

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.

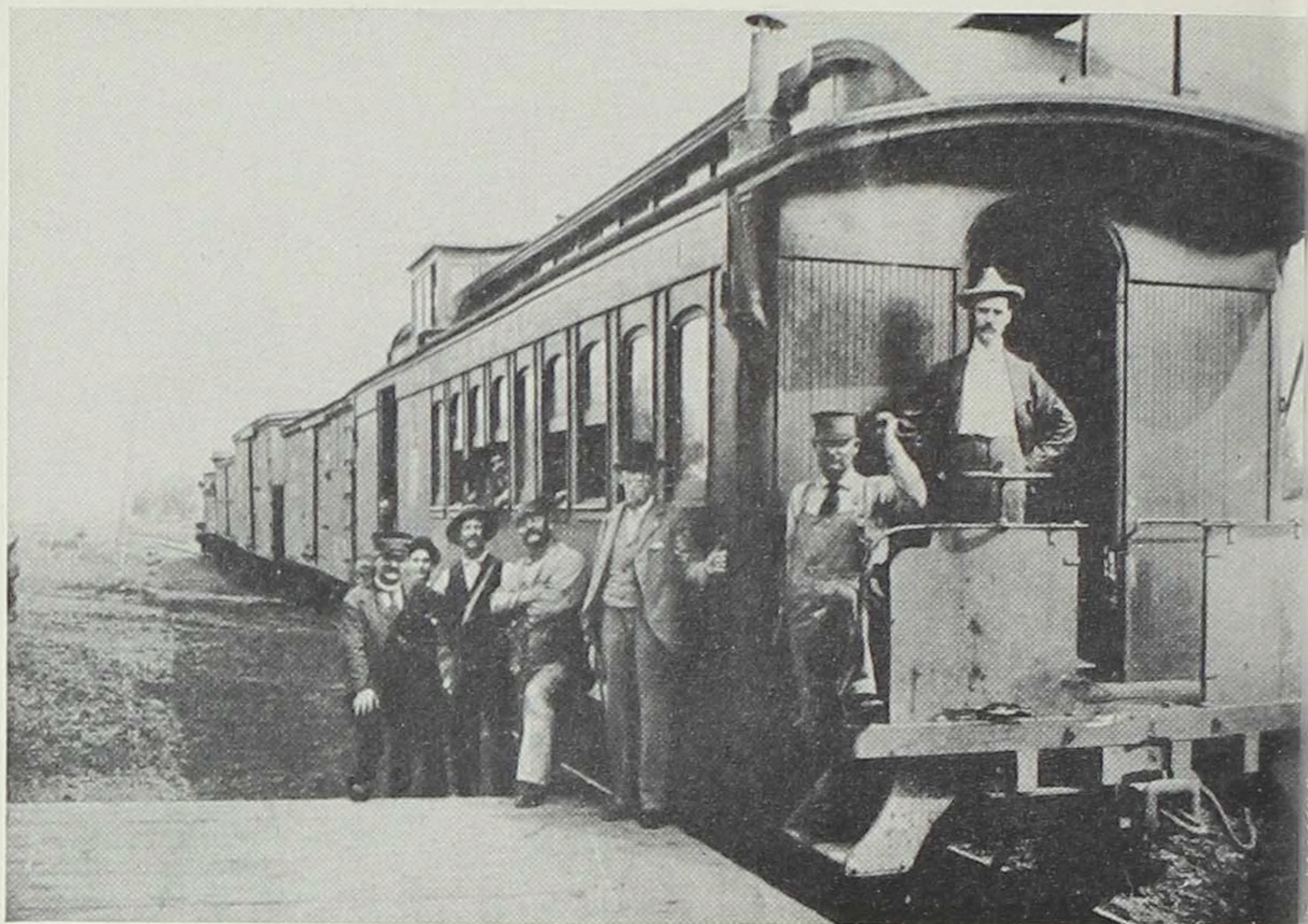
Several years later, being hard pressed for motive power, the M&StL leased a few "compound" freight locomotives, that is, engines having both high and low pressure cylinders, from the Soo Line. They were more complex and, to the uninitiated, harder to "steam" than the normal or "simple" engines heretofore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

