

The **P**ALIMPSEST

NOVEMBER 1937

CONTENTS

Collector - Historian
Levi O. Leonard
JACK T. JOHNSON

Boyhood and Youth 349

Railroads and the West 357

Collector-Historian 364

From the Durant Papers 375

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

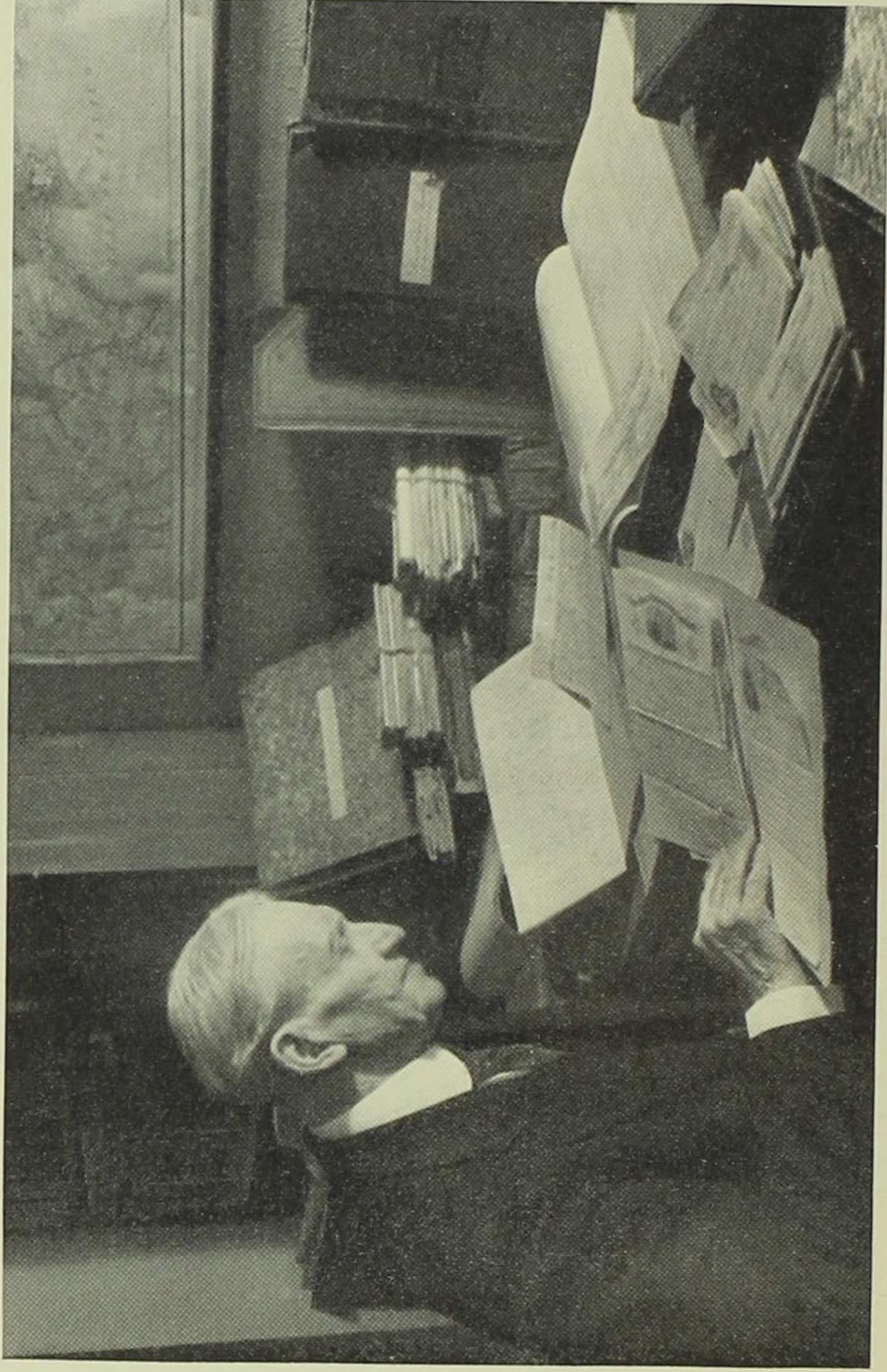
Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials 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.

