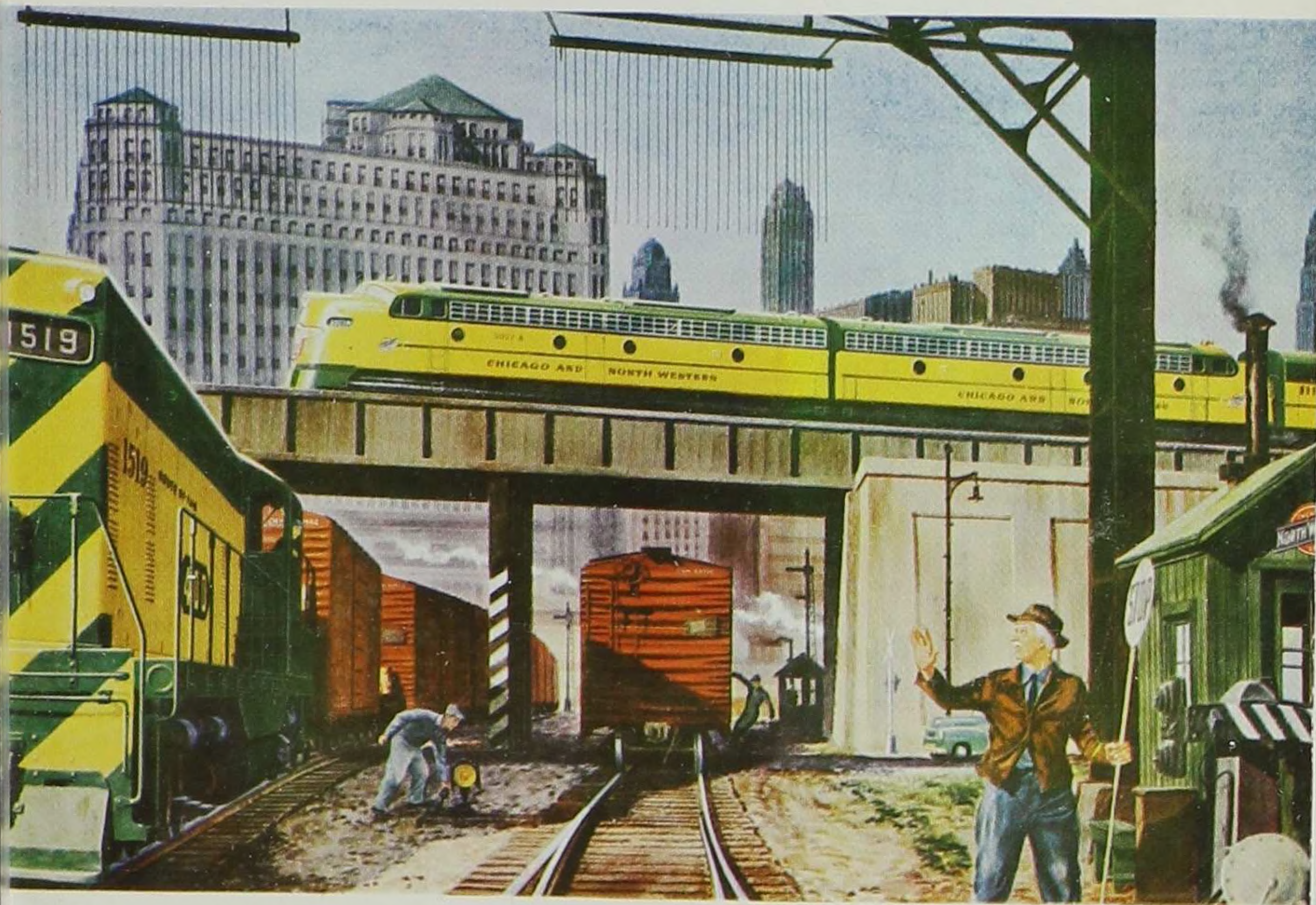


# *The* PALIMPSEST



The North Western in Iowa

Published Monthly by

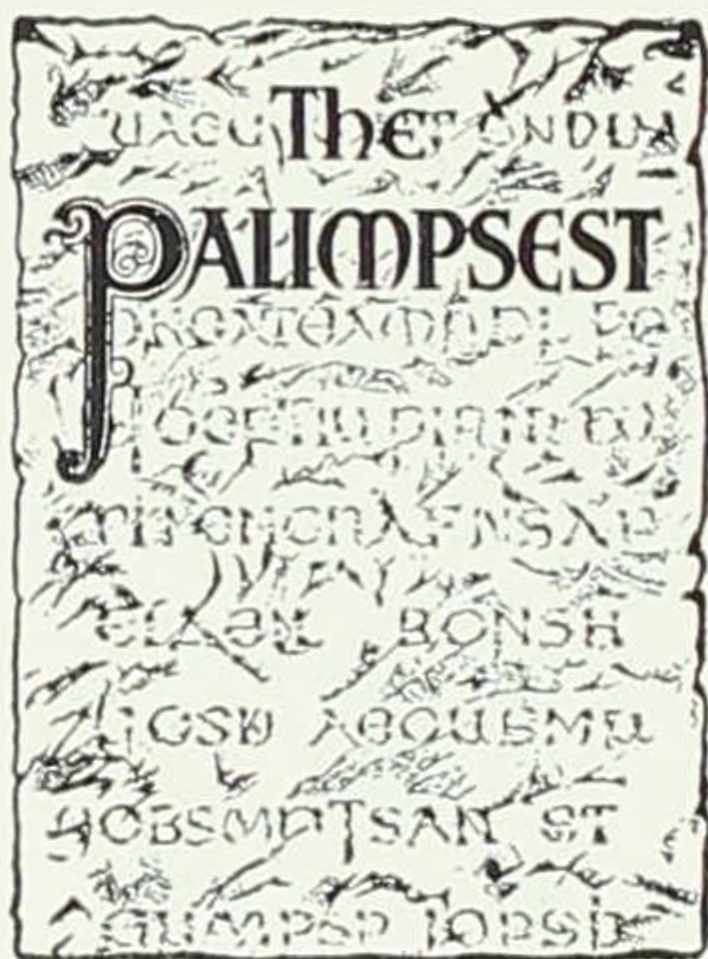
The State Historical Society of Iowa

Iowa City, Iowa

DECEMBER 1962

SPECIAL NORTH WESTERN EDITION — FIFTY CENTS





## 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 record 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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FRANK P. DONOVAN

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## Illustrations

All illustrations, unless otherwise noted, are from the Public Relations Offices of the North Western, and other personal railroad fans of Mr. Donovan.

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The following North Western personnel were helpful: F. A. Koval, Assistant to the President; Harold A. Lenske, Publicity Manager; and W. F. Armstrong, Engineer of Buildings.

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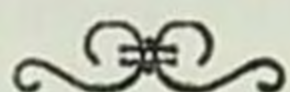
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## The Race to Council Bluffs

The Chicago & North Western has more miles of track in Iowa than any other railroad. It was first to cross the state and first to feature through passenger service in conjunction with the newly-formed Union Pacific-Central Pacific transcontinental route in 1869.

The North Western-Union Pacific-Southern Pacific's strategic middle line was the standard way to travel between Chicago and San Francisco. Other transcontinentals came: the Northern Pacific, Great Northern and Milwaukee on the north; the Santa Fe, the Rock Island-Southern Pacific's "Golden State Limited," and the Southern Pacific's "Sunset Route" on the south; and the newer Burlington-Rio Grande-Western Pacific line, which closely paralleled the first transcontinental. Yet for some 86 years the strategic middle route, with the Chicago & North Western at the eastern end, dominated transcontinental rail travel.

Today, alas, the North Western no longer participates in through cross-country passenger serv-



ice. On the other hand, it is still a mighty factor in handling transcontinental tonnage. Great long freights still barrel through Iowa, but the glory of its named limiteds and plush streamliners is now only a nostalgic memory.

The story of the North Western in Iowa begins with the race to Council Bluffs. It concerns three trunk lines, all struggling to reach the coveted Council Bluffs-Omaha gateway first. Associated with the enterprise was a New Jersey railroad builder who rose to great heights, and a grandiose railroad scheme which fell to abysmal depths. Leaving out Western mountains and Indians, the drama in building across Iowa has much of the heroic qualities which characterized construction of the storied Union Pacific.

The byways which led to the North Western in Iowa go back to the ill-fated Iowa Central Air Line Rail Road Company — organized in 1853. Also known as the Lyons and Iowa Central Railroad, the Iowa Central was to run in more or less of a straight line from the little Mississippi River town of Lyons via Iowa City to Council Bluffs. At Lyons a lofty bridge was to carry the Air Line across the Mississippi.

The Air Line lost no time in dispatching surveyors and charting the road. It also did considerable grading between Lyons and Anamosa. At other points there is evidence of work done, and it is said an old grade can still be seen east of Iowa



City. The Air Line received extensive local aid, mostly in the form of bonds issued by counties along its route in exchange for stock of the road.

Meanwhile, what was to be Iowa's first operating railroad, the Mississippi & Missouri, was being surveyed westward from Davenport in 1853. It likewise had planned to go through Iowa City on its way to Council Bluffs. Crews of the two rival lines often met; and competing promoters vied with each other in soliciting funds for their respective enterprises. All along the routes surveyors were greeted with enthusiasm.

Council Bluffs, for example, welcomed Grenville M. Dodge, of the Mississippi & Missouri, with a lavish reception and ball. A few days later equal elation was shown rival surveyors of the Air Line. Agents of the two railroads exhorted towns and villages to support their companies and get on the "great through route" across Iowa. Public meetings were held, and each party spoke in glowing terms of his projected line.

The Air Line is said to have had about 2,000 Irish immigrants, including their families, camped in Lyons to expedite construction of the road. But the visionary project was doomed from the start. Its principal backer, H. P. Adams of Syracuse, New York, absconded with the bonds and left the counties with taxes to pay and Irish laborers to feed. Many of these workers were forced to settle for groceries and dry goods in place of wages.



Because of the latter item, the defunct line was dubbed "The Calico Road." It was subsequently discovered that Adams was a fugitive from justice with a criminal record. While the Air Line was permanently grounded, certain aspects of its corporate existence appeared later to play a very significant role in the North Western's history.

No sooner had one contestant dropped out of the race for Council Bluffs than another took its place. The newcomer was the Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska Rail Road, organized January 26, 1856. It had the backing of several up-state New Yorkers, including Lucius B. Crocker of Oswego, and Thomas T. Davis and Austin Meyers, both of Syracuse. Others lending financial help were John Bertram, a sea captain of Salem, Massachusetts, Oakes Ames of North Easton, Massachusetts, and Alfred W. Johnson of Belfast, Maine. Milo Smith was the chief engineer.

Construction began at Clinton in 1856. By June, 1859, the road had reached Cedar Rapids, 81 miles distant. This was farther west than the Mississippi & Missouri, which had completed its line from Davenport to Iowa City by January 1, 1856, and halted there for several years. But down the Mississippi River a third railroad was pushing its rails across the prairie. Called the Burlington & Missouri River, later known as the Burlington, it proudly reached Ottumwa in August, 1859.



That was the railroad picture in Iowa when a tall, well-built, 58-year old businessman, John Insley Blair of Blairstown in the Kittatinny Mountains of northern New Jersey, left his tiny community to attend the Republican Party National Convention in Chicago May 16, 1860. He was one of about 500 delegates to the great political rally, at which there were over ten thousand spectators.

When the convention ended, with Abraham Lincoln duly nominated for the presidency, the delegates were invited on a free trip to Iowa. John Blair eagerly accepted the invitation. He went with a party of three hundred by rail to Dunleith (opposite Dubuque), thence by boat from Dubuque to Clinton. At the latter town they boarded "the cars" on the newly-completed Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska Rail Road for Cedar Rapids. The visitors were dined and entertained at the end-of-track community, and told of the wonders of the West. On returning, Blair wrote in his diary:

"I Consider this Road [the Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska] Considering its extension with the land grant on the 200 Miles West of Cedar Rappids, one of the Most desirable and if Rightly Managed ought to pay."

Spelling and grammar were not subjects in which John I. Blair excelled. But when it came to vision, business foresight and making money, he had few peers. Blair was destined to return to



Iowa in 1862 and build railroads faster and more extensively in that state than anyone else — before or since.

Blair never went to high school. At ten he is said to have declared: "I have seven brothers and three sisters. That's enough in the family to be educated. I am going to get rich."

At eleven he went to work in a country store at Hope, New Jersey, not far from Belvidere where he was born in 1802. When eighteen, he owned a store at Gravel Hill. Nine years later he had a chain of five general stores in northern New Jersey, and he operated four "flouring-mills."

Always alert to new business opportunities, Blair branched out into mining, manufacturing and railroading. Modest success in mining at Oxford Furnace, New Jersey, led to an active part in founding the Lackawanna Coal & Iron Company in 1846. Later, with his son DeWitt Clinton Blair, and Oakes Ames as partners, he established the Lackawanna Steel Company to make rails. Heretofore nearly all steel rails had been imported from England. Blair was also one of the original directors of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, and soon became its biggest stockholder.

At sixty, when most men are thinking about retirement, John I. Blair began his remarkable career as a builder of western railroads. When he came to do business in Iowa in 1862, the Hawkeye State was ready to do business with him. The Cedar



Rapids and Missouri River Railroad had been organized on June 14, 1860, to extend westward from Cedar Rapids to the "Big Muddy." More important, from the investors' standpoint, was the fact that the road persuaded the Iowa General Assembly to turn over the land grant of the defunct Iowa Central Air Line to the very much alive Cedar Rapids & Missouri River Railroad.

The new railroad had capital provided mostly by eastern financiers, among whom were John Bertram, Lucius B. Crocker, and Oakes Ames. These men, it will be recalled, were also instrumental in building the Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska Rail Road. In addition, the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River Railroad had the backing of John Weare and John F. Ely of Cedar Rapids, and G. M. Woodbury of Marshalltown. Crocker became first president and W. W. Walker secretary. With capital and a bountiful land grant, the road built westward from Cedar Rapids. But it lacked the drive, soon to be provided by John Blair, the "human dynamo let loose in railway-mad Iowa."

Blair appears to have first taken a hand in the road's management in 1861. After that, dirt began to fly. By the end of that year the track reached Otto Creek Station (now Chelsea), 41 miles west of Cedar Rapids. In 1862 the road was completed to Marshalltown. Two years later (1864) it reached Nevada and in 1865, Boone. Now it was over halfway across the state.



In the meantime, the Mississippi River had been bridged, replacing a slow, cumbersome ferry. The bridge was started in 1858; and the following year a 7-span McCallum truss, built of wood, connected Fulton, Illinois, with Little Rock Island, 1,400 feet from shore. It was not until 1864, however, that the deeper western channel of the Mississippi, from the island to Clinton, was bridged by Howe truss spans. The draw span was of the Bollman pattern. Subsequently, the whole structure proved to be too light, and it was replaced over the years by heavier and stronger pin-connected Pratt trusses.

While Blair was blazing his own trail across Iowa, his two competitors were not idle. Far to the south the aggressive Burlington had reached Albia in 1866. But the Mississippi & Missouri (soon to become the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad), which formerly set the pace in Iowa railroad building, was marking time in Grinnell.

Thanks to additional land grants made available to Congress and the energetic leadership of Blair, the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River Railroad went all-out in construction. The railroad builder from New Jersey, along with his young assistant W. W. Walker, made a splendid team. Together they visited towns and villages along the projected route. Both were shrewd traders. They often pitted one town against another in seeking dona-



tions, station lands, bonds. They matched their wits against promoters of the Burlington and the Rock Island in enlisting public support and in seeking both public and private aid.

In Council Bluffs, where "railroad fever" was so pervasive, an enthusiastic crowd greeted Blair and Walker on July 9, 1866. The two spoke in Burhop's Hall on a stage flanked by "first citizens" amid a backdrop of American flags. At the other end of the hall a band aroused the audience to religious fervor. The following resolution was passed:

Resolved, That we feel under obligations to Messrs. Blair and Walker, the gentlemanly officers of said company, for their visit to our place, and for the interest manifested by them in the early completion of their road to our city, and for the free, full and frank expressions given by them of the prospects for the speedy completion of their road, and of the future prospect of our city.

John I. Blair must have beamed with the results of the meeting. Heading the subscription list was Major M. Turley with a gift of eighty acres of land in Council Bluffs for a depot and other railroad buildings. One business house donated \$2,000; eleven subscribers pledged \$1,000 each, and 106 other signatures brought the total up to \$36,000.

The popular demand for a railroad is evinced in the zealous words of Editor William S. Burke of the Council Bluffs *Nonpareil*. Said he:



It would be better for every lot owner in the city to donate one half of his possessions — be they much or little — if, thereby, these railroad connections could be secured, than to own twice what he now has and allow them to go elsewhere. Without her railroads, we would scarcely give a baubee for the best vacant lot in Council Bluffs; with them, we will see how rapidly every stagnant impulse will be stirred into life, and the flush of a radiant but permanent prosperity mantle all the future.

Shortly after the Council Bluffs meeting Walker advertised in the *Chicago Times* for five thousand laborers to expedite construction to the Missouri River. The last lap of the race was on!

Meanwhile, the Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska Rail Road, it may be added, was leased on July 3, 1862, to the Galena and Chicago Union Rail Road Company and by modified lease on December 10, 1869, to the Chicago and North Western Railway Company.

The Cedar Rapids and Missouri River Railroad was leased on July 8, 1862, to the Galena and Chicago Union Rail Road Company and by modified lease December 1, 1865, to the Chicago and North Western Railway Company.

We have seen that the race across Iowa began when the Rock Island (Mississippi & Missouri) first built westward from Davenport, thereby getting a head start. Next came the Burlington (Burlington & Missouri River), which soon forged ahead of its pioneer competitor. Lastly, the North Western (Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska and the



Cedar Rapids and Missouri River railroads) appeared as a late comer. All three were in a close and exciting race at various stages of their mad rush across Iowa.

The Rock Island had such distinguished engineers as Peter A. Dey and General Grenville M. Dodge. But bankruptcy and management dissension retarded its progress. The Burlington had President James F. Joy and an able young superintendent by the name of Charles E. Perkins. Moreover, it was financed by the "Boston Group." Finally, there was the North Western. And in Iowa, Blair was the North Western, and the North Western was Blair.

The race ended differently from the way it started. The first road came in second, the last first, and the Burlington at the tag end. In other words, the race ended with the North Western first; the Rock Island second; and the Burlington last.

The Burlington had, perhaps, man for man, the ablest management, to say nothing of the solid support of conservative Boston bankers. But the North Western had Blair. It was as simple as that. Blair was absolute boss.

In the case of the Rock Island, very competent engineers were hamstrung by management difficulties. As for the Burlington, the management was of the best, but the Bostonians were cautious. Not so with John Insley Blair. He had the power,



the money and engineering talent. He dominated the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River Railroad. He was owner, manager, and financier. While others waited for the necessary funds, or for a nod from the front office, Blair was in the field — building, building, building.

West of Boone, construction started in December, 1865. By the following spring the railhead was within fifteen miles of Denison. A few months later the husky Chicago "gandydancers" were hammering spikes and surfacing track down the valley of the Boyer River. On September 15, 1866, ground was broken for the Council Bluffs depot with an elaborate ceremony accompanied by the Council Bluffs Brass Band. On Tuesday, January 22, 1867, the last rail was laid in front of the new station, marking the completion of the first railroad into town.

Ironically, General Grenville M. Dodge, who helped survey the Rock Island across Iowa, was the principal speaker to celebrate the North Western's arrival. By this time, however, he was chief engineer of the rapidly-building Union Pacific, and he welcomed the railroad from the East with genuine enthusiasm. He looked for the day when "five great trunk railroads" would serve Council Bluffs and when it would become "a railroad centre . . . second to none in the State of Iowa."



## One of the "Big Three"

It is almost impossible to trace the early development of the North Western in Iowa without continual references to the Burlington and the Rock Island. Iowa was (and still is) a battleground where each road fought for tonnage. Unlike the heavily populated, highly industrialized states, Iowa's local business, while important, is far overshadowed by its through traffic. Nor are the major cities of Iowa strongholds of any one railroad such as San Francisco is of the Southern Pacific or Philadelphia of the Pennsylvania.

After the Union Pacific-Central Pacific Omaha-to-the-West-Coast line had been completed on May 10, 1869, there was a lively jockeying for position by the three trans-Iowa connecting links. Having reached Council Bluffs first, the North Western had the advantage of priority. According to the Omaha *Herald*, the Union Pacific in the late 1860's was to build "two hundred and fifty cars for the transportation of their own material over the Chicago and North Western." It goes without saying the North Western hauled much of the Union Pacific's supplies. Furthermore, the North Western's first president, William Butler Ogden, was also the first incumbent to that office



on the Union Pacific. In addition, Oakes Ames, who was so active in the Union Pacific's management, was likewise prominent in the early affairs of the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River Railroad. Not content with building the North Western across Iowa, John I. Blair found another outlet for his tremendous drive in constructing the first 100 miles of the Union Pacific in Nebraska.

But fully as important in the transcontinental railroad strategy was the Rock Island. It very adroitly claimed a major share of the Union Pacific's traffic, for had not Thomas C. Durant, Henry Farnam and John A. Dix, representing the Union Pacific's management, also been active in promoting the Mississippi & Missouri road?

On the other hand, there was little community interest between the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy and the Union Pacific. But the Burlington was a skillful bargainer; it had the soundest financing of the Big Three, and, like its Iowa-Missouri satellites, was dominated by the able James F. Joy.

There was also a "dark horse" in the picture to further complicate matters. This was the Kansas City, St. Joseph & Council Bluffs Railroad, which entered Council Bluffs more or less by the back door, coming in from St. Joseph, Missouri, on the south. A Joy-property, it connected with other Joy-controlled roads, forming a roundabout route from Council Bluffs to Chicago via northern Missouri and southwestern Illinois.



All in all, the complex situation would seem to equate a knock-down and drag-out battle of rate wars, rival construction and unbridled competition. Such direct action often characterized the turbulent era of early railroad expansion. But nothing of the kind happened in Iowa, at least for fifteen years. Instead, the Big Three formed "The Iowa Pool" which Dr. Julius Grodinsky has described as "the envy of the railroad world."