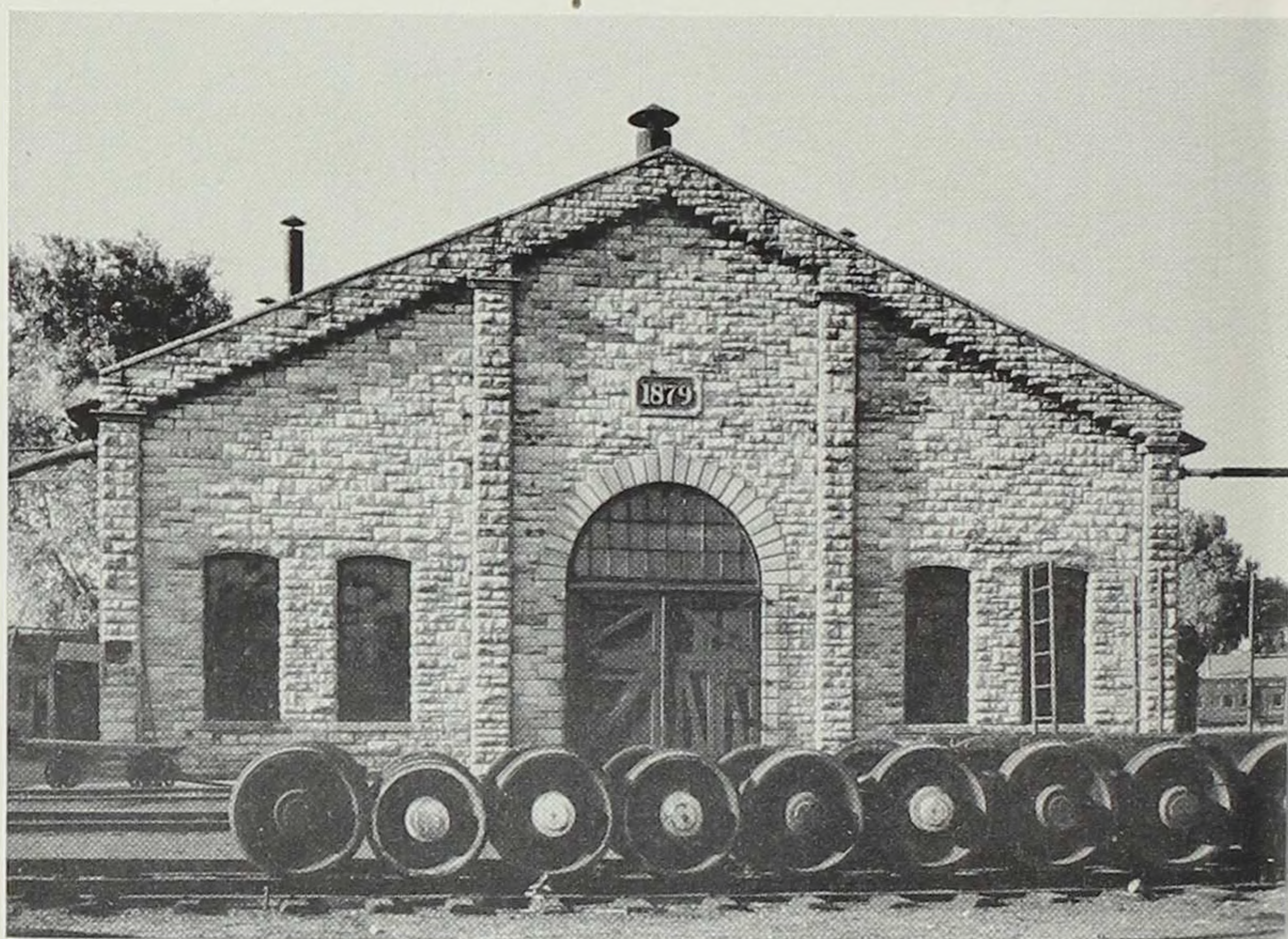
Forty cars of coal,
Twenty cars of beer,
A compound engine, and —
A simple engineer.

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



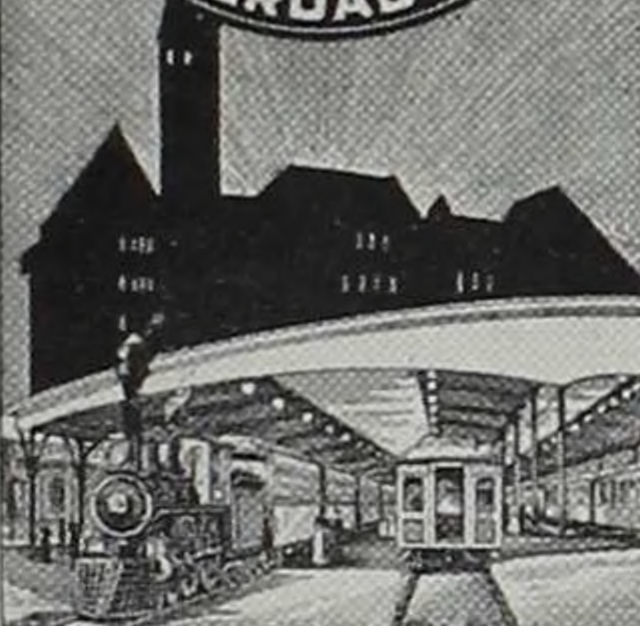
THE OLD IOWA CENTRAL BLACKSMITH SHOP, MARSHALLTOWN

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.
MARSHALLTOWN, IOWA.

