

The Hill Regime

In the late 1890's James J. Hill, seeking a Chicago outlet for his St. Paul-based Great Northern, determined to acquire the Burlington. The "Empire Builder" had the GN and the Hill-controlled Northern Pacific secretly buy into the "Q." Meanwhile, E. H. Harriman wanted the Burlington to achieve the same purpose for his Union Pacific. In order to do this Harriman tried to buy the NP and thereby get half interest in the Burlington. The outcome was a titanic struggle between the two giants of American railroading. Northern Pacific stock zoomed upward, and on May 9, 1901, during the peak of the battle it reached \$1,000 a share. In the end, Hill won.

Now firmly in control, Jim Hill dictated the Burlington's policies. Apart from being a director or on the executive committee, Hill never held an office on the CB&Q. But whatever he controlled he managed. So for the rest of his life the ex-Canadian was "boss." Top management was accountable to him at all times, and not infrequently Hill brought in the men he wanted for key positions.

With the resignation of Charles E. Perkins as president, George B. Harris, his right-hand man,

took over that post in 1901. Harris ably held that office for a decade. When he in turn retired, Jim Hill saw to it that Darius Miller was made president in 1910. It was Hill who had brought Miller from the Michigan Central to the Great Northern as vice president and later had shifted him to the same post on the Burlington in 1902. Known as Darius the Silent, Miller generally listened quietly in conferences before giving his opinion.

After Miller's sudden death in 1914, Hale Holden, formerly vice president and head of the road's legal department, took his place.

During Hill's regime the Burlington was known for its galaxy of managerial talent. Indeed, the road became widely acknowledged as a training school for railway executives. On the Hill team was a series of vice presidents who went on to achieve fame elsewhere. The first was Howard Elliott, vice president under Harris, who left the road in 1904 to assume the presidency of the Northern Pacific and still later the New Haven.

James J. Hill thereupon brought in Daniel Willard from the vice presidency of the Erie to a similar post on the "Q." Willard is remembered for having advocated the use of the Prairie-type locomotive (oOOOo) and track modernization. "Uncle Dan," as he was later affectionately called, left the Burlington, after a six-year stint, to rehabilitate the Baltimore & Ohio. Since Hill was not the easiest man to work for, Willard no doubt

reasoned he would have more freedom on the B&O. Willard's job then went to Harry E. Byram; and the latter in turn, a few years afterward, departed for the top position on the Milwaukee.

Even before Hill's stewardship of the Burlington, the road's alumni had been impressive. Robert Harris, president in the late 1870's, subsequently held a like post on the Northern Pacific. More than any other road, however, the Santa Fe recruited its top echelon from the Burlington. In this category fell William B. Strong and Edward P. Ripley. Before "graduating" from the "Q," Strong had been general superintendent in the 1870's, and Ripley vice president late in the next decade. To this list may be added the name of W. C. Brown, superintendent of the Iowa line in the 1880's. He, several decades later, became president of the New York Central.

The Hill years of the Burlington were years of great expansion, although almost entirely outside of Iowa. An exception was the building of the Iowa & St. Louis Railway from 1901 to 1903. This 52-mile feeder went from Sedan to Elmer, Missouri, where it tapped coal mines. Upon completion in 1903 it was leased by the Burlington. (The road also had a short branch from Centerville to Sedan which was abandoned in 1903.)

That same year the Burlington & Western was extended from Oskaloosa to Tracy—13 miles. Built to standard gauge, it met the Albia-Des

Moines branch at Tracy. Meanwhile, the entire B&W had been widened from narrow to standard gauge, and it was bought by the Burlington in 1903.

Apart from construction, the "Q" in collaboration with the Milwaukee Road jointly leased the Davenport, Rock Island & Northwestern in 1901. The 41-mile short line had its own bridge crossing the Mississippi between Rock Island and Davenport with tracks extending along the Iowa bank of the river up to Clinton. It gave access to many industries in the area not hitherto accessible to the Burlington.

Outside of Iowa important developments were afoot, for Hill was desirous of promoting a new short route from Billings to the Gulf of Mexico. He unceasingly strove for a better traffic balance. With such a line he could ship goods from the Orient and lumber from the northwest directly to the Gulf. From there it would go on to eastern cities by water. In the reverse direction manufactured goods from the East and the Gulf area would flow readily to the Pacific Northwest.

To implement this plan he had the Burlington construct a new line from western Nebraska to Billings by way of Casper and the Wind River Canyon. In conjunction with this project the Burlington acquired the Colorado & Southern in 1908. With some additional construction and trackage rights the "Q" had now a new direct

route from Billings to Houston via Casper, Denver, and Fort Worth.