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LEVI O. LEONARD AT WORK WITH HIS COLLECTION OF RAILROAD HISTORY DOCUMENTS

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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Boyhood and Youth

Almost any day on the campus of the State University of Iowa, among students and professors hurrying to and from classes, a tall gray-haired man may be seen. He walks with a firm step, and the motion of his body is almost athletic. His eyes shine as though inspired with a great vision. While he appears young, he is past eighty. He is neither a student nor a professor — although long ago he was a student and his father was a professor.

On the second floor of the building where history is studied on the Old Capitol campus, this man enters a little room which serves as his office and library. The compactness of the space is accentuated by a small collection of books and a large number of steel cases securely locked. From the steel cases several documents are taken and placed on a desk already loaded with ledgers, newspaper clippings, and cancelled checks totaling millions of dollars. A yellowing letter is sub-

jected to a scrutinizing gaze, and the fading script is traced under a magnifying glass. On one wall is a map of the principal railroads of the country. On another, hang pictures of men who look as if they belonged to a past generation. They do. Altogether the scene stimulates interest and the atmosphere suggests romance.

The man in the room is Levi O. Leonard. And the documents in the steel cases constitute one of the most remarkable collections of source material relating to railroad history in America. There the romance of the first transcontinental railroad is documented. There the fascinating financial story of the Credit Mobilier awaits revelation. And in those papers lies concealed the story of a man's life.

Levi O. Leonard was born in the middle fifties on a farm in the vicinity of the little village of Kosuth, near Burlington, Iowa. He was the first of five children. At the time of his birth his father was completing a post-graduate course at Harvard College.

In 1858, three years after the opening of the State University of Iowa, Chancellor Amos Dean recommended to the Board of Trustees that the work of the institution over which he presided be suspended in order that sufficient funds might be accumulated to keep all the departments in oper-

ation, that buildings might be erected, and that students might become qualified in preparatory schools for work in the University. Owing to the uncertainty of legislation dealing with education and the pressure of the financial crisis of the late fifties, all but the Normal Department of the University was suspended pursuant to the Chancellor's recommendation. When the institution reopened in 1860 the father of Levi O. Leonard was appointed Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy.

The Leonard family moved to Iowa City in August, 1860, and took as a residence the last house on the north side of East College Street. The place was known as the Hart House, since it belonged to Anson Hart who was then secretary of the University Board of Trustees.

"I do not remember a great deal about that first year in Iowa City", says Mr. Leonard in recalling those early days. "The presidential campaign was on and I was given a Lincoln badge which I wore on my blouse." One day when he was down town with his father a stranger accosted him: "Sonny, you are wearing the wrong emblem." The boy was puzzled; and he was still more confused when, in October, he and his father encountered a large group of people listening to a speech in a park. "There", said his father, pointing to the speaker,

"is Stephen A. Douglas who wants to be President." ♦ During the life of every individual much history is recorded in memory's storehouse.

Perhaps in this boy's life the only variations from the usual activities of boys of that time were occasional visits to his father's classes. The Old Stone Capitol was then the only building on the campus, and within its walls all of the University classes were held. There young Levi was placed on a chair near the window where he was expected to remain quiet during the class hour; but two or three girls of the class could not resist holding the "youngest member" on their knees. ♦ Trivial incidents are sometimes remembered when more significant events are forgotten.

After two years of "auditing" his father's courses, Levi Leonard entered the primary school in the Mechanics Academy. "My teacher", he says, "was Miss Amelia C. Romaine. I do not remember many of the pupils then going to school, save the three Finkbine boys, Charles, Ed, and W. O." In due time Levi was promoted to the Second Ward School which was then located in the same block, within a hundred feet of the Academy. In 1871 he entered the State University which he attended for two years. Eye trouble compelled him to give up his studies. The remedy prescribed was rest.

It was about this time that St. Joseph's School was conducting a course in deciphering telegraphy by sound. Robert Gray, the night operator at the Rock Island depot, was the instructor. The grand adventure of telegraphy and railroading was in the first act. Little wonder that Levi, attending the class, should want to see how that drama was going to unfold on the western stage. His training in telegraphy was to reward him later.