**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.

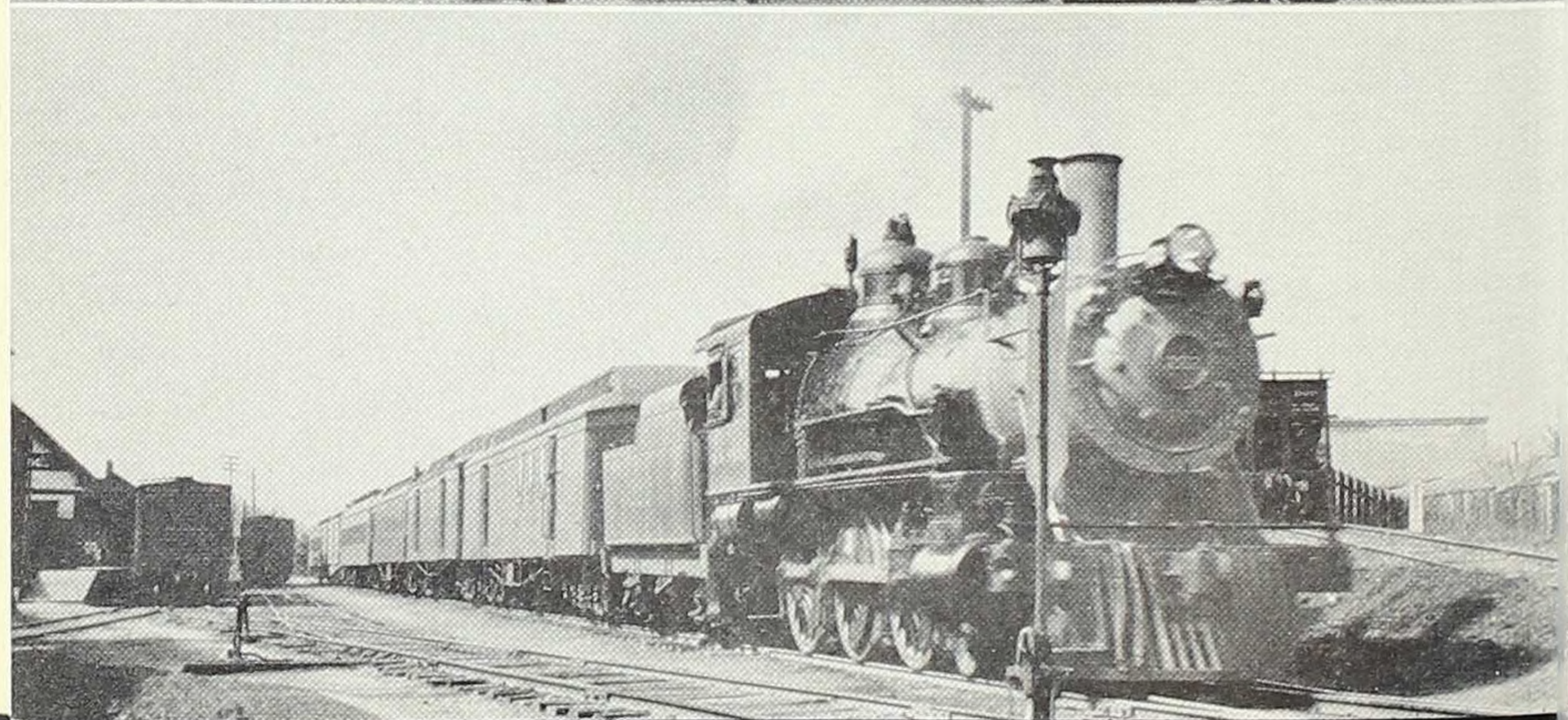
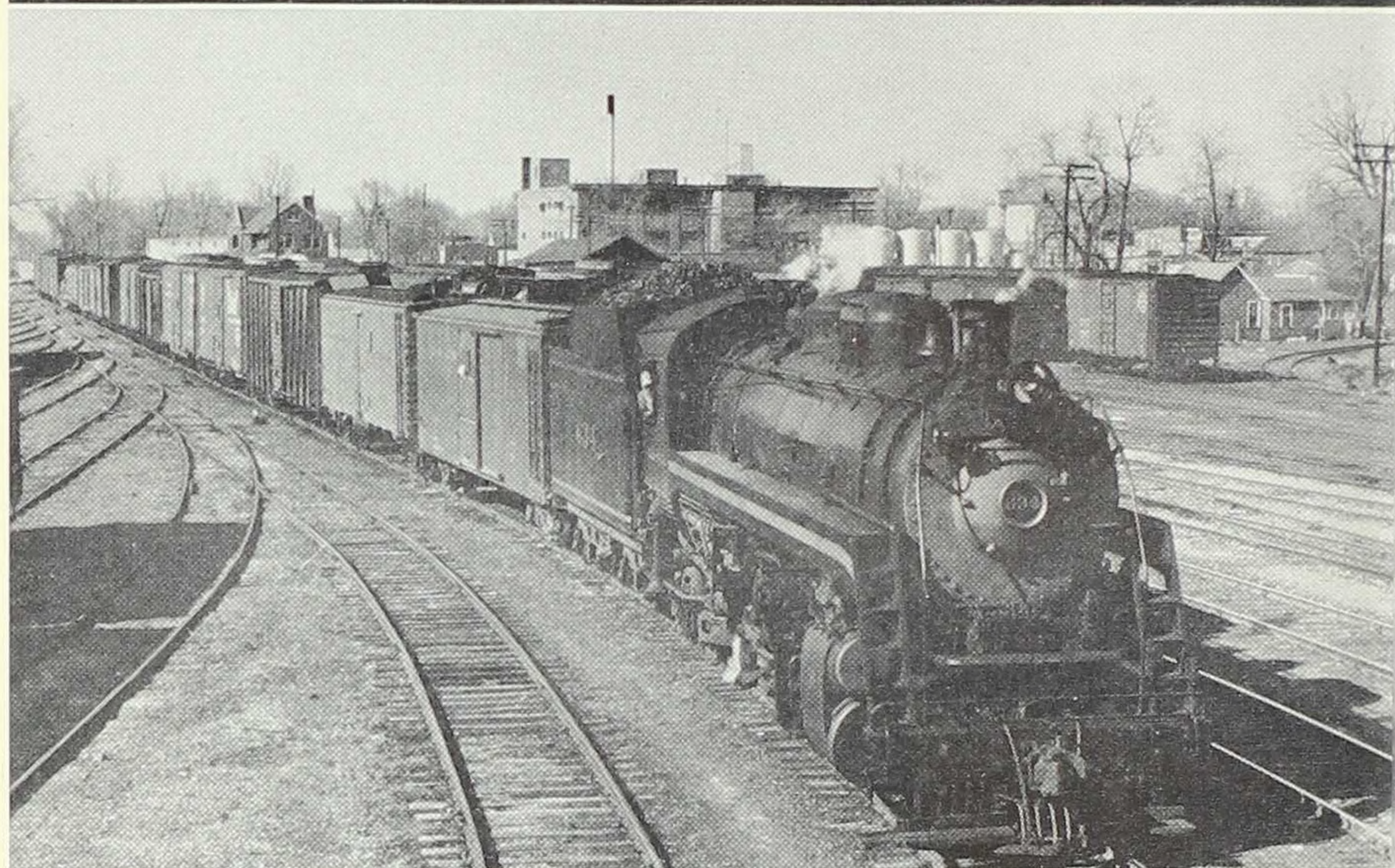