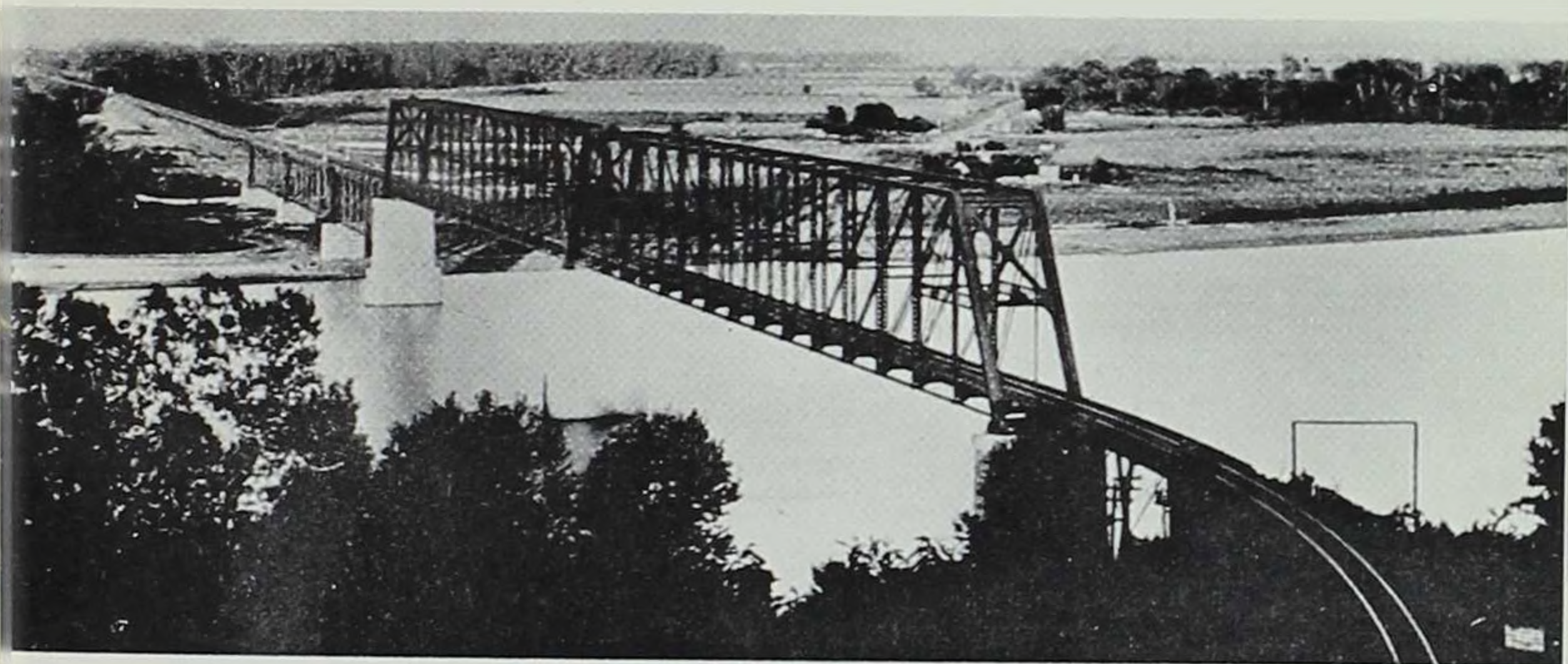
Meantime, the Burlington, as always, was intent on developing the territory it served. One aspect of this purpose in Iowa was the operation of a Silo Train, calling at 42 towns in the state during 1913. Agents on the train made talks concerning the proper storage of corn and distributed thousands of pamphlets urging construction of silos. A "Dairy Special" was likewise run during February 1914, visiting 24 Iowa locales in the interest of better dairying.

The Hill regime gave employment to Harry Bedwell, a young man from Kellerton, near Mt. Ayr in southwestern Iowa. He lived on the longer line of the loop connecting Giles with Albany Jct., Missouri. (The loop was in the middle of the extensive Chariton-St. Joseph branch.) When the little local trains paused at his village they spelled adventure and romance to country-bred Harry. He was soon helping around the depot in return for being taught "Morse" by the friendly agent. Upon mastering "the key," he fudged his age a bit and got a job as operator at Andover, Missouri, a tiny station on the other side of the loop. Later he pounded brass as relief operator on branch lines in Iowa and Missouri as well as on the "high iron" between St. Joseph and Council Bluffs. Having gotten a "good going over" on the Burlington, the young "lightning slinger" lit out

for the West to become an "op" on the Rio Grande, Southern Pacific, and Pacific Electric railroads.