The eager youth read all the books in the library on Montana, Utah, and Wyoming. The next step was to go west. Two of Iowa City's prominent attorneys (George J. Boal and Rush Clark) and an influential business man (W. H. Hubbard) gave him letters of introduction. "It so happened that I never had an opportunity to use the letters", says Mr. Leonard, "but I have preserved them as souvenirs of the beginnings of my historical collection." ♦ Three letters of introduction became the foundation of a great collection of historical source materials.

Mr. Leonard did not go west: he went south. In the spring of 1879 the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Railroad began the survey of a branch line from Elmira through Iowa City to Riverside. The right-of-way through the city was subject to the inspection of Professor Leonard who was the local engineer. In conducting the survey

the railroad engineer welcomed the aid of the city engineer's son. Levi's interest in surveying had begun while he was a student in the University and afterward he became his father's assistant. The work on the railroad through the city took three days. On paying the young man for his services the chief engineer asked: "How would you like a position in our engineering department? I can use a young man like you." The offer was promptly accepted.

The road was soon completed to Riverside; and the next task for the engineering party was to erect an iron bridge across the river below Iowa City. This work was finished early in the fall of 1879; and when the men went to the next assignment, Levi Leonard went along.

The Louisville Bridge and Iron Company had contracted with the Cairo & Vincennes Railroad for the construction of twelve bridges over rivers and small streams in southern Illinois. One day Mr. Leonard was asked by the superintendent to take the pay roll to the main office. "Upon arriving at Louisville", recalls Leonard, "I found that General Grant was expected to stop there on his return from a trip around the world. It was a rainy morning and the streets were muddy. Grant's train was stopped on a Main Street siding about three blocks west of the Louisville Hotel.

A great crowd had assembled. The General was taken to a stand where the Governor presented him with a flag. After that he was taken to the hotel where he met a large delegation of Union and Confederate soldiers. Everything moved according to the program until the General stopped to shake hands with the men in blue and gray uniforms. Then there was a mad rush. Grant was lifted to the shoulders of two men and carried away. Everybody tried to grasp his hand. Some one in the crowd called out: "The General has two hands, one for the North and one for the South!"

Working with engineering parties was more than seeing history in the making: it was hard work. Late in the fall of 1879 it became apparent that before winter set in the last bridge would be finished. But the men were required to work on Thanksgiving; and they had to take their dinner with them. The location of the engineering party was near the little town of Vienna. At noon, in order to get out of the rain, the party climbed a hillside and prepared to eat their lunch under some overhanging rocks. "What a cheering sight met our gaze", recounts Mr. Leonard. "Our feast turned out to be cold beans, sour corn bread, and molasses. We were not very enthusiastic over that spread; and so my partner, a veteran mechanic,

ventured the opinion that it was time we were getting back to the northern country." Mr. Leonard agreed with the idea, but not with the place. He knew where to go. He had heard the white-coated philosopher Horace Greeley speak in Iowa City at the old Metropolitan Hall. ♦ What strange training lies in the background of a great vision! What we have been is sometimes what we are.

JACK T. JOHNSON

Railroads and the West

An advertisement, an inquiry, and an answer took Levi Leonard to Pueblo, Colorado. The advertisement called for tie cutters; the inquiry was for an engineering job; and the answer invited a railroad builder to go west. The young engineer found work with a construction gang of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad where he was assigned to the position of transit man in a crew working west of Canon City. Construction was headed up the Royal Gorge of the Arkansas River.

This was in December, 1879. "We were", states Mr. Leonard, "to run a line from the mouth of Texas Creek up Dead Horse Gulch to Silver Cliff. It was a pretty wild looking country. There were a few Ute Indians around in the mountains, and they were not kindly disposed toward the railroad. For protection we had a few extra men along who were armed. But to me the worst part of it was that I was left alone at the transit while the party was sometimes a half mile ahead."

At night, when the party made camp, they sometimes had to shovel away snow to get down to the ground. The nights were cold, and often the members of the group did not have enough

bedding to keep them warm. A few weeks was enough of that kind of work. An offer of better pay took Surveyor Leonard to Cheyenne, away from the Indians and rough mountain country.