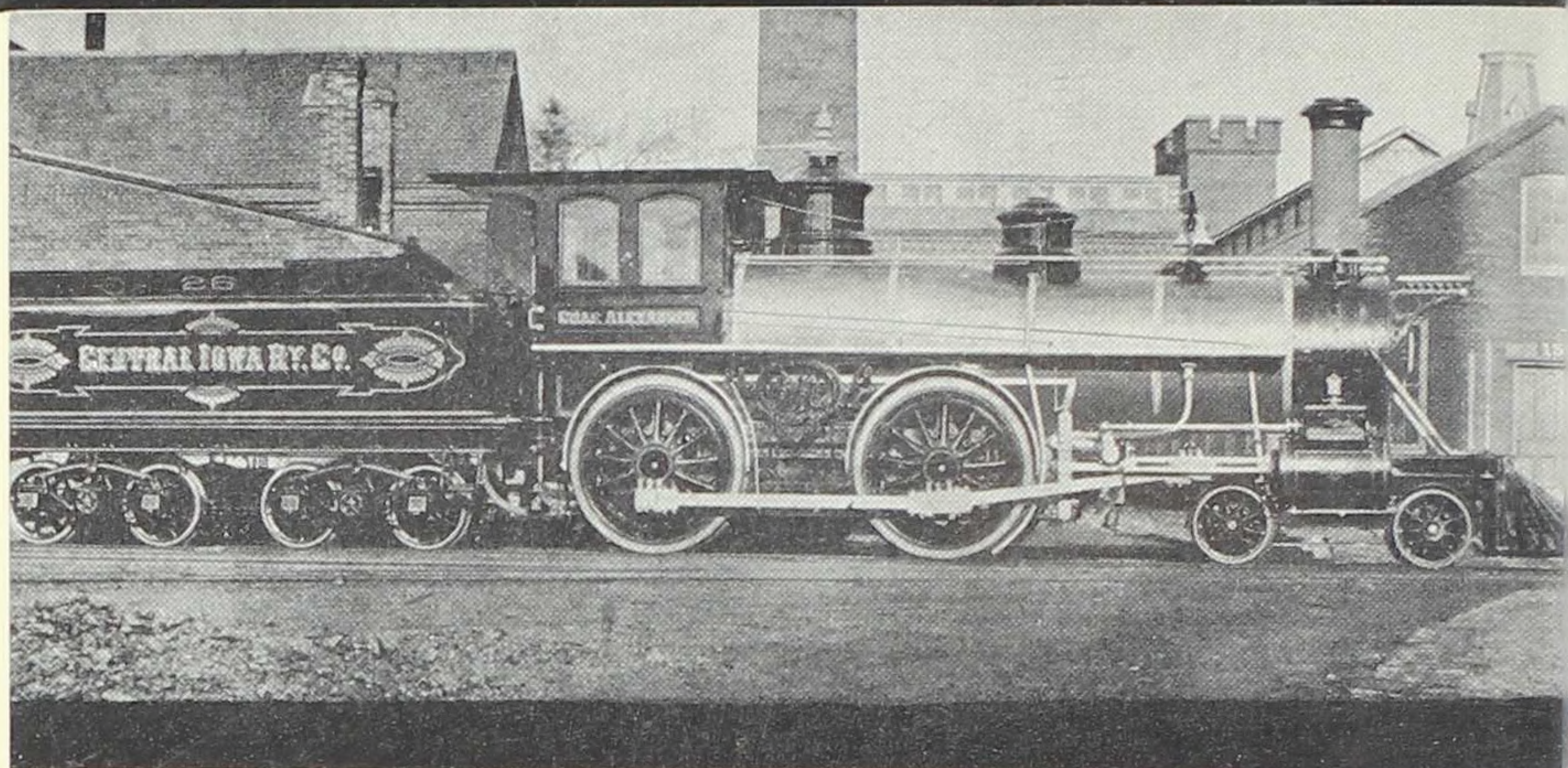
NOV. 1887 - 1910
**MINNEAPOLIS
AND
ST. LOUIS
IOWA
CENTRAL**

