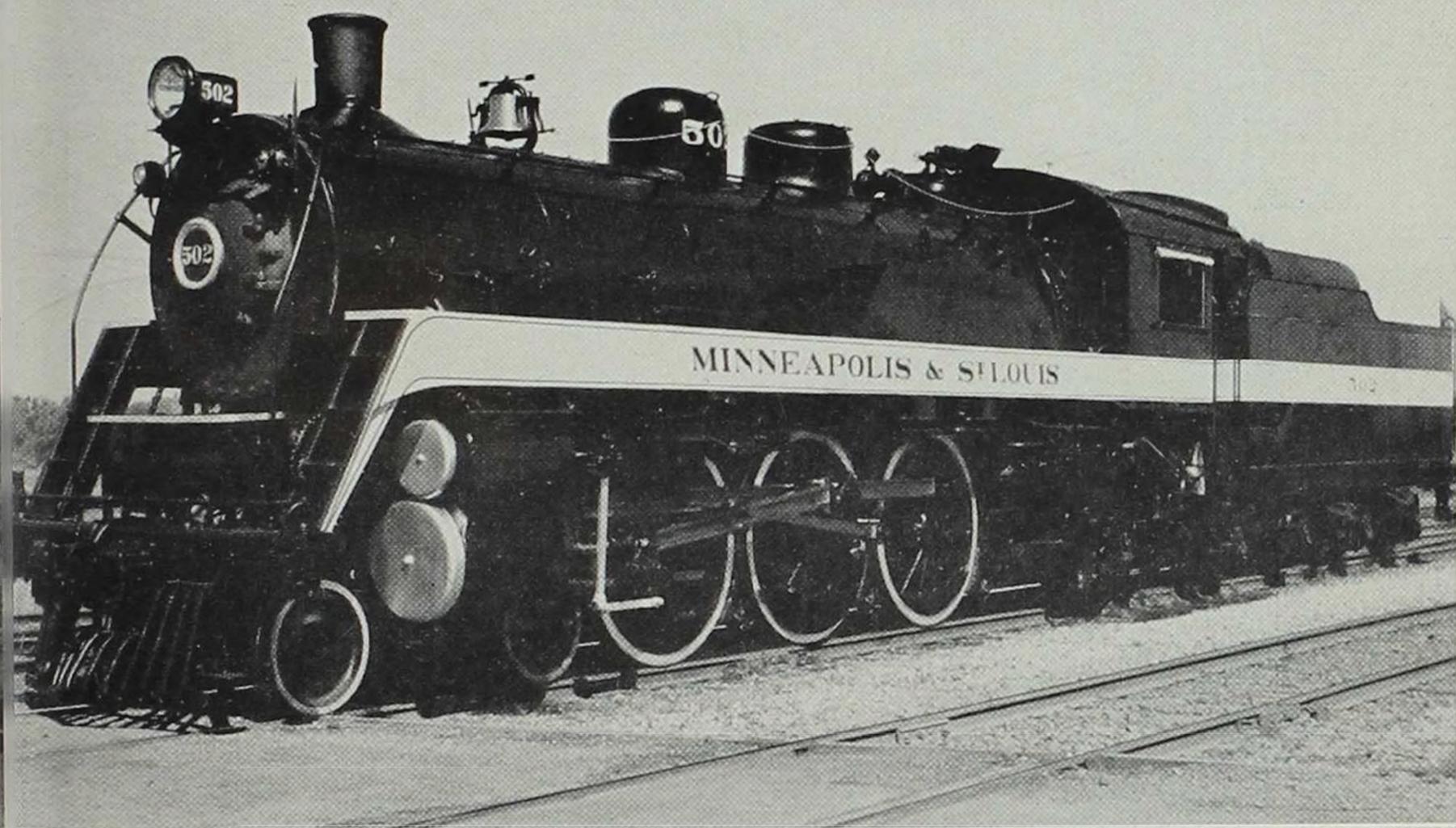
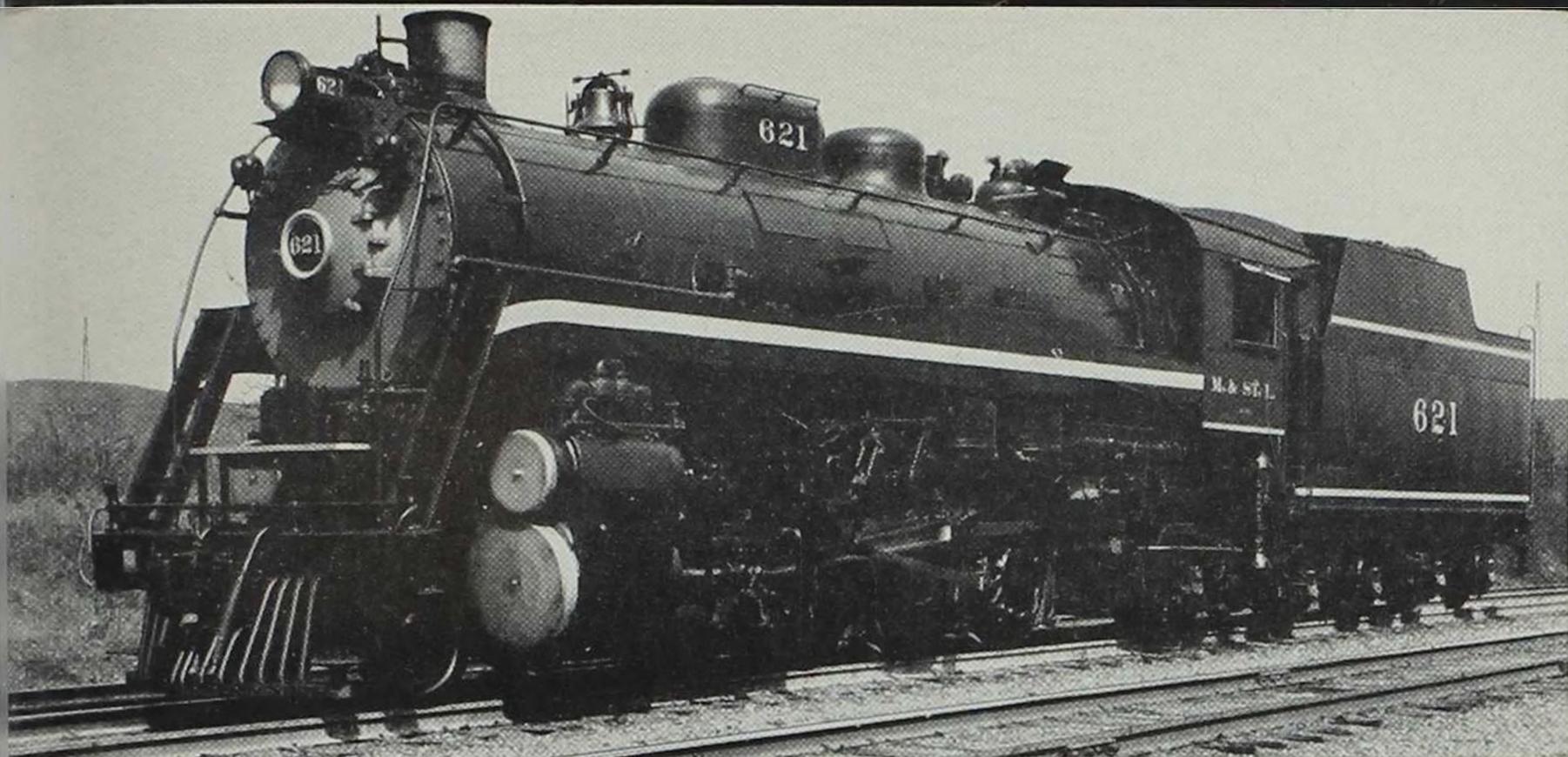
A. B. CUTTS
Passenger Traffic Manager
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