The initiative came from President John F. Tracy of the Rock Island after conferring with the North Western's executive committee. Both roads were fearful of the Burlington's expansion program. As an alternative to cut-throat competition, they suggested pooling the earnings of all three trans-Iowa roads serving the Omaha gateway. Joy, who headed the Burlington, was amenable. Although not adverse to extending the Burlington where it seemed expedient, he nonetheless favored restricting competition and considered rate-wars disastrous to all parties concerned.

A series of conferences between the Big Three, with the tacit approval of the Union Pacific, led to the formation of the very real, yet scarcely tangible institution known as the Iowa Pool. For authority, effectiveness and informality, it is unique in the annals of American railroading. Based only "upon confidence between man and man" it lasted from 1870 to 1884. In his *The Iowa Pool*, Julius Grodinsky writes:



While the competitive forces swirled in all directions, the Pool roads continued to function as members of an organization which, in its informality, flexibility, and tentative — almost experimental — nature, was unprecedented in American business history. The roads carried traffic and distributed earnings without the help of any written contract. Neither was there any formal organization set up to administer the operations of this co-operative enterprise.

The three pool roads made a verbal agreement in which each line retained forty-five per cent of the passenger revenues and fifty per cent of the freight to meet the cost of doing business. The balance of the revenues was equally divided among the members of the pool.

Until the wily and unpredictable Jay Gould got control of the Union Pacific about 1875, the Iowa Pool operated with surprising harmony. But when Gould began exerting undue pressure in Union Pacific affairs, discord immediately developed. For one thing, he felt the Union Pacific should have a greater share in the "division" of the Chicago-Pacific Coast freight receipts. To this idea the pool members were obdurate.

By one manner or another the crafty Gould sought to break up the pool. He tried to get control of the Kansas City, St. Joseph & Council Bluffs road and thereby divert traffic from the pool. He had himself elected a director of both the North Western and the Rock Island. By so doing he hoped to align these two against the Burling-



ton. In none of these undertakings was he successful. Probably he dealt his most telling blow when he brought the Wabash into Council Bluffs and for a time shunted a major part of Union Pacific freight routed via Omaha to and from the far-flung Wabash system.

The Iowa Pool valiantly withstood the assaults of Gould. Other economic factors, however, led to its inevitable downfall. The railroad picture had changed. Early in the 1880's the Wabash was admitted to the pool and subsequently the Missouri Pacific (which came up from the south through eastern Nebraska to Omaha) and the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul. By this time the North Western had considerable mileage in northeastern Nebraska; the Burlington had a line to Denver; and the Rock Island was expanding in the southwest. The Omaha gateway could easily be bypassed so that pool-members were no longer constrained to share their revenue as they had formerly done. The pool triumphed over Gould-made traffic changes, but it could not hold out against changes made by an expanding railroad economy. In 1884 the Iowa Pool quietly expired.

What effect did the pool have on the North Western? It stabilized rates, kept other railroads from encroaching on its territory, and aided in its weathering the panic of 1873. But the great system which William B. Ogden envisioned was neither very great in the 1870's nor was it entirely



independent. For about a year it wore the collar of the St. Paul (now known as the Milwaukee Road) when Alexander Mitchell, president of the St. Paul, also headed the North Western. On June 3, 1870, John F. Tracy, head of the Rock Island, doubled in brass by starting his three-year term as the North Western's president. He was followed by Albert Keep, who restored the North Western to a measure of independence.

The North Western did not come into its own, however, until a young man by the name of Marvin Hughitt rose from general superintendent to top executive in 1877. Hughitt came to the North Western from the Pullman Company in 1872. As he rose in position and power, so rose the North Western in public esteem and financial stature.

While the Iowa pool flourished, the North Western's expansion in the state was mostly confined to its own immediate bailiwick—beginning at the eastern edge of Iowa at Lyons, where it had acquired the land grant of the ill-fated Iowa Central Air Line Rail Road and transferred it to the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River Railroad. With the transfer there was a curious stipulation: the new land grant recipient had to build a line from Lyons to connect with the Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska Rail Road. Thus, the Cedar Rapids company, whose nearest rails were 82 miles away, was required to build a 2.60-mile stub line from Clinton to Lyons in 1870.



The same year, the Iowa Midland Railway Company was chartered to build over the partly-graded Air Line from Lyons to Anamosa via Maquoketa. The entire 71-mile line was completed in December, 1870. It was subsequently leased to the North Western. Farther west the Stanwood & Tipton Railway Company was organized (and completed) in 1872 to connect the main line with Tipton, eight miles to the south.

To tap coal banks in Boone, a spur line (called the Iowa Railway, Coal and Manufacturing Company) was organized in 1873. Three miles of track were laid the following year.

The longest affiliate in Iowa, however, was The Toledo and Northwestern Railway, organized in 1869. Before outright purchase by the Chicago & North Western some twenty years later, it grew to almost 400 miles. Starting on the main line at Tama, it ran in a northwesterly direction to Jewell, thence north through Webster City and Eagle Grove to Elmore on the Minnesota border. Another line veered west from Eagle Grove to Harwarden on the western boundary of the state. Still a third branch struck off from Jewell to Lake City, 58 miles west. The road got off to a quick start with an 83-mile route connecting Tama with Webster City in 1880. Two years afterward, all the above mentioned sections were completed.

The North Western was careful not to go far south and thereby encroach upon Rock Island and



Burlington preserves. It did, however, organize the Iowa South Western Railway Company in 1880 to build from Carroll to Kirkman. The 34-mile extension was finished in 1881. The next year Manning and Audubon were linked.

Another ganglion of lines sprang up out of Maple River, appropriately called The Maple River Rail Road Company. Chartered under North Western auspices in 1876, the affiliate had a 60-mile crescent-shaped road to Mapleton in 1877. By 1883 a branch headed for Sioux City linked Wall Lake with Kingsley, about 25 miles short of its planned destination. The ubiquitous John Blair had a hand in building the road, and his associate, Horace Williams, headed the company. Like other Blair roads, the Maple River had its headquarters in Cedar Rapids.

Blair comes into the picture even stronger with his Sioux City & Pacific. This company came into being after the failure of the Union Pacific to build to Sioux City under the provisions of the Act of 1862. The original Union Pacific act was amended on July 2, 1864, releasing that company from its obligation and permitting another road to link the Union Pacific with Sioux City. The Sioux City and Pacific Rail Road Company was organized at Dubuque September 10, 1864, for that purpose. The incorporators and first directors were William Boyd Allison, John I. Blair, L. B. Crocker, A. W. Hubbard, Morris K. Jesup, Charles A.



Lambard, Frederick Schuchardt, Platt Smith and James F. Wilson. Blair became first president and W. W. Hamilton secretary.

With a congressional grant of 42,500 acres of land, financial help from the North Western and its principal Iowa leased lines, along with aid from Illinois Central affiliates and the Union Pacific, the new road set out to make Sioux City a trans-continental gateway. Its six-mile segment from Missouri Valley Jct. to California Jct. was built by the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River Railroad in 1867. The rest of the line from California Jct. to Sioux City was in operation by February, 1868.

Meanwhile, a branch was built from California Jct. across the Missouri River to Fremont, Nebraska, where it connected with the Union Pacific. Cars were ferried across the river during the summer, and in winter they went on a temporary bridge. A permanent all-year bridge was built in 1883 by the Missouri Valley and Blair Railway and Bridge Company, organized in 1882.

Blair seems to have had a particular fondness for the Sioux City and Pacific Rail Road Company. Usually he had only about fifteen per cent interest in most so-called "Blair roads," but the Sioux City he dominated almost up to his death. For many years his son, D. C. Blair, was vice president; and his brother, James, a long-time director. Then, too, it served as a bridge route from his Iowa properties to those in Nebraska.



Foremost of the latter was the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad Company, forming a complex of lines out of Fremont. Organized in 1869, the "Missouri Valley" had a 100-mile system a dozen years later. When purchased by the North Western in 1903, this swelled to 1,372 miles.

Freight and passengers seemingly went from one railroad to another between the Mississippi River and Missouri Valley points. Actually, they went from one Blair property to another. Like the famous baseball double play from Tinker to Evers to Chance, so traffic went from the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River to the Sioux City and Pacific Rail Road Company to the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad Company. They were all different roads, yet they all worked together on the same Blair team.

Thanks largely to Blair's industry the North Western, through owned, leased and controlled lines, became one of the Big Three in Iowa. In the early eighties its finances had improved. It had well-intrenched lines in eastern Wisconsin extending up into the Michigan peninsula. It had a line from Chicago through southern Minnesota to half-way across Dakota. And its Chicago-Council Bluffs route was proving to be a valuable trunk line that was no longer dominated by the St. Paul. The latter, however, did give it stiff competition when it built to Council Bluffs in 1882.



## Enter the Omaha

A very important factor in strengthening the North Western's position in the Midwest was its purchase of control of the Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway Company in 1882. At one stroke it obtained a bow-shaped line, 1,147 miles long (including branches), from Elroy, Wisconsin, through the Twin Cities to Sioux City and Omaha. It also had a nearly-completed branch from Hudson to Bayfield, Wisconsin, on Lake Superior.

This railroad gave the North Western a direct line to the Twin Cities from both Chicago and Omaha. It likewise gave the controlling road an outlet to the Ashland area on Lake Superior. In every way it was an asset in rounding out the North Western.

The Omaha Road, as the CStPM&O was called, evolved from the consolidation of the Chicago, Saint Paul and Minneapolis and The North Wisconsin railways in 1880 under the name of the Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway; and the purchase of the Saint Paul and Sioux City Railroad Company in 1881. These lines brought with them other companies which they had garnered before the merger. The man



who tied the assorted railroads together was Henry H. Porter.

Porter came west from Machias, Maine, to seek his fortune. Bound for California at seventeen, he stopped off in Chicago for temporary work. He found a job as a junior clerk in the office of the Galena and Chicago Union Rail Road, predecessor of the North Western. He soon rose to be general ticket agent and is said to have issued the first coupon ticket west of Chicago. During the cholera epidemic of 1854 he took a turn at braking and sometimes served as conductor when regular trainmen were ill.

Employment on other railroads, a partnership in the lumber business and associated activities, made Porter forget about the Golden West. Chicago became Henry Porter's home port. In 1869 he was made a director of the Rock Island, which soon controlled the North Western. In this roundabout way he again became interested in his first Chicago employer.

The panic of 1873 gave Porter the opportunity to buy and reorganize bankrupt railroads. First it was the West Wisconsin, linking Elroy and Hudson. He offered it to the North Western at cost. The offer was refused. The latter's directors felt they already had "too much railroad." Porter bided his time. If they wouldn't buy his modest little package at bargain rates, he would get a big bundle of roads, tie them up neatly, and command



a good figure. And that is precisely what he did.

The West Wisconsin Railway Company was reorganized and acquired by the Chicago, Saint Paul and Minneapolis Railway Company, which the Porter syndicate controlled. The latter was afterward consolidated with other roads, forming what was popularly called "The Omaha." When tied together, the assortment presented an attractive package custom-made for the North Western and was promptly bought at a price. Having made the desired sale, Porter, who headed the Omaha, then relinquished the presidency. His place was taken by the young and energetic Marvin Hughitt, by this time vice president of the North Western.

Let us roll back the years again and trace the Omaha's antecedents on their trek to Iowa. To do this we must begin with the Sioux City and Saint Paul Railroad Company. It was the southern counterpart of the Saint Paul and Sioux City Railroad Company, and was later sold to that company. The first road built *up* from Sioux City; the second *down* from St. Paul. The point of junction was St. James, Minnesota.

Surveying parties started work from St. James in a southwesterly direction in March, 1871. Gen. Judson W. Bishop, the chief engineer, relates in the *Minnesota Historical Society Collections* how he "with team and driver, covered spring wagon, and his old army 'mess kit' with six days' rations and forage, a large pocket compass, and the best



maps then obtainable, started to find and mark by his wagon wheels, an approximate line across the uninhabited country from St. James to Sioux City."

Although "the wagon was steered by compass over the desolate prairie as a vessel would be guided across the ocean," the line of the present Omaha Railroad between St. James and Le Mars, Iowa, is not at any point "more than eighty rods distant from that wagon trail of . . . 1871."

In September of 1872 the line was completed to Le Mars, and from that point trackage rights to Sioux City were obtained over what is now the Illinois Central. This agreement with the Illinois Central is still in effect.

Two hazards of early-day operation were drifting snow and hordes of grasshoppers in summer. The first was rectified by widening the cuts, erecting double lines of snow fences and planting trees to stem drifts. The 'hoppers posed more of a problem. They not only slowed trains by making it difficult for the locomotive drive-wheels to get traction, but also ruined the farms, thereby reducing the freight revenue. To combat this situation, Bishop and his associates formed what was dubbed "The Grasshopper Syndicate."

They purchased acres of the road's land-grant holdings in the heart of the grasshopper districts. One of these areas was near Sheldon. Here they broke the sod and planted wheat. But the "little



hoppers outnumbered the wheat plants five to one." This time, however, Bishop and his men were ready. They had an armada of "land boats." That is, plates of sheet iron eight feet long by four wide, turned up at each end. In these pan-like boats was liquid coal tar. The boats were pulled in unison across the field by a fleet of horses in front and to the sides of the iron rigs, to which they were attached by wires. As the phalanx advanced across the field from north to south, the grasshoppers jumped from under the horses' feet. Another jump or two and they landed in the sticky tar. A few weeks later the process was repeated.

Expansion was continued by an affiliated Minnesota corporation called the Worthington and Sioux Falls Railroad Company, linking the two communities in its name by 1878. The next year the company built a branch south from Luverne, Minnesota, to Doon, Iowa.

Another branch to the Iowa border left the main stem at Lake Crystal (south of Mankato), and ran in a southeasterly direction to Elmore, all in Minnesota. It was completed by the Saint Paul and Sioux City Railroad Company in 1880.

Entry into Omaha was effected by a series of affiliated roads on the west side of the Missouri River in Nebraska. By 1881 a through route was opened between Sioux City and Omaha.



## Expansion

The 1880's saw a period of aggressive railroad expansion in Iowa and in the Midwest. With minor exceptions this decade witnessed the completion of practically all of the North Western's Iowa lines. Much of the expansion took the form of extensions of lines previously constructed in the late seventies and early eighties by roads associated with the North Western. The Omaha Road, as has been pointed out, was an exception in that it was built mostly by independent interests.

Another independent line was The Des Moines and Minnesota Rail-Road Company, organized in 1870. Its three-foot-wide track was running from Des Moines to Ames by 1874. Under the banner of The Des Moines and Minneapolis Rail Road, the little railroad reached Callanan (now Jewell) four years later. The latter community was named after the road's president, James Callanan, a prominent Des Moines banker and real estate operator. During this period the North Western purchased control and changed the gauge to standard. The short line proved to be valuable in routing freight between Des Moines and the Twin Cities in conjunction with the Toledo and Northwestern-Omaha Road via Elmore, Minnesota.



The Toledo and Northwestern was further strengthened by a 26-mile branch from Eldora Jct. to Alden. Organized in 1882 as the high-sounding Chicago, Iowa & Dakota Railway Company, it was completed in two years. The line picked up most of its traffic from a large lime quarry in Alden. Incidentally, some of its original 54-pound rails are still in service. In 1886 the Toledo and Northwestern built a 15-mile extension from Lake City to Wall Lake Jct., thereby connecting that line with The Maple River Rail Road Company.

In 1886 a 20-mile line from Mapleton to Onawa, on the Missouri River, was built by the Maple Valley Railway Company. Farther to the north the Sioux City branch was heading toward completion when the 9-mile Kingsley-Moville section was finished in 1887 by the Sioux Valley Railway Company. The 20-mile gap between Moville and Sioux City (Sergeant Bluff) was finally spanned in 1901 by the Moville Extension Railway Company.

The Boyer Valley Railway Company, organized on October 17, 1898, constructed the 61-mile branch line from Boyer to Mondamin on the Missouri River and the 25-mile Wall Lake-Denison branch line in 1899. This gave the Wall Lake area three lines to the Missouri River, two to the North Western's main stem on the south, and an easterly connection via Wall Lake Jct. to Jewell, Tama and other eastern points. In its heyday as a



railroad junction, Wall Lake (population 766) had twelve passenger trains going in six directions! Two of these carried sleepers.

The biggest Johnny-come-lately in the North Western's Iowa domain was the 195-mile Iowa, Minnesota and Northwestern Railway Company. Organized in 1898, completed and sold to the North Western in 1900, the road was built with Blair-like rapidity. In 1899 the fifty-nine miles from Blue Earth, Minnesota, to Mason City, Iowa, were in operation. By the end of the following year the railroad had spiked down rails from Mason City to Belle Plaine and from Blue Earth to Fox Lake in Minnesota. As its name suggests, the line runs in a northwesterly direction more than half way across Iowa and catercornered into a large section of southwestern Minnesota.

Another interstate line built during this period was the Minnesota and Iowa Railway Company, incorporated in 1898. It built from Burt, Iowa, on the Elmore-Des Moines line, through Fox Lake and Sanborn to Vesta, all Minnesota towns. When acquired by the North Western in 1900 it had a 118-mile line.

The North Western's boldest incursion into territory south of its Clinton-Council Bluffs high iron, began with the line from Belle Plaine to the mining town of Muchakinock. The 60-mile coal road, organized in 1883 as the Ottumwa, Cedar Falls and St. Paul Railway Company, was com-



pleted the next year. In 1901 a 21-mile extension built by the Southern Iowa Railway Company gave it access to the Negro colliery of Buxton. At one time the mines along this railroad are said to have furnished the North Western with enough coal for nearly the entire system.

To round out the lower Iowa railroads, mention should be made of the 6-mile addition to the Carroll-Kirkman branch. Built by the Harlan and Kirkman Railway Company in 1899, it served the two Shelby County towns from which it was named.

From time to time the North Western sought to purchase its many controlled and affiliated lines and thereby simplify its corporate structure. The first big purchase came in 1884 and included the following Iowa companies:

Cedar Rapids and Missouri River Railroad  
Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska Rail Road  
The Des Moines and Minneapolis Rail Road Company  
Iowa Midland Railway Company  
Iowa South Western Railway Company  
The Maple River Rail Road Company  
Ottumwa, Cedar Falls and St. Paul Railway Company  
Stanwood & Tipton Railway Company

In 1887 four more were acquired:

Iowa Railway, Coal and Manufacturing Company  
Linn County Railway Company (Cedar Rapids by-pass)  
Maple Valley Railway Company  
Sioux Valley Railway Company



In 1890 the 385-mile Toledo and Northwestern Railway was purchased. At the turn of the century the following were purchased:

Boone County Railway Company (Line revision)

Boyer Valley Railway Company

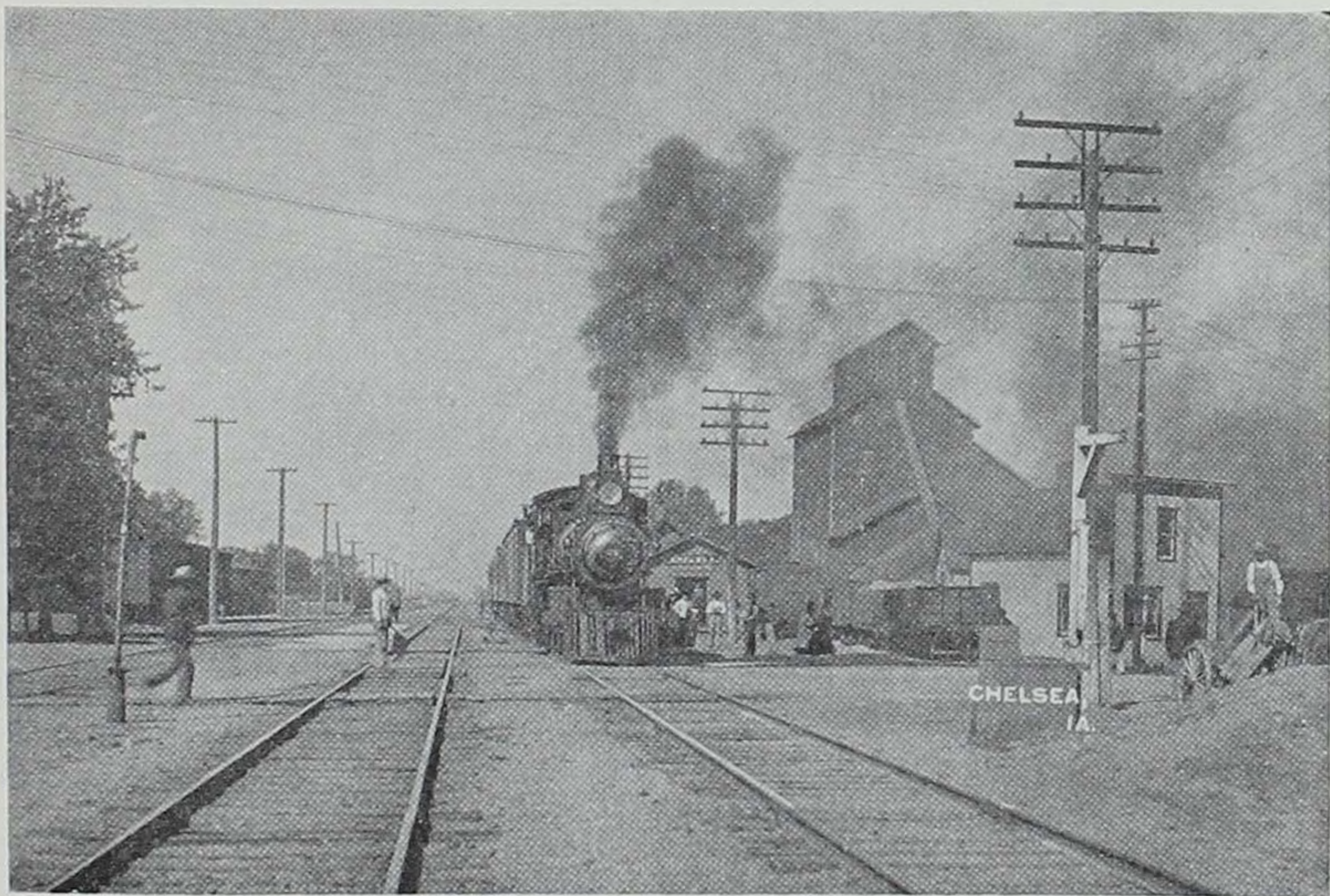
Harlan and Kirkman Railway Company

Iowa, Minnesota and Northwestern Railway Company

By 1901 the North Western had corralled the Southern Iowa Railway Company along with the Sioux City and Pacific Rail Road Company. In 1903 the little Chicago, Iowa and Dakota Railway and the big Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad were purchased.