A member of a construction party works during the day, but has a long evening to himself. He may sing or he may play cards. Leonard began to collect. His engineering training had made him methodical. Making notes by day, he wrote items at night. The folks back home would be interested. Events found their way into his notebook and into the corners of his mind. Western tales and western legends, the topography of the country and the character of the people, the drama of railroads and the vision of empire became memoranda of his daily experiences. ♦ A collector-historian must know when and where to look, and when and how to listen.

After a short stay in Cheyenne, Levi Leonard left to join a Union Pacific engineering party. He was the topographer whose duty was to make maps and profiles. Robert Blickensderfer, a son of the chief engineer, was in charge of the crew. The scene was near the North Platte River close to Fort Laramie.

The ink tracing the story of the epoch-making first transcontinental railroad was scarcely dry. Topographer Leonard began his historical observ-

ations and note taking at an opportune time. He was to know personally the men who made possible the uniting of the Atlantic and Pacific by rail. He was to interview them and to get their story. He was to realize that all great things have a human side.

Life on the plains is not always hard and lonesome: it has its humorous incidents. "Usually the first 'kick' that the boss of the party hears is about the grub", recalls Leonard. In our first party out of Cheyenne, we made camp on Chug Water Creek. We had with us a professional cook who had been on one of Uncle Sam's war vessels. Our commissary was well stocked. Nothing had been overlooked.

"One evening after a day of labor the crew was returning to camp when a black cloud appeared. It was a "Cheyenne zephyr". Within a half mile of our destination we saw the young cyclone strike camp. We saw our tent float off in the air, scattering our fine dinner all over the prairie. The cook was stamping on his white hat. We could see only the pantomime, but well did we know the cook's vocabulary — the air must have been blue around him. That was one of the most ridiculous sights I ever saw. We drove ten miles to get something to eat. His Honor the Cook was our guest." ♦ Life is sometimes tragedy and sometimes comedy.

Presently Mr. Leonard was sent to Julesburg. It was one of the first cities of the pioneer West. When an early traveler left Omaha his destination was likely to be Julesburg. Construction officials of the first transcontinental railroad wrote to their resident engineers: "If you can not get supplies at Omaha try Julesburg." It still had the flavor of a frontier town when Mr. Leonard was there.

After finishing the running of track centers out of Julesburg, the rising engineer was called to Omaha. An assignment of constructing the Utah & Northern Railroad into Dillon, Montana, was held up by the coming of winter. He was returned to Cheyenne where he was given a "holdover" job in the freight office. Liking this work, he was given a similar position at Ogden, Utah. There he was given the freedom of staying in one place.

Plans were going forward for the construction of the great Anaconda smelter, nine miles west of Stuart in Montana. The smelter was to increase the railroad business of Stuart. When the station was enlarged, Mr. Leonard was placed in charge on April 10, 1883. This was his first opportunity to use the telegraphy he had learned in Iowa City.

◆ Our past often combines with our present to play curious tricks with our future.

It was at Stuart that Mr. Leonard met the mas-

ter mind behind the smelter. One day the "copper king" commented that the station was pretty small to handle the business. "Bring the business and we will enlarge our facilities", replied Mr. Leonard.

"I suppose you know who I am?"

"No, I'm sorry I don't."

"Well," was the hesitant reply, "I want to meet the one man in the West who doesn't know Marcus Daly."

It was the beginning of a long friendship.

A year later L. O. (as his friends called him) left the Utah & Northern Railroad and purchased the *Anaconda Review* — a newspaper which he published until 1894. He became active in public affairs, and in 1887 he was appointed general manager of the Rocky Mountain Telegraph Line. This utility, connected with the Postal Telegraph, was owned by Marcus Daly and William A. Clark. Mr. Leonard's intimate association with two of the most influential citizens in the West gave him prestige and gained for him more friends.

◆ Associates are an essential background for the many aspects of a great story.

Interest in public affairs lead Mr. Leonard into politics. At the inaugural reception of Benjamin Harrison, he represented Montana. As a boy he had worn a Lincoln badge; as a man he saw Har-

risson become President of the United States. Much history had gone into the records—the Civil War and Reconstruction. The nation was slowly maturing. Commercial interests knew no sectional bounds. East and west, north and south were united by ever expanding transportation facilities. Indeed, the amazing growth of the railroads symbolized the daring, resourcefulness, and vision of the era. Mr. Leonard well knew the part played by some of the railroad builders who contributed much toward the creation of a wealthy and united nation.