REVISED MAY, 1901

Subject to Change Without Notice

OLD IOWA CENTRAL AND M&STL TIMETABLES

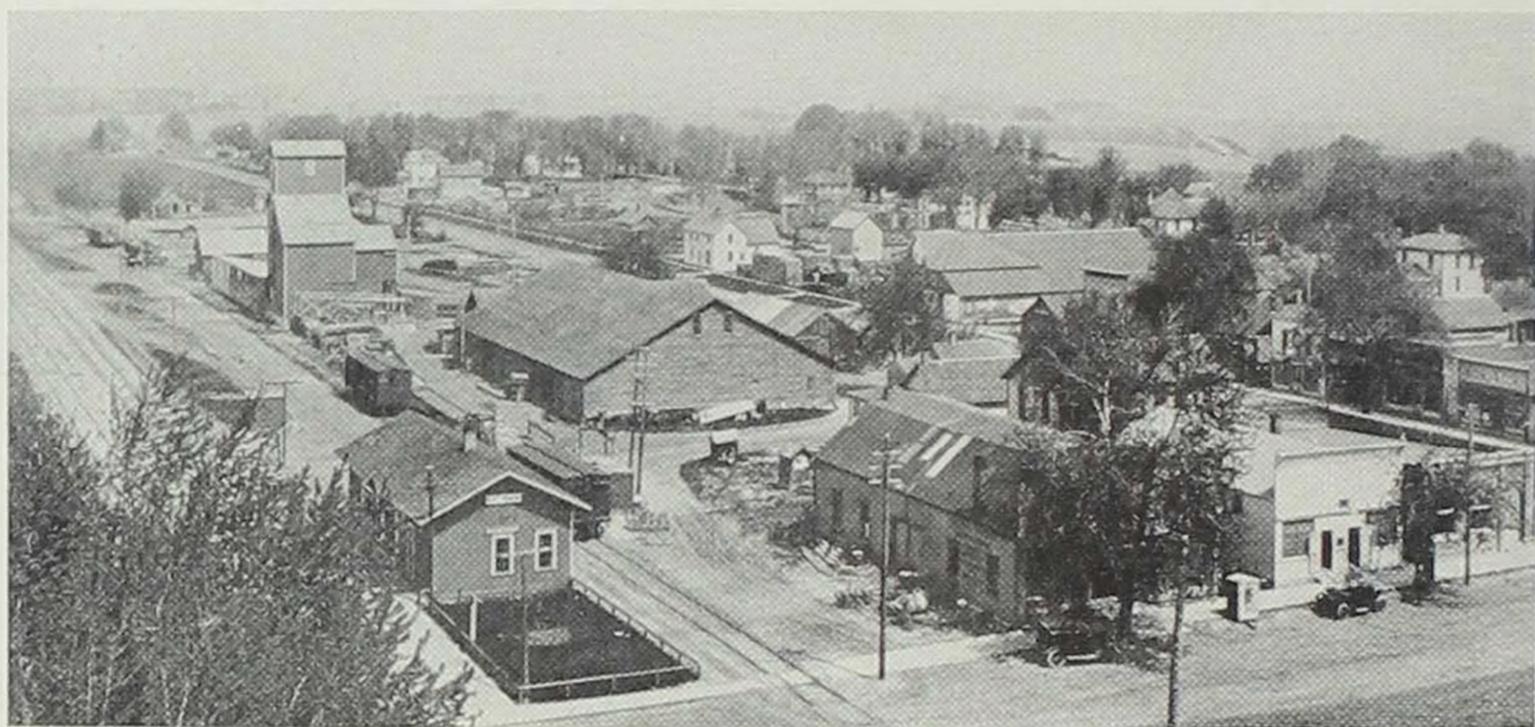






Credit Ralph C. Haynes

TEAMSTERS WAITING FOR TRAIN AT GOWRIE IN 1910

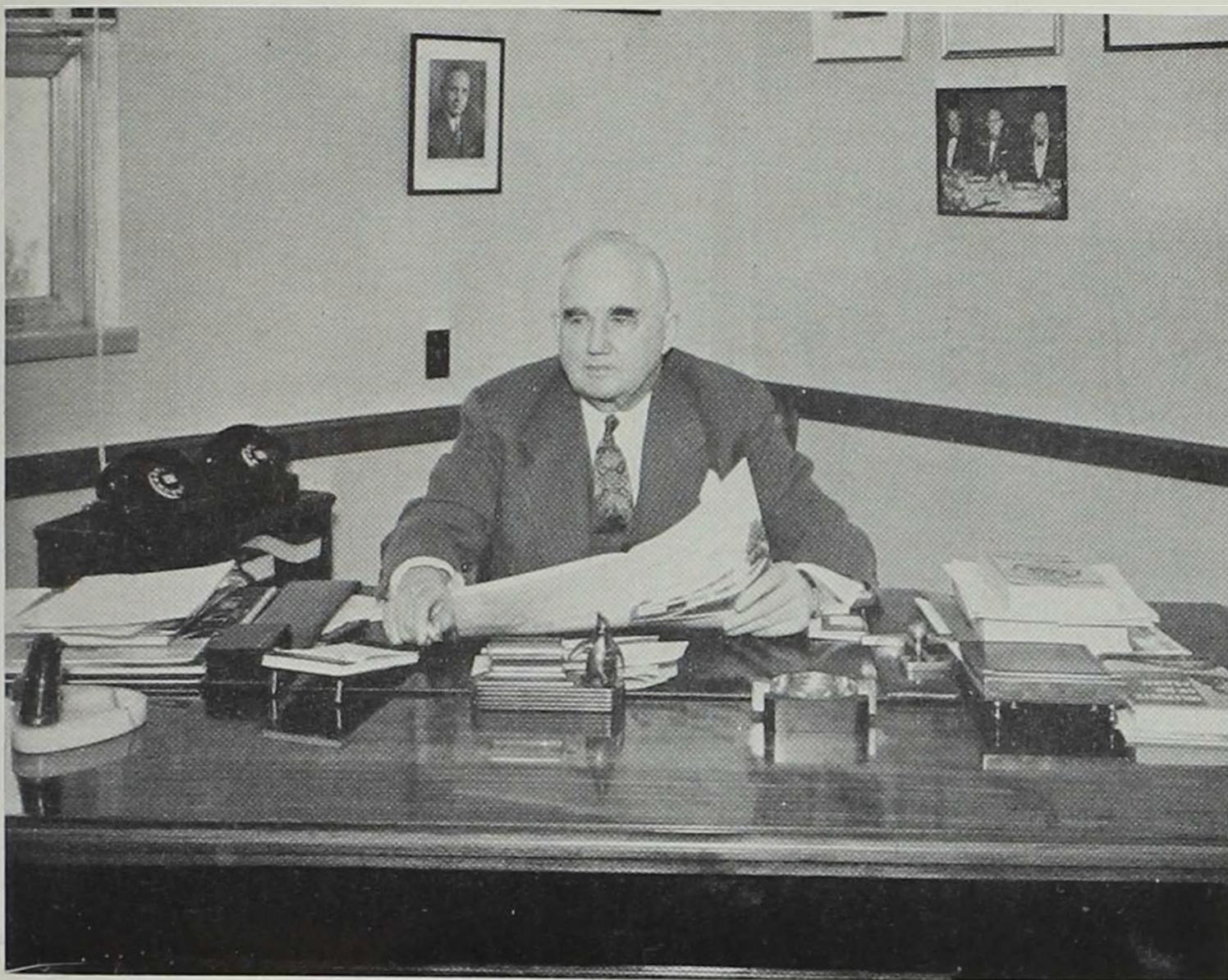


Credit Ralph C. Haynes

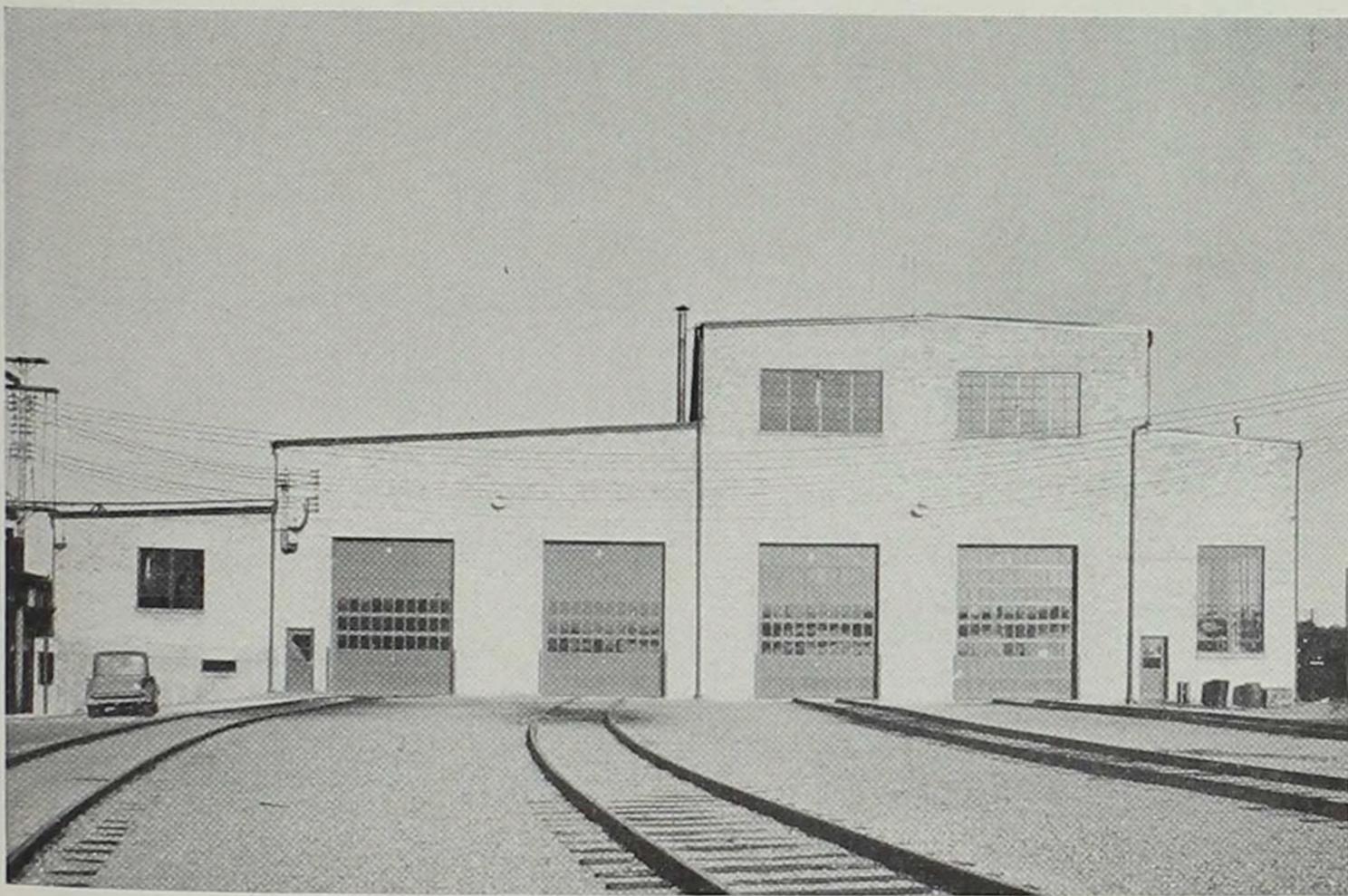
M&STL TRACKS AND STATION AT GILMAN



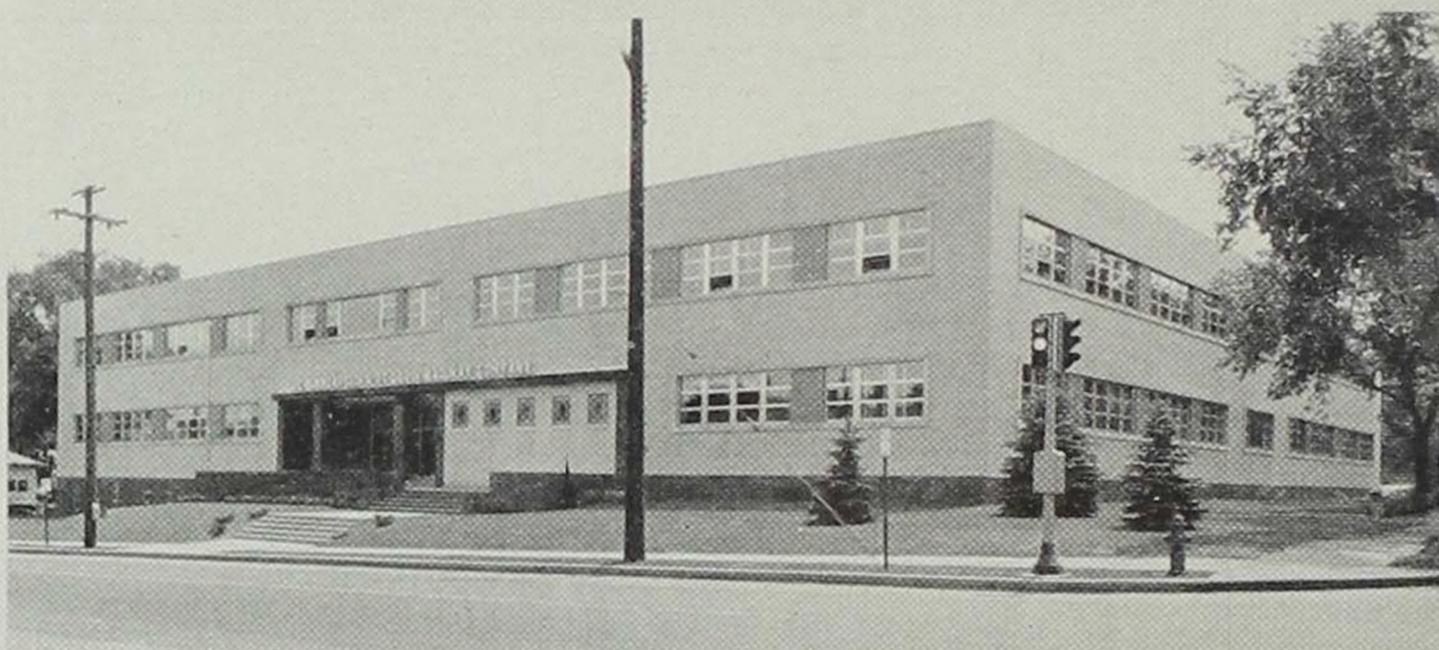
THE OLD AND NEW IN THE MARSHALLTOWN YARDS



LUCIAN C. SPRAGUE, PRESIDENT OF THE M&STL



NEW DIESEL SHOP AT MARSHALLTOWN



IOWANS ON THE M&STL

Top, left to right: Oscar M. Sandahl; Fred B. Matthews; William J. Powell.

Center: New Minneapolis office building.

Bottom, left to right: Merle E. Eaton; Charles LeRoy Fuller.

their annual gathering. At the beginning of the century it was quite common for Friends to inquire as to their mode of travel to Yearly Meeting. The question was put: "Did thee come Woolman or Pullman?" As a word of explanation it may be added that "Woolman" referred to one John Woolman, a revered Quaker preacher who practiced and expounded the virtues of thrift