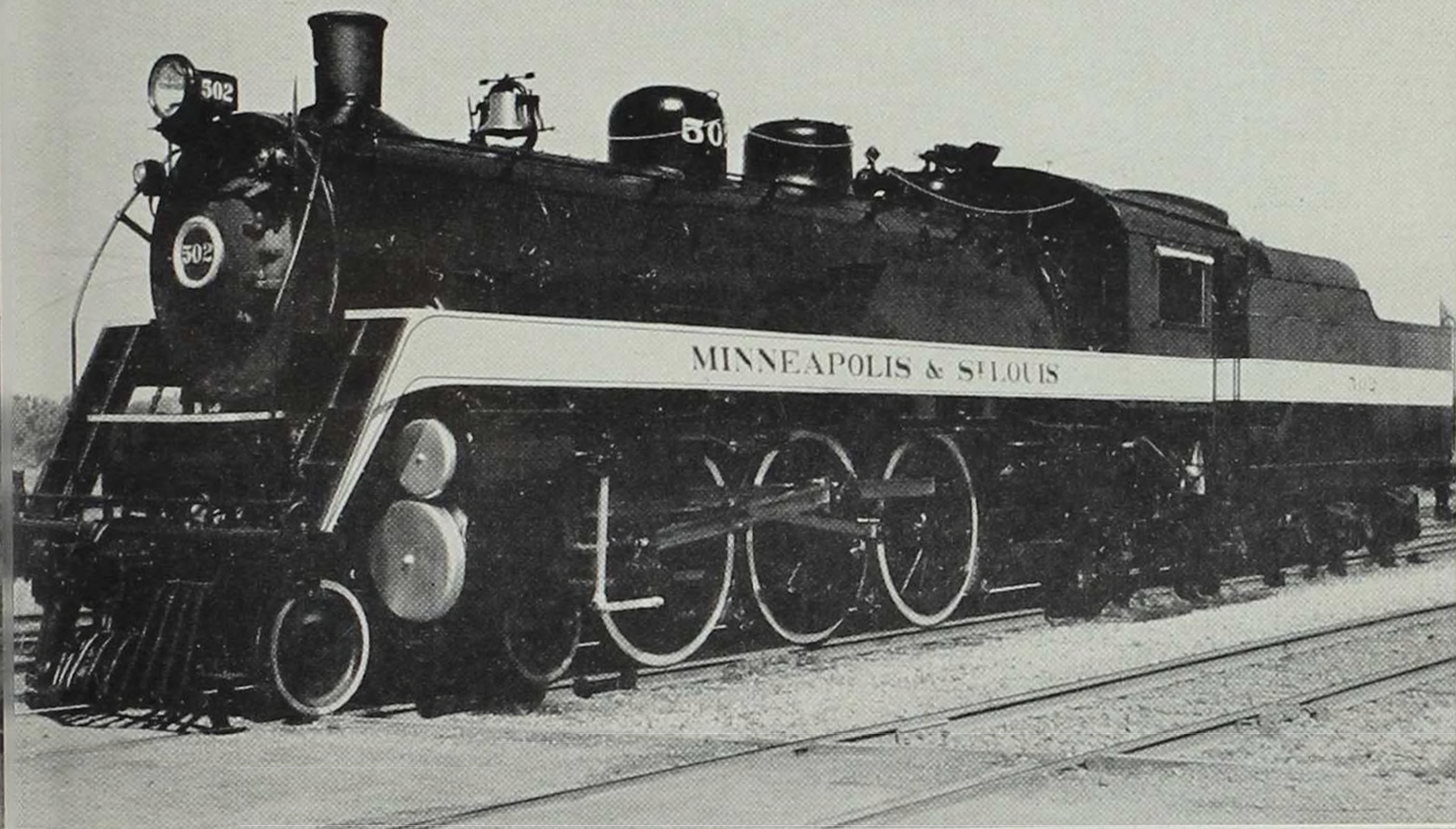
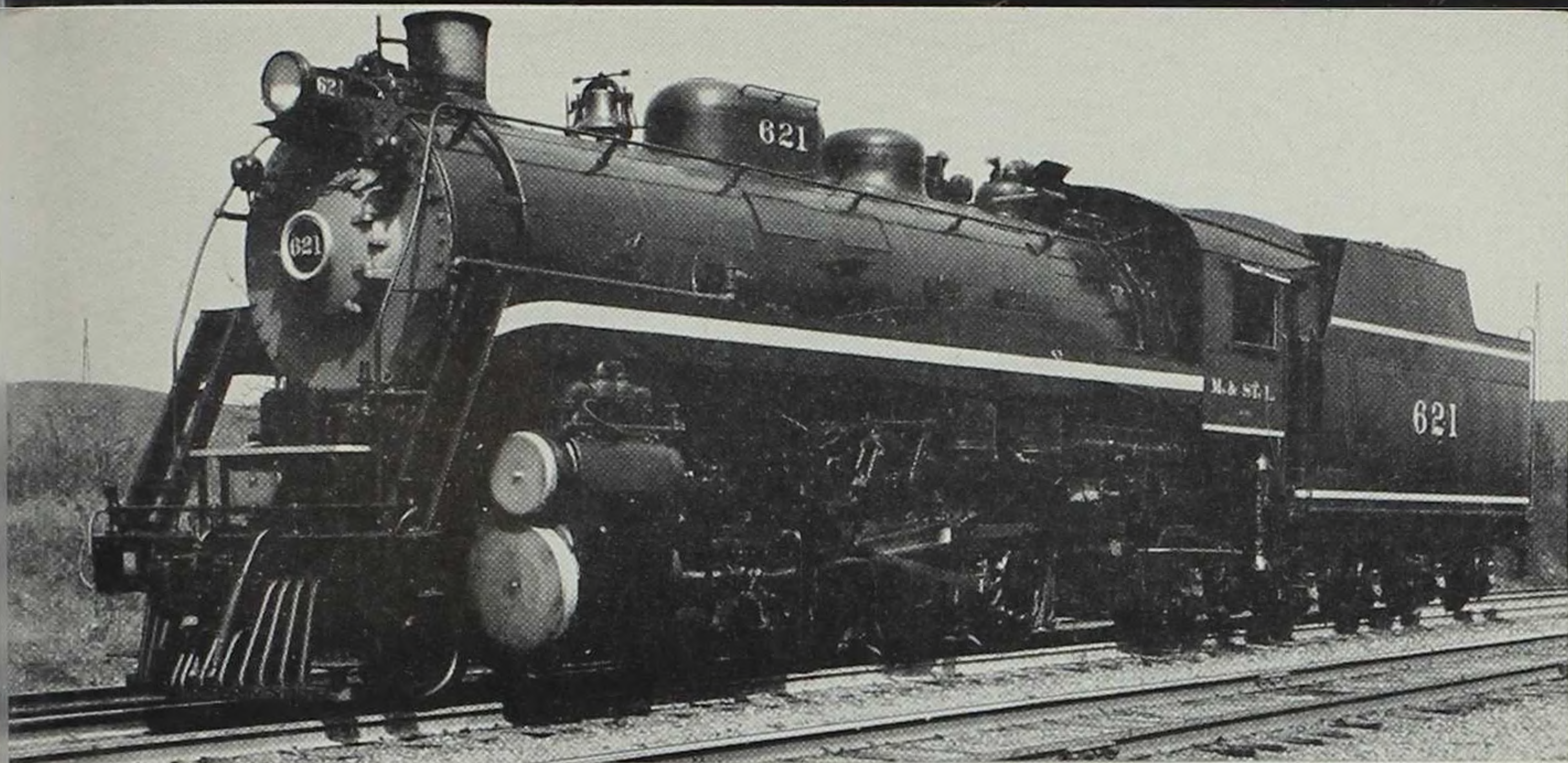
ELECTRIC LIGHTED TRAINS