In 1885 he helped organize the Montana Press Association. He was one of the charter members; and is now one of two living members of that first group. He left the *Anaconda Review* in 1894 and took over the *Butte Mining and Railroad Review*. Politics once tasted never fails to lure, and again Mr. Leonard turned his attention to public affairs. He was sent to Washington to attend the festivities of William McKinley's inauguration. There he was commissioned as an aide on the staff of General Horace Porter who was in charge of the parade. The memory of that day is one of the most cherished of his recollections.

Mr. Leonard left newspaper work in 1894 and returned to his first love, which was railroading. From transit man, to topographer, to freight agent,

to station master, to newspaper work, then back to transportation: Leonard had squared the circle. A traveling freight agent sees his territory and he meets all classes of people. People who built railroads, people who managed railroads, and people interested in railroads passed before his view. Seeing the West recalled to Mr. Leonard old stories and unfolded new ones. He re-examined his notes: some were hard to decipher; some told of beginnings; and some recorded the development of America's mighty empire.

When his notes begged for printed expression, Mr. Leonard ventured in 1916 to publish some syndicated articles in several western newspapers. What better training could there be — a journalistic background for a railroad story by a railroad man. His knowledge of railroads and his understanding of the West came to the attention of the Union Pacific officials. A satisfactory account of the first transcontinental railroad had not yet been written. President E. E. Calvin saw the importance of such a project, and Mr. Leonard welcomed the opportunity to collect the material for a definitive history of the Union Pacific.

JACK T. JOHNSON

Collector-Historian

History collecting and history writing require a background of experience. Mr. Leonard had that qualification in a full measure. In 1918 he was appointed historian of the Union Pacific system. He was to compile a history of the organization and construction of the first transcontinental railroad. It was thought by those in authority that the assignment would take five or six months. As the work progressed, however, it became apparent that the story covered a much wider scope than was suspected even by the promoters of that gigantic enterprise. Its construction had revolutionized the commerce of the world. Its completion was the greatest triumph of an expansionist movement. The dream of Columbus, the vision of a northwest passage, had become a reality. For magnitude of achievement it has no parallel in man's mastery of nature.

Such a drama could not be written in a few months. The story of the building of the steel bridge across the continent would not be a mere chronicling of events. The bypaths of life would have to be related. This was a job for a collector-historian.

Mr. Leonard's researches brought to light forgotten documents and moldering records. Every detail was pursued, every human element classified. Slowly the scenario of the railroad drama began to unfold. But as is often true in thorough work, the more minute the search the more elusive the materials. One man's testimony threw doubt upon the accuracy of another's. Many were interviewed — the petty mechanic and the great financier alike. ♦ History is not made in a day, nor written in an hour.

An assistant engineer (F. S. Hodges), engaged upon the first line to span the continent, became a valuable source of information. His memory traced the construction of the Union Pacific from 1866 to its completion on May 10, 1869. Mr. Leonard cross-examined him many times. He found that his own notebooks, his newspaper clippings, and his vivid experiences were most valuable to a collector in search of the truth. The human side of the building of the road became alive. Hodge's narrative emphasized the fact that it is men who build.

An assistant engineer's account is apt to be incomplete: it would tell only one phase. Members of the construction parties should have some interesting sidelights upon the building of the line. One day while in Chicago, Mr. Leonard had the

good fortune to meet W. J. Gooding — one of the members of a locating party of the western portion of the road. He had worked in Wyoming, Utah, and Nevada; and his remembrances supplied a valuable description of the work in which he had been engaged. ♦ To plan a railroad is one thing; to locate it is another; to build it is still more. A complete history must include every aspect.

Collecting is not only instinct and perseverance: it results from a wide acquaintance. While engaged in the freight office at Ogden, Mr. Leonard met W. B. Doddridge, the superintendent of the western division of the Union Pacific and later general superintendent of the system. From their meeting in 1882 until Doddridge's death a close friendship existed between them, which was very useful to the collector. From him Mr. Leonard obtained the story of the first nineteen years of the Union Pacific, its construction and its birth pangs as a going concern. He also learned that railroads do not exist in isolation: they are interrelated. The men who constructed one road constructed others. Mr. Doddridge was later vice president of the Missouri Pacific Railroad.