All this time the itinerant railroader was committing to paper his experiences and those of his fellows. Bedwell's first significant article, an autobiographical account of "The Mistakes of a Young Railroad Telegraph Operator," ran as a two-part serial in *The American Magazine* for November-December 1909. Throughout the years he wrote thirty-five stories for *Railroad Magazine* and its predecessors, and had fictional tales in ten issues of *The Saturday Evening Post* as well. Some of these yarns were woven into a novel called *The Boomer* (1942). He died in 1955, but his remarkable and authentic short stories continue to appear in anthologies. Harry Bedwell, last of the great railroad storytellers, was at his best in portraying the colorful "boomer" of yesteryear when steam was king and railroading more of an adventure than a science.

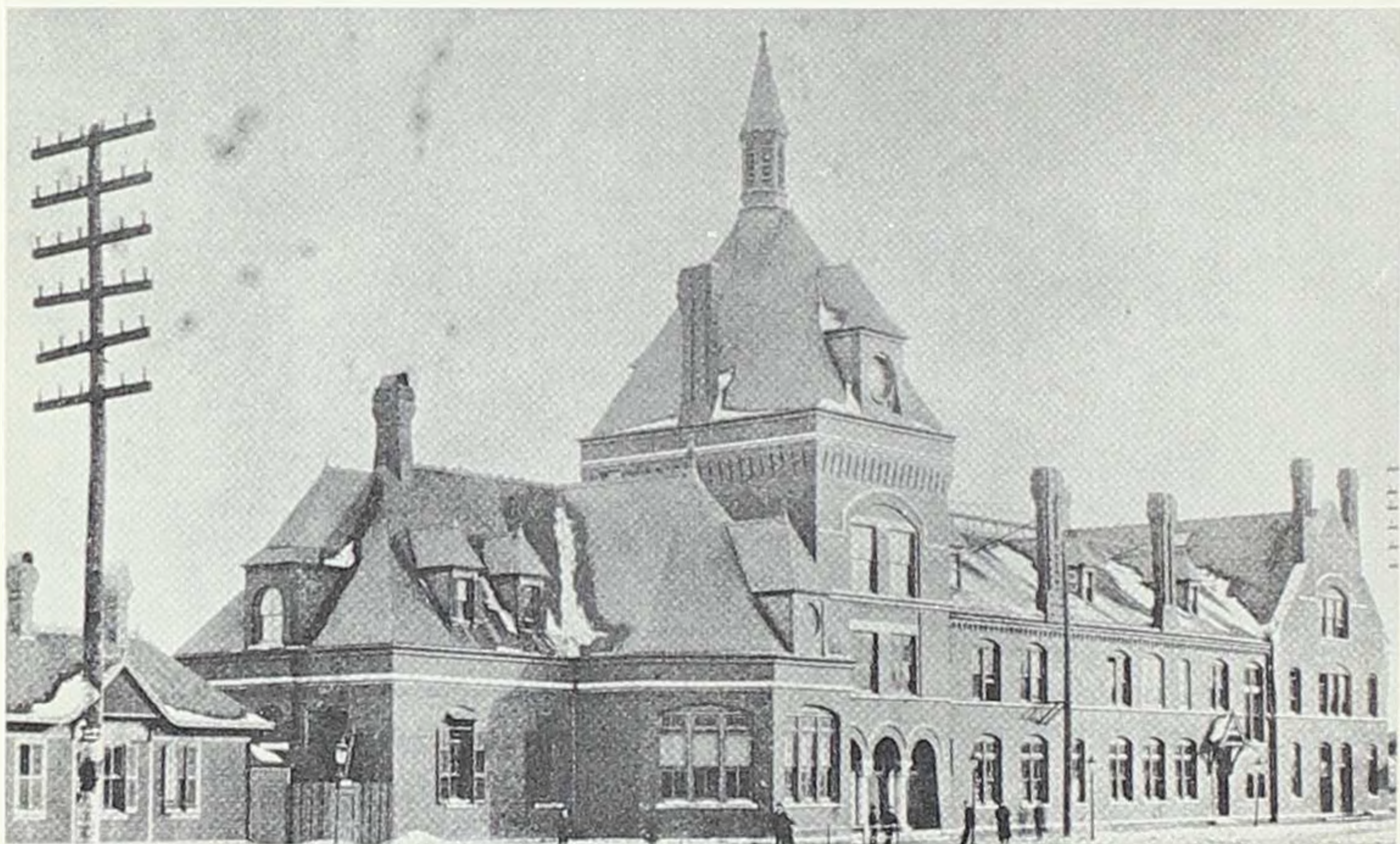
FRANK P. DONOVAN



Spanning the Missouri River between Plattsmouth, Nebraska, and Pacific Junction, Iowa, the first Plattsmouth bridge was built in 1879-1880 and rebuilt in 1901-1902.