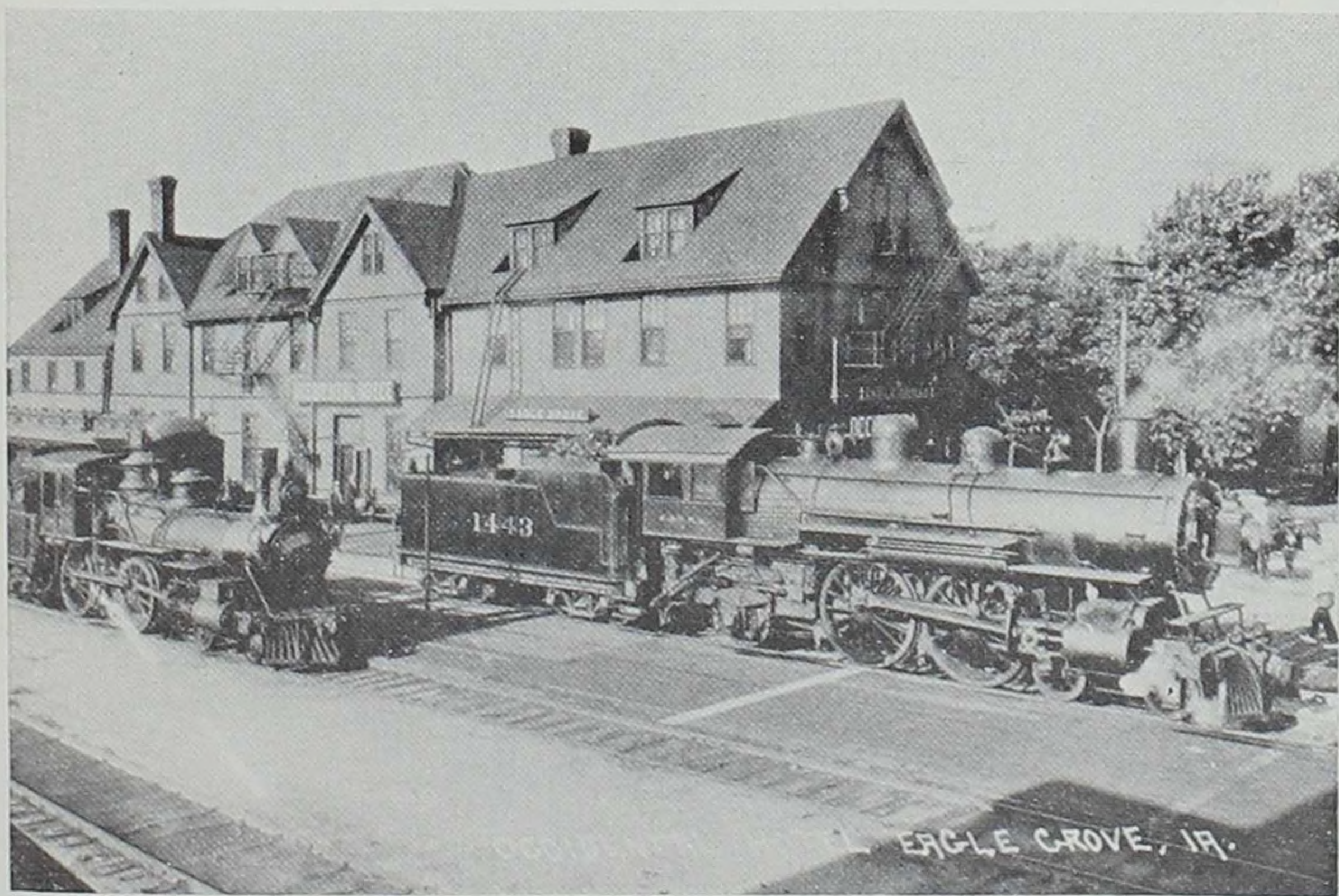
With the purchase of the "Missouri Valley" the last of the major Blair roads was taken over by the North Western. It is here that we should say a few more words about this railroad builder who meant so much to Iowa. Blair, while retaining his beloved Blairstown, New Jersey, residence until his death, always had one foot in Iowa from the time of his first visit to Cedar Rapids. Indeed, the headquarters of his far-flung railroad empire was in the three-story brick structure known as the Blair Building in that city. The imposing \$60,000 building was financed by his two principal Iowa railroads, his land company and by the First National Bank, which he helped organize in 1864. Also housed therein was the Iowa Rail Road Land Company and similar organizations he formed to promote new towns.





*J. P. Vander Maas Collection*

Traintime at Chelsea. Note crossing watchman at left. Photo shows left-hand operation which is standard practice on North Western.



*Dr. Robert McGrath Collection*

Station and Occidental Hotel at Eagle Grove in 1910. Important junction where Hawarden branch meets Des Moines-Blue Earth line.



**CHICAGO, IOWA & NEBRASKA R. ROAD**  
Time Table No. 2.  
To go into effect Sunday, April 15th, 1860.  
For the Government and Information of Employees only.

TRAINS WEST			TRAINS EAST		
2	1	STATIONS	1	2	
PASS	FREIGHT		PASS	FREIGHT	
P. M.	A. M.		A. M.	P. M.	
4:05	8:30	CLINTON	10:45	4:00	
4:20	8:50	Camanche	10:32	3:40	
4:35	9:10	Low Moor	10:20	3:25	
4:45	9:25	Ramessa	10:10	3:10	
5:05	9:50	De Witt	9:50	2:45	
5:20	10:10	G'd Mound	9:30	2:20	
5:40	10:30	Calmas	9:18	1:55	
5:50	10:45	Yankee Run	9:04	1:40	
6:05	11:05	Louden	8:52	1:25	
6:25	11:35	Onion Grove	8:31	1:00	
6:55	12:20	MECHVILLE	8:03	12:20	
7:15	1:05	Lisbon	7:42	11:50	
7:23	1:20	Mt. Vernon	7:36	11:25	
7:45	1:45	Bertram	7:15	10:50	
8:15	2:25	CEDAR RAPIDS	6:45	10:10	
P. M.	P. M.		A. M.	A. M.	

Trains will meet and pass at Stations indicated by full face figures.  
Train No. 2 West and No. 1 East have the right to the road against all other Trains for one hour after their own time at any Station as per table. After that time the right of the road belongs to the other Trains.  
Train No. 2 East has the right to the road against No. 1 West for one hour after their own time at any Station as per table. After that time the right of the road belongs to No. 1 West.

**M. SMITH, Sup't**

Employees Timetable issued one year after Iowa & Nebraska Rail Road was completed between Clinton and Cedar Rapids.

**CHICAGO AND North Western RAILWAY.**

THE SHORTEST LINE  
FROM  
**CHICAGO**  
TO  
**COUNCIL BLUFFS**  
VIA  
**CHICAGO AND NORTH-WESTERN RAILWAY.**  
TO  
**ALL POINTS**  
AND THENCE  
**NORTH-WEST**  
QUICK TIME!

**OMAHA**

**DENVER**  
**SALT LAKE**  
**SAN FRANCISCO**  
And all parts of  
**CALIFORNIA AND THE TERRITORIES**

Fullman Palace Sleeping Cars on all Night Trains

MARVIN HUCHITT, General Superintendent      H. F. STANWOOD, Chief Clerk

Poster advertising the North Western's "direct route" through Omaha Gateway to "California and the Territories" in 1872.

**CHICAGO AND NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.**

**TRAIN SERVICE**

THOROUGHLY ORGANIZED.  
FULLY EQUIPPED.

Between  
**CHICAGO**  
ST. PAUL & MINNEAPOLIS,  
COUNCIL BLUFFS & OMAHA,  
DENVER & THE BLACK HILLS,  
& ALL POINTS IN  
**SOUTH DAKOTA**  
COLORADO,  
CALIFORNIA,  
OREGON & WASHINGTON.

It is the pleasure of  
Ticket Agents, at all  
Coupon Stations, on all connecting  
lines to furnish information and  
through tickets over this great  
Highway.

CHICAGO OFFICES  
206 & 208 CLARK ST.



JAMES M. WHITMAN, H. C. WILKINSON, E. P. WILSON  
Gen'l Mgr.      Trf. Mgr.      Asst. Pass. Agt.



OFFICIAL SCORE

18 89

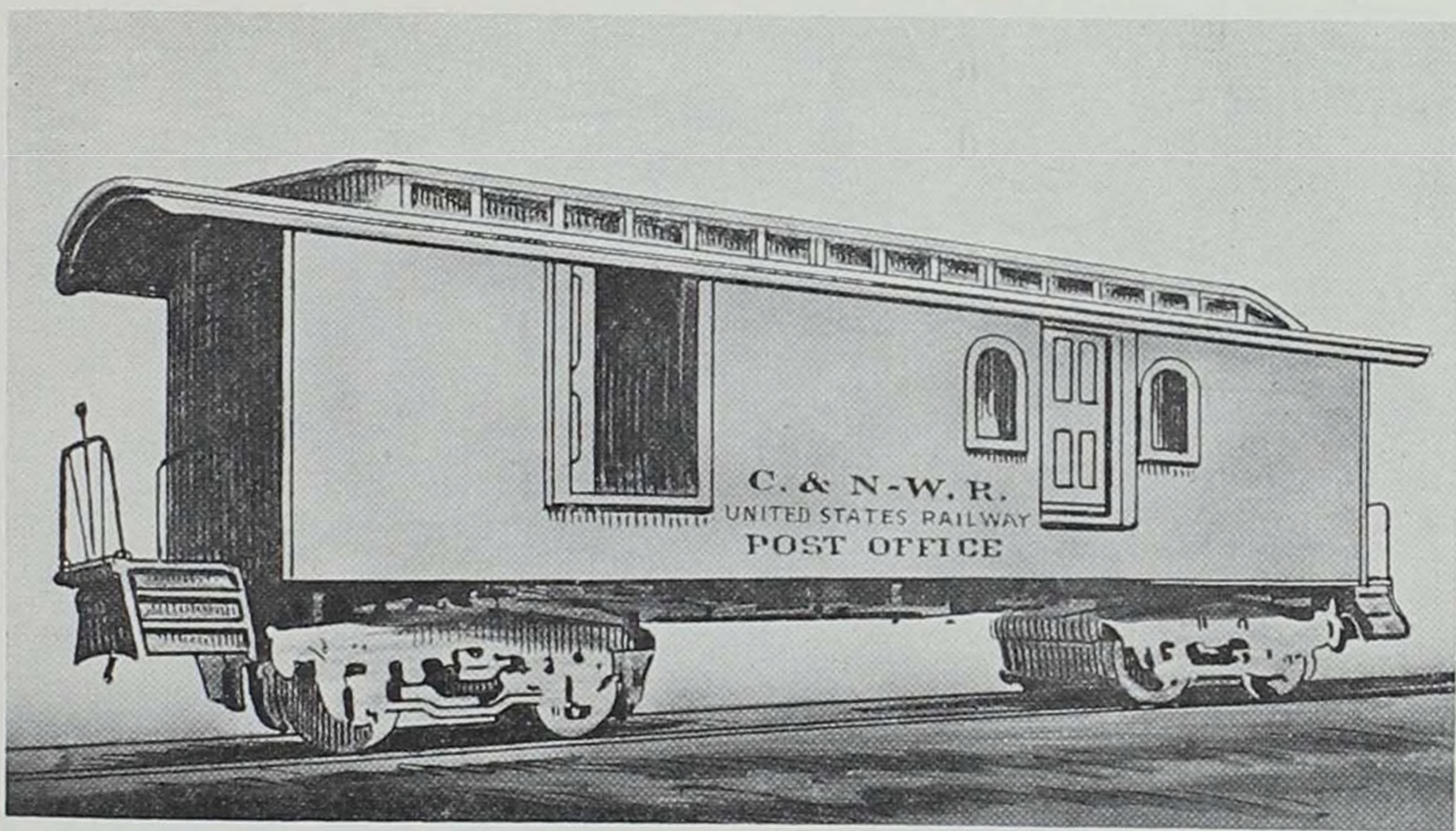
N. TREU PFEIFFER

North Western Railway Photos

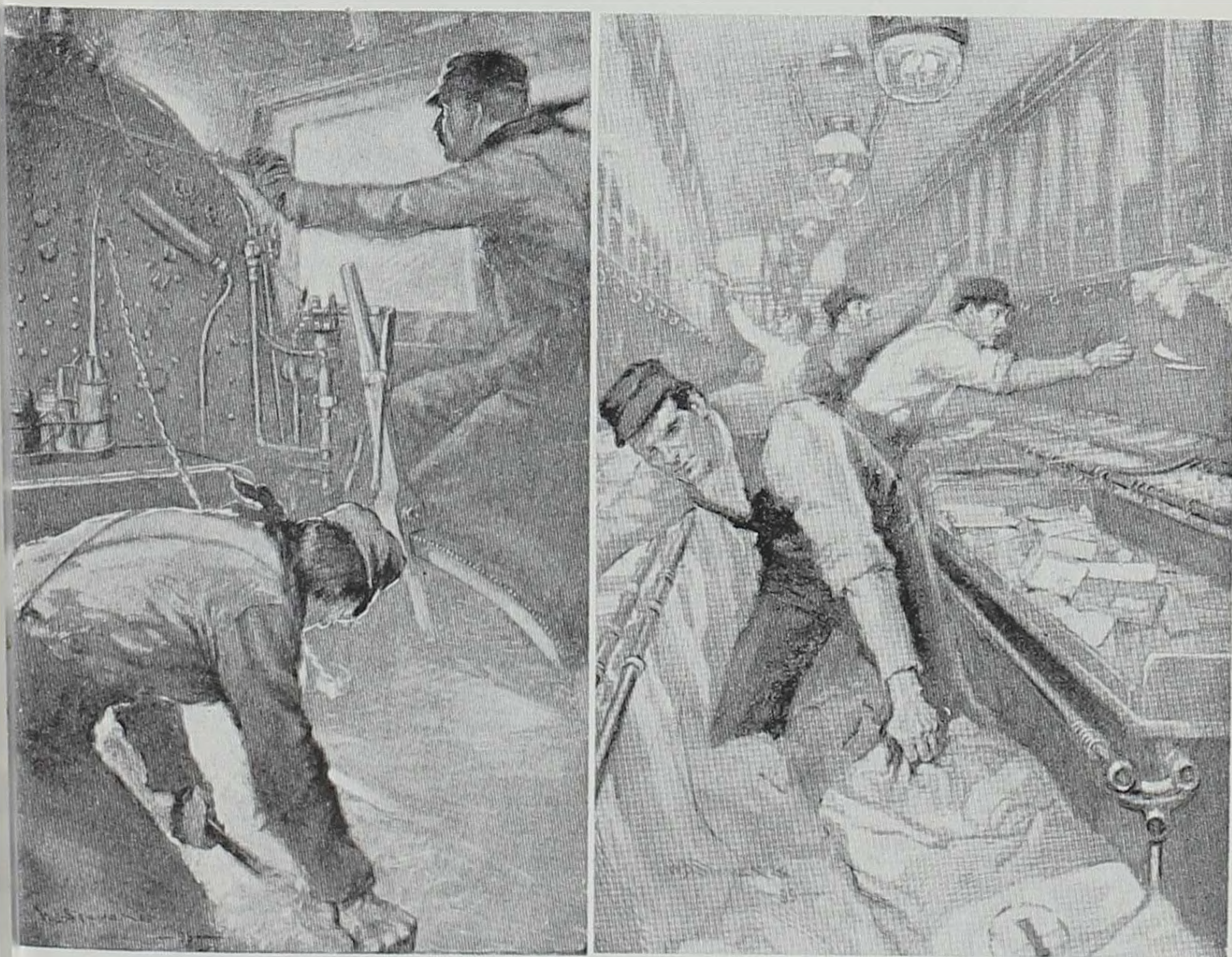
North Western advertisement on back of 20-page baseball score program featuring Chicago White Stockings [Cubs] and New York Giants on September 28, 1889.





*North Western Railway Photo*

Sketch of first Railway Post Office car, a rebuilt baggage car, which made its initial run between Chicago and Clinton on August 28, 1864.

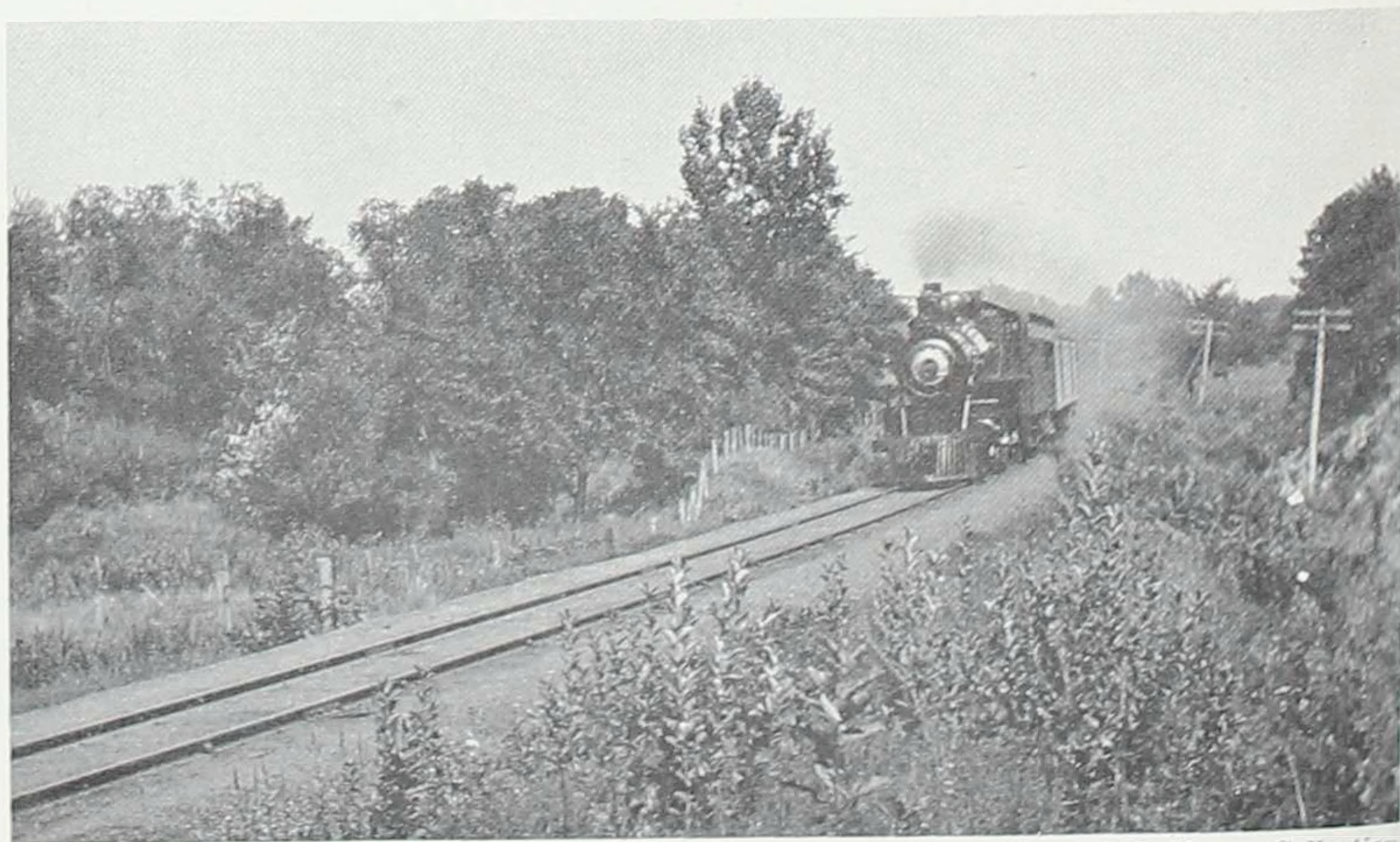


Drawings by W. D. Stevens for article by Cleveland Moffett entitled "At Ninety Miles an hour" in *McClure's Magazine*. The engine room and mailroom depict the struggle between the Burlington and North Western for the "million dollar mail contract."



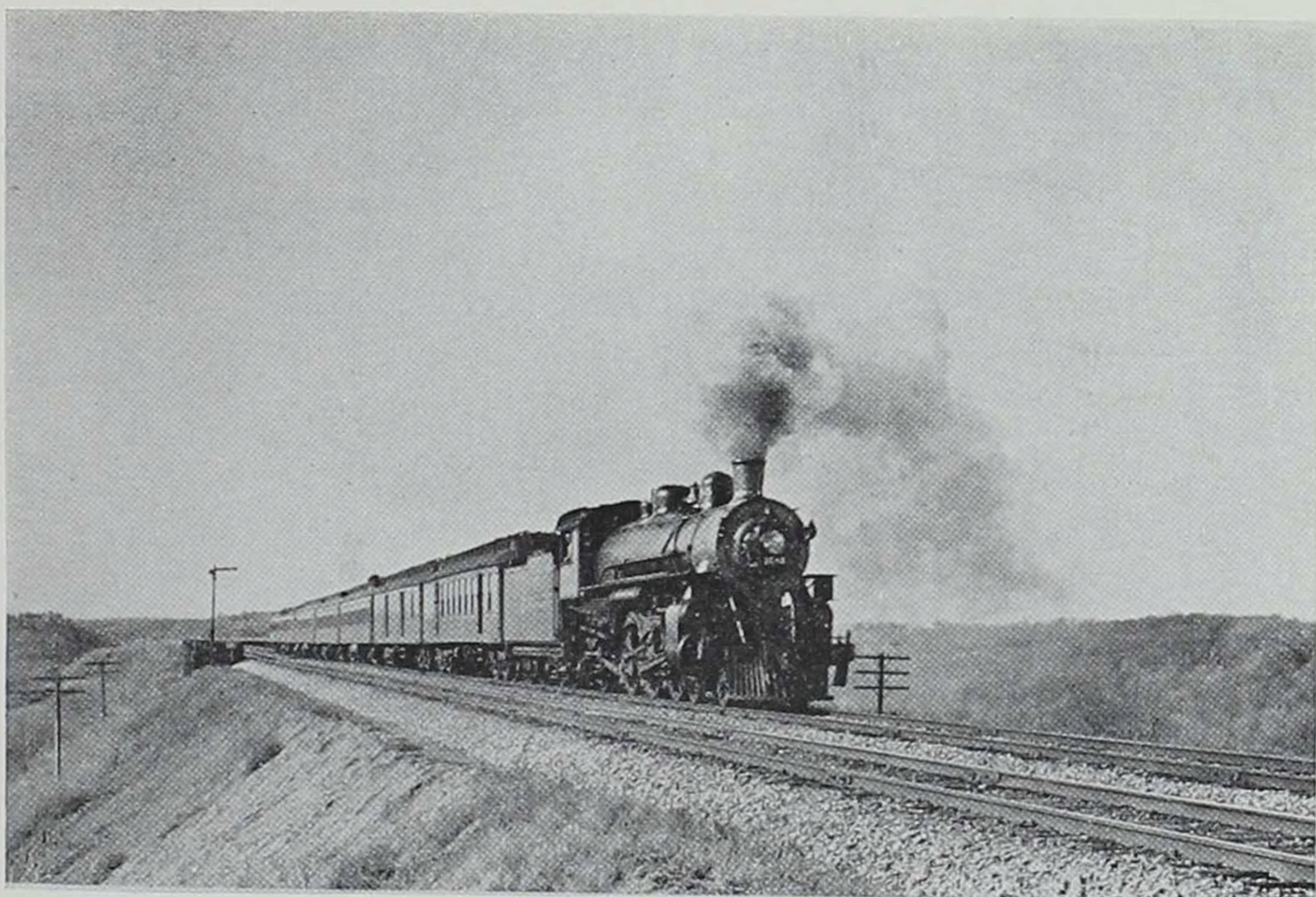


*North Western Railway Photo*  
Station Agent Kate Shelley at her Moingona Station.