Sometimes chance smiles upon those who search for the sources of history. While visiting relatives in Joliet, Illinois, a cousin said to Mr. Leonard: "There is a woman living here whose father was

an important man in the construction of the Union Pacific. If you wish, I'll introduce you to her." Acting upon this advice he was taken to the home of Mrs. Fred Bennitt, who was the eldest daughter of Samuel B. Reed. Reed had been the chief engineer of construction during the location and laying of track between Omaha and Promontory Point. His papers proved to be the most important discovery up to that time.

Reed had kept a record of locations, orders, and letters. He contrasted the problems of a builder with the problems of those who dreamed in New York. He noted the inconsistencies of those who wanted to do, and those who did. His files dated from the days of the enlargement of the Erie Canal to the completion of the Union Pacific. ♦ A collector has to be able to fit every piece of a puzzle into the whole picture. Oftentimes the most unobtrusive part is the most valuable.

Piece by piece the epoch of railroad building became etched in Mr. Leonard's mind. The inter-relationship of American railroads brought him into contact with the early history of the Rock Island Lines, and in 1923 he was appointed research historian of the Rock Island Railroad. He already knew many of the builders of the Rock Island for they were also builders of the Union Pacific. ♦ Railroad construction was an adven-

ture: those who dared, refused to rest on past triumphs.

Mr. Leonard traced the lives of the men who enlarged the Erie Canal until he found that some of the same men drove the golden spike that completed the Union Pacific. The materials of his collection date back to the time when the public had little or no confidence in railroads. A hundred years ago seven companies had to be organized to build a line between Albany and Buffalo in New York — a distance of 296 miles. At that time passengers had to get off the train and buy new tickets six times and re-check their baggage at the end of each line. "The published time between the two points was advertised this way", says Mr. Leonard: "Passengers can breakfast in Albany and *sup* with friends at Buffalo, on Lake Erie, the same evening." ♦ How true it is that nothing is so permanent as change.

Leonard's researches and his extensive collection of railroad materials show that the few men who had the courage to start the first railroads saw those enterprises through to their completion. John B. Jervis, who assisted in bringing the Croton Aqueduct into New York City, besides being one of America's greatest engineers, was connected with the organization of the first railroad in 1829. He was one of the instigators in the construction

of a fourteen-mile railroad between Albany and Schenectady. His principal assistant was Horatio Allen. Allen had been sent to England to interview George Stephenson. Convinced of the success of Stephenson's experiment he purchased the "Stourbridge Lion" and brought it to America as the first steam locomotive.

For the men who undertook the enlargement of the Erie Canal, it was but a step to running the first railroad into Chicago. John E. Henry, Samuel B. Reed, Peter A. Dey, and D. H. Ainsworth came west with the Michigan Southern & Northern Indiana Railroad. All of these men were intimately connected with railroad building until the Atlantic was connected with the Pacific by rail. The time check of Reed on the Erie Canal dates 1841. It rests in the Leonard collection along with a letter from Reed to his wife on January 31, 1870. In speaking of the completion of the first transcontinental railroad he wrote: "Tomorrow I close my accounts and the Auditor of the company will be here to take all construction accounts off my hands. We get great credit for the good shape all our papers and books are returned in. There are no company books and vouchers in New York or Boston that are in as good shape as the construction accounts I returned from the west." ♦
Destiny is not so kind to all men. Few, indeed,

are they who may pursue their dreams until they become realities.

One of the strongest personality links in Leonard's chain of railroad builders is Thomas Clarke Durant — one of the most important figures in the history of railroad transportation in America. He was a man of impatience and of ambition. As evidence of his ability, he graduated from a course in medicine at Albany College when he was not yet twenty-one. There he heard Amos Dean (who was later Chancellor of the University of Iowa) lecture on medical jurisprudence. The life of a doctor was too sedentary for Durant; so he joined his uncle's firm of Durant, Lathrop & Company, shippers of grain and flour in New York City. Grain came too slowly: he wanted more. The enlargement of the Erie Canal was a possibility. When "the doctor" got to Buffalo he found that the Michigan Southern & Northern Indiana Railroad was projected. The completion of the road would mean more grain, and as a consequence he turned all his energies into the achievement of that result. And railroading took all of his attention until his death. The story of this railroad builder is like a tale from the Arabian Nights.

