

From Steamboat To Iron Horse

Iowa was in the throes of a revolution in transportation and communication in 1858. Prior to the Civil War the Mississippi was still the main highway for freight and passenger service between Iowa and such towns as St. Louis, New Orleans, Louisville, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh. The completion of the telegraph to the Mississippi in 1848 and the laying of the Atlantic Cable in 1858 were epochal feats in the annihilation of time and space. And nowhere in the world was the conquest of space taking place more rapidly than in the American Middle West.

Steamboating was in its heyday between 1855 and 1860. There were more steamboat arrivals at various Mississippi ports during these years than in any other period. Furthermore, most of these boats were larger and faster packets than had plied the Upper Mississippi in earlier times. Increasing steam traffic on both the Des Moines and the Missouri was recorded. Enterprising citizens of Des Moines were actually building a steamboat in 1858 that would run from Des Moines to Fort Dodge the following year.

The heaviest traffic, of course, was along the Upper Mississippi where navigation opened early

in 1858. On March 16 the *Dubuque Daily Express and Herald* recorded the arrival of the *Alhambra* as the first boat of the season. The *Grey Eagle*, commanded by Daniel Smith Harris, was the first boat to reach St. Paul, setting a record when she churned into that port on March 25.

Some idea of the tremendous steamboat traffic along the eastern border of Iowa can be gained from the number of boats docking at various Iowa ports. In the two weeks following the arrival of the *Alhambra* at the Key City, the Dubuque editor recorded the *Audubon*, the *Badger State*, the *Brazil*, the *Chippewa*, the *Envoy*, the *Eolian*, the *Excelsior*, the *Fanny Harris*, the *Fire Canoe*, the *Flora*, the *G. H. Wilson*, the *Granite State*, the *Grey Eagle*, the *Henry Clay*, the *Itasca*, the *Kate Cassel*, the *Key City*, the *Lake City*, the *Metropolitan*, the *Milwaukee*, the *Oakland*, and the *War Eagle*. In addition to these twenty-two craft, the *Belfast*, *Dew Drop*, *James Lyon*, *Laclede*, and *Lucy May* were advertised as on their way up from St. Louis.

These boats carried an immense amount of freight both upstream and downstream. Two thousand pigs of lead and eighty barrels of flour formed a part of the *Alhambra's* cargo downstream from Dubuque. Under the caption "A Good Sign!" the *Express and Herald* of March 17 declared:

Our levee begins already to assume a bustling appearance, and as the season advances so favorably, business

will speedily infuse a new life into our veins. The migratory habits of our people are shown by the number of strangers who will commence pouring in by rails and boats, until our hotels are filled to overflowing.

We notice, in connection with our levee, that the Alhambra, owing to the inclemency of the weather and the great amount of freight to be shipped, will not leave until this evening.

The *Express and Herald* was not slow to note the various cargoes arriving at or departing from Dubuque. The firm of West & Hopkins had already shipped 7,000 pigs of lead. Six hundred bags of wheat were loaded on the *Granite State*. The *Conewago* left the following day with 740 barrels of flour. When the *Chippewa Falls* passed upstream with a large shipment of plows from Moline, the editor queried, "Why cannot our dealers have this trade?" Such activity as well as rivalry existed in all the river towns between Keokuk and Dubuque.

Meanwhile, the decade prior to 1858 had witnessed some historic railroad events culminating in the linking of the Atlantic with the Mississippi by rail. The first railroad constructed west of Chicago was the Galena & Chicago Union [North Western] in 1848. The Rock Island was the first to reach the Mississippi — arriving at Rock Island opposite Davenport on February 22, 1854. Three other Iowa river towns were linked with the Atlantic Ocean in 1855. The Burlington was opened for traffic to the Mississippi opposite

Burlington on March 17; the Illinois Central and the Galena & Chicago Union opened their joint track to Dunleith opposite Dubuque on June 12; and the Galena & Chicago Union completed a second track from West Chicago to the Mississippi opposite Clinton on December 16. Two years later, in 1857, the Milwaukee was completed between Milwaukee and Prairie du Chien.