A long freight emerges from the Plattsmouth bridge today. The bridge provides a short cut for Burlington freight trains to and from Nebraska by avoiding the longer and more congested Council Bluffs-Omaha gateway.



Belfry, dormer windows, and a profusion of chimneys characterized this Victorian-style station at Burlington. Built in 1882, it was destroyed by fire in 1943.



A new Burlington station replaced the burned structure in 1944. On the west wall is a panel honoring Charles E. Perkins, who lived in Burlington for nearly a half century after his arrival in August of 1859.



E. H. Meyers Collection

Work train derailment at New Market in 1912. Engine is an American Standard used extensively on secondary lines around the turn of the century.



B. G. Corbin Collection

Derailed of a mixed train on the Creston-Cumberland branch three miles north of Orient in June of 1909.



B. G. Corbin Collection

Work train, with little four-wheel "bobber" caboose, making a fill to replace trestle west of New Market in 1912. This part of line abandoned in 1945.



B. G. Corbin Collection

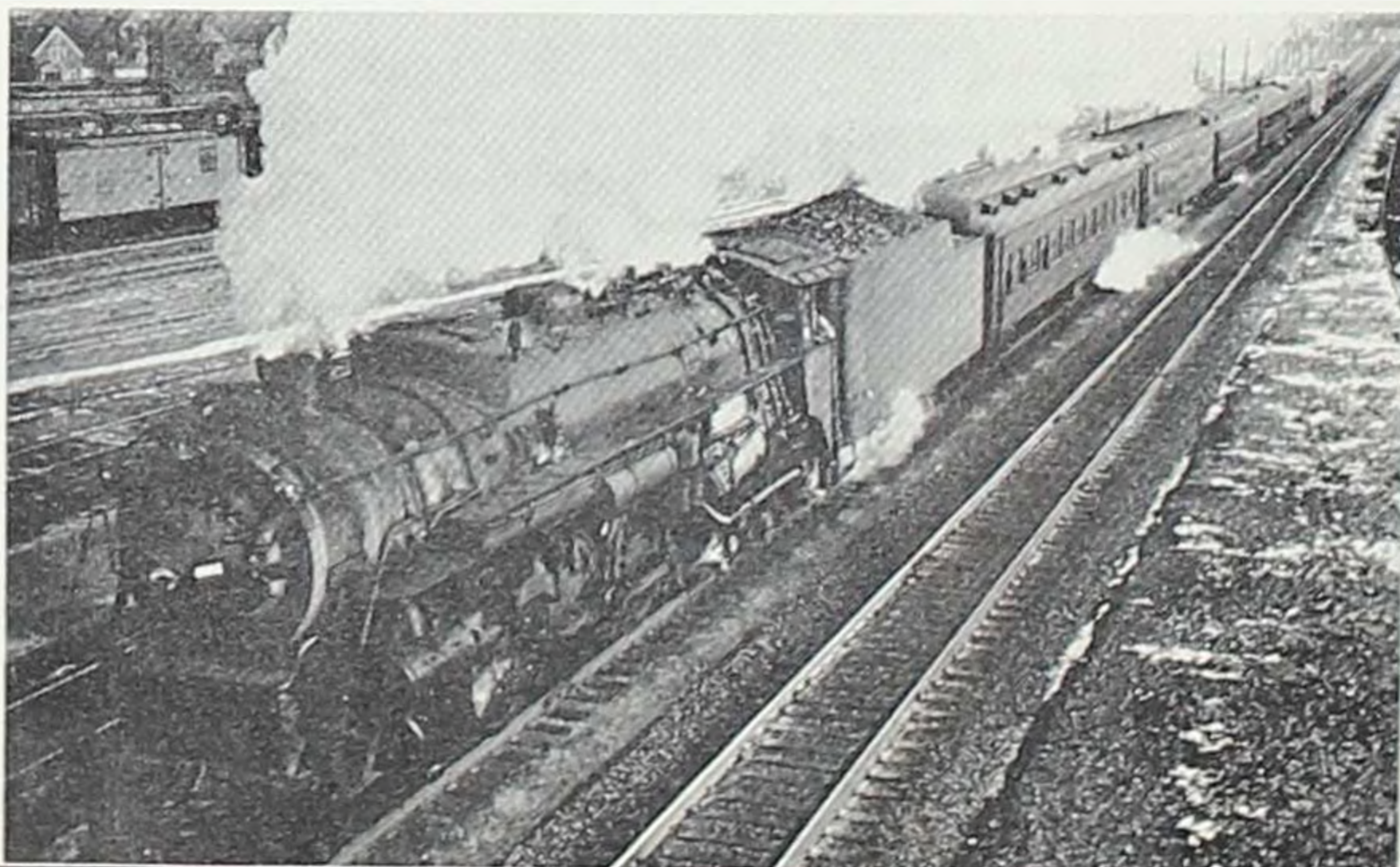
Steam locomotive, Aeolus, pulls No. 6 out of Burlington. It was the second streamlined engine of that name and the only Hudson-type locomotive featuring a vestibule cab.