For many years Mr. Leonard had sought the whereabouts of William West Durant, the son of Thomas Clarke Durant the railroad builder. He

was sure that William Durant had his father's papers — papers and documents which contained the inside history of the Union Pacific. For a long time the search seemed hopeless. The Durant family had dropped from sight: no one seemed to know where they were. But Mr. Leonard kept on searching because he had faith in his vision of a great railroad history and because he never lost his enthusiasm for collecting.

Then one day an unknown person living in South Carolina informed Mr. Leonard of the address of Thomas C. Durant's son: he was living in a modest apartment house in New York City. Mr. Leonard hastened to make his acquaintance. The interview which followed convinced William Durant of Mr. Leonard's profound knowledge of railroad construction and railroad history. He also sensed Mr. Leonard's understanding of men and his sympathy for those who had been great but whom history had forgotten or belittled. William Durant was enough like his father to see and appreciate the truth that important accomplishments develop from the cultivation of every detail. At the close of the day's talk he said: "Many people have been seeking my father's papers. But since you seem to know more railroad history than any man I have ever met, I will give you all of my father's papers." And he did.

The recent economic depression caused many people to lose their perspective. History belongs to the arts, and in economic crises the arts are forgotten by all but the few. Mr. Leonard wanted, in the serenity of his autumnal years, to write his story of the Union Pacific. For fifty years he had searched and collected, and now he wanted to write. Where should he go to seek the fulfillment of his hope, the realization of his life's dream?

Railroads were being reorganized; capital was frightened. But the State Historical Society of Iowa had lost none of its zeal for making history accessible to those who want to know. It was the Society's Superintendent who caught the spirit of Mr. Leonard's adventure and understood the value of his collection: he made it possible for the collector-historian to come to Iowa City to complete his lifelong task.

And so in 1933 Levi O. Leonard came home — came back to Iowa City, the scene of his boyhood days. And with him came the collection of one who had pursued a vision for a lifetime.

While arranging documentary materials for systematic filing in the steel cases, Mr. Leonard became aware of a gap in his collection: certain important papers pertaining to the Credit Mobilier were lacking. The missing material included the records which Congress wanted but could not find

during the investigation of the Credit Mobilier in 1873. To be sure these papers had been used in a trial at Providence, Rhode Island, in 1879; but no one knew what had become of them after the close of that trial.

It was in January, 1937, that the widow of William Durant informed Mr. Leonard that she had come into the possession of a box of Union Pacific papers which for some sixty years had lain unnoticed in the vaults of a bank in New York City. Would he come to New York and advise her what to do with this box of papers? Mr. Leonard conferred with the Superintendent of the State Historical Society and the Superintendent conferred with the Dean of the Graduate College of the State University.

"Do you think he will be able to get the papers?" asked the Dean.

"I am sure he will", replied the Superintendent. "He always gets what he goes after."

The next morning Mr. Leonard was off for New York City. Five days later he returned to Iowa City with the box of Credit Mobilier papers under his arm.

In the atmosphere of a great university, surrounded by thousands of documents, stimulated by the counsels of an historical society, and aided by a sympathetic collaborator, Mr. Leonard works

with the enthusiasm of youth on a history of the first continental railroad which includes the story of the Credit Mobilier. The history of the Union Pacific — its planning, its construction, its financing, and its many human sidelights — makes a mighty sweep in the drama of American history.

To-day, in the Indian summer of a life of adventure, Mr. Leonard is putting together the last pieces of his railroad puzzle. And while doing this he recalls the days of "the golden west", with its colorful cowboys and still more colorful Indians. He witnessed the passing of the frontier and the forging of a united nation by the construction of a wide-spread net of railroads. He gathered the documentary threads that are to be woven into the romance of a nation in the making.

JACK T. JOHNSON

From the Durant Papers

Thomas C. Durant, more than any one else, was responsible for the building of the Union Pacific Railroad. While dreamers debated possibilities, he sent surveyors to explore routes; when financiers were timid, he staked his own fortune on the trans-continental railroad and organized the Credit Mobilier; as vice president of the railroad company, he superintended construction in person. From his voluminous correspondence the following letters, selected at random from L. O. Leonard's collection, are typical and self-explanatory. — The Editor.