By 1858 the race across Iowa was proceeding from a half-dozen points on the Mississippi. Orion Clemens seems to have caught the spirit of the changing times in his *Keokuk Directory and Business Mirror* for 1857. According to Clemens:

In the grand westward march, the hunter follows the buffalo's track; is himself followed by the emigrant's wagon; it by the stage coach; succeeding that is the railroad, and after that manufactures and trade in their most expanded form. Already seven projected railroads hold a menacing attitude towards the coach; and the latter, as if frightened by the prospect, but more probably encouraged by the large amount of travel, commences this summer to pursue its devious, toilsome, weary, winding way three hundred miles further westward, to-wit: a daily line between Keokuk and Nebraska City. In the meantime the iron horse is already galloping up the Des Moines Valley; will be making regular trips around the Lower Mississippi Rapids the coming summer, and will be harnessed to the cars on the road from Keokuk to connect with the Chicago and Quincy Railroad some time this year.

Iowa newspapers were filled with railroad schedules, not only of those under construction in Iowa, but also for those linking Iowa with Chi-

Dubuque & Pacific Railroad.



On and after January 25, 1858, trains will run by DUBUQUE CITY TIME, as follows:

Passenger Train will leave Dubuque at 8 45 A. M.
 Arrive at Julien 9 20 Arrive at Farley 10 15
 " Caledonia, 9 40 " Dyersville 10 35
 " Epworth, 10 " Nottingham 11 15

Passenger Train will leave Nottingham at 12 30 P. M.
 Arrive at Dyersville 1 05 Arrive at Caledonia 2 00
 " Farley 1 25 " Julien 2 20
 " Epworth 1 40 " Dubuque 3 00

A Freight Train with Passenger Car attached will leave Nottingham at 6 30 A. M.
 Arrive at Dyersville 7 20 Arrive at Caledonia 8 50
 " Farley 7 55 " Julien 9 20
 " Epworth 8 25 " Dubuque 10 15

A Freight Train with Passenger car attached will leave Dubuque at 3 10 P. M.
 Arrive at Julien 4 00 Arrive at Farley 5 20
 " Caledonia 4 30 " Dyersville 5 45
 " Epworth 4 55 " Nottingham 6 35
 D. H. DOTTERER, Sup't,
 C. B. STOW, Gen'l Ticket Ag't,
 J. A. PINTO, Gen'l Freight Ag't
 Jan. 27, 1858. d&wly(73

Keokuk, Fort Des Moines, and Minnesota
RAILROAD.



Change of Time.

New Arrangement!

Through tickets to St. Louis, Louisville, Cincinnati, &c. &c.

Two trains each way Daily—Sundays excepted.

LEAVING Keokuk at 7 a. m.
 " " 2.40 p. m.
 " Bentonsport 7.00 a. m.
 " " 6.30 p. m.

Connecting at the latter place with the Post coaches of the Western Stage Company for all points in the Des Moines Valley, and throughout Middle, Western and South-western Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, &c!!

Passengers for Cincinnati, Louisville and the South-eastern and Eastern cities, will find this the cheapest, most expeditious, and the most comfortable route to these points.

THROUGH TICKETS!

at reduced cost, to all points south and east of Keokuk may be had at the Railroad office at Bentonsport.

Passengers for the East should be sure to purchase tickets via Bentonsport.

S. DWIGHT EATON,
 Engineer and Superintendent.
SAM. A. BLACK,
 Assistant Superintendent, and General Passenger Agent.
 Ticket Office at Rail Road Depot.
 June 26th, 1858.

MISSISSIPPI & MISSOURI



RAILROAD!

On and after Monday, April 12, 1858, and until further notice, trains will leave Iowa City daily, (Sundays excepted,) as follows

FOR DAVENPORT.

1st Passenger (mail) train..... 8:35 a. m.
 2d Freight train, with passenger car attached, 12:30 p. m.
 3d Express train..... 2:30 p. m.
 Trains arrive at Iowa City, daily, (Sundays excepted) as follows:

1st Freight train, with passenger car attached, 10:40 a. m.
 2d Passenger (mail) train..... 12:10 p. m.
 3d Mail train..... 4:45 p. m.