B. G. Corbin Collection

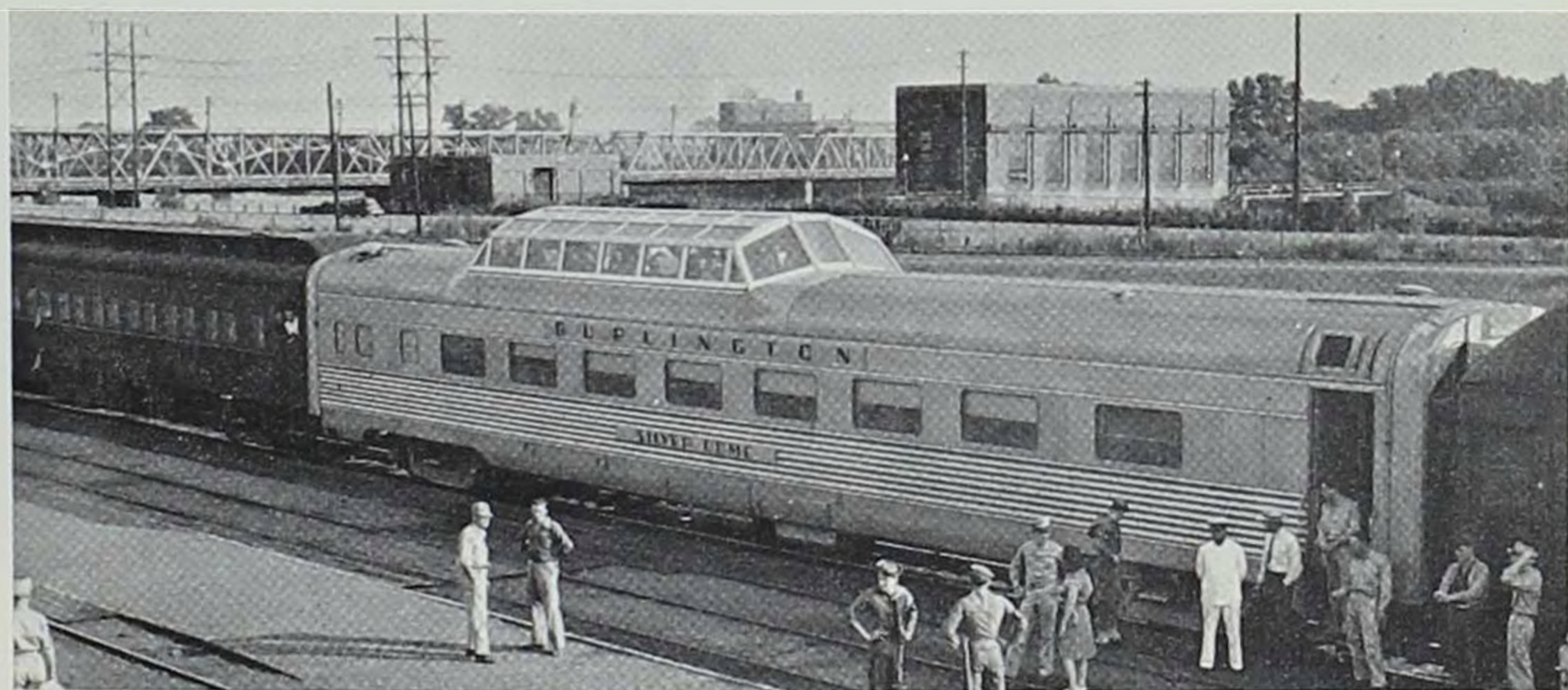
No. 6, the Chicago local, powered by a Baldwin-type locomotive, near Red Oak. It was the only eastbound passenger train crossing the Plattsmouth bridge.

The Exposition Flyer was placed in service in 1939 and was superseded by the Dieselized California Zephyr. It crossed Iowa mostly in daylight and was popular with Iowans.





The Pioneer Zephyr passing through Aurora as it neared the end of its historic dawn-to-dusk non-stop run from Denver to Chicago on May 26, 1934.