and plain living. Therefore if the reply was "Woolman" it meant day coach with the inference of Spartan simplicity and minimum of comfort — a state of affairs which is said to have characterized the old Iowa Central.

Another facet of the Iowa scene in yesteryear were the "crummy," or miners' trains. The Iowa Central (and later the M&StL) had extensive mines in the vicinity of Albia through ownership of the Hocking Coal Company. Early in the morning and late in the afternoon these "crummies," composed of a train of box cars with pot-bellied stoves and wooden benches, shuttled between Albia and the mine shafts. The Iowa Central served many diggings, probably the most noted of which were the Excelsior mines near Oskaloosa. Whole trainloads of coal went from Excelsior for distribution to many points within and without the state.

The Peoria Gateway Line

Until the eve of the first World War, the M&StL was called the Albert Lea Route, but thereafter it became known as the Peoria Gateway Line. The reason is obvious. More emphasis was placed on freight, and Peoria is an important gateway for east and west tonnage. Albert Lea, on the contrary, was chiefly regarded as a passenger junction point. The new slogan was indicative of the coming importance of freight.

All, however, was not well on the M&StL. The drubbing the road took under government operation during World War I was a big factor in bringing on the receivership of 1923. A long siege of crop failures, unfavorable business conditions, and finally the Great Depression prolonged the court's control. In an effort to pare expenses, all passenger trains except the *North Star Limited* were motorized. Many locals which did not earn their keep were withdrawn, and segments of branch lines abandoned. During this trying period the road was piloted by William H. Bremner, a native of Marshalltown. "Billy" Bremner started on the Iowa Central as a baggage clerk. He later was graduated from the State University at Iowa City and came to the M&StL as general attorney

in 1909. At the outbreak of America's entry into World War I he became president, then federal manager, and subsequently receiver.