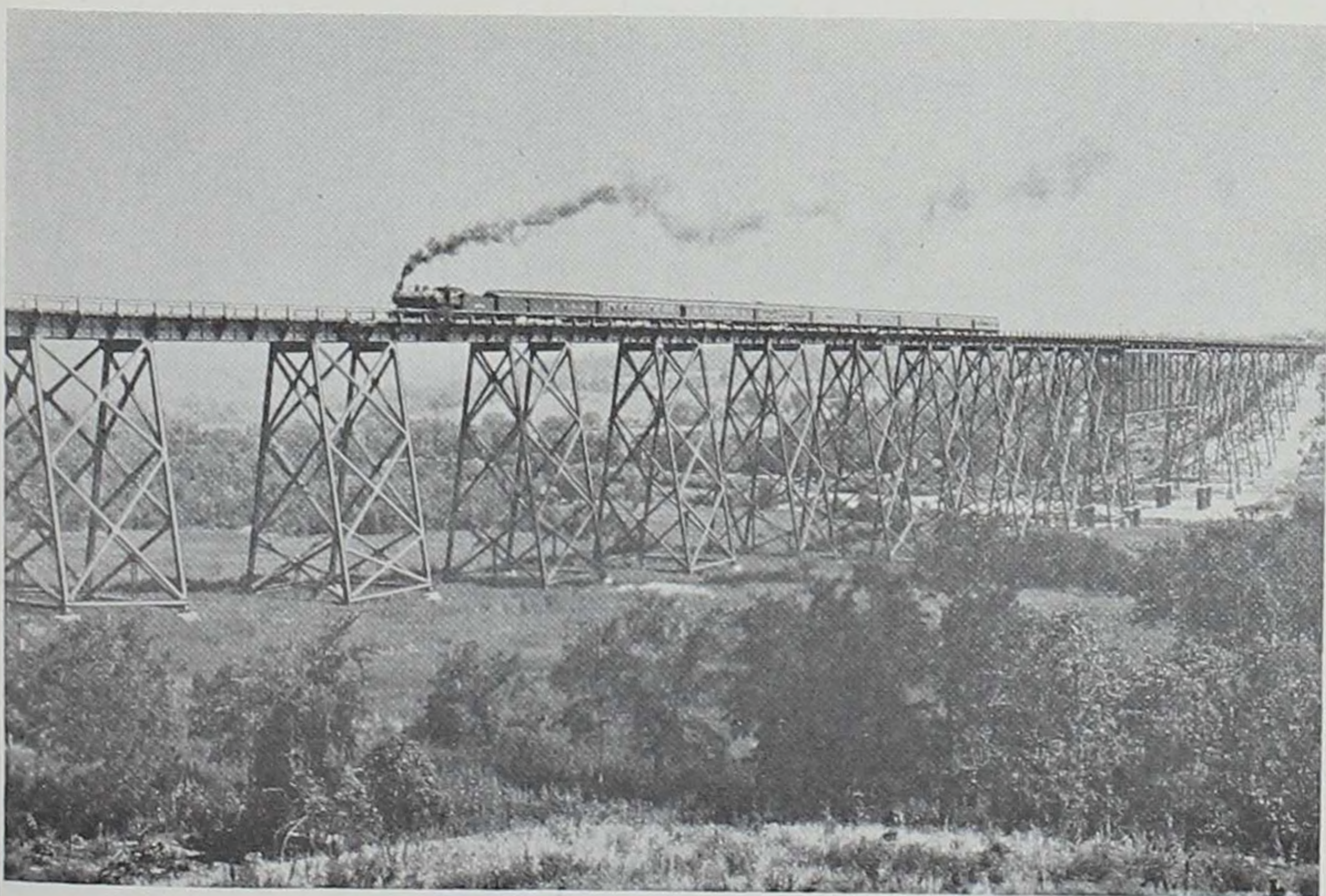
*Edward H. Meyers Collection*  
Old main line through Moingona 1¼ miles south of Boone in 1900.





*Edward H. Meyers Collection*

Eastbound train speeding over high embankment after crossing Kate Shelley bridge in 1912.



*North Western Railway Photo*

Westbound Overland Limited crossing Kate Shelley bridge over Des Moines River in 1901. The American type (4-4-0) locomotive was later relegated to Chicago suburban service.

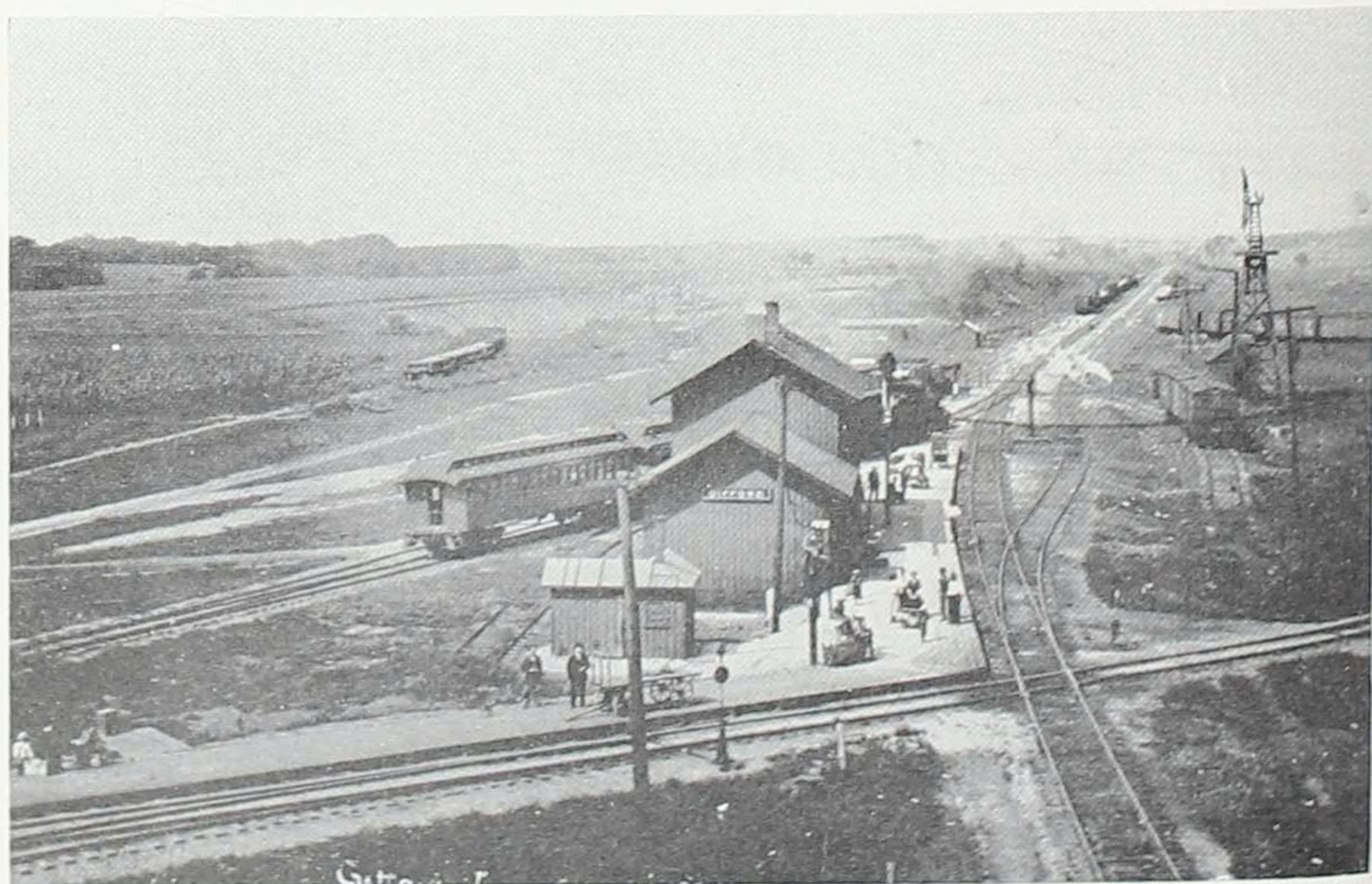




This Photo, taken year of 1879, 10 miles north of Ames, Iowa, was the Des Moines and Minneapolis (Narrow-gauge) Railroad. Now the Chicago and North-western.

*North Western Railway Photo*

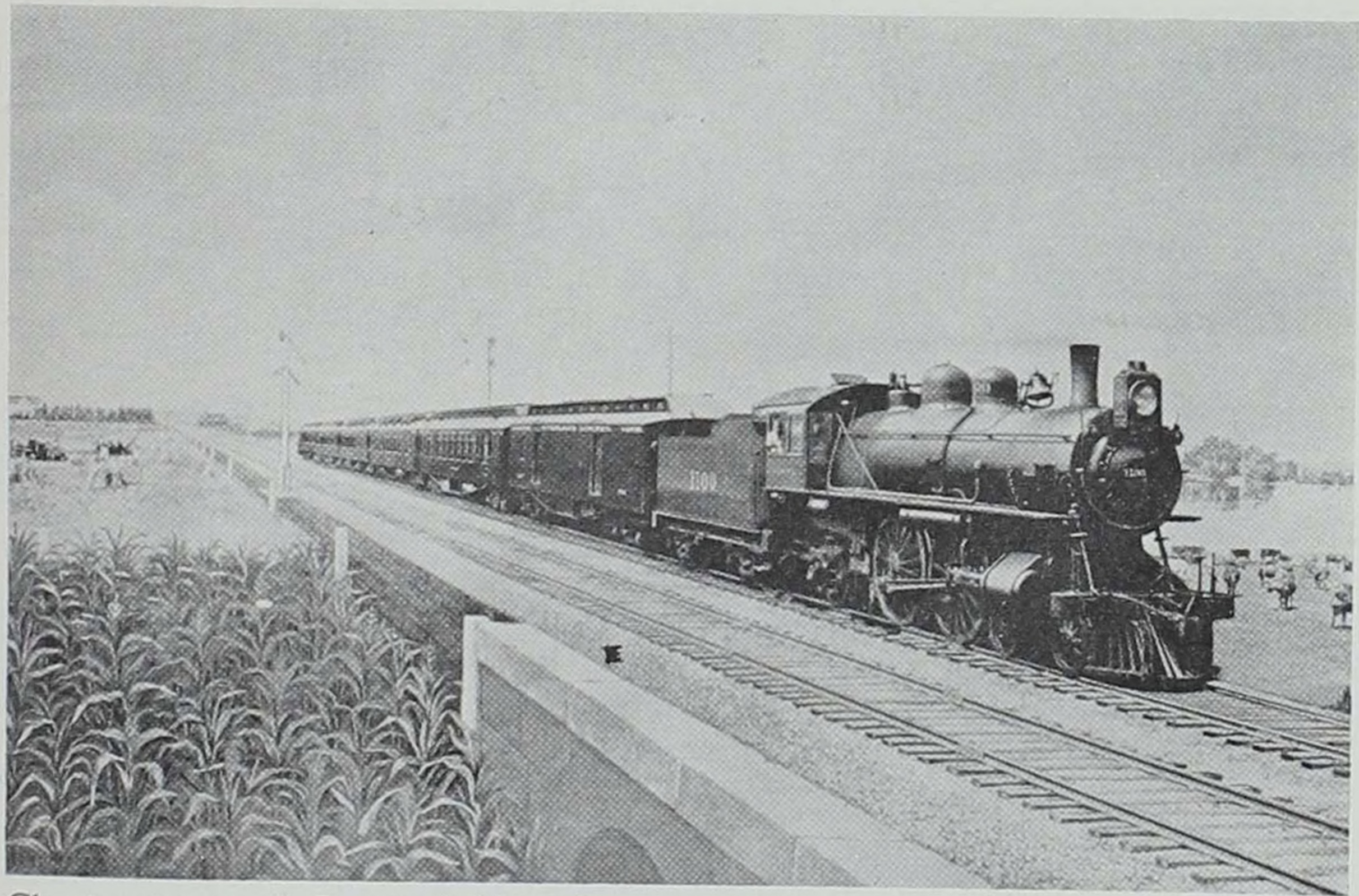
Des Moines and Minneapolis narrow gauge mixed train crossing trestle ten miles north of Ames.



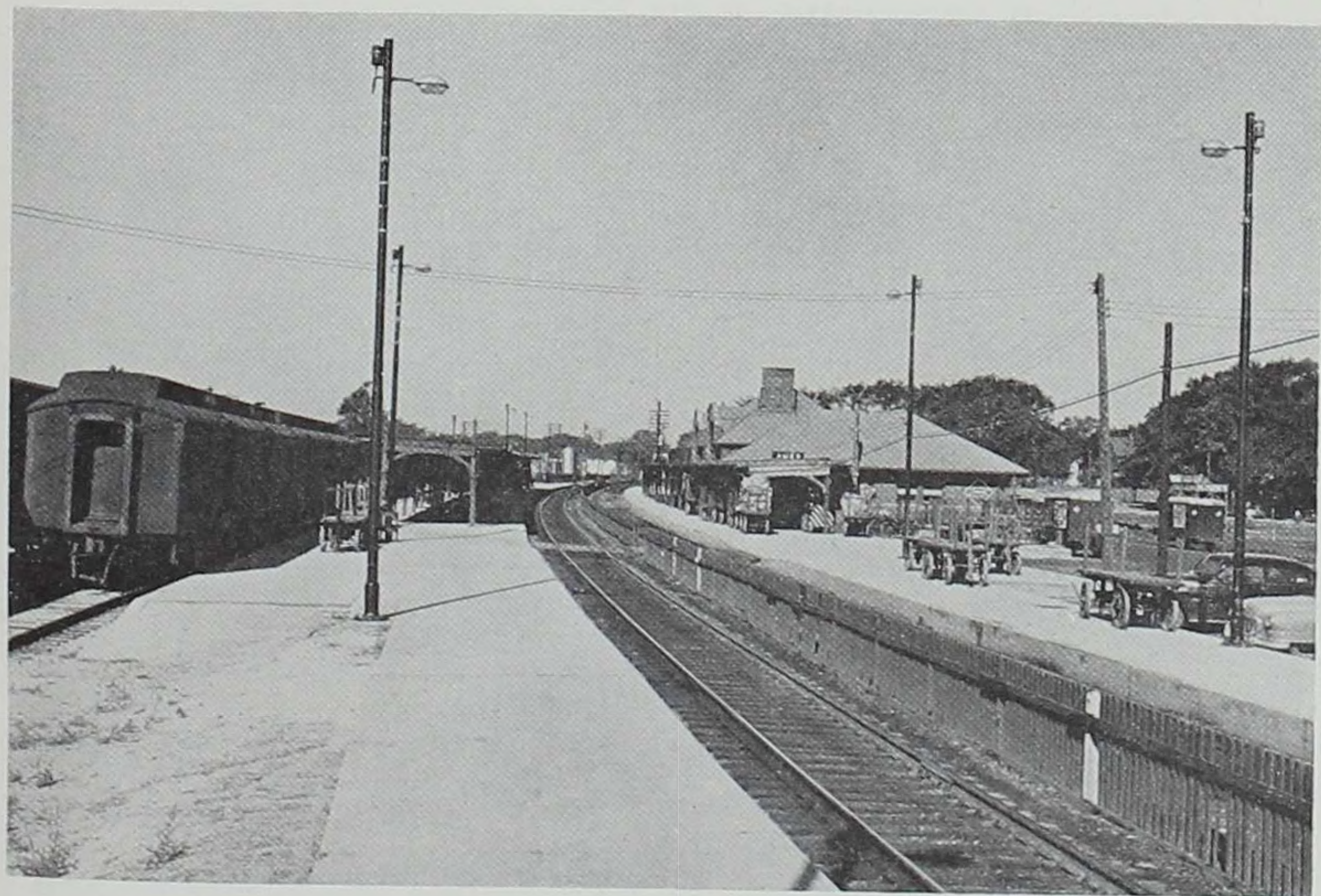
*Edward H. Meyers Collection*

Junction at Gifford showing the North Western's Tama-Wall Lake branch (right) with M. & St. L. main line in foreground.





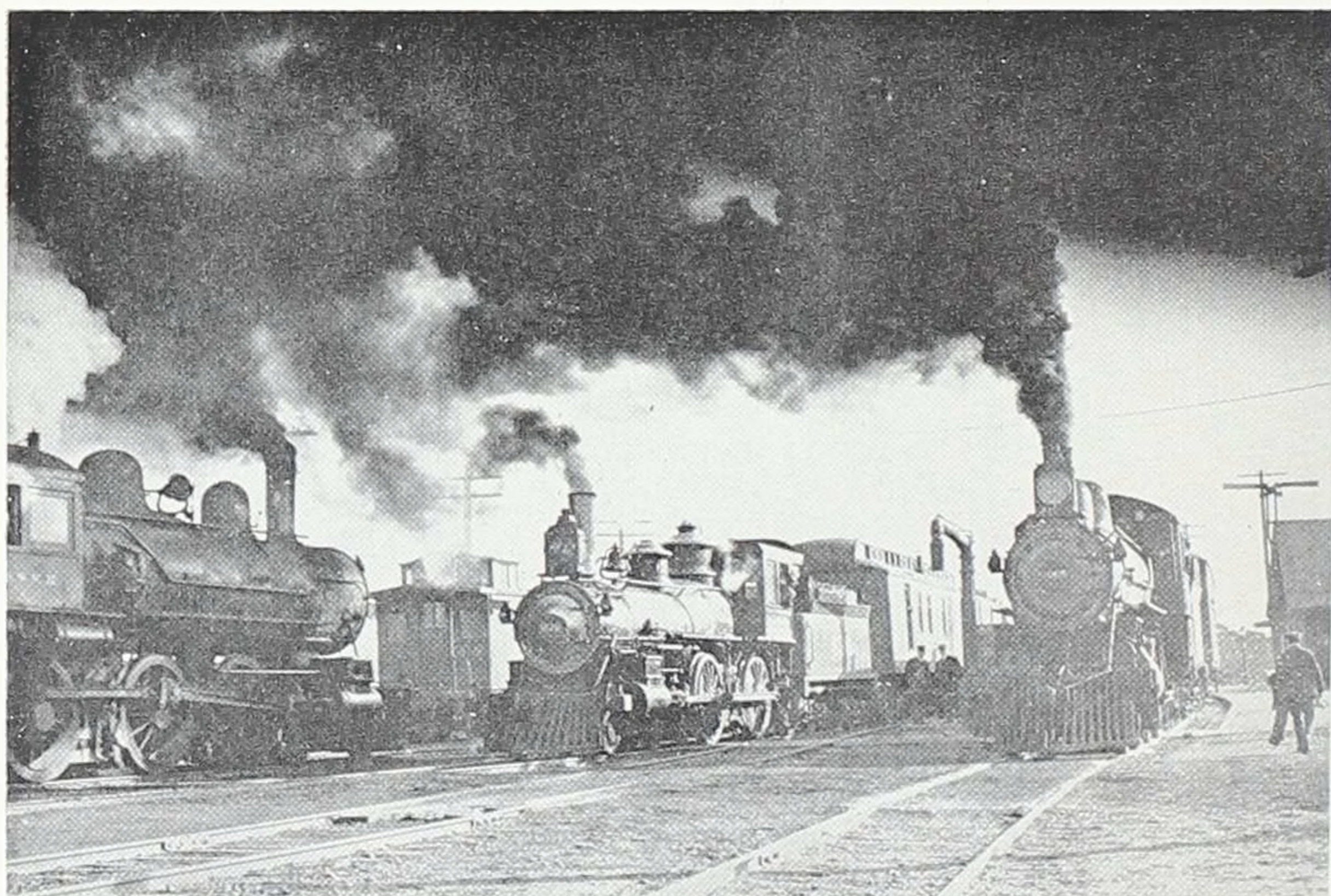
Classic picture of Overland Limited around 1900 showing authentic photo of train superimposed on a painted-in Midwest background.