Fort Sanders Sept 29th/63

W Snyder Esq
Supt [of Operation]
Dear Sir

I am informed that some of our employees are dissatisfied because there are to be no precincts for holding elections in Nebraska west of North Platte although heretofore with a less population there has been several and that for a distance of some two hundred and fifty miles they are to have no opportunity to vote unless they go to North Platte the nearest precinct.

As this section of our road is in the Indian dis-

strict where it is difficult to keep our employees many of whom are ready to take advantage of the slightest excuse to bring about a feeling of dissatisfaction I think it a matter of Policy on the part of the Company and advisable to meet the case by furnishing all of our men who desire free transportation to North Platte in order that they may register their names and also on the day of Election that those who wish may exercise their full privilege. Probably when the opportunity is given them many will not avail themselves of it who otherwise would be dissatisfied In other cases it will have the tendency to keep them on the line for a time Take care however that no partiality is shown any party and by all means keep the Co out of Politics

Yours

T C Durant V.P

You will act in accordance with the above suggestion.

T C Durant, V P

★ ★ ★

Paterson Aug 1 1864

Thomas C Durant Esq

13 William St N.Y.

Dear Sir

Yours of 28th ultima is at hand & contents noted

The first Engine for the Union Pacific Rail Rd Co will be ready for delivery about from the 6th to 8th of September next and the other three one in every five days thereafter

Respy Yours,
Danforth Cooke & Co
Hopper

★ ★ ★

Lancaster June 26th 1867

My dear Sir:

I enclose you the charter of the Northern Pacific R. R. Co., and another document relating to it.

I would be very happy if the result of your deliberations on the subject I proposed to you should be such as to induce you to unite with us. It is however, very desirable that I should know your conclusion before July 3rd. Will you please write to me here; or if you wish, I will come on to see you.

Very respectfully yours

Edward Reilly

[Attorney for the Northern Pacific Railroad]
T. C. Durant Esq.

N Easton April 2d 1868

Dr T C Durant

Dear Sir

In organizing our force on the Road for this season I think you should at the very earliest moment put the Grader in that 60 or 70 mile of country that is without water except in the spring We cannot commence too early on this We should also have a force whose special duty it is to sink wells where we expect to have Depots. We suffered very much last summer from neglect of ample and seasonable provision for water and in some cases put our Depots where it is almost impossible to get water and would be now economy to remove them. The Force for construction of Depots should also be organized and I think if stone masons can be easily obtained it would be economy for us in this Stony Country to construct them of Stone.

The Machine Shop and Round House at Cheyenne should be immediately started and it cant be got ready too soon. We have the Machinery ordered for it to be shipped on the opening of Navigation Machine Shop Round House and Blacksmith Shop can all be built of the rough Stone of the Country or those taken out from our cuts on line of Road — and if Stone Masons can be easily obtained will cost no more than wood and will be

safer against fire and very much better than wood I think the North Platte Machine Shop and Blacksmith Shop as large as needed — at Cheyenne the Round House should be Larger

You Dillon & McCombs can decide this matter on the ground, and will you write me how soon the machinery will be needed. We ordered it to be delivered on opening of Navigation I Suppose we shall have to pay for it then if ready by cash or note of Co. The contract with the Chicago & N Western R R for construction Freight should be decidedly fixed as to what is and what is not construction material They are now feeling that we are trying to put things in that contract that were not intended to go there. We cant afford to have any trouble this season with them that will make them give a preference to other freight than ours. They have always seemed to be anxious to have it settled just according to contract And as you made this contract with them you can undoubtedly settle it better with them than any one else

If you have time would it not be well to take the a/c along with you to Chicago and have a conference with Dunlap or the parties who made the contract with you and settle it? Our Money matters after quarter day can be more readily fixed to our minds. We shall undoubtedly have to be large Borrowers up to July when I hope we shall

be receiving Govt Bonds enough to make it easy and if our 1st Mtg Bonds shall sell as rapidly as may be expected we shall be flush. Hoping you will have a good time going over the Road and find men and teams enough to put the first three Hundred miles under contract and cover it

I Am very Respectfully

Yours

Oliver Ames

[A trustee of the Ames contract]

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