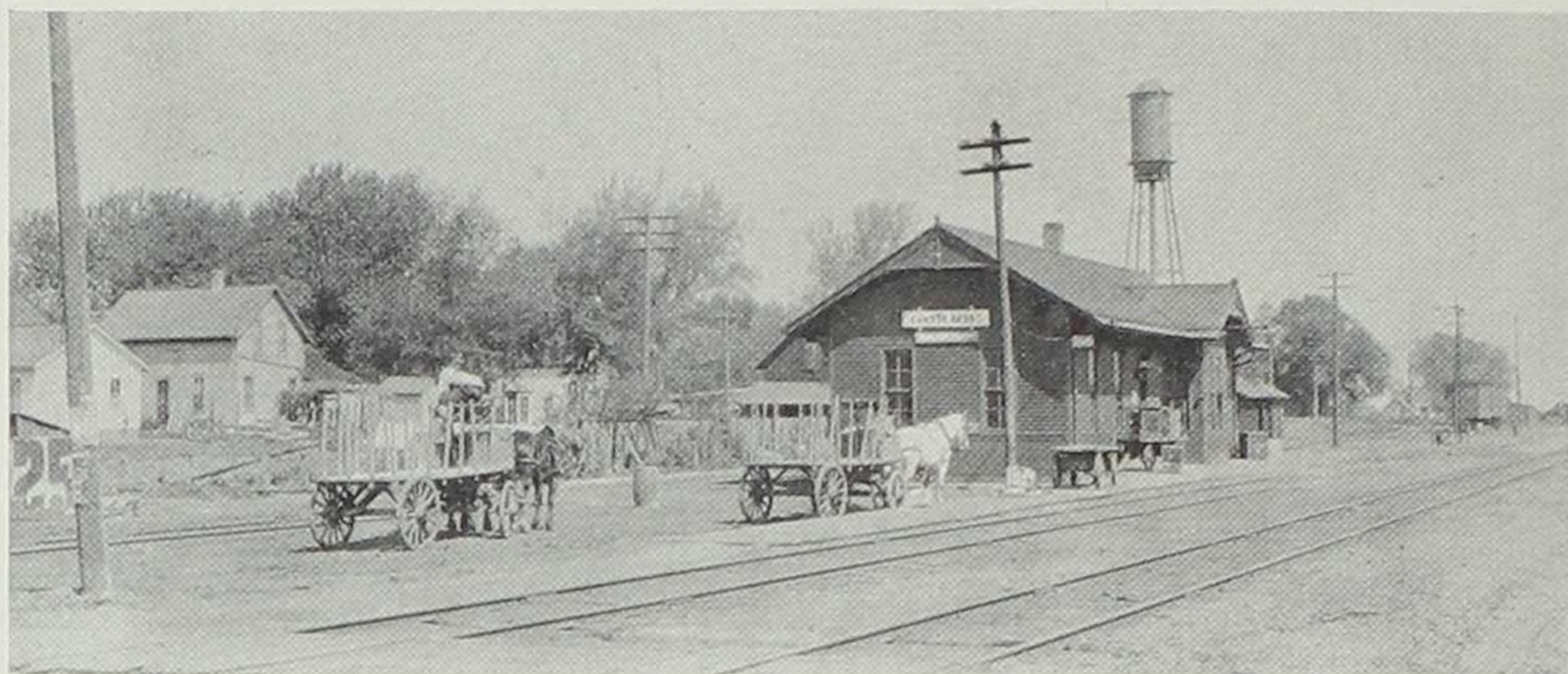
WINTER EDITION, 1902-1905.
**THE MINNEAPOLIS & ST. LOUIS
RAILROAD CO.**
**ALBERT LEA
ROUTE**