*North Western Railway Photos*

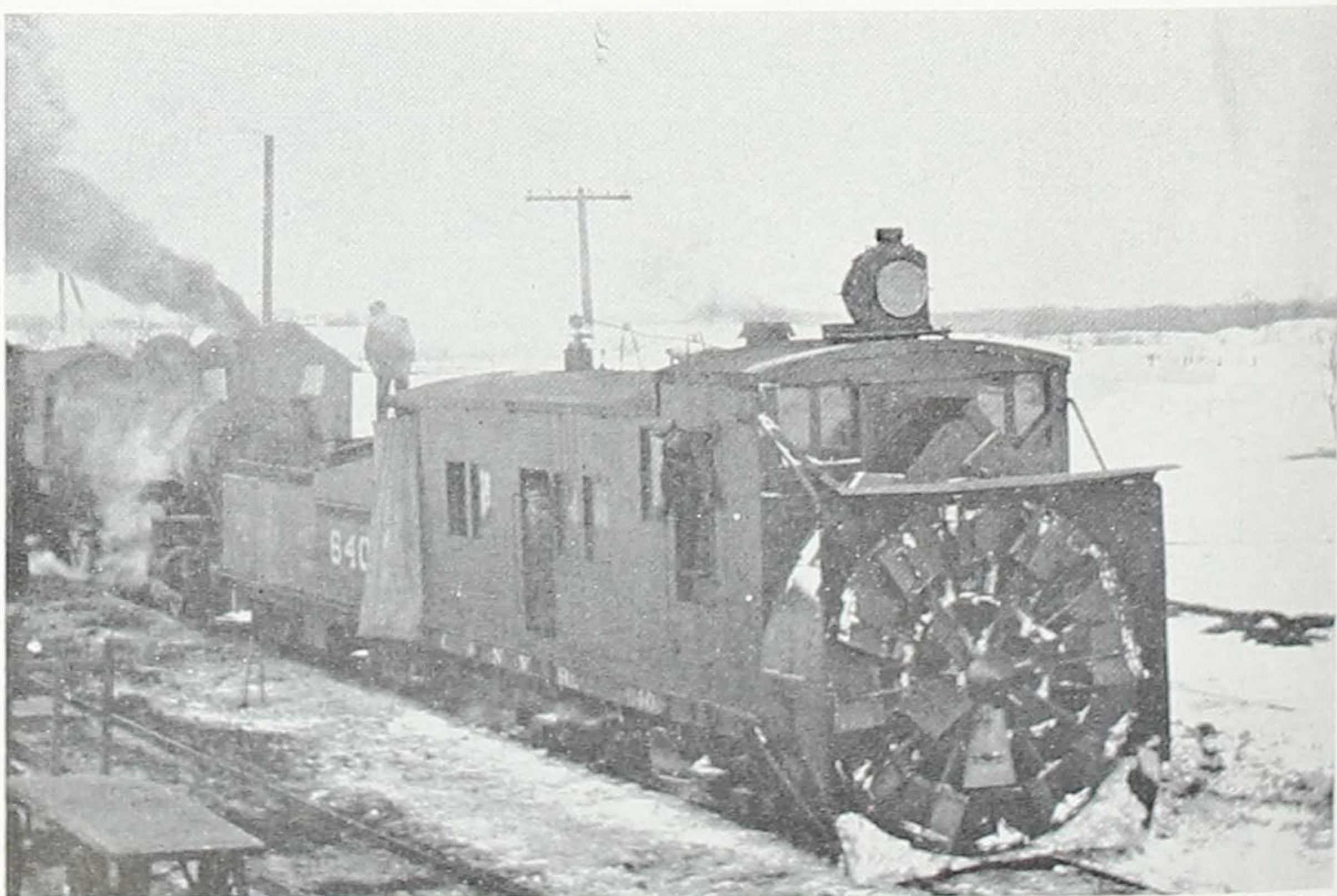
Long trains once stopped at this graceful curve at Ames to discharge thousands of Iowa State College (now University) students each term.





*Edward H. Meyers Collection*

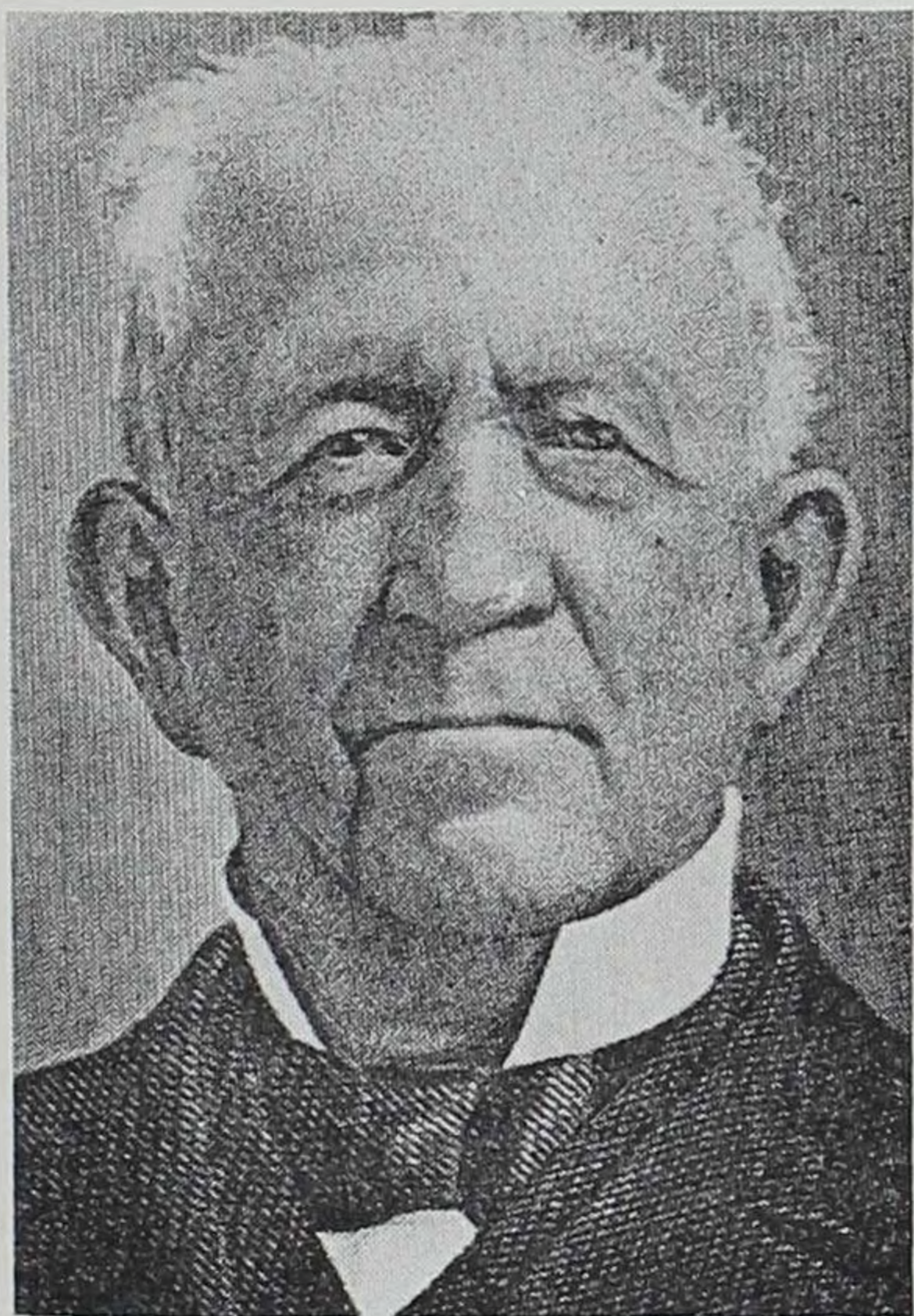
Billowing smoke darkens sky at Jewell while firemen stoke their engines. Jewell has North Western lines going in four directions and formerly had numerous passenger trains.



*Edward H. Meyers Collection*

Rotary plow at Gifford about 1910. White flags on engine indicate it was an extra train, probably recalled after battling drifts along Tama-Wall Lake branch.





*Blairstown Centennial Book*

John I. Blair — builder of the North Western in Iowa and surrounding states.



*North Western Railway Photo*

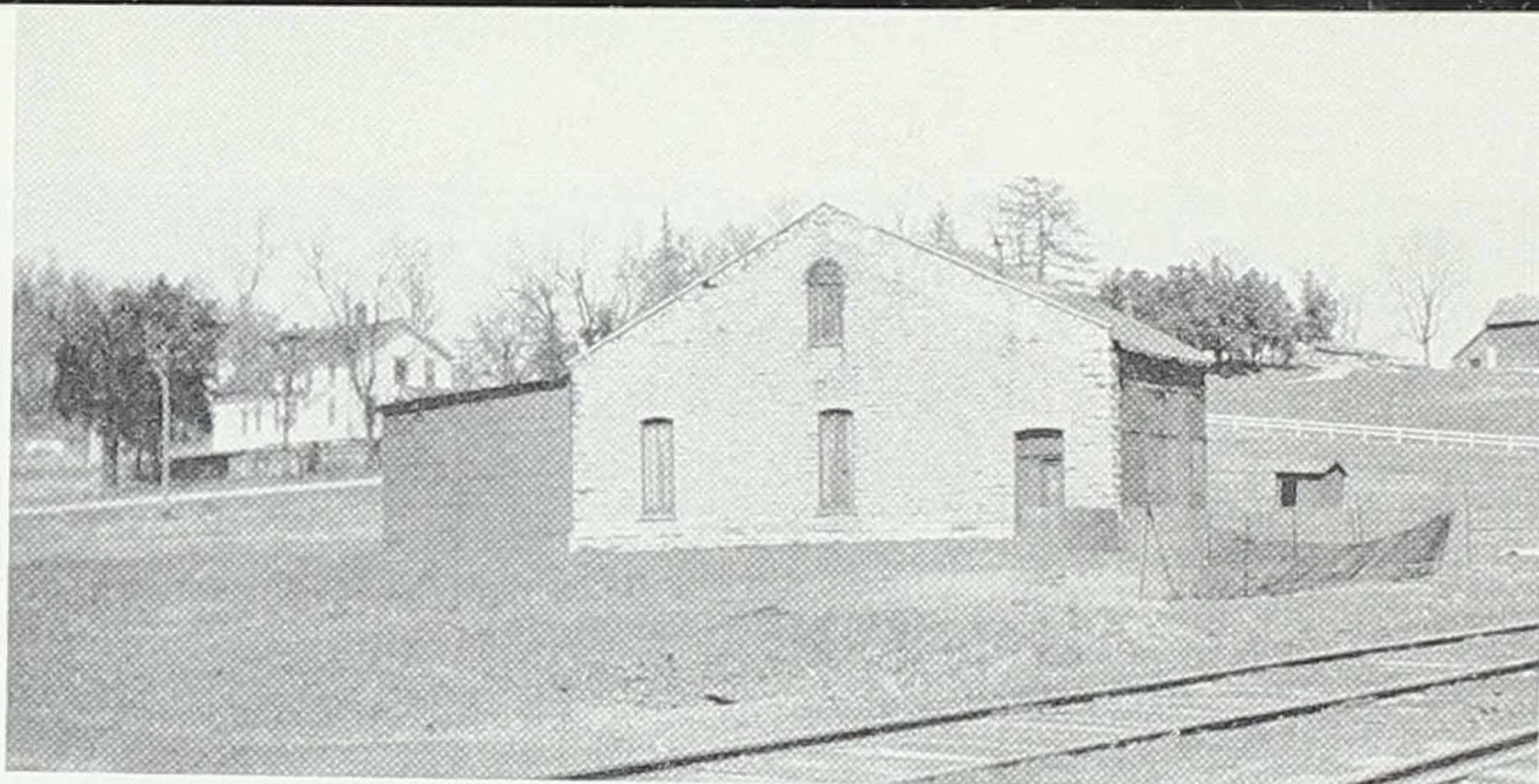
Fred W. Sargent — Iowa-born president of North Western from 1925-1940.



*J. P. Vander Maas Collection*

Wreck at DeWitt on main line early in 19th Century.





*Wm. Armstrong Collection*

Old enginehouse at Anamosa on the abandoned Anamosa-Clinton branch.

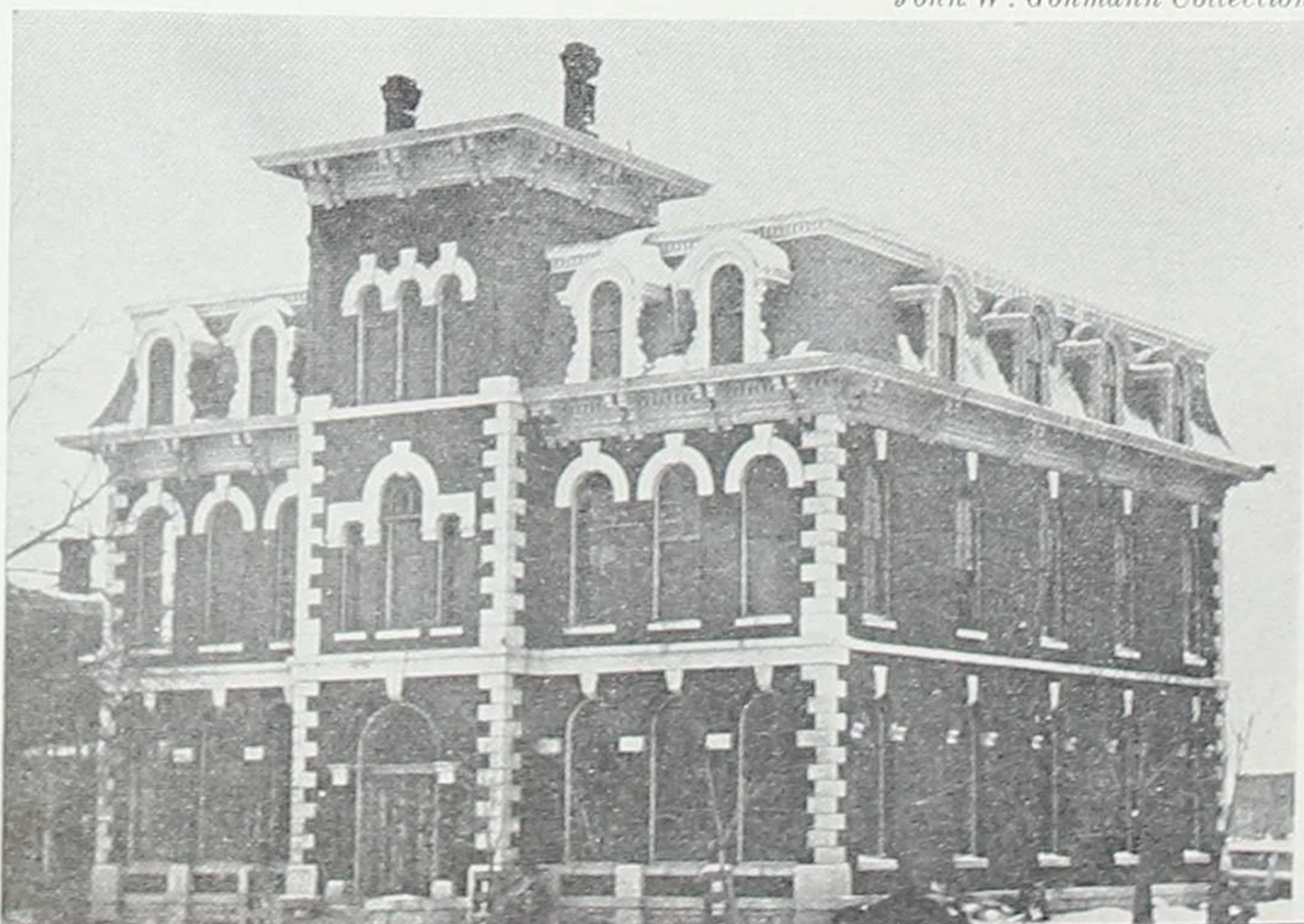


*Wm. Armstrong Collection*

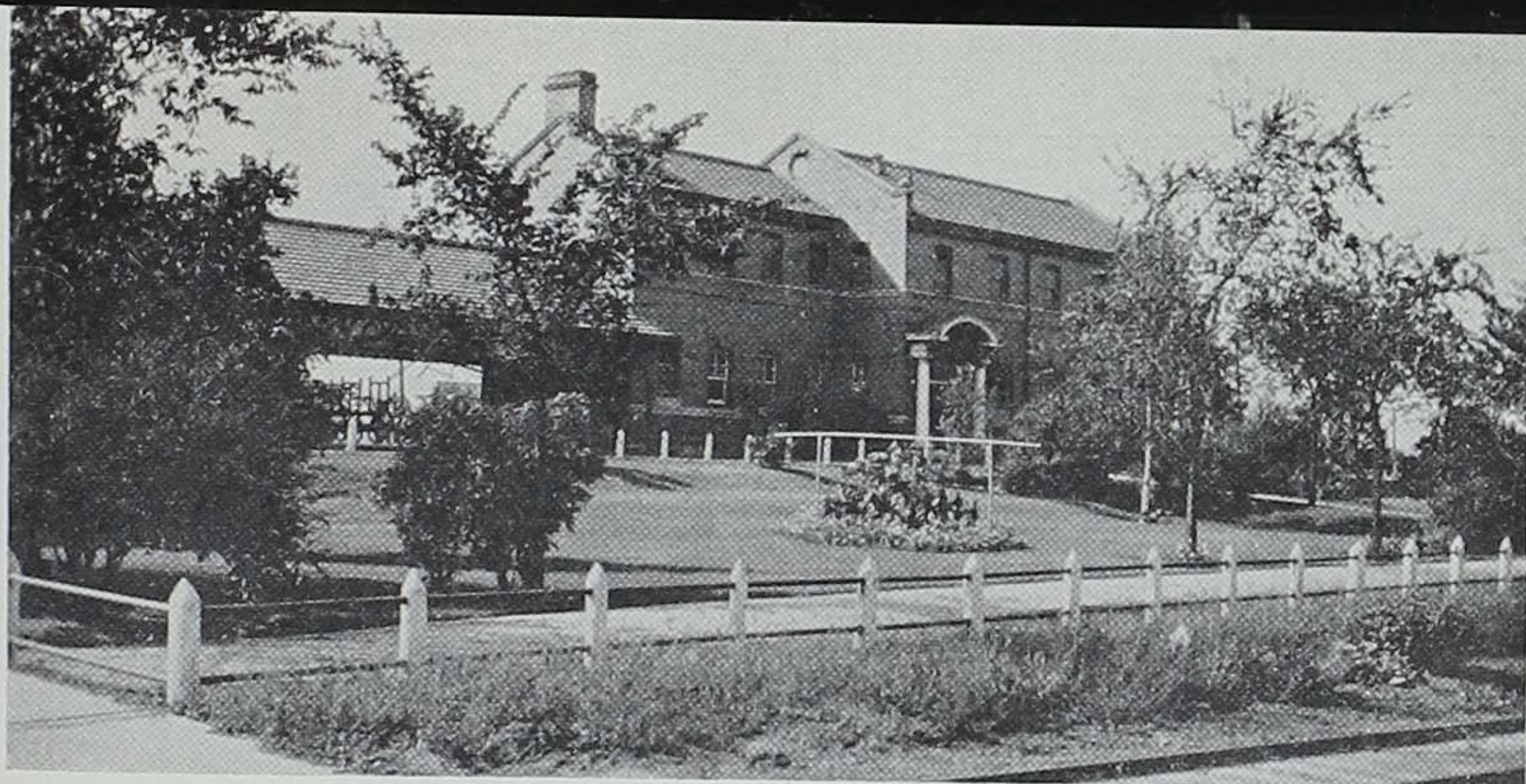
*Above:* Sturdy brick station on the Alden branch at Eldora.

*Below:* Blair Building in Cedar Rapids. Headquarters of John I. Blair's railroads. Built in 1869; razed in 1889.

*John W. Gohmann Collection*

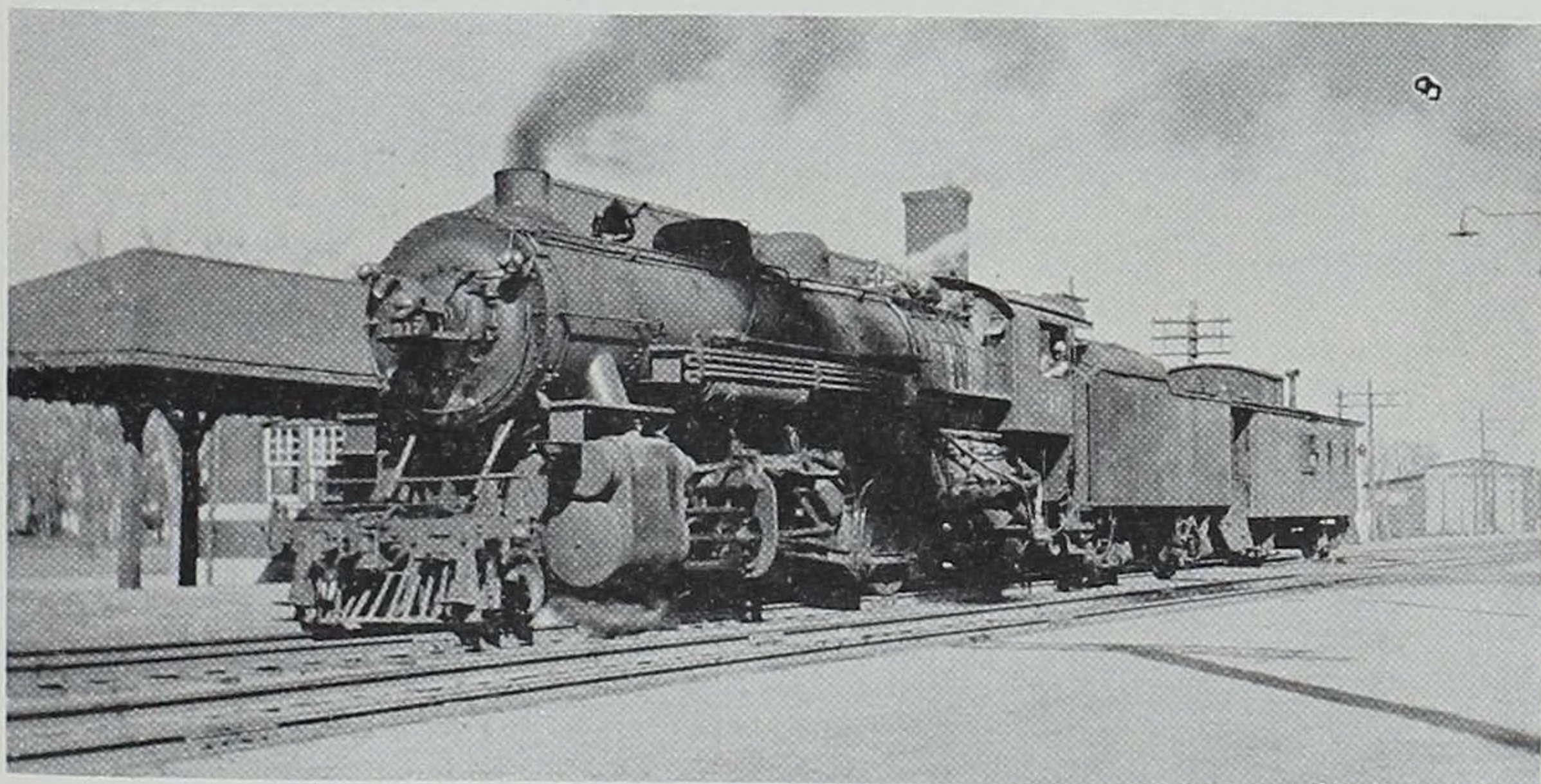






*Wm. Armstrong Collection*

North Western Station at Mason City in 1914. This became Division Office on M. & St. L. in October, 1962.