Passenger trains over this Road run through from Iowa City to Chicago without change of cars or baggage, connecting there with trains over both the Michigan Southern and Michigan Central Railroads for all points East and South. Also at LaSalle with Illinois Central Railroad North to Galena and Dunlap, and South to St. Louis to Cairo.

Through tickets for all the principal points East and South can be procured at the ticket office in Iowa City. Passengers are reminded of the necessity of giving direct directions as to the destination of their baggage.

cago and the Atlantic seaboard. By 1858 tracks had been laid westward from Keokuk to Bentonsport, from Burlington to Fairfield, from Davenport to Washington and Iowa City, from Lyons-Clinton to DeWitt, and from Dubuque to Nottingham [Earlville].

New Arrangement!



THE traveling public are hereby notified that the Western Stage Company are now prepared to convey passengers to and from Bloomfield with comfort and dispatch, making close connections with the cars for Keokuk at Bentonsport, daily, by a **FOUR HORSE** line of

NEW & COMMODIOUS COACHES.

Also, daily connections made with the cars at Rome, for Burlington.

Also, a daily line of Hacks west, running through all the county seats in the southern tier of counties, to the

MISSOURI RIVER.

Passengers for northern Missouri, southern Nebraska and Kansas, will find it to their advantage to take this route west, as they will be carried through with dispatch and comfort.

Stages start for this point daily from Bentonsport and Rome, immediately upon the arrival of the cars at those places, and leave daily for north east, east and west, at half past 6 o'clock, A. M.

Stage office at the "American House,"

WM. J. LAW,

Agent Western Stage Company.

Bloomfield, April 1st, 1858—4-11.

The need for stage coaches as depicted by Orion Clemens was still very great in 1858. The Western Stage Company inserted advertisements in most papers and generally received warm plaudits for carrying passengers and mail through under the most adverse conditions. The *Iowa Farmer* of February 18, 1858, declared:

We have a word for the traveler. If you wish to make good time, receive kind treatment, and go about as comfortable as the nature of things will permit this cold weather, we commend to you

the Western Stage Company's Coaches; and if you wish those other comforts which enter so largely into the affec-