When Bremner died at the end of 1934, Lucian C. Sprague was appointed a receiver and president. Mr. Sprague began his railroad career as callboy on the Burlington. Then came a spell as machinist helper, a few years firing a locomotive, and finally advancement to the right-hand side of the cab. But that was just a start. From the "Q" Lou Sprague went into engineering and supervisory positions with the Great Northern, Baltimore & Ohio, and Denver & Rio Grande Western. In 1923 he was made vice-president and general manager of the Uintah Railway, a Utah ore road.

When Mr. Sprague first arrived in Minneapolis to run the M&StL the day was stormy and bitter cold. The job before him seemed even bleaker. "The day I took the receiver's job," he recalls, "\$524,000 in unpaid vouchers for current bills were dumped on my desk with the warning, 'You'll never get another dollar's worth of material!'"

Meeting the payroll with nearly an empty till was his No. 1 job. Many expressed the opinion that the road was "of little worth as a railroad but of considerable junk value." That was Lou Sprague's cue. He could not go along with the first part of the phrase but the latter he knew to be true. A thousand obsolete freight cars rotting in

the yards gave him an idea. By long-distance telephone he contacted a friend in the wrecking business. A day or two later a certified check came for \$60,000 in part payment for the superannuated cars, sight unseen.

From that time on the M&StL started on the long road to complete rehabilitation. Just prior to the Sprague administration the Burlington had abandoned most of its Tracy-Winfield Branch; the remainder it sold to the M&StL. The Louie purchased the Martinsburg-Coppock section and another stretch between Tracy and Oskaloosa. The former segment had less curves, fewer bridges, and more moderate grades than the M&StL's route between the same points. Under Sprague's direction the ex-Burlington road was rebuilt to conform with the new main line standards on the Peoria Gateway Line. The old M&StL track going through Richland and Ollie was then dismantled.

All along the line a general face-lifting became noticeable. One-hundred-pound (to the yard) rails took the place of lighter steel on the main line, and crushed rock ballast replaced slag and cinders. The steam engine which heretofore had been the only type of locomotive on the road shared a place with the Diesel. Marshalltown and Oskaloosa saw Diesel switchers ranging from 600-, 660-, 900- to 1,000-horsepower jobs shunting cars in the yards. During the late war the re-

built Mikados (2-8-2), known as MacArthurs on the M&StL, did valiant service; but the days of the steam engine were numbered.

The advent of "road" Diesels, that is engines for service from one division point to another and beyond, meant faster and more economic freight operation. Big two-unit 3,000-horsepower Diesel-electrics cut out the water and coal stops of yesterday. Still larger three-unit 4,050-horsepower monsters meant no more doubling on hills. Indeed when Mr. Sprague came to the road the fastest freights took 32½ hours to make the 476-mile run from Minneapolis to Peoria. Today the "three-units" barrel from terminal to terminal in 17 hours and 55 minutes. With the acceleration of time freights and a modernized plant, Iowans no longer joke about the Louie. Such nicknames as the "Midnight and Still Later," the "Maimed and Still Limping," and the "Misery and Short Life" just don't fit.

In December, 1943, the M&StL emerged from a twenty-year receivership with the same name except that "Railway" replaced "Railroad" in the title. This receivership was the longest of any Class I railroad (a road having operating revenue of over \$1,000,000 a year) still running in America. The Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway now pays substantial dividends and is one of the few railroads in the nation with no bonded indebtedness. Apart from virtually complete Diesel opera-

tion, the road is proud of the fact that better than 80 per cent of its freight cars have been acquired new since 1940.

Time was when Iowa folk used to check the reins of Old Dobbin and watch the *North Star Limited* steam by. That once-famous train symbolized the M&StL thirty years ago. Today a lad in a convertible on U. S. Highway 65 paces Time Freight 20. That fast freight between Minneapolis and Peoria, with its trim green-and-yellow Diesel, now typifies the road. The Louie is still vital to Iowa and the Midwest, and more tonnage is shipped over its rails than ever before. But the *North Star Limited* was discontinued in 1935, for the automobile had taken away most of the passenger traffic. Some local service, however, is still provided by rail motor cars pulling comfortable stainless-steel air-conditioned coaches.

Other changes are noticeable. Certain non-profitable branches have ceased to operate, namely: the Old Mud Line; branches to Montezuma and State Center; and part of the Belmond Branch from Corwith to Algona. Because of light traffic and high cost of extensive bridge maintenance, the Spencer-Storm Lake section of the Southwestern Extension was lopped off in 1936. Subsequently that part of the branch from Rembrandt south was acquired by the Milwaukee, and operation retained.

When the Tracy Branch was ripped up west of

Fosterdale on account of serious washouts, it marked the end of the second oldest steel railroad bridge in the country. This was a 400-foot through-truss span crossing the Des Moines River. Prior to its Iowa location it carried the Burlington's tracks over the waters of the Missouri at Plattsmouth, Nebraska.

To this day you will find old timers on the "Eastern Division" — that is, from Albert Lea to Peoria — who started railroading on the old Iowa Central. At the Oskaloosa station one can still discern "I C" on the cornice-stones, and some of the older depots have pot-bellied stoves with "Iowa Central Railway" on their fire doors. Long Diesel-operated fast freights roll over a modern railroad, but much of the right of way, some of the buildings, and a great deal of the tradition go back to the days of the Iowa Central. Such is the heritage of the Minneapolis & St. Louis.