*Wm. Armstrong Collection*

Above: "Caboose hop" at the Nevada station. Engine is powerful 2-4-2 type.  
Below: Boone station and Iowa Division headquarters.

*Mrs. Guy Mills Collection*



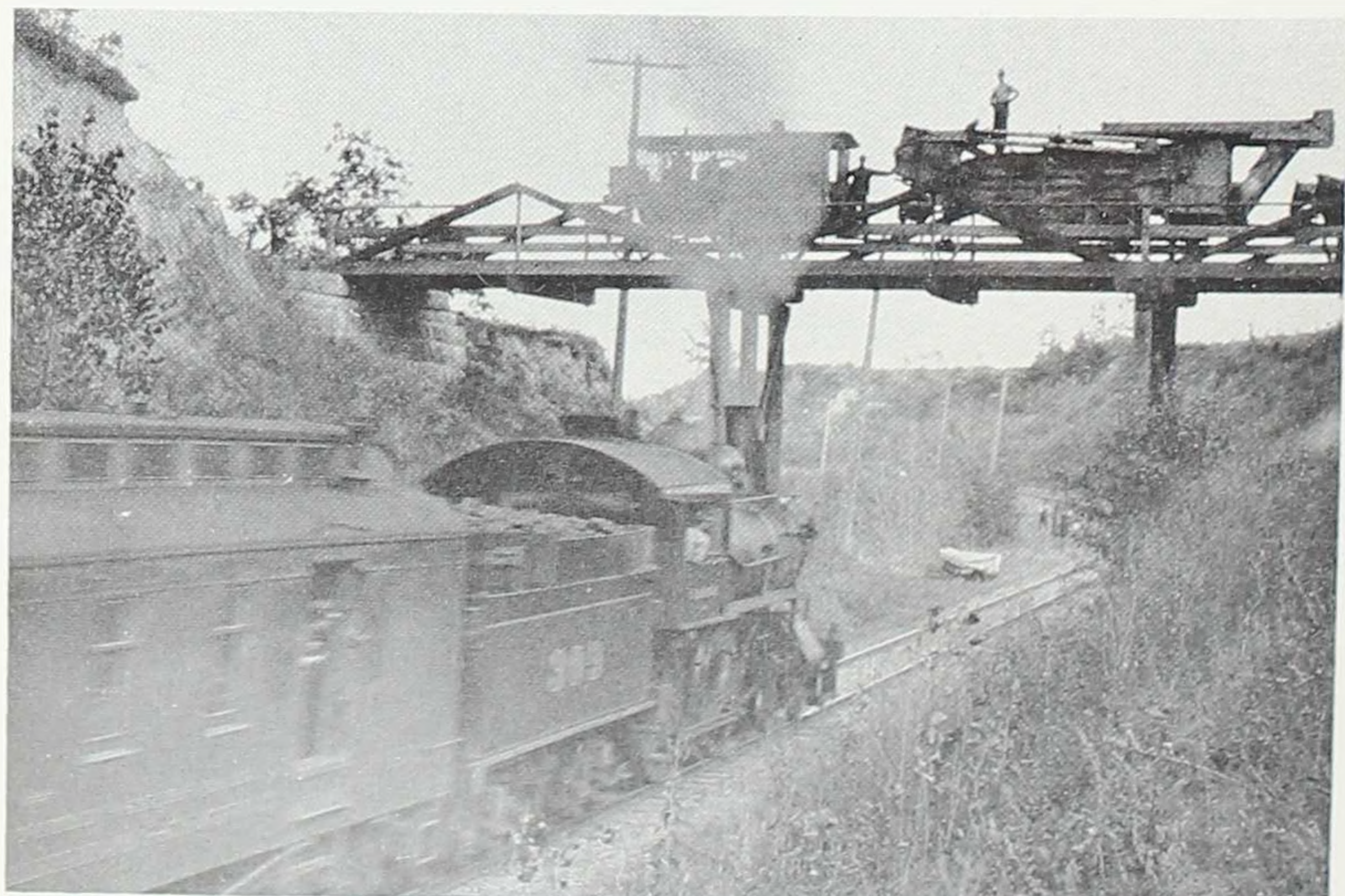
P. J. Bu S.W. Miller





*North Western Railway Photo*

Freight train leaving Council Bluffs yards — Chicago-bound.



*Edward H. Meyers Collection*

North Western mail train #3 speeding west of Stratford toward Wall Lake in 1913. Note section hands standing aside while steam tractor operator pauses on bridge to watch train.





*Edward H. Meyers Collection*

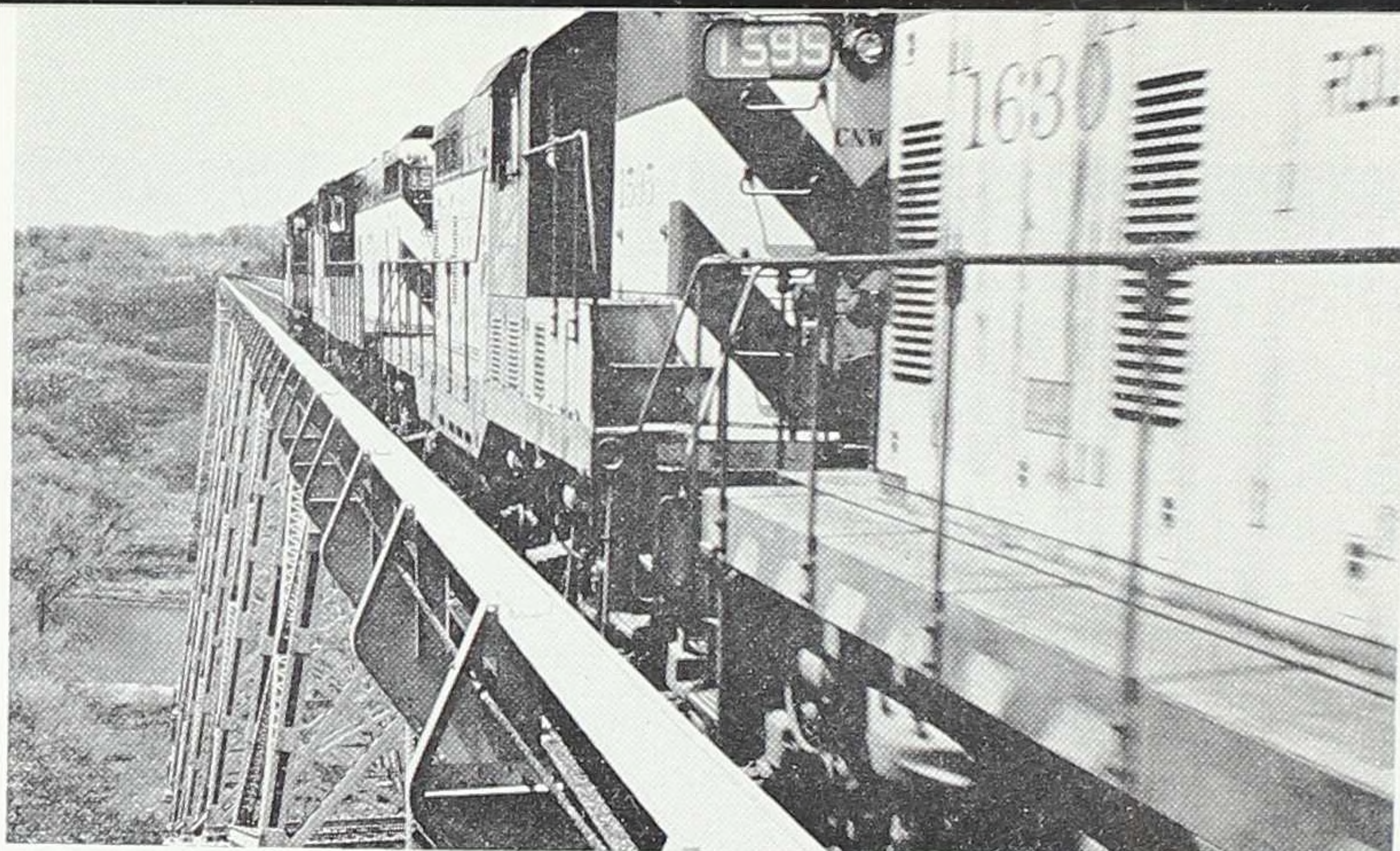
Now leaving on Track One! Five o'clock train ready to leave North Western's stub-end Sioux City station in 1913 — probably the Des Moines local.



*North Western Railway Photo*

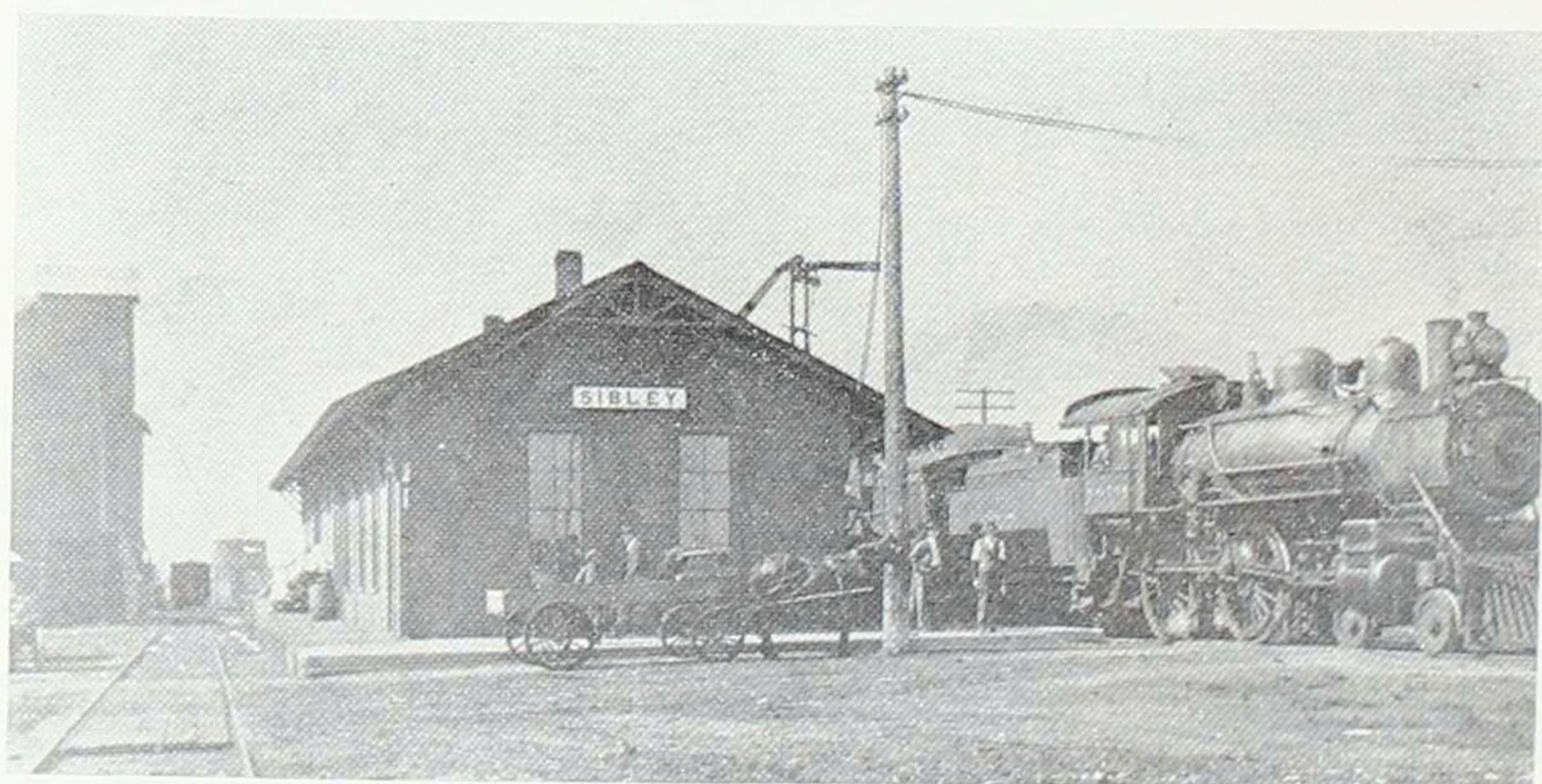
North Western passenger train rounding curve near Council Bluffs.





*North Western Railway Photo*

Time freight crossing Kate Shelley bridge on modern double tracks.

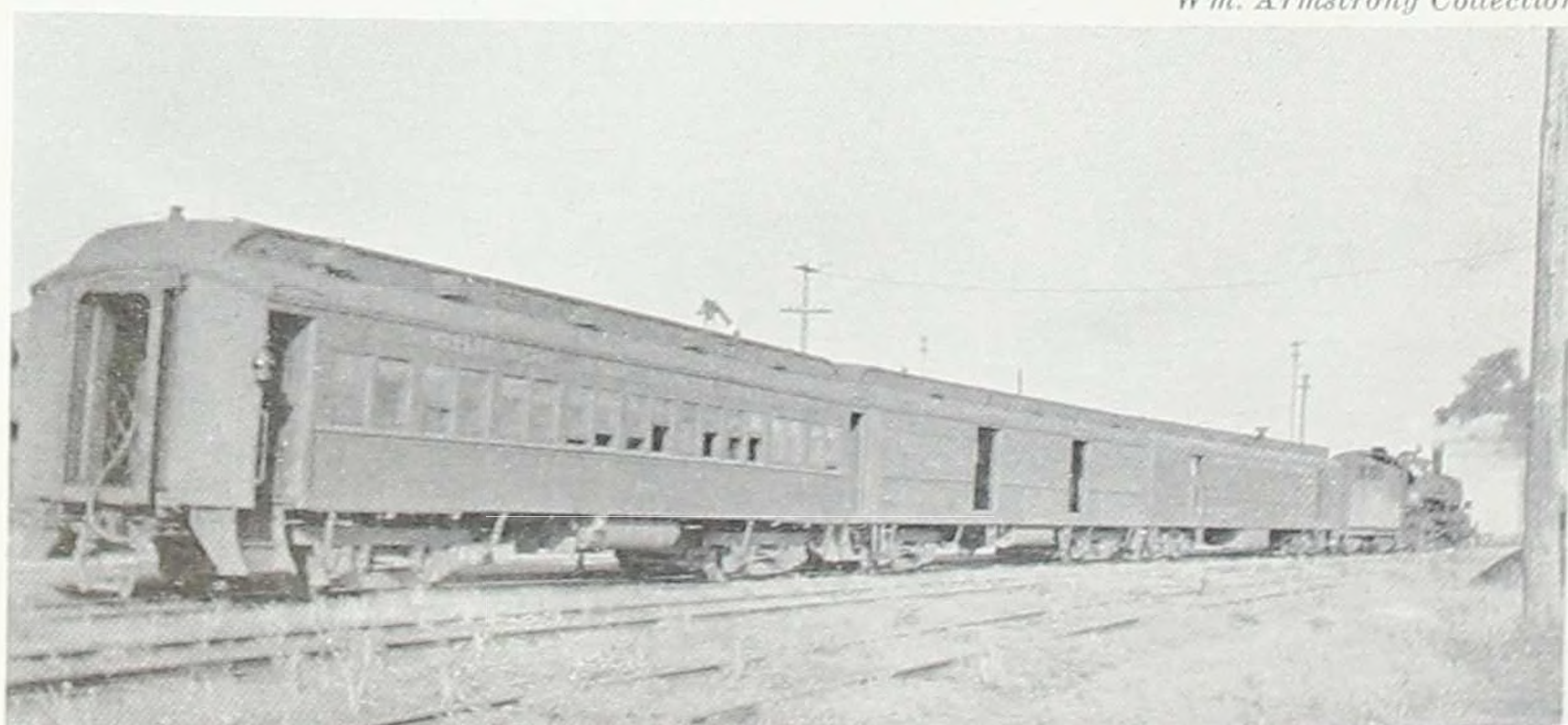


*Basil Koob Collection*

*Above:* High-wheel American type engine at Sibley on Omaha Road in 1908.

*Below:* Typical branch line local during last year (1953) of passenger service on the Hawarden branch at Jewell.

*Wm. Armstrong Collection*







*Edward H. Meyers Collection*

Motor car with coach waiting for the "highball" at Jewell Junction.



*Wm. Armstrong Collection*

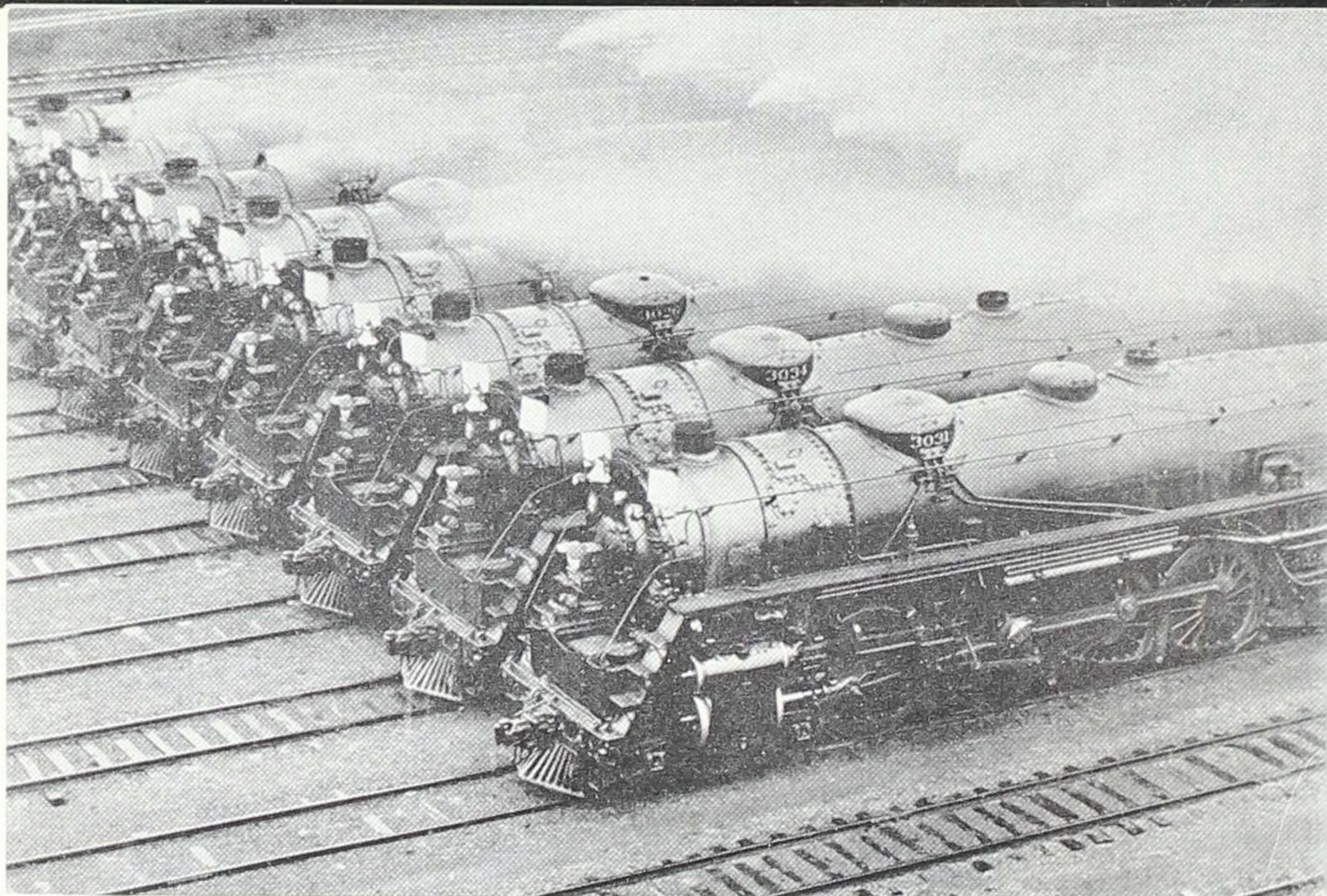
*Above:* Last run of the North American leaving Council Bluffs for the Twin Cities on October 24, 1959.

*Below:* A familiar scene re-enacted in Boone when the Milwaukee Road detoured UP streamliners over the North Western due to mud slide near Dedham in March, 1962.