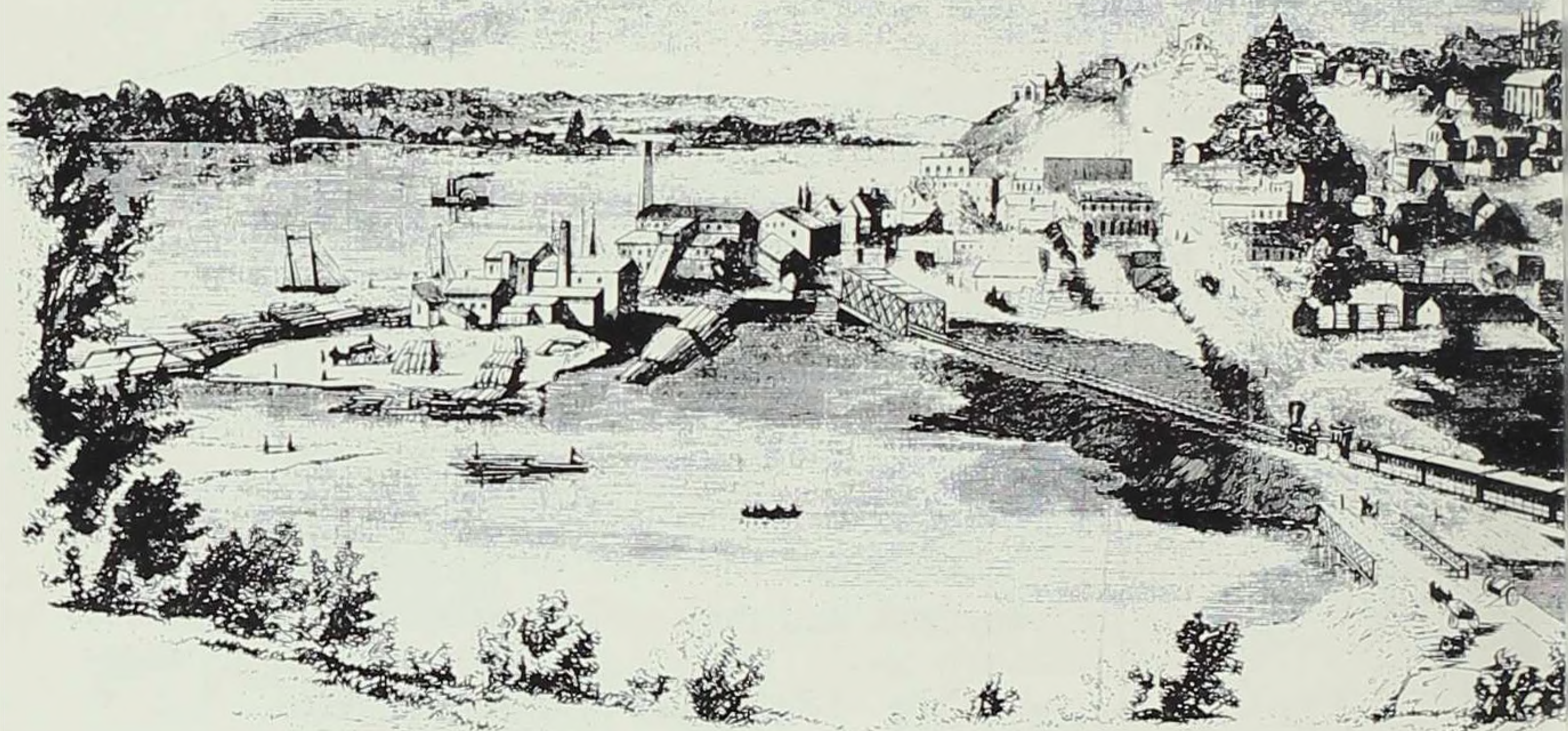
tions of travelers as well as those who do not travel, a sojourn at Downing's at Oskaloosa, Amos' at Eddyville, Bacon's at Fairfield, Eichelberger's at Mt. Pleasant, and the Wightman House at Burlington, will secure all you desire. All are more known to fame than the National, Bacon's at Fairfield, but when John S. has been as long in the field as the others he will be as extensively and as favorably known. Try them and if it is not as we tell you, draw upon us for your bills and they will be honored.

The Webster City *Hamilton Freeman* expressed warm satisfaction with the performance of the Western Stage Company in its issue of July 8.

Thus far during the season the roads have been very bad, and travel has been greatly interrupted. But our mail services have suffered no hindrance. On the contrary, they are constantly improving. When Col. Heath's Deputies do their duty, our Dubuque dailies reach us three days after they are issued. The traveler now reaches Dubuque in three days from this point. — For this good management and speed, the public are indebted to MCCHESENEY, the popular and well-known western agent of the Company. During all the wet season he has been very active, and the present efficiency of the route is owing to his efforts. His star, as Stage Agent, will one of these days set in the smoke of the locomotive — but till then, the Company cannot find a more prudent and energetic manager.

Equally delighted was the editor of the Dubuque *Times* who wrote on December 10:

On two occasions, during the last three or four months, we have had an opportunity to witness the metal of horses