The nation's first dome car at Ottumwa on a test run, July 27, 1945.

Chicago-bound California Zephyr glides through Stanton in May of 1965. Its passengers had an excellent opportunity to view the Rockies and other scenery from the train's five dome cars.

B. G. Corbin Collection





B. G. Corbin Collection

(Left) Double-header main line train on a cold winter's day at Osceola in 1915. (Right) Engine, with link-and-pin coupler, on old grade and depot site at Red Oak. Track and grade was rebuilt and relocated in 1902.



B. G. Corbin Collection

"Armstrong" turntable at Sidney. It was the end of the branch running north to Hastings. Photo taken in the winter of 1945.

Switch engines and crews in front of the former Pacific Junction station in 1915. The Kansas City-Council Bluffs line crossed the Burlington's main stem at Pacific Junction. Engine on the left is a four-wheeler; the others eight-wheelers.





B. G. Corbin Collection

Stock train on a spidery trestle crossing the Wabash near Coin. This stock "extra" is pictured on the Villisca-Corning, Missouri, branch in Iowa.



B. G. Corbin Collection

Steaming up the grade into Red Oak on its run from Shenandoah is this 10-car train of nursery stock.

Poultry was an important item of freight as the "chicken" car behind the engine would suggest. This was a local freight on the Mt. Ayr "loop line" between Giles and Albany Jct., Missouri, located on the Chariton-St. Joseph branch.





Mogul, or 2-6-0 type, locomotive at West Burlington shops in 1913. It was built by Rogers in 1892 and retired in 1927.



B. G. Corbin Collection

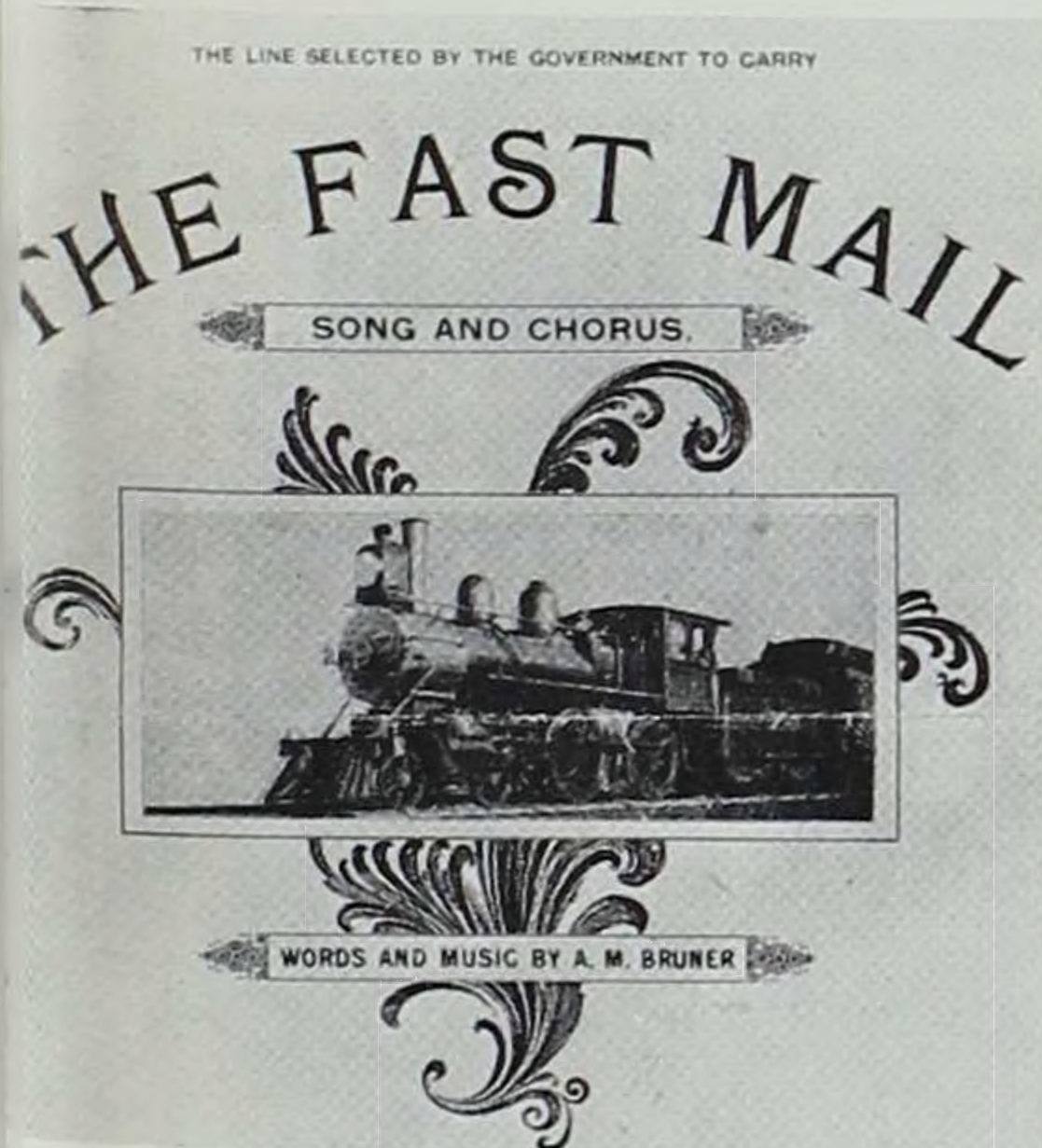
Last steam freight through Red Oak on September 21, 1956. The engine was a powerful Texas-type steam locomotive, attractive in appearance and among the most efficient in the Burlington system.