**NEW SHORT LINE
TO CHICAGO**
M. SWEENEY, Gen'l. Superintendent. L. F. DAY, Asst. Supt. & Gen'l. Freight Agent. A. B. CUTTS, Gen'l. Pass. & Tkt. Agent.
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.
JANUARY, 1901
Subject to Change Without Notice

OLD IOWA CENTRAL AND M&STL TIMETABLES







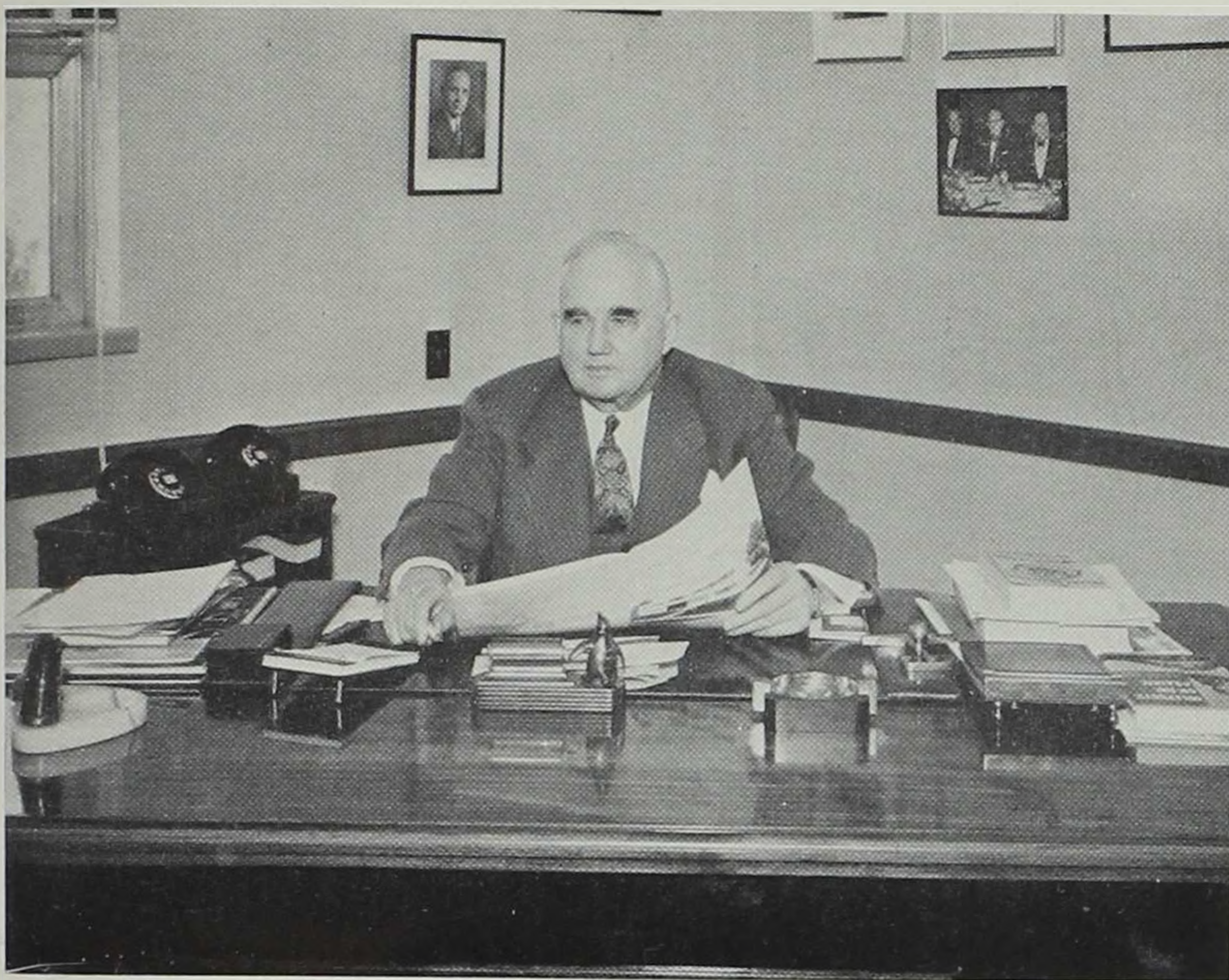
Credit Ralph C. Haynes
TEAMSTERS WAITING FOR TRAIN AT GOWRIE IN 1910



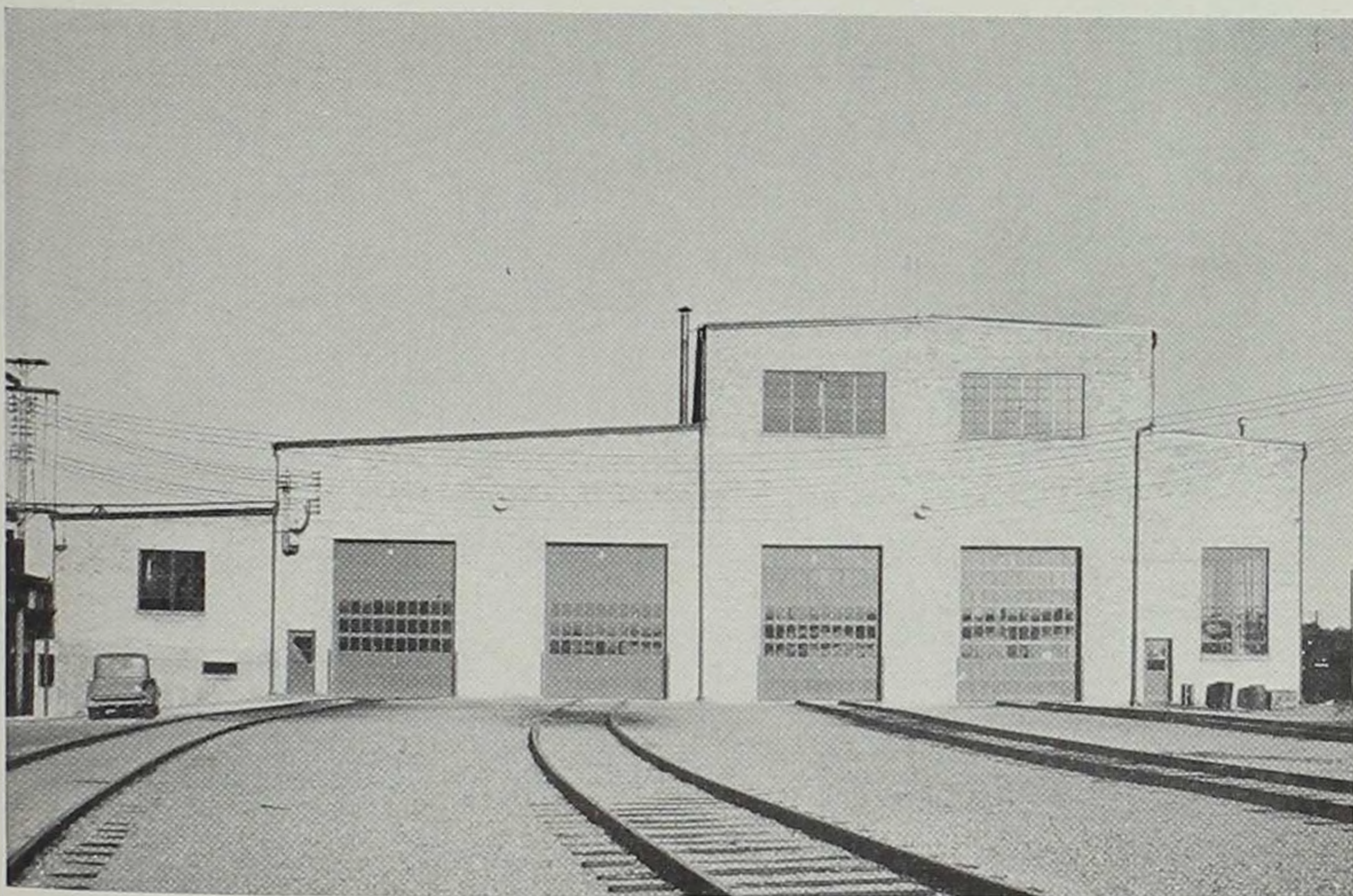
Credit Ralph C. Haynes
M&N TRACKS AND STATION AT GILMAN