Iowans on the M&StL

Of all Iowa towns Oskaloosa is probably more of an "M&StL community" than any other within the state. Being an important junction point and division center, Oskaloosa is vital to the Minneapolis & St. Louis: the railway is one of the largest employers in town. Moreover, this thriving seat of Mahaska County has provided its full share of the road's officials.

Back in 1925 a tall, lanky lad just out of high school handed a letter to the Railway Post Office clerk on the *North Star Limited* as it halted at Oskaloosa's station. The writer was Charles Leroy Fuller; the letter was a query about a job. Two days later a telegram came to him from Dexter Denison, freight traffic manager of the M&StL. It was a notice to report to work as a stenographer in Minneapolis; a "wire pass" for transportation accompanied the note. "Skeet" Fuller took the job. He has been with the road ever since.

Roy Fuller (born in Oskaloosa, March 24, 1905) liked railroading and subsequently became traffic agent in Des Moines, then traveling agent working out of Cincinnati, and in 1935 general agent in Indianapolis. A year later he came in from off-line territory to the general agency in

Minneapolis. Promotions followed: general freight agent, assistant traffic manager, and, in 1950, freight traffic manager. One of the tallest men on the railroad (he is, in his own words, "5 feet, 17½ inches") Roy Fuller is also outstanding because of his pleasing personality and sunny disposition. He likes to play pocket and three cushion billiards in which he is proficient. He married Susan Dale Riley; the Fullers have a boy and a girl. Mr. Fuller asserts he is "non-partisan in politics"; he is a Congregationalist, and holds membership in the Traffic Club of Minneapolis, Army Transportation Association, and the Minneapolis Athletic, Optimist, and Toastmasters clubs.

Another Oskaloosan — and a veteran on the Louie — is Purchasing Agent Fred B. Matthews. Born in "Oskey" May 19, 1890, young Fred looked to the Iowa Central for employment after finishing high school and the Oskaloosa Business College. His rail career began as receiving clerk in the home town freight depot. That was, he recalls, "back in December 15, 1908." He subsequently became assistant timekeeper, then chief timekeeper. In 1916 he left Oskaloosa for a stint at chief clerking: first in the O. S. & D. (Over, Short and Damaged) Department at Minneapolis; then a like position with E. E. Kerwin, superintendent at Watertown, South Dakota. When the Watertown superintendency was abolished late in 1917, Matthews was made assistant chief clerk to C. P. Stembel

and shortly afterward chief clerk to Robert E. Ryan (both superintendents) back in Minneapolis. On April 15, 1935, he was appointed purchasing agent.

Mr. Matthews married Nancy Jane Klepper of Oskaloosa; they have one living son, their other boy lost his life in the late war. Fred Matthews is fond of hunting and fishing although he finds little time to do either. When in Iowa he had quite a reputation as second tenor in the Knights of Pythias Glee Club, and sang at many social engagements.

Up until 1910 Centerville was an Iowa Central point, for the Albia & Centerville Railway was operated by the former road. Around train-time at the Centerville depot, town folk of all ages came to see the trains depart. Among these was a youngster, one of the Sandahl kids, called Oscar. He was, however, more fascinated by the sound of the telegraph key than the commotion of a departing train. Oscar, in short, decided he'd be a telegrapher. Moreover, he backed up his decision with well-directed training.

In town the Methodist minister's boy had the same idea — and a new telegraph set. Oscar managed to get some old battery jars and a key; a friendly lineman helped string second-hand telephone wires between the parsonage and the Sandahl residence, and both boys started pounding the keys. Whatever additional aid was needed

Oscar's brother, Carl, who was then an "op" for the Iowa Central, gladly proffered. Came the day when Carl was transferred from Centerville to Moravia, and brother Oscar promptly applied for his old job. On November 1, 1904, when only fifteen (he was born January 11, 1889, in Centerville), Oscar Sandahl started railroading on the local road at \$25 a month.

After some two years on the Hook he switched to the Kansas City Division of the Milwaukee — the pay was better. By midsummer of 1909 he was back on an Iowa road — the Des Moines Union — at the state capital, as operator. Sensing greater advancement in traffic work he went with the New York Central as stenographer and solicitor in Des Moines. After a stint in the army during World War I, Oscar Sandahl returned to railroading, this time with the M&StL as clerk and solicitor at Des Moines. Advancement to traveling agent soon followed, along with better jobs at the off-line points of Chicago, Detroit, and Boston. On May 1, 1937, Mr. Sandahl was summoned to Minneapolis as assistant general freight agent. Other promotions came, and by the end of 1943 he was appointed freight traffic manager.

Mr. Sandahl married Ruth Tilton of Des Moines; they have a son and a daughter. He likes to sing and remembers the day when the brothers Sandahl (Carl, Paul, Fred, and Oscar) had an amateur quartet which had engagements in Iowa

and in the East. Mr. Sandahl is a Republican, a member of the Traffic Club of Minneapolis, and the Minneapolis Athletic and Golf clubs.

In the Executive Department of the M&StL, Iowa is represented by Merle E. Eaton, assistant to the president. Born in Chester, May 4, 1892, Eaton was educated at Cresco High School and the Minnesota School of Business, Minneapolis. He came to the M&StL in 1923 as secretary to William H. Bremner, then president and receiver. Mr. Eaton was subsequently made chief clerk in the receiver's office. When L. C. Sprague succeeded Bremner as head of the road in 1935, Merle Eaton was made assistant secretary of the company; three years later he became secretary. In 1943 he was appointed assistant to the president and assistant secretary.

Methodical and businesslike, he has a quiet sense of humor and enjoys nothing better than to harmonize with a group of singers at the piano. When a schoolboy he excelled in basketball — he still likes the game — but now enjoys the less arduous sport of billiards. He was married to the late Helen Hayes; his daughter lives near Minneapolis; his son died in World War II. Mr. Eaton married Luella Hauser in 1950. He is a Shriner, a Republican, and holds membership in the Traffic Club of Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Athletic and the Golden Valley Golf clubs.

The youngest Iowan in the official brackets is

William J. Powell, general attorney for the railway. Although born in Floris, November 22, 1914, he spent his boyhood at Ottumwa where his father, William H. Powell, and his uncle, James F. Powell, had both edited the *Ottumwa Courier*. Educated at Carleton College, Bill Powell chose the law as a career and received an LL. B. from the University of Minnesota in 1938. He practiced in Spring Valley, Minnesota, where at the age of twenty-eight he was elected president of the Tenth Judicial District Bar Association. He came with the M&StL in 1947 as general attorney.

In spite of the fact that he went to the University of Minnesota, Bill Powell stoutly avers he always cheers for the Hawkeye team whenever Minnesota plays the State University of Iowa. His fondness for Iowa and his dry wit are two noticeable characteristics. His avocations include "gardening in the summer; snow shoveling in winter." He married Meredith Burnap; the Powells have a son and a daughter, in that order. Mr. Powell is a Republican, an Episcopalian, and a member of the Minnesota Bar Association and the Minneapolis Athletic Club.

It is an odd coincidence that in reviewing the former executives of the M&StL one finds the longest and the shortest terms were held by Iowa men. William H. Bremner, mentioned elsewhere in this article, was president of the road from 1917 to 1934 except for a year and a half during World

War I when he was federal manager. Born in Marshalltown October 24, 1869, Bremner, after passing his bar examination, hung up his shingle in the state capital. Before entering the M&StL's law department he had been city solicitor for Des Moines.

In contrast to Bremner's long tenure, Edward L. Brown held the presidency for less than half a year. Serious illness forced his untimely resignation, but after a period of convalescence at the Mayo Clinic his health improved; he later headed the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad. Brown was born in Iowa January 3, 1864; he began his rail career as a messenger boy on the Rock Island. After rising to become train dispatcher on that road, he went with the St. Paul & Duluth (now the Northern Pacific), becoming superintendent in 1896. Six years afterward he changed to the Great Northern. He relinquished a superintendency on the GN to head the M&StL late in 1916. Brown died in 1921, and his body was taken by special car to his old home in Pella for burial.

Probably the most distinguished ex-M&StL official is Judge Matthew M. Joyce. Judge Joyce was born in Emmetsburg April 29, 1877; he took his law degree from the University of Michigan in 1900, and practiced in Missoula, Montana, and in Fort Dodge. Coming with the M&StL as general solicitor in 1917, he was subsequently made general counsel. In 1932 he left the railroad when ap-

pointed judge of the United States District Court in Minneapolis, which office he still holds.

Another Iowan held in high esteem on the M&StL was the late John H. Reinholdt. Born at Manning, November 23, 1883, and educated at Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania, Reinholdt had a long and varied engineering career. Beginning as roadman on the Chicago Great Western in 1901, he later held responsible engineering positions on the New York Central Railroad, Easton Transit Company, and the Lehigh Valley Railroad. Reinholdt left the latter road to become the M&StL's assistant engineer in 1909. He went with the Kansas City Terminal Railway as general roadmaster early in 1917 but returned to the Louie by summer to become chief engineer. In 1920 he was made superintendent at Fort Dodge. Three years afterward Reinholdt left the M&StL to go into the contracting business for himself. He died in 1935.

Iowa's role in the M&StL looms large. Why? Because the M&StL has more mileage in the Hawkeye State than in Minnesota, South Dakota, and Illinois combined. Operating as it does 1,400 miles from Leola, South Dakota, to Peoria, Illinois, the bulk of the "north and south main line" is still in Iowa. Since the seventies the Marshalltown shops have been in continuous operation; they are now and have been for many years the repair headquarters for freight cars on the entire Min-

neapolis & St. Louis system. The shop's payroll provides a livelihood for 135 employees. Marshalltown also has a new Diesel service building, the most modern on the railroad. Finally, in the just-completed \$1,000,000 M&StL office building in Minneapolis there are many officials who are proud of the fact that they were born and raised in Iowa.

THE MINNEAPOLIS & ST. LOUIS RAILWAY CO.

THE PEORIA & WYOMING GATEWAY