Modern fast freights, like this four-unit job, highball tonnage from Chicago to Council Bluffs and beyond on passenger-train schedules.



The Fast Mail, taken with instantaneous exposure, near Monmouth, Illinois, on May 27, 1887. Speed photography was in its infancy at this time.



This is the cover of a song, the Fast Mail, which commemorated the Burlington's Fast Mail service. The words and music were by A. M. Bruner and the song was published by the Burlington's Passenger Department.

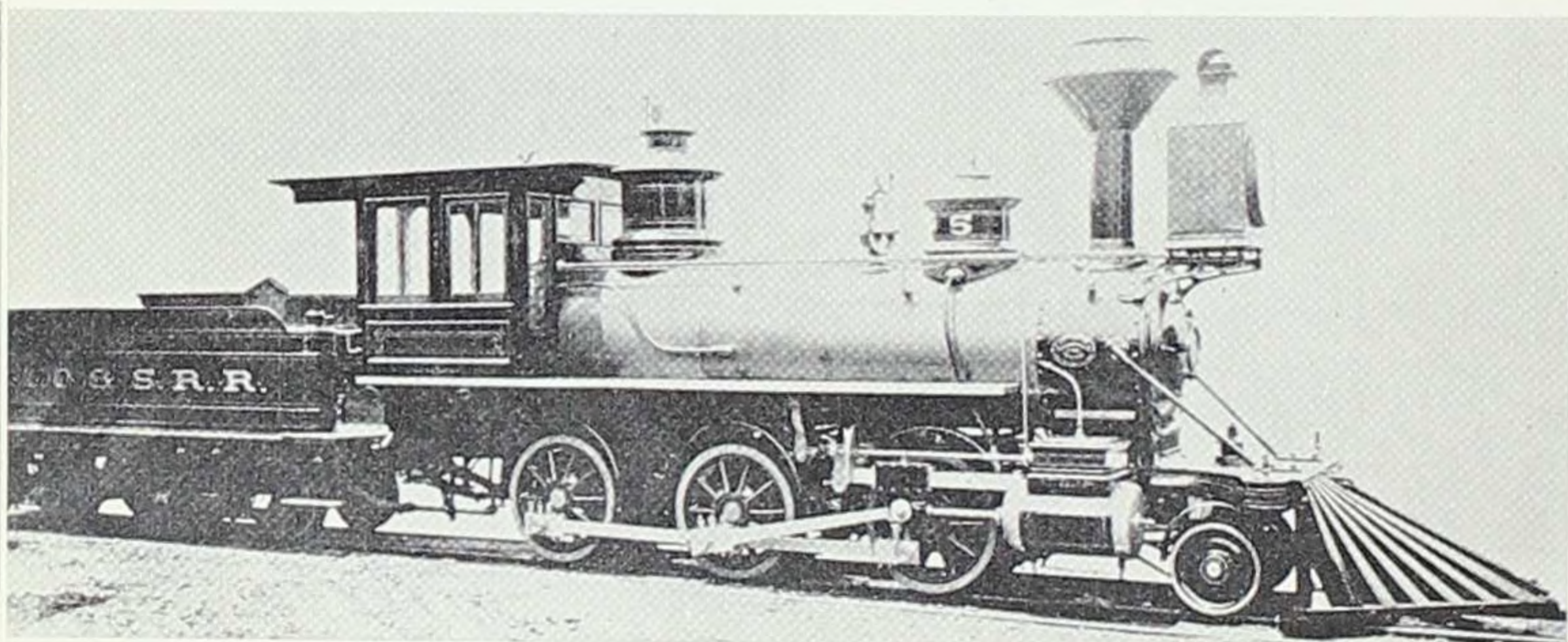


Postal clerks sort letters as The Fast Mail speeds over the track. The famous train was started in 1884 and terminated operation in 1967.