*Edward H. Meyers Collection*



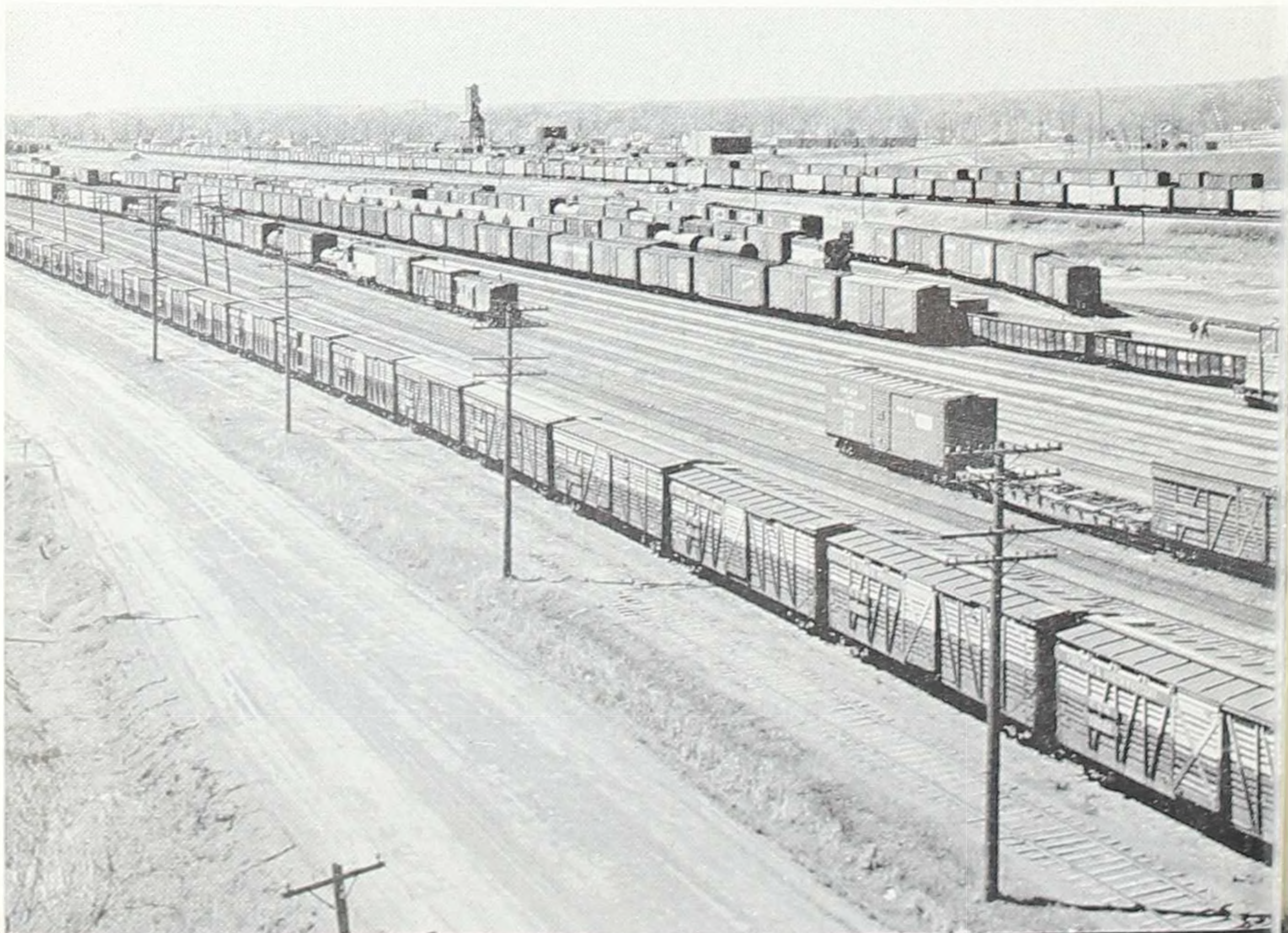




A fleet of the famous Class H engines lined up at Chicago. Built by Baldwin in 1929, they were the pride of the North Western, and were put on display in Iowa and elsewhere before going into regular service.

Chicago and North Western Yards at Council Bluffs.

*North Western Railway Photos*





Blair is said to have laid out more than eighty townsites. He is known to have personally named at least twenty communities in Iowa. Among these are Ames, Belle Plaine and Ogden. The first is named after his friend, backer and Union Pacific official, Oakes Ames; the second is believed to be in honor of his granddaughter, Isabelle Scribner, whose father was Charles Scribner, the publisher; and the last is a tribute to Chicago's first mayor and first president of the North Western, William B. Ogden.

Others include Scranton (Green County), probably named after his two early New Jersey business associates, George W. and Selden T. Scranton; Whiting (Monona County) named for Judge Charles E. Whiting, a local farmer; and Colo (Story County), so called from a child's pronunciation of Carlo, the favorite dog of a person who owned land on which the station was built. All are on the North Western.

Blair was a man of simple tastes. A teetotaler, he inserted clauses in deeds of lots he sold prohibiting the vending or manufacture of liquor. A staunch Presbyterian, Blair, by donating land and money, helped build more than one hundred churches of all communions on his townsites. He is estimated to have given \$5,000,000 to charitable and educational institutions. When Iowa College (now Grinnell) was demolished by the tornado of 1882, Blair contributed to its restoration.



At one time Blair headed sixteen railroads. His Western holdings were scattered in Wisconsin, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Dakota and Texas, to say nothing of Iowa. In spite of being a millionaire, the poverty of his youth made him frugal and almost parsimonious. A story is told of Blair's having had a meal at a restaurant on one of his Iowa lines leased to the North Western. The owner of the eating house told him the price was fifty cents. Blair brought out a quarter instead. After some altercation, the vendor admitted the charge to railroad men was twenty-five cents. "I am a railroad man," snapped Blair. "I own this road!" and he walked out angrily.

A person of remarkable vitality, he is reputed to have taken "two steps at a time" when going upstairs. Attired in a Prince Albert coat, a white waistcoat and a beaver hat, under which he sometimes carried his papers, Blair made many trips to personally supervise his railroad holdings. When in his sixties he used to travel up to 40,000 miles a year. At eighty-five, however, he was obliged to reduce this to 20,000. Never afraid of work, Blair, at ninety-two, was often at his desk at 5:30 a. m. He died in 1899 at ninety-seven.

Blairstown, in Benton County, one of the smallest Iowa towns on the railroad having the largest mileage in the state, honors a man who had come from a tiny village to build one of the biggest Midwestern railroad systems!



## Prosperous Years

From 1887, when Marvin Hughitt became president, until his death in January, 1928, the North Western was regarded as a Hughitt road. Hughitt's ability and his prodigious capacity for work had been demonstrated while on the Illinois Central. As a youthful superintendent on that road he had sat for thirty-six continuous hours at the telegraph key dispatching troop trains southward through Cairo to reinforce the hard-pressed Union forces at Corinth. Then, after a few hours sleep, he took the key for *another* thirty-six gruelling hours to move the same troops to a different battlefield.

Marvin Hughitt began railroading on the St. Louis, Alton & Chicago Railroad (Chicago & Alton). Later he went with the Illinois Central. Then he switched to the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, and just before coming to the North Western he was for a short time superintendent of the Pullman Palace Car Company. As we have seen, Hughitt rose rapidly on the North Western. Under his firm guiding hand the railroad prospered. Hughitt had two dominating interests in life — his family and his railroad. For twenty-three years he shaped the policies of the



North Western as its president. When made board chairman in 1910 he, as elder statesman, still ran the railroad. Even as chairman of the finance committee from 1925 to his death at nearly 91, his consuming interest was the Chicago & North Western.

During his tenure as president, and later as board chairman, the North Western's mileage was virtually doubled. Under his direction the main line across Iowa had been double tracked by 1902. Like the main stem in Illinois, trains operated on the left hand track as is customary in Great Britain. Contrary to popular belief it was a matter of economy and not the influence of English investors which led to "southpaw" operation. Most of the stations being on the north side of the original single track line, it was cheaper to add another track to the south. By reversing the normal direction of traffic the depots could remain intact and passengers could buy tickets without crossing the track before boarding trains for Chicago.

The most spectacular improvement in this period was building "the longest, highest double-track railroad bridge in the world" over the Des Moines River near Boone. Opened in 1901, the 2,685-foot structure, known as the Kate Shelley Viaduct, rose 184 feet above the beautiful valley. Completion of the bridge marked the use of the 7.25-mile cut-off built by the Boone County Railway Company. This eliminated the longer single



track line through Moingona with its steeper grade and greater curvature. It also did away with "pusher" operation. The older line, on which the immortal Kate Shelley's signal saved victims from a washed out railroad bridge, was later abandoned.

This brings us to the legend of Kate Shelley. What Casey Jones is to folksong and John Henry is to Negro folkways, Kate Shelley is to American railroad heroines. All three were railroaders, and their stories are founded on fact. But their exploits have transcended actual happenings to emerge into ballad and folklore, adding luster and shedding fact. Here, however, are the known facts of Iowa's famous woman and the nation's most popular railroad heroine.

Kate Shelley, daughter of a North Western section foreman, was born on a farm near Moingona September 25, 1865. After the death of her father, Kate with her two sisters and brother remained at home helping her mother run the farm and support the family. On July 6, 1881, a violent storm swept the Des Moines Valley and fifteen-year-old Kate was obliged to get the livestock out of the stable, which was partly flooded by the waters of Honey Creek. As the rain increased in fury Kate became very apprehensive. She feared driftwood in the creek and in the nearby Des Moines River would back up against the railroad bridges and undermine them.



Just before midnight the frightened girl heard a "pusher" engine going east. As it neared the Shelley farm she noted an eerie tolling of the bell, a crash and a hissing of steam. Kate sensed at once the locomotive must have plunged from the Honey Creek bridge. If so, who would flag No. 4, the *Atlantic Express*, due shortly from the west? It was up to her!

She hurriedly put on a hat and coat, grabbed a lantern and ran to the bridge. Part of the structure remained, but the engine was in the creek. Clinging to driftwood were Ed Wood, the engineer, and Adam Egar, a brakeman. Others in the crew had perished in the raging creek. Seeing she could not help them, Kate went to seek aid — and to flag the express. To do so she had to cross the Des Moines River on the railroad bridge above the rushing water. Her lantern had since gone out, and she groped along the ties on her hands and knees in the dark. The wind almost blew her from the structure; and she was afraid lest any minute the express would bear down on her. But courageous Kate finally made it. She then sped down the track to the depot at Moingona.

Nearly exhausted and half-coherent from fright, Kate told her story to the operator. Summoning all her energy, she later went back with willing railroaders on another engine to help rescue Wood and Egar from the swirling currents of Honey Creek. Kate subsequently became ill from



her terrible ordeal, and it was three months before she fully recuperated. By this time all America knew of her heroic deed.

Not content with her truly remarkable feat, legend has it she reached Moingona just in time to have the operator snatch a red lantern and flag the express. Some accounts say she stopped the midnight flyer herself. But careful research by Edward H. Meyers of Boone explodes this myth. In "The True Story of Kate Shelley" in October, 1957, *Trains*, Meyers points out there was a "hold order" set up as a precautionary measure. Eastward trains were held at Scranton, some 40 miles west of Moingona, and westward trains at Marshalltown, about 60 miles from where Kate contacted the telegraph operator. Furthermore, a bridge at Coal Valley, just west of Moingona, was also washed out.

At any rate, Kate Shelley's name has gone down for posterity. The Iowa State legislature awarded her a gold medal and \$200; the Order of Railway Conductors gave her a gold watch; and the Chicago *Tribune* raised a fund to help the Shelley family. In Dubuque a statue was erected in her memory, and the school children of that community presented her with a medal. The grateful railroad made her the agent at Moingona in 1903, and she continued working there almost up to her death on January 21, 1912. Her name is currently being perpetuated by The Kate Shelley



Award given yearly by *Modern Railroads* to individual women and groups of women for outstanding achievement in American railroading.

Many poems have been written about this brave Iowan. One of the best was penned by the well-known Iowa writer MacKinlay Kantor. Titled "The Ballad of Kate Shelley," and first published in the *Chicago Daily News*, the poem ends as follows:

But if you go to Honey Creek in some dark summer storm,  
Be sure to take a lantern flame to keep your spirit warm.  
For there will be a phantom train, and foggy whistle cries—  
And in the lightning flare you'll see Kate Shelley on the ties.

Along with double tracking of the main line, considerable track relocation took place, resulting in more favorable grades and reduced curvature. The remains of the old lines may still be seen in several places by sharp-eyed observers even today.

Another major improvement was replacing the old single-track Mississippi River Bridge with a two-track structure. The new span was built between 1907 and 1909. It consisted of eight lattice truss spans and one Pratt truss across the east channel of the river. The narrower west channel is crossed by three spans: one of through riveted lattice, another of through Pratt truss and a third being a through 460-foot pin-connected swing span. The sturdy modern structure is a few feet south of the original bridge.

In 1886 the Linn County Railway Company



was organized to by-pass the congested Cedar Rapids area. It resulted in rebuilding a six-mile cut-off between Otis and Beverly, thereby speeding up freight operation.

Apart from line relocation and cut-offs, there were scarcely any new lines built after 1901. An exception was the Sioux City, Dakota and North Western Railway Company, organized in 1909 to build from Hinton Jct. to Hawarden Jct. Completed in 1910 the 28-mile line provided a shorter route between Sioux City and points west of Hawarden.

Another exception was the twelve-mile extension of the Iowa Southern Railway Company to tap coal mines between Consol and Miami in 1915. The line proved to be the last North Western branch built in Iowa (except for a 7-mile power-plant spur built in 1962, near Sioux City) and one of the first to be retired after the mines petered out in the late 1920's.

The financial picture of the North Western appeared never brighter than it did under the presidency of Hughitt. But World War I and its aftermath changed the situation, as did economic conditions over which the railroad had little control.



## Heyday of the North Western

Here and there along the main line of the North Western in Iowa one sees faded, weatherbeaten signs warning enginemen to "R. S. 70," that is, reduce speed to 70 m.p.h. They are unheeded today, for the top speed is 60 miles per hour and if a freight exceeds that limit, the automatic train control will bring it to a stop. At the same time, these signs are a reminder of the long, colorful era when the North Western was the great speedway between East and West.

Presidents and visiting nobility, immigrants and millionaires, tourists and business men — indeed, people from every corner of the globe sped across Iowa on their way to and from the fabled West. Fast mail trains kept the rails hot. Solid "consists" of express, chartered trains of the rich, extra sections and extra trains with rattan seats for homesteaders or the most luxurious appointments for those of means, shuttled across Iowa. It was a grand cavalcade, a spectacular cross section of America and a fair sampling of visitors from every civilized nation. It is safe to say that, while it lasted, more people from more places rode the North Western across Iowa than any other transcontinental rail route in North America.



From the start the North Western fought aggressively for United States Mail contracts. Its races across Iowa in competition with the Burlington were classic. While the Burlington is credited with having the first railroad car for sorting mail in transit, it was the North Western which had the original Railway Post Office unit as we know it today. The specially designed car made its initial run between Chicago and Clinton in 1864.

There was magic in the very name FAST MAIL. It called for the swiftest engines, the most skilled "throttle artists" and a clear track all the way. Everything "went in the hole" for the mail. So spectacular was the flight of the mail that in 1899, when the North Western cut nearly two hours from its Chicago-Omaha run, the popular *McClure's Magazine* ran a lead feature about it. Written by Cleveland Moffett, with W. D. Stevens detailed to make on-the-spot drawings, the story related the struggle between the North Western and the Burlington for the "million dollar mail contract." The run across Illinois and Iowa was characterized as —

the hottest, maddest part of its sweep between the oceans . . . where level ground and keenest competition offer such a spectacle of flying mail service as has [never] been seen before since letters and engines came upon the earth.

The article was appropriately called "At Ninety Miles an Hour." At that time the North West-



ern's *Fast Mail* left Chicago at 10 p.m. and arrived in Omaha at 8:15 the next morning.

To further speed the mail the North Western took delivery of six American-type locomotives, outshopped by Schenectady in 1899. They had 80-inch drivers and wagon-top boilers with 2,353 square feet of heating surface. Another half dozen 4-4-0's with 75-inch drivers and 2,508 square feet of heating surface were part of the same order for heavy passenger train use. *The Railway Gazette* described them as having "the largest boiler ever used with an eight-wheel locomotive" and having "practically the same heating surface as the new Atlantic type locomotives of the Burlington."

The Burlington's answer to its rival was two 4-4-2's, alluded to above. Built by Baldwin, they had high,  $84\frac{1}{4}$ -inch drivers and a total heating surface of 2,500 square feet. The *Gazette* characterized them as "the largest engines of this type so far built." These Vaucrain compounds, with curious English-style six-wheel tenders, proved a marked contrast to the more orthodox American Standards on the North Western. The new motive power served to intensify the keen competition between the two railroads, and items on "the fast mail" often made newspaper headlines.

In 1869, when "The Overland Route" to California was first opened, the North Western in conjunction with the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific was the first to send a train from Chicago



to the Pacific Coast. It was also the first to operate dining cars over the route.

For variety of food, few restaurants anywhere came near offering the bountiful selection featured on the Pullman Hotel Cars. In June, 1877, for example, there were six kinds of steak on the menu, including venison. Besides such prosaic meats as chicken, chops and cutlets, one could get pheasant, snipe, quail, plover and duck. Seven varieties of oysters were offered and four of clams. There were in addition several kinds of fish, along with cold plates of turkey, lobster and potted game. Nearly a dozen vegetables were included, and the relishes numbered sixteen. Some twenty desserts were listed, including pastries, cakes and fruits.

For over a half century one train became a distinguished symbol of the North Western-Union Pacific, Southern Pacific route to the coast. It was *The Overland Limited*. Even the name has a distinct historical connotation. It stood for the land route across the Nation, in contrast to the sea voyage around the Horn, or by way of the Isthmus of Panama. The *Overland* started in December, 1887, and faded out in 1955. But even through the Great Depression of the 1930's the comfortable *Overland* ran serenely on, seemingly impervious to time and change.

Countless authors and newspaper writers have left the memory of their trips on the "Overland Route" in books and periodicals. Undoubtedly



the most detailed account of a journey on the North Western is in the late J. P. Pearson's four-volume *Railways and Scenery*. Pearson, Great Britain's counterpart of *The New Yorker's* Roger Whitaker, painstakingly recorded minute details. Of the Chicago-Omaha limited he noted:

Side and end walls were in brown wood, with fine panels, while the clerestory roof and the curve up to it . . . were in a brownish-yellow material with a gilt scroll inside the border of silver colour. . . . A bevelled mirror was furnished between every other side window . . . .

In between noting the gradients and "clocking" (he quoted arrivals and departures in seconds), the alert Pearson found time to admire scenery. He was fascinated by the view near Council Bluffs where the Boyer River Valley

fringed with trees — with sunlight on leaves and water — took its way among a park-like expanse of meadows. A marsh and a lake, with the bold outline of bluffs standing out picturesquely on the south-eastern side of the valley, against the soft blue of the sky, followed, and made one of the finest pictures I have ever seen.

In the parade of extra trains racing across Iowa over the years, probably none had more glamour than the Warner Brothers Special of 1940. Operated from Chicago to Nevada, it took motion picture stars, movie magnates, press agents and others to attend the opening of *Virginia City*. No money was spared to make the première a success, and everyone praised the glorious North Western.



## Retrenchments and Abandonments

Three presidents followed Hughitt, and then came Iowa's own Fred W. Sargent. Sargent was born on May 26, 1876, in Akron on the Big Sioux River, about 25 miles north of Sioux City. The son of a farmer and miller, young Sargent learned hard work and discipline while ploughing fields and getting up early to feed cattle. His father, Wesley Sargent, while a strict disciplinarian, was a man of unimpeachable integrity, well thought of by everyone. Indeed, Fred Sargent attributed much of his success to his dad's wise guidance.

After finishing Akron high school, Sargent entered the University of South Dakota in near-by Vermillion. Later he transferred to the State University of Iowa, where he received his LL.B. in 1901. After graduating from the University he opened a law office in Sioux City. In 1905 he became attorney for the Omaha Road and later the North Western. Success in handling railroad cases led to his being appointed general solicitor for the Rock Island in Iowa with headquarters in Des Moines. In 1921 he returned to the North Western as general solicitor in Chicago. Two years later he was made vice president and general counsel, and in 1925 he became president.



When Sargent was a young attorney for the North Western, the road wanted to build a cutoff between Sioux City and Hawarden. Right-of-way was readily purchased with the exception of one farm through which the track had to cross. Its owner absolutely refused to sell, nor would he enter into negotiation with the railroad. Sargent was about to institute legal proceedings and condemn the property when he decided to pay the farmer a visit. Arriving at the farmhouse he stated his business. The farmer, however, was not in the least impressed until learning the visitor's name.

"Sargent, huh," the husbandman repeated, when he heard the name. "Did you ever happen to know 'Wes' Sargent?"

The attorney replied, "'Wes' was my father."

"Your father!" the man exclaimed. He quickly called into the house, "Mother, come right away, this is 'Wes' Sargent's boy!"

"Wes" Sargent's boy was made to stay for dinner. After a friendly meal the host explained why he had such a high regard for the elder Sargent. He said that he once lived in Calliope, a tiny community near Hawarden, when they had an epidemic of diphtheria. Many people fell sick and some died. The crops had been bad that year and the people were poor. Then one day a car of flour arrived on a siding for "The People of Calliope." It was from "Wes." Everyone helped himself and it tided them over that trying winter.



After the farmer had finished talking, Sargent again brought up the subject of right of way through the farm.

"You can have anything you want," he told Sargent. "Just set your own price. Whatever you say is fair will be right with me."

In concluding the story Fred Sargent added, "You may be sure I didn't take advantage of him."

Unfortunately the stock market crash of 1929 and the ensuing prolonged depression made Sargent's administration a critical period in the road's history. The possession of a high percentage of marginal branch lines together with hundreds of passenger trains operating at a loss aggravated the North Western's position. In 1935 Sargent had no alternative but to seek protection from the courts, and the road went into receivership. Five years later Sargent died.

The North Western was reorganized in 1944, and for a time its earnings were modest. But the basic problems of relatively short hauls and unremunerative branches along with intensive truck, bus and plane competition left their toll. The income of the 1940's turned into several years of alarming deficits in the 1950's. In 1960 the net loss from railway operations was \$7,180,145, largely due to the steel strike and poor grain movements. After additions of special credits, however, the net income was \$244,450. The next year, thanks to better business conditions and more eco-



nomical operation, the road showed a net income from railway operations of \$3,075,776. After additions of special credits, the net was \$7,384,027.

The road's retrenchment program was forcefully brought to the attention of Iowans by the scrapping of over a hundred miles of branch lines. The bulk of the abandonments came during the depression years. The Omaha Road started with the retirement of its curious branch from Luverne, Minnesota, to Doon, Iowa, in 1934. True, the old Moingona line had been abandoned in 1933, but this was the result of the relocation of the main line by a cutoff via the Kate Shelley Viaduct.

Closing the coal mines at Buxton, Muchakinock and other points on the Consol-What Cheer branch led to its scrapping in 1935. The remainder of the branch from What Cheer to Belle Plaine, however, continued on a marginal basis until it was likewise abandoned in 1958.

Costly washouts on the Manning-Harlan section of the branch running south from Carroll brought about abandonment of that part of the line in 1937. Service, nevertheless, was continued by trackage rights over the parallel route of the Great Western. In 1940 running rights were secured over the Great Western between Manning and Carroll, and the North Western's line between these points was subsequently removed. In 1953 the short branch between these points was subsequently removed. In 1953 the short branch running south-



west from Manning to Audubon ceased operating, due to insufficient earnings.

Probably the most pathetic abandonment was that of the pioneer Lyons-Anamosa branch, formerly known as the Iowa Midland Railway. In 1944 a flash flood washed out the right of way between Maquoketa and Anamosa. Conductor James Ryan and his train were stranded at Anamosa. He had to return by a roundabout route over the Milwaukee to Cedar Rapids, thence on "home" rails to Clinton. Since the flood did a great deal of damage, many feared the little-used line would never reopen.