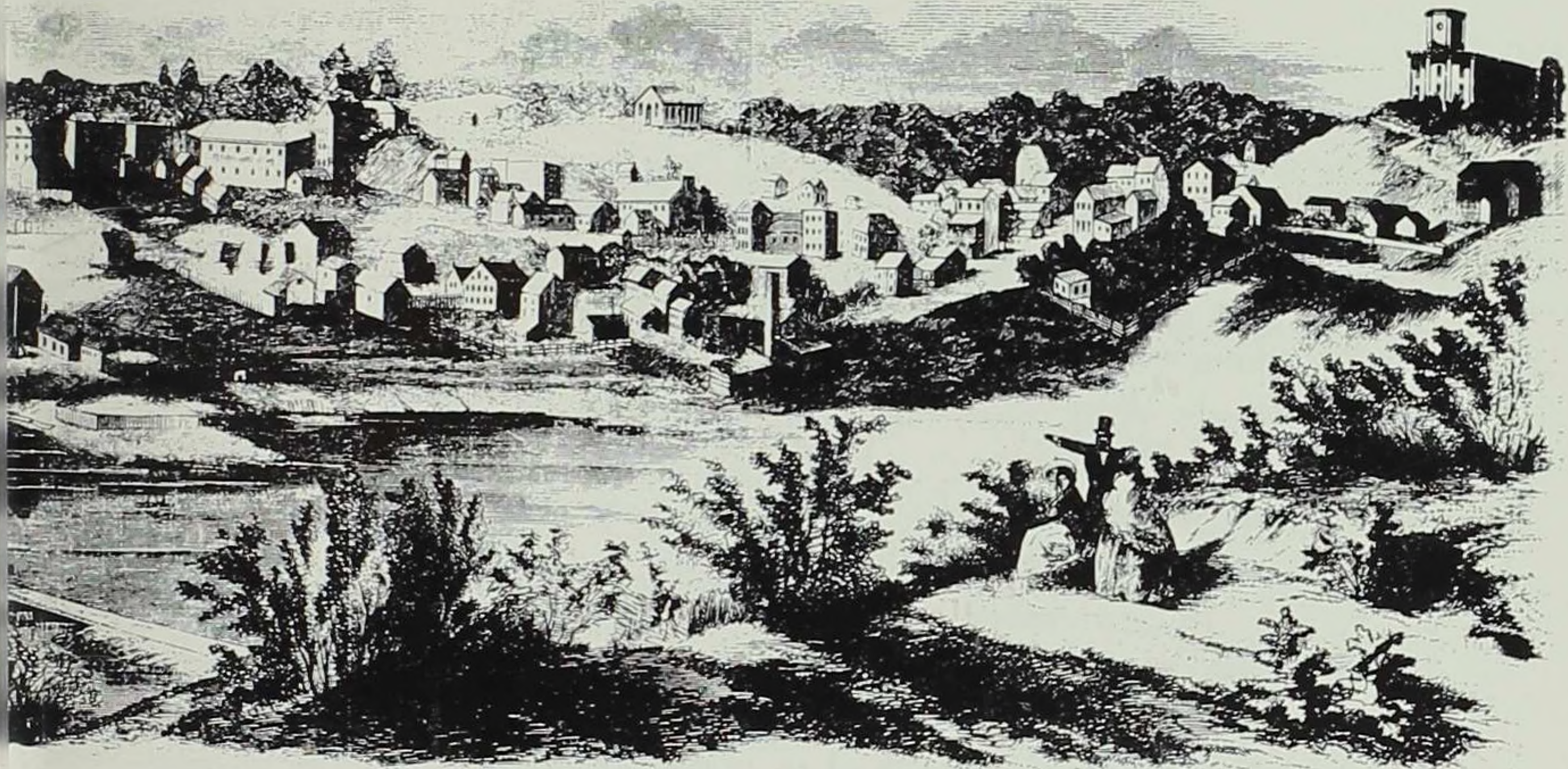


VIEW OF MUSCATINE, IOWA.—FROM A

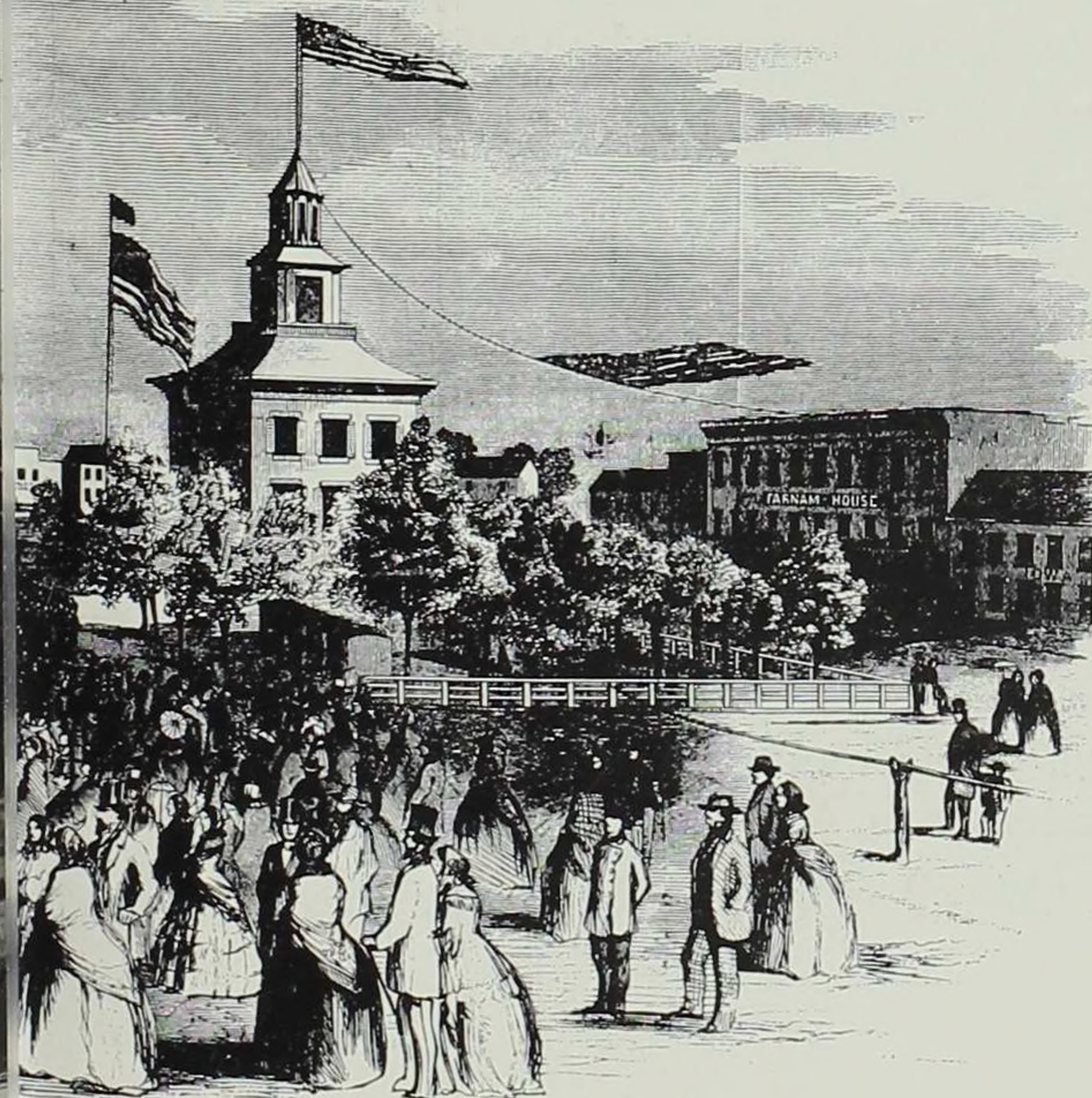
Washington, Iowa, celebrated the arrival of the Southwestern Division of the Rock Island [M & M] on September 1, 1858. Thirteen cars brought guests from such towns as Iowa City, Davenport, Muscatine, Columbus Junction, Oskaloosa, and Sigourney. Five thousand people attended the celebration and three thousand feet of tables were set with the finest foods. Toasts were made to railroads, the Atlantic Cable, Chicago and ten other towns, newspapers, laborers, and the ladies. Among the notable Iowans present were Hiram Price, J. B. Grinnell, J. Scott Richman, J. R. Needham, J. Thorington, Francis Springer, Fitz Henry Warren, Dr. J. Bowen, and Judge Thayer. Bands blared martial music and ladies in hoop skirts added color to the occasion. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* of November 13, 1858, carried the story with drawings of Muscatine and the Washington celebration by Mr. Ronde, Dutch Creek artist.



THE GREAT RAILROAD CELEBRATION



BY P. RONDE, OF WASHINGTON, IOWA



ON OF 1858 AT WASHINGTON

The arrival of a railroad at any Iowa town was followed by a gala celebration. Special trains carried the invited guests to the colorful affair and speeches, toasts, dinners, band music, and parades were common features. In 1854 the arrival of the Rock Island at the Mississippi was the occasion for a steamboat excursion from Rock Island and Davenport to St. Paul. Seven boats were chartered to carry more than 1300 guests.