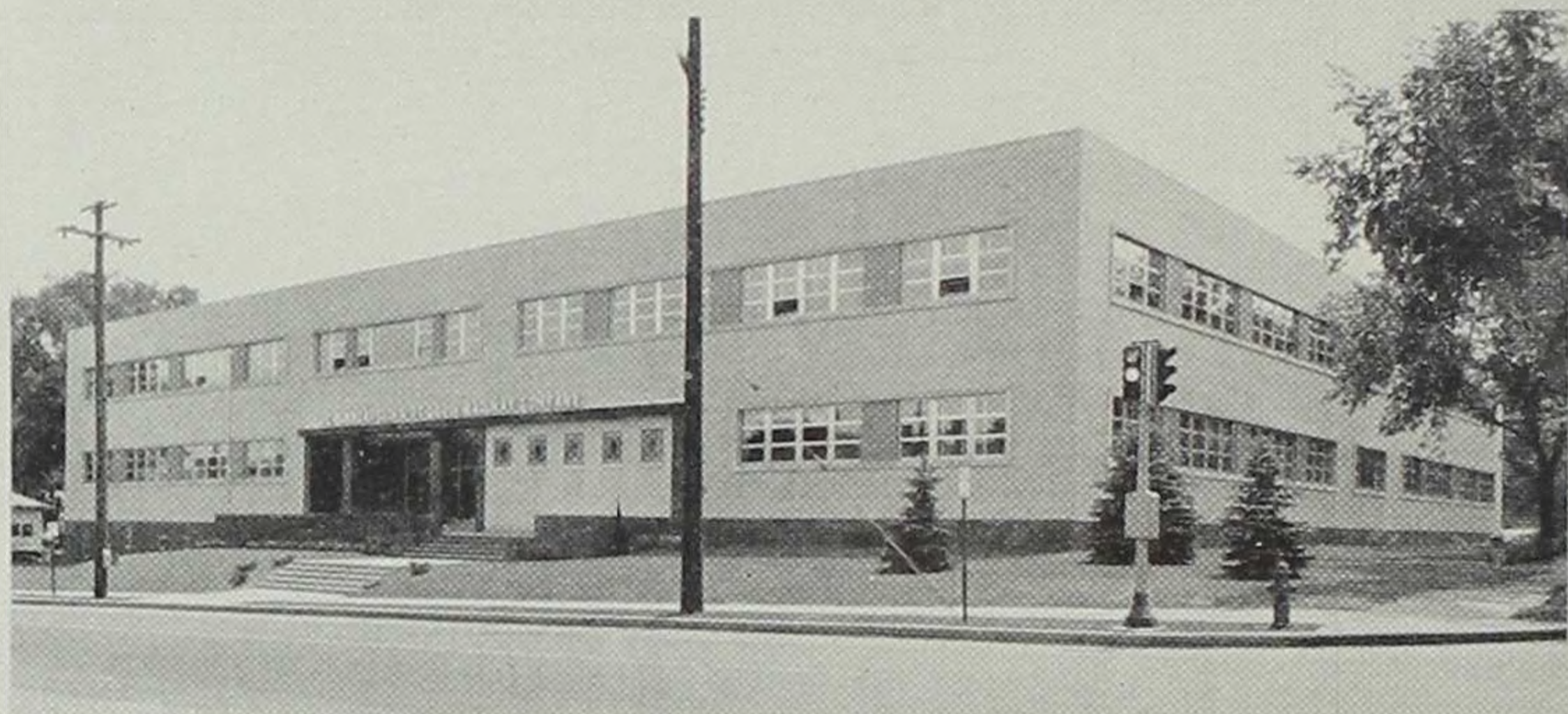
THE OLD AND NEW IN THE MARSHALLTOWN YARDS



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.