Grass grew up between the rails as the line lay dormant for two years. But with the assurance that shippers would do all they could to patronize the branch, the North Western rebuilt the road. Operation was resumed some 28 months later. A special train of freight cars, a lounge car and a caboose celebrated the reopening. Conductor Ryan again piloted the train over the line. About forty businessmen and farmers rode the club car and toasted to the success of the railroad. Amid cheers and felicitations one passenger solemnly rose and said:

"Gentlemen, your hats. . . . We are on the Midland!"

But with the advent of better all-weather roads, the rebuilt "Midland" failed to prosper. The losses became so great that the North Western



had no alternative but to abandon the 79-year-old line in 1950. Thus the successor to the ill-fated Iowa Central Air Line Rail Road Company, and the only railroad operated on the right of way of that grandiose project, passed into history.

The plight of the North Western and its poor financial showing resulted in a change of management in which Ben W. Heineman and his associates acquired control in 1956. Heineman became board chairman, with Clyde J. Fitzpatrick, formerly vice president of operation of the Illinois Central, elected to the presidency. The new management embarked upon a thorough modernization program to improve operating efficiency and increase employee productivity.

To consolidate the railroad's car repair facilities, a \$6,000,000 plant was built in Clinton. Opened in 1958, the new car shop eliminated 14 smaller repair yards all over the system. When operating to capacity it can build 1,000 new cars annually and make some 7,000 old cars look "like new." The largest building in the centralized facility is the 1000-foot long fabricating and erecting shop. About 250 men are normally employed. During peak operation, however, this may rise to nearly 500.



## Exit the Passenger Train

In this era of the motor car and airplane it is easy to forget the once-important role the railroad played in many hundreds of Iowa communities. The passenger train was often the only link with the outside world. Dakota City, for example, is a little way station, the second town west of Eagle Grove, where shops and offices of the former Northern Iowa Division were located. In the 1920's it had four daily passenger trains including Nos. 24 and 25, the "Flyer." The Flyer not only covered the 145-mile branch from Eagle Grove to Hawarden, it went east to Chicago and west to Huron, South Dakota.

For a branch line, the Flyer was quite a train. Pulled by a high-stepping Atlantic-type engine with a United States mail car behind the tender, it usually had a brace of express cars, a baggage car, a smoker and two chair cars, followed by one or two Pullmans. That was the first train west. Basil W. Koob, who started railroading as a clerk at Dakota City station, recalls the hard work required at train time.

There was often a traveling salesman or two, and when I saw them I knew there would be a lot of excess baggage on that train. They always had big, heavy trunks carry-



ing their wares, which were drayed to local hotels. Every hotel of any consequence had a "sample room," where drummers displayed their merchandise. It was up to me to check all the baggage for excess weight (over the 150-pound maximum) and load it back on the train again when the "traveling men" left town.

More arduous labor followed when the way freight clanked into town between 9 and 10 a.m. It first halted for water, Dakota City being the only water-stop between there and Eagle Grove. When the train finally pulled up to the depot the conductor swung down from the caboose with a fist full of waybills. As Koob relates:

The usual routine was to begin from the rear car, just in front of the "crummy," and work toward the engine. We unloaded every conceivable size and description of merchandise and foodstuffs, including fruit, vegetables, fresh meats, canned goods . . . even machinery. That took from a half to three quarters of an hour. Then the "peddler" whistled a reply to the conductor's "highball" and the cars rumbled by, leaving a pile of assorted merchandise on the platform.

Afternoon brought the locals, one east, the other west. This meant issuing tickets, mostly to way points, and checking baggage. Later in the day the erratic eastbound "peddler" showed up. Along between 8 and 9 o'clock in the evening, tickets would be sold and space confirmed for the Chicago-bound Flyer. That popular train operated over three branches via Eagle Grove, Jewell, and Tama, thence on the main line for its early-morn-



ing arrival in the Windy City. Saturday was "stock day," and livestock trains kept the rails polished through early Sunday morning.

The decline of passenger business started with the short-haul rider. Most Iowans felt that the main line's streamliners on the North Western were an institution here to stay. It was a glamorous era that would never end.

One could stand in Clinton and watch the parade of yellow cars go by, starting at 7:02 in the evening and continuing until almost midnight. There were seven trains, beginning with the streamlined *City of Denver* and ending with the quite orthodox steam-operated *Gold Coast*. The streamliners had new roomettes along with open sections, drawing rooms and other customary sleeping accommodations. All West Coast-bound "City" trains were streamliners usually featuring valet service, barbers and radios. Most of them also had baths.

Even secondary trains had unusual attractions. The *Los Angeles Limited* and the *San Francisco Overland* boasted of through sleepers from New York City to the Pacific Coast, in conjunction with the Pennsylvania and the New York Central. The former also had through Pullmans from Washington, D. C., via the Pennsylvania. Apart from this there were other through-car routings of long standing from the Twin Cities to the West, in collaboration with the Omaha Road. Indeed, *The*



*Nightingale* and *The North American* were both crack "Omaha" trains with sleepers to and from Los Angeles. They were popular with retired Minnesotans, who fled from zero climes to spend the winter in balmy southern California.

By 1955 trans-Iowa service was trimmed to five Chicago-to-the-West through trains in each direction. The airplane had taken its toll, as had stiff competition from the luxurious *California Zephyr* on the Burlington-Rio Grande-Western Pacific route and accelerated schedules of the Santa Fe's smart streamliners. Moreover, dissension between the Union Pacific and the North Western did not help matters. The former was not satisfied with the service given east of Omaha; and the latter wanted a bigger division of revenue to help underwrite high Chicago terminal expenses. The outcome of the quarrel made headlines in the Midwest and rated columns in *Time* and *Newsweek* when the Union Pacific announced that on October 30, 1955, it would switch its through trains between Omaha and Chicago to the Milwaukee Road.

The North Western countered by advertising three new streamliners, two of which would cross the state, to substitute for the withdrawn trains. One was the *Corn King*, an overnight train having coaches, sections, roomettes and bedrooms, together with a diner-lounge. The other, called *The Omahan*, consisted of coaches, a parlor car with



drawing rooms, and a dining car on its daylight run. A third train, running between Chicago and Boone, was appropriately named the *Kate Shelley*. It featured modern coaches, a parlor car and a diner-lounge on a fast afternoon and evening schedule.

The new trains were not profitable, and service soon deteriorated. The *Kate Shelley* was cut back to Marshalltown, then to Clinton. Pullmans were shed from the night train, and the parlor car and diner withdrawn from the Omaha day run. On May 15, 1960, passenger trains between Clinton and Council Bluffs made their final runs. Meanwhile, the Omaha Road had already ceased carrying passengers between the Twin Cities and Council Bluffs as of October 25, 1959.

Today the North Western does not have a single passenger train in Iowa save for a few hundred feet where the *Kate Shelley* comes into Clinton from the east. Moreover, North Western mail and express service in Iowa is a thing of the past; and what little less-than-carload shipments remain is only of an interstate nature.



## M & St L Purchase

On November 1, 1960, the North Western purchased the 1,500-mile Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway for \$3,488,320. In addition, the purchaser agreed to assume the Minneapolis & St. Louis's liabilities, including \$17,441,600 First Mortgage 6% bonds issued in connection with the transaction. Heretofore the Minneapolis & St. Louis had had no bonded indebtedness.

It is interesting to reflect that the only other comparable size merger of two major Iowa railroads occurred in 1903. That year the 1,300-mile Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Railway was deeded to the Rock Island, which had previously controlled it. The former road had its headquarters in Cedar Rapids.

That part of the Minneapolis & St. Louis (known as the Iowa Central), was based in Marshalltown. Even today the Minneapolis & St. Louis Division of the North Western still has its car shops and locomotive repair facilities in Marshalltown.

The most notable Iowan associated with the old Iowa Central was Josiah B. Grinnell, who once served as its receiver. Indeed, one of the choice bits of Hawkeye folklore concerns Grinnell when



he headed the Grinnell & Montezuma Railway, operated by the Iowa Central. In those primitive days of railroading passes were informal and often written in longhand by the president. It so happened that an employee of the little line was discharged in writing by J. B. Grinnell himself. For many years, it is said, the dismissed employee rode happily over the Grinnell & Montezuma using his letter of dismissal as a pass. Nobody could read anything but the signature!

The Iowa Central came under control of the Minneapolis & St. Louis in 1900, and it was later purchased. The combined roads established a well-publicized freight route from the Twin Cities via Marshalltown and Oskaloosa to Peoria, Illinois. Known as the Peoria Gateway, the routing avoided congested Chicago terminals in expediting shipments between East and West. In addition, the Minneapolis & St. Louis had a line westward from Minneapolis to Watertown and Leola, South Dakota. It had two routes to Des Moines: one from Albert Lea, Minnesota, via Fort Dodge; another from Oskaloosa south to Albia, thence by trackage rights over the Burlington-Wabash route to the Iowa capital. There was also an additional line to Fort Dodge coming down from Winthrop, Minnesota, along with several minor branches.

The Minneapolis & St. Louis's greatest value to the North Western is financial. It has been a prof-



itable railroad ever since emerging from receivership in 1942. In the preceding five years before its acquisition "The Peoria Gateway" line had an average yearly income before taxes of \$2,754,000. Geographically the Minneapolis & St. Louis's role is less important, for its lines are largely paralleled or bisected by the North Western. This would suggest some sharp cutting to eliminate duplicate mileage in the near future.

Integrating the two railroads has already resulted in many changes. The current Minneapolis & St. Louis Division of the North Western includes all of the former railroad, with the exception of the "Western Division," from Hopkins, Minnesota, to Leola, South Dakota, 329 miles; the 88-mile Fort Dodge-Des Moines branch; and the M&StL-operated Minneapolis Industrial Railway, running from Minneapolis to Wesota, 115 miles.

The "Western Division" of the Minneapolis & St. Louis was transferred to the North Western's Dakota Division; the Fort Dodge-Des Moines branch to the Iowa Division; and the Minneapolis Industrial Railway to the Twin Cities Division. To compensate for its greatly reduced mileage, the North Western's 240-mile Belle Plaine to Sanborn Jct., Minnesota, branch was allocated to the Minneapolis & St. Louis Division.

To have more centralized headquarters, the Minneapolis & St. Louis Division offices were moved from Minneapolis to the North Western's



old passenger station in Mason City. The depot has been completely modernized for its current functions. With the removal of personnel from the comparatively new million-dollar Minneapolis & St. Louis Building in Minneapolis, the last traces of the "Peoria Gateway" line as a separate entity have disappeared.

Traffic-wise, too, there has been revamping. Twin Cities-Des Moines freight now goes on a more direct and logical route. Formerly it went south to Albia, thence in a northwesterly direction to Des Moines. Present operation is on what was the Minneapolis & St. Louis's main line to Marshalltown, thence over the double-track North Western to Ames, and south on the latter's branch to Des Moines. The new line is 79 miles shorter than the Minneapolis & St. Louis's circuitous routing. It also eliminates 68 miles of trackage rights, at an appreciable saving.

The current trend is to route more freight between the Twin Cities and the East via Marshalltown and the North Western's main line to Chicago. This means less emphasis on the Peoria Gateway, which had been the hallmark of the Minneapolis & St. Louis and its principal reason for existence. Be this as it may, consolidations are inevitable and are the pattern of railroad development in Iowa as they are elsewhere in the nation.



## Modern Freight Railroad

The North Western's double-track "high iron" across Iowa is ideal for freight. It is mostly straight track, with a few easy curves. It is virtually flat, the steepest grade being only .72 per cent. It is protected by continuous automatic train control throughout. High and wide clearances make it an admirable route for "piggy-backs" and over-size shipments. Time freights race across Iowa on schedules operated with passenger-train punctuality. Modern adjuncts, such as International Business Machines, process data on shipments well in advance of their arrival. And radio communication, with "walky-talkies" for trainmen, speed up over-the-road operation regardless of the weather.

All through freights are "highball jobs," which is to say they move with dispatch. Operated by the best railroaders and the most modern equipment, the North Western is surpassed by none in expediting transcontinental rail tonnage. Even in the days of heavy passenger traffic, the division headquarters at Boone, and men all along the "left handed" railroad, had a jealous pride in highballing freight. It is a North Western tradition.

Locomotive Engineer Wallace Hammond recalls how in other years each superintendent had



his favorite train. For instance there was Henry A. Parish. "Hank" Parish's favorite was the "Vegetable." He would invariably leave his office in the two-story brick building to greet the crew upon arrival about 2:00 p. m. One could spot him by a white carnation in his lapel. If they made a good run he was all smiles. If they were unnecessarily late someone would be called on the carpet.

Later came Superintendent "Monty" Williams. The apple of his eye, so to speak, was the "Calumet" which, incidentally, often had cars of big, red apples. It usually came in around 11:00 p.m. No matter how late it arrived, Williams seldom went to bed until it had steamed into Boone.

To expedite its time freights, the North Western had its famous Class H. or 4-8-4 type engines, built by Baldwin in 1929. These beautiful machines were designed for dual service; and, until the coming of diesels, they were the last word in handling the fastest freight and passenger trains. So popular were these versatile locomotives that when they were put on exhibit in Boone, school children were let out of class to see them.

Thanks to the diesel, however, along with other adjuncts of modern railroading, the North Western's time freights are better than ever. Every day, five through trains speed across Iowa from Chicago via Clinton with tonnage for the gateways of Council Bluffs and Fremont, Nebraska. Much of this is freight for West Coast points. It



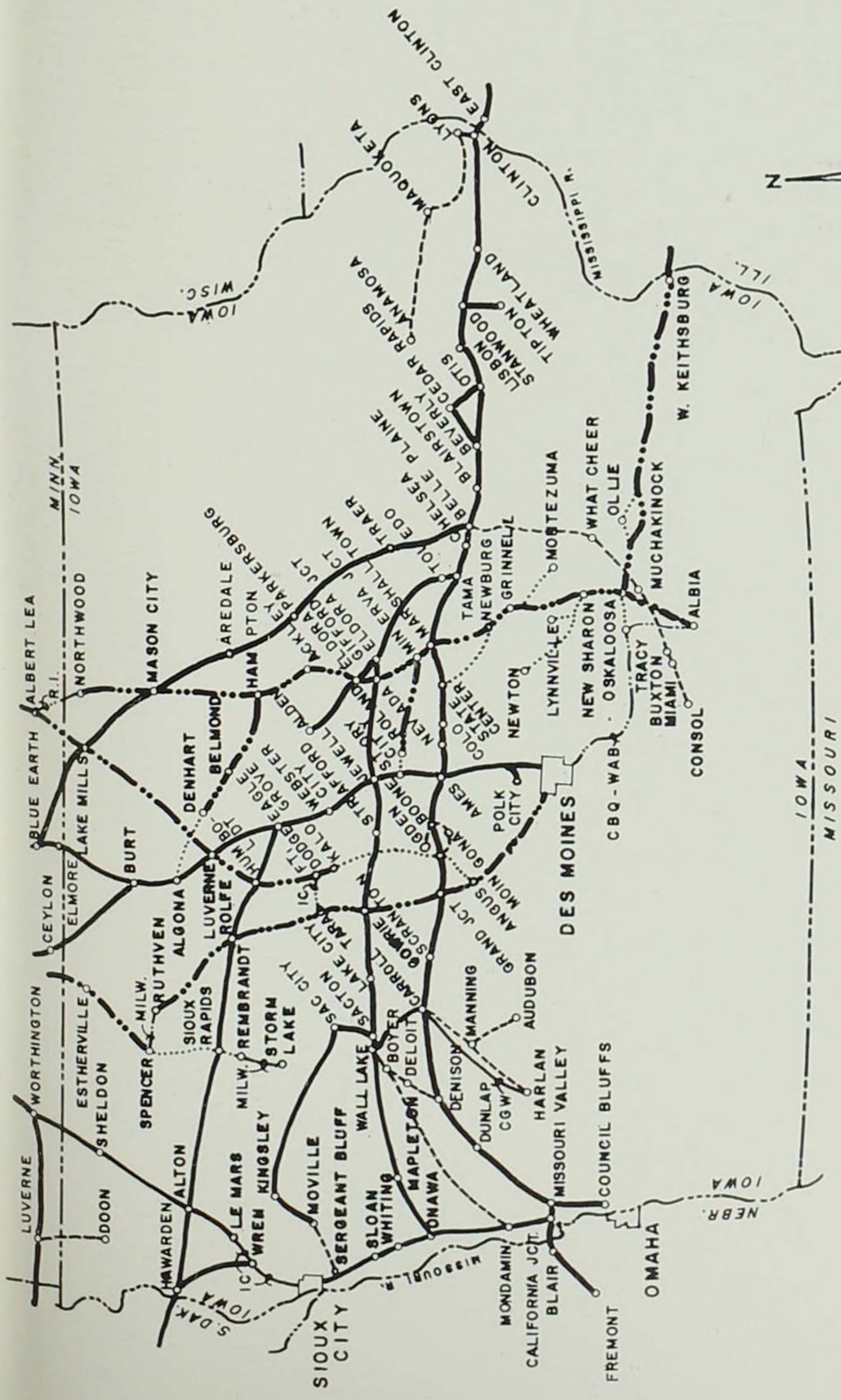
is highly competitive cargo obtained only by reliable service and on-time performance.

Each day, starting with No. 255 leaving Clinton's West Yard at 1:15 a.m., the long freights roll with goods from East to West. The 255 is dubbed "The Piggyback" because it is largely composed of trailer-trucks on flat cars. At 5:00 a.m. there's No. 261 (Dispatch), a hotshot of mixed freight. But the pride of the road is No. 249 due at 1:45 p.m. and out five minutes later. Unlike the other through freights, it goes to Fremont, Nebraska, instead of Council Bluffs. Leaving the main line at Missouri Valley the "manifest" goes across the Missouri River to Fremont via the Blair Bridge, bypassing the congested Omaha yards on a route 24 miles shorter than going through the Council Bluffs-Omaha gateway. At Fremont a Union Pacific locomotive replaces the North Western engine, and the train is on its way west. Even the caboose goes through without change.

There's a respite in the West Yard until "The Local" whistles out at 5:45 p.m. This is No. 253, which picks up and sets out cars at the larger towns on its way to Council Bluffs. Finally, at ten at night comes the bright headlight of No. 251. After an all night run across Iowa it will pull into Council Bluffs in time for an early breakfast.

Such is the modern North Western, a specialist in handling freight and a mighty link in expediting transcontinental tonnage.





# THE NORTH WESTERN IN IOWA

SCALE IN MILES



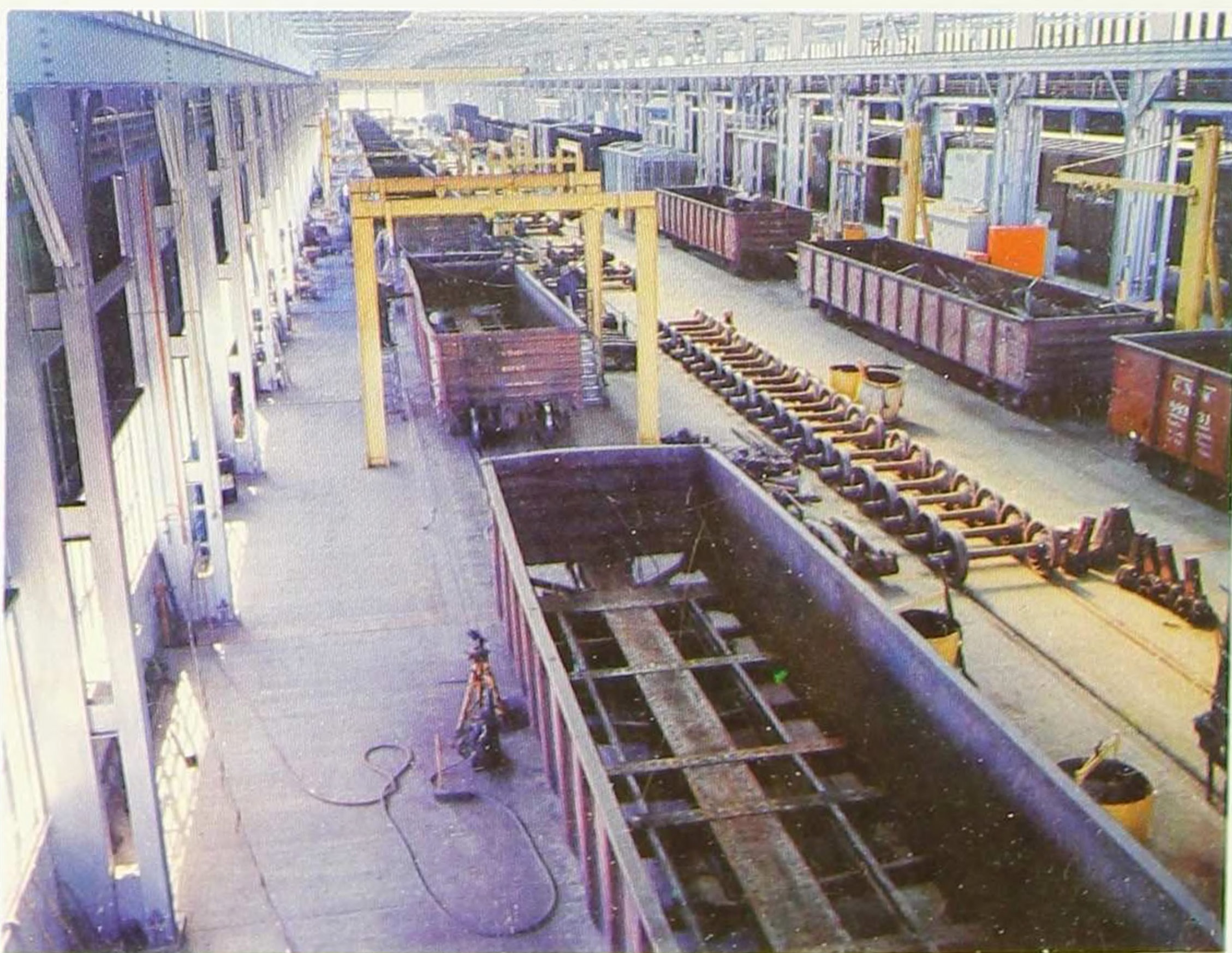
- LEGEND
- CNW in use
  - CNW abandoned
  - MA STL in use
  - MA STL abandoned
- (Note - MA STL in use is now part of CNW)

DRAWN BY NORMAN F. PODAS, JR. SEPT. 1962





Transportation by Piggy-Back is Common on North Western.



Interior of the Main Car Shop at Clinton, Iowa