B. G. Corbin Collection

R.P.O. and baggage motor car with an older coach as a trailer at Villisca in 1939.



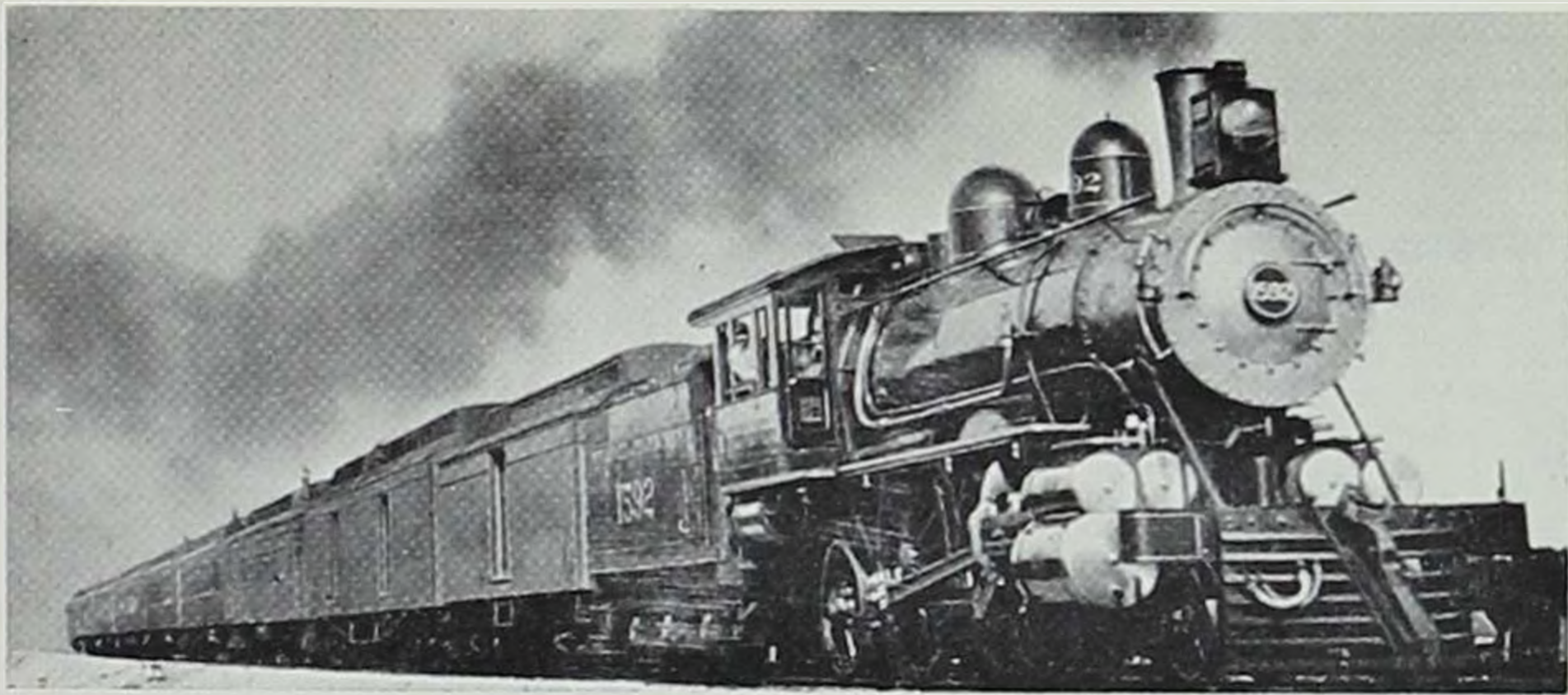
B. G. Corbin Collection

Narrow gauge locomotive on the Des Moines-Osceola & Southern. Line formerly went from Des Moines to Cainsville, Missouri.



B. G. Corbin Collection

Narrow gauge train on the Burlington & Northwestern at Washington.



A classic pose of the Denver Flyer in 1899. Powered by a fleet Atlantic-type engine, the Flyer raced across Iowa on its way to Denver.



Passenger coach of the 1890's.



Parlor car of the 1900's.

1865. EASTWARD. 1865.

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B & M R LAND ADVERTISING CIRCULAR - 1873

These are typical of the land-office broadsides and early advertisements issued by the Burlington and Missouri River R.R. Through such enticing broadsides thousands of prospective settlers bought land at an average of \$12.17 per acre and opened up their farms along the right-of-way of the Burlington Railroad.