In 1858 the Dubuque & Pacific ran an excursion to Nottingham, the Burlington celebrated the completion of its track to Fairfield, and the Keokuk & Des Moines Valley ran one to Birmingham.

Prominent state officials, newspaper editors, railroad executives, and citizens from towns along the way, or farther west, who hoped soon to share a similar experience, were among the invited guests. The arrival of the railroad was one of the most memorable events in the life of any Iowa community.

belonging to the Western Stage Company, and, although, we have ridden a great many thousand miles in a stage coach we have no recollection of having seen better animals than some of those that run between Nottingham and West Union. They are, with few exceptions, as fat as woodchucks that have been pastured in a field of clover, and almost as supple as antelopes.

In September, we came down one morning, from Waterloo to Independence, and the last ten miles were made inside of one hour. At times the horses seemed to fly over the prairies. We had a taste of what De Quincy calls "the glory of motion;" and were half inclined, with the "Opium Eater," to give the preference to the stage coach, over every other vehicle of conveyance. This is taking it for granted that we can choose a good road, and be driven by one of the Jehus in the service of the Western Stage Company.

The *Hamilton Freeman* wholeheartedly agreed with these words:

The above compliment is well deserved. On this end of the route the Company have as fine a lot of nags as ever whirled a coach over the turnpike. The drivers are sober and civil, and as good fellows every way as we have ever met. And to keep all this machinery in motion, requires just such a tireless ubiquitous, wide-awake and enterprising General Agent as "Tom McChesney," who has held forth in that capacity for some time past. We wish Tom every success till his sun is eclipsed by the Iron Horse — hoping he will be rich enough to retire by that time.

The *Mitchell County Republican* of January 21, 1858, endorsed a Minnesotian's estimate of the "Lacy's Line of Stages."

The above line connects this place with Mankato on the St. Peters river. The following item from the Southern Minnesota *Star* shows its popularity.

Lacy's mail coaches are up to time every week, and never fail in bringing us our regular Eastern mail. They leave Albert Lea for Mitchell on Every Saturday, and for Mankato and St. Peter every Wednesday.

Many small towns advertised their own "mail, express, and passenger hacks." On November 4, 1858, the *Mitchell County Republican* noted:

McFARLAND & CO., PROPRIETORS

Leave Mitchell every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, for Floyd, St. Charles, North Washington, Ft. Atkinson, Calmar, Ossian, Postville, Springfield, Monona and McGregor.

Office at the American House.

The same editor was distressed with the uncertain mail deliveries, particularly during the legislative session:

We need a tri-weekly mail connecting us with Waterloo, or Cedar Falls. Now we have but a weekly mail, and even that is quite irregular. Nearly all the letters we receive from the Capital are from three to four weeks on the way, whereas with proper mail facilities they would reach us in one week. — We see by the advertisements for proposals that bids are invited for a tri-weekly service upon this route and hope it will be secured.

It is worth noting that the Governor of Iowa chose a Des Moines River steamboat as an easier mode of transportation back home. On March 25, the *Iowa Farmer* laconically reported:

Governor Lowe, who has been here during the whole of the session of the Legislature, left for his home at Keokuk, on the steamer EDWIN MANNING . . .


Hotels and Livery stables were in great demand in 1858. Dubuque, the metropolis, had twenty-eight hotels and other towns had hotels commensurate with their size. Salesmen and prospective land-buyers hired a horse and buggy to accomplish

KEYSTONE HOUSE,

HARRISON ST., BET. FRONT AND SECOND,

One Square Below Steam Packet and Ferry Landing,
DAVENPORT, IOWA.

J. K. RHODES, - - - - Proprietor.

 This House is one of the most pleasant locations, commanding a fine view of the Mississippi River and Rock Island.

BOARD \$1.00 PER DAY.

PARKER & SPEARING,

Livery and Sale Stables,

Opposite the Le Claire House,

DAVENPORT, IOWA.

Horses and Carriages always on hand. Extras fitted out at short notice.
Horses bought and sold.

their work. The livery stable, the blacksmith, and the wagon and buggy maker continued to form an important part of the Iowa scene until the horseless carriage gradually shunted them aside after the turn of the century.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN