

University of Nebraska at Kearney

## OpenSPACES@UNK: Scholarship, Preservation, and Creative Endeavors

---

History Theses, Dissertations, and Student  
Creative Activity

Department of History

---

8-18-2023

### The Mogadishu Effect: America's Failure-Driven Foreign Policy

Philip Benjamin Dotson

University of Nebraska at Kearney, [pdotson@cedarville.edu](mailto:pdotson@cedarville.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://openspaces.unk.edu/hist-etd>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Dotson, Philip Benjamin, "The Mogadishu Effect: America's Failure-Driven Foreign Policy" (2023). *History Theses, Dissertations, and Student Creative Activity*. 25.

<https://openspaces.unk.edu/hist-etd/25>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of History at OpenSPACES@UNK: Scholarship, Preservation, and Creative Endeavors. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Theses, Dissertations, and Student Creative Activity by an authorized administrator of OpenSPACES@UNK: Scholarship, Preservation, and Creative Endeavors. For more information, please contact [weissell@unk.edu](mailto:weissell@unk.edu).

FORGOTTEN LOSS: THE STORY OF IOWA'S  
DEADLIEST TRAIN ACCIDENT

A Thesis

Presented to the

Graduate Faculty of the History Department

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Kearney

By

Scott Richard Foens

August, 2023

## THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in History,  
University of Nebraska at Kearney.

### Supervisory Committee

Name	Department
<i>Christyha Steink</i>	History
<i>Torsten Homberger</i>	History
<i>Robert Jeffrey David Wells</i>	

*Mark Ellis*

Supervisory Committee Chair

July 14, 2023

Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Though composition is a road down which one walks alone, no history writer journeys solo. Research librarians track down obscure document references, archivists guide the researcher to primary source material, and professors suggest lines of inquiry, guide, and edit drafts. Most importantly, family members sacrifice time away for the student to both investigate and compose. This is not a work I could have produced without the support of all these different supporters, particularly, my wife and children. Their encouragement and understanding are the foundations upon which *Forgotten Loss* is constructed. Academically, Dr. Jeff Wells both understood—and importantly—encouraged what became an “atypical” thesis. Without his guidance, this work would look substantially different and be of lower quality. Dr. Mark Ellis’ superlative feedback focused the narrative and immeasurably improved the final product. The Historical Society of Marshall County’s Michelle Roseburrough was an incredible resource, who provided answers to innumerable questions about people and places in Marshalltown and was always accommodating to any request as did the research librarians at the Calvin T. Ryan Library on the University of Nebraska at Kearney campus. Sharon Avery and Kelsey Berryhill from the Iowa State Historical Library & Archives were incredible investigators, locating information related to the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners and physician licensing in Iowa. Paul Schuch offered excellent background on Rock Island railroad operations and equipment inventories. Finally, members of the Iowa Utilities Board support staff dug through their archives to find reports and information

related to the railroad commission in 1910. Their contribution to my research was invaluable.

## ABSTRACT

At 8:18 AM on March 21, 1910, the lead tender of a Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railways “double header” passenger train left the tracks four miles outside Green Mountain, Iowa. Detoured because a freight train crash blocked the Rock Island’s main line to Waterloo, CRI&P operations in Cedar Rapids arranged for the two trains to travel west on the Chicago Northwestern’s tracks and then turn northeast towards Waterloo along the Diagonal, a section of Chicago Great Western road that was part of the Maple Leaf route. The wreck completely destroyed one wooden passenger coach and half of a second that killed more than forty people immediately and injuring fifty more. Ultimately, the crash took fifty-four lives. When the Iowa Railroad Commission concluded four factors contributed to the crash, they sought to answer why the lead tender left the tracks. What board members should have first understood is why they conducted an inquiry at all. From that starting point they could identify the right question and its answer. *Forgotten Loss* uses a narrative history approach to explain this was a disaster. It assembles all of the components to build a chain of events that resulted in a catastrophe. Throughout, *Forgotten Loss* corrects misunderstandings and exposes mythologies around the wreck that grew up over the years as narrators recounted stories they heard or conclusions they reached after a cursory—if any—examination of the evidence. Finally, it memorializes a forgotten catastrophe in Iowa history and the victims who lost their lives.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements_____	iii
Introduction_____	1
The Land That Trains Love_____	21
Give Us More Railroads_____	35
Open Switch_____	78
Travelers Intersect_____	107
Detoured_____	130
Send Help Now!_____	161
Arrival Back_____	188
A Commission Is Born_____	221
Right Answer To The Wrong Question_____	263
Conclusion_____	287
Bibliography_____	311

## Introduction

Buried under the silt of Hawkeye state history, lies the story of Iowa's deadliest railroad disaster, a passenger train derailment outside Green Mountain, Iowa. On that first spring morning of 1910, two locomotives and a Pullman Palace sleeper left the tracks. Two wooden coaches came right after the berthing coach. The wreck's force crushed these cars leaving more than eighty injured or killed. Though newspapers morosely predicted memories of the wreck and aftermath would persist into the future, accurate recollections quickly faded allowing a mythology that grew over actuality. Sixty-six years after the crash, Marshall County's Bicentennial Commission memorialized the site with a plaque mounted atop a granite stone, wrongly attributing the wreck's cause to a detour due to flooding. Just one scholarly article recounted the tragedy, accepting at face value investigators' framework and conclusions. Green Mountain devolved into a historical curio sitting on the shelves of a few local residents interested in railroad history, the names and lives of those lost were forgotten.

This work seeks to correct those errors. First, *Forgotten Loss* fans away the fairy tale fog of falsities to present evidence-supported details about the wreck that corrects factual errors committed by past writers. Second, this book applies a critical disaster studies analysis approach to thinking about the tragedy and what factors contributed to making Green Mountain a disaster rather than simply another of the many train derailments that occurred during this time. The story functions as a case study of organizational attitudes—both public and private—towards railroad crashes at what

would become the end of the railroading era. Employing this framework extends the historical discussion about this wreck beyond a prior focus by investigators on the derailment and explains why this was a tragedy. Finally, this work attempts to compose an engaging narrative that viscerally connects with a reader and expands their understanding of the crash. With a nod to past American Historical Association President Carl Becker, this thesis seeks to do work.<sup>1</sup>

Similar to other historical events, new evaluative frameworks offer different evocations of the tragedy. The Iowa Railroad Commission's report on the derailment's cause followed from the available evidence and drew reasonable conclusions. The roadbed was in poor condition, two wooden passenger coaches were positioned between steel cars, the locomotives ran backwards, and train operations generally involved greater risk to life and limb.<sup>2</sup> Their failure was not in the result reached, but in the question asked. At the core of their inquest was wondering why two locomotives left the rails. What commissioners should have first answered is why they were inquiring in the first place. Obviously, the magnitude of fatalities generating national news coverage forced the men to set up shop in Marshalltown and take testimony. On that foundation, the next reasonable question is why so many people lost their lives? Certainly, the derailment set off a nearly instantaneous consecutive set of events ending in mass death, but it was

---

1. Carl L. Becker, "Everyman His Own Historian," *American Historical Review* 37, no. 2 (1931): 221–36.

2. "The Thirty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending December 4, 1910, (Des Moines, 1910), 149.," Crash Investigation, Board of Railroad Commissioners Report (Des Moines, Iowa: Iowa Utilities Board, December 4, 1910), 154-155.

merely one event in a long chain of contributing factors ignored by previous writers documenting the tragedy. *Forgotten Loss* corrects this oversight.

Implied in the aforementioned question is the idea that disasters are social constructs. This is a point-of-view expressed by Jacob Remes and Andy Horowitz in their book, *Critical Disaster Studies*. In it, the pair argue, “floods and earthquakes, wars and famines, engineering failures and economic collapses,” are not disasters *per se*, but rather receive that label as, “an act of interpretation.”<sup>3</sup> Through a series of essays by sociologists, historians, anthropologists and geographers, *Critical Disaster Studies* constructs a fundamentally different framework for examining disaster. Scott Gabriel Knowles and Zachary Loeb posit previous, “disaster typologies defined by genres (natural, technological) or statistics (death counts, material losses) is now an object of analysis and critique, rather than a heuristic.”<sup>4</sup> Understanding Green Mountain does not require anthropological examination nor would a sociological evaluation offer particularly useful insights, but Remes and Horowitz’s roadmap inspires different questions and answers to those prompts afford a fresh look at Iowa’s deadliest train wreck and a conclusion expanded beyond the commission’s determination.

Jason Puskar assumed a similar position nine years before Remes and Horowitz in *Accident Society*, though from the perspective of language. “Chance is made out of

---

3. Jacob A.C. Remes and Andy Horowitz, *Critical Disaster Studies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), 1.

4. Scott Gabriel Knowles and Zachary Loeb, “The Voyage of the *Paragon*: Disaster as Method,” in *Critical Disaster Studies*, ed. Jacob A. C. Remes and Andy Horowitz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), 12.

words,” he wrote, that “is a conceptual category crafted through language” then deployed “in a wide range of institutional and political contexts.”<sup>5</sup> Puskar, who holds PhD in English from Harvard and researches late nineteenth and early twentieth century American literature and culture, minces no words.<sup>6</sup> Casualties of railroad crashes, “became accident victims largely because Americans stopped describing their injuries in terms of fault and blame” and switched to “the language of chance.”<sup>7</sup> This view of the disaster as an act of fate is the keystone upon which critical disaster studies is constructed and reinforces Remes and Horowitz position of disaster as a social concept. In particular, it fits into the idea of catastrophes as “interpretive fictions.”<sup>8</sup> Puskar’s description of the transition of culpability to random act epitomizes the railroad commission’s assumption that risks exist in all train operations.<sup>9</sup> This is, however, where Remes and Horowitz’s work extends past the use of language. Puskar looks only at the linguistic transition from blame to chance, whereas critical disaster studies add two additional dimensions.

A second element in the critical disaster studies framework is that events occur over time. “People commonly imagine disasters to be unexpected and sudden,” and that

---

5. Jason Puskar, *Accident Society: Fiction, Collectivity, and the Production of Chance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 1.

6. Jason Puskar, “Curriculum Vitae: Jason Puskar” (University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, n.d.), <https://uwm.edu/english/our-people/puskar-jason/>.

7. Puskar, *Accident Society*, 1-2.

8. Remes and Horowitz, *Critical Disaster Studies*, 2.

9. Board of Railroad Commissioners, “The Thirty-Third Annual Report,” 155.

perspective hides “enduring social circumstances.”<sup>10</sup> The Green Mountain disaster’s clock did not begin ticking on Sunday night, but rather started twenty-nine years earlier with construction of that line by the Wisconsin, Iowa, and Nebraska railroad. Obviously, railroad commissioners ascribed to the atomic, isolated, and random point of view as the foundational characteristic. Had they not, board members would have reported a broader set of circumstances that all contributed to this tragedy.

Critical disaster studies’ third feature that “disaster, vulnerability, risk, and resilience shape and are shaped by contests over power.”<sup>11</sup> The desire to either maintain or establish control undergirds every disaster response and that reaction is “subjective and usually contested.” Remes and Horowitz described the idea of order restoration pointing out “the existing order served some people much better than it served others” making its imposition “a power play.”<sup>12</sup> There are certainly power dynamics at work in this disaster story, most notably, the interaction between two Great Western employees over locomotive orientation while a Rock Island conductor reminded the two that the train was already late and getting later as it sat at the Marshalltown depot. Readers could infer another element of power in the decision to combine these two passenger trains into one larger conveyance. Finally, there is a component of power around route selection by including locales willing to offer tax subsidies to the railroad in exchange for train service

---

10. Remes and Horowitz, *Critical Disaster Studies*, 5.

11. Remes and Horowitz, *Critical Disaster Studies*, 3.

12. Remes and Horowitz, *Critical Disaster Studies*, 3.

to their towns. As the story unfolds, these conflicts over control do not represent significant contributions to this calamity.

A disaster's lifecycle spawns multitudinous stories during each stage of the event. First is the initial "breaking news" containing little more content than a brief alert something bad happened. Driven by public demands for information and publication deadlines, articles recounting victims' experiences result in screaming headlines and many column inches. The narrative's general theme is often correct, but details remain unsubstantiated leading to erroneous conclusions. In the absence of objective fact or official comment, reporters fill the void with rumor and speculation. Because of these exogenous drivers, journalists' rough draft of history demands skeptical examination by the historical researcher. Often, the first revision comes from the commissions investigating a tragedy. Lacking the pressures of time and information access, investigators collect detailed witness accounts, see physical evidence and visit the site. Though their reports should be an accurate accounting of the who, what, where and when of calamity, these too require evaluation with an equal skepticism applied to media accounts. They are not the final word.

Into the fray enters the historian. Benefitting from chronological distance and archival access documentarians can patiently follow the evidence to where it leads, drawing evidence-based conclusions and often answering why and how a tragedy occurred. But the historian must strive, as much as is possible, to *accurately* tell the story that memorializes those impacted. The 1910 tragedy outside Green Mountain, Iowa offers a case study in both aspects of the discipline.

In the 1984 summer issue of *The Palimpsest*, H. Roger Grant examined this crash and his article adheres to a boilerplate historical approach. Grant received his PhD from the University of Missouri in 1970 and specialized in transportation history, focusing almost exclusively on railroads and railway companies. “The Green Mountain Train Wreck: An Iowa Tragedy” is the only scholarly article published on the topic and what his piece reveals is a general acceptance of death with railway transportation. Three weeks before Green Mountain, an avalanche in Stevens Pass, Washington swept a stalled passenger train off the rails and down a mountainside, killing ninety-six.<sup>13</sup> For the Green Mountain train wreck, the Iowa Railroad Commission, in a rare display of investigative aggression, heard testimony from a variety of sources and issued a final report on the crash’s causes. At the state level, Grant points out the catastrophe “did not prompt Iowa lawmakers to alter immediate railroad statutes.” In addition, Grant’s essay provides details of the equipment involved in the wreck and a timeline leading up to the crash. However, his cited source material does not support these details. They appear in neither the *Marshalltown Times-Republican*, who heavily covered the wreck, nor the Iowa Railroad Commission’s investigation report. *Forgotten Loss* corrects with references to supporting documents.

To address the second goal, demands an analysis and story that steps away from the traditional recipe for disaster writing. Narrators tell tragic tales in three parts; set-up, event and outcome—as though a disaster is an atomic event, uninfluenced by other

---

13. “1910 Stevens Pass Avalanche Still Deadliest in U.S. History,” *Seattle Times*, February 27, 2010.

factors. John Barry's 2005 *The Great Influenza* models this narrative strategy. Barry holds a Master of Arts in History awarded by the University of Rochester. *The Great Influenza* is considered an outstanding work documenting the lead up to, transmission of and impact of the influenza virus in 1918.<sup>14</sup> He argues government leadership's unwillingness to acknowledge the consequences of infection or recognize its transmission vector resulted in virus spread along deployment routes of United States troops heading to Europe for combat in the Great War. Physicians and researchers were poorly equipped and lacked the basic knowledge needed to combat the disease but performed heroically. In addition to providing insight into the medical community during the first quarter of the twentieth century, Barry's work is a template for communicating tragedy to the reader. Considered "popular" history, the author's template is useful to historical writers seeking connections with a wider audience.<sup>15</sup>

The train's abrupt stop crushed two wooden passenger cars. Understanding the construction of these cars aids in mortality kinematics. August Mencken's 1957 *The Railroad Passenger Car* provides a description of these rail cars, including descriptions of passenger experiences riding in these conveyances. August Mencken was a professor

---

14. Peter Palese, "The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History," *Journal of Clinical Investigation* 114, no. 2 (July 15, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1172/JCI22439>; Ben Wooliscroft, "Book Review: The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History," *Journal of Public Affairs* 8 (2008): 217–18, <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.295>; Steve Ryan, "Book Review: The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History," *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy* 48, no. 10 (2020), <https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/great-influenza-story-deadliest-pandemic-history/docview/2458775703/se-2>.

15. Barry, John M., *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2018).

at Johns Hopkins University and the brother of the famous satirist, H.L. Mencken. Though his focus is on nineteenth century cars, both the day car and smoking car filled with passengers were first put into service before the outset of the twentieth century, giving researchers insights into what riders experienced during the trip from Cedar Rapids to Marshalltown and from Marshalltown to the crash site. Though Mencken includes a series of passenger stories from train derailments, these antebellum accounts do not add significantly to a reader's understanding of Green Mountain mainly because the car technology by the turn of the century was different from railroad cars prior to the Civil War.

Death and injury go with every disaster. Examining the state of emergency medical care at the time informs investigators to both mortality after the event and long term disabilities experienced by those who survived. *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* by Paul Starr, first published in 1982, affords researchers with a picture of medicine's evolution through history and affords investigators a window into emergency medicine's standard of care at any given point. Starr holds a PhD in Sociology from Harvard and his book on American medicine earned him the Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction writing. The author charts two stories. The first is a "rise of professional sovereignty," whereby standardized education, state licensure and codes of ethics improved both the care doctors provided and their reputations in the community. His second arc looks at, "the transformation of medicine into an industry."<sup>16</sup> The Green

---

16. Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine: The Rise of a Sovereign Profession & the Making of a Vast Industry*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2017), xv.

Mountain disaster occurred right at the point where emergency medicine was taking its first steps toward change. Acutely ill or injured did not travel to a hospital for care, but instead received care at home. But as Americans traveled on the rails, home care became impossible when a passenger fell ill in a distant town with no family in the area. Doctors and their association with hospitals changed the point at which they rendered care. Starr offers a critical description of medical care at the time of Green Mountain with insights into treatments the injured received and long-term impacts from those wounds.

*Death Rode The Rails* is Mark Aldrich's 2006 survey of railroad disasters from the locomotive's introduction in 1828 through 1965. Aldrich's expertise is in economics and worked for the Occupational Health and Safety Administration as a senior economist before he transitioned to academia. Aldrich is a member of both the Economic History Association and the Society for the History of Technology. He compares the American railroad history with Europe's noting, "early American railroad safety followed a separate path because product and labor market forces ...were fundamentally different from those in Europe."<sup>17</sup> Readers considering this, "a work of business and economic history," Aldrich points out he, "tried to write in English, not social science blah." Any railroad accident survey contains statistics and he admits including, "some simple statistical analysis," but considers numbers, "part of the supporting cast, not the star of the show."<sup>18</sup> This is more than just a collection of disaster stories. Aldrich breaks American train

---

17. Mark Aldrich, *Death Rode The Rails: American Railroad Accidents and Safety 1828-1965* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), xiii.

18. Aldrich, *Death Rode*, xiii-xiv.

wrecks down into equipment failures leading to derailments, infrastructure failures like rails and bridges causing crashes, and coordination failures putting two trains on the same track headed toward one another. He describes the evolution in operational changes, including expanded regulation in response to operational lapses killing passengers and employees. Relying upon media coverage of accidents at the time, contemporary trade publications like the *Railroad Gazette* and government reports, he structures his chapters chronologically, identifying the period in which the Green Mountain crash occurred as one of a crisis of safety. Elected officials and government regulators react to economic conditions and public concern. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the federal government increased railroad regulation resulting from business consolidations, customer exploitation and worker deaths. These rules did not keep pace with dramatic expansion of chemicals used to produce goods or development of the internal combustion engine. American life in the 1920s required new rules addressing transport by rail of these dangerous cargos.

Charity Vogel's 2013 book, *The Angola Horror*, recounts the 1867 crash of a New York passenger train outside Angola, New York. Her narrative follows the well traveled popular history path of lead up, crash, response and blame of disaster chronicles. It begins with passengers, crew and equipment all coming together for a trip. After setting the stage, the group departs. Along the way, a series of events unfolds leading up to a tragedy with death and injuries. Individual and agency response immediately follows, peppered with heroic anecdotes of either crew members or passengers. An investigation is held subsequent to the disaster and a report is released. Increased regulation and

operational changes in addition to examinations of survivor outcomes round out the work. Charity Vogel is not a professional historian, but rather holds a PhD in English from the State University of New York at Buffalo and her narrative style reflects these literary influences. Her lack of historical training is apparent. She crafts a literary story then plugs in facts to fit the narrative. Her work is rife with speculative words and she seeks to create a sense of drama by including John D. Rockefeller into her cast of characters. While the rising oil magnet did start out on the train in Cleveland, he missed a station departure excluding him from being part of this disaster. Vogel employs an extensive bibliography of news accounts, reports and trade journals from the period but fails to answer any historically significant questions. Additionally, she includes historical books and articles discussing railroads and crashes including *Death Rode the Rails*. *The Angola Horror* provides a narrative template for writing about the Green Mountain tragedy, but the book's most significant contribution is illustrating what not to do when composing the story of a tragedy.<sup>19</sup>

Train crashes occurred frequently throughout nineteenth and early twentieth century transportation. Paul Kuenker's April 2016 PhD dissertation, "In the Unlikely Event," examines the dangers of steam powered transportation, both by boat and rail, during the nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> Kuenker provides, "a cultural history of danger, disaster, and steam-powered transportation." Fundamentally, he argues that technological

---

19. Charity Vogel, *The Angola Horror: The 1867 Train Wreck That Shocked the Nation and Transformed American Railroads* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

20. Paul Kuenker, "In the Unlikely Event: Danger and the Transportation Revolution in America" (Ph.D., United States -- Arizona, Arizona State University), i.

advances in transportation modes come with the cost of, “unlikely, but inescapable danger.”<sup>21</sup> His opening chapter offers a detailed picture of pre-steam mobility and the growth of travel as steam transportation became available on water and land. But his important contribution was a discussion on traveling public rights and companies’ “apparent lack of concern for human life,” after tragedies.<sup>22</sup> Because crashes frequently occurred, Kuenker suggests reports desensitized the public to the danger and death on the rails became an accepted part of American life. If correct, this desensitizing explains why neither the federal government nor the state legislature took aggressive action to reduce deaths of railroad passengers.

While Kuenker offers one reason for government torpor towards railroad regulation, Jacob Remes and Andy Horowitz indirectly offer a second explanation; regulators and elected officials asked the wrong questions. Remes, a product of Duke University and Horowitz, trained at Yale, launched a new framework to evaluate tragic events in 2021. Their book, *Critical Disaster Studies* posits, “The causes and consequences of disaster are not defined by an autonomous natural order, nor are they inevitable.” Instead, disasters “are bound up. in human history, shaped by human action and inaction.” From this premise, the two historians conclude characterizing a flood, earthquake, fire or building collapse as a “disaster” is “an act of interpretation.”<sup>23</sup> The traditional approach to chronicle catastrophes ignores human contribution to loss of life

---

21. Kuenker, “In the Unlikely Event”, 2.

22. Kuenker, “In the Unlikely Event”, 252.

23. Remes and Horowitz, *Critical Disaster Studies*, 1.

or property, sees geologic or meteorologic events as unavoidable and deifies responders overcoming enormous challenges in their work to reduce death and suffering. Historians recount manmade tragedies, the Triangle Shirtwaist in March 1911 for example, through an event narrative, culpability assignment and corrective measures, but fail to ask and answer the core questions: why is this a disaster and what economic, social and political conditions created the environment for the loss of life or property? Remes and Horowitz offer a different approach demanding writers first explain why a tragedy is a disaster and then undertaking a multi-disciplinary examination with the objective of exposing what led to the tragedy. By answering these questions, researchers can identify effective approaches for mitigation.

Understanding Green Mountain requires more than the hedonistic rubber-necking of gory victim stories and appeals to emotion for families of the dead. Describing the crash site and an arc of recovery are important as part of the wreck's impact, but those elements represent just a portion of the story. It requires awareness of why that one large passenger train was at that point on the tracks at that moment in time. This one train was actually two different ones combined. What caused these two separate sets of passengers to end up in one train? How did that train end up on that section of track, one neither owned nor controlled by the train's railroad company? Who built this line from Marshalltown to Waterloo in the first place and why was it constructed? Finally, what role did regional geography play in the wreck and how did that topography come into existence? Only through a story answering those questions does the reader possess a

deeper appreciation of Green Mountain. This leads into the third—and perhaps most important—objective, composing a captivating narrative.

“History that lies inert in unread books does no work in the world,”<sup>24</sup> said Carl Becker in his 1931 address to the American Historical Association. Medieval history writer Dan Jones told the *Economist* “that ‘most academic history is unreadable,’” because historians “tend ‘not to have crisp readability at the top of their list of priorities.’”<sup>25</sup> Instead of composing engaging stories of fact about events in the past, historians express “a fascination with innovative methodologies” that “overtook an emphasis on clear, intelligible prose.”<sup>26</sup> Compare the storytelling of Barbara Tuchman’s engaging *The Guns of August*, Taylor Branch’s emotion-laden *Parting the Waters*, or Sean McMeekin’s evocative *July 1914* to Elizabeth Sanders’s utterly inaccessible *Roots of Reform*, Douglas Baynton’s soporific *Defectives in the Land*, or James Duram’s coma-inducing *A Moderate Among Extremists* and the difference between a focus on writing versus research is readily apparent. To take liberties with a Robin Williams quote from the movie *Good Morning Vietnam*, these latter works “are given to insomniacs who don’t respond to strong drugs.”<sup>27</sup>

---

24. Becker, “Everyman,” 233.

25. “The Trouble With The Past,” *Economist*, June 12, 2021.

26. Hal Brands and Francis J. Gavin, “The Historical Profession Is Committing Slow-Motion Suicide,” *History News Network* (blog), December 10, 2019.

27. *Good Morning Vietnam*, 35mm, Biography (Buena Vista Pictures Distribution, 1987).

This work departs from that tedious paradigm of latter books. *Forgotten Loss* is narrative history, though elements of expository composition do appear periodically in this thesis. The first two chapters set Green Mountain's foundation. The first two chapters examine the three key ingredients, settlement, geology, and economic evolution, that produced a set of tracks through a low hill on the Marshall-Tama County border in the late nineteenth century. Chapter 3 explains why two Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific passenger trains ended up on tracks not belonging to the CRI&P, but rather sixty miles west in Marshalltown. Chapter 4 memorializes some of the crew and passengers on the doomed train, where possible, describing their individual paths to that fateful ride. Chapter 5 sees two passenger trains combined in Cedar Rapids, routed through Marshalltown to Waterloo, and the actual crash. Chapter 6 recounts the aftermath—the immediate scene, securing help, care for the wounded, and then transport back to Marshalltown. Chapter 7 recounts the chaos in Marshalltown from arrival of a rescue train through hospitalization of the injured to processing the dead. Chapter 8 describes the unprecedented investigation by Iowa's Railroad Commission and the conclusions they reached. The final chapter buries the dead and examines the tragedy's aftermath. Neither the survivors nor families of the dead were the same and both groups sought judicial relief through suits filed against the railroad. Remarkably, the Rock Island acceptable liability for the wreck and settled nearly every case filed.

That the disaster's magnitude overwhelmed local offices is apparent in the record keeping by county administrators. Of the more than fifty fatalities, Marshall County's official death register only lists forty-six. At least another seven names not recorded on

the roll, appeared in regional papers across multiple editions, some complete with obituaries. Not that this was just due to a system's inability to scale, but also a result of challenges in victim identification. The 1910 American carried no driver's license or government-issued identification. Business cards in a victim's pocket, an interview with a traveling companion, or recognition by a family member determined victims' names. Media added to the confusion. Word of the crash spread throughout the region as newspaper reporters raced to Marshalltown where the victims were taken. Once on "the scene," pressure to get information back to the newspaper was incredibly high and absent official information, writers filled in gaps with rumors. Citizens received their news from print publications and people with relatives or friends on the trains gathered outside newspaper offices anxiously awaiting the latest information on injuries, deaths and a description of what happened. In only one instance was an individual listed as dead who was very much alive. Compiling a comprehensive and accurate roster of the dead required cross-referencing with multiple newspapers, particularly when no official record exists. Variations in name spellings in different reports introduced an additional challenge. Because the government records are incomplete, any enumeration of names possesses an element of uncertainty.

Newspaper accounts of events, including eyewitness accounts, introduce another level of uncertainty. Reporters, lacking an obvious reason for the wreck, speculated on the crash's cause which led to misrepresentations about how safely the engine crews operated the train. Early in the reporting, some pointed to excessive speed as a contributing factor. However, Iowa's Railroad Commission debunked that assertion and

demonstrated the train traveled at or under the prescribed speed. Even the commission's final report is suspect. Investigators' conclusion regarding the order of passenger cars upon leaving Cedar Rapids is inconsistent with the train's operation that early Monday morning which left later researchers to question other conclusions drawn from the inquiry.

In the end, their final report was wrong because investigators answered the wrong question. As noted earlier, instead of wondering why this train left the tracks, they should have first understood why they were even investigating. Obviously, the body count motivated an inquest. But then, the next question should have been answering why so many people lost their lives. That is easy. Passengers died because the wooden cars in which they rode were crushed between a heavy steel car ahead and the force of seven cars behind. Proceeding further down this line of inquiry leads to what caused sandwiching the coaches? The train's sudden stop and why did the train come to such an abrupt halt? Because when the tender derailed, it imbedded itself in the embankment's yellow clay. Kinetic energy from the train's momentum had to express itself somehow and the two wooden cars carrying the passengers absorbed the full force. It's not the fall that kills a person. It's the sudden stop. Like an onion's layers, peeled away one-by-one, the core question is finally exposed. The fundamental question to answer is why engineers dug a 1,500 foot long trench through a low hill twenty-eight years earlier for the roadbed rather than just laying the track over the hill. Chapter Two answers that question.

A final note on sourcing. Period newspaper accounts provide a rich vein of historical information about the sequence of events that led to the wreck and what

subsequently occurred. However, any single article is viewed skeptically. Reporters tilted towards melodramatic actor descriptions and rescuers thrusting themselves into life-threatening situations when the circumstances do not support the theatrical characterizations. Because Green Mountain became a national story, reports from the various regional papers spent days in Marshalltown reporting on the disaster. By cross-referencing the events contained in each reporter's article with that of the others, a general story arc, absent the linguistic flourishes, becomes apparent. Official records offer a confirmatory source for much of the reporting while at the same time, demonstrating that factual accuracy was a lower priority in some instances.

Of course, some of these mistakes are simply the byproduct of production deadlines and likely many times reporters simply did not have the time to check every fact included in a story. Government records offers their own set of challenges. Ensuring accurate death reporting in the early twentieth century and prior was not quite as important. At least ten names appear in newspaper reports as deceased for which there is no record of their passing with Marshall County. However, obituaries in local papers exist putting them on the train and losing their lives. In another instance, a train crewman died in Shellsburg, was taken to Cedar Rapids for preparation of the remains and then shipped to Greene, Iowa for services and burial. No official record exists in any of the county recorder offices of his passing. Concurrent with the absence of some death records are the variety of spellings used for a single surname. Where possible, official records dictate the spelling of names rather than articles in newspapers. However, in those rare instances where a government record is unavailable, the usage published by the person's

hometown newspaper is given extra weight simply because it is more likely to know the person rather than a reporter from a regional or national paper. Supplementing these sources are letters, unpublished manuscripts, and diaries offering a look into the past.

A definitive history of Green Mountain does not exist—yet. Amongst residents in the region, there is little awareness of the wreck. Into this vacuum enters mythology leading to inaccuracy and incorrect conclusions. *Forgotten Loss* fills that evidentiary-based gap, seeking to lift the fog of myth and describe what happened, to whom it happened, and why it happened.

## Chapter One

### The Land Trains Love

Nature abhors stasis. Over Earth's more than four billion years of existence, tectonic plates ground against one another causing earthquakes and volcanos, creating new mountain ranges, and reforming the landscape. Winds picked up dust and sand from a desiccated terrain and blasted airborne grains against solid rock that slowly eroded layer after layer of stone away. Stone did not abrade smoothly, forming crags in the rock that, when combined with uneven heating and cooling of stone fractured boulders and cliffs. Precipitation penetrated these fissures and the frozen water expanded that also split boulders. Eventually, rock weathering decomposed the cliff portion into large pieces of rock that collapsed into piles of gravel. Rain carried the aggregates into streams and rivers that eventually reduced rocks into sand and silt. When a waterway's current slowed, the suspended particles sank to the bed producing shoals, swamps, and islands.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, another means nature employs to remake a landscape. That is the glacier. Of all the forces constantly remaking the Earth's topography, glaciers produce the most significant and far-reaching changes.

---

1. Renee Clary and James Wandersee, "Volcano! Investigating Plate Tectonics, Geologic Time, and the Rock Cycle," *Science Scope* 39, no. 3 (November 2015): 10–15, [https://doi.org/10.2505/4/ss15\\_039\\_03\\_10](https://doi.org/10.2505/4/ss15_039_03_10); Jill Cox and Debi Molina-Walters, "Chipping Away at the Rock Cycle," *Science Scope* 32, no. 6 (February 2009): 66–68.

Fifteen-thousand years ago, tulle-thin sheets of snow stretched off the edges of drift, driven by an incessant wind. From horizon to horizon, in every direction, an undulating surface of protean icy hills and valleys—constantly reshaped by ice, gust, and gravity. Except for the zephyr driven rivulets of dry snow, nothing moved. Surveying the landscape yielded neither vegetation nor landscape feature to interrupt the glacier's insipid white and grey surface. Each snowfall added a new layer of frozen precipitation that covered the last storm's snow and pressed down on the previous layer. For thousands of years cold temperatures allowed snowstorm after snowstorm to pile up layers of frozen precipitation that squeezed coats underneath. The snow's weight turned individual flakes into a bluish clear ice one-hundred-fifty-feet that pressed the ice outward in all directions.<sup>2</sup> This frozen flow slowly overwhelmed vegetation, grinding down and carrying away anything on the surface and down to bedrock. The ice cryopreserved plants and captured rocks and sand. Extreme pressure pulverized boulders into gravel, sand, and a fine powder, while glacial movement carried the silt hundreds of miles. As a cold cycle ended, melting snow and ice deposited this till throughout the region. On the surface, airborne dust settled into crevices in the snow, was entombed and carried along by a creeping ice tsunami.

No agreement exists on a glaciation cycle's cause. Alterations in the Earth's orbit, a minute reduction of the Sun's radiant energy, or changes in ocean temperatures and hydrologic flows may all cause or contribute to a colder world. Clearly, however,

---

2. Michael Hambrey, *Glacial Environments* (Vancouver, British Columbia: UBC Press, 1994), 29.

atmospheric temperatures consistently cool over a period of years preventing snow from completely melting introducing a new era of glaciation. These hundred-thousand-year cycles of advancing and retreating glaciation formed and shaped the geography and geology of what is now the United States northern Midwest. Periods during which snow and ice cover substantial portions of the Earth are not unusual climatological events. Geologists identify eight different ice ages during Earth's last 2.5 billion years, each altering various regions including Europe, Niger, the Sahara and Lower Congo, in addition to North America. Earth's most recent period of extended cooling began 2.5 million years ago within which the Pleistocene Epoch occurs.<sup>3</sup> An ice age is not just one period of glacier development and "monotonously cold," but rather, "long icy intervals," interrupted by, geological timescale speaking, "relatively short warm periods."<sup>4</sup> Glaciation can last 100,000 years or more and then interrupted by 15,000 to 20,000 years of warming. The past ten thousand years represent one of these warm periods. The distinguishing characteristic of each glaciation is reshaping the geography underneath. Rock-laden ice scours the land underneath, capturing debris within the ice and carrying material far from its original location. Warmer conditions melt the ice and snow, driving the glacier back towards its genesis. Left behind is drift composed of boulders, gravel, sand, silt, and clays settling into geographic imperfections thereby smoothing an irregular

---

3. Hambrey, *Glacial Environments*, 31.

4. Macdougall, *Frozen Earth : The Once and Future Story of Ice Ages* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2013), xiv.

surface and producing new landscapes of tablet-like prairies punctuated with low rising hills.

The region that became America's breadbasket experienced a series of these glacial cycles leaving behind a new countryside. The geology and geography of land that became Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa all reflect those experiences of ice incursions and subsequent retreats. Ice flattened terrain while melting snow carved new waterways through the plains. Five hundred thousand years ago, glaciers penetrated deep into North America's middle covering Iowa and neighboring states, delivering the ingredients to produce fertile soils ideal for agriculture, leaving a variety of geographic regions in each state. Ohio has five distinct zones, four areas divide up Indiana, and Illinois contains more than ten. Periodic glaciation in Iowa created eight distinct geographic zones across nearly 56,000 square miles. The Iowa Southern Drift covers much of the state's southern area bordering southern Iowa's landscape reflects the results of this period. However, 20,000 years ago ice and snow covered Iowa's northeastern quarter, in what geologists call the "Last Glacial Maximum," plunging down from Canada and creating the Iowan Surface zone arching southward through thirteen counties, of which Marshall was one.<sup>5</sup>

This last ice sheet, which geologists named the Wisconsinan Glacier, laid across northeastern and north central Iowa leaving a distinct geographical boundary between land under the ice and land untouched by the frozen tsunami. The most striking feature of this boundary is the transition from the Southern Iowa Drift's "deeply creased landscape

---

5. Jean C. Prior, *Landforms of Iowa*, 1st ed. (University of Iowa Press, 1991), 31.

to terrain with “long slopes, low relief, and open views to the horizon.”<sup>6</sup> These last glaciers left a detritus of materials and a distinct geography. Pahas, low hills of loess deposits left behind as the ice sheets disappeared, provided topographical variation across an otherwise tablet-like plane that marked the ice's furthest southern advance. A, “finely-divided rock flour, rich in the minerals that plants need,” covered an expanse of land from Ohio to Nebraska.<sup>7</sup>

Exposed, the environment weathered particles of mineral and sand through “fragmentation and hydrolysis,” further diminishing their size and flattening the specks further.<sup>8</sup> Gravel deteriorated into sand, sand into silt, and silt into “platelike or needle-like” particles less than 2  $\mu\text{m}$ .<sup>9</sup> Vegetation chased the retreating ice sheets taking root along the surface and spreading north across bare ground. Seasonal cycles of plant growth in the spring and death in the fall, punctuated by the periods of heavy rain, drought and the resulting prairie fires, contributed critical organic matter to the glacial deposits creating nutrient rich topsoil, the ground New Englanders first encountered in Ohio. This humus, built up over the subsequent years of warmer weather, buried the glacial flakes that produced an unyielding layer of subsoil clay.

---

6. Prior, *Landforms*, 58-68.

7. *A Century of Farming in Iowa 1846-1946* (Ames, IA: The Iowa State College Press, 1946), 19.

8. Daniel Hillel, *Environmental Soil Physics* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1998), 80.

9. Hillel, *Environmental Soil Physics*, 62.

Because it is tightly packed, scientists call clay a “heavy” soil. Unlike sand or even silt, clay has little space between the flakes making for a dense layer possessing no ability to absorb mechanical forces applied to it. This is an advantage when considering clay as a base to produce bricks for construction or the surface of a tennis court, but a hinderance to an object in motion striking a clay wall. In order for a surface to “give” when pressed, a substantial amount of space between particles must be present. When present, kinetic energy is absorbed by the medium, dispersed across its matrix as the open spaces collapse. That lack of an energy-absorptive lattice makes impacts against clay surfaces potentially dangerous. Though impervious to mechanical energy, clay possesses significant capacity to accept and hold water. Its introduction to clay produces a “plastic and sticky” blob, allowing for molding. Like its uncompromising nature, this characteristic possesses both an advantage and disadvantage. By becoming malleable when wet, the material can be molded into a variety of useful forms and then dried to retain its new shape. However, a soil surface that becomes pliable in the presence of water means any object embedded in the clay becomes less stable and the soil’s rigidity degenerates. This was the geology westward headed Americans encountered.

The transition was subtle and uneven, but apparent to those migrating west. Tired mountains, weathered rock face, and thick forests of conifers in New York and Pennsylvania gave way to diverse growths of oaks covering the Allegheny Plateau’s hills and dales. The plateau is a large geographic region stretching through New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and eastern Ohio. The further west the travelers went, the more this land’s irregular character subsided. The geography flattened and prairie grasses

replaced the unending forest of deciduous trees. Here, was a geologic border between land unsullied by the Ice Age and terrain sanded flat by massive waves of ice and snow. What the glaciers left behind was a base upon which subsequent weathering and plant-life turned into land made for farming. Yankees, escaping what they perceived as a “crowded” East Coast, navigated through the rugged regions of New York and Pennsylvania toward the Northwest Territory.<sup>10</sup> Here, New Englanders found large land tracks of relatively flat ground with fertile and deep soil that they could turn over to plant crops. The contrast between the thin, low-quality dirt of New England was stark.<sup>11</sup> Growing crops to sustain these transplanted families, though still challenging, did not have the obstacles farmers faced trying to grow and harvest a crop along the Atlantic seaboard.

Despite the romantic myth of a pioneer family loading their wagon with possessions, yoking oxen and walking west, this was the exception rather than the rule. Americans, looking to migrate west, organized companies that sold subscriptions. When the company raised enough money, they sent a small committee of men west to locate and acquire enough land for division amongst the subscribers. Upon a successful purchase, these men returned home and during the following year, company participants

---

10. Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815*, Oxford History of the United States (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 363; Virginia E. McCormick and Robert W. McCormick, *New Englanders on the Ohio Frontier: Migration and Settlement of Worthington, Ohio* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1998), 15.

11. McCormick, *New Englanders*, 8.

loaded their belongings and traveled across the mountains as a group. The system worked, except when it did not and there were times when it certainly did not.

The Stafford Western Land and Emigration Company dissolved. Organizers returned what remained of the \$30,000 to the subscribers on a prorated basis. The company was supposed to locate and acquire an entire township on the frontier using fees collected from the residents in and around Lowell, Massachusetts. A block of land that size would have created 144 farms of 160 acres each and a town at the center, “for their civic center.” Members had to find another way to go west. It was not so much that Lowell, Massachusetts did not offer opportunities, the textile mills in America’s first planned industrial city offered a number of jobs.<sup>12</sup> It was more the allure the vast opportunities on this blank canvas of new plains territories that made migration attractive. Wage work meant labor to benefit another. Instead of working twelve-hour days on Francis Cabot Lowell’s water-powered looms to enrich cloth factory owners, Yankee pioneers could spend those same hours of exertion benefitting themselves on their own land west of the Mississippi. The desire was still there.

Though their migrant company failed, a few of the participants did not give up their dream of moving west. Joseph Bailey, Samuel Goddard and A.B. Chaffee headed out “to find ‘The Land of Promise.’” Traveling by Erie Canal, railroad, steamship, wagon, and on foot, the trio eventually found the land they sought. “Timber bordered the streams and rolling prairie with productive soil between,” providing both the raw

---

12. Carol McCabe, “The Mill Girls of Lowell,” *Early American Life* 32, no. 5 (2001): 34-35.

materials for homesteads and treeless land for crops. Three men left, but only two returned. The search exhausted Chaffee, taking his life. He died in Red Wing, Minnesota and never saw farms built on the land he helped find. The Yankees found homes on a geography dramatically different from the world they left behind in Massachusetts.<sup>13</sup>

New Englanders were not the only Americans moving west. About the same time Stafford company men first went west—and failed—to find a township, two score of North Carolinian Quakers formed the Reece company to manage their journey west of the Mississippi. Hailing from Yadkin County, North Carolina, with the western part touching the Brushy Mountains, the forty migrants traveled northwest towards Iowa, which had become a state just five years earlier. The trip, on foot for everyone except older family members, consumed two months. This group of immigrants secured land in north central Iowa, along the Iowa River. “They were sixty miles from the nearest mill, twenty-five miles from the nearest post office, and ten miles from the next settlement nearest them.” The land, on which they formed their community was “fertile, well watered, and ready for the plow.”<sup>14</sup>

Mass migration was the second of three key prerequisites necessary for railroad development. During the nineteenth century, much of the East Coast picked up and moved west. Many of those who first settled in Ohio and Michigan then moved further

---

13. Leslie Dunn, “Grandmother Farnham’s 96 Years of the 19th Century,” Letter, n.d., Folder 1, University of Iowa Women’s Archives.

14. Frank T. Clampitt, “Some Incidents In My Life: The Saga Of The ‘Unknown’ Citizen” (n.d.), Olson/Clampitt Memoirs, Box 1, University of Iowa Women’s Archives, 2.

west to Illinois and Iowa. as the federal government forcibly took land from Indigenous peoples already living in the area and offering it to migrating Americans and immigrants entering the United States. In Iowa, the population grew from 10,531 in 1836 to 117,954 when admitted as a state and climbing to 682,002 just before the Civil War began.<sup>15</sup> The economic objective of the first settlers establishing farms on the prairie was primarily cultivating and storing adequate food supplies for themselves and perhaps a small surplus to trade for manufactured goods with neighbors.<sup>16</sup> But as industrialization expanded creating demand for wage workers, many of whom immigrated from Europe, that approach was changing.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, nearly everyone grew at least some portion of their own food.<sup>17</sup> America's Industrial Revolution drove a change in farmer attitudes towards crop production. Men, women, and children who left the fields for wage work in the mills and factories that materialized in the Northeast needed fed. The transition from field-to-factory is apparent from US census statistics. In 1800, 5 percent of Americans lived in communities of 2,500 people or more. Sixty years later, 20 percent called cities their homes.<sup>18</sup> Farmers that surrounded these small factories, both expanded

---

15. "A Short Description for the Advice of Immigrants." (State of Iowa, 1861), State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City Center, 1.

16. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America 1815-1848*, Oxford History of the United States (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 33; Clampitt, "Some Incidents", 7.

17. Howe, *What God*, 525.

18. Census Bureau, *Bicentennial Edition: Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* Part 1 (Washington, 1975), 8-12.

their production and modified their crop portfolio as the socioeconomic environment changed. New opportunities arose to sell produce and meats.

The evolution in the economic philosophy in agriculture represents the third prerequisite necessary for railroad development. Importantly, the transition did not occur in a short span of time, nor did this change happen across the entire American nation. Instead, industrialization and the resulting urbanization catalyzed development of a transportation infrastructure along the nation's waterways because this route could move larger volumes of raw materials and farm products from farms to cities for processing. For those with land along the Mississippi, Ohio, or Missouri Rivers, flat bottom boats carried grain south to New Orleans for sale and transport by ocean going vessel to ports on the East Coast. Even farmers planting crops near tributaries of rivers had a means to move grain. But absent access to water transport, planting substantially more than was needed offered no benefit because no means existed to haul produce far. The iron horse helped alter this dynamic.

Railroads debuted in the United States at about the same time America's nascent manufacturing economy appeared. There was the horse drawn Mauch Chunk Railway, a nine mile stretch of track in Pennsylvania for passengers while at Quincy, Massachusetts, a three mile stretch terminating at the area's granite quarry. Though the Mauch Chunk line gained notoriety for the experiences of its riders, the Quincy Road was a harbinger of the primary cargo for railroads. Relying on a slightly downward grade, the cars, laden with cut stone could gradually roll down a gentle slope, be unloaded, and then pulled back up this small grade using horses. This latter operation moved "tremendous weights

... with relatively little effort.”<sup>19</sup> Their reliance on livestock for motive power proved a hinderance to construction of railroads covering any substantial distance. Companies addressed that flaw four years later when the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad unveiled a steam locomotive.<sup>20</sup> Replacing animal power with steam changed America’s transportation industry fundamentally and in part ushered in the railroad era.

Continued growth of cities expanded not just demand for agricultural products, but for a means of getting produce from the farm to the market. Railroads expanded throughout the Midwest connecting growing cities to rural communities. As railways constructed routes that made these new markets accessible, farmer attitudes towards both the types and quantities of crops changed. The two factors went hand-in-hand. To fill that demand, subsistence farmers of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa transitioned towards cultivating cash crops and raising an increasing number of farm animals as the means to ship food and livestock to distance cities entered the picture. But the flow of goods was not in just one direction. Trains to the countryside carried finished products back to rural communities improving the overall quality of life.

The Pleistocene Ice Age, with its hundred-thousand-year cycles of glaciation interrupted by fifteen-thousand-year warming periods leveled the North American landscape and put in place a foundation for growth of a rich biodiversity of flora. During the last wave of ice and snow, nomadic peoples migrated across a land bridge between

---

19. H. Craig Miner, *The Most Magnificent Machine: America Adopts the Railroad, 1825-1862* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010), 1-2.

20. Miner, *The Most Magnificent*, 30.

Asia and North America to first occupy lands reshaped by the ice developing their own societies and ways of living. Discovery of the Americas by European explorers brought a new wave of immigrants to the continent's shores setting up conflicts between different European powers for control and exploitation of the land. As former British colonies successfully escaped control by the English to form their own nation, citizens of the new United States moved westward to occupy unorganized territory, regardless of the legality of their actions. At the same time entrepreneurs constructed factories, notably textile mills in Lowell, Massachusetts, to mass produce goods. Here then, was a setting of the stage for a substantial alteration of the nation's economic structure. Twice, during the nineteenth century, Americans' approach to commerce changed. In the antebellum period, industrialization and urbanization motivated farmers to shift from and individualized-family maintenance philosophy towards crop commoditization. After the Civil War, corporatization grew into the commodity-controlling trusts for, among others, sugar, steel, and railroads.

Starting in the 1830s, pioneers floated across the Mississippi on ferries to stake out a land claim in the Iowa territory. Domestically, the migrants came from New England, other Midwestern states, and the South. But these were not the only pioneers. Scandinavians and Germans traveled across the United States to build farms in Iowa also. Over the next fifty years, hundreds of thousands came to make a life for themselves. The railroads came because the three necessary elements for railroad development existed. Land was relatively flat and easy to construct a road, a critical mass of people occupied the land, and farmers looked to produce crops for cash rather than direct consumption and

local barter. Railways generally built from east-to-west and south-to-north and in 1878, railway companies owned nearly three thousand miles of road in Iowa.<sup>21</sup> Though rails crisscrossed the state at that point, opportunity still existed.

---

21. "First Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending June 30, 1878.," Annual (Des Moines: Iowa Railroad Commission, 1878), 39.

## Chapter Two

### Give Us More Railroads

“Another Trunk Road” headlined an April 5, 1882 article inside Wednesday’s *Iowa State Register*. The paper gushed that “a great railway enterprise” will offer “Iowa another great trunk road fully the equal of the CB&Q, the Rock Island and the Northwestern, and the Wabash, but also one that will open up a new system of roads.” Four days earlier, J.S. Clarkson formally announced a new railway company, the Wisconsin, Iowa & Nebraska, capitalized by investors in New York and Europe, to build a line from the Mississippi River in northeastern Iowa diagonally through the state that terminated along the Missouri River in southwestern Iowa. Clarkson’s release withheld organizational details, with the exception that he named George Woolston as the road’s superintendent, a man raised on the fields southwest of Marshalltown, to hand the day-to-day construction.<sup>1</sup>

The WI&N, as the railroad came to be known, was the latest in a series of railway companies who attempted constructing rail lines in Iowa, with mixed results. The first effort to build a railroad that spanned Iowa began in the fall of 1853 when a Chicago and Rock Island-backed company, the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad, broke ground on a

---

1. “Another Trunk Road: The Great Iowa Railroad Project of the Year 1882.,” *The Iowa State Register*, April 5, 1882, Microfilm, State Historical Society of Iowa; “Another Iowa Road: Prospectus of the Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska--The Township Bonds Plan,” *Sioux City Daily Journal*, April 7, 1882, Morning edition.

line to connect “Davenport to the Missouri River.”<sup>2</sup> Despite the absence of significant geographic obstacles, track extended just twelve miles west into Walcott a year later, just one mile a month. During the next sixteen months, productivity improved 150 percent which allowed crews to reach Iowa City, forty miles to the west. The Mississippi & Missouri arrived just in time for Iowans to move their state capital 115 miles west to Des Moines. For the next eleven years, construction continued in fits and starts, but mounting debt from the company’s failure to make financially meaningful connections, forced the M&M into receivership, a common outcome for many railroads. When the end came, track extended as far west as Kellogg, over one-hundred-thirty miles from the railhead, yet still forty short of Des Moines.<sup>3</sup> Had individual investors formed the M&M, its work—and the money squandered—might well have disappeared from history. But it was not. The original backers replaced their defunct M&M with a new organization, bearing a new name, the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific, and holding a new corporate charter. Foremost, this new corporation permitted the Chicago and Rock Island to maintain their federal and state land grants while also continuing to establish a road to Council Bluffs.<sup>4</sup>

---

2. Frank P. Donovan, Jr. and Harry Bedwell, “Iowa’s First Railroad,” *The Palimpsest* 44, no. 9 (September 1963): 384-6.

3. Frank P. Donovan, Jr. and Harry Bedwell, “On To Council Bluffs,” *The Palimpsest* 44, no. 9 (September 1963), 392.

4. Donovan, Jr. and Bedwell, “On To Council Bluffs,” 392.

A cursory glance at Iowa's 1881 railroad map had track seemed to run everywhere.<sup>5</sup> Over the next five years, this new company finished what the M&M started by laying track all the way to Council Bluffs on the Missouri River. Though breaking ground first, construction and organizational delays within the CRI&P allowed another railway to reach the Missouri River first. The race winner, (and financial reward for completing the connection ahead of the competition), went to the North Western, who entered the city three years earlier. By arriving at Iowa's western border earliest and directly across from Omaha, headquarters for the Union Pacific, the North Western secured lucrative freight contracts to haul, "much of the material for building the Union Pacific."<sup>6</sup> By 1869, Iowa had two lines traversing the state east-to-west. There would be more. Lines eventually spread out across the state like the veins of a leaf. Over the next sixty years many companies tried to build railroads in the state, but some suffered the same fate as the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad. Despite these individual setbacks though, track mileage grew. From east to west, Iowa spanned 330 miles and from north to south, nearly 250 miles. In that space, companies laid more than 4,387 miles of road by June 1878 connecting hundreds of Iowa towns and cities to the larger United States.<sup>7</sup> But

---

5. Iowa Railroad Commissioners, *Railroad Map of Iowa* (Des Moines, Iowa, 1881), Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

6. Donovan, Jr. and Bedwell, "On To Council Bluffs," 392-3.

7. Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners, *First Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending June 30, 1878* (Des Moines: State of Iowa, 1878), p. 72

even with this much rail service already in place, opportunities existed for more lines if the right person, at the right time and having the right connections could exploit them.

Only in northwestern Iowa did a scarcity of lines appear to exist. At least eight different companies operated roads from the Mississippi River towns of Dubuque, Clinton, Davenport and Burlington west to Council Bluffs and Sioux City on the Missouri. Generally, those same communities served as jumping off points for track running northwest to Minneapolis. Additionally, railways originating in St. Louis crossed into Iowa near Keokuk traversing the state towards their Twin Cities destination. Both trunk and branch lines through innumerable Iowa towns and small cities offered rural residents access to growing commercial centers in Omaha, Chicago, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Kansas City and St. Louis. Moreover, trains brought cosmopolitan manufactured goods back into these towns improving residents' quality of life. Upon closer examination, however, rare was track running from southwest to northeast. But what the map revealed most clearly was the ad hoc nature of rail line construction. There was no master plan. The objective was transportation of rural products to processing centers in midwestern cities for manufacturing and distribution to the rest of the country. In his 1906 book, *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair describes the cattle pens in Chicago's stockyards. "All along this east side of the yards ran the railroad tracks, into which the cars were run, loaded with cattle." During the night, trains from the countryside carried livestock so that in the morning, "the pens were full."<sup>8</sup> Livestock only represented a small percentage of

---

8. Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, ed. Joslyn T. Pine (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2001), 27.

freight carried. Combined, these trains ran nearly two and a half times as many miles as did passenger trains, carrying 21,297,764 tons of raw materials and goods.<sup>9</sup> But with their focus on farm product deliver to the cities, railroads failed to see other opportunities. That was, however, about to change.

No trunk line ran diagonally across the state from northeast to southwest and that negatively impacts a significant number of Iowans. With the exception of those living directly north of the state capital, served by the Chicago and Northwestern Railway, residents above the failed M&M between Davenport and Council Bluffs lacked a direct route to the state capital. For example, a resident in Dubuque traveled west to Waterloo where he or she connected with a train heading southeast through Cedar Rapids to Iowa City to then pick up an east-west line to Des Moines.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, a Lee County resident in the state's most southeastern county enjoyed a near uninterrupted ride straight to the capital. They might not even need to exit the passenger car during the entire trip. Major railway companies' generally east to west focus excluded over forty percent of the state's population from convenient travel.<sup>11</sup> The *Waterloo Courier* complained, "we have at all times, in season and out of season, urged the necessity and ... the advantages of a railroad

---

9. "Third Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners, for the Year Ending June 30, 1880.," Annual, Board of Railroad Commissioners Annual Report (Des Moines: General Assembly, June 20, 1880), 167.

10. "Railroad map of Iowa, 1881," Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners, Western Litho Co., 1881. Courtesy of University of Iowa Libraries and Archives.

11. Frank D. Jackson, "Census of Iowa for the Year 1885," *Census* (Des Moines, Iowa: Iowa Secretary of State, 1885), 1.

from Waterloo to Des Moines.”<sup>12</sup> They did not get one despite making a reasonable case. Iowa’s 1885 census reported Blackhawk County’s population, in which both Waterloo and Cedar Falls are located, at more than 23,000. Fayette County to the northeast had 22,000 and Clayton County along the Mississippi River had 26,000. To the southwest of Blackhawk, Tama County housed 21,000 resident and in next door Marshall County, nearly 25,000; none with a direct line to the state’s capital. Onto the scene emerges a former Marshalltown dry goods clerk turned New York City business apprentice who developed the requisite financial connections to build this exact route, George F. Woolston.

Woolston was born in 1846 on his family’s Somonauk Township farm in north central Illinois. He was the third of six children, five boys and one girl, born to Frank and Mary Woolston. After George’s sister died in 1856, Frank moved Mary and the children west, resettling in central Iowa and started a new farm near Melbourne, twenty miles southwest of Marshalltown. Like all Iowa pioneer families, the Woolstons experienced their share of challenges. The yeoman farmer life meant hours of work and measure of privation. However, the Woolston parents, both literate themselves, ensured their boys received an education and sent them to the closest country school. Both Mary and Frank saw literacy’s importance to their children’s success in the growing United States. But a storm was coming. Just as Simon, their oldest, entered adulthood, slavery supporters attacked Fort Sumter signaling the Civil War’s start. Simon answered President Abraham

---

12. *The Waterloo Courier*. “W., I. & N. R’y.: Those Letters Mean the ‘Wisconsin, Iowa & Nebraska Railway’, a New Iowa Trunk Line!” April 12, 1882.

Lincoln's call for volunteers by enlisting in the Iowa Thirteenth Regiment. While supporting the Union Army's 1864 Atlanta siege, Confederates captured Simon. They shipped him, along with other members of his unit to the notorious Andersonville prison. He never returned.<sup>13</sup>

When Simon died as a prisoner of war, his brother George, at sixteen, became the oldest living Woolston child. Typically, the eldest inherits the farm, but agriculture held little appeal to this family heir who aspired to something greater than a yeoman farmer. In 1868, four years after Simon's death, George took his first step towards a different future by leaving the farm and moving to Marshalltown. Arriving "barefooted," George secured his first job with the local dry goods retailer, Lee & Bromley. He was successful enough through his employment to court and marry a local woman, settling down in Marshalltown's First Ward. But this was not enough for an ambitious young man. George quickly outgrew the limited local opportunities and in the early 1870s, shortly after the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific railroad arrived in Council Bluffs, George moved east to New York City with its limitless opportunities. Over the next ten years, George Woolston secured the right jobs that helped him meet the right people to learn the right business lessons at just the right time.<sup>14</sup>

Over a span of six years, three presidents oversaw, "an extraordinary amount of railroads," throughout America noted Richard White. Railroad construction exploded

---

13. "Roster and Records of Iowa Soldiers, War of the Rebellion – Regiment History 13th Regiment Iowa Volunteer Infantry," accessed June 20, 2022.

14. "The First Shovel on the Great Diagonal," *The Marshall Statesman*, July 15, 1882, D 6-5, Marshalltown Public Library.

across the United States and just happened to coincide with Woolston's arrival in New York City.<sup>15</sup> Manhattan was the financial center for the boom in rail line construction and he was in the middle of the action. The confluence of this favorable investment environment with his intellect, ambition, and work ethic coalesced into an idea to build a railroad in Iowa—but not a road like what everyone else was did. Instead, he saw a contrarian opportunity to run opposite the general direction of everyone else. Instead of a line that ran east-west or that went from southeast to northwest, George saw a “Great Diagonal” that carried freight and passengers from northeastern Iowa to the state's southwestern corner.<sup>16</sup>

His was not a novel idea. Others tried before, but “for various reasons failed to realize the hopes of their projectors.”<sup>17</sup> Road builders laid nary a rail or turned a shovel of dirt. With a general idea for a new railroad, Woolston spent he courted investors throughout 1881, selling his proposal to men with money to invest. Adequate financial resources distinguished his project from so many others. It was not George absorbing, “lessons of policy, genius, confidence, manipulations,” nor his, “indomitable pluck and energy,” but rather made sure, “he got his financial backing with New York and the

---

15. Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2011), 203.

16. “The Diagonal, or W. I. & N.: Who Is Building It, What Is Proposed, The Kind of Road Being Built,” *The Marshall Statesman*, January 1, 1883, Microfilm Roll 6-5, Marshalltown Public Library.

17. “W.I.N.,” *The Marshall Statesman*, April 8, 1882, Roll D6-5, Marshalltown Public Library.

European capitalists,” secured first.<sup>18</sup> Just as importantly, George reestablished relationships with the business community back home in Marshalltown. Cash on the barrel meant more than a unsecured assurances. Back in Iowa, Woolston sought out two men prominent in the Marshalltown community, John Parker, an attorney and state representative serving his second term in the Iowa Legislature and George Glick, president of First National Bank.

John Parker arrived right in the middle of the Payton and Laney Parker clan behind four older siblings but ahead of five younger ones. Born on April 22, 1838 Parker spent his first seven years in Pickaway County, Ohio before his father moved the family to Fulton County in northwestern Illinois. The Parkers arrived at a time when Americans, many of whom carried 160 acre land warrants given to them after service in the War of 1812 migrated to the state.<sup>19</sup> After the War of 1812, the federal government granted 160-acre patents to veterans opening up Illinois land for settlement. Though Payton Parker did not hold a patent, he joined in the migration to this new, fertile territory to raise his family. Once John Parker reached his early twenties, he left the farm and traveled thirty miles north to matriculate at Hedding College in Abingdon. War interrupted his education.

In 1861, Parker left Hedding to join the 66<sup>th</sup> Illinois known as, “the Western Sharpshooters.” He suffered a leg wound at the Mt. Zion, Missouri, battle, but recovered

---

18. The First Shovel,” *The Marshall Statesman*.

19. The US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management offers an online search for bounties and warrants issued to veterans of the War of 1812. My four times great-grandfather is listed there awarded property in Perry, County Illinois.

to rejoin the Sharpshooters to participated in a number of battles including Shiloh and Atlanta. The Army mustered the twenty-six-year-old from service in 1864 and he returned to Hedding to complete his studies. Like his father before him, Parker headed west and landed in Marshalltown during the fall of 1865. Shortly after his arrival, Parker secured a position to study law with local attorney, L. W. Griswold and in 1866, the Iowa Bar admitted him to its ranks. Just two years of legal practice made John financially secure enough to marry one of the Webster sisters. Rueben Webster, her father, was a Marshalltown cofounder who possessed a sterling reputation and marrying into the Webster family elevated Parker's standing in the community. Over the subsequent ten years, John grew into a prominence during which time he served three terms as mayor, became city solicitor, led the Marshalltown Electric Light Company, and won elections for two terms in the Iowa House of Representatives.<sup>20</sup>

That political experience and social standing made John Parker an invaluable resource for Woolston as he sought to build his railroad and Parker delivered. Much of the heavy lifting to create the Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska Railroad involved selling the road to go through townships and in compensation for bringing a valuable transportation infrastructure asset to a town, secured financial subsidies to offset construction costs. Parker traveled north along the proposed route and sold the road's benefits through presentations at township trustee gatherings and city council meetings. He capitalized on community excitement then saw most townships remunerate the WI&N

---

20. *Portrait and Biographical Record of Jasper, Marshall and Grundy Counties, Iowa: Containing Biographical Sketches of Prominent and Representative Citizens of the Counties* (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Co, 1894), 650-1.

with a five percent levy. Without that local financial support, New York and European investors would have walked away from this new line, ending Woolston's dreams just like those who came before.<sup>21</sup>

Though Parker brought considerable value to the WI&N, George Woolston left nothing to chance. Ensuring success meant maximizing the company's gravitas with the community and for that role, he recruited another George, one of the most prominent members of the community, George Glick. Glick was born on Marcy 18, 1827, in the Rhineland village of Otterberg. Glick grew up during the period of nascent political reform and rise of nationalism. Whereas social, political and economic uprisings convulsed some European regions, Prussia and Austria diligently suppressed these efforts. In 1840, at the age of thirteen, George and his father left their Old World for the New, immigrating to the United States and first settling in Mansfield, Ohio. As he came of age, George began an apprenticeship with Dr. Eli Teegarden to become a physician. In the late 1840s Glick left Mansfield to build his foundation of knowledge at college in Cincinnati, graduating in 1849. A year earlier, James Marshall found particles of gold in a millrace his crew was enhancing.<sup>22</sup> The Gold Rush caught American's imagination flocking west to claim their stake. Glick headed west too, though not to pan for gold. Instead, the entrepreneurial Glick set up shop as a merchant selling supplies to

---

21. J. W. Richards, "Railroad Talk: A Few Words Concerning the Advantage of Railroads in General, and the Necessity of Securing the W., I. & N. In Particular.," *Waterloo Courier*, April 26, 1882.

22. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 813.

prospectors “meeting with fair success in his speculations.”<sup>23</sup> Five years later, George returned to Ohio and married Jane Ziegenfelden. In 1856, the Glicks moved again, this time to Marshalltown where he finally settled permanently with Jane where they spent the rest of their lives. Upon arriving at his final destination, George ran dry goods businesses before purchasing the Stadler & Wassen Drug Store in 1858. Twelve years later, Glick became the First National Bank’s cashier eventually becoming president of the bank. First National was highly respected in the community and George Glick possessed a superlative reputation for high quality management. With Glick willing to join his project, Woolston all but guaranteed townships in Marshall County would sign up for the new road. He rounded out his WI&N team with a few additional prominent men and prepared to launch his venture.

Each year’s vernal equinox marks the start of another spring cycle. Tulips, daffodils, and primrose punch through a fading winter’s stubborn snow patches, harbingers of spring. In 1882, springtime flowers not only signaled an onset of this annual renewal, their emergence coincided with Woolston’s new railroad announcement. Inside the April 5, *Iowa State Register* a long article described his new company, the Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska Railway and what it planned to build. The line would construct 325 miles of track, beginning in McGregor on the Mississippi, “thence southwest to various points,” and end up at Nebraska City on the Missouri. In between,

---

23. *Portrait and Biographical*, 611-2.

Waterloo, Independence, Marshalltown and Des Moines would receive service.<sup>24</sup> Rather than start construction in McGregor and build southwest, the WI&N proposed beginning at the center of Iowa in Des Moines and build northeast. This approach reflected Woolston's expectation of the line's primary function which was transporting coal mined around Des Moines in Warren, Dallas, and Monroe Counties, to the north and returning south with lumber harvested from Wisconsin's plentiful forests.<sup>25</sup> Surprisingly, Des Moines presented the first, and most significant, of many headaches for George Woolston in building this road.

During the nineteenth century, railroads wielded almost existential powers over rural communities. Towns lived or died based on where the tracks ran which made residents reluctant to oppose a subsidy or right-of-way grant when the railroad representative rode into town. In Iowa, one exception existed—Des Moines. Centrally located, a manufacturing center, the most populace city, and the state capital provided Des Moines leverage with railroads in negotiating routes and subsidies no other city possessed. By the early 1880s, multiple lines, the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific being one, already offered service to Des Moines that left residents with little desire to support increased property taxes. New railroad companies needed Des Moines much more than Des Moines needed them. Because of this circumstance, the *Iowa State Register* warned

---

24. "Another Trunk Road: The Great Iowa Railroad Project of the Year 1882.," *The Iowa State Register*, April 5, 1882, Microfilm, State Historical Society of Iowa.

25. "Another Trunk Road" *The Iowa State Register*. For information on Iowa Coal Mine locations, see Iowa Department of Natural Resources Map Site at <https://programs.iowadnr.gov/maps//coalmines/>.

that the WI&N could bypass the city unless the Des Moines “treats the enterprise differently from the way it has treated the railroads” previously.<sup>26</sup> When he planned out his railroad, Woolston greased the tax subsidy skids by naming prominent Iowans to manage the company. As a nod to Marshalltown, Glick was named company president and to entice Des Moines, former Iowa Governor Samuel Merrill became vice president. Hoyt Sherman, a member of the Des Moines business elite managed the money, Parker assumed the position of secretary, and Woolston became road superintendent. “The whole project depends,” wrote the *Iowa State Register*, on communities—including Des Moines—to pony up funds for the new road.

Towns skipped by other trunk lines, warmly embraced the WI&N’s railroad subsidy. Gushing local newspaper reports—helped along by Woolston—shape public attitudes. In the run up to his announcement, he effectively co-opted local newspaper coverage and turned reporting into advocacy. As he solicited investors throughout the previous two years, Woolston quietly kept the *Iowa State Register*, *Marshall Statesman* and *Marshalltown Times-Republican* up-to-date on his activities so long as they did not report his plans before he was ready to go public. Engaging the media as a partner, Woolston secured critical editorial support to endorse the WI&N when he finally went public. Newspaper enthusiasm was important because Woolston needed residents along his new line—who read the local paper and voted—to partly fund the project through a temporary property tax increase. These subsidies, along with property owners voluntarily

---

26. “Another Iowa Road: Prospectus of the Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska--The Township Bonds Plan,” *Sioux City Daily Journal*, April 7, 1882, Morning ed.

ceding land for right-of-way, reduced construction costs offering investors security knowing their advances would be paid back. Two months after the railroad announcement, Marshalltown overwhelmingly approved a special tax for the new line with 421 endorsing to just 68 opposed.<sup>27</sup> Waterloo approved a five percent levy, 1,245 to 294, so long as the line ran to Des Moines.<sup>28</sup> Fairbank, Iowa, northeast of Waterloo, “subscribed \$10,000 aid to secure the road” and Olewein approved a tax increase for the new line.<sup>29</sup> The *Marshalltown Statesman* gushed, selling this new line to communities required little more than a simple visit. “All along the line is, ‘we want it, must and will have it.’”<sup>30</sup>

Nineteenth century news reporting should always be read with a high level of suspicion. Papers were partisan organs and characterizations of overwhelming public enthusiasm can overstate general attitudes. A segment of railroad news from *The Iowa State Register*, republished in *The Waterloo Courier* described “Waterloo particularly is dead earnest over the matter.” In Reinbeck, “The people of that place are alive on the subject of the new railroad.”<sup>31</sup> Reporters obsequiously claimed “Everywhere his

---

27. “Almost Unanimous,” *The Marshall Statesman*, May 6, 1882, Roll D6-5, Marshalltown Public Library.

28. “A Glorious Victory! Railroad Tax Carried By A Majority of Nearly 1,000 In Waterloo and East Waterloo T’wps,” *Waterloo Courier*, May 3, 1882.

29. “Diagonal News,” *The Waterloo Courier*, September 20, 1882.

30. “The W.I.N. North,” *The Marshall Statesman*, April 29, 1882, Roll D6-5, Marshalltown Public Library.

31. Richards, “Railroad Talk.”

[Parker's] demands meet with hearty acceptance, and aid is tendered on at asking."<sup>32</sup> The only objective measure of attitude are vote totals and election results do not lie. From Marshalltown north towards McGregor, support for a supplemental levy was substantial. Except in Des Moines

Nearly three months after Woolston's announcement, the capitol city had not held a subsidy vote nor even taken the first step and schedule a special election. Potential supporters in Des Moines did little to push forward a ballot measure with "petitions still requiring a hundred names or so, and no work has been done on them." This recalcitrance forced a trip back to New York by Woolston for investor guidance on how to proceed. Though the idea was to initiate construction in Des Moines, residents' continued disinterest meant beginning elsewhere. If Des Moines did not offer a financial supplement, then the WI&N would start building where residents approved support. When he left New York, Woolston carried authorization to let contracts for construction. Marshalltown became the WI&N's starting point and would then proceed northeast towards Waterloo. Investors gave Woolston authority to bypass Des Moines if residents in the capitol would not pay up.<sup>33</sup>

At first glance, orders to skip the state capital by Field, Griswold & Company who financed the route construction, appear vindictive. However, understanding their point of view offers a different perspective. A Des Moines stop enthused Iowans eager

---

32. "WIN North," *Marshall Statesman*.

33. "The Great Diagonal," *Waterloo Courier*, June 28, 1882.

for rail travel to the city, but the financiers focused on freight and as mentioned earlier, a very particular kind of freight. coal headed north and wood going back south.<sup>34</sup>

In particular, coal became a highly sought after commodity beginning in 1879. Relatively mild winter temperatures and later starts to cold weather during the 1870s led buyers to reduce quantities purchased and delay their acquisitions into December. But in 1879, the weather situation changed dramatically. A series of cold snaps through November caused demand for coal to skyrocket at a time when mine operators had reduced the quantity of coal extracted.<sup>35</sup> Exacerbating the shortage was a region-wide strike by bituminous coal miners, begun six weeks earlier.<sup>36</sup> High demand product shortages lead to links in the supply chain blaming other members. In reaction to public pressure over the ongoing “coal famine,” Iowa’s three-year-old railroad commission mailed a “circular” to coal companies and railroads that sought operator views on “the general causes of the scarcity of the coal supply” and coal car statistics.<sup>37</sup> Predictably, blame lie elsewhere.

J.L. Platt, Fort Dodge Coal Company president ascribed, what became a theme in many letters back to the commission, culpability to customers that created “unsteadiness

---

34. “The Contract Is Let for the W.I.N.,” *The Marshall Statesman*, July 1, 1882, Microfilm Roll 6-5, Marshalltown Public Library.

35. “Third Annual Report,” Iowa, 571.

36. “Mere Mentions,” *Sioux City Daily Journal*, November 7, 1879.

37. “Third Annual Report,” Iowa, 572.

and irregularity of the demand.”<sup>38</sup> He described rural Iowans who “become ‘panicky’ early in the fall” that “all send in their orders simultaneously for about two or three times the amount needed.” Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad General Manager T.J. Potter wrote “consumers should be more prompt in getting their supplies during the early fall months” which echoed the sentiment of that same company’s division superintendent, W.C. Perkins blamed “dealers and consumers, as they do not order and lay in a supply of coal during the warm weather.”<sup>39</sup> Many letters placed some blame on miners. C.J. Ives, Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern Superintended relayed the rumor “that there is a great scarcity of miners,” in Iowa.<sup>40</sup> P.E. Hall of the Sioux City & Pacific Railroad echoed this same sentiment when he blamed “not practical miners to work the mines.”<sup>41</sup> Platt described “*piratical*” prices whereby “miners become demoralized and make demands which no regular business could conceded” when lead to “an *entire suspension, a strike*.”<sup>42</sup> The Crooked Creek Railroad & Coal Company’s W.C. Wilson bluntly blamed a “large amount of time that is wasted every fall and winter by miners striking,” and Illinois Central Railroad Company president W.K. Ackerman admitted their company’s mine “has been closed since the 1<sup>st</sup> ... owing to a strike of the miners.”<sup>43</sup> Suppliers and

---

38. “Third Annual Report,” Iowa, 573.

39. “Third Annual Report,” Iowa, 580, 581.

40. “Third Annual Report,” Iowa, 584.

41. “Third Annual Report,” Iowa, 587.

42. “Third Annual Report,” Iowa, 573.

43. “Third Annual Report,” Iowa, 576-578.

railroads adapted to these altered economic realities such that by the commission's 1883-84 annual report, coal availability did not warrant a mention.

But at the time, investors' desire for ready access to coal outweighed interest in a public financed Des Moines station and any further delay before breaking ground. Woolston signed a contract for grading and construction in late June with the ceremonial breaking of ground scheduled for July 10—not in Des Moines, but outside Marshalltown.<sup>44</sup>

"Knee-high by the Fourth of July" is an agricultural adage for Iowa corn farmers. Hopefully, John Hopkins' corn reached past his knee on Monday, July 10, 1882. Hopkins farmed ground just over the Iowa River, in the Marshall County's Marion township where he lived with his wife Sarah, their two children Maggie and Fred, along with a seven-year-old adopted daughter Eunice.<sup>45</sup> At sixty-four, Hopkins was, "one of the oldest settlers in Marion township," and a Marshall County pioneer. But for Woolston's purposes, Hopkins' farm field was a near ideal spot to start work on his new railroad.<sup>46</sup> Marshalltown's elite gathered under a July sun with the Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska railroad leadership of Woolston, Glick and Parker, contractors and Hopkins' neighbors in the center a field at 12:30 pm. The general contractor on the grading project, Mr. Wheeler, "set the center grade stake," stepped to the side and turned to Woolston, spade

---

44. "Again The Diagonal," *The Waterloo Courier*, July 19, 1882.

45. 1880 *United States Federal Census* U.S. Census Bureau, 1880. Marion, Marshall County, Iowa, Enumeration District 289, p. 4.

46. "Again The Diagonal," *Waterloo Courier*.

in hand.<sup>47</sup> Two years of planning, sales pitches, investor meetings and route surveying came down to this one moment. George pressed his shovel into the loamy Iowa soil and spoke.

“Twelve years ago I went to New York, and while there I found friends who had confidence in Iowa men, in Iowa enterprise, in Iowa resources, and are willing to invest their money here; and I tell you that we have the ability, the disposition, and the determination to make this one of the greatest systems of railroads, not only in Iowa but in the whole West.”<sup>48</sup>

Arching his back, he pried loose a clump of prairie and threw a dirt clod to the side that marked road construction’s beginning. John Laird, one of the small gaggle of spectators and who lived close by, led the crowd in, “three cheers for the Marshall county farm boy.” With the ceremonial construction started, the small crowd retired to a setting of food and drink under a nearby tree. Celebrating continued throughout the afternoon with a banquet and music that included, “the grand old anthem, America.” While management made merry, five contractor crews immediately began plowing, scraping and shoveling the land that glaciers shaped 15,000 years earlier to build foundation for the railroad.

The first few months of roadbed building went smoothly. After Wheeler, Steiger and Phillips Company of Peoria, Illinois, one of the primary contractors, boasted they already arranged for “men and teams with implements and supplies” either in or headed to Marshalltown. Their crews were “prepared for active operations.”<sup>49</sup> Laborers

---

47. “The First Shovel,” *Marshall Statesman*.

48. “Again The Diagonal,” *Waterloo Courier*.

49. “Again The Diagonal,” *Waterloo Courier*.

methodically worked northeast towards Green Mountain and Gladbrook striving to create a level track with few curves. Not that eastern Marshall County represented a rugged geography with significant topographical obstacles to go through, over, or around. The region was more of the opposite. Marshalltown and the land that immediately surrounded the city, reflected Pleistocene Ice Age glacial shaping of the Iowa Southern Drift. Its gentle deposits of loess and silt left gradual slopes of the rolling hills that presented few challenges to farmers for growing crops. Nor were they significant obstacles for laying track though that did not stop engineers from cutting through every paha they encountered along the proposed route—even when the overall elevation change was just six feet. Arthur Wellington was a railroad economist that investigated different road-building approaches. He chastised engineers who dug a trench through every hill instead of going around or over because “it often entails a considerable expense for construction to no purpose whatever.”<sup>50</sup> In his 1887 book, *The Economic Theory of the Location of Railway*, he acknowledged engineers’ consensus view that the most efficient track was both level and straight, neither too short, nor too long. Though clearly correct in the abstract, he criticized, “this view is wholly erroneous” because “the effect of those details on the direct cost per trip or per mile ... is an exceedingly small percentage of the aggregate.”<sup>51</sup> Wellington described engineers approach to grade as a binary choice. Either “undulating gradients’ ... are not seriously objectionable,” or, “to introduce as long and

---

50. Arthur Mellen Wellington, *The Economic Theory of the Location of Railways: An Analysis of the Conditions Controlling the Laying out of Railways to Effect the Most Judicious Expenditure of Capital* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1887), 329.

51. Wellington, *The Economic Theory*, 186-7.

as nearly level grades as possible at all points of the line indiscriminately.”<sup>52</sup> WI&N Chief Engineer C. C. Gilman chose the latter and clearly demanded that crews cut through even the lowest hill to create long and level grades.

Seven miles northeast of Marshalltown lay the village of Green Mountain. Four miles further in that same direction is the border between Marshall and Tama counties. That was the route Gillman selected for the WI&N where land elevation generally varied no more than a few feet. But absence of wide variation in grade did not mean the ground was flat. Erosion over thousands of years produced a subtle wavy pattern across this landscape that Wheeler’s grading crews easily smoothed over, building up where necessary or digging through when appropriate. However, there was one spot right on the county line—about 1,500 feet long—gradually rising to a height of six feet above the grade.<sup>53</sup> With level and straight their mantra, contractors, dug a trench through the low hill’s loess topsoil exposing an unyielding yellow clay base along the sides. Railroad men called this trench a “cut.”

Construction engineers commonly prescribed crews dig “cuts” rather than go around or over a landscape change as they pursued their “straight and level” ideal. What superintendents failed to appreciate, when ordering this method, were the long term operational and maintenance headaches cuts generated. Richard White points out that in

---

52. Wellington, *The Economic Theory*, 329.

53. *Report to the Governor in re Investigation of Wreck of C., R. I. & P. Train on Line of Chicago Great Western Railway, Between Gladbrook and Green Mountain*, Thirty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners, Rep. No. 4389-1910 at 147 (1911), 147.

the winter, cuts along the Union Pacific's transcontinental line "filled with snow that buried the tracks and halted trains" for more than a month in some instances.<sup>54</sup> Each year, Iowa experiences a real winter with temperatures well below freezing for months at a time and even here, cuts filled with snow that prevented passage of rail traffic.<sup>55</sup> Cuts acted as both collectors and channels for rainwater and melting snow. Pools of water degraded roadbed integrity by softening the underlying soil and decaying rail ties. This caused track to sink or shift due to train traffic. Proper cut maintenance included increased monitoring of drainage capability to ensure track stability. Sustaining the bed sturdiness meant more frequently adding high quality ballast to the road than on other rail segments, regular tie replacement and frequently evaluating and clearing paths for water to drain out of the cut. Wellington was well aware of the maintenance challenges cuts introduced and wrote, "Level cuts are always very objectionable" because of the drainage problem. To illustrate his point, he describes a cut produced by "English engineers ... several miles long, which caused immense difficulty," with drainage. Fixing the problem of standing water required, "several costly tunnel culverts having to be driven to drain it."<sup>56</sup>

This low hill right before the county line offered no remarkable resistance to Wheeler's grading crews. They plowed a trench between three to six feet deep before continuing northeast towards Gladbrook. While this geographic feature was

---

54. White, *Railroaded*, 48.

55. "Supt. McMichael," *Waterloo Courier*, February 11, 1885.

56. Wellington, *The Economic Theory*, 381.

unremarkable and the engineering approach common, the decision to trench through this low change in grade produced a track feature Arthur Wellington vigorously opposed—a level cut. Predictably, water drainage was a problem that the railroad’s owners inadequately addressed, particularly, the road’s subsequent owners, the Chicago Great Western.

A year after Woolston formally organized the Wisconsin, Iowa & Nebraska Railroad Company in December 1881, the rail line was actually being built. During the last five months of 1882, construction corps turned dirt. gangs laid ties, and crews attached rails. Iowans saw tangible results and this was more progress achieved than any previous efforts to construct a northeast to southwest diagonal. But Christmas approached. The ground froze and then snow arrived. When construction season ended, the WI&N nowhere near achieved its grandiose grading or track projections from last spring. Back in April in the railroad company’s initial announcement, the *Iowa State Register*, predicted “two hundred miles to be built in Iowa this year.” In its prospectus, the company forecasted one-hundred graded miles by December and the *Waterloo Daily Courier* boldly envisioned, “one hundred miles ... in operation in February.”<sup>57</sup> The WI&N was lucky to have half that distance graded. The new roadbed stretched from John Hopkins' farm field, fifty miles northeast to Hudson, a small community to Waterloo’s southwest. The track situation was even worse with only fourteen miles of rail down and

---

57. “The Great Diagonal,” *Waterloo Courier*, June 28, 1882.

crews nine miles away from Gladbrook.<sup>58</sup> To be fair, the original forecast unrealistically assumed universal tax subsidy acceptance that allowed for construction at the beginning of May—an assumption proved false. Yes, voters wholeheartedly endorsed funding along much of the route, but Des Moines' tepid response froze work and delayed the start more than sixty days. When plows and shovels finally began moving earth in mid-July, WI&N leaders confidently envisaged “cars running from Marshalltown to Waterloo,” by November’s outset.<sup>59</sup> They were not even close. The great German military strategist, Helmuth von Moltke warned planners, “No plan of operations extends with any certainty beyond the first encounter with the main enemy force.”<sup>60</sup> Though the WI&N did not face a martial enemy on the field of battle, builders encountered a variety of typical construction challenges that deviated from what they expected. Their schedule did not allow for unanticipated schedule delays that left WI&N managers without the luxury of slack time in their project plan.

Certainly, one of those unforeseen challenges was Woolston’s arrest for fraud and a subcontractor jailed for alleged blackmail. Problems appeared as grading crews worked near Gladbrook. Technically, the WI&N was not building their rail line. In a typically railroad building exercise, railroads formed construction corporations that contracted the

---

58. “The Diagonal, or W. I. & N.: Who Is Building It, What Is Proposed, The Kind of Road Being Built,” *The Marshall Statesman*, January 1, 1883, Microfilm Roll 6-5, Marshalltown Public Library.

59. “Again The Diagonal,” *Waterloo Courier*.

60. Helmuth Graf von Moltke, 1900, *Moltkes Militärische Werke: II. Die Thätigkeit als Chef des Generalstabes der Armee im Frieden. Aufsatz vom Jahre 1871 Ueber Strategie, Zweiter Theil*, (1871), books.google.com, 291.

work to them. These construction firms then subcontracted road building to a general contractor who subsequently hired other companies with crews for grading and laying track. Woolston obviously learned this approach during his years in New York. He established the Iowa Improvement Company, a New York-based corporation, of which Woolston was president, with whom WI&N management contracted for Diagonal construction. This Iowa Improvement Company then selected Wheeler, Steiger and Phillips Company as the general contractor to perform the grading. But they did not do the work either. Instead, Wheeler, Steiger and Phillips offered contracts to groups of men for purchase of equipment and supplies to actually turn the earth. At each contracting level, investor and taxpayer funds paid salaries for corporate bureaucrats to move papers rather than dirt. The general contractor's sole responsibility was to pay its subcontractors for the work performed and, in this case, it rested with Wheeler, not the Iowa Improvement Company, and definitely not the WI&N. Subcontractors and shopkeepers did not see it that way though.

The nineteenth century lacked a formalized system of consumer credit. That is not to say credit was nonexistent, but rather debenture systems for individuals developed in an ad hoc way and lacked any kind of regulatory oversight. Subcontractors turned in payroll sheets to the general contractor who provided paper, endorsed by the general contractor, and given out to laborers by the subcontractor that specified "bearers were entitled to so much money on pay day."<sup>61</sup> Because payroll occurred only once a month

---

61. "Diagonal News: An Explanation of the Trouble at Gladbrook," *The Waterloo Courier*.

and laborers generally had no savings to speak of, “railroad laborers, as a rule, have no money; sub-contractors ditto.”<sup>62</sup> But men with no cash still had to eat. They needed clothes and shoes and tools—all items that required money. Penniless does not mean penury. Laborers possessed a liquid asset, their pay memos which became an alternative currency structure with pay advices as the medium-of-exchange. Workers, looking to make a purchase handed over their pay memo to Gladbrook merchants who happily accepted these IOUs as payment. The first pay cycle, for July and remitted on August 15 reportedly proceeded without a issue. The September 15 payday was a different story.

Like ants attracted to honey, those absent moral character are attracted to anywhere large sums of money are available and building the Diagonal meant large sums of cash. According to a report in the *Marshalltown Daily Times-Republican*, some subcontractors failed to turn in payroll sheets and “issued orders for amounts much greater than the pay for work performed.”<sup>63</sup> Exacerbating the fraud was fraudulent paper, perhaps circulated by these same subcontractors and perhaps created by unscrupulous shopkeepers seeing “gold” in Gladbrook’s western prairie. When this problem surfaced, the Iowa Improvement Company refused to pay Wheeler, Steiger, and Phillips for August’s work. That meant the general contractor could not remit payment for memos presented, whether they were endorsed or not. Allegedly, Woolston “paid up those sub-

---

62. “Diagonal News: An Explanation of the Trouble at Gladbrook--Other Items,” *The Waterloo Courier*, October 11, 1882.

63. “Diagonal News: An Explanation of the Trouble at Gladbrook,” *The Waterloo Courier*.

contractors who were known to be all right” but “refused cash orders to a greater amount than their liability to the contractors.”<sup>64</sup>

Woolston’s decision to pay some but not all of the subcontractors did not sit well with those excluded, nor with many shopkeepers holding questionable pay advices. Angered over the fake paper, Gladbrook merchants gathered in Woolston’s office and demanded the Iowa Improvement Company honor the counterfeit orders. If he refused, shopkeepers threatened they would “go immediately to Des Moines and spend \$10,000 in order to defeat the tax at that place.” Des Moines WI&N supporters, having dawdled for six months over setting a tax subsidy special election, had finally managed to get a poll scheduled at the beginning of October.<sup>65</sup> After, “having thoroughly explained the matter several times,” an apoplectic Woolston shouted back, “Go and be damned!”<sup>66</sup> In response, merchants stormed around Marshalltown “howling themselves hoarse ... in raising the cry, ‘The Diagonal is busted,’ ‘they are swindling us out of our hard-earned money.’” And, some of those merchants made good on their threat. They traveled to Des Moines “to help defeat the tax.”<sup>67</sup> Antipathy’s zenith came three weeks later when one of the subcontractors, a man named Ferguson, swore out a warrant for Woolston’s arrest for

---

64. “Diagonal News: An Explanation of the Trouble at Gladbrook,” *The Waterloo Courier*.

65. “The Diagonal: Des Moines Does Not Want It,” *The Waterloo Courier*, October 4, 1882.

66. “Wanted Their Pay,” *Sioux City Daily Journal*, September 27, 1882.

67. “The Diagonal: Des Moines Does Not Want It,” *The Waterloo Courier*, October 4, 1882.

non-payment on “a charge of conspiracy with intent to defraud.”<sup>68</sup> Not to be out done, Woolston returned the favor by accusing this subcontractor of blackmail.<sup>69</sup> At the first hearing, the judge ordered a continuance until November that gave both sides time to cool off and arrive at an amicable solution. No court record remains of this alleged controversy and leads to the conclusion a resolution came about that did not require justice system intervention.

The root of this September payroll debacle were two major elements, the WI&N’s push to build quickly and money. Had Woolston started with a limited number of crews, all known to one another, and accepted a longer construction timeline, opportunities for fraud would have been fewer. But Woolston and his WI&N did not because he apparently believed building fast meant generating freight revenue sooner for investors anxious to see returns. Concomitantly, road building, in particular hundreds of miles of road building, required significant cash outlays for wages and equipment. With large amounts of money in circulation, avarice shopkeepers, with dreams of wealth, became easy marks for confidence men looking to score. Greed dulled men’s skepticism. Merchants failed to ask questions that in any other circumstance would be reasonable. For example, why would a grading subcontractor need new jewelry and a fancy carriage? Diamonds do not dig. So long as everyone made money, no one questioned what was

---

68. “Diagonal News: An Explanation of the Trouble at Gladbrook,” *The Waterloo Courier*.

69. “Woolston Arrested,” *The Waterloo Courier*, October 18, 1882; “Diagonal News: An Explanation of the Trouble at Gladbrook,” *The Waterloo Courier*.

happening. Building the Great Diagonal made substantial amounts of cash available attracting mendacious moths to the financial flame.

As the subcontractor-merchant issue flared, Des Moines continued to be a thorn in the railroad superintendent's side. While Gladbrook store owners marched around Marshalltown along with, "a dozen or more wild Irishmen ... clamoring wildly for something—few could tell what," October 2, Des Moines voters cast ballots on a one percent property tax to fund the line.<sup>70</sup> When the ballot counting finished, residents soundly rejected the financing proposal 2,069 to only 724 in favor. On Monday night, before the vote, opponents leased the Lewis Opera House, contracted with a band for music and proceeded to denounce the railroad to attendees. The proposal went down in defeat. This was not surprising. From the first announcement of this new road, Des Moines residents expressed little support for the idea of paying for another railroad to come to the capital. Likely, voters believed the line had to come to Des Moines anyway, so why pay tax money for infrastructure private money would inevitably be built anyway. Just one-in-four voters endorsed the tax. Except those who may have thought the WI&N had to build a Des Moines connection were wrong. Investors wanted to get to the coal fields to the south and collect some of that lucrative freight money, not provide passenger service to the state capitol. Though disappointed at the defeat, WI&N management simply planned their route east of the city through Altoona instead.<sup>71</sup>

---

70. "Glad-Broke Merchants," September 30, 1882.

71. "The Diagonal: Des Moines Does Not Want It," *The Waterloo Courier*.

Des Moines' rejection and WI&N management's backup plan had unintended consequences. The change nullified Waterloo's property tax levy approval from the previous April. An element of the ballot measure qualified support on a Des Moines stop. No Des Moines depot meant no Waterloo money which meant no line into town and halted any further work on the Diagonal's north end. However, Waterloo voters clearly demonstrated their enthusiasm for this new road and seemed willing to approve a new five percent tax levy, even though it would not run to Des Moines. However, residents had to vote a second time to subsidize the WI&N. By the time township trustees arranged for a new poll, weather made further work on the road impossible. Meanwhile, engineers, sat in Hudson, on the Cedar River's west side and within sight of Waterloo, but without direction. Had Waterloo voters rejected the amended five percent levy proposal, this was more than just deciding whether or not to go around Iowa's second largest city. Woolston had to figure out where to go next. Tracks had to cross the Cedar River somewhere and grading could not continue until crews knew where the line planned to build a bridge. Until Waterloo decided on the subsidy, where to bridge the Cedar River remained an unknown and with that location in question, graders could not continue grading. With nothing left to do on the northern end, focus during the company's second year shifted to building southwest. The Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska Railroad Company's second y1883 saw tumult, but also success.

Eighteen-eighty-three began with a dramatic announcement in mid-January. The original WI&N backers, who obviously sought to extricate themselves from their

investment position, sold “a controlling interest in the road.”<sup>72</sup> to R. T. Wilson and Company, a New York conglomerate of banking, manufacturing and railroad interests. Wayne Griswold coordinated investor funding for the railroad from his office in Manhattan and acted as shareholder liaison. When Woolston first announced the company, his idea was for an independent railroad, free of the large trusts. But, his route choice created an attractive situation for those same conglomerates. A northeast-to-southwest route crossed nearly twenty other lines, many of them trunks, that provided opportunities for coordinated operations between the WI&N and the trunk line owner. What Woolston envisioned an independent railroad, Wilson saw a potentially lucrative circumstance. The Diagonal, which ran at an obtuse angle to the existing east-west routes, could become the backbone for a regional railway system across many states in the Midwest and Great Plains. Such a construct presented potentially rewarding financial benefits by employing economies of scale.

The buyer, Richard Thorton Wilson, was born in Georgia in 1831. After attending a local school, he moved north to Tennessee where he worked and saved his money until he could purchase a store. A superlative business acumen earned the young man commercial success and when the Civil War erupted, Confederates tapped Wilson to lead the South’s Commissariat Department. After the Confederacy collapsed in defeat, many southern elites suffered financial ruin. Wilson was not one of them. He, instead saw substantial financial success. Observers claimed Wilson emerged from his Confederate

---

72. “Diagonal Doings: The Revolution in The Management--How Work Is Progressing and Preparations for Spring,” *Waterloo Courier*, January 17, 1883.

service “\$500,000 richer,” and traveled to Great Britain where he used his connections to southern plantation owners to become the English agent that oversaw sales “of the entire Southern cotton crop.” He spent just a year overseas but during that time expanded and internationalized his network of connections to financial elites. Upon returning to the United States in 1886, Wilson and his wife settled in New York City where he formed a financial conglomerate that became R. T. Wilson & Co., building his great wealth through, “cotton, also in southern railways.”<sup>73</sup> A thin man with a slender face with a neatly trimmed dark brown and gray beard, Wilson appeared the stereotypical genteel southerner. He was much more. Behind his pleasant dark eyes and amiable demeanor lay a keen mind, focused on building a financial empire. Wilson could look at an Iowa railroad map with the proposed route and see much more than a line running counter the prevailing direction. He saw the interconnections and opportunity to develop a midwestern rail system. Wilson wanted in.

With this announcement, the new owner introduced managerial and operational oversight where before none existed. Throughout the company’s first year, Woolston provided progress reports to financial manager Griswold who ceded decision making authority back to Woolston. For example, Griswold placed the decision on pursuing a line into Des Moines on Woolston. His frustration with Des Moines business and political leaders’ reluctance to subsidize the line resulted in Woolston’s decision to bypass the

---

73. “WILSON DEATH PUTS MANY IN MOURNING,” *The New York Times*, November 27, 1910.

state capital when Des Moines voters rejected a subsidy in October.<sup>74</sup> R. T. Wilson & Co. employed a different approach. The firm operated more than four hundred miles of road in the South and possessed a robust rail construction and operations arm. Wilson's organization already had practical experience with railroads and could rely on its internal experts for recommendations instead of the novice Iowa leadership. The ownership change meant Woolston no longer just reported to *laissez-faire* investors but rather to John Fisher, Wilson's overall railroad construction superintendent. Within a few weeks of the announced purchase, Wilson summoned Woolston to New York for a review the 1883 road construction plans with himself and his staff.<sup>75</sup>

Subsequent to Fisher and Wilson's review of Woolston's plans, work immediately stopped on any further roadbed construction to the southwest. At the other end, grading work on the northeast remained at a standstill because of uncertainty over building into Waterloo. Wilson wanted to know if a Des Moines subsidy, "could be raised." If so, then Woolston, "was to hurry up the location of the line from the coal fields into Des Moines, and to let the contract from Marshalltown to Des Moines," for grading. Unlike Griswold, whose priority seemed less about getting the line carrying freight and more about subsidies, Wilson and Fisher focused on generating road revenue. Getting to the coal fields meant being, "able to exchange coal and lumber on its line."<sup>76</sup> When Fisher

---

74. "The Great Diagonal," *Waterloo Courier*, June 28, 1882.

75. "The Diagonal," *The Waterloo Courier*, February 21, 1883.

76. "The Diagonal," *The Waterloo Courier*, February 21, 1883.

traveled to Iowa in March, “to see how matters stood,” he told an *Iowa State Register* reporter, “it was no use to build a road unless it was set to work earning money.”<sup>77</sup>

In Des Moines, WI&N supporters faced a harsh reality—come up with 20,000 dollars to secure right of way for the line or have builders skip the city. Realizing Diagonal owners would *actually* bypass Des Moines pushed advocates to raise the cash and they did—just not through taxes. Instead, citizens assumed the financial burden through private donations with one man who pledged, “a \$500 subscription,” and challenging others to, “do as well or better.”<sup>78</sup> On March 3, “The vexed question has been at last settled and the Diagonal road is to go to Des Moines,” trumpeted the *Waterloo Courier*.<sup>79</sup> Supporters success in the capitol city offered new hope to WI&N. backers in Waterloo and also to supporters in Cedar Falls, right next door. The Des Moines stop made selling a replacement tax levy easier. How the line would enter Des Moines remained an open question, but to Waterlooans, that mattered little. They would have an easy trip to the Des Moines. Finally, the southwestern portion of the line had direction on how to proceed.

But not everyone shared that perception of clarity. Just as the Des Moines impasse seemed overcome, disturbing rumors circulated back in New York City about the city and the WI&N. Uncomfortable with their content, “Mr. Wilson’s faith was naturally shaken

---

77. “The Diagonal Push: Brief Statements Made by Messrs. Fisher, Wooston and Gillman--To Des Moines By Christmas,” *Iowa State Register*, March 13, 1883.

78. “The Diagonal,” *The Waterloo Courier*, February 21, 1883.

79. “Des Moines and the Diagonal,” *The Waterloo Courier*, March 7, 1883.

in the project and began investigating the Diagonal's construction costs and operational expenses against expected revenue,"<sup>80</sup> Dissatisfied with the information available in New York, he scheduled an Iowa trip in late April, "for the one purpose of investigating the whole project." Should he, "go ahead with it ... or build no more than the link ... between Marshalltown and Waterloo or Cedar Falls."

From whom did these negative comments originate? The record is ambiguous. An *Iowa State Register* article reported the rumors came from "those who should have been last in such falsifications" and the *Waterloo Daily Courier* described their progenitorship, "coming from such a quarter as to be surprising."<sup>81</sup> Shifts in attitude amongst Wilson executives towards the Diagonal cascaded into the local newspapers amplifying Wilson's reasonable questions, turning them into deep-seated fears back in Iowa. The public's humor swung from irrational exuberance to baseless defeatism. They feared construction workers would be ordered to pull up track already laid. In Marshalltown, "friends of the Diagonal project [are] very much alarmed."<sup>82</sup> Wilson exacerbated local anxiety from his noncommittal comments towards the Diagonal by meeting and then touring the new road with Iowa Central Railway company owners. This was not a spontaneous assembly. Gossiping about the WI&N originated with, "the Central Iowa folks," who saw the new

---

80. "The Diagonal: Is It to Be Built to Waterloo or Not?," *The Waterloo Courier*, May 2, 1883.

81. "What Of The Diagonal?" *Iowa State Register*. "The Diagonal" *The Waterloo Courier*.

82. "The Diagonal: Is It to Be Built to Waterloo or Not?," *The Waterloo Courier*, May 2, 1883.

line as a competitive threat. Reporters, seeing Wilson, Fisher and the Central Iowa leadership traveling along the Diagonal's completed portions caused the *Marshall Statesman* to worry their new road would become, "a common plug, a feeder."<sup>83</sup>

As promised, both Wilson and Fisher arrived in Iowa. During their four-day visit, Wilson toured the area and met with Des Moines business leaders who sought, "to show the interest of the city," in the Diagonal, "and to counteract and correct the strange misstatements which had been made against it as a project and Des Moines as city." Though impressed, "with Des Moines, as the commercial and railroad center of the State," Wilson, "wished the public to understand that he had not yet decided," if the line would continue into Des Moines. Right-of-way cost was a crucial element in the calculus to go forward with the road and depot. Until he knew this information, he "will not decide, nor ... know how to decide." The Diagonal project, which seemed certain thirty days earlier, was no longer a sure thing.<sup>84</sup>

After completing his survey, Wilson boarded a train headed east and returned to New York and left Fisher in Iowa to be his eyes and ears on the ground. Fisher's activities was just one WI&N. mystery over the next two months. The absence of any announcements by Wilson after his Iowa trip led to a variety of unsubstantiated claims. Rumors had the Diagonal being, "passed into the hands," of the Illinois Central, sold to

---

83. "Will It Succeed: Concerning the Diagonal," *The Marshall Statesman*, May 5, 1883, Digital Archives of the Marshalltown Public Library.

84. "What Of The Diagonal? Mr. Wilson Has Left It for the People to Decide," *Iowa State Register*, May 1, 1883.

the Chicago & North Western, or turned over to the Iowa Central.<sup>85</sup> None of these claims represented reality, but without statements from either New York City or the WI&N. construction headquarters on the corner of First and Nevada streets in Marshalltown, speculation swirled.

Two months passed before Fisher announced grading contracts would be signed for road building between Marshalltown and Des Moines. Though work continued, R. T. Wilson & Company failed to quash sale canards. When Milwaukee Road cars appeared on Diagonal tracks, tongues wagged, “it has been bought by the Milwaukee.”<sup>86</sup> Observers in Des Moines noticed, “the passenger equipment ... furnished by the Milwaukee,” that the Milwaukee Road, “is also shipping freight into Des Moines,” over the Diagonal and, “A wholesale grocer house received cargo in a Milwaukee car a few days ago.” A variety of explanations could account for another railroad’s cars appearing on The Diagonal, but WI&N. management’s failure to issue clear denials combined with a major resignation did nothing to salt the fertile ground from which these false weeds sprouted. Pearl clutching businessmen betting on the Diagonal’s success white-knuckled their grip.<sup>87</sup>

Then the new WI&N owner pushed out Woolston. His resignation came at the end of July. During his previous eighteen months, Woolston went to jail, saw Des Moines repudiate his offer, and failed spectacularly to meet any of the first-year construction or

---

85. “Diagonal Notes,” *Waterloo Courier*, June 27, 1883.

86. “Railroad Matters: The Diagonal Company Still Independent and Alone,” *Iowa State Register*, September 23, 188.

87. “Who Owns The Diagonal,” *The Marshall Statesman*, December 15, 1883, [marshalltown.advantage-preservation.com](http://marshalltown.advantage-preservation.com), Marshalltown Digitized Park Library.

operational objectives. His investors sold a controlling state to another firm that pursued its own vision that envisaged the road going to Council Bluffs and only later towards Nebraska City.<sup>88</sup> The Diagonal was his baby. He planned it, sold those plans to a small group of friends and then helped secure the funds for construction. Woolston coordinated selling the road to communities in exchange for subsidies, contracted for grading, purchased rails, ties and ballast, and forcefully advocated for the road. Now he was out and Fisher was in.<sup>89</sup> Wilson's head of railroad construction replaced Woolston as president of the Iowa Improvement Company that was building the new railroad. After Wilson's purchase of the line, Woolston had to coordinate his activities through Fisher who came to Iowa shortly after the purchase. Nearly five months in Iowa afforded Fisher a comprehensive understanding of the operation. Woolston was expendable.

If the men who turned the earth or laid the rails felt any emotions at Woolston's departure, their performance did not reflect it. While corporate power politics and local officials' fears churned around the project, construction crews kept grading the road, bridge builders continued driving pilings and men laying steel ribbons proceeded to put down rails. By early March 1883, track was down into Gladbrook.<sup>90</sup> On April 23,

---

88. "The Iowa Diagonal," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, March 12, 1883.

89. "Railroad Matters: The Diagonal Headquarters," *Iowa State Register*, August 4, 1883.

90. "Diagonal Activity: Reports of Progress and Energy from the North End of the Line," *Iowa State Register*, March 10, 1883.

sledgehammers drove the last iron spike into a railroad tie at Hudson.<sup>91</sup> Soon thereafter limited operations began. The Wisconsin, Iowa & Nebraska began offering passenger service to Waterloo running the train to Hudson where WI&N arranged carriages conveyed customers into Waterloo. In May, the entire construction workforce loaded its equipment onto WI&N freight cars and traveled down the line to Marshalltown, starting work on the track into Des Moines. Christmas 1883 came early for Richard Wilson and his WI&N. In mid-November, Cedar Falls voters overwhelmingly approved a five percent property tax subsidy for the road.<sup>92</sup> That result pushed Waterloo where voters cast ballots a week later and again approved funding for the road. From Hudson, the line would travel north into Cedar Falls before entering Waterloo and bridging the Cedar River. But what made the year a success was completing track into Des Moines. Just before Christmas, leaders from the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy and the Iowa Central met George McMichael, WI&N superintendent on Des Moines' west side. The party boarded a special train car and rode to a station on the east side of the Des Moines River to examine a potential connection point between the WI&N and the already established Burlington Road. There, executives agreed to allow Diagonal trains to run into "the new

---

91. "A Diagonal Deflection: A Plan by Which East Des Moines May Loose Some Prospective Railway Track," *Iowa State Register*, April 27, 1883.

92. "An Election Was Held at Cedar Falls," *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, November 16, 1883.

passenger depot on the corner of West Fourth and Elm streets.”<sup>93</sup> The WI&N was in Des Moines.

As the railroad entered its third year of existence, it could legitimately say the Great Diagonal was real. It had locomotives and rail cars, passengers and freight. Passengers could book a ride from Des Moines to Hudson with horse-drawn carriage service into Waterloo or Cedar Falls. “The Diagonal is no longer a twadling infant, but a full-grown giant.”<sup>94</sup> The WI&N’s second year had successes and tumult. Instead of service into Hudson foreshadowing smooth expansion, the road’s arrival turned out to be a high point before innuendo and managerial power struggles occupied executive attention. Beneath the corporate intrigue, crews building the road’s southwestern portion kept grading and laying steel. Once Woolston was gone and rumors of an impending sale crushed, the sun shone again on the WI&N. Cedar Falls and Waterloo both agreed to tax subsidies and the railroad arranged for service into eastern Des Moines. What looked depressing in July exuded a celebratory attitude by December.

The next two years were relatively peaceful for the Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska Railroad. Expansion continued, but where the line would meet the Missouri River kept changing. After a period of time, St. Joseph, Missouri became the new primary object to the southwest. But it never arrived and never would. On June 3, 1886, the WI&N. was no more. Stockholders, at a meeting in Marshalltown, sold their Diagonal

---

93. “The Diagonal In Town: Arrangements Made for It to Come in on the C., B. & Q Road,” *Iowa State Register*, December 21, 1883.

94. “R. T. Wilson, the Diagonal Magnate,” *The Marshall Statesman*, December 1, 1883, Marshalltown Library Digital Archive.

positions, “to a newly formed railroad company, known as the Chicago, St. Paul & Kansas City Railway Company.”<sup>95</sup> Like Richard Wilson, Saint Paul businessman Alpheus Stickney saw an opportunity to create a railroad network. But where Wilson built a road, Stickney both built and acquired roads for his transportation network. The Diagonal was a near perfect backbone to carry traffic from Minneapolis down to Kansas City supported by branch lines along the truck. And that is exactly what Stickney did. He continued adding to his system through railroad acquisition building a large organization that became the Chicago Great Western. The Diagonal was a keystone to his “Maple Leaf” route. Over the subsequent years, the Chicago Great Western’s fortunes rose and fell with the nation’s economic conditions and the 1907 Panic forced Stickney to sell his controlling interest to J.P. Morgan. During these lean years, track maintenance received lower priority, including the 1,500 feet of track through a hillside cut on the county Marshall-Tama County line, a few miles north of Green Mountain. As the company regained its financial footing, in 1910 replacing ties and reinforcing roadbed ballast became the company’s priority. On Monday morning, March 21, 1910, brand new replacement railroad ties laid along the Great Western’s track through northeast Iowa awaiting installation whenever track maintenance crews got to them.<sup>96</sup>

---

95. “The Diagonal Transferred,” *Iowa State Register*, n.d.

96. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending December 4, 1910, (Des Moines, 1910), 149.,” Crash Investigation, Board of Railroad Commissioners Report (Des Moines, Iowa: Iowa Utilities Board, December 4, 1910), 151.

Though more than sixty miles west of the CRI&P's trunk line, once the Rock Island lost access to its line through Shellsburg, the Great Western's Diagonal's confluence with a Chicago and Northwestern track from Cedar Rapids to Marshalltown became a critical route for detoured Rock Island trains going either north or south. Once CRI&P train dispatchers in Waterloo and Cedar Rapids realized the Shellsburg wreck closed off the trunk line, they contacted their train operations counterparts at these two companies to arrange trips. Great Western main dispatch operations, located in Des Moines, were likely very busy coordinating schedules with the Rock Island. Meanwhile, the CRI&P's No. 21 St. Louis to Chicago Express arrived in Cedar Rapids stopping next to the No. 19 that rolled in about thirty minutes earlier.<sup>97</sup> While all of this activity occurred passengers departing from Cedar Rapids appeared at the depot for their northbound late-night departure.

---

97. *Photo of Union Station With Freight Side Men Lying Down*, n.d., Photograph, n.d., Linn County Historical Society; *Cedar Rapids Union Railroad Station In Winter And In Summer*, n.d., Photograph, n.d., Linn County Historical Society.

## Chapter Three

### Open Switch

Loren Reynolds could look through the steam locomotive's narrow left front window, up the tracks, and into the darkness. With him, on the cab's right side was tonight's engineer, Bill Bradley, his arm rested on the metal windowsill. His leather gloved left hand gripped the long steel throttle that reached over the boiler's top. Completing the cab's compliment of members was tonight's fireman, a man named Herman, who stoked the engine's firebox with coal and was the most physically active crew member. Herman rhythmically scooped lumps of coal from the tender's hold, stepped back and with his pivot foot, pressed a floor pedal to open butterfly doors on the firebox. He turned, peered into the firebox, quickly scrutinized the fire, identified areas needing more fuel then precisely pitched his shovel of coal towards that spot. A fireman's objective was simple. "Maintain proper steam pressure," and, "fire according to the need for steam."<sup>1</sup> Train conductor Bailey Dillion rounded out the crew for this trip. By himself, Dillon sat at a small desk in the caboose and completed Chicago, Rock Island,

---

1. Lewis A. Wilson and Oakley Furney, *Suggested Unit Course in Locomotive Firing* (Albany, New York: University of the State of New York, State Education Department, Bureau of Industrial and Technical Education, 1944), 7.

and Pacific Railway paperwork. He worked alone, with just the rhythmic “clack” of the car’s metal wheels as they rolled over the tracks interrupting the night’s silence.<sup>2</sup>

They traveled northwest, along one of the CRI&P’s main lines. The CRI&P, colloquially known by the nickname “Rock Island,” and its many subsidiaries operated nearly 1,600 miles of road that originated at a number of Mississippi River towns and connected with company lines in Missouri, Illinois, Minnesota, and Nebraska.<sup>3</sup> But this one, a single ribbon of steel rails and wooden ties laid over a base of aggregates and glaciated farmland carried its fair share of railway traffic.<sup>4</sup> When considering Rock Island subsidiaries, the road ran from the Iowa-Minnesota border at the northern end down to either Davenport, on the Mississippi, or the Iowa-Missouri border south of Keokuk.<sup>5</sup> The portion between Waterloo and Cedar Rapids saw nine different scheduled Rock Island trains, four northbound and five southbound, Monday through Saturday. Sunday was marginally less busy with six passenger trains, three headed north and three headed south,

---

2. “Another Wreck at Shellsburg Sunday,” *The Vinton Eagle*, March 22, 1910; “Met An Open Switch; Went Down Into Creek,” *Cedar Rapids Republican*, March 22, 1910; “One Is Killed At Shellsburg,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 21, 1910; “One Killed In First Wreck,” *Des Moines Tribute*, March 21, 1910.

3. The Iowa Railroad Commission’s road listing includes all track in all states for the company. This number is calculated based on the mileage between Iowa terminals only. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending December 4, 1910, (Des Moines, 1910), 293-297.

4. George W. Clarke, Governor et al., *Census of Iowa For The Year 1915* (Des Moines, Iowa: Robert Henderson, State Printer, 1915), lxx.

5. Iowa. Board of Railroad Commissioners, *Map of Iowa, Issued by the Board of Railroad Commissioners, 1915*, 8 Miles to 1 Inch (Rand McNally and Company, 1915), Map Collection, University of Iowa Libraries.

running over these rails Even more trains journeyed over these tracks when including the unscheduled “extra” freight trains transiting through thereby making this section of track important for moving passengers and cargo.<sup>6</sup>

Which is exactly the category of train Bradley, Herman, Dillion, and Reynolds ran. CRI&P dispatchers assigned the men to take thirty-six freight cars, carrying a variety of freight including, thirteen that carried livestock, horses, farm implements, and émigrés north.<sup>7</sup> Peter Jorgensen and William Marsan of Marne, along with H. Marenhoff and H. Krugert from Casey were leaving the United States for homesteading opportunities on the virgin plains of Saskatchewan, Canada. The four split up where each rode in a different animal-carrying car. Rail car builders installed partitions for holding the animals and it was in these stalls the men took their places as the only human passengers. They traveled with the livestock as caretakers, tending to the animals’ needs during the long trip.<sup>8</sup> This was the next leg on their long trip to 160 acres of free land.<sup>9</sup>

At first glance, leaving Iowa’s rich farm fields and traveling hundreds of miles north to Canada’s unimproved plain appears counterintuitive. “Luxurious” was not an

---

6. *Rock Island Lines Train Schedule* (Chicago: Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway Company, n.d.), 789; “Rock Island Timetable,” *Vinton Eagle*, January 4, 1910.

7. “One Is Killed At Shellsburg,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 21, 1910.

8. “Met An Open Switch; Went Down Into Creek,” *Cedar Rapids Republican*, March 22, 1910; “One Is Killed At Shellsburg,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 21, 1910; “Another Wreck at Shellsburg Sunday,” *The Vinton Eagle*, March 22, 1910.

9. *Canada West, The Last Best West, Homes for Millions* (Ottawa, Dept. of Agriculture, 1908).

adjective to describe rural life in the state, but Iowa's extensive railroad infrastructure stretching across the state offered local residents access to the crucial raw materials with which to establish a farm. Wood from Wisconsin forests to construct homes, coal from southern Iowa offered heat in the winter, and local dry goods stores carried a variety of products manufactured in Chicago, Omaha, Des Moines, and Moline. The one component missing from this picture of ready access to free, or at least cheap, farmland.

An exhaustion of cheap prairie land by 1890, in particular in Iowa, made Canadian land desirable.<sup>10</sup> Commonwealth officials took advantage of this eagerness for land to recruit agriculture-minded immigrants to Alberta and Saskatchewan. Growing demand for food from the eastern provinces motivated the government to expand the nation's agricultural production base.<sup>11</sup> *Canada West*, a Minister of Agriculture published pamphlet in 1908 touted the benefits of moving to central Canada.<sup>12</sup> Set apart from the burnt orange, amber, and brown colors covering was a distinct blue and white box near the bottom advertising "160 acre Farms in Western Canada Free." On the inside cover, publishers, in easily understandable language, laid out the qualifications for homesteading and regulations on importation of goods. It described the township structure—the contours of which matched the US approach—what and how many

---

10. *A Century of Farming in Iowa 1846-1946* (Ames, IA: The Iowa State College Press, 1946), 6.

11. Gerald D. Nash "The Census of 1890 and the Closing of the Frontier," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (1980), 98.

12. *Canada West*, 1.

implements, animals and goods could be imported duty free to establish a homestead,<sup>13</sup> Facilitating the migration were privately held land offices established in midwestern cities that eased the process.<sup>14</sup> The rather meager accommodations of a boxcar modified to carry livestock offered these émigrés a taste of the challenges they would face upon arriving in Canada.

Pulling this unscheduled freight train was the CRI&P's new No. 1978 locomotive.<sup>15</sup> A 2-8-0, this heavy and powerful engine easily managed the quarter mile of boxcars attached to it for this trip. Built by the American Locomotive Company, these ALCO 1900s were some of the newest and, "biggest engines on the Rock Island."<sup>16</sup> Weighing more than 200,000 pounds with a small guide axle and eight sixty-three inch drive wheels, the Consolidation 2-8-0 generated, "between 39,000 and 43,000 pounds," of tractive force and could pull the heaviest freight trains.<sup>17</sup> Feeding this monster was a tender carrying up to twelve tons of coal and 6,500 gallons of water that, when fully loaded, weighed more than 180 tons.<sup>18</sup> The first of these workhorses arrived on the

---

13. *Canada West*, 2.

14. "'Who Is Who' In Sioux Falls," *Sioux Falls Daily Argus-Leader*, April 7, 1910; "Land Is Cheap In Southland," *Washington County News*, September 1, 1910; C. R. Graham, "Strong Commendation," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, May 18, 1907.

15. George M. Dodge, *The Telegraph Instructor* (Valparaiso, Indiana, 1901), 79.

16. "Met An Open Switch; Went Down Into Creek," *Cedar Rapids Republican*, March 22, 1910, [advantage-preservation.com](http://advantage-preservation.com).

17. F. Wesley Krambeck, William D. Edson, and Jack W. Farrell, *Rock Island Steam Power* (Boston: Edson Publications, 2002), 63.

18. Krambeck, Edson and Farrel, *Rock Island Steam*, 65

Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway lines in 1907. Known by the ALCO acronym, the company came into existence in 1901 when the Schenectady Locomotive Engine Manufactory combined with seven other railroad engine builders including the Brooks facility in Dunkirk, New York. ALCO manufactured 164 of these freight car pulling locomotives between 1907 and 1910 for the Rock Island and they remained the backbone of the railway's freight operations until being replaced by diesel engines during the mid-twentieth century.

Despite the relative “newness” of this heavy locomotive, Reynolds was not a fan. The thirty-two-year-old father of four complained to family members back in his hometown of Greene, Iowa, this locomotive was not “running right.”<sup>19</sup> No record exists to explain what led the brakeman, with four years of experience in the job, to create a discomfort. Granted, the thirty-two-year-old father of four was not nearly as well seasoned in locomotives as many others Rock Island employees, but he knew something was off with the No. 1978.

Not that he thought he would be spending much more time in an engine cab anyway. “Little Mike,” as he was known to his coworkers, would not have nearly as much time to stare out the window in the near future. He anticipated a promotion to conductor and a move from the locomotive's cab back to the freight train caboose.<sup>20</sup> Advancement meant additional administrative work, more responsibility, higher pay and

---

19. “Loren W. Reynolds Answers Summons While at Post of Duty,” *Greene Recorder*, March 23, 1910.

20. “Loren W. Reynolds Answers Summons While at Post of Duty,” *Greene Recorder*, March 23, 1910.

doing more than just throwing rail yard switches or standing behind a stopped train with a flag to warn the next locomotive's engineer the track was blocked. Of course, a nice side benefit was less time out in the weather. But for tonight's run, he was still the head brakeman.

While Reynolds watched up the tracks, the train's fireman, F. Herman, stood on a diamond plated steel apron stretching between the engine and its substantial fire box. Every few minutes, Herman performed his stoking-the-fire dance that, depending on the speed of his movements, almost fit with the beat of contemporary ragtime songs.<sup>21</sup> Steam was the sustenance forcing the large pistons back and forth thereby turning a locomotive's drive wheels. Herman's job was to make sure he made enough of it throughout the trip. A heavy freight train pulled by a steam locomotive across a widely varying grade demanded close attention to the fire and an adequate supply of water to maintain boiler pressure. Tonight's thirty-six car load was heavy, but ran through a countryside of low, gradually sloping hills. This made Herman's job easier and a little more routine. In between each firebox stoking cycle, he checked water levels, steam pressures and monitored the stoker. Unlike a brakeman, who had few operational responsibilities while the train moved, the fireman was always supplying or checking something. So far, the trip was uneventful so there was nothing out of the ordinary for which the fireman needed to adjust his process.

---

21. Lewis A. Wilson and Oakley Furney, *Suggested Unit Course in Locomotive Firing* (Albany, New York: University of the State of New York, State Education Department, Bureau of Industrial and Technical Education, 1944), 29-31.

Herman titrated his coal shoveling to the train engineer's need for steam. Bradley controlled this flow via a long metal shaft with a handle at one end. This throttle connected to a valve in the steam dome which controlled the amount of steam released and hence, the train's speed. Above his right shoulder, a whistle cord, pulled to announce the train's arrival, its pending departure, or its approach to a railroad crossing. Bradley rested his right arm on the cab's side windowsill, looking into the night. Like Loren Reynolds on the left side, Bradley watched the tracks on the right side for unexpected dangers and to make throttle adjustments, speeding up or slowing down the engine. Tonight's freight train was ultimately Bradley's responsibility. He listened to Reynolds and Herman's feedback on the engine's operation, adjusting steam release that changed speed, sounded a warning whistle when needed or set brakes. In addition to everything else, he also kept a close eye on the hands of his pocket watch.<sup>22</sup>

Obviously, his opinion carried no weight with the Rock Island's operations staff because here he was, fifteen minutes out of the Cedar Rapids rail yard, in the middle of night, pulling a freight train nearly a third of a mile long, on an unscheduled trip.<sup>23</sup> The engine's single front-mounted headlamp produced a cone of illumination forward of the

---

22. V12 Productions, "Cab Ride in a Steam Locomotive! - YouTube," Video, YouTube, 2022, <https://youtu.be/xDjQTLm0dEc>; Dillon Goble, "Cab Ride on the Nevada Northern 81 Steam Locomotive - YouTube," Video, YouTube, 2021, <https://youtu.be/syzQzIXfMJI>; "Illinois Railway Museum: Frisco 1630 Steam Cab Ride IRM Steam - YouTube," Video, YouTube, accessed January 28, 2023, <https://youtu.be/R2GrcYoW80E>.

23. At the time, railroads used a mix of thirty and forty foot long cars. See John H. White, Jr., *The American Railroad Freight Car: From the Wood-Car Era to the Coming of Steel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 194-204.

train, pushing back the winter night's darkness. On each side glowed two green lamps.<sup>24</sup> Those were not to help the crew see at night, but rather make the black engine stand out to anyone on the tracks. Light reflected off the tracks that presented crew members with two gleaming ribbons which stretched out ahead of the train that then faded into the darkness. Tonight, a waxing gibbous moon and clear skies augmented the locomotive's lone headlight, dimly revealing surrounding terrain, albeit in shadow, as the train rolled past.<sup>25</sup> Not that east central Iowa's agricultural landscape offered breathtaking scenery to anyone passing through. This was farming land. The countryside was flat, with a few low hills breaking up the geographic monotony. In the fields on either side of the train, a few stubborn patches of snow laid at the bottom of deep furrows produced from last fall plowing.<sup>26</sup> A rhythmic "chuff, chuff, chuff, chuff" rolled out over the adjacent prairie as steam from the locomotive's boiler drove the engine's pistons and turning the drive wheels. Residents living along the tracks probably acclimated to the nighttime noise. The nighttime eleven to one in the morning period was relatively busy for this section of track. Forty-five minutes behind Bradley's freight were two Rock Island passenger trains,

---

24. A 2-8-0, built in 1912, sits on a pair of tracks at East Park in Mason City, Iowa. Maintained by "Friends of the 457," the static display allows visitors to experience the locomotive's ergonomics and where crew members sat during operations.

25. Newspaper forecasts for the period indicated fair weather and the moon phase comes from a moon phase question posed to Dr. Brandon Marshall of the University of Nebraska at Kearney Physics Department.

26. Luther B. Hill, *History of Benton County Iowa*, vol. Vol. I (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, n.d.), 368; M.L. Bowman, "Insect Pests On The Farm: Their Life History and Remedies," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 19, 1910; "Weather Crop Bulletin," *Vinton Review*, September 29, 1909.

the No. 19 out of Chicago and No. 21 from St. Louis. The two were both headed to Minneapolis and *were* on the company's regular published train schedule.<sup>27</sup> With a little luck, the freight train would be well past Vinton before the Chicago train pulled out of the station.

Railroad men took these published schedules seriously. The printed schedule told engineers whether a section of track was clear for their train. These timetables are more than mere programs telling passengers when they should arrive at a destination or a merchant when to expect his freight shipment, they were critical to railroad safety. Train crews and station dispatchers used these timetables to know if a section of track was clear for a train to proceed. Frequently, the reason a head-on collision occurred between two locomotives traced back to one train deviating from the schedule. Knowing the schedule and the correct time could mean the difference between a safe arrival or head-on collision.<sup>28</sup> Because of its preeminence, every crew member carried a watch. But each did not just need to know what time it was, he needed to know the *correct* time. Therefore, each man synchronized his watch to the station clock after checking the board for train orders.<sup>29</sup>

---

27. *Rock Island Lines Train Schedule* (Chicago: Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway Company, n.d.), 789.

28. Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway Company, *Rules and Regulations for the Government of Employés of the Operating Department*, (Chicago, Cameron, Amberg & Co, 1904), 41.

29. Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway Company, *Rules and Regulations for the Government of Employés of the Operating Department*, (Chicago, Cameron, Amberg & Co, 1904), 108; *Rules and Regulations*, 88.

Assuming the train crew followed CRI&P procedures, Bradley and his conductor, Bailey Dillon, wound and synchronized their watches with the Union Station standard clock. Both then checked the bulletin board for any special orders. Trains ran in both directions on a single track and schedulers produced time-based orders for switching to a siding thereby allowing an approaching train to safely pass. Six months earlier, a Chicago, Burlington & Quincy passenger train collided head-on with a CB&Q “extra” freight train four miles south of Lincoln, Nebraska, killing two and injuring nine.<sup>30</sup> Crashes involving two trains were an all too frequent and deadly occurrence which is why the printed schedule and pocket chronograph held such great importance. Everyone read the orders and every crew member had a watch they all set to match the station clock. Being off by a few minutes could doom an entire crew.

This night’s trip shared an additional characteristic in common with the Lincoln crash. In the Nebraska wreck, the freight train was an “extra,” added because of special cargo, time sensitive freight, or simply more goods to move than the regular train schedule could accommodate. Tonight, livestock made up a portion of the cargo. Because of concerns over husbandry of the animals, John White Jr. points out, “cattle trains were run on extra fast schedules.”<sup>31</sup> These trips operated outside the routine railroad timetable. Bradley, Herman, Reynolds and Dillon’s trip to Waterloo was one of these unscheduled extras. Their cargo needed moved, in particular a set of freight and livestock cars headed to Canada carrying cattle, horses, and farm implements. Add in the complications of

---

30. “Two Dead In Wreck,” *Sioux City Journal*, September 13, 1909.

31. White, Jr., *The American Railroad*, 247.

darkness and traveling late at night increased the risk of mishap measurably. No one expected trouble, but routine could change to panic in a manner of seconds.

The engine and its cars rolled through Palo heading northwesterly towards Shellsburg. On either side of the tracks, feral trees stood like silent parade observer skeletons held behind a fence of telegraph wires, waving bony arms at the crew and their cargo as the train kicked up a gust of wind, blowing through their bare branches. Across those wires, depot telegraph operator messages noting each train's passage through their station, alerting operators up the line to expect the monster locomotive and its long trail of rolling stock.<sup>32</sup> After crossing a bridge north of Palo, the track gently guided the long string of cars through a gradual left hand turn a mile east of the Shellsburg station. From here, it was a straight line of track through town and then on to Vinton.<sup>33</sup>

As the minute hand on Bradley's watch closed on 11:30, the train he drove approached Shellsburg, a rural community in east central Benton County. Founded in 1854 by Jacob Cantonwine and Emanuel Fluke, the original community consisted of two streets and twenty-four lots and by 1860 , had around 150 residents.<sup>34</sup> Situated

---

32. Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway Company, *Rules and Regulations for the Government of Employés of the Operating Department*, (Chicago, Cameron, Amberg & Co, 1904), 102.

33. Iowa. Board of Railroad Commissioners, *Map of Iowa, Issued by the Board of Railroad Commissioners, 1915*, 8 Miles to 1 Inch (Rand McNally and Company, 1915), Map Collection, University of Iowa Libraries.

34. Luther B. Hill, *History of Benton County Iowa*, vol. Vol. I (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, n.d.), 367 - 369; *The History of Benton County, Iowa, Containing A History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, &c.* (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1878), 459; James W. Grimes, E. Sells, and J. Pattee, *The Census Returns of the Different Counties of the State of Iowa, For 1856: Showing in Detail, The Population*,

geographically near the mid-point between Cedar Rapids and Vinton, Shellsburg emerged as a natural stop for John Weare's stage coach line between the two cities before the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern railroad's arrival in the mid-1870s.<sup>35</sup> During the next half century, the community's population tripled so that by 1910, census takers counted 527 Shellsburg residents.<sup>36</sup> In addition to the homes and a railroad depot—the line acquired by the CRI&P—People's Savings Bank maintained a branch in town and the Iowa Canning Company operated one of its four plants there.<sup>37</sup> Shellsburg was a busy little town.

Guarding the town's southern approach ran Bear Creek. Just a few feet deep this is a meandering stream that originates in western Benton County and gradually drifts to the northeast before taking a sharp dive south towards Shellsburg. Once this channel nears the town limits, it turns east and then curves back north along the town's southern border following a horseshoe shaped path that produces a salient of land before turn back to its subtle southerly path emptying into the Cedar River. This path's net effect divides Shellsburg into a large northern section where much of the commerce takes place and a smaller southern section on with the train station sits. Over the last 12,000 years, since

---

*Place of Nativity, Agricultural Statistics, Domestic and General Manufactures, Etc.* (Iowa City: Crum & Boye, Printers, 1857), 23.

35. *The History of Benton County*, 459; Hill, *History of Benton County*, 368-369.

36. George W. Clarke, Governor et al., *Census of Iowa For The Year 1915* (Des Moines, Iowa: Robert Henderson, State Printer, 1915), 590.

37. "Banks Do Pay Interest on County Deposits," *Vinton Eagle*, October 18, 1910; "Consolidated Statement of Benton County Banks," *Vinton Eagle*, July 19, 1910; "Elected Manager," *Vinton Eagle*, January 25, 1910.

the current warming period began, Bear Creek's shallow current cut a channel through the Benton County of prairie thirty feet wide and twenty feet deep. By the time railroads arrived, this stream had eroded enough prairie that the railway company needed two spans, one on the eastern side and one on the western side of the horseshoe for the tracks to run across.

Though this line was a single track, at Shellsburg, the railroad constructed a siding. Fifty feet before northbound trains crossed the eastern bridge a mechanical switch either left trains on the main line or redirected them onto an alternate set of tracks that ran next to the depot.<sup>38</sup> Switch hardware is supposed to be locked into position directing trains onto one track or the other and periodically inspected for point wear. Over time, gaps develop between the rail head and a turnout point leading to situations where the wheels on the left side of the train follow one rail while the right side tries to track down an alternate path. This situation pulls the wheels off the rails, derailing the locomotive sending it on top of the railroad ties. These are not particularly easy to see at night. Train crews must be aware of them along a road and ensure they are set correctly for the train to pass over.

The train cleared the sweeping left-hand turn and rolled towards Shellsburg. In one of the homesteader cars, an emigrant, stood next to his horse in the makeshift stall.

---

38. "Met An Open Switch; Went Down Into Creek," *Cedar Rapids Republican*, March 22, 1910; "One Is Killed At Shellsburg," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 21, 1910; "One Killed In First Wreck," *Des Moines Tribute*, March 21, 1910.

He looked out at the farm fields as the freight car rolled by.<sup>39</sup> Up in the engine's cab, Herman stoked the firebox, adjusting his coal shoveling based on Bradley's input regarding how much power the engineer needed to pull this line of cars. Just up ahead, fifty feet from Bear Creek's east bank was the first of two turnouts the No. 1978 would cross over as the train rolled into town.<sup>40</sup>

No record exists to indicate this switch's position. The turnout may have been open and Loren Reynolds just missed it, or the switch's signal might have indicated closed even though one of the switch points did not tightly abutted against the railhead that effectively produced an open turnout. In either case, outcome was the same. No. 1978's right wheels tried to travel straight while the left wheels tracked towards the south siding. The net effect pulled the heavy engine off either track and onto the road foundation of ties and gravel. More than one hundred tons of pressure turned steel flanges into knives on the tall drive wheels causing them to slice through the 8 x 8 creosote infused ties. At thirty miles an hour the Consolidation 2-8-0 covered the fifty-foot distance from switch to the trestle entrance in a single second. Before the second hand could tick again, all 200,000 pounds of engine drove onto the bridge deck. On land, an engineer can activate the air brakes and try bringing a running across the ties supporting two sets of rails to stop. A solid base underneath and between the ties makes that possible. Bridges, however, have no such support. Construction engineers built bridges to

---

39. "One Is Killed At Shellsburg," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 21, 1910.

40. "One Is Killed At Shellsburg," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 21, 1910; "Another Wreck at Shellsburg Sunday," *The Vinton Eagle*, March 22, 1910.

carry heavy trains riding over rails, not the wooden cross ties supporting the steel. Once No. 1978 was onto the bridge over Bear Creek, wooden ties cracked, then split in half under the wheel flanges, twisting individual rails inward. Heavy timbers supporting the left track failed just enough before the right to send the engine listing to the left and diving through the bridge and into the frigid stream, twenty feet below.<sup>41</sup> Already leaning to the left, the locomotive laid over onto that side, driven by the momentum of its fully loaded tender. It diligently followed its locomotive into the channel, demolishing the engine cab and spilling tons of coal in the space where the crew had just stood a few moments before. The sudden stop “telescoped” trailing rail cars still on the east bank at three different points, rolling the front six into the ditch, destroying 450 feet of track and closing this route off from use by other trains.<sup>42</sup>

Reynolds died quickly. On the left side of the cab, this instantaneous stop threw him forward into a narrow space between the cab wall and boiler. The locomotive buried its nose into the creek bed and rolled onto its left side and trapped him underneath the boiler. Flues ruptured allowing pressurized steam to jet out the cracks scalding the brakeman. The engine’s weight crushed him as steam from a ruptured boiler cooked his

---

41. “Another Wreck at Shellsburg Sunday,” *The Vinton Eagle*, March 22, 1910; Based on Bradley’s description of his escape, the brakeman’s routine placement in a locomotive cab on the right side, and the fact the crash killed Reynolds, the failure of the left track just before the right, causing the engine to roll over to the left is a reasonable conclusion.

42. “Another Wreck at Shellsburg Sunday,” *Vinton Eagle*, March 22, 1910.

flesh.<sup>43</sup> Like the brakeman, the wreck launched Herman forward, against the boiler's back wall. Luckily, he averted falling under the boiler but then was buried under debris from the shattered cab, the tender's twisted metal, and loose coal pouring out of the hopper. Escaping steam badly scalded Herman, but he untangled himself from wreckage and escaped his near fatal entrapment. On the cab's right side, Bill Bradley reached out the cab window, grabbed ahold of a metal bridge support then clung tightly to the twisted steel girder, "as the engine cab was sinking into the creek"<sup>44</sup> Having escaped sudden death, he scrambled up the wrecked trestle's steel framework and onto what was left of the bridge deck, shaken, but uninjured.

Behind the engine, freight cars rear ended the one in front of it. One of those cars thrown into the ditch carried Peter Jorgensen and William Marsan. It telescoped off the tracks rolled onto its top, flipping the men and their animals onto the car's ceiling. When later asked, neither man could explain how they avoided being crushed to death under their horses' weight and avoided even serious injury during the subsequent chaotic moments afterward as the animals scrambled to get upright after the wild ride. Not that the pair emerged unscathed. Though both, "crawled out of the overturned car," Jorgensen suffered an injury to his back requiring later transport to Saint Lukes hospital in Cedar

---

43. "Loren W. Reynolds Answers Summons While at Post of Duty," *The Greene Recorder*, March 23, 1910; "Met An Open Switch; Went Down Into Creek," *Cedar Rapids Republican*, March 22, 1910.

44. "One Is Killed At Shellsburg," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 21, 1910.

Rapids while Marsan, “escaped with only a few bruises.”<sup>45</sup> The animals had no serious injuries either but could not crawl out of the overturned boxcar themselves needing bystanders to “cut an opening in the side of the car” for egress. Further back, a second set of cars, carrying Marenhoff and Krugert, left the rails. The pair suffered no injuries, but one horse died after a tractor carried in another car, broke loose landed on it. Another one hundred yards further back, a third section telescoped where, “one car was practically demolished.”<sup>46</sup>

Being the last car in line, the caboose carrying the train’s conductor was the last to know there was trouble. As the train approached Shellsburg, the sound of air rushing out of the braking system signaled a problem.<sup>47</sup> Airbrakes on freight trains were still a relatively new technology. Invented by George Westinghouse Jr. in 1869, application to passenger trains demonstrated the technology’s efficacy through increased train speed while significantly improving railroad safety performance. However, railroads’ enthusiasm for application on freight cars was tepid. Unlike passenger trains, freight trains routinely included cars owned by other roads and that company’s failure to universally install airbrakes on their rolling stock created operational nightmares for yard workers assembling freight trains and the crews running them. Because Westinghouse’s

---

45. “One Is Killed At Shellsburg,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 21, 1910.

46. “One Is Killed At Shellsburg,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 21, 1910.

47. William Backoff (Railroad conductor, Union Pacific Railway), in discussion with the author August 9, 2022.

invention depended upon a closed system, cars relying on hand brakes had to be placed behind all airbrake equipped rail cars. This interoperability challenge dramatically slowed technology adoption for freight trains. Only after the Safety Application Act became law in 1893, did companies seriously begin airbrake installation on freight trains.<sup>48</sup>

Within two seconds, the caboose's brakes clamped down at about the same time a hard stop tossed the forty-three-year-old conductor forward.<sup>49</sup> That was not necessarily an unusual event. Conductors getting flicked backwards and forwards in a freight caboose was an occupational hazard. Amongst railway conductors, engineers developed reputations for starting and stopping so smoothly not even a drink cup noticed while other, generally less popular, engineers delighted in bouncing their conductor around.<sup>50</sup> But that happened when the train was either arriving or departing a station. This was different. They were not scheduled to stop in Shellsburg meaning the surprising airbrake application in addition to the jar forward could only mean something was wrong.

Dillon picked himself up, grabbed his lamp and climbed down the caboose's steps onto the uneven road ballast. He hurried forward over crunching prairie grass laid flat from the winter's snows, through the darkness towards the train's engine. The light from his lamp played wildly over the rutted ditch as plume of steam rose high into sky and

---

48. Steve W. Usselman, "Air Brakes for Freight Trains: Technological Innovation in the American Railroad Industry, 1869-1900." *Business History Review* 58, no. 1 (1984): 30–50.

49. "M.B. Dillon, Retired Railway Conductor Dies," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, February 29, 1936.

50. William Backoff (Railroad conductor, Union Pacific Railway), in discussion with the author July 20, 2022.

deafening roar echoed off houses just past the tracks. Hustling past three wrecked sections of freight cars, Dillon came to the trestle and saw the No. 1978 lying on its left side, a haze of steam partially hiding and otherwise exposed underbelly, the locomotive's rear covered in lumps of coal. The tender's remains sat where the engine cab should have been, malformed like a severely arthritic joint, water pouring from leaks in its tank. Recognizing the magnitude of the wreck's damage, Dillon carefully worked his way across the undamaged trestle section and towards the dim window lights of Shellsburg's depot to call for help.<sup>51</sup>

In the small station, a night telegraph operator sat at his wooden desk, key, sounder, paper and pencil within easy reach. The person manning the telegraph was a critical contributor for moving trains safely in the railroad's block-based track system. Whether branch or trunk line, the railway defined a series of "blocks" into which a train could enter only when another had cleared. When the man on duty at the telegraph key saw a train approaching his town's station, he tapped out an inquiry for any updated train movement orders. A higher priority train might need the line requiring the approaching locomotive and cars to shift onto a siding or the road ahead was blocked by another train due to mechanical failure or wreck. His block was clear and the extra could proceed, but he still needed to check for any new train orders for the No. 1978. He waited to catch sight of the approaching freight train's head lamp and front green signals. However, the only lights were those at the station.

---

51. "One Is Killed At Shellsburg," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 21, 1910.

Having successfully navigated across Bear Creek, avoiding a misstep that would have sent him down into the cold creek water, Bailey Dillon touched ground on the west bank and raced to the Shellsburg station. Rushing up to the operator's desk, Dillon ordered him to urgently wire back to Cedar Rapids that the extra had wrecked, the road was blocked and to send help. He then turned heel, stepped through the depot door and disappeared back into the darkness with only his lamp's beam oscillating up and down as he ran back towards Bear Creek and the stricken train.<sup>52</sup> At the key, the telegraph operator tapped out his station identification information and then the Cedar Rapids addressing. The message went out saying the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific's railroad tracks were blocked, men were injured and to send help.

Back in the creek channel, Herman frantically dug through the wet coal pile, ignoring the pain from his own scalded flesh searching for Loren Reynolds. There was simply too much coal and debris to move alone. "The task was far beyond him," and he finally gave up trying to rescue his engine cab partner.<sup>53</sup> This job required many hands. Arriving townspeople quickly pitched in to help, moving debris and digging around the rear of the engine underneath the crippled boiler.<sup>54</sup> After two hours of excavation and moving twisted metal, they pulled Loren Reynolds' body from underneath the wreckage then took his remains to the undertaker in town. While many worked in Bear Creek

---

52. "One Is Killed At Shellsburg," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 21, 1910.

53. *Cedar Rapids Tribune*, "Met An Open Switch."

54. "Met An Open Switch; Went Down Into Creek," *Cedar Rapids Republican*, March 22, 1910.

digging under the engine, others scoured the crash site for additional injured or dead and helped with extricating livestock from wrecked cars. Though everything Shellsburg residents did helped, this was the extent of what the town could do. Pulling the engine out of the creek bed and rebuilding the demolished bridge section required specialized equipment and crews skilled in their use.

Receipt of the Shellsburg transmission set off an explosion of activity in stations both up and down stream. At the Cedar Rapids depot, a rather routine Sunday night suddenly turned into a scramble to both assemble a rescue train and also come up with a way to get two Minneapolis bound passenger trains around the crash site and back onto the main line. One person summoned Dr. Wentzel Ruml, the company doctor, while another sent a message to the rail yard hostler to select get a fire started in a roundhouse engine's firebox. Preparing a steam locomotive for a run took time and that was a commodity in short supply. A yard engine moved two cars onto the tracks, capable of carrying responders for an aid mission to wreck at Bear Creek.<sup>55</sup> "Mac" McDuff and Ralph Hromek, both machinists in the Rock Island shop, climbed aboard to help bring the wrecked engine and cars back to Cedar Rapids.<sup>56</sup> Once the locomotive's boiler was up to pressure, a train crew, called in to run the relief train to Bear Creek took over. This rescue train left the Cedar Rapids yard around four o'clock in the morning, chugging across the

---

55. "Met An Open Switch; Went Down Into Creek," *Cedar Rapids Republican*, March 22, 1910.

56. "Rock Island Shop News," *Cedar Rapids Tribune*, March 25, 1910, advantage-preservation.com.; For the correct spelling of Ralph Hromek's name and the two men's jobs, *Cedar Rapids City Directory of Cedar Rapids, Marion and Kenwood, Iowa* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1910), 204 & 266.

Cedar River following No. 1978's same path. Concurrently with organizing a Shellsburg relief train, the dispatcher contemplated options for incoming engines to circumnavigate the Shellsburg crash. Calls went out to check the availability of using other roads as detours.

A little over an hour before the first hints of Monday morning daybreak appeared in the eastern sky, a headlamp appeared in the distance with the attendant rhythmic chugging of a steam engine. The relief train, composed of a locomotive pulling two cars behind, carried Ruml and a CRI&P repair and recovery crew to the crash site. The responders disembarked, hiking over that same uneven terrain Bailey Dillon traversed five hours earlier, but with the advantage of a locomotive headlamp to their rear and a number of men with lanterns in accompaniment. Ruml sought out the two injured men and the Cedar Rapids railroad gang started assessing the situation. First, get the undamaged cars still sitting on the rails out of the way and started clearing away wreckage. Once teams cleared a path, repairs began immediately on a temporary track to reopen this important Rock Island line.<sup>57</sup>

While the teams worked, word was sent to bring Loren Reynolds' body back down to the tracks. By this time, the sun was well up in the Iowa sky. Bystanders at the crash, movements no longer hampered by darkness, loaded Reynolds onto the relief train. Ruml, Herman and Jorgensen all boarded. The conductor waved his arm towards the locomotive's right side, signaling to the engineer they were ready to leave. Two whistle blasts announced an intention to depart. Steam billowed out each side of the engines from

---

57. "No. 32 Derailed," *Vinton Eagle*, March 25, 1910,

the driver pistons as the wheels slowly began to turn. The relief train headed back to Cedar Rapids. Upon arrival at the Rock Island yard, CRI&P employees helped the wounded men, under Ruml's supervision, into a conveyance for their trip up First Avenue to the city's Methodist hospital, Saint Lukes. Meanwhile, another small group of men loaded Reynolds too. He was headed to a Cedar Rapids undertaker for preparations of the remains. Though taken back to Cedar Rapids along with the others, he would not be buried there. Reynolds hailed from Greene, Iowa, a small community northwest of Waterloo and had moved the family to Cedar Rapids only after accepting his railroad job. Four Greene residents caught a train down to Cedar Rapids in order to claim the remains, riding back up to Greene with them.<sup>58</sup> The family wanted him brought home.

The wreck's cause was never definitively established because no formal investigation took place. When created by the Legislature in 1878, lawmakers empowered its Railroad Commission to inspect equipment and evaluate operations, "with reference to the public safety and convenience."<sup>59</sup> However, their primary role was monitoring a railroad's financial health. Railroads had to report injuries and deaths to the commission, but legislators left the decision to investigate a crash up to commissioners and they showed little interest in doing more than reporting mortality and morbidity statistics. Operating a train inherently contained, "an element of danger," manifested by

---

58. "Loren W. Reynolds Answers Summons While at Post of Duty," *Greene Recorder*, March 23, 1910.

59. *Acts and Resolutions Passed at the Regular Session of the Seventeenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa: Begun January 14, And Ended March 26, 1878* (Des Moines, Iowa: State of Iowa, 1878), 67-71.

injuries and deaths.<sup>60</sup> The loss of one railroad employee, killed in a wreck involving a single train, late on a Sunday night, outside a small Iowa community, and absent any citizen inconvenience warranted no more than an additional tick mark under the “employees killed” category in the 1910 Iowa Railroad Commission’s annual report. Years of lethargy left a growing threat of tragic lethality undetected.

In particular, the risk to a light-weight wood car, placed between to much heavier rail cars when the train came to a near instant stop. In the last section of telescoped cars from the near instantaneous stop after the No. 1978 fell through that trestle, was a lesson. Two fully loaded boxcars splintered an empty wooden boxcar between them so thoroughly that, “the train closed up as though there had been nothing there.”<sup>61</sup> Like the bedraggled man holding his cardboard sign that screams “SIGNS ARE ALL AROUND US,” scrawled in black marker, the Shellsburg crash illuminated a significant safety risk. A newspaper reporter described the scene and certainly the recovery crews were aware of what happened. But neither rescuers, recovery gangs nor wreck gawkers understood the real operational risk of what was right in front of them. They saw yet did not see.

The intermingling of wood and steel cars came about as rail car manufactures transitioned to steel construction near the end of the nineteenth century. With a train’s weight growing, mechanical engineers and locomotive designers push engine technology

---

60. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending December 4, 1910, (Des Moines, 1910), 149.” Crash Investigation, Board of Railroad Commissioners Report (Des Moines, Iowa: Iowa Utilities Board, December 4, 1910), 155.

61. “Another Wreck at Shellsburg Sunday,” *Vinton Eagle*, March 22, 1910.

forward, producing new power plants capable of pulling these heavier trains. Steel proved much more durable than wood thus making the new cars attractive purchases to railroads. The new locomotives coming out of the Baldwin plant, for example, could easily pull these newer cars. However, railway companies did not immediately replace their entire rolling stock of wood with steel. Instead, assembled strings of cars became a hodgepodge of wood and metal depending on how quickly older rolling stock needed replaced. In 1910, wood constructed cars remained a significant contributor to a railroad's cargo capacity. The danger of this approach went unrecognized by Train Masters.

That operational lesson was lost during the ensuing scramble to reroute trains and repair the line. As Cedar Rapids station staff worked to organize a relief train, one of those scheduling headaches approached the depot. Due in at ten minutes after midnight was the No. 21 Saint Louis to Minneapolis passenger train for a thirty-five-minute layover to switch crews, deliver Parlor City destined cargo and passengers, and pick up both riders and goods traveling north. Already sitting at the depot was another CRI&P passenger train headed to Minneapolis. The freight train's crash closed the CRI&P's only route to Waterloo. With the tracks blocked, another route using competitors' tracks had to be secured and new movement orders created. However, arranging a detour would take time to formulate and then communicate. Alternate routes meant longer trips fit in-between another railroad's trains leading to late arrivals and missed connections. Paying passengers tended towards unpleasantness with railway company staff after experiencing trip tardiness. Barrels of soap never complain to station masters about hold ups. Passengers did. By midnight, station employees knew their only CRI&P line to Waterloo

was unusable and that two passenger express trains needed alternate routes around the crash. They would be delayed but just did not know by how much.

Across Iowa's thousands of rail line miles, derailments were relatively regular occurrences. However, the Shellsburg wreck was not one of those routine crashes. The Cedar Rapids-Vinton-Waterloo road was a major trunk line and part of the larger CRI&P system connecting Minneapolis, Chicago, and Saint Louis. The wreck and resulting track closure created scheduling headaches for station masters both in Cedar Rapids and Waterloo. Each day, a number of trains ran over its tracks in both directions. Reopening this line required repairing the damaged trestle, pulling a locomotive out of channel twenty feet deep and reconstructing nearly 450 feet of road.<sup>62</sup> That, however, would take more than twelve hours to complete during which a number of CRI&P regularly scheduled freight and passenger trains were stopped cold. Southbound trains sat in Waterloo while northbound locomotives waited at Cedar Rapids. At the moment, two Minneapolis-bound express trains, one originating in Chicago and one coming up from Saint Louis, stood still on the tracks in Cedar Rapids. The two trains combined consisted of eight passenger or sleeper cars, a baggage car, an express cargo car, and a mail car carrying more than one hundred people. Train dispatchers needed to figure out a route to get their trains around the wreck.

When composing a disaster narrative, chroniclers recount a chain of events leading up to the catastrophe. Those who memorialized the Green Mountain crash focus on why CRI&P officials detoured the Nos. 19 & 21 passenger trains off their regular

---

62. "Another Wreck at Shellsburg Sunday," *Vinton Eagle*, March 22, 1910.

route. H. Roger Grant wrote “the events that led to came to be called the ‘Green Mountain Train Wreck’ began the previous day” with the Shellsburg crash.<sup>63</sup> At the wreck’s site, a plaque—wrongly—attributes the detour to flooding and Paul “Biff” Dysart’s evidence-free story described “a Rock Island train had jumped and destroyed the tracks in Benton County” and that the wreck forced the CRI&P “decision over how to proceed north to Waterloo.”<sup>64</sup>

Starting this story at the detour is congruent with reporting from the period. The *Waterloo Evening Courier*’s first article described the “passenger train being detoured.”<sup>65</sup> The *Vinton Eagle* opened its coverage noting the Shellsburg crash first that forced the railroad to “detour both St. Paul trains.”<sup>66</sup> “Train Detoured” headlined the *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*’s first report and the *Cedar Rapids Republican* wrote “the derailment of a Rock Island freight train ... caused the two main line passenger trains ... to be detoured.”<sup>67</sup> The Iowa Railroad Commission report affixed an imprimatur that made the official starting point of the calamity the detour describing permission granted by the

---

63. H. Roger Grant, “The Green Mountain Train Wreck: An Iowa Railroad Tragedy,” *The Palimpsest* 65, no. 4 (July 1, 1984), 136.

64. “Wreck of the Rock: A Massive Tragedy Moves Marshalltown,” *Marshalltown and Central Iowa’s Past Times*, n.d., 64.

65. “Awful Horror Follows Derailment Near Gladbrook,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 21, 1910.

66. “45 People Die In Terrible Wreck,” *Vinton Eagle*, March 22, 1910.

67. “45 Killed and Score Injured; Frightful Wreck of Double Header-Rock Island Train,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 21, 1910; “45 Killed, Two Score Injured In Wreck of a Rock Island Train at Gladbrook,” *Cedar Rapids Republican*, March 22, 1910.

Chicago & Northwestern and Chicago Great Western to the CRI&P to run the trains over the Diagonal either to Waterloo or then back to Cedar Rapids.<sup>68</sup>

But the reporters, the investigators, and the historians were wrong. The first connection in this disaster's sequence of events was not the Shellsburg crash that caused a subsequent detour. It did not even occur in 1910. Certainly, the loss of the CRI&P's main line *was* a link in the chain—just not the first one. The first ring towards catastrophe happened more than twenty-five years earlier when a Marshall County farm kid returned from a stint working in New York City wanting to build his own railroad company.

---

68. "The Thirty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending December 4, 1910, (Des Moines, 1910), 149.," Crash Investigation, Board of Railroad Commissioners Report (Des Moines, Iowa: Iowa Utilities Board, December 4, 1910), 147.

## Chapter Four

### Travelers Intersect

A Gibson girl walked through Union Station's double doors and out onto the depot's platform. Behind her, the terminal's warmth, in part from two massive fireplaces, and ahead was the March night's chill.<sup>1</sup> A broad skirt whose hem stopped just above the tops of her Edwardian shoes tapered towards the waist and accentuated a narrow, corseted waist.<sup>2</sup> Metal combs held her long, brunette hair in a series of buns, all tucked underneath her hat. The only noticeable difference from Charles Dana Gibson's depictions of his thin, high-cheek boned young woman was that her face was slightly more rounded which softened the lines of her cheeks and jaw.<sup>3</sup> That somewhat more gentle appearance enhanced, rather than detracted from, her attractiveness which is likely why William Randolph Hearst's *New York World* newspaper selected twenty-year-old

---

1. *View of Interior of Union Station*, n.d., Photograph, n.d., Linn County Historical Society.

2. Elizabeth Ewing, *History of 20th Century Fashion*, ed. Alice Mackrell, 3rd ed. (New York: Costume & Fashion Press, 1992), 22; James Laver, *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History*, 5th ed., World of Art (New York: Thames & Hudson, Inc., 1982), 213-216.

3. Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl On The Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes In American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 41.

Mae Hoffman as one of its “Beauties of Business in January.”<sup>4</sup> Her look came right from the covers of *Ladies Home Journal* or *McCalls*. She adorned the fingers of her hands with five distinct rings. An ornamental pin clasped the two ends of her high collar on her shirtwaist blouse that left only Hoffman’s face exposed.<sup>5</sup>

But she was not alone. Paul Swift, a twenty-two-year-old-circulation manager for the *Waterloo Reporter* escorted Hoffman. Swift’s presentation was Gibson’s compliment to the media-created ideal woman he drew. Dark wispy hair, parted on the left framed Swift’s almost boyish features. clean shaven with broad shoulders, Swift was the Gibson Girl’s perfect partner and the closest manifestation of Gibson’s ideal.<sup>6</sup> Together, Hoffman and Swift made what Gibson would have considered, “a striking pair” as they walked down the apron of red brick pavers and awaited their train’s arrival.<sup>7</sup>

Inside, hands on the station’s clock approached Shakespeare’s “witching time of night.” The pair anticipated a relatively short ninety-minute ride on the Rock Island’s No. 21 Saint Louis-to-Minneapolis express home to Waterloo. If their coach departed on schedule, the two should be back in Waterloo before 2:00 AM. Their visit to Cedar Rapids was both pleasant and short. Seven hours earlier, they took a ninety-minute ride down from Waterloo on a southbound train, leaving around 4:40 in the afternoon and

---

4. “Miss Mae Hoffman As A Type of ‘Beauty In Business,’” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, January 17, 1910.

5. “Wreck Thief Held,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, April 2, 1910; “Miss Hoffman Identified,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

6. Paul J. Swift, *Waterloo Evening Courier*, Photograph, March 22, 1910.

7. Kitch, *The Girl*, 40.

arriving in town as the sun retired for the day.<sup>8</sup> Both were still free from many of adulthood's obligations. Swift roomed at a building on Wellington and Hoffman lived at home with her sister, mother, and stepfather. The two enjoyed an evening out and about town with their friends and spent some time "auto-riding" the city's roads<sup>9</sup> More than thirty miles of paved streets ran east-west and north-south that formed uniform city block squares in downtown with a few hard-surface roads snaking even further out. Pavement made travel easier for owners of the period's latest transportation innovation, the automobile. Cars were taking off as a transportation means and Cedar Rapiidians embraced this new transportation form. A week before, the city hosted "The Great AutoShow" designed to invigorate public enthusiasm for the new vehicles.<sup>10</sup> But their "auto-riding" was over and time for Hoffman and Swift to get back home.

Being free from many of adulthood's obligations did not mean the two young adults were liberated from all responsibilities. Swift had a job. The *Waterloo Recorder*, his employer, published both a daily and semi-weekly newspaper out of their offices at the corner of Park Avenue and Sycamore Street. Their paper was one of at least three different rags in Waterloo, and certainly, the publisher, Matt Parrott & Sons, expected

---

8. "Notes of Wreck", *Waterloo Daily Courier*, March 21, 1910.

9. "Awful Horror Follows Derailment Near Gladbrook," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 21, 1910.

10. Luther A. Brewer and Barthinius L. Wick, *History of Linn County Iowa: From Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time* (Chicago: The Pioneer Publishing Company, 1911), 335-6.; "The Auto Show," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 12, 1910.

him to be at the office on Monday.<sup>11</sup> Hoffman's situation was a little different. Attractive, talented, and educated, Hoffman's pleasant disposition and superlative eye-hand coordination gave her a set of fundamental characteristics that engendered attention from corporate managers. These qualities along with a competitive spirit and coming of age as attitudes towards women roles in the workplace evolved, dramatically changed the young woman's life a year earlier.

Business trusts' rise during the 1870s and 1880s created insatiable demand for administrative support by large corporations. By the beginning of the twentieth century, more than three percent of America's working age population were office workers.<sup>12</sup> Men initially filled the roles of clerks and scribes which was the most common avenue to a business career."<sup>13</sup> Sheer demand for administrative support opened corporate offices to women and business colleges reacted to this appetite by admitting young ladies into their programs. Hoffman was one of those women. After graduation from Waterloo's east high school, Hoffman enrolled in typing and stenography courses at Waterloo Business College. Situated on the fifth floor of a Waterloo office building on the Sycamore block, class instructors, soon discovered this nineteen-year-old possessed a superlative talent for

---

11. *McCoy's Waterloo City Directory 1909-1910*, 7th ed. (Rockford, Illinois: The McCoy Directory Company, 1910), 412.

12. Olivier Zunz, *Making America Corporate 1870-1920*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 126.

13. Zunz, *Making America*, 105.

accurate and fast typing.<sup>14</sup> She made such an impression on the faculty that school leaders convinced Hoffman to compete at a regional stenography and typing contest.<sup>15</sup>

During the last decade of the nineteenth century and into the first two of the twentieth, associations and companies held contests that measured the speed at which men and women could put words to a page using a typewriter. Speed typing competitions grew into a minor craze.<sup>16</sup> Key to understanding this was the battle to supply typewriters to a ballooning corporate bureaucracy that leaned more and more on the typewritten word for contracts and communication. Not only was a typed letter or contract easier to read, typists could translate the shorthand dictation into words on paper using a machine much more quickly than they could hand write out a manager's words.<sup>17</sup> This led to executives seeking out those men and women whose fingers flew fastest and more accurately over the metal keys. But it also meant typewriter manufacturers sought to demonstrate that their machines allowed the nimble fingered to be even faster.

One way for Remington, Corona, or Underwood to show off their machine's abilities was through those typing competitions. In June, 1909, Hoffman joined twenty-four other contestants at the Western Manager's Commercial Teachers' Association

---

14. *McCoy's Waterloo City Directory*, 412.

15. "Waterloo Girls to Enter Contest," *Waterloo Daily Courier*, June 3, 1909; "Thousands Will Visit Des Moines," *Register and Leader*, May 31, 1909; "Waterloo Girls to Enter Contest," *Waterloo Daily Courier*, June 3, 1909; "Miss Mae Hoffman," *Waterloo Daily Courier*, August 14, 1909.

16. Bruce Bliven, Jr., *The Wonderful Writing Machine*, (New York: Random House, 1954), 116.

17. Bliven, *The Wonderful Writing*, 5

conference in Des Moines where she finished first in the dictation contest.<sup>18</sup> Her solid performance both in class and in competition prompted her to consider entering the international competition held in New York City.<sup>19</sup> As she practiced for the upcoming October contest, instructors asked Hoffman for a demonstration of her typing acumen at the Waterloo Business College's August graduation ceremony. Commencement attracted a variety of well-known individuals for speeches and presentations and Hoffman's was no different. In attendance was Emil Trefsgar, "one of the three swiftest and most accurate typewritists in the world" who, along with Hoffman performed a speed typing demonstration."<sup>20</sup> Her speed and accuracy in front the attendees caught Trefsgar's attention, and he saw a future typing speed champion. Trefsgar facilitated Hoffman's entry into the October competition sponsored by the Underwood Typewriter Company.<sup>21</sup> That October, Hoffman competed against the world's fastest college level typists and acquitted herself admirably, finishing second at sixty-two words-a-minute on her Underwood typewriter. Her result impressed company officials enough to earned Hoffman a position on the Underwood typist team where she trained with other typists for contests and product demonstrations around the US.<sup>22</sup>

---

18. "Miss Mae Hoffman," *Waterloo Daily Courier*, August 14, 1909. "Fifty Feminine Fingers Fly In Typewriter's Race," *Des Moines News*, June 5, 1909.

19. "Gov. Robert Glenn Will Speak Again: Waterloo Business College Commencement on Aug. 10," *Waterloo Daily Courier*, July 26, 1909.

20. "Miss Mae Hoffman," *Waterloo Daily Courier*, August 14, 1909.

21. "Miss Mae Hoffman," *Waterloo Daily Courier*, August 14, 1909.

22. "Mae Hoffman," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, October 8, 1909.

However, the allure of adventures across America, speed typing on Underwood's flagship Model 5 faded quickly. The company required her to stay in New York and, when not traveling for demonstrations, spent her days refining her typing mechanics at the company's office on New York City's "Typewriter Row." This was an eight-block stretch between Park Place and Leonard streets in lower Manhattan that served as home to all the major typewriter companies.<sup>23</sup> Corporate managers, looking to improve both the quality and quantity of typewritten output strolled down the street stopping in for demonstrations of equipment by Underwood, Remington, Corona and others. The men and women hired as demonstrators strove to produce amazing output and capture these buyers' business.

Which is when Hoffman's other outstanding characteristic became a substantial asset. Mae Hoffman was incredibly attractive and everyone acknowledged it. In January 1910, Hearst's *New York World*, featured a large photograph of the young woman, in profile, and calling her one of "the six representative types of 'Beauty of Business.'" The *Waterloo Daily Courier* noted Hoffman's image was "the largest picture," on the page and gushed her "portrait will generally be conceded to be the most beautiful."<sup>24</sup> During a six-month whirlwind, Mae Hoffman went from Waterloo trade school student to become one of the premier typewriter manufacturer's future typing contest champion. From the

---

23. "Waterloo Girl Shows Great Speed on Typewriter", *Waterloo Daily Courier*, August 14, 1909; Bruce Bliven, Jr., *The Wonderful Writing Machine*, (New York: Random House, 1954), 108.

24. "Miss Mae Hoffman As A Type Of 'Beauty In Business'", *Waterloo Daily Courier*, January 17, 1910.

outside, Hoffman was on her way to a life of success. That notoriety, however, came at a cost.

Beyond the public attention of typing contests and travel were hours upon hours, day after day, of practice in, “a huge, loftlike room” at the Underwood Company’s office at 30 Vesey Street. Every day of the week, “the purr of typewriters doing one hundred words a minute and better filled the air.”<sup>25</sup> Underwood gave every speed team member a machine customized to that employee. All drilled under the tutelage of Charles E. Smith who was always looking for new techniques to make his typists even faster. Smith coached each team member on ergonomic tactics that shaved tenths of a second off the production of each page and drove up the typist’s word count. Hoffman was one of Smith’s “novices,” a team member with less than a year’s training.<sup>26</sup>

But Hoffman was more than a speedy cog in the Underwood typing machine. She was a twenty-year-old young woman in a huge city, a long way from home with no family as an emotional support structure. By February 1910, homesickness seemed to overwhelm Underwood training. Hoffman worked out an agreement whereby she remained part of the organization but practiced at home in Waterloo. So, like her escort Paul Swift, Mae Hoffman sort of had a job to be at on Monday morning.

Having traveled through train stations in Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia and New York, Cedar Rapids' Union Station likely did not garner much notice from Hoffman. For Iowans less well-traveled, the neogothic building was an experience. A small

---

25. Bliven, Jr., *The Wonderful Writing Machine*, 122.

26. Bliven, Jr., *The Wonderful Writing Machine*, 123.

community depot was little more than a compact single-story building, made of wood, that occupied less land than the surrounding homes. In contrast, Union Station was a grand depot, constructed of St. Louis hydraulic brick and trimmed with Bedford stone. German clay tiles covered the depot's roof. Charles Frost, from Chicago, Illinois designed the building using a gothic Revival architectural approach "patterned after Flemish guild halls of the 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries."<sup>27</sup> Constructed in 1897 three blocks from the Cedar River's East Bank, the station ran north-south for four hundred feet long and east-west forty feet. Street cars disembarked passengers traveling from Cedar Rapids on the depot's west entrance and tracks from a variety of railroads ran along the east side. In the building's center, a 102-foot tower. Suspended above the public entrance was an unblinking concrete angel who watched over the station's Fourth Avenue approach.<sup>28</sup> Inside, were marble floors, two large fireplaces, and oak wall paneling with brass rails.<sup>29</sup> Along with the obligatory ticket offices, the station sported both a lunchroom, restaurant and news stand. Dark stained oak benches ran through a 4,000 square foot waiting area, frequently filled with passengers at all hours of the day or night awaiting their transportation.<sup>30</sup>

---

27. "Depot's Last Days", *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*, June 25, 1961.

28. "Union Depot's Last Stand", *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*, July 23, 1961.

29. "Union Station Nears Completion—As A Replica", *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, April 16, 2008.

30. Union Station Description, Union State Depot folder, Linn County Historical Society, Cedar Rapids, n.d.

Across the tracks to the east sat Greene Square Park and just to the park's south, a local high school. Union Station thrummed the sounds of Cedar Rapids' twenty-four hour a day industrial and commercial district that featured not just the Sinclair meat packing plant to the south, but also a bottling company, variety of equipment manufacturers, Quaker Oats, and a thriving immigrant community of Bohemians. To facilitate transportation across the Cedar River that flowed through the city's center, four concrete and steel bridges. Along downtown streets, white globed electroliers illuminated the sidewalks and roads after the sun disappeared below the western horizon each night.<sup>31</sup>

Travel-by-rail was a fixture of American life in the early twentieth century. Not all railroads ran to every destination that made terminals like Union Station, hubs for travelers that needed to switch railway companies. A variety of railroads ran through the city. The Milwaukee Road, Chicago North Western, and Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific along with a variety of interurbans and street cars all supplied passenger and freight service in Cedar Rapids. Union Station was busy enough to warrant a second platform constructed between two sets of tracks. This allowed the passenger terminal to manage two passenger trains simultaneously if necessary and on the night of March 20, it was necessary.

On the same platform as Hoffman and Swift stood Leonard Parrish who awaited the same train for a short ride back to Waterloo-Cedar Falls. He caught a train earlier for a trip down to Iowa City and needed to get back to campus. With a thin face, thick wiry

---

31. Dave Rasdal, *Czech Village & New Bohemia: History in the Heartland* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2016), 43; *Cedar Rapids Historic Postcards*. Cedar Rapids: Gazette Communications, 2005, 15-17.

goatee, and an impassive gaze set behind a wire-rimmed set of oval spectacles, sixty-year-old Leonard Woods Parrish was a psychology professor at Iowa State Teacher's College in Cedar Falls and appeared the part.<sup>32</sup>

Born in Springfield, Massachusetts on Independence Day, 1849. Springfield sits along the Connecticut River and is the seat of Hampden County within which more than fifty-thousand residents resided.<sup>33</sup> Leonard was Ariel and Anna Parrish's fourth child and the couple's first son.<sup>34</sup> On the 1850 United States Census schedule, Ariel listed himself as "school teacher" that owned a 3,200 dollar home.<sup>35</sup> Parrish, oversaw the education systems in both Springfield and later New Haven, Connecticut. With education such a prominent aspect of the Parrish house, it is not surprising his parents ensured the boy completed a secondary education and then went off to college. He matriculated at Yale, graduated the year Ulysses Grant won a second presidential term, and entered the teaching profession in Connecticut. Four years later, Parrish left the East Coast and moved to Traer, Iowa for a job with the school there. While there, he met Emma W.

---

32. *Prof L. W. Parish., I.S.T.C., Cedar Falls*, March 22, 1910, Photograph, March 22, 1910.

33. *Fanning's Illustrated Gazetteer of the United States, Giving The Location, Physical Aspect, Mountains, Rivers, Lakes, Climate, Productive and Manufacturing Resources, Commerce, Government, Education, General History, Etc. of the States, Territories, Counties, Cities, Towns, and Post-Offices in the American Union, With The Population and Other Statistics From the Census of 1850*. (New York: Phelps, Fanning & Co., 1853), 211-213.

34. Bureau of the Census, "Eighth Decennial Census of the United States: 1860," Census (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, July 26, 1860), 306.

35. "United States Census 1850" (U.S. Census Office, 1850), FamilySearch.org, 36.

Stuart and the two married shortly thereafter. Just one year into his job, the twenty-seven-year-old accepted the principal's position for the Rock Island, Illinois school and after just two years on the Mississippi's east bank, Parrish moved back into Iowa after he accepted Des Moines' school superintended job.<sup>36</sup> Six years later, the somewhat nomadic Parrish, moved again, this time, to Independence, Iowa's where he oversaw that school district for another four.<sup>37</sup>

At forty, Parrish was ready for a new challenge and accepted a faculty position teaching psychology at the Iowa State Normal School in Cedar Falls that was later renamed Iowa State Teacher's College. In 1895, he joined the Political Science Department faculty then published *Institute Economics and Civics For Iowa Teachers* the following year. He wrote the book as a primer on economics and civics after "the sudden demand," for foundational information on this pair of disciplines after Iowa's General Assembly passed legislation "requiring teachers to be examined," on these two topics.<sup>38</sup> Fifteen years after he began to teach for the Political Science Department, the college named Professor Parrish the department chair. By all accounts, he was a respected faculty

---

36. *United States Census of 1880- Schedule I - Inhabitants in 3d Ward City of Des Moines, in the County of Polk, State of Iowa Enumerated By Me On the 19th & 21st Day of June 1880.* (Washington, D.C.: Census Bureau, 1880), 279.

37. "Parrish Is Mourned," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 22, 1910.

38. L. W. Parish, *Institute Economics and Civics for Iowa Teachers* (Cedar Falls, Iowa: Gazette Book And Job Printing House, 1896), 3.

member by both staff and students.<sup>39</sup> Because service was—and to this day remains—a factor in evaluating professorial performance, Parrish also served as the Iowa Historical Society curator and began that role in 1900.

Like Mae Hoffman and Paul Swift, Leonard Parrish was on his way back home. During thirty-four years of marriage to Emma, the couple produced three children, two boys and one girl. Like their father and their paternal grandfather, all three of the Parrish children found a livelihood in education. John C. Parrish was their middle child and worked in Iowa City at Iowa's Historical Society library. Professor Parrish traveled down from Cedar Falls to spend Palm Sunday with his son. However, Monday started a new week and he needed to be back on campus.

Waterloo and Cedar Falls were not the only passenger destinations. Lizzie Anderson only needed to go as far as Vinton, just forty-five minutes up the tracks. Born in Sweden, Anderson immigrated to the United States when she was just fifteen years old and made her way to Vinton where she worked as a domestic servant for Jacob Urbach and his wife. Urbach was a Polish Jew who, at the age of twenty-two, immigrated to the United States in 1889 eventually settling in Vinton, Iowa. In 1902, Urbach formed a partnership with Charles Lewis and opened the "Urbach & Lewis-The Big Store" that specialized in clothing and shoes.<sup>40</sup> He married his wife Leah, nearly fifteen years his junior, and started a family. Anderson came to Vinton for work in the busy Urbach

---

39. "The Parrish Funeral," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 23, 1910.

40. "Iowa State Census, 1915," database with images, Iowa State Historical Department, Des Moines; "Urbach Bros. & Lemis," *Vinton Eagle*, January 14, 1902.

household. Dark hair, pinned up into a series of oversized waves that emphasized a tall forehead and silky face, her physical appearance fit with Anderson's "bright and sunny disposition."<sup>41</sup> She was engaged to A. G. Carlson, a Swedish immigrant who arrived in the United States just a year or two before Lizzie was born.<sup>42</sup> Carlson farmed an acreage five miles south of Vinton and the two planned to wed in the fall. On Sunday, Anderson and her friend Olga Swenson joined a larger group from Benton County's Scandinavian community to visit Cedar Rapids. Olga, also a Swedish immigrant, also worked as a house servant, but for the J. P. Whitney family.<sup>43</sup> While the rest of the group boarded an earlier train back to Vinton, Anderson and Swenson decided to stay in town a bit longer and catch a later train home. As Sunday turned to Monday, they too, waited for the No. 21 and the thirty-seven-minute ride to home.

Not everyone standing on the Union Station platform or sitting on one of the many dark oak pew-like benches were Cedar Rapids visitors heading home. Thomas Betts rode the train so he could get to work. Betts was a fifty-two-year-old New York native who came to Iowa in 1880 and soon joined a growing number of manufacturing representatives traveling throughout different regions of America. On his lapel, a round

---

41. "Victims of Rock Island Wreck Now Number 49," *Vinton Eagle*, March 25, 1910.

42. Though the newspaper lists G. A. Carlson, census records do not support that spelling, but rather the reverse of the first two initials. "Iowa State Census, 1915," database with images, A G Carlson, 1915; citing Eden, Benton, Iowa, United States, card no. , Iowa State Historical Department, Des Moines; FHL microfilm.

43. "Victims of Rock Island Wreck Now Number 49," *Vinton Eagle*, March 25, 1910.

metal pin with a blue background and in the center, a white vase from which a red flame appeared. Men and women who wore this pin identified as a member of a relatively new evangelical society called The Gideons. The product of an encounter with three traveling salesmen at a hotel in Boscobel, Wisconsin, within four years of that first meeting in 1898, they had spread their Christian message to “Christian traveling men,” throughout the Midwest with and set up a number of state and municipal chapters.<sup>44</sup> Traveling manufacturer representatives, possessing a deep Christian faith made perfect missionaries for the Gideons to spread their message because the organization itself incurred no travel cost. Companies for whom the salesmen worked paid the expenses for each trip leaving the salesman to proselytize in whatever city he found himself when off the clock. Just as important, however, was that Gideon membership offered the salesman, far away from home and family, a connection with likeminded compatriots seeking “betterment of the lives of the traveling men, businessmen and others with whom we come into contact daily.”<sup>45</sup> By 1903, the Iowa Gideon chapter claimed 584 members with Christian camps in at least nine cities.<sup>46</sup> During the Gideons first national convention, the Executive Council proposed the objective of placing Bibles in every hotel room, a resolution adopted by the group. To support the organization and purchase Bibles for hotel

---

44. *Twenty-Two Years’ History of The Gideons: The Christian Commercial Travelers’ Association of America 1899-1921*, First ed (Chicago: National Association of Gideons, 1921), 11-12; “Ottumwans Are Chosen,” *Ottumwa Courier*, October 1, 1907.

45. “Ottumwans Are Chosen,” *Ottumwa Courier*, October 1, 1907, Newspapers.com.

46. “Gideons of Iowa: Annual Meeting of Association of Christian Traveling Men in Oskaloosa Is a Grand Success,” *Oskaloosa Herald*, January 7, 1904.

placement, a one dollar annual fee was approved at the organization's second national convention.<sup>47</sup> Betts was a member a member in good standing with the Gideon organization. So much so, the Cedar Rapids chapter appointed both he and his wife as delegates to the 1907 state convention in Ottumwa.<sup>48</sup> When he took his seat in the wooden coach, Betts started his workday.

These five were just a small sample of a crowd awaiting the No. 21's arrival. On a set of tracks near the platform, a seven-car passenger train patiently waited in readiness to depart. At its head, a 193,000 pound ALCO Pacific 4-6-2, on the crew cab's side, the numbers "828" barely visible through a thick layer of dirt and coal dust. Built in at the Brooks Works plant, the 4-6-2 offered 28,250 pounds of tractive force and produced, "more power than Atlantics, Americans and Ten-Wheelers."<sup>49</sup> A weak column of black smoke rose from the engine's exhaust stack and disappeared into the night sky. The locomotive emitted a low, steady hiss that faded into the background the longer anyone was exposed to it. Incandescent electric lights illuminated the walkways for both riders that disembarked and those leaving on one of the newer Pullman steel coaches. Though headed through Waterloo, this train was not the conveyance for which many passengers at the station held tickets. Theirs was due in shortly.

---

47. *Twenty-Two Years*, 21, 53.

48. "Ottumwans Are Chosen," *Ottumwa Courier*, October 1, 1907.

49. F. Wesley Krambeck, William D. Edson, and Jack W. Farrell, *Rock Island Steam Power* (Boston: Edson Publications, 2002), 81.

Not that the No. 21 lacked passengers already. At twenty-five minutes past eleven o'clock, the express stopped at the West Branch depot, a small two story wooden building with double-hung windows all the way around. This allowed sunlight to illuminate the station during the daytime reducing lamp oil, and later electricity, consumption during the daytime. When the locomotive and its cars stopped, Frank Fisher, Chattly Eves, William Ward, and Nathan C. Heacock all ascended a set of metal stairs up into one of the wooden passenger cars. Until December 1909, Fisher was one half of the Fisher & Bell lumber yard and a former member of the West Branch City Council. In that month, Fisher sold his interest in the business to Bell and planned a move to Cedar Rapids.<sup>50</sup> Eves sold real estate and owned a retail business in town while both Ward and Heacock were farmers. Reasons for their trip varied each person, but they too fit the picture of a typical passenger riding the train.

As the clock ticked past midnight, a single white light appeared on the tracks south of the station. Behind the No. 21 Saint Louis-Minneapolis Express stood three towering smoke-stacks of the Sinclair Meatpacking Company. A nine-year-old 4-4-2 Atlantic locomotive with its express car, two coaches, and a Pullman Palace Sleeper slalomed between the slaughterhouse's bleached limestone buildings then exiting the plant grounds and swept through a graduate turn north for that last mile of track into Union Station.<sup>51</sup> Like the 828 sitting at the station, this engine, numbered 1008, was built

---

50. "Council Proceedings," *West Branch Times*, June 17, 1909; "Of Local Interest," *West Branch Times*, January 6, 1910.

51. Historic Map Works LLC, "Cedar and Rapids Township, Atlas: Linn County 1907, Iowa Historical Map."

by the Brooks Locomotive Works but was two years older and ten tons lighter. Though its four seventy-nine-inch drive wheels offered 23,530 pounds of tractive force, increased train weight due to railway companies transitioning to steel rail cars from nineteenth century wood, quickly exceeded the locomotive's towing capabilities.<sup>52</sup> The Atlantics were soon replaced by more powerful engines on CRI&P's main lines. But this express train was relatively light, consisting of an express car, smoker, day car, and a heavy steel Pullman Palace car. The 4-4-2 could handle this load.

Union Station possessed two passenger platforms, each abutted six hundred feet of rail. Around the station itself thrummed the sounds of Cedar Rapids' twenty-four hour a day industrial and commercial district featuring not just the Sinclair meat packing plant to the south, but also a bottling company, variety of equipment manufacturers, Quaker Oats, and a thriving immigrant community of Bohemians. In order to make their city more attractive leaders undertook paving projects of macadam, asphalt, and brick throughout downtown, construction of concrete and steel bridges across the river, and white globed electroliers along the streets to illuminate the downtown at night.<sup>53</sup> These were the streets on which Hoffman, Swift, and their friends experimented with driving the new automobile.

---

52. *Rock Island Lines: List of Officers, Station Agents, Etc.* (Chicago: Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway Company, 1910), 187; F. Wesley Krambeck, William D. Edson, and Jack W. Farrell, *Rock Island Steam Power* (Boston: Edson Publications, 2002), 77.

53. Dave Rasdal, *Czech Village & New Bohemia: History in the Heartland* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2016), 43; *Cedar Rapids Historic Postcards*. Cedar Rapids: Gazette Communications, 2005, 15-17.

When the depot came into sight, the No. 21's engine crew saw something they would not have expected, the rear car of what was obviously another train sitting alongside one of the station platforms. Odd. According to the Rock Island's passenger train schedule no passenger train should be in the station. The No. 19 was supposed to depart Union Station nearly ten minutes before the No. 21's arrival.<sup>54</sup> Yet, there a train sat. It could only be the other CRI&P passenger train on the railroad's published timetable, the No. 19 Chicago-Minneapolis Express. The No. 19's presence was likely not particularly unusual. Each train originated from a different city but had the same destination. The Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railway Company, a subsidiary of the CRI&P, operated the smaller No. 21 Saint Louis-Minneapolis Express. Each afternoon at 2:15 pm, the express train departed the Union Station in Saint Louis, located just a few miles west of the Mississippi River in downtown. Three hundred miles northeast hostlers began assembling a longer Chicago-Minneapolis Express at the Windy City's near west side station. However, the Chicago train did not depart until two hours after the Saint Louis train. The two trains' paths converged in the small town of West Liberty, Iowa, forty-five miles southeast of Cedar Rapids. Despite its later departure, however, the No. 19 Chicago train arrived in West Liberty and was gone thirty minutes before the No. 21. Both trains then followed the same route through Cedar Rapids, Waterloo and Albert Lea, Minnesota on their way to Minneapolis. The Saint Louis train shadowed its Chicago sibling, always around thirty minutes behind, till Albert Lea where the two joined up for

---

54. *Rock Island Lines January 1910 Train Schedule* (Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway Company, 1910), 789.

the final leg of their trip into the Twin Cities. Certainly, it was not unheard of for the Saint Louis train to catch up to the No. 19 before their scheduled rendezvous in Albert Lea. But the timetable was not published that way. This was the train Hoffman, Swift, Parrish, Anderson, and Swenson all waited on.

Clearly, something was amiss and whatever that “something” was, it kept the Chicago train from going on its way. But for the men in the No. 21 cab, whatever happened was not their concern. Their portion of the trip finished at Union Station. Arriving in Cedar Rapids ended the Saint Louis crew’s workday and everyone looked forward to the layover spending it in a soft bed and getting a good night’s sleep. The engineer applied his airbrakes and the train slowed to a crawl as it approached the platform. If whatever obstacle prevented the No. 19 from departing delayed this train, it was the oncoming crew’s challenge to overcome.

Metal-on-metal screeching of rail car brakes echoed off the station’s walls as the Saint Louis-Minneapolis Express slowed to a halt. A gust of steam billowed from the engine’s sides, disappearing into the night air. Porters quickly placed wood steps beneath passenger car stairwells for disembarking riders who cascaded down these metal stairs like a creek’s waterfall and towards Union Station. Electric lights burned under the depot’s awnings, lighting the way for both riders arriving and leaving. The depot was loud. Chaotic mass movement occurred along its entire six-hundred-foot length. Dark jacket clad porters pulled four-wheeled hand trucks piled with express freight packages, ticket holder baggage and newspaper bundles between the station and train. Their metal rims ground against platform pavers as un-greased iron axles, screeched in protest at the men pulling them.

Periodically, a random “HEY” yelled to catch someone’s attention or a “COMING THROUGH” warning to clear a path pierced the low rumble of tramping feet and indistinguishable voices. In this cacophony of movement, conversation was limited to staccato bursts of easily understood phrases in a raised voice. Casual conversation was nearly impossible.

Until the automobile, and the necessary infrastructure offering reliable travel, overtook the train as the preferred means of traveling distances, railroad depots were active places regardless of hour. The depot was busy whenever passenger trains arrived and railroads scheduled arrivals and departures throughout every twenty-four hour period. Upon arrival, platforms more closely resembled the medieval infantry charges of two armies than a sedate as debarking passengers walked towards the station while new passengers headed the opposite way to board the train and secure a good seat. Shadowed by her escort Paul Swift, the twenty-year-old Hoffman methodically weaved through streams of exiting passengers, and towards an unimpressive dark gray rail car, third in line behind the engine.

These drab, dark grey cars, known by a variety of names including chair car, day car, smoking car, or ladies’ car depending on the riders seated within, offered a less expensive alternative for passengers traveling between stops. With the exception of the trucks, some undercarriage structures, and the steps leading into the coach, these cars were all wood. At each end, a vestibule with steps leading into the seating section. Builders knitted together vertical slats, about six inches wide, to form the coach’s exterior skin. Glass windows ran the cars length, each window aligned with a seat. Seat covers varied

along with the level of decorative appointments. Car builders and railroads classified these carriages as first or second class depending on the type and quality of materials used in the interior. For the No. 21, the CB&Q operators used two similar chair cars, one for smokers and the other for ladies and those not wanting to travel, wrapped in a fog of tobacco smoke, for their trip with a Pullman Palace sleeper at the end. Though newer steel coaches were available, and in use on the No. 19, railroads refused to retire their wooden rolling stock.

Hoffman and Swift queued with other ticket holders to ascend the carriage's metal steps. One after another, ticket holders carefully climbed the short stairway, entered the vestibule and then walked through a door into the passenger seating section. Rail car seating did not all face the same direction. Instead, rows faced one another providing an opportunity for travelers to talk with one another during a trip. Seats on both sides of the coach ran the car's length with a narrow aisle just wide enough for one person to walk down. Riding in the same car were two of the pair's friends, Irene Cowan and Florence Winn who had also come down to Cedar Rapids for visits. Hoffman sat in one of the cushioned seats and Swift in the other, across from Cowan and Winn. Outside their window, patrons milled about on the platform and on the other set of tracks, that train still had not departed. Clearly, something was awry.

On that Sunday night, a diverse group of individuals came together at the Cedar Rapids train station. Domestic servants, traveling salesmen, farmers, and businessmen were all climbing aboard a train, seated next to one another. Their economic status varied from the successful business owner to a worker of modest means. The CB&Q operators that originated in St. Louis, configured this train for two types of passengers, ones

traveling a significant distance benefiting from the comfort of a sleeper and those whose trip was relatively short, consuming a few hours at most. Within these two categories passengers headed home or traveled to another destination on business. Neither the smoking car, nor its companion chair car presented riders a buffet of amenities. But for those onboard these rail cars, they had little need for more than a relatively comfortable seat. Regardless of distance traveled or trip objective, wide variation existed in passenger age, level of education, and occupation. For the group ticketed in either the chair or smoker cars, their only distinguishing characteristic was the absence of any common distinguishing characteristic. Unlike many instances of catastrophe where victims are overwhelmingly from a certain economic class, ethnic background, or certain age, the men and women taking seats in these carriages represented a wide variety of backgrounds and financial conditions. Their train arrived on-time and they each readied to climb onboard. Likely, they all looked forward to arrival at their various destinations.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Detoured**

While passengers worked through the routine pell-mell coach boarding process or milled about the depot awaiting the conductor's "All Aboard!" call, four men stood in the train dispatcher's office inside the Union Station. Conductors M. C. Einwalter and Jacob Nauholz, wearing their black jackets with gold buttons and matching pants along with locomotive engineer Bob Robinson and Electus Pritchard in overalls, flannel shirt, and blue striped hats favored by the train crew waited for new orders. The freight train wreck in Shellsburg badly damaged the Bear Creek bridge. While the Rock Island train dispatcher scrambled to organize a relief train to Shellsburg, this quartet in his office reminded the on-duty clerk that he needed to find a detour around the crash site for the two idling express trains.

Though the Rock Island represented a substantial portion of railroad activity in Cedar Rapids, the city also received service from other lines. The Milwaukee Road, Chicago & Northwestern, and Illinois Central, just to name a few, all crossed paths in the city. Because multiple lines stretched outward from the city, CRI&P train dispatcher's job of identifying a detour for his passenger trains was somewhat easier. One option was the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern line to Independence and then heading west on the Illinois Central Railroad into Waterloo. Another took the trains southwest to Marshalltown on the Chicago & North Western Railway tracks and then transition onto

the Great Western's "Diagonal Line" to Waterloo. Besides the obvious need for one railroad's tracks to interconnect with another line's, the track over which the CRI&P could run needed to fit into within the other railroad's timetable. Fortunately for Rock Island schedulers, the route through Marshalltown could accommodate the passenger trains. Between 1:15 AM and 3:15 AM, the Chicago & Northwestern had four trains coming from the west on tracks the CRI&P needed.<sup>1</sup> The Great Western's Maple Leaf Route, the other set of tracks the CRI&P needed for getting to Waterloo, did not experience the same congestion with just one train at 5:05 AM.<sup>2</sup>

Messages went out from the CRI&P dispatcher to his peers on the other roads asking if their schedules could accommodate a passenger train on their line. Chicago & North Western agreed to let the trains use their tracks to Marshalltown but fitting two separate trains to Marshalltown onto their line during the timeframe requested. When the C&NW 3:05 AM train arrived in Cedar Rapids, a two-hour window opened when the road would be clear. The Great Western's No. 1 St. Joe and K.C. Limited pulled into Marshalltown at 5:05 AM. After that train, a four-hour window opened for a passenger train, not making any stops between Marshalltown and Waterloo, to run over those tracks. The CRI&P dispatcher had a workable option. But there remained one last complication.

---

1. "Chicago and Northwestern," *Cedar Rapids Daily Republican*, March 18, 1910.

2. "Railroad Time Table: Chicago Great Western 'Maple Leaf Route,'" *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, January 29, 1910.

Based on the C&NW schedule, their timetable could easily accommodate one train. Fitting a second one onto the line could cut the schedule close. A way around this problem would be to consolidate the two trains into a single, larger conveyance. Though rather unusual, this approach offered the advantage of fitting just one train within the confines of another road's timetable rather than working two separate trains, both with the same destination, into the schedule. Moreover, at Albert Lea, Minnesota, the two trains schedules converged with the No. 21 following the No. 19 into Minneapolis anyway. Combining the trains was a straightforward process. The No. 21's smaller 4-4-2 Atlantic locomotive would disconnect from its four cars and position itself on the tracks in front of No. 19's newer and more powerful 4-6-2 Pacific engine.<sup>3</sup> Because the train originating in Chicago was nearly twice as long, The Saint Louis cars could then be attached to the back of the Chicago train creating a single "double header" for the trip to Waterloo.

The 4-4-2 and 4-6-2 designations identify the number of wheels for each locomotive as a proxy for an engine's overall power. Developed by Frederick Methvan Whyte in 1900, the system allowed for quick and consistent classification of motive power.<sup>4</sup> The first number is the number of guide wheels, the small ones at the locomotive's front. The second number reports the number of drive wheels on the engine

---

3. Krambeck, *Rock Island Steam Power*, 81; "Leading engine and tender, train wreck, March 21, 1910, Green Mountain, Iowa," Historic Iowa Postcard Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Grinnell College Libraries, grinnell:14398.

4. Inkster, Ian, *History of Technology*, vol. 33 (London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2017), 75.

which are responsible for moving a locomotive forward and the last digit indicates the number of smaller wheels underneath the cab area supporting the engine's back portion. Both the Atlantic and the Pacific possessed four guide wheels and two cab support wheels, but the number of drive wheels reflected the greater motive force of the Pacific with six wheels while the Atlantic had four. That the CB&Q operators relied upon a less powerful engine to pull the train originating in Saint Louis and the CRI&P used the more robust locomotive from Chicago makes sense when considering both the number and construction type of cars attached. The No. 21 was shorter with four cars, two wooden and two steel while the No. 19. was nearly twice the size with seven all steel coaches and baggage cars. The heavier train needed the stronger locomotive.

The two trains, however, would not leave as two individuals, but rather one larger train. With schedules coordinated, dispatchers between the C&NW, Great Western, and CRI&P issued new orders to engine crews along the route. Finally, Jacob Nauholz could walk back towards the last car on his train, No. 21's Pullman Palace sleeper car, the *Colonia*. On his black conductor's jacket, gold buttons gleamed under the slightly jaundiced platform's lights. He climbed the steps into the relative quiet of the heavily curtained sleeper. The Pullman's porter, Archie Price was working the sleeper tonight. Price was well into his process of shining passenger shoes when the conductor climbed aboard. The Pullman Company did not require porters to shine shoes, however, porters knew passengers tipped more for the service and a substantial portion of a porter's

income came from tips.<sup>5</sup> Other railroad employees considered the Pullman Palace Car sleeper porter's job the worst in the industry and passenger treatment of porters could be demeaning. To a passenger, every porter's name was "George," after George Pullman, and it was not unusual for porters to clean up the messes of riders who imbibed too much whiskey or experienced an illness while on the train. In the rare instance when a passenger died during a trip, the porter's job was to get the body off the train as quickly as possible. Porters worked long hours, in upwards of eighty consecutive hours without a break. They were forbidden to sleep during period and however, for a Black man in the early twentieth century, working as a porter was one of the better jobs available.

On this night, the CRI&P assigned Archie Price to their *Colonia* Pullman Palace sleeping car. Built seven years earlier at Buffalo, New York's former Wagner Palace Car complex, the *Colonia* was a large "12-1 sleeper" featuring six sections of folding seats facing one another on each side of the train car, a center aisle and a drawing room suitable for family travel at one end. In the evening, while passengers were away from the space, Pullman's car porter folded down the seats creating a full-sized mattress. He then made up the bed with fresh sheets, a pillow and blankets. If two travelers rode in the same section, an upper berth folded out from the area between the windows and the roof. Ceiling to floor drapes stretched across the section adding a small measure of privacy.

As Price continued to shine shoes and Nauholtz finished his pre-departure conductor duties, much of which likely included explaining to passengers why the train

---

5. Jack Santino, *Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle: Stories of Black Pullman Porters*, American Folklore Series (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 74-77.

had not yet left and how they were getting to Waterloo. Pritchard walked towards the 4-4-2 Atlantic locomotive. He climbed the ladder, seating himself in the right-side seat. Everyone on the train, including passengers, knew their train should have left hours earlier, but arranging clearance on not just one, but two different roads consumed much of those early morning hours.<sup>6</sup> Pritchard signaled to yard workers standing between the 1008's tender and express car. They released the coupling between these two cars and signaled back to Pritchard he as clear to move. The engineer slowly pulled the throttle toward him, pressurizing the locomotive's pistons that caused the engine's drive wheels to start slowly turning, leaving the four Saint Louis cars behind. He pulled far enough ahead to allow the No. 19 train to fully drive onto the same track. They were already late and this detour would make them even later.<sup>7</sup>

In the No. 828 locomotive cab stood George Ross, stoking the firebox. He worked his shovel and the butterfly doors keeping the fire hot and water pressure up. Bob Robinson sat in the locomotive's driver's seat. The two crew members could not have appeared more different. Married only four months, Ross did not look old enough to shave let alone handle the demanding work of engine fireman. In contrast, Robinson worked for two other railroads before coming to CRI&P seven years ago. Even so, he was the stereotypical train man. After twenty-five years of railroading, his head of dark

---

6. *Rock Island Lines Train Schedule* (Chicago: Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway Company, n.d.), Table 25.

7. "Mortuary Record of Awful Wreck of Rock Island Trains near Gladbrook Yesterday--Brief Sketches of Cedar Rapids Vicitms and Their Portraits," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

hair thinned noticeably, assuming an observer could get past a thick, bushy handlebar mustache. How Robinson managed to prevent hot coal cinders from igniting the forest of hair underneath his nose and curving down his face will never be known. Seven months earlier, Robinson's wife died at the age of forty-nine. However, his twenty-one-year-old daughter Fern remained their home along First Avenue on Cedar Rapids' east side.<sup>8</sup>

Robinson's leather gloved hand grabbed the whistle pull rope handle giving it two brief tugs. The short blasts signaled to Einwalter, the No. 19's conductor, that the train was about to pull out. Einwalter signaled back he was ready and Robinson gripped the 4-6-2's engine's throttle, easing the long metal arm forward. A dull banging sound in rapid succession of steel hitting steel added to the train station noise as slack came out the couplings between coaches and announced the train's exit. The No. 828 eased through the turnout and pulled on the main line. Robinson slowly approached an open knuckle at the rear of No. 1008's tender. A sharp sound of steel clanging together ricocheted off building walls and through downtown as 828's front coupler joined with 1008's. Once workers secured the connection between the engines, the pair slowly moved in reverse, pushing the seven Chicago cars back towards the four Saint Louis ones that sat on the other track. The Chicago Pullman car latched onto the No. 21's express car. Hostlers repeated the process of securing the coupling and signaled forward to the engineers. Between 5:30 and 6:00 AM, two whistle blasts pierced the early morning chill and the

---

8. "Mortuary Record of Awful Wreck of Rock Island Trains near Gladbrook Yesterday--Brief Sketches of Cedar Rapids Victims and Their Portraits," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

consolidated passenger train left Cedar Rapids on its way to Waterloo, by way of a seventy-mile detour west through Marshalltown.<sup>9</sup>

An obvious question to ask is why passengers in Cedar Rapids and destined for Vinton and Waterloo bothered with a train that traveled a substantially greater distance over this circuitous route than the geographic stretch between Cedar Rapids and Waterloo. At this particular point in history, no other reasonable option existed. Iowans, to a point, still relied upon horse-drawn wagons, but the iron horse ended stagecoach operations. Transportation via horse was an option, except no one had a horse to ride. Passengers could attempt a fifty-mile hike, in the dark, without lights, over wet ground, while wearing leather shoes, suits, and billowing skirts, but such an approach was certainly foolish. Finally, there might be a way for some passengers, like Mae Hoffman and Paul Swift, who knew people with cars to drive them home. But in 1910, that idea was as outlandish as the fifty-mile trek.

The difficulty faced by any new transportation offering is use on an infrastructure for which it was not designed. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, larger Iowa communities pursued a variety of approaches to eliminate the muddy bogs dirt streets became whenever rain fell. Most settled on a combination of macadam, asphalt, and heavy brick pavers that were all friendly to wheeled transport. When driving around town, the challenge was avoiding wagons, streetcars, and pedestrians not accustomed to these vehicles rather than overcoming a hostile street surface. Wander away from

---

9. D.B. Campbell, "Traveler Writes A Very Warm Roast," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 30, 1910; "Says Road Was In Bad Shape," *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, March 31, 1910.

downtown and road quality degraded substantially. Though miles of hard surface roads in Iowa grew exponentially in the twentieth century's first decade, rural roads often remained little more than, "graded stretches of ground, cleared of weeds and grass."<sup>10</sup> Linn County, where Cedar Rapids is located, waited till 1918 to paved its first road.<sup>11</sup> This lack of infrastructure meant traveling any distance over a reasonably short period of time required a train ticket and that is why Hoffman, Swift, and so many others patiently waited for the train rather than seeking an alternative means home.

However, a lack of decent inter-city roadways was not the only limiting factor to wider automobile use. No real infrastructure existed for drivers to conveniently keep their car running on a trip. At that time, there were no gas stations. When a person needed gasoline, which was often used to power home appliances, including stoves, customers dropped by a hardware store that sold gasoline, "from tanks in the back." Cars lack fuel gauges leaving owners at risk of being stranded on the roadside. Cedar Rapids' mayor, George Lightner and much of the city council learned that less the hard way three years earlier. After accepting an invitation by Alderman Billy Stepanek to go auto-riding, the group ran out of gas on the way home to Cedar Rapids and they, "ended up pushing the car over a mile until they found a farm house that happened to have a 5 gallon can of

---

10. Leo Landis, *Building Better Roads: Iowa's Contribution to Highway Engineering 1904-1974* (Ames, IA: Center for Transportation Research and Education, 1997), 3-4.

11. Judith Yarger Hull, *Roads, Railroads and Trolley Cars of Marion* (Marion, IA: Marion Historic Preservation Commission, 2007), 14.

gasoline.”<sup>12</sup> Despite a distance of less than sixty miles, automobiles still lacked the necessary infrastructure of improved roads and reliable spots for fuel purchases to make a car trip an option. In 1910, trains remained the primary means of transportation between cities.

The consolidated train slowly steamed away from Union Station, crawling through the heart of downtown Cedar Rapids. Periodically, they stopped long enough for Tom Charter, a thirty-three-year-old brakeman on the No. 1008 and his older brother to Ross in the No. 828, to throw a switch directing the train onto CNW tracks.<sup>13</sup> Once in Marshalltown, the crews would switch over to the Great Western’s “Diagonal” line which took them up to Waterloo. Passengers destined for Vinton, a stop between Cedar Rapids and Waterloo along the CRI&P line, had to catch a southbound passenger train to complete their trip. Riders dozed while the train rolled through farm country, heading west. The scenery was little different from that along the CRI&P road. Just farm fields, standalone homesteads, and occasional small towns.

As the first hints of morning appeared on the horizon, this Rock Island double-header pulled into Marshalltown. Yard workers quickly set turnouts that connected various tracks to allow the train to merge onto the Great Western’s main line. Robinson and Pritchard brought the double-header to a stop at the Great Western depot on Nevada Street. Waiting for the rerouted train in the Marshalltown station was John White, a ten

---

12. Hull, *Roads, Railroads*, 11.

13. *Twelfth Census of the United States* (Census Office, 1900), Creston Twnship, Union County, Iowa, Sheet 4A.

year train veteran and Great Western conductor. His pale eyes, razor-thin lips and strong features presented an air of pensiveness.<sup>14</sup> White joined the crew on the route to Waterloo. Railroad companies routinely imbedded a member of their staff familiar with the road into the detoured railroad's crew to lead that train along the railway's set of tracks. This was a reasonable precaution. Employees who regularly transited a line knew of any dangers along a route that another railroad's crew would not have awareness of. On one hand, this improved overall safety. But there was a parochial interest as well. Derailments tear up sections of track and wreak havoc with shipping schedules. Wrecks caused by crew ignorance of known threats are worse. Putting a seasoned staff member eliminated this latter concern and White, a conductor with the CGW "was familiar with the track," on which the Rock Island trains would travel north towards Waterloo.<sup>15</sup> He protected the Great Western's interests as well as the Rock Island's. As the train slowed to a halt at the Marshalltown Great Western depot, Nauholz, watch in hand, stepped off the *Colonia*, met the Great Western's assigned pilot, and walked towards the train dispatcher's office. The consolidated train, now more than five hours behind schedule, reached Marshalltown without incident which is where the next issue for this trip arose.

When the Nos. 19 & 21 arrived, the train's orientation was towards the west. But at Marshalltown, they needed to turn northeast. The problem was that after arrival at the

---

14. "Pilot Who Met Death In Wreck," *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, March 22, 1910.

15. "The Thirty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending December 4, 1910, (Des Moines, 1910), 149.," Crash Investigation, Board of Railroad Commissioners Report (Des Moines, Iowa: Iowa Utilities Board, December 4, 1910), 148.

Great Western depot, the locomotives were pointed in the wrong direction. Unlike later diesel locomotives that were self-contained power plants within a single structure that could operate effectively in either direction, steam locomotives did not afford railroads that advantage. They were designed to run in one direction. When an engine need to pull a train in the opposite direction, yard workers and the engine crew turned it around using one of two different methods.

Typically railroads accomplish this with a locomotive turntable. These mammoth constructions, dug eight to ten feet into the ground, ranged in size from seventy and one hundred twenty feet in diameter. The turntable connected multiple train tracks that ran towards it. These usually served a railroad's roundhouse where railroads stored their engines.<sup>16</sup> Operation simple was simple. After a locomotive slowly rolled onto the table, an operator activated either a compressed air or hydraulic system that forced the table to slowly spin. This redirected the engine either onto a different track or, if allowed to rotate 180 degrees, in the opposite direction on the same track. Engineers preferred turning steam engines around to face the direction they were headed rather than running in reverse. Mechanical engineers designed steam locomotives to operate facing forward, not in reverse.

In the event a rail yard lacked a turntable, another option existed. The engines could be turned using an existing "Y" track configuration. This is when two rail lines, more-or-less perpendicular to one another, are joined by turnouts and merge track that

---

16. Francis X. Milholland, "'Round a Round House," *Scientific American*, April 1930, 291.

forms a triangle. The engine which needed redirection simply backed up through the merge track and out onto the perpendicular line. A brakeman threw that perpendicular track's turnout towards the other merge track. The engine traveled across that merge rails and back onto the line—only it was now pointing in the opposite direction. Effectively, this was the equivalent of an automobile three-point-turn on a road. There was a limit to the “Y” tactic. A locomotive and its tender could not be too long, nor could the engines be too heavy.

Nauholz and White entered the depot and walked into the Great Western office where Marshalltown's train dispatcher, Robert Beale sat. Glancing at his pocket watch, the conductor asked the pilot if he intended to turn the locomotives around. White replied pointing the engines in the right direction was his preference.<sup>17</sup> Though Marshalltown did not have a turntable, the confluence of three different railroads resulted in a “Y” configuration just a short distance east of the Great Western depot. An Iowa Central line ran diagonally through town connected with the Great Western with a “Y” arrangement and locomotive crews frequently used this formation to turn Great Western locomotives. But, in White's assessment, the CRI&P locomotives were both too long and too heavy to be turned on the tracks.

---

17. “Investigation of Wreck Commenced: Railroad Commissioners Begin Probe to Learn Cause of Great Disaster,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 29, 1910.

Sitting at the operations desk, a youthful Beale listened to the back-and-forth between White and Nauholtz.<sup>18</sup> If there was no turntable and the “Y” was too short, Nauholtz ask about running the locomotives in reverse. That required authorization from the chief dispatcher in Des Moines. Rock Island regulations mandated Chief Dispatcher approval involving, “movements not provided for by time-table” and likely Great Western rules required the same approval.<sup>19</sup> For this portion of the trip, the consolidated train was not on a Rock Island schedule, meaning those CRI&P rules did not apply. However, it was on the Great Western’s schedule and therefore required approval from the chief dispatcher in Des Moines, F.C. Balkie.

With White and Nauholtz at an impasse on turning the locomotives, Beale quickly tapped out a message to the chief dispatcher in Des Moines, asking about running the locomotives backwards. Balkie seemed surprised by the question and asked why the engines could not be turned? Beale translated into dashes and dots, White’s assessment that the CRI&P locomotives exceeded Marshalltown’s “Y” capabilities. Balkie was not convinced. He argued the Rock Island engines “were no longer than the Great Western freight engines” and told the pilot “to make the turn.” White refused to concede the point,

---

18. “Fix Blame For Deadly Train Wreck,” *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, March 29, 1910. The article spells Beale’s name incorrectly which was a relatively common problem with articles during this time when reporters lacked recording devices for interviews or had to rely on memory when recounting events.

19. Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway Company, *Rules and Regulations for the Government of Employés of the Operating Department*, (Chicago, Cameron, Amberg & Co, 1904), 41.

standing his ground. As the two men argued their points through messages, Nauholtz kept looking at his pocket watch, marking time.

For Nauholtz it was time, not just the numbers on a clock's face, but rather its passage, was an issue. Certainly, the lateness of the train was problem. However, time's passage had another latent effect which risked violation of federal law involving railroad operations. Four years earlier, Wisconsin Senator Robert La Follette introduced a bill proscribing railroads from forcing employees to work "an excessive number of hours."<sup>20</sup> La Follette placed power to define what an excessive number of hours meant into the Interstate Commerce Commission's hands. An amendment, adopted while the bill was in committee, struck all but the enacting clause, replacing the original language with a clearer definition of excessive, placing a sixteen-hour limit into the legislation. Not long before the bill came up for debate, a Baltimore and Ohio train crashed into a passenger train. The subsequent inquiry revealed a train engineer working fifty-six hours "with but two intervals of four hours each for sleep."<sup>21</sup> In January 1907, the bill finally came up for debate with the upper chamber nearly unanimously agreeing to the change. The House made additional changes to the bill forcing the creation of a conference committee between the two chambers to resolve the disagreement. The conference report produced an acceptable bill to both Houses which passed the legislation which Roosevelt signed into law. Though the legislation carved out exceptions to the sixteen-hour rule, none of

---

20. S. 5133, 59th Cong., March 16, 1906, Library of Congress.

21. "Sixteen Hour Service Law," *Journal and Tribune*, January 19, 1907

those applied to the detoured train and the longer the Great Western's chief dispatcher and pilot argued, the more time they consumed of the train crew's allotment.

As often occurs in philosophical disagreements, practical examples tilt the scale towards one point of view. What ended this disagreement was arrival of another passenger train. This one was the southbound CRI&P No. 22 Saint Louis Express, that ran the Great Western's "Diagonal" from Waterloo to Marshalltown with its engine backwards.<sup>22</sup> Presented with an example of a locomotive that ran in reverse across the Great Western line safely sustained White's perspective. Nauholz's growing impatience with the inaction added to White's argument. Balkie relented and authorized the locomotives to run in reverse.

Yard workers disconnected the two locomotives from the thirteen cars. Pritchard, still leading, took the pair onto a siding running parallel to the main tracks which is where Bob Robinson took over the lead. With his 828 now leading, he ran the two locomotives up the siding in reverse, past the rail cars and through a second turnout that directed the engines back onto the same tracks as their passenger cars so the engines could reconnect with their load.<sup>23</sup> Pritchard eased the two engines towards the passenger cars connecting 1008's front coupler with the *Colonia*'s. The last car in the train on the way to Marshalltown was now the first car of the train to Waterloo. Next in line was the day car, in which Mae Hoffman and Paul Swift rode, then a smoking car followed by the No. 21's

---

22. "The Thirty-Third Annual Report," 150.

23. *Second Engine and Pullman Green Mt. Wreck*, March 21, 1910, Photograph, March 21, 1910, Grinnell College Libraries Special Collection.

express car.<sup>24</sup> The cars were in the same sequence as configured in Cedar Rapids, however, the front cars of the No. 19 were now the back ones and the four cars of the No. 21 that trailed on trip to Marshalltown were in front.

By this time, the engineers, Robinson and Pritchard along with the Chicago train conductor M.C. Einwalter, joined Nauholz and White for a final review of train orders. Yes, they could run the engines in reverse, but should not exceed twenty-five miles an hour. Beware of “bad spot” along a crossing three miles east of Reinbeck limiting speed to five miles an hour. Finally, a little less than a mile outside Gladbrook, the train should not travel around a curve at more than ten miles an hour.<sup>25</sup> The men synchronized their watches with the depot clock, turned and headed back to their trains. Because he was the pilot, White joined Robinson, Ross, and Charter in the cab of 828.

By the time the disagreement about the engine orientation was settled and final train orders issued, the morning sun was well into the eastern sky. All of the passengers who stepped off the train and into the depot were rounded up and back in their seats. Einwalter and Nauholz checked their respective cars in preparation to depart. At 7:35 AM, Robinson sounded 828’s whistle and poked his head out the window.<sup>26</sup> Einwalter, the No. 19 conductor leaned off the stairwell of a Pullman passenger car and waved his

---

24. H. Roger Grant, “The Green Mountain Train Wreck: An Iowa Railroad Tragedy,” *The Palimpsest* 65, no. 4 (July 1, 1984), 137. While Grant’s list of the car order is correct, the locomotive arrangement is not based on photographic evidence from the scene.

25. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report,” 150.

26. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report,” 149.

hand to signal the train was ready to leave. The conductor had to remember that since the locomotives were backwards, his engineer was on the opposite side of the train from what he was used too. Granted, the brakeman Ross Charter could see him clearly enough, but hand signals should occur between the engineer and conductor. Adding someone in the middle ran the risk, albeit small, of miscommunication. Another whistle blast announced the consolidated train's departure. Steam plumes erupted from the valves of both engines and the sixty-nine-inch drive wheels slowly began turning counterclockwise.

An unexamined element of historical record is the overall consolidated train's arrangement. Historians and subsequent journalists accepted the railroad commission's rendition in its report at face value. H. Roger Grant, in his 1984 *Palimpsest* article, included an author generated block drawing of the train with the No. 1008 at the head. He identified the trailing six blocks as the 828 tender, 828 locomotive, Pullman sleeper, day car, smoker and express car, all part of the Chicago train.<sup>27</sup> This characterization graphically describes what the Iowa Railroad Commission wrote in its report of the crash investigation. Commissioners described Rock Island operators who "consolidated its two trains at Cedar Rapids, by placing its engine No. 1008 in the lead," and that 828 followed by the "Pullman sleeper, an ordinary day coach, a day coach used as a smoker, an express car," with the remaining cars all part of the Chicago portion of the train. Moreover,

---

27. H. Roger Grant, "The Green Mountain Train Wreck: An Iowa Railroad Tragedy," *The Palimpsest* 65, no. 4 (July 1, 1984), 137.

investigators wrote the train's composition upon leaving Marshalltown was the same as when it left Cedar Rapids.<sup>28</sup> This is wrong.

An image of the wrecked locomotives that pulled the consolidated train, lain on their sides in the south ditch became, one of many photo postcards that captured the wreck site. Throughout much of the twentieth century, Americans created, mailed, and collected a variety of photographic post cards capturing images of the time. Though many such images were pedestrian in nature, James Allen, in his book *Without Sanctuary*, illuminates this practice of post cards capturing events with the disturbing example of images capturing lynchings in the United States.<sup>29</sup> . What picture shows, from left to right, is a tender, engine, the remains of a second tender, and a second locomotive. The numbers on the side of the lead engine are indiscernible. On the engineer's side of the cab for the second locomotive, a faint "00" is readable. The post card contradicts Grant's stick figure drawing in his 1984 article that the No. 1008 led the train out of Marshalltown.<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, Grant's description of the two locomotives as "a 2-6-0 'Mogul,' and a 4-4-0 'American Standard'" are incorrect. The same postcard image shows the No. 1008 engine with two drive wheels and a single wheel under the cab. Though the wreck

---

28. "The Thirty-Third Annual Report," 147.

29. James Allen, *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Twin Palms Publishers, 2000).

30. Grant, *Palimpsest*, 137; Newspaper reports identified the 1008 as the 1009. The number was likely reported as 1009 in the initial crash reporting and then simply repeated by other reporters who never went to the crash site or saw the two locomotives. No. 1008 was used in the commission report which is why it is used here.

obscured the locomotive's front wheel configuration, the rear wheel presence contradicts the claim this engine was either a Mogul or a Standard, neither of which were configured with an under-the-cab wheel. A locomotive photo from the scene incontrovertibly presents an *x*-6-2 wheel configuration.<sup>31</sup> Like the No. 1008's picture postcard, wreckage concealed the front wheels, but the wheel arrangements in the photos are consistent with the Krambeck's description of an Atlantic 4-4-2 and a Pacific 4-6-2 engine.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the authors of *Rock Island Steam Power* created a locomotive number chart that listed the No. 1008 in the Atlantic category and the 828 under the Pacific heading.

Correctly identifying the locomotive type creates an environment from which a supportable inference can be drawn as to which locomotive headed up which individual train. Krambeck points out increased weight of trains at the same time ALCO offered the 4-4-2s quickly outgrew the engine's pulling capacity and the Rock Island relegated them to trips on "locals and Chicago commuter runs."<sup>33</sup> In contrast, the listed the No. 828 as a Pacific engine that "had more power than Atlantics."<sup>34</sup> The St. Louis train, a Pullman sleeper, two wooden coaches, and an express car, was lighter than the seven all steel car Chicago train. The reasonable conclusion, upon review of the evidence, helps identify which engine pulled which train. The more powerful engine—No. 828—would have

---

31. *Green Mountain Wreck*, March 21, 1910, Photograph, March 21, 1910, [capoliticalreview.com](http://capoliticalreview.com).

32. F. Wesley Krambeck, William D. Edson, and Jack W. Farrell, *Rock Island Steam Power* (Boston: Edson Publications, 2002), 79-82.

33. Krambeck, *Rock Island Steam* 79-80.

34. Krambeck, *Rock Island Steam*, 81.

been at the head of a heavier train that originated in the headquarters city of the railway company that owned it. The less powerful locomotive—No. 1008— would have pulled the lighter train operated by a subsidiary line out of the other city.

Understanding which locomotive likely led which train offers an important clue to the consolidated train's car arrangement. Because the No. 1008 led the train out of Cedar Rapids and because it was likely the one pulling the lighter set of cars out of St. Louis, it was the one disconnected from those cars and put in the front.<sup>35</sup> The reasonable conclusion to draw is that Cedar Rapids yard men attached those four No. 21 cars to the No. 19's rear. No evidence has ever been uncovered to support the idea Great Western workers rearranged the individual cars after arrival at the depot, nor can an inference be made based on news reports or any other sources that they moved cars around. When the consolidated train left Cedar Rapids, the two wooden cars were most likely at the train's rear which was a much safer position than at the front sandwiched between two locomotives and a heavy steel sleeper on one side and seven steel rail cars behind.

In homesteads along the Diagonal, farm families finished their breakfasts and began morning chores. The double-header, its two locomotives facing the wrong direction, trundled up the Great Western's tracks towards Waterloo, seven hours behind schedule. It slowly rolled through eastern Marshalltown just over twenty miles an hour and traversed the eight miles to Green Mountain before entering the black soil farmland and Pleistocene planted hills of eastern Marshall County.<sup>36</sup> A clear sky, bright sun, and

---

35. "The Thirty-Third Annual Report," 147.

36. "The Thirty-Third Annual Report," 149.

much warmer than average temperatures all pointed to a pleasant March Monday, the first day of spring.<sup>37</sup>

The day coach and smoking car contained a diverse mix of passengers, both economically and by age. Most of the Brown family, Alfred, his wife Rose and two of their four daughters, six-year-old Eva and her twelve-year-old sister Lenora, sat in a section of double seats where one pair faced another. Alfred, a Canadian immigrant with an Irish heritage, owned a confectionary in Waterloo.<sup>38</sup> A funeral brought the four down to Fairfield, Iowa earlier in the week and they were returning home. The Brown's two oldest daughters, Dora and Vera remained in Waterloo to run the candy business while their parents and siblings were in Fairfield. In the smoking car, E. J. Kline sat with George Downing and F. G. Fulmer, who faced him.<sup>39</sup> Also on board was Professor Leonard Parish, an Iowa State Teacher's College faculty member and the Iowa Historical Society curator, who was in Iowa City for a meeting and also traveled home.<sup>40</sup> Swift, Hoffman, Cowan and Winn were not the only young adults on the train. In another set of seats sat nineteen-year-old Lizzie Anderson and her friend Olga Swenson. When she was fifteen, Anderson immigrated to the United States from her native Sweden and worked as

---

37. "Weather Record Goes By Board," *Des Moines Evening Tribute*, March 23, 1910.

38. "Obituary," *Fairfield Daily Journal*, March 30, 1910.

39. "Like Horrible Nightmare," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

40. "Prof. L.W. Parish Victim of Wreck," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 21, 1910.

a servant for Jacob Urbach and his wife in Vinton.<sup>41</sup> The two were on their way back there and caught the “midnight train” out of Cedar Rapids.<sup>42</sup>

Shallow ditches ran along both sides of the tracks in a “cut” through a low hill, dug twenty-eight years earlier, that sat on the Marshall-Tama County line. Embankments on either side of the road ranged climbed just three to six feet.<sup>43</sup> More than two feet of water stood in the ditches on both sides of the roadbed.<sup>44</sup> Unseasonably warm temperatures melted snow in the cut and the Great Western’s failure to adequately maintain the earthen troughs prevented drainage which softened the base underneath the tracks. On one side ran a seven-foot-high wooden plank fence.<sup>45</sup> New railroad ties, replacements for the ones in place at the time, sat off to the side and waited patiently for installation by one of the Great Western’s road gangs.<sup>46</sup>

To appreciate the following sequence of events requires an introduction to mechanics, and kinematics, area of investigation within the physics discipline. Sir Isaac Newton, in the late seventeenth century, published his *Philosophiae naturalis principia*

---

41. “Victims of Rock Island Wreck Now Number 49,” *Vinton Eagle*, March 25, 1910.

42. “45 People Die In Terrible Wreck,” *Vinton Eagle*, March 22, 1910.

43. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report,” 150.

44. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report,” 150.

45. *Disastrous Wreck March 21, 1910, Gladbrook, Iowa*, March 21, 1910, Photograph, March 21, 1910, Iowa Historical Postcards Collection (IHPC), Grinnell College Libraries Special Collections.

46. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report,” 151.

*mathematica*, known as his *Principia*. Here, Newton lays out his three principles of motion, the relevant one for understanding what happened next being that a body in motion stays in motion unless acted upon by another force.<sup>47</sup> When a train is in motion, the locomotive and its cars are not the only objects moving. Everything carried by the train moves also, being acted upon the engine chugging down the tracks. But another critical element of motion is conservation of energy. What a cohort of early nineteenth century scientists, each acting within their own fields of expertise, learned was that energy is neither created nor destroyed, but simply changes form.<sup>48</sup> Within the context of mechanics, motion often transforms into heat, for example, how brake pad temperature climbs from friction when applied to a spinning plate. In addition to heat, forces applied to a body in motion can split another object, as an axe splits a piece of wood. A final ingredient is the formula for the kinetic energy of a body. One half the weight of an object, multiplied by the square of its speed equals its kinetic energy. The heavier an object is or the faster it travels, the more kinetic energy and object has that must transform.

The double-header, with the No. 828 tender leading, steamed into the channel at around twenty-two miles an hour, three under the chief dispatcher's order of no more than twenty-five. The first "bad" spot was still a few miles further up the tracks, closer to Gladbrook. White, Robinson, Ross neither saw nor felt anything awry. Back in the

---

47. Peter J. Bowler and Iwan Rhys Morus, *Making Modern Science: A Historical Survey*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 49-50.

48. Bowler and Morus, *Making Modern*, 104.

smoking car, Kline felt a bit thirsty, he excused himself, got up from his seat, and walked to the coach's rear water dispenser for a drink.<sup>49</sup> In the day car, Hoffman and Swift sat in a double seat facing their two friends, Irene Cowin and Florence Winn. Winn, who was just weeks away from her wedding, started telling a funny story.<sup>50</sup>

Just before exiting the cut, 828's tender left the tracks on the south side, traveled eighty-eight feet in just 2.75 seconds then stuck in the wet clay embankment.<sup>51</sup> Pritchard sat in the No. 1008's window and when he looked over his tender, could see Robinson in the front locomotive cab. According to Pritchard, Robinson was, "leaning out of his window" then suddenly disappeared from view. Neither he, Ross, nor Charter had any time to react.<sup>52</sup> Investigators noted "the levers in each engine were unchanged and the brakes had not been set."<sup>53</sup> Sixty-seven tons of locomotive followed its tender off the rails, rolled onto its side, and stopped a split second after its tender did. Momentum threw the men in No. 828's cab against the tender's front wall. No one riding in the lead engine's cab survived. The boyish looking newlywed George Ross, the fireman for

---

49. "Thrilling Story By Eye Witness," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 21, 1910.

50. "Marshalltown Wreck Delays Wedding," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 1, 1910.

51. According to the investigation, the length from the point where a mark on the ties indicated a flange running across it to the spot in the embankment was 237 feet. Combined length of engines and tenders was 148 feet leaving 88 feet of travel distance.

52. "Cause Of Wreck Still A Mystery," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 1, 1910.

53. "The Thirty-Third Annual Report," 149.

Engine 828, died instantly.<sup>54</sup> Robinson survived the initial crash and found himself, “lying on his back with his head and shoulders out of the window.”<sup>55</sup> The twenty-eight-year-old White, “was pinned beneath the wreckage, where escaping steam literally cooked his flesh,” but managed to dig himself out and with two broken legs, began crawling towards a farmhouse just south of the tracks to get help.<sup>56</sup>

The No. 1008 followed 828 off the tracks and its tender collided with No. 828’s front. Caught between two sixty-seven-ton locomotives, the wreck crushed 1008’s tender like an empty can. Boilers in both engines ruptured and pressurized steam erupted in the cabs. The sudden stop launched the No. 1008 crew against its tender. Pritchard ended up “behind the boiler head.”<sup>57</sup> Above his head he found a hole then scrambled out it and away from the wreckage. Pritchard, having extricated himself from the No. 1008, raced up to the lead engine and pulled Robinson through the window then “carried him up to the fence.”<sup>58</sup> Steam from the engine’s boiler badly scalded the engineer and he quickly succumbed to his injuries.

---

54. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report,” 149.

55. “Cause Of Wreck Still A Mystery,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 1, 1910.

56. “White Funeral Today,” *Des Moines Register*, March 23, 1910.

57. “Cause Of Wreck Still A Mystery,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 1, 1910.

58. “Cause Of Wreck Still A Mystery,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 1, 1910.

Little of the train's kinetic energy dissipated from the 1008 tender's destruction. Instead, momentum flowed downstream through the train. The Pullman Company's heavy sleeper, *Colonia*, was the first rail car in the train. Unable to continue forward, the Pullman sleeper rolled onto its side and the rear portion telescoped which lifted its other end off the tracks. When the heavy palace car rolled onto its right side it left a wide gap between the car's trucks and the rails on which it rolled over just moments before. The sleeper car's stop pitched Jacob Nauholz and Archie Price head first into an interior wall, killing both men. The *Colonia*'s orientation placed the car's toilet at the sleeper's rear, next to the day car. When the locomotives derailed, a Washington, Iowa man was in the bathroom dressing and preparing for his day. The sudden stop pushed the day car into the washroom's rear wall and collapsed it which "instantaneously" killed the young man.<sup>59</sup> In the cab of Engine 1008, all three crew members survived the initial crash. However, the locomotive's fireman J.S. Goodenough suffered significant burns from the engine's boiler and did not survive through the night.

Momentum from the other nine cars in the train pushed the coach forward and into the Pullman. Because the sleeper rolled onto its side, the day coach continued down the tracks traveling under the main Pullman body. This created an almost "wedge" effect, crushing the day car's body, splintering walls and crushing its occupants against the sleeper's steel walls as its wheels continued down the track, underneath the sleeper. Metal rods used in the day car's construction pierced the *Colonia*'s floor and into one

---

59. "Awful Tales Told of Wreck; Death List Is Appalling," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910, Newspapers.com.

compartment.<sup>60</sup> Row after row of passengers piled up against the *Colonia*'s back wall in human layers as the day car destroyed itself against the sleeper.<sup>61</sup> Iron rods used in the day car's construction drove through the Pullman's floor.<sup>62</sup> The day car simply disappeared in a mass of wooden shards, bent pipes and detached trucks. A smoking car, third in line and no more substantively constructed than the day car, piled into the Pullman sleeper's rear, exploding walls and flooring into long splinters impaling riders who escaped being crushed. By the time the second coach was slamming into the stopped steel sleeper, enough force dissolved to stop the train before the entire second coach was ground to sawdust. In those few moments between the tender's derailment and the train coming to a stop the human impact was catastrophic.

Moments before the day car disintegrated, As the laughed, their passenger rail car exploded into wood shivers with the sleeper car coming at them.<sup>63</sup> The sudden stop flipped Cowin and Winn backwards as their seats broke from the floor crushing Irene's right elbow. A shard of wood cut deep into that arm tearing her bicep and triceps muscles

---

60. "Like Horrible Nightmare," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

61. "Horrible Wreck on Rock Island," *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, March 23, 1910.

62. "Like Horrible Nightmare," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

63. "Miss Hoffman Identified," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

from the bone.<sup>64</sup> Florence Winn landed hard enough to dislocate her hip.<sup>65</sup> The crash launched Hoffman and Swift forward with Paul landing on the other two young women and suffering a right leg compound fracture and hip dislocation, “and whose shoulders and head were severely injured.”<sup>66</sup> The crash tossed Mae to the side landing with a force that impaled the prongs of her metal hair comb into her brain, “behind her right ear,” pinning the young woman in the debris. George Downing, taking the train home to Vinton, was also in the coach with Hoffman and Swift. “Two men sitting in front of us were squashed to death,” he told reporters describing himself and his traveling companion being, “down on the bottom with the world piled upon us.”<sup>67</sup> Downing’s seat mate graphically described laying, “under the living man opposite us and the two dead men who were literally smashed and whose blood rained down on us thru the wreckage.” The other day car passengers had similar experiences being, “hurled under seats and into the aisle.”<sup>68</sup> In the smoking car, a Cedar Falls resident, Dan Clark flew, “over fifteen

---

64. “Sorrowful Scenes Surround Morgue and Hospital,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

65. “Five Added To List; More Are Identified,” *Evening Times-Republican*, March 22, 1910.

66. “Five Added To List; More Are Identified,” *Evening Times-Republican*, March 22, 1910.

67. “Nearly Forty Dead, Many Hurt In Wreck,” *Evening Times-Republican*, March 21, 1910.

68. “Graphic Stories of the Survivors,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910

seats,” but avoided injury by landing, “on the cushion,” of another one ahead of him.<sup>69</sup>

An editor of the Albert Lea *Times Enterprise* sat at the back of the day car, closest to the smoker “and the next thing he remembered was “standing near the front of what was left of the coach.” For the victims, “there was an almost absolute silence” that ended with, “a succession of shrieks and cries” of the trapped passengers.<sup>70</sup> In all, thirty-eight people died at the crash scene and another forty-four were, “seriously injured.”<sup>71</sup>

When Bill Bradley drove his No. 1978 Consolidation locomotive through the bridge at Shellsburg, he became another link in the chain that ended in a clay embankment at the eastern edge of Marshall County. When the Rock Island’s chief train dispatcher decided to consolidate these two individual passenger trains into one became the next link. When Rock Island operators detoured the consolidated train to Marshalltown and then Waterloo was the third link to lock into place. Then, John White’s decision to ignore the Great Western’s chief dispatcher, F. C. Balkie’s, advice and not turn the locomotives around added one more link. In nearly every instance, decisions made by people, all operating independently, resulted in this passenger train stopped on the county line, its locomotives in the ditch, one wooden passenger car obliterated, a second one badly damaged and dozens of casualties. This tragedy’s chain, however, does not end when 828’s tender leaves the rails. Disasters end when the last person leaves the

---

69. “Graphic Stories of the Survivors,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

70. “Graphic Stories of the Survivors,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910; “Horrible Wreck on Rock Island,” *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, March 23, 1910.

71. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report,” 147.

hospital, the property is finally restored or a final lawsuit is settled. How many were dead, how many would subsequently die, how many would recover, and how a community reacted become the next links to join this catastrophe's chain.

## Chapter Six

### Send Help Now!

Uncontrolled plumes of steam billowed from wrecked locomotives of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific for the second time in less than nine hours. This time, instead of a single engine falling through a bridge and into creek bed, two locomotives accordioned themselves into a six-foot embankment alongside the tracks. In this latter case, during a span of about ten seconds, the weight and momentum of eight steel cars behind the smoker and day coach, pushed the two wooden passenger cars into the immoveable *Colonia*. Passengers riding in the train's rear section felt "a terrific jolt" followed by a second "jolt coupled with a deafening crash."<sup>1</sup> When it finally stopped, twisted trucks, shattered glass, and piles of wood shards scattered on either side of the tracks where the CRI&P's day car should be. Shredded planks floated in the water that filled ditches along the trench. Nearly one half of the smoking car's walls, floor, and ceiling contributed to the debris field stretched across the right-of-way. The crash stacked passengers like cords of firewood against the Pullman Sleeper's collapsed steel vestibule, one atop another separated only by flattened car seats. For others, momentum involuntarily stood riders up and crushed them between the sleeper's rear wall and what remained of the smoking car. Shoulders, arms and heads limply dangled out either side of

---

1. "Horrible Wreck on Rock Island," *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, March 23, 1910.

the spot where the two cars joined.<sup>2</sup> Even before the injured could begin to feel their pain and cry out, blood already stained the rubble alternating between crimson on unpainted surfaces and deep black on what remained of the dark grey passenger cars' panels.<sup>3</sup>

When the last bit of inertia drained from the trailing cars, the train stopped. There was a single, deafening moment of silence shattered by a chorus of agonizing screams that filled the void.<sup>4</sup> Shrieking, some sharp and clear and some muffled, came from victims that hung out the side of the wooden coaches and “from beneath the cars and from places which were walled in.”<sup>5</sup> Victims' cries offered auditory reinforcement to the visual horrors. The wreck separated passengers' heads from their bodies, arms from shoulders and legs from hips.<sup>6</sup> “Here and there a liver, kidney, brain or head of some man, woman or child.”<sup>7</sup> The wreck forced one man's head through a coach window that shattered the glass pane. Unable to move, his head lay on the razor-sharp shards that stuck up from window's sill and sliced deeply into his flesh as he pleaded, “for someone

---

2. “Graphic Stories of the Survivors,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

3. “Wrecked Train Arrived Today,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 26, 1910.

4. “Horrible Wreck On Rock Island,” *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, March 23, 1910.

5. “Fix Blame In Terrible Iowa Wreck,” *The Rock Island Argus*, March 22, 1910; “Horrible Wreck on Rock Island,” *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, March 23, 1910.

6. “Fix Blame In Terrible Iowa Wreck,” *The Rock Island Argus*, March 22, 1910; “Horrible Wreck On Rock Island,” *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, March 23, 1910.

7. “Horrible Wreck on Rock Island,” *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, March 23, 1910.

to kill him.”<sup>8</sup> When a rescuer broke the glass that was cutting him, a portion of his jaw “and five or six teeth in it, fell on the ground.”<sup>9</sup> Blood flowed everywhere. It dripped onto victims “pinned under the seats” and eventually into the ditches, tinting the standing water red<sup>10</sup>

At the train’s front, ruptured pipes that fed water into the boiler and carried steam to the locomotive’s pistons spewed super heated water vapor into what remained of both locomotives’ cabs. Jets, erupted from a number of snapped joints that hissed streams of scalding steam which engulfed crew members, boiled the flesh on their faces and soaked through their work clothes. A unique characteristic of scalding is the steam’s ability to severely burn a victim through his or her clothing while leaving the fabric undamaged. Arms, legs, chest, and back can all be severely injured with the depth of an insult hidden underneath the sufferer’s clothes. Only when caregivers remove the garment can they appreciate a burn’s full extent. Bob Robinson crawled through the superheated steam and away from the wreckage towards the fence. There, he rested, his skin likely blistered and peeling away after exposed to the steam from No. 828’s boiler. Because the engines ran in reverse, he sat on the side opposite from the derailment direction that prevented the locomotive from rolling over him. White struggled through the jets of steam that cooked

---

8. “Like Horrible Nightmare,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910; “Horrible Wreck on Rock Island,” *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, March 23, 1910.

9. “Like Horrible Nightmare,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

10. “Graphic Stories of the Survivors,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910; “Awful Tales Told of Wreck; Death List Is Appalling,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910; “Horrible Wreck on Rock Island,” *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, March 23, 1910.

his skin as he extricated himself from the wreckage.<sup>11</sup> To his right a few hundred feet, he saw a north-south dirt road through which the tracks ran. Knowing he needed to call for help, White struggled up the tracks to the crossing and headed down the road looking for a farmhouse where he could call for help.<sup>12</sup> Neither Ross nor Charter escaped the cab. The two men died in the wreckage. In the engine behind No. 828, the crew experienced the full spectrum of potential outcomes. Tom Charter, Ross' brother, suffered scrapes and minor burns. Electus Pritchard, was worse off and experienced injuries that required greater treatment. Jim Goodenough took the full brunt of the crash and died in the yellow clay mud.

When steel and wood collide, steel wins. Because of that reality, few expected any occupants in the *Colonia*, Pullman's heavy steel Saint Louis sleeper in front of the day car, to be seriously injured, let alone killed. Yet, there were. Rescuers found both Jacob Nauholz and the Pullman car's porter, thirty-seven-year-old Archie Price, dead on the sleeper's floor. No record identifies cause of death for either man, nor do any accounts describe externally visible trauma. Though purely speculative, kinematics of the crash suggest both men suffered devastating cerebral and cervical injuries resulting from the wreck throwing them forward in the car. A sleeper contains a variety of unyielding surfaces on which a person could strike their head causing fatal brain injuries and transfer

---

11. "One Des Moines Man Dead," *Register and Leader*, March 22, 1910; "White Died A Hero In The Wreck," *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, March 25, 1910.

12. "White Died A Hero In The Wreck," *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, March 25, 1910.

of force onto the spinal column which dislocates or fractures with catastrophic consequences.

The abrupt stop threw Chicago section train conductor M. C. Einwalter into the seat with John Jennings, a railroad engineer “dead-heading” to Albert Lea. Einwalter quickly picked himself up and headed for the passenger car’s exit. This was Einwalter’s second serious train crash in as many months, having experienced a serious wreck outside Greene two months earlier.<sup>13</sup> Looking outside, he saw Tom Charter, the No. 1008’s brakeman running towards the train’s rear. Once the train derailed, the greatest danger to the passengers became a threat of a collision with a second train that either trailed the Nos. 19 and 21 or one which approached from the front. In a train crash, the most important function a brakeman performs is going far enough behind and to the front of a crippled train and flagging down any approaching locomotives, stopping them before they created an even larger catastrophe. Einwalter stepped off the coach’s stairway onto the uneven gravel along the track’s side and caught Charter before he raced passed. He directed the brakeman to do what Charter was already in the process of doing, get far enough behind the train to stop any other approaching locomotives to prevent them from rear-ending the wrecked train. This was not a frivolous activity. Just two miles behind trailed a different Minneapolis express on a run to Waterloo. Charter spent just a few moments listening to the conductor’s orders then started down the tracks to plant a

---

13. “Awful Tales Told of Wreck; Death List Is Appalling,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

warning flag well behind the last car in the train to warn any approaching engines to stop.<sup>14</sup>

After directing the brakeman to stop any trains approaching from the rear, Einwalter stepped off the rear Pullman's vestibule steps and hurried up the rails towards the engines. He reached the locomotives at about the same time Bob Robinson staggered away from his wrecked locomotive and the onto the gravel roadbed. Einwalter asked Robinson if he was badly hurt which the heavily mustached engineer denied. Whether his answer was putting on a brave face for the conductor or an act of self-delusion, reality quickly overtook him. Deeply scalded and badly injured Robinson died on the side of the road shortly thereafter from the combination of burns and internal injuries.<sup>15</sup>

At the train's rear, passengers who rode in the trailing five Chicago coaches were not quite sure what had happened, but clearly something went awry up ahead.<sup>16</sup> The cars were stopped, one of the crew members who ran by carried a flag and waved his arms after which their conductor left the coach headed towards the front of the train. And there was noise. Although muffled by the rail car's glass windows and walls, passengers heard a commotion. The steam's roar spread out over adjacent farm fields, cries of the injured, sounds of running feet over uneven ground, and shouts by the first people on the scene all

---

14. "Awful Tales Told of Wreck; Death List Is Appalling," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

15. "Awful Tales Told of Wreck; Death List Is Appalling," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

16. "Awful Tales Told of Wreck; Death List Is Appalling," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910,

contributed to the chaotic scene. Curiosity overcame apprehension and riders left their seats to see what had happened. Men, wearing their cheviot vests, waist coats and derby hats descended the coach stairwells, their leather oxfords and half boots sinking into the boggy mixture of thawed clay soil and aggregate.<sup>17</sup> Corseted ladies in shirtwaist blouses, plain tailored jackets, walking skirts and Edwardian heels trailed behind their husbands anxious to see what caused the delay.<sup>18</sup>

Those that left on their coach's south side looked up the tracks and immediately saw the *Colonia* rolled onto its side in the ditch. Just beyond the crippled sleeper was the No. 1008's front and a cloud of steam around the engine. This parade of passengers approached the wrecked section and reacted in horror at the grisly scene in front of them. A few fainted.<sup>19</sup> Most others recognized the wreck's enormity, stripped off their jackets and immediately began digging through the debris to help victims away from the destroyed coaches. Their yelling and crying added to the pandemonium that attracted attention of farmsteaders along the tracks which brought even more onlookers to the scene, just to find out what all the racket was about.<sup>20</sup>

---

17. Fredrick Taylor Frazer, "What Men Will Wear This Autumn," *Ladies Home Journal*, September 1909, 47.

18. "American Fashions For American Women," *Ladies Home Journal*, September 1909, 2; "Horrible Wreck on Rock Island," *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, March 23, 1910.

19. "Graphic Stories of the Survivors," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

20. "Awful Tales Told of Wreck; Death List Is Appalling," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

A modern public safety emergency communications center knows a significant event is in progress based on the number of calls received about the same incident. This became a feature of American life as telephone service penetrated the consumer market. Prior to the telephone, bystanders identified a single messenger to summon the nearest doctor. Smoke from a neighbor's house led those living nearby to investigate what was burning. Telephony changed that. Now, when an incident occurred, witnesses, in their nearby homes, could pick up the receiver and tell the operator a wreck had occurred or a house was on fire, without requiring direction from someone at the scene. Green Mountain was a mass casualty event of a magnitude never before experienced in Iowa railroading and the sheer number of witnesses guaranteed a high volume of calls went out for help.

Ed Murphy, an attorney and the *Vinton Eagle* editor's son, sat onboard a coach at the train's rear and "hardly noticed the shock."<sup>21</sup> When other riders got up and left, he followed and then quickly sized up the situation. Rather than join a growing crowd at the site, Murphy's first concern was getting medical help to the scene. In the distance, he saw a farmhouse and a spot where a dirt road crossed the tracks. The Zink family owned a number of farms in section of the county along the south side of the tracks. To the north, Sarah Milholand controlled ground on the other side.<sup>22</sup> Hopefully, the one of those residents had a telephone from which he could summon help.

---

21. "45 People Die In Terrible Wreck," *Vinton Eagle*, March 22, 1910.

22. *Transfer Records*, Book 2-4, Marshall County Recorder, Marshalltown, Iowa. 415; *Transfer Records*, Book 8, Marshall County Recorder, Marshalltown, Iowa. 278.

The thirty-one-year-old was on the road, just a short distance from the wreck, when he heard someone behind him. Murphy turned to see John White, the train's pilot, struggling down the same road. Though passengers from the other coaches and a growing number of local farmers aided immensely in the efforts to extricate victims from the wrecked rail cars, injured travelers needed medical attention from experienced hands and putting the two locomotives and the *Colonia* Pullman back on the tracks, and for that matter, repairing the tracks themselves demanded specialists and heavy equipment. The train was White's responsibility and now that it was wrecked, getting doctors to the scene, railroad recovery equipment, and repairing track became his priority. Escaping steam from No. 828's boiler drenched and then deeply scalded the ten-year railroad veteran.<sup>23</sup> Murphy came back to White and helped him the rest of the way to a farmhouse both hoped had a phone.

It did. Directed to the phone, Murphy picked up its receiver. White asked him to report the crash to the Great Western's office. In the telephone exchange, an indicator lit to alert the operator of a call. She connected her headset to the line and asked Murphy to whom he wished to speak.<sup>24</sup> When a station clerk answered, Murphy described the dire situation and told the clerk to send help. After he finished his call, Murphy turned his attention back to White. He helped the burned man out of his clothes "and plastered the burned places with soda." Baking soda, either dry or mixed with water that created a

---

23. "White Died A Hero In The Wreck," *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, March 25, 1910.

24. Charles R. Gibson, *How Telegraphs and Telephones Work: Explained in Non-Technical Language* (London: Seeley and Co. Limited, 1909), 97-99.

paste was the standard first aid treatment for both burns and scalds.<sup>25</sup> The idea was to seal off the injured tissue from exposure to air. If a sodium bicarbonate slurry was not available, professionals recommended “Ordinary vaselin or carbolized vaselin, olive or castor oil, and fresh lard.”<sup>26</sup> Once applied, caregivers should loosely cover the area using “muslin or linen.”<sup>27</sup> After the white mixture was applied to White’s scalded skin, Murphy wrapped him “in a sheet and covered him with quilts” the farmer’s wife gathered from around their home. With nothing more to do in the way of treatment, Murphy headed back to the crash site to hopefully find a doctor to examine young man.

White and Murphy were not the only ones that went for help. After Charter placed his warning flag to alert any approaching engines of a blocked track, he raced back towards the disabled engines. But the brakeman did not stop at the scene. Instead, he continued up the tracks towards Gladbrook to alert the station operator of a wreck. As he trekked northeast, the young man encountered a Great Western section crew working on the tracks. Lucky for Charter, the maintenance crew brought a hand truck to the site.

The typical railroad hand truck consisted of a small wooden platform mounted on a steel frame with four steel wheels. A seesaw looking device consisting of a center-mounted pillar and metal shaft with handlebars at each end about three-quarters the

---

25. Dr. Gustavus M. Blech, *Bauer & Black Hand Book of First Aid In Accidents, Emergencies, Poisoning, Sunstroke, Etc.*, Household ed. (Chicago: Bauer & Black, 1916), 23.

26. Colonel Charles Lynch, *American Red Cross Text-Book on First Aid, 2nd Woman's* (Philadelphia: P. Blakiston’s Sone & Co, 1918), 105.

27. Jane A. Delano R.N., *American Red Cross Text-Book on Home Hygiene and Care of the Sick*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: P. Blakiston’s Son & Co., 1918), 277.

length of the car, sat atop the platform. Attached to the shaft was another steel bar connected to gears on the car's axles. Typically, two men, one at the handlebars took up a position and alternated pressing their handlebar down. This seesaw motion pushed rods that then turned gears to make the car's wheels turn. Hand cars were heavy, often times weighing hundreds of pounds and not necessarily easy to control which is a major reason they were operated by two workers. Charter told the men about the wreck, urged them go to the scene and help rescue passengers. As they started down the tracks, Charter commandeered their hand car and furiously pumped one side up and down all the way to the Gladbrook depot. When he arrived, the brakeman told the station operator what had happened and to get any help he could moving towards the crash site."<sup>28</sup>

Telephone switchboard operators at the central exchange connected a number of calls to Great Western clerks and doctors' offices that spread the news of a terrible railroad crash. The women handled "two and one half times more business than in any day in its history."<sup>29</sup> Though an infrastructure to support the rapid response of medical professionals and rescue equipment to the crash site did not exist, penetration of the telephone throughout rural America allowed witnesses to quickly alert authorities of the wreck, its severity, and to request help. The wire-based telephone, a late nineteenth century invention, was one of the first advances towards improved disaster response.

---

28. "Awful Tales Told of Wreck; Death List Is Appalling," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

29. "Conditions Fast Becoming Normal," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 24, 1910.

The structure of a modern public safety system is an ascending matrix of various technological developments combined with a variety of cultural changes. At the very bottom sits Alexander Graham Bell's telephone. Throughout human history, the perceived person with healing powers was summoned to the patient by a messenger, either on foot or horseback. The period between a runner's dispatch to fetch the doctor and his arrival depended entirely upon the topography and distance between the patient's location and the physician's office. An added factor in this response time was the transportation mode available. Horseback was typically fastest than foot, but a galloping horse can only run so far before it too must have a break. Getting the doctor could require fifteen minutes if the patient was in town or a few hours when located in the country. As the telephone penetrated the consumer market and spread across both urban and rural, the time between notifying the doctor and his arrival dropped dramatically. A person need only get the switchboard operator's attention and connect the caller to the doctor's office. That dramatic reduction in response time, however, did not change the perception of the duration between a call for help and its arrival. Bystanders still did not know where the doctor was or when he would arrive.

Ostensibly, the manifest purpose of a siren on an ambulance, fire engine, or police car is clearing a path through traffic. a function with decidedly mixed results. A latent benefit, however, is that the oscillating wail signals to those at a scene that assistance is on the way. Hearing help on the way and it actually being there, however, are two different things. To victims and bystanders alike, the time between calling for help and help's arrival feels interminable. Those who experienced the Green Mountain tragedy

confronted that same frustration during in that time between the crash and arrival of medical help and a relief train. Ignorance around the logistics for providing a response underpins much of that anger and in 1910, mounting a train derailment response demanded substantial resource orchestration. Time is the price paid. There is time required to find a location capable of communicating a request for help. Time ticks by as managers secure a crew, locomotive, and rail cars for transportation. Time slips past waiting for doctors to arrive at the station for transport. Finally, there is the time consumed getting to the crash site. The Green Mountain tragedy was no different.

Frank Doherty sat behind the customer counter in the Great Western Railway's terminal on Nevada Street. Though the morning air was crisp, a bright sun in the nearly cloudless blue sky over Marshalltown made his mile long commute from the Doherty family home on North Center Street, rather pleasant. During Doherty's seventeen years with the railway, he lived a somewhat nomadic life with previous jobs in Chicago, Saint Joseph, Kansas City and Saint Paul. A year and a half earlier, he left a freight agent position in Council Bluffs for a combined passenger-freight agent job in Marshalltown. He was well-liked by residents and during his time, Great Western business "increased materially."<sup>30</sup>

Just as the wall clock hit nine o'clock, Doherty received an urgent message that reported the consolidated Minneapolis Express derailment between Green Mountain and Gladbrook and to get a relief train with as many doctors as could be found out to the site.

---

30. "F.L. Doherty, C.G.W. Agent, Will Quit," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, August 4, 1910.

As many as twenty-five dead and “many injured.” His job was to put a relief train together. Nearby was the Iowa Central’s rail yard. Doherty was told to contact the Iowa Central and borrow a baggage car from the competitor’s rolling stock. Use a switch engine from the yard and get the word out for any “doctors and physicians” to immediately come to the Great Western depot for a ride to the crash site. Luckily, he caught the Iowa Central’s trainmaster, a man named Ryan, who provided a baggage car for the rescue train. A switching crew created a route between the two railroads to get the rail car onto the Great Western’s tracks.<sup>31</sup>

Though the Great Western operation could mount a medical response from their yard in Marshalltown, they lacked the specialized equipment needed to put the derailed train back onto the tracks once those were repaired. A message went up the line to another Great Western location, this one in Oelwein that asked for a wrecker car, basically a crane on a flatbed with the ability to lift the wrecked engines and cars. Distance worked against the railway as train dispatchers adjusted their scheduled and issued orders to get the recovery train to Green Mountain. It arrived at the crash site around the time Marshalltown’s relief train departed with its human cargo for its return trip.<sup>32</sup>

Having started hostlers on their work getting the rescue train assembled and dealing with the need for specialized equipment, Doherty picked up the phone receiver

---

31. “Hurried With Help,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 22, 1910.

32. “Horrible Wreck on Rock Island,” *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, March 23, 1910.

and held it to his ear as he called through into the funnel shaped microphone for the operator to connect him with Dr. Norman Mighell, the Great Western's company surgeon. Mighell was no stranger to gruesome calls from the railroad. Eleven years earlier, Iowa Central appointed the Rush College medical graduate as the railroad's company surgeon. Seven years later, the other two lines through Marshalltown, the Chicago Northwestern and Chicago Great Western also chose Mighell as their company surgeon.<sup>33</sup>

During that time, the forty-eight-year-old saw the devastation rail cars and engines could do to human flesh. Two years earlier, Frank Taylor, along with other yard workers, sought shelter from a springtime rainstorm underneath a loaded boxcar. When a switch engine approached to move the car, "Taylor failed to get out in time." The car crushed both his legs and mangled the section man's hands, the right being "an unrecognizable mass of mashed bone and muscle." Coworkers carried the fifty-four-year-old father of eight to the master mechanic's office where Tom Feeley called Dr. Mighell. There was little he could do for the mortally injured worker other than palliative care. Taylor died later that night<sup>34</sup> Two years later, Dr. Mighell received another call, this time from the Great Western's passenger agent at the depot.

---

33. "Hurried With Help," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 22, 1910; "New District Surgeon," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 23, 1906; "Mighell Gets C. G. W.," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 30, 1906.

34. "Section Man Meets Death Under Wheels," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, May 29, 1908.

When Mighell picked up the earphone, the passenger agent asked him “to secure all the doctors he could gather,” and come down to the station. A train crashed and many were injured. Twenty-four physicians and surgeons practiced in Marshalltown and managing the injured from this wreck demanded the services of everyone. From his office on the Hopkins block, Mighell alerted as many of his fellow physicians and surgeons as he could before he grabbed his jacket and medical bag and then raced down to the Nevada Street depot.<sup>35</sup>

Doherty had one last call remaining. According to the message, at least twenty-five people were dead. Railroads employed specialists across a spectrum of professions from boiler makers to machinists to engineers and even doctors. However, companies did not keep an undertaker on staff. In cases of an employee workplace fatality or passenger death while in transit, railroads relied on the closest town’s undertaker to handle the case. What posed the greatest challenge, given the available information, was that just four undertakers made Marshalltown their home.<sup>36</sup> Doherty called one and asked him to alert the other three. There would be plenty of bodies to identify, prepare, and ship back to family members.

---

35. *Marshalltown City Directory 1910: Comprising an Alphabetically Arranged List of Business Firms and Private Citizens--Miscellaneous Directory, City and County Officers, Public and Private Schools, Churches, Banks, Secret and Benevolent Societies An A Complete Classified Business Directory* (Fargo, North Dakota: Pettibone Directory Co, 1910), 237-8.

36. *Marshalltown City Directory 1910: Comprising an Alphabetically Arranged List of Business Firms and Private Citizens--Miscellaneous Directory, City and County Officers, Public and Private Schools, Churches, Banks, Secret and Benevolent Societies An A Complete Classified Business Directory* (Fargo, North Dakota: Pettibone Directory Co, 1910), 244

Assembling the entire rescue package of conveyances and personnel at the depot and then on-board the relief train took just a little over an hour. The switch engine's bell clanged loudly followed by two whistle blasts. Directly behind it, an Iowa Central baggage car Doherty received from the Iowa Central's trainmaster. From the passenger car's steel steps, a conductor waved his hand and signaled permission to depart. Another whistle blast followed by the first heavy chugs of the locomotive. Its drive wheels started to slowly turn and picked up speed with each revolution. The train of rescuers pulled away from the Great Western depot and headed up the same tracks used just ninety-minutes earlier by the Rock Island's consolidated train. By ten-thirty, they were on the scene.<sup>37</sup>

Though the Great Western's reaction represented the bulk of the area's response to the crash, the railway company was not the sole responder. When area residents realized the catastrophe's size, husbands and wives hurried back home to collect sheets and blankets for covering victims and made bandages. Some brought coffee or bottles of whiskey—a nostrum accepted as a standard of care at the time—then shared drinks with the injured and rescuers alike. Word spread quickly in Gladbrook, Green Mountain, and a plethora of other communities in the area.<sup>38</sup> Despite poor road conditions that made, “wheeling heavy,” automobile drivers picked up doctors from these surrounding towns

---

37. “Hurried With Help,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 22, 1910; “Like Horrible Nightmare,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

38. “Awful Tales Told of Wreck; Death List Is Appalling,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

then rushed them as fast as they could to the scene.<sup>39</sup> Caregivers waded into the mass of bodies and worked non-stop, doing what they could for those still alive.<sup>40</sup>

Until the first half of the 1970s, when the California FIREScope initiative introduced an incident command structure, mass casualty incidents and major property damage natural events—and Green Mountain certainly qualified as a mass casualty incident—were pell-mell sites of confusion. At this crash site, small groups of men and women worked without direction on whatever activity they thought most important. Rescuers rushed hither and back in wasted motion. Yelling between people added to an atmosphere of disarray. No single individual possessed an overall picture of the situation nor had any idea what resources existed and were available. A hundred different individuals prioritized a hundred different tasks a hundred different ways. The waves of responders, ranging from uninjured passengers and crew to untrained bystanders to identified teams of rescuers, arrived at the scene but received no guidance on which activities were more important. Resources, be them men, material, or equipment were misallocated that led to wasted time. Green Mountain was a textbook example.

In this instance, that first wave of rescuers rode in the very cars crushed in the wreck, despite a sudden bewildering change in circumstance that demanded quickly reorienting to a new situation. *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise* editor J. W. May “hardly knew what happened.” One minute “he was sitting in the smoker,” and the next he, “was

---

39. “Awful Tales,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

40. “Awful Tales Told of Wreck; Death List Is Appalling,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

standing near the front of what was left of the coach.” May was lucky. Uninjured, he freed himself from the wreckage then joined other passengers in their efforts to rescue the wounded and recover bodies of the dead. To George Downing, who sat in a double seat with F.G. Fulmer and faced towards the train’s front, the crash appeared to cause the day car to come “right back through into us.” Across from them, a man seated in the opposite direction who faced Fulmer along with two additional passengers. The wreck killed the two riders in the double seats front of Downing’s seat and their companion who faced Downing and Fulmer crashed “back against them,” and “flattened us to the floor,” layering the victims as though they were sediment in a stream bed. Fulmer extricated himself from underneath the debris and bodies then quickly started “dragging at the rubbish trying to release Downing and the other living man.”<sup>41</sup>

May, Downing, and Fulmer all avoided the deadliest perils of the two coaches, one being sharp wooden shards as the car walls splintered and the second were the many windows. Glass represented a particularly injurious part of a passenger car’s construction. The wreck sent a man’s head through the glass, “who in his unconscious struggles was slowly cutting his own throat.” Another rescuer joined May and the two successfully removed the victim from the window and any further danger, placing the injured man on the ground to receive care. In another case, a yard-stick length wood shard impaled a passenger through his abdomen.<sup>42</sup> Henry Tisdale, a CRI&P auditor recounted the work

---

41. “Like Horrible Nightmare,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

42. “Graphic Stories of the Survivors,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

put in by two young men, both injured in the crash. One “refused to let the physicians touch him,” because others had greater need while the other “worked all day, although we could see he was suffering from injuries,” that turned out to be a pair of broken ribs.”<sup>43</sup> Trapped in the wreckage were eight non-English speaking Russian immigrants. Though uninjured, the octet had no way of understanding what was happening. Both “Tisdale and Einwalter herded [them] back into one of the steel coaches.”<sup>44</sup>

Dudley Whitney was a forty-seven-year-old Rock Island baggageman. He received, loaded, and returned passenger luggage and also had responsibility for transporting railroad correspondence and parcels to destination stations. In addition to those jobs, he maintained, “the head and light in the baggage cars.”<sup>45</sup> Assigned to the Chicago train section, eight cars back of the engines with passenger luggage, Whitney was on his final leg of this round trip and heading home to his wife in Albert Lea.<sup>46</sup> After the train came to its abrupt stop, he climbed down the baggage car ladder and walked up to the wrecked smoker. Within moments, passengers from the coaches joined him. Men

---

43. “Awful Tales Told of Wreck; Death List Is Appalling,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

44. “Awful Tales Told of Wreck; Death List Is Appalling,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

45. Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway Company, *Rules and Regulations for the Government of Employés of the Operating Department*, (Chicago, Cameron, Amberg & Co, 1904), 91.

46. “Horrible Wreck on Rock Island,” *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, March 23, 1910; *Freeborn County Directory: 1909* (St. Paul: R. I. Polk & Co, 1909); Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Commerce and Labor, 1910).

and women that looked to help but were unsure on how to proceed, often looked to those in uniform as leaders for guidance. The stress of this circumstance certainly created a situation where anyone who appeared to have some form of authority could muster bystanders into ad hoc work gangs. Whitney, wearing his railroad uniform, did just that and gathered “a band of men,” with axes who “chopped to safety fifteen to twenty of the imprisoned sufferers.” Nearby, Kline grabbed an axe from another coach and began chopping the smoker’s roof. It, however, stubbornly refused to split open and “always rebounded.”<sup>47</sup> He eventually gave up using the axe and found a farmer who brought a length of rope. The pair was able to use it to move debris which afforded them access to the victims.

In a mass casualty event, removal of the dead is a lower priority than extrication of the living. But in disasters where both are intermingled with one another, extracting a fatality can facilitate access to living person trapped. In the Green Mountain event, neither category of victim had priority over the other.<sup>48</sup> W.T. Shreiner described a mother and daughter carried from the wreckage that “were both crushed to death.” In a vain attempt to protect her daughter she, “folded the child in her arms ... and they were taken out dead wrapped in each other’s arms.” J.W. May, of Albert Lea, offered a badly injured woman whiskey, but she refused directing him to offer a swallow “to a man ... groaning

---

47. “Thrilling Story By Eye Witness,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 21, 1910.

48. “Graphic Stories By The Survivors,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 23, 1910.

terribly.” He did and upon returning to the woman, found her dead.<sup>49</sup> In many cases, rescuers pulled only body parts from the wreck. The crash sliced one passenger in half, just above the pelvis. “The lower portion ... was taken from the wreck and identified by paper in the pockets.”<sup>50</sup> Scattered around the two demolished cars were “money and purses lying about.”<sup>51</sup>

Blood was everywhere. Wounded and dead lay strewn across the ground along the train’s sides. Victims bled from lacerations to heads, necks, arms, chests, and legs caused by large wooden splinters and shards of glass. To dress these wounds, ladies, uninjured in the crash, tore sections of their ankle-length skirts, using these swaths to bandage wounds displaying, “stern superhuman nerve that helped them meet the bloodies and most revolting sights with a steadiness.”<sup>52</sup> Doctors and surgeons finished swathing the wounds of one patient only to have another appear. Many patients were deemed so badly injured, “physicians did not dare to administer whiskey to them.” Instead, doctors asked a local farmer to “get black coffee,” and they “returned ... with a two-gallon can of good coffee.”<sup>53</sup>

---

49. “Graphic Stories By The Survivors,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 23, 1910.

50. “Like Horrible Nightmare,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

51. “Another Arrest In Wreck Affair,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 4, 1910.

52. “Horrible Wreck on Rock Island,” *Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*, March 23, 1910.

53. “Awful Tales Told of Wreck; Death List Is Appalling,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

When Murphy arrived back at the crash site after he called for help and assisted plastering White's burns, he tried to get a doctor to leave the wreck and tend to White back at the farmhouse. There were simply too many injured at the crash site needing care for a physician to spend twenty minutes away. Two hours passed before he convinced a physician to walk the half mile back to where White lay injured. Once one finally agreed, the two hiked back to the house and after the doctor began tending to White, Murphy started back towards the crash scene again. The physician, after applying the treatments he could, took White back with him to the crash site and put him on the relief train for a ride back to Marshalltown and to the hospital.<sup>54</sup>

Though unexpressed explicitly in any of the source material, Frank Doherty's actions back at the Marshalltown Great Western train station clearly indicate that he recognized this situation was grave. He mobilized nearly the entire city's medical and mortuary capacity while also acquiring adequate transportation means for a response to the tragedy. What both the Rock Island's reaction to the Shellsburg wreck and the Great Western's response to the crash outside Green Mountain reveal is unexamined faith in private industry to provide rescue services when tragedy strikes. When Tom Charter raced on a hand car four miles to Gladbrook and John White hobbled down a country road to a farmhouse and called for help, they contacted Great Western representatives—not public safety agencies. Ambulances did not respond to the scene, but instead awaited

---

54. "The Thirty-Third Annual Report," 152-153; "White Died A Hero In The Wreck," *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, March 25, 1910.

the relief train's arrival at the Great Western depot in Marshalltown<sup>55</sup> When the train that carried the wounded arrived, these white horse-drawn wagons conveyed the injured to a hospital and the dead to a makeshift morgue. No police officer or sheriff secured the accident site and the bodies of those killed. No one called for a one of Marshalltown's hose or ladder companies though Marshalltown had volunteer fire brigades in every city ward. Elijah Jay, Marshall County's medical examiner, was the closest thing to an emergency manager in this mass casualty incident. While communities can adequately manage smaller incidents, Green Mountain represented calamity on a scale that overwhelmed the resources available from private enterprise and neighborhood Good Samaritans. Like the failure to recognize that wooden cars, arranged between fully loaded steel boxcars, disintegrate into kindling when a train comes to an immediate stop and the attached cars telescope, the need for a community based public safety infrastructure went unseen.

Nearly six hours after the disaster began, rescue efforts wound down. The switch engine joined the relief train cars to the consolidated train's undamaged passenger coaches and around mid-afternoon, departed for a return trip to Marshalltown. The crash injured or killed almost one hundred people. Though some suspicion remained that recovery crews might locate one or two more bodies in the wreckage, a decision was made to start back for Marshalltown. Throughout the rescue process, responders removed the dead, placing them on the embankment and covering the remains with white sheets

---

55. *Ambulances, Train Wreck, March 21, 1910, Green Mountain, Iowa, March 21, 1910, Photograph, March 21, 1910, Iowa Historical Postcards Collection (IHPC), Grinnell College Libraries Special Collections.*

filched from the laid over *Colonia*. After five hours of rescue, responders thought they had recovered as many victims as they could, the time arrived to take both the living and dead back to Marshalltown. Some suspected one or two bodies might still remain underneath the sleeper, but later, when railroad cranes from both the Great Western and Iowa Central arrived on the scene and righted the Pullman, no remains were found.<sup>56</sup> Bystanders lifted up the dead, covered with sheets and farm quilts, off the ground where they laid and loaded the bodies into the Iowa Central's baggage car. In another car rode the wounded, tended by physicians from the relief train and who were assisted by uninjured passengers. On the trip back to Marshalltown, Dr. Mighell triaged the patients and assigned a number to each patient thereby establishing a priority for transport to the hospital.<sup>57</sup> Professor Parrish was one of those badly injured passengers placed into the car with other wounded passengers. His significant internal injuries did not kill him during the six hours that passed between the wreck and scene departure. But the aging educator faded. Dan Clark attended to Parrish while doctors moved from patient to patient in the coach.

Every jar or jolt agonized the injured. Swift, his right leg broken, a cut on his scalp, and internal injuries laid on the floor in pain. Nearby, Florence Winn, one of the three women Swift sat with in the day car's double seats, also was on the floor, her leg shortened and rotated that telegraphed her hip dislocation. Irene Cowin could at least sit

---

56. "Like Horrible Nightmare," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

57. "Conditions Fast Becoming Normal," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 24, 1910.

up. A shard of wood sliced through her arm's flesh, severing muscle attachments to bone and had her elbow crushed.<sup>58</sup> For White, his pain came from the raw nerve endings of cooked skin rather than due to the jars and jolts of the passenger coach. Also amongst the wounded were Olga Swenson and Lizzy Anderson. Swenson nearly had her "scalp torn off," and in Anderson's case, the wreck broke both her legs.<sup>59</sup> From a medical perspective, the young adult body withstands and can compensate for greater physical trauma than can another person years older. Though the two immigrant women suffered severe insults, both were still alive.

Rescue, in the arc of disaster mythology, is the victim's nadir. From the moment one escapes his or her circumstance, the story trajectory is upward. Reality rarely mimics mythology. Passengers who rode on the day coach or smoker experienced a horrific crash and then spent hours after the wreck, stranded at the site, and waiting for the relief train to return them back to Marshalltown. Then they acutely felt every bump on the road back. In the coach carrying the injured, Dan Clark ministered to the former school superintendent turned college professor, Parrish as the train slowly headed, back towards Marshalltown. The fifty-nine-year-old put on a brave face for the other injured riders, "to give courage to the other sufferers." Doctors riding in the car, "tried to give relief," to the badly wounded man but his injuries were too severe. As the coach rocked side-to-side, he

---

58. "Sorrowful Scenes Surround the Morgue and Hospital," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

59. "Victims of Rock Island Wreck Now Number 49," *Vinton Eagle*, March 25, 1910; "Nearly Forty Dead, Many Hurt In Wreck," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 21, 1910.

drew his last breath and succumbed to his internal injuries while on the way back to Marshalltown.<sup>60</sup>

---

60. "Graphic Stories of the Survivors," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910.

## Chapter Seven

### Arrival Back

Word spread through Marshalltown. There was a train wreck near Green Mountain. It's really bad. Lots of people dead. The Great Western sent a train up to help out and it was coming back here. Though urban when measured against other Iowa communities, Marshalltown was really still a small town having just over thirteen-thousand residents.<sup>1</sup> Telephone technology required physical operators to make a connection between individuals calling one another and customers connected to phone service via party lines where anyone attached to the circuit, including the operator, could listen in to the conversation. Urgent calls to every physician and surgeon in town drew attention. When those same doctors hurriedly picked up and left their offices, either for the depot, or in a car headed northeast, residents did not need prescience enlightenment to know something terrible occurred. Neighbors and townspeople noticed funeral parlor ambulance drivers bridle their horses and hitch their teams to the mortuary's Red Cross wagons. Painted a bright white, on each wagon side, just behind the driver's seat and underneath the mounted clear lanterns was the funeral home's name, painted in elegant

---

1. George W. Clarke, Governor et al., *Census of Iowa For The Year 1915* (Des Moines, Iowa: Robert Henderson, State Printer, 1915), 586.

script.<sup>2</sup> Drivers flicked their reins signaling to the horses it was time to start pulling. Upon entering the street, each driver tugged on those same reins, turning their horses towards a shallow dale that ran through town. That was where the trains lived.

For those residents who lived or worked near Great Western's train station, or for the men that enjoyed themselves at the saloon across the tracks, they did not need a phone to know something was going on. Along the north side of the rail line waited every ambulance in town, including ones from Pursel & Sons and the Wilbur funeral home.<sup>3</sup> The rear of each wagon, its rear double doors wide open, abutted the Great Western depot's platform. Jake McGraw, one of the many ambulance drivers sitting along Nevada Street, leaned back into his driver's seat and relaxed. George Ederhoff, from another mortuary, tended to his team, checking the bindings and bridles.<sup>4</sup> For these men and their horses, there was nothing to do but wait—so they waited. Though the sheer number of Red Cross wagons was enough to draw attention, what made the circumstance even more unusual was that wagons of all types sat around the depot. People milled about coming to the depot throughout the late morning and early afternoon. Onlookers gathered at the

---

2. *Ambulances, Train Wreck, March 21, 1910, Green Mountain, Iowa*, March 21, 1910, Photograph, March 21, 1910, Iowa Historical Postcards Collection (IHPC), Grinnell College Libraries Special Collections.

3. *Ambulances, Train Wreck, March 21, 1910, Green Mountain, Iowa*, March 21, 1910, Photograph, March 21, 1910, Iowa Historical Postcards Collection (IHPC), Grinnell College Libraries Special Collections.

4. "Conditions Fast Becoming Normal," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 24, 1910.

station “whitefaced and horrified waiting the coming of the special train.”<sup>5</sup> Tragedy attracts attention and by the early afternoon of March 21, 1910, an entire town’s attention fixated on an empty set of railroad tracks that ran from Waterloo to the northeast and curved into Marshalltown.

“Nothing attracts a crowd like a crowd.”<sup>6</sup> David Pirner’s lyric aptly described resident reaction to the crowd of people down by the train station. On this first day of spring, a bright sun, moderate temperatures, and likely a rumor mill that operated in overdrive, encouraged gawkers to await for the relief train’s return. They stood around the ambulances and wagons while drivers attended to their horse teams as they readied their transports for the onslaught of injured arrivals and subsequent dash to the hospital. Around three o’clock in the afternoon, the crowd heard the first faint whistle blasts of the rescue train’s engine as it returned to Marshalltown that carried and injured along in undamaged coaches along with uninjured passengers from the wreck. The engineer pulled up to the Great Western depot platform and brought his train to a stop. Another set of coaches stood silently on a different set of tracks next to the rescue train. Dozens of men climbed up the cars’ ladders and stood on the roofs, looking down at the rescue train and its cargo of stricken passengers. Quickly, railroad employees, uninjured passengers, wagon drivers, and bystanders began lifting the wounded off the train and loading them into their wagons. Once the maximum number of patients the wagon could carry was

---

5. “Nearly Forty Dead, Many Hurt In Wreck,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 21, 1910.

6. David Pirner, “Black Gold,” *Black Gold: The Best of Soul Asylum*, Track 14, 2000.

reached, drivers “with horses on dead run” raced “thru Main Street at breakneck speed”<sup>7</sup> towards Saint Thomas Hospital.

The way wagon drivers, sped down the city’s streets, reveals a common misperception that the speed of a patient’s transport positively impacts their overall medical outcome. It does not. When emergency medical care moved from the mortuary to the medical professional, doctors began examining the efficacy of speed in transport. More than fifty years of research demonstrated that in less than ten percent of cases, driving a patient at high speed to a medical facility changed their overall medical outcome. What these also showed was the increased risk of injury to both medical providers in the vehicles and bystanders from these high rates of speed far exceeded the benefits realized. But these realizations did not emerge until the 1970s. Anyone dispassionately considering the state—but not the quality—of emergency medical care in 1910 recognized the standard of care argued even more vigorously against speed. During that time, physicians attended to the injured right at the scene of a traumatic event and provided what was at the time, state-of-the-art care. Where an injured person received treatment, whether in a hospital or in their home, matter little. However, running a team of horses, hitched to a wagon, at full speed through a city could create new injuries further taxing a heavily burdened medical infrastructure during a disaster. Yet here were ambulance drivers that pushed their horses to gallop as absolutely fast as they could through the city’s streets.

---

7. “Nearly Forty Dead, Many Hurt In Wreck,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 21, 1910.

Marshall County coroner, Dr. Elijah William Jay rode in one of the ambulances and tended to the patients onboard as the driver pushed his horses into a run. When word of the crash reached him earlier in the day, Jay found automobile transport to the crash site so he could help with treatment of the injured. Though a horrific scene generally, individual patient injuries were not that unusual to the forty-seven-year-old physician and surgeon. He had been around medicine for awhile. Born near LeGrande in 1863, Jay grew up in Iowa and after deciding to pursue a career in medicine, enrolled in the Ohio Medical School at the University of Wooster, Cleveland.<sup>8</sup> This was a period of change in the nascent healthcare industry. Jay entered medicine at a time when doctors sought to professionalize their occupation. In 1880, the Iowa Legislature passed legislation that created a statewide Board of Health, but did not create a mandate of physician licensing. Six years later, after heavy lobbying by the Iowa Medical Society, representatives enacted the Medical Practice Act codifying the idea that anyone practicing medicine in Iowa should possess a standardized foundation of knowledge determined by other doctors who were appointed by the State.<sup>9</sup> Jay became part of the first generation of Iowa physicians to begin their practice after receiving an education in the medical sciences.

However, nothing in Jay's Ohio medical training prepared the middle-aged doctor for riding in a careening ambulance. The wagon violently bounced over Marshalltown's

---

8. "Dr. Jay Answers Death Summons," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, May 6, 1910.

9. Susan C. Lawrence, "Iowa Physicians: Legitimacy, Institutions, and the Practice of Medicine," *The Annals of Iowa* 62, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 151–200, <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.10680>, 196.

paved streets and, combined with the vehicle's rocking side-to-side, exacerbated an injured person's pain, not to mention the ride made providing any additional care in the cramped compartment impossible. Not designed for speed, patient compartment passengers had few places on which to hold onto and safety belts simply did not exist. This driver ran his horses up Twelfth Street. As the speeding ambulance approached Main Street the driver pulled hard on his left rein. This both slowed the team and forced his horses into a sharp left turn. As the wagon turned onto Main, he whipped the reins which caused his animals to leap back into a run. In back with victims, Jay sat at the very rear and rested his back against the ambulance doors. The ambulance's jolt forward threw all of Jay's weight against the back doors. Never intended to sustain a man's weight pressing on it, the latch failed and sent the county coroner out the back doors and onto the street. "He struck the pavement on his head and shoulders, injuring his back severely and was helpless when he was carried to the hospital."<sup>10</sup> A facility already taxed well beyond capacity, received another patient. As the case of Dr. Elijah Jay illustrates, a person need not have been in the train wreck to have been hurt by it. This kind of collateral injury to a responder placed a greater burden on remaining physicians and hospital facilities that were already stretched far beyond the capacity to address the catastrophe.

Nowhere was the strain on Marshalltown's medical system more vividly exposed than at Saint Thomas hospital. Built in 1903 the three-story red brick building was the culmination of a move to construct a public hospital in Marshalltown. Three years prior, a

---

10. "Dr. Jay Among Injured," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 21, 1910.

prominent group of residents floated the idea of a public hospital and throughout 1901, debated its merits and funding.<sup>11</sup> Opponents argued “the city is not large enough to support a purely charity hospital,” that a public hospital “would be unfair” competition to an already established private facility, and this is nothing more than “doctors who have so far neglected to make for themselves a large investment” asking “the benevolent public to provide hospital facilities.”<sup>12</sup> Dr. Hiram Getz, Marshalltown’s private hospital owner was particularly vocal and wondered if physicians that advocated for this public hospital scheme, simply wanted a charity hospital into which they could house their patients while incurring “little or no expense to themselves.” Getz argued that instead, those same doctors should “just go down into their own pockets” and build a hospital.<sup>13</sup>

Despite a small number opposed to the project, the general public supported the idea. By the beginning of 1902, the question of whether Marshalltown needed a public hospital settled in favor of construction. Marshalltown was large enough to justify a facility accessible to everyone in the area. However, endorsing the idea of a public facility and turning that idea into a physical structure are two different things. Father Lenihan who shepherded the Saint Mary’s Catholic Church flock, estimated supporters needed to raise twenty-thousand dollars to cover purchase of land and cost of

---

11. “Local Comment”, *Marshalltown Evening Times-Republican*, November 3, 1900; H.L. Getz, “Dr. Getz Has A Word”, *Marshalltown Evening Times-Republican*, November 26, 1901.

12. “Local Comment”, *Evening Times-Republican*, November 3, 1900.

13. H.L. Getz, “Dr. Getz Has A Word”, *Evening Times-Republican*, November 26, 1901.

construction. Quickly, eyes turned towards raising funds for a building. One of the largest contributions, representing ten percent of the goal, came from the priest's brother, Bishop Thomas Lenihan. Lenihan's brother oversaw the diocese in Wyoming and just as Marshalltown citizens decided to support a public hospital, the bishop died and left behind a substantial financial estate. Though much of the money helped fund a variety of charities, Lenihan endowed two-thousand dollars, "for a public hospital in Marshalltown."<sup>14</sup> In a case of "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em," Dr. Getz donated five hundred dollars and furnished one of the many private apartments in the new hospital.

Funding and construction were just two pillars of the three needed for a successful new facility. The last involved day-to-day operations. To run the facility, Lenihan asked the Sisters of Mercy, who managed hospitals in Davenport and Des Moines, to run the new hospital.<sup>15</sup> When the hospital opened for patients in the early fall of 1903, five sisters oversaw the hospital's operations.

On that March 21, 1910 Monday morning, Sister Mary Thecla Roche, Saint Thomas' local superior, arose at 5:30. She was the third Superior to oversee the hospital and replaced Sister Mary Angela Delany in 1907. A nun's day is prescribed by the convent's *horarium*, the Latin word meaning "daily schedule." After a morning offering and thirty minutes of meditation, the Sisters gathered for mass at 6:30 in the third floor chapel then descended to the basement for breakfast. At the same time the nuns were

---

14. "Ready For Dedication," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, October 29, 1903.

15. Sister Mary Aquinas, "Sister Mary Aquinas, R.S.M. Gave The Following Information," Letter, n.d., Health Care, Sisters of Mercy Chicago Regional Community.

enjoying their morning meal, a few miles to the southeast at the Great Western depot, John White argued with the Des Moines chief dispatcher over Whites decision run the Rock Island locomotives in reverse. As White climbed into the No. 828 cab to pilot the train to Marshalltown, Sister Roche climbed the building's center staircase to the first floor and entered the rather austere business office to begin her day.

Three o'clock was supposed to be the nuns' time for recreation but there would be none on this afternoon. Within minutes of that three o'clock hour, the first ambulance, carrying a cargo of critically injured passengers, raced up the drive. The driver pulled back hard on the reins, bringing the team to an abrupt halt and throwing anyone sitting in the back against the front wall. The rear doors flew open and attendants started unloading the injured and carrying them up the steps and into Saint Thomas. Just as one vehicle discharged its human cargo, another arrived, and then another. The ambulances just kept coming. Wagon after wagon wheeled up the dirt path along the facility's east side to unload its cargo of wounded.

Physicians, attendants, and bystanders carried wounded passengers from the wagon, up wooden steps and through the doors, into the hospital's first floor. If the injured person was a woman, she was wheeled down the "yellowish gray" hallway, past the parlor, a series of apartments, named by the sponsors furnishing them, the business offices, and the drug room into a large room, its walls tinted gray. Nuns placed four white enamel framed beds along each wall. This was the women's ward located on the southwest corner of the hospital. The injured men followed the same route. However, orderlies and assistants carried each up the wide front stairs to the second floor and into

identically configured large room, directly above the women's ward in the hospital's southwestern corner. Pauper patients typically occupied these communal settings because those who could afford privacy, received it. Between the sixteen beds for men and woman in addition to a number of sponsored apartments, Saint Thomas could care, "for about seventy patients at a time," with "little fear of its being overcrowded."<sup>16</sup> The waves of injured from the Green Mountain wreck inundated Saint Thomas and shattered that optimistic view.

The crash victims—and Dr. Jay—were emergency medical cases. Had this been later in the twentieth century, each victim would have been received in a hospital's Emergency Room for evaluation and treatment. But in 1910, hospitals were not intended for immediate care of acute conditions or traumatic injuries. They were locations for persons, lacking access to a home and family members, to convalesce. Sociologist Paul Starr points out that patients coming to a hospital at that time lacked, "networks of familial assistance" that would normally provide space for the ill or injured person to recover. He is blunt about the state of nineteenth and early twentieth century hospitals. "They were dangerous places; when sick, people were safer at home."<sup>17</sup> Though bystanders took Jay to Saint Thomas, he did not stay there, instead taken back home to recover from his fall. As opportunities for mobility expanded and Americans traveled

---

16. "Ready For Dedication," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, October 29, 1903.

17. Starr, Paul, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine: The Rise of a Sovereign Profession & the Making of a Vast Industry*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 72.

further from home, those on the road who were injured or suddenly fell ill were the very people without a support structure for healing. This is why when Saint Thomas opened in 1903, it had a ward for men and a ward for women, but most of the building was configured with private apartments, elaborately furnished by sponsors like the Elks Club, families such as the Kellerhers and Paiges, individual town physicians like Dr. Getz, and organizations that included St. Mary's Total Abstinence Society and the Happy Home League.<sup>18</sup> In each case, the apartment's decor reflected the sponsor's interior design tastes. In these private rooms, patients who could paid temporary rent and healed.

In those first hours on Monday night, there were no private rooms. Multiple injured passengers filled every empty apartment and still, the wagons kept coming. When the wounded exhausted Saint Thomas' available space, attendants left stretchers on gurneys in the hospital hallways. Throughout the building, its "wards and rooms were crowded with mangled, moaning men and women." The sheer volume of injured quickly overwhelmed the nursing staff and women from the community volunteered their assistance.<sup>19</sup> A call went out for every available Marshalltown nurse to come to Saint Thomas and even six nurses traveled from Des Moines to supplement the staff.<sup>20</sup> Bare armed doctors wore white aprons and moved from patient to patient to provide what care they could. An ambulance brought the two Scandinavian immigrant girls, Olga Swenson

---

18. "Ready For Dedication," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, October 29, 1903.

19. "Misery Seen In The Hospital," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

20. "Conditions Fast Becoming Normal," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 24, 1910.

and Lizzie Anderson to the hospital. Swenson suffered injuries to her face and one leg, though none of the trauma threatened her life. Anderson's broken legs likely caused significant blood loss hours and after attendants carried her into the building her internal systems. The next morning, her body surrendered to her wounds and she died.<sup>21</sup>

Often, there was little that could immediately be done. Upon his arrival, doctors examined Swift and decided the young man was more seriously injured than initially thought. Unclear is whether his body's compensatory mechanisms presented doctors at the scene and on the train back with a healthier picture, in the midst of a mass casualty event, physicians simply missed the seriousness of Swift's condition, or the trip back from Green Mountain on the rescue train, the manhandling between the passenger coach and ambulance, and a frightfully rough wagon ride exacerbated his injuries. Whatever the reason, eight hours after being badly hurt, the young man's compensatory mechanisms began to fail, thereby revealing signs of greater injury. Whatever the cause of his change, surgeons considered the risk of death after anesthesia administration significant enough that they decided to wait on setting Swift's fractured femur until after he stabilized.

Florence Winn, the young woman sitting across from Swift dislocated her hip but had no other serious injuries. Because of this, physicians "reduced" her dislocation shortly after arrival at Saint Thomas. Irene Cowin, the last of this Waterloo foursome, too suffered a less serious injury—when measured against many others—but still a crushed elbow and deep arm laceration was still a traumatic insult demanding significant recovery

---

21. "Five Added To List; More Are Identified," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 22, 1910, Evening-Times Republican Archive, Chronicling America.

time. Miss Cowin would not be traveling back to her home in Waterloo any time too soon.<sup>22</sup>

Amongst the arriving passengers, was John White, the badly burned Great Western pilot who was one of the crew members that sought to call for help. Healthcare providers who have never treated a severely burned patient often fail to appreciate the deep sense of hopelessness medical professionals experience in these cases. Skin is the single largest organ of the human body providing both protection from bacteria and virus and allowing for sensation. In addition, the skin facilitates vitamin D production and helps regulate body temperature.<sup>23</sup> Burns, even scalds, interfere with those abilities. But more importantly for the patient in the short term, burned areas attract massive amounts of plasma as the body begins to heal the insulted area which is why both the burn depth—superficial, partial thickness, or full thickness—and the amount of surface area injured both contribute to patient outcome. The deeper the burn and the larger the surface area, the more internal fluids the human body deploys. Persons suffering large surface area burns, whether thermal or chemical, involving great depths die from shock because doctors cannot provide them with enough fluid to maintain blood pressure. The standard of care in hospital burn units for patients with large surface area burns involves insertion of catheters into veins and administering as much fluid as possible to prevent shock.

---

22. “Sorrowful Scenes Surround the Morgue and Hospital,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

23. Rod R. Seeley, Trent D. Stephens, and Philip Tate, *Essentials of Anatomy & Physiology*, 6th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 99.

In 1910, intravenous fluid resuscitation was still a brand-new medical approach only in use by doctors on the leading edge of medical treatment. No medical record remains that calculates either the depth or surface area size of White's scalding. However, the story from Dan Murphy, who aided White to a farmhouse and offered burn treatment to the twenty-eight-year-old pilot provides clues. White suffered at minimum, partial thickness burns on his chest, arms, face, and neck representing a sizable body percentage. Likely, his body's reaction was to rush plasma to the scalded sites. Because reports do not identify any other injuries to him, the evidence indicates the area of injury consumed far more body fluids than he could surrender. Absent any means to restore those fluids leaking from the blood vessels near the injured skin, White slipped into a deep shock and died at Saint Thomas, less than eight hours after he arrived.<sup>24</sup>

A number of victims suffered leg fractures and head injuries in the crash which, considering the wreck's kinematics, was not particularly surprising. Like Swift, the *Waterloo Recorder* manager, Iowa Telephone Company wire chief, August Nagle, was on his way home to Waterloo also. Beginning in the mid-1950 and into the 1960s, scientists, engineers and physicians began studying injuries to the human body resulting from wrecks. Cataloging those injuries revealed a pattern of trauma. An unrestrained passenger involved in a front-end automobile crash is violently thrown forward striking their knee against the car's dashboard with enough force to fracture the femur. As the leg hits the dash, the person's head impacts the windshield causing a brain injury. In the Green Mountain case, Swift, Nagle, and others suffered leg fractures that were likely the

---

24. "One Des Moines Man Dead," *Register and Leader*, March 22, 1910.

result of either the *Colonia*'s rear section or the chairs in front of where they sat, coming back at them and hitting their knees just as a driver's leg strikes the dashboard. Nagel arrived at Saint Thomas with both legs broken. Like the passenger in a car not wearing a seat belt, The wreck slammed into his head causing unconsciousness. Attendants carried him into the hospital, but doctors did not expect the twenty-six-year-old young man to live. There was simply nothing early twentieth century medicine could do. Nagle died around one o'clock in the morning on March 23.<sup>25</sup>

The rescue train Great Western's Frank Doherty organized carried more than just the wounded, the deceased, and the uninjured passengers. Onboard was an entire baggage car's worth of emotions running the gamut from fear to sadness to horror experienced because of the crash and subsequent rescues. In addition, it also transported the site's chaos, conveying the morning wreck's mayhem back to Marshalltown. When the relief train stopped, both the emotions and the chaos, contained at the site, split in two. Polar opposite feelings of fear and hope relocated to the hallways of Saint Thomas. Despondency and grief, however, traveled to a different city site—the two-story building on Center Street which was the location of Wilbur Howard's mortuary.<sup>26</sup>

---

25. "Five Added To List; More Are Identified", *Marshalltown Times-Republican*, March 22, 1910; "Two More Die of Injuries," *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, March 23, 1910.

26. "Nearly Forty Dead, Many Hurt In Wreck," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 21, 1910; *Marshalltown City Directory 1910: Comprising an Alphabetically Arranged List of Business Firms and Private Citizens--Miscellaneous Directory, City and County Officers, Public and Private Schools, Churches, Banks, Secret and Benevolent Societies An A Complete Classified Business Directory* (Fargo, North Dakota: Pettibone Directory Co, 1910), 228.

Set in a two story brick structure across the street from Marshall County's courthouse, Howard's site became the focus for identification of the dead and preparation of the remains. After ambulances transported the living to Saint Thomas, vehicles returned for the dead. In a baggage car, covered with quilts from farmhouses surrounding the crash site lay bodies of those killed in the wreck. Ambulance attendants and helpers on the train platform lifted each body from its spot on the car floor and carried the lifeless forms to a waiting ambulance. Unlike the hurried nature so prevalent with the injured, there was less sense of urgency conveying the dead. Slowly, each wagon team traveled up the street and towards the golden dome that marked the county courthouse square. Upon arrival, attendants carried stretchers into the morgue. Howard arranged his facility with appropriate room for the bodies of women and a separate room for men. He directed the stretcher bearers to the correct ward and attendants placed each body either on the floor or sitting on sawhorses.<sup>27</sup> An element of arrival processing involved attaching a numbered tag, probably tied to an ankle or wrist. Hand-numbered, starting with one, these cards provided both a unique identifier for the body from which staffers could track identification and transportation details along with an easy way to know just how many bodies came through the makeshift mortuary. Those staffing the morgue possessed no knowledge of who the victims were and the dead themselves, laid out on the floor or on makeshift tables, told no tales. Not that silence ruled this temporary morgue. The din of morticians and attendants talking as they collected jewelry and personal effects, orders

---

27. "Conditions Fast Becoming Normal," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 24, 1910.

shouted out for supplies, and directions given to assistants painted a canvas of an ad hoc operation.

Lying on one of the tables, a young woman, her long brunette hair spilled off her shoulders and down the construction-grade board on which she rested. Behind her right ear, a deep puncture wound. When she was carried in, an assistant attached a tag with “16” clearly written on it, to her. She wore five rings, two on the fingers of one hand and three on the other. When her turn came for preparation, the undertaker slid each ring off her finger, placing it in a small container with the rest of her things. Rumors floated amongst those in the room about her identity. Many thought they knew her name, but there is an “uncertainty that attended all identifications.” Learning the name of each victim of the Green Mountain train wreck represented a challenge, but the difficulty was not unique to this tragedy. Americans carried no identification cards routinely in 1910. The lack of identifying documents applied to women even more than men.<sup>28</sup> As Americans expanded the distance with which they traveled, funeral directors became adept at identification of remains. The unusual aspect of Green Mountain that made this process even more difficult was the sheer number of bodies. Number sixteen remained unidentified until a person acquainted with the victim made a positive identification.<sup>29</sup>

---

28. “Last of Unknown Dead Identified,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 24, 1910.

29. “Miss Hoffman Identified,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910; “Five Added To List; More Are Identified,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 22, 1910; “Community Saddened By Young Lady’s Death,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

Not that everybody who came through the doors on 17 South Center Street was a John or Jane Doe. The gold buttons, radiant against his black blazer onto which they were sewn that covered a black vest and pressed white shirt, clearly identified corpse Number Six as a train conductor. Certainly, papers in his pockets listed his name—Jacob Nauholtz. But making that identification demanded more than a name on a piece of paper. It required a person who knows him or her to categorically attest to the identity of that the body lying on a table. In the case of Nauholtz, obtaining that final verification was straightforward. Any uninjured train crew member who worked with Nauholtz could vouch for the final identification. Further down the row of sheet covered remains laid another uniformed man clad in a similar black jacket, vest, and shirt. Whereas even a passenger could tell the undertaker the former man's name, that same passenger probably only knew this latter man as "George." In the eyes of the Pullman Palace Car company, its Black porters had no individuality. They were all "George." Number Eighteen was obviously a porter but only a crew member would know his given name—Archie Price.

For the rest, attaching a name to a corpse remained tentative until a witness could make a claim. This was one of those events where widespread media attention aided the victim identification process. Green Mountain's death toll was so large that the wreck attracted widespread interest from local and regional newspapers. Papers in Marshalltown, Cedar Rapids, Waterloo, and Des Moines that went to print with at least the basic information of the deadly crash, indirectly facilitated notification of victims'

friends and family. When the CRI&P office received an initial list of injured and dead, office clerks transmitted that information to train stations up the main line.<sup>30</sup>

Back in Cedar Rapids, Fern Robinson was at the home she shared with her grandmother and her remaining parent, the No. 828's engineer, Bob Robinson. Though he would be away for work, Fern's mother was always at home. That changed six months earlier when, in 1909 when her mother, Mary, contracted tuberculosis, a wasting-type sickness. She ultimately succumbed to her infection in August 1909. Then, the new year handed Fern another loss when her seventy-five-year-old maternal grandmother contracted pneumonia and died.<sup>31</sup> A house within which resided three generations of women, shrank to just one. Growing up, the daughter of a railroad man, meant she was used to him being away for stretches of time. But Fern's mother and grandmother were always there. Now, when her father left for a trip, Fern stayed home alone.

The *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette* published its regular evening edition containing a bulletin from Marshalltown, sent at three o'clock that contained almost no information on the dead, listing just five people. More was known about the injured because most of them could at least identify themselves to railroad officials. The paper reported the names of thirty-six passengers hurt in the wreck and what it knew at press time that a crash occurred. Editors wrote that the paper sent a reporter to the

---

30. "Victims of Rock Island Wreck Now Number 49," *Vinton Eagle*, March 25, 1910.

31. "Certificate of Death: Mary Robinson" (Linn County, August 3, 1909), Book 3, Page 109, Linn County Recorder; "Certificate of Death: Mrs. Hester A. Robb" (Linn County, February 8, 1910), Book 3, Page 118, Linn County Recorder; *Twelfth Census of the United States* (Census Office, 1900).

Marshalltown “on the first train” out and promised an “extra” edition once their man on ground had more information.<sup>32</sup> Later that night, the *Evening Gazette* went to print with a headline that screamed “EXTRA EDITION CEDAR RAPIDS PEOPLE KILLED IN GREEN MOUNTAIN WRECK.” The paper reported they bushy-mustached Robinson killed.<sup>33</sup> Officials in Marshalltown needed Fern to complete the identification, but by the time the Cedar Rapids office received confirmation of Robinson’s death, the time was too late for Robinson’s daughter to board a train for Marshalltown on Monday night. Tuesday morning, Coe College Professor of Bible and a Robinson family acquaintance, Dr. William Evans, rode over to the small house at 1121 First Avenue.<sup>34</sup> He put the young woman in his carriage and as an invitingly bright sun warmed the day, the pair rode down the hill to Third Street and turned left towards the domed tower of Union Station. There, the two boarded a train on a mission to collect her father’s traveled the fourteen blocks from the Robinson house on First Avenue to Union Station where the purchased tickets to remains.<sup>35</sup>

---

32. “45 Killed and Score Injured; Frightful Wreck of Double Header-Rock Island Train,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 21, 1910.

33. “Cedar Rapids People Killed In Green Mountain Wreck,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 21, 1910.

34. *The Republican and Times City Directory of Cedar Rapids, Marion and Kenwood, Iowa* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1910), 349.

35. “Awful Tales Told of Wreck; Death List Is Appalling,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1910; “A Personal Tribute” (Coe College, n.d.), Faculty, Individual, George T. Henry College Archives, Stewart Memorial Library, Coe College.

When Mae Hoffman's mother arose Monday morning, she probably expected to find her daughter still in bed asleep. After all, she did not expect Mae to arrive back in Waterloo before 1:30 in the morning. But the bed was empty and there was no word on where the twenty-year-old might be. By late afternoon, she "was almost frantic with apprehension."<sup>36</sup> Whether Hoffman's mother contacted the family's doctor and the Waterloo Business College head about making a trip to Marshalltown, or they volunteered is unknown. What the newspaper reported was that the two men, Dr. L.E. Evans and A.F. Gates both rode a passenger train down the Diagonal from Waterloo to Marshalltown, traveling past the very spot where the wreck occurred. After arriving at the depot, the two joined others, arriving from various cities and towns, and headed to the front door at 17 South Center Street. An attendant showed the men five rings taken from the fingers of corpse Number Sixteen and they confirmed to whom "these bits of jewelry" belonged. Number Sixteen was no longer just Number Sixteen. She was Number Sixteen - Mae Hoffman. A mortician completed his preparations of her body for shipment. On Tuesday morning, Evans and Gates escorted Hoffman's body to the train station. Freight men loaded the casket onto a baggage car as the two men climbed up the steps of the passenger coach and took their seats. One of 1910's New York six "Beauties of Business" and a young woman with so much talent and opportunity ahead of her was no more.<sup>37</sup>

---

36. "Notes of Wreck", *Waterloo Daily Courier*, March 21, 1910.

37. "Miss Hoffman Identified," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

In some cases, informal communication channels got word to friends and family before the official notice. At 9:30 Monday night, a former West Branch resident now in Marshall County, Frank Corbin, learned two of the bodies lying on tables at the South Center Street morgue were West Branch men. Corbin called back to his friend J.T. Butler. Corbin's news quickly reached B.A. Gill and Dr. M.W. Munger. The two men hurried to West Branch's small CRI&P train station on the eastern side in time to likely catch the March 21 Saint Louis to Minneapolis Express to Cedar Rapids and then on to Marshalltown. The two "arrived in Marshalltown in time to identify and look after the preparation of the bodies of the dead."<sup>38</sup>

Gill and Munger, coordinated the shipping of four bodies back to West Branch hints at an overlooked logistical challenge for mass casualty events—preparation the dead. Focus by individuals involved in the event, the media that covered the tragedy, and writers who subsequently chronicled this disaster all failed to examine the difficulties undertakers faced upon confronting more than forty dead bodies at one time. Through the eighteenth century, a variety of actors from religious leaders to community members performed different roles in the burial process. Vanderlyn Pine points out circumstances changed during the next century with local "church's unwillingness or inability to maintain authority" over the bereavement and burial process.<sup>39</sup> When various denominations stepped away from overall control, changes in attitudes towards funerals

---

38. "All West Branch and Vicinity in Mourning," *West Branch Times*, March 24, 1910.

39. Vanderlyn R. Pine, *Caretaker of the Dead* (New York: Irvington Publishers, Inc., 1975), 16.

and preparation of bodies provided ground for new approaches. Embalming was one such change.

Though the idea of filling a body with various chemicals was for preservation, in fact, that was not the purpose. For example, formaldehyde killed off, “bacteria or germs of disease or decomposition,” that prevented both the spread of disease and protection of soil and water from pollution by “the putrid flesh decaying in the grave.”<sup>40</sup> Early embalming fluids contained a variety of deadly chemicals including arsenic and bichloride of mercury putting the undertaker at risk poisoning himself as he injected the solution into body cavities. By the late 1890s chemical manufacturers introduced formalin, “a powerful disinfectant,” produced by oxidizing methanol that replaced much more dangerous chemicals.<sup>41</sup> In parallel to advances in the chemical process, undertakers pursued administrative changes as well. Across America, state funeral director associations lobbied state legislator to introduce and enact new laws requiring licensing for embalmers. Like physicians looking to establish a set of standard practices, this licensure drive by morticians is one example of a variety of professions turning to governments as a means to professionalize those who practiced in a field. Eight years after the Iowa Medical Practice Act became law, legislators began introducing bills to

---

40. William Sanford Carpenter, *Text of the Extension Service Course of the Hohenschuh-Carpenter College of Embalming*, Lesson 1 (Des Moines, Iowa: Hohenschuh-Carpenter College of Embalming, 1917), 6-8.

41. Robert G. Mayer, *Embalming: History, Theory, and Practice* (Norwalk, Connecticut: Appleton & Lange, 1990), 53.

establish a State Board of Embalming and codifying licensure.<sup>42</sup> Over and over again, House leaders refused to bring language embalmer licensure language to a vote on Iowa House floor. Finally, in 1907, the House File 7 “An Act To Regulate The Transportation of Dead Bodies and to Provide For Examination and License of Embalmers” passed through both chambers and on March 6, was sent to the Governor for signature.<sup>43</sup>

In the temporary morgue on South Center Street, the pickle smell of formaldehyde hung in the air as more than a dozen embalmers worked through the night and into Tuesday. They emptied the blood from each body and replaced it with disinfecting solution. Though women were typically excluded from all but the most menial employment opportunities, preparation of remains was not one of those areas. John Purcel’s wife Emma held an Iowa embalming license and with three women volunteers, Lillie Fisher Miller, Clarrisse Biglow, and Thad Smith’s wife, worked “preparing the bodies for burial.” Others focused on bringing as much of the chemical to the mortuary as they could find while others worked to secure coffins for each body to be shipped. When not helping Emma Purcel, Miller, teamed up with Grace Crellin, Martha Kuhns and Mabel Dodson to record “the bodies as they were identified, and making out

---

42. Iowa General Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Twenty-Fifth General Assembly of the State of Iowa Which Convened at the Capitol in Des Moines, Iowa January 8, 1894*. (Des Moines, Iowa: State of Iowa, 1894). See reference to House File 301 and Senate File 204.

43. Iowa General Assembly, *Journal of the House of the Thirty-Second General Assembly of the State of Iowa Which Convened at the Capitol at Des Moines January 14, 1907 and Adjourned Sine Die April 9, 1907* (Des Moines: State of Iowa, 1907), 627.

the shipping papers.” As they worked to document the deaths, the Howard office phone rang frequently, interrupting the ongoing administrative work.<sup>44</sup>

With so much death and hurried activity that surrounded the preparation of so many remains, some reports were missed. Not every fatality which occurred that day was memorialized in the County Recorder’s log of deaths. Though officials in this circumstance could be criticized for a failure to establish a documentary chain-of-reporting, death recording in general lacked a measure of rigor. No record of Loren Reynolds' death, the CRI&P brakeman killed at Shellsburg, exists. A search of the Benton County Recorder’s records, where Reynolds died, the Linn County Recorder records, where Reynolds' remains were prepared for shipment, nor the Greene County Recorder’s office, where the Reynolds family buried him, have any official entry of his passing. Most likely, diligence in death reporting did not emerge until the financial impacts of fraud became substantial to life insurance companies.

By Wednesday, the work was done. Morticians processed the remains of forty-nine bodies during a thirty-six-hour period. Their work finished, the men and women left Wilbur Howard’s funeral parlor and each headed home to finally get a little rest. In a wrap-up of the past three days, the *Marshalltown Evening Times-Republican* praised the

---

44. *Marshalltown City Directory 1910: Comprising an Alphabetically Arranged List of Business Firms and Private Citizens--Miscellaneous Directory, City and County Officers, Public and Private Schools, Churches, Banks, Secret and Benevolent Societies An A Complete Classified Business Directory* (Fargo, North Dakota: Pettibone Directory Co, 1910); “Conditions Fast Becoming Normal,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 24, 1910; "Iowa State Census, 1905," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QS7-89ZK-9T69?cc=2126961&wc=QDRZ-RY7%3A1041466201> : 23 August 2016), 007486460 > image 2392 of 6683; State Historical Department, Des Moines.

doctors and nurses seeing patients at Saint Thomas, gushed praise on the undertakers noting “it is doubtful whether any number of the profession anywhere could have worked harder,” the ambulance drivers “carrying the bodies of the injured to the hospital, and bringing the dead to the morgue,” and finally Marshall County Sheriff Nicholson responsible for securing victims' valuables.<sup>45</sup> During that three day period, routine daily life in Marshalltown halted. Residents volunteered hundreds of hours of work with hospital staff and the undertakers. Others opened their homes to grieving friends and relatives of the victims, offering condolences for their losses and many spent time making bandages any other supplies needed to succor the injured. By Thursday, the crisis abated. The mortally wounded succumbed to their injuries and the many who remained at Saint Francis began a long journey of healing.

The Green Mountain tragedy cast a pall over a number of Iowa communities outside Marshalltown. Vinton was “thrown into such a state of anxiety” never before experienced.<sup>46</sup> The news of Eves and Fisher’s death “cast a gloom over the entire community.”<sup>47</sup> In Cedar Rapids, “Union Station was a place of gloom” as caskets that contained dead Rock Island railroaders arrived at the depot. But those were not the only coffins passing through the freight section of the Cedar Rapids depot. Many of the

---

45. “Conditions Fast Becoming Normal,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 24, 1910.

46. “Victims of Rock Island Wreck Now Number 49,” *Vinton Eagle*, March 25, 1910.

47. “All West Branch and Vicinity in Mourning,” *West Branch Times*, March 24, 1910.

caskets were destined for other cities and “at one time there were eight caskets on the platform waiting to be transferred.”<sup>48</sup> One of the hardest hit areas however, was the Waterloo-Cedar Falls region. There, residents experienced the most difficult time as the communities with the highest number of victims.

When the dead arrived, loved ones wasted little time burying their dead. By Saturday, six days after the wreck, families had interred most of the dead. Typically, services were conducted in the home. Fern Robinson held her father’s service at their house on First Avenue in Cedar Rapids Thursday afternoon, four days after the wreck.<sup>49</sup> Relatives paid their respects to John Goodenough the following day at the family home on Fourth Street, on Cedar Rapids' west side.<sup>50</sup> But in those instances where family members expected mourners to exceed a home’s capacity or non-familial groups hosted a service, funeral directors made other arrangements. For Professor Parrish, the Iowa State Teacher’s College conducted his funeral in their auditorium where “faculty, students and friends paid their last tribute of respect.”<sup>51</sup> Church memorials were relative rare events likely due to logistical obstacles of storage between date of death and date of service and transportation requirements. Mae Hoffman’s memorial “attracted hundreds of friends and

---

48. “Pitiful Scene When Bodies Arrived Here,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 23, 1910.

49. “The Mortuary Record: R. S. Robinson,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 23, 1910.

50. “The Mortuary Record: J. H. Goodenough,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 23, 1910.

51. “The Parrish Funeral,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 23, 1910.

acquaintances.” Mourners inundated the O’Keefe and Towne funeral home with floral arrangements that followed the popular Waterloo woman to the church service. Instead of burial, her mother placed Hoffman’s remains in a crypt at the newly constructed mausoleum inside Fairview Cemetery.<sup>52</sup>

Of the many internments subsequent to the Green Mountain crash, the Brown family burial was the most unique. Alfred Brown, his wife Rose, and their two youngest daughters, five-year-old Eva and twelve-year-old Leanora sat in a set of double seats on board the day car. Alfred Brown was an immigrant from Canada who came moved to the United States in 1876. The nomadic Brown met his wife Rose and the two exchanged vows in Wichita, Kansas. Five moves and four daughters later, the Brown family settled in Waterloo where he opened and operated the Pure Food confectionery. Four of the six Brown family members were traveling back to Waterloo after visiting family down in Fairfield, Iowa when the wreck occurred. Dora and Vera, the Brown’s two older daughters remained in Waterloo working at the family’s candy store. The crash took the lives of Rose and the younger two girls instantly. Though suffering a broken leg and internal injuries, Albert survived the crash, train ride back to Marshalltown, and a furious ambulance trip to the hospital. Upon learning of the tragedy, both Dora and Vera immediately left for Marshalltown and arrived in time to comfort their father as blood loss slowly took his life. Extended family arranged shipment of the parents and two girls to Fairfield where the four were buried at Wright cemetery in “one large grave.” The

---

52. “Miss Hoffman Laid To Rest,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 23, 1910.

*Fairfield Daily Journal*'s obituary noted "the members of the family are not separated even in death."<sup>53</sup>

In Archie Price's case, the *Colonia*'s porter barely lived in sufficient space for he and his wife in their small home on Oak Avenue. Hosting a funeral there was out of the question.<sup>54</sup> However, there was the A.M.E. church on South Sixth Street. On Wednesday, two days after the wreck, family and friends trudged through the sanctuary's double doors and took seats in the wooden pews. Unlike the stone and brick ornate Methodist houses of worship around the city, the A.M.E. building was nondescript narrow structure that opened directly onto a brick sidewalk. Two long windows, triangular shaped at the top offered natural light for those who gathered. Pall bearers had no steps to navigate over. Inside, just rows of oak pews and a plain alter. Reverend Ferribbee shepherded this flock and probably officiated the funeral where friends and family bid the thirty-seven-year-old husband and porter goodbye.<sup>55</sup> Apparently, with financial help from the Sunshine Mission, family members buried him at Linwood Cemetery in a "pauper" cemetery section.<sup>56</sup>

---

53. "Obituary," *Fairfield Daily Journal*, March 30, 1910; "Burial of Four at Fairfield, Ia," *Waterloo Semi-Weekly Courier*, n. d.; "Sorrowful Scenes Surround the Morgue and Hospital," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 22, 1910.

54. "The Mortuary Record: Archie Price," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 23, 1910.

55. *Cedar Rapids City Directory of Cedar Rapids, Marion and Kenwood, Iowa* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1910), 38, 334.

56. When visiting Archie Price's gravesite, the cemetery sexton described the section this way.

Though victim funerals closed one chapter for families who experienced a loss. for those injured, they were still writing a conclusion. Paul Swift laid in bed, his leg swaddled in bandages, face bruised and dealt with the constant ache that seemed to come from everywhere in his body. Inez Millen, a “graduate nurse” brought in from Des Moines to augment the Saint Francis staff, moved about the hospital’s private apartment and attended to him.<sup>57</sup> Swift was one of the more seriously injured patients requiring the longest recovery time. The twenty-two-year-old circulation manager spent nine weeks healing from his broken leg.<sup>58</sup> He, however, was not the only patient having an extended stay.

Florence Winn and Irene Cowin of Waterloo and Olga Swenson, the Swedish immigrant who worked for a family in Vinton, remained under the Catholic nurses’ watchful care for another three weeks. Winn, who was seated with Swift, Hoffman, and Cowin, dislocated her hip in the crash. In the wreck Cowin crushed her elbow and had a deep laceration across her upper arm. She shared a room with Winn. After he learned about his sister’s injuries, Cowin’s younger brother traveled to Marshalltown to be with his sister. Most visitors brought flowers to cheer up the patient. However, he, being a hunter, bagged five mallard ducks that he shared with “his sister, Miss Winn and Paul

---

57. “Miss Inez Millen,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, May 23, 1910.

58. “Only One Victim In Bed,” *Waterloo Evening Reporter*, May 24, 1910.

Swift.”<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, Swenson, that traveled with Lizzie Anderson, who did not survive her crash injuries, badly avulsed her scalp. which took time to heal.

In the Saint Thomas men’s ward on the hospital’s second floor, George W. Thompson, C.W. Peterson, and Frank Swanson rested in their metal frame beds. Comparatively, the trio experienced less severe injuries than many of the other passengers. Thompson injured his chest and sprained an ankle in the crash. Like his aforementioned ward mate, Peterson also sprained an ankle, but also struck his head in the wreck. Fortunately, the force with which he struck his head was not enough to cause a serious brain injury. Swanson was recovering from injuries to his chest as well. By Friday, doctors expected Peterson to be well enough for a trip home to Cedar Rapids and though the initially though Swanson would spend little time in the men’s ward, either doctors did not accurately assess the seriousness of his wounds or, because his breathing was somewhat compromised due to those injuries, a touch of pneumonia may have set in requiring a longer period for recuperation. In either case, he spent more than three weeks in the hospital before being discharged until mid-April.<sup>60</sup>

These were not the only victims remaining at Saint Thomas, but they do represent a cross-section of the patients who required greater attention. When doctors finally discharged Swift on Sunday, May 23, the last survivor of the train wreck left town and

---

59. “Wreck Injured Are All Doing Nicely,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 25, 1910.

60. “Five Added To List; More Are Identified,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 22, 1910, Evening-Times Republican Archive, Chronicling America; “Three Leave The Hospital,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, April 14, 1910; “Wreck Injured Are All Doing Nicely,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 25, 1910.

headed home.<sup>61</sup> With his leg encased in heavy plaster to facilitate healing, Swift struggled down the hospital steps and into a carriage for the short trip to board a train home. Only then did this aspect of the wreck outside Green Mountain end. Not that the survivors would not deal with disabilities for the rest of their lives. But at least they would be adjusting at their homes.

“Human toll” frequently appears in disaster narratives. The writing employing this description implies that victims of a tragedy are but one characteristic imbedded within a collage of consequences. It removes a community or society’s central contribution to a tragic outcome leaving blame, at a foundational level, assigned to chance. The Green Mountain derailment certainly carried a human toll and this cost made the wreck a disaster. The crash fundamentally altered the trajectories of more than fifty families whose loved ones lost their lives. Those that were injured suffered permanent disabilities changing their lives too. But the waves of impact spread beyond the dead, their immediate families, and those who survived. Uninjured passengers, walking up the tracks to the scene of wrecked cars, local farmers coming up to see what was going on, and the townspeople of Marshalltown whose mundane daily routines were turned into chaos and fear all suffered as well. Mental scars are rarely visible, but certainly exist.

The last act in a disaster is the inquiry. When enough people lose their lives, enough residents suffer disruptions, enough property damage occurs, or enough media coverage causes concern, communities look to investigators for explanations about the cause. Often, these are either elected or appointed officials, at some level of government,

---

61. “Swift Discharge,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, May 23, 1910.

who arrived to conduct inquests, take testimony and then issue a report of findings to unravel a tangled knot of contributing factors and assign fault. Depending upon their explication, changes in operational guidelines, rules, regulations, or legislation sprouts from the conclusions drawn. Scrutinizing factors leading to tragedy grew out of changes in attitude towards disasters during the Progressive Era. When the Green Mountain crash occurred, America generally and Iowans in particular were in the midst of this change in mindset. The death toll, that drove the newspaper coverage, that caused concern amongst residents, motivated state government officials to understand what happened at 8:25 AM on Monday, March 21, 1910. In an unprecedented act, the Iowa Railroad Commission investigated a railroad crash.

## Chapter Eight

### A Commission Is Born

Eight days after the crash, five men walked up the town square's south sidewalk and towards an ivory-colored building in the center of Marshalltown. Constructed on one of the highest points in the city, the Marshall County Courthouse is a four story brick-and-limestone Classic-Revival structure that occupies an entire city block. Built in 1886, the structure's center features a domed clock tower announcing the local time to downtown patrons and Marshalltown residents. At 175 feet tall, the tower is visible for miles offering a navigation landmark to anyone with a Marshalltown destination.<sup>1</sup> Not that this coterie needed to navigate over such a large expanse. Coming from Des Moines, they arrived at a train station, located less than ten blocks from the place where they would conduct the investigation—the building's east courtroom on the second floor. The men, state railroad commissioners Nathaniel Ketchum, W.L. Eaton, and David Palmer accompanied by board secretary Wright Louis and a stenographer were in town for a rare crash inquiry and report back to Governor Beryl Carroll on the Green Mountain wreck's cause.<sup>2</sup> Rare, because Iowa's Board of Railroad Commission members did not formally

---

1. Edward Stanek and Stanek, Jacqueline, *Iowa's Magnificent County Courthouses* (Des Moines, Iowa: Wallace-Homestead Book Company, 1976).

2. Edward Stanek and Stanek, Jacqueline, *Iowa's Magnificent County Courthouses* (Des Moines, Iowa: Wallace-Homestead Book Company, 1976), 134-5; Mrs. J.W. Norris et al., "Marshall County Courthouse National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form," 1972, National Registry of Historic Places;

probe railroad wrecks on their own initiative—even those having fatalities.

Commissioners relied on railway companies to self-report crashes to them then often published the company's explanation for a crash's cause in its annual report to the General Assembly. Typically, this was without any further comment. Ten years earlier, in 1900, commissioners investigated a crash between two freight trains in Hardin County that occurred in 1898 only because the Legislature demanded it. Otherwise, they would not have bothered. At first glance, this disinterest in crash inquests appears unusual. But comprehending their nonchalance requires understanding the forge that produced Iowa's Board of Railroad Commissioners and the who the legislative blacksmiths were that pounded this organization into a functional shape.

War is good for business—especially when supplying the winning side—and America's Civil War was certainly a lucrative opportunity for many Union suppliers. Armies in the field need more than weapons and munitions. Soldiers require boots, clothes, and food. Keeping forces provisioned requires a logistical infrastructure of horses and wagons. These too, required feed and Iowa farmers certainly contributed to the war effort—at a price—to keep men in the field. Even during the period that followed cessation of hostilities, victors often must feed and clothe the vanquished. These needs kept demand for agricultural products higher than before the war which naturally inflated commodity prices. In 1863, a bushel of corn fetched twenty-three cents, potatoes earned

---

“Wreck Inquiry to Be Held Tuesday: Many Railroad Officials and Employees Cited to Appear Before Commission,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 28, 1910.

fifty, and oats returned thirty-five.<sup>3</sup> At these prices, Iowa farmers could meet their financial obligations to grow food with a little money left over they could spend to improve their homes and families. Eight years after hostilities ended as Southern plantations returned to crop production, the situation changed.

A reconstructed South created two simultaneous, reinforcing economic headwinds for Iowa farmers. By producing enough crops locally to sustain themselves, southern demand for Midwest corn and oats fell. But also, as southern production exceeded the minimum sustenance level, excess plantation produce entered commodities markets and competed with midwestern farmers. The combination of falling demand and rising supply placed downward pressure on crop prices. By 1873, corn paid three cents less a bushel than ten years earlier, oats ten less, and potatoes garnered only half of their 1863 price.<sup>4</sup> Farmers experienced a revenue drop that resulted from increased supply and decreased demand. But another negative element contributed to Iowa agricultural woes, a dangerous dependence on monopolistic railroad lines that shipped harvests to markets.

The late 1860s and first years of the 1870s, railroad companies dramatically expanded their track mileage throughout the United States. In 1866, railroads operated 36,801 miles of track. By 1873, that number nearly doubled to 70,268.<sup>5</sup> The biggest jump in new track occurred between 1869 and 1872 when railroad companies constructed

---

3. "Commercial: Cedar Rapids Market," *The Cedar Valley Times*, June 11, 1863.

4. Cedar Rapids Times. "Commercial: Cedar Rapids Markets." June 1873.

5. United States Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, 2 vols vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975), Series Q 321-328, 731.

23,760 miles of new road. This was more track laid than during the previous seventeen years and as much track as corporations added over the next eight.<sup>6</sup> Like many other states, Iowa experienced a railroad building boom. Between 1868 and 1870, mileage nearly doubled from 1,448 to 2,783.<sup>7</sup> At the beginning of 1872, Iowa railroad mileage hit 3,144, a seventeen percent increase from a year earlier.<sup>8</sup> Though the overall state benefitted, this transportation infrastructure did not advantage everyone equally. For example, in 1870, an anonymous writer, under the pseudonym—Occasionally—complained railroads refused to construct a north-south line through Cedar County despite the area’s substantial agricultural productivity.<sup>9</sup>

Not that farmer convenience was the sole motivating factor in route selection by railroads. During the 1860s and 1870s, funds received by the state government from railway companies did not remain completely in Iowa’s General Fund. Instead, the Treasury disbursed nearly seventy percent of those monies to counties that contained railroad lines. Governor Samuel Merrill, on the last day of his final term as Iowa’s chief

---

6. United States Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, 2 vols vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975), Series Q 329, 732; Christoph Nitschke, “Theory and History of Financial Crises: Explaining the Panic of 1873,” *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 17 (2018): 224.

7. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fourteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 8, 1872*. (Des Moines, Iowa: State of Iowa, 1872), 33.

8. “Railroad Construction in the United States in 1871,” *Railroad Gazette*, January 13, 1872, pub\_railway-age, Archive.org, 58-59.

9. Occasionally, “Iowa Correspondence: Importance of Developing Local Business,” *Railroad Gazette*, April 16, 1870, pub\_railway-age, Internet Archive, 14-15.

executive, provided a survey of state conditions to the General Assembly. On taxation and revenue, he opined the recent practice of disbursing railroad tax money received by the Iowa Treasury to counties through which railway companies constructed their roads. Merrill pointed out that counties receiving these monies benefitted from “the speediest access to the markets of the world, and consequently the best prices for their products.” In contrast, counties, like the aforementioned Cedar, “are compelled to transport their products long distances to the railroad lines” and importantly “do not enjoy any of this revenue.” Moreover, those living in trackless areas effectively “pay tribute to the more fortunate localities which Merrill rightly considered unfair. In its place, he suggested “the entire proceeds ... be paid into the State treasury” where elected officials could decide how best to allocate funds.”<sup>10</sup>

But that undercurrent of unfair treatment did not just run through counties without railroad service, but also in those places where no competition between lines existed. A railroad’s arrival did not always improve local merchant and farmer financial prospects. As seen when the WI&N decided on the route of its Diagonal line, townships that provided right-of-way and financial incentives received favorable treatment. In 1868, Iowa’s General Assembly authorized townships to tax residents for railroad construction. The Iowa Supreme Court ruled the law unconstitutional only to have the Legislature pass a modified bill that passed the court’s muster. This township tax raised more than one

---

10. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fourteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 8, 1872*. (Des Moines, Iowa: State of Iowa, 1872), 16.

million dollars in 1870 but Merrill opined “the policy is at best a questionable one.”<sup>11</sup> In many cases, the investment resulted in a single line that serviced a number of other counties and the railroad used the lack of competition to “extort rather than assist,” local businesses which “led the people to demand ‘protection.’”<sup>12</sup>

Railway companies poisoned their relationship with elected officials in two ways. First were extortionate shipping rates charged on freight loaded at depots serviced by one railroad. This agitated merchants and farmers who likely complained bitterly to state representatives. The second was companies that routinely ignored state reporting mandates but incurred no consequences thereof. When a railroad constructed a line, Iowa required the railroad report how much of the construction’s cost the company funded, line length, grade, and even “the ‘number of ties per mile.’” But according to the Governor, no “railroad company in the State has complied with this requirement.”<sup>13</sup> Additionally, railroads were supposed to report their financial condition each year to the Secretary of State but failed to do so. This mandate was ignored by all but “a small number of companies.” Railroads dismissed state mandates perhaps due to the sheer size of their operations. Merrill estimated railroads controlled “one-eleventh of the entire value of all

---

11. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fourteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 8, 1872*. (Des Moines, Iowa: State of Iowa, 1872), 16.

12. Occasionally, “Iowa Correspondence: Importance of Developing Local Business,” *Railroad Gazette*, April 16, 1870, pub\_railway-age, Internet Archive, 58.

13. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fourteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 8, 1872*. (Des Moines, Iowa: State of Iowa, 1872), 34.

the property in the State,” and because of their sheer size, needed “some measure of official supervision.”<sup>14</sup> Much to the frustration of many Iowa voters, the Fourteenth General Assembly failed to implement a satisfactory regulatory program. Ineffective oversight, combined with state leadership failures to address just how dependent Iowa agriculture was on railroad shipping access created a situation ripe for farmers in the state to organize and act collectively. against the businesses Therefore, it is not surprising that when the Grange Movement seeds blew across the Mississippi and into Iowa, they found fertile soil in which to grow and after a few years taking root, quickly spread across the state.

The Patrons of Husbandry, or Grange as it was also known, appeared in Washington D.C. when four men, Oliver Kelley, William Saunders, William Ireland, and John Trimble, met to organize an agriculture based fraternal society. Kelley, a Mason and ne’er do well Bostonian unsuccessful at land speculation and farming in Minnesota, worked as a clerk at the Department of Agriculture. Saunders, whom Kelley befriended, headed up a division focused on gardens. Like Kelley, Trimble was a clerk at the Agriculture Department. Of the four, Ireland was the member not like the others. He worked at the Post Office, but shared a common masonic membership with Kelley.<sup>15</sup>

---

14. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fourteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 8, 1872*. (Des Moines, Iowa: State of Iowa, 1872), 34.

15. Jenny Bourne, *In Essentials Unity: An Economic History of the Grange Movement*, New Approaches To Midwestern Studies (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017), 5-9.

Word of this new fraternal organization for farmers reached Iowa in the spring of 1868. In a single paragraph, on page two, the *Burlington Daily Hawk-Eye* described “a secret order recently established ... for the benefit of farmers and horticulturists and to promote their interests.” Ireland was the new organization’s treasurer while Kelley became its secretary. The paper expressed its distaste of government opining this new group “probably originated in the agricultural department,” seeking “to promote the interests of employees there. Heaping on derision, editors wrote, “The originators will probably go back to Adam and Eve, instead of stopping, as the Masons do, at King Hiram and Solomon’s Temple.”<sup>16</sup> Though the paper dismissed this Grange movement, through 1869 and 1870, the farmer cooperatives spread across the state like an August prairie wildfire. A small paragraph in the *Cedar Falls Gazette* claimed an Iowa Grange membership of eighty-thousand and according to a Patrons of Husbandry charter log, the organization sent out 1,575 charters in 1873.<sup>17</sup>

The Grange was not intended as a political organization, but rather one that believed “agriculture is the parent and precursor of all arts, and its products the foundation of all wealth.”<sup>18</sup> Founders claimed to “ignore all political or religious discussions” because the Grange “needs no such patronage” to accomplish its

---

16. “Notes and Gleanings,” *Burlington Daily Hawk-Eye*, March 13, 1868.

17. *Record of Charters Sent Out and Consolidations of Granges Revocals*, n.d.

18. *Constitution of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry and By-Laws of the National Grange, Adopted at the Sixth Annual Session of the National Grange January, 1873*. (Washington, D.C.: Gibson Brothers, 1873), 3.

objectives.<sup>19</sup> To that end, the organization focused on improving agricultural practices and advocated on the behalf of farmers in a variety of areas. Granges worked to secure price reductions for farm implements and coordinated efforts in towns to bring implement dealers and manufacturers. Once there, members worked to secure reduced prices for farming tools. They formed mutual insurance associations that offered indemnification to property owners for losses and developed produce sales networks that bypassed commodities markets and middlemen. Importantly, senior Grange members often traveled to other subordinate chapters and educated newer members on improved farm methods.<sup>20</sup> A primary focus on improving farmer's economic situation did not mean, however, that Patrons of Husbandry chapters shunned politics.

One of the Iowa organization's early forays into election influencing occurred on April 1, 1873 when "about twenty Granges" met in Waterloo. There, members adopted a resolution that endorsed D.W. Adams for Governor and James Wilkinson for Lieutenant Governor. Attendees argued state and federal officials refused to address their "claims, for relief from oppression and injustice" and that the Democrats and Republicans "may find, too late that party names lose their power when made the bulwarks of wrong."<sup>21</sup>

---

19. "A New Secret Organization," *Clayton County Journal*, November 3, 1869.

20. "By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation of the Iowa Mutual Tornado, Cyclone and Wind Storm Insurance Association," n.d., Box 2, Folder 1, State Historical Society of Iowa, Library Archives, Des Moines; George Huston, "Check to J.W. Murphy for Services as Lecturer," December 14, 1878, Box 2, Folder 1, State Historical Society of Iowa, Library Archives, Des Moines; "What the Grangers Have Accomplished," *Tipton Advertiser*, February 20, 1873.

21. "Patrons of Husbandry," *Buchanan County Bulletin*, April 4, 1873.

Shipping costs were the biggest issue and one which created financial stress for farmers. In a Letter to the Editor, one writer querulously described “tears and complaints of thousands of our countrymen” for a political solution to railroad inflated shipping rates unheeded by elected officials. Failure to act indicated “that there is something wrong in our political machinery.”<sup>22</sup> The *Buchanan County Bulletin* called the issue of freight cost, “One of the most important questions of the present time.”<sup>23</sup> In particular, farmers that tilled northwestern Iowa land suffered significant economic hardship.<sup>24</sup> Failure by the federal government and the Iowa Legislature to exercise a measure of oversight not only fertilized and thereby accelerated the Patrons of Husbandry growth, inaction motivated chapters to take a political stand.

At the core of farmer dissatisfaction was that commodity prices failed to cover their cost of production which included transportation charges. What few recognized was that the lack of a diversified transportation infrastructure meant that many farms had just one shipping option and thus surrendered any consumer leverage to the sole servicing railroad. From the railway company’s perspective, pricing power in regions where they held a monopoly offered increased individual line profits. That increased margin could then be used to subsidize operations in communities with competition. For example, a

---

22. “A Second Sober Thought,” *Weekly Oskaloosa Herald*, January 2, 1873.

23. “Farmers Efforts for Cheap Transports,” *Buchanan County Bulletin*, January 3, 1873.

24. Iowa Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Assembled at the Capitol at Des Moines, January 12, 1874*. (Des Moines: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1874), 53.

higher shipping rate paid to the sole railroad serving the farmer in Clay County, allowed that same line to reduce their rates charged to his peer in Polk County where the railway company competed with two or three other roads. Combine a lack of competition in many Iowa communities with a financial downturn amongst the railway companies and that created an environment ripe for regulatory reaction. This happened because railroads inflated fees on farmers in monopolized towns that provided the necessary cash flows to satisfy interest payments to their bond holders. The circumstances just described guaranteed a public backlash against railroads operating in Iowa.

Of the fourteen Iowa General Assemblies, Democrats controlled the Iowa Senate between 1846 and 1852 along with the 1862 session while in the House they managed a majority just three times from 1848 through 1853. In the Fourteenth General Assembly, just eight out of forty-nine Senators were Democrats and over in the House, Democrats averaged just fifteen seats out of more than ninety available over the previous ten years.<sup>25</sup> But by the summer of 1873, a wave of anti-monopoly sentiments, helped along by a substantial number of Grange chapters throughout the state led to creation of an Anti-Monopoly party, a People's party and a group running for the Legislature as Independent Republicans.<sup>26</sup> As summer waned, so too did the prospects of incumbent members of the General Assembly for reelection in October.

---

25. See the Iowa Legislative website at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators> to see the party affiliation of Senators and Representatives in each session.

26. "As Democracy Sees It," *Iowa Voter*, November 6, 1873, Chronicling America.

Adding to the anger over railroad rates by the public was a financial storm that caused financial wreckage across much of the United States. Through the early 1870s, both the stock and debt markets communicated optimism in America's economic situation. When securities experience a bull market, the first investors commit resources because assets are undervalued by virtue of generating greater revenue than reflected in the price of a stock or bond. As the bull market continues, however, a transition from investment towards speculation occurs in that purchasers of securities do not expect positive returns from the underlying asset itself, but rather from appreciation of stock or bond as demand outstrips supply. Speculation causes financial bubbles in which the price of a security becomes disconnected from the underlying asset it represents. By the beginning of 1873, those intimately intertwined with American stock markets grew increasingly concerned "speculative activity on the stock exchange was becoming ever more excessive," that "a speculative mindset ... was permeating every sphere of life, and the thirst for profits knew no limits."<sup>27</sup>

The financial pendulum swung from bull to bear in 1873. Christoph Nitschke, in a *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* article examined the 1873 financial panic. Nitschke recognized that the volume of railroad expansion demanded corporations raise substantial amounts of capital in the debt markets.<sup>28</sup> So long as creditors valued both

---

27. Hannah Catherine Davies, *Transatlantic Speculations: Globalization and the Panics of 1873* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 54.

28. Christoph Nitschke, "Theory and History of Financial Crises: Explaining the Panic of 1873," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 17 (2018): 221–40, 221–40.

purchasing and holding these debt instruments, railways could continue to expand. In 1872, cash flows into America's bond market dried up. Jay Cooke & Company's failure to convince European investors to purchase Northern Pacific Railway Company bonds was a clear signal of financial trouble ahead. A subsequent domestic offering received little interest. Potential lenders held little belief the bonds would pay off. Lenders attitudes towards risk shifted from acquisition enthusiasm to purchase aversion. By early 1873, concerns that speculation disconnected securities valuations from the underlying asset values began appearing in the press.

Then, in late September, Jay Cooke & Company defaulted on its debt setting off a stock and bond market panic that depressed the American economy significantly. The established parties experienced a similar depression when counties reported results from the October 14 election. Of the twenty-one seats up in the Senate, voters returned less than five sitting senators. In the House, less than fifteen returned to Des Moines. The GOP received the brunt of losses in the Senate with Republicans holding nineteen of the twenty-two contested seats and lost ten of them. Seven of those went to Anti-Monopoly party candidates and just three to Democrats. Across the rotunda in the House, forty-four seats switched from Republican to the other party. From a legislative reform perspective, party membership was less important than Grange affiliation and as many as seventy of the new Legislature's House members belonged to a local Patrons of Husbandry branch.<sup>29</sup>

---

29. "Iowa Legislature: Yesterday's Proceedings of the Regular Session of the Fifteenth General Assembly - Senate," *Iowa State Register*, February 6, 1874, Daily edition.

Voters in the eastern half of Iowa tended towards support for third party candidates more than those who resided in the western half with one notable exception—northwest Iowa. A cursory glance at the state’s electoral map results presents a contradiction between financial hardship and third-party support. Northwest Iowa farmers complained loudest about their financial struggles yet, with one exception, chose *not* to send Anti-Monopolists to Des Moines. In fact, the economic situation for farmers in northwest Iowa was so dire, the General Assembly created an emergency fund with fifty-thousand dollars for distribution to those working the land. But railroad shipping rates had nothing to do with the extreme poverty. During the previous summer, grasshoppers swept through the region devastating crops. The money paid for “seed, grain, and vegetables” in relief.<sup>30</sup> Anti-Monopoly pledges for railroad regulation offered no support for families just attempting to survive the next few months and the election results suggested that reality.

Moreover, new Republican candidates did win some races. The GOP flipped at least eight House seats that somewhat mitigated their loss.<sup>31</sup> “The election of Tuesday was, as a general thing, a pretty severe drubbing for our side” wrote the partisan *Buchanan County Bulletin* editor.<sup>32</sup> In Tama County, Anti-Monopoly candidates won nearly all of the county seats along with the state senator. The *Toledo Chronicle* blamed

---

30. “Iowa State Register: Laws of Iowa,” *Iowa State Register*, February 28, 1874.

31. Analysis comes from information published in both the Iowa House and Senate Journals combined with party information provided by the Iowa Legislature’s website.

32. “The Election,” *Buchanan County Bulletin*, October 17, 1873.

GOP “over-confidence” in addition to poor candidate quality for the mediocre showing.<sup>33</sup> Though the GOP won the Governor’s office handily, “strong Republican counties had gone for the ‘Anti Monopolists.’”<sup>34</sup> Clearly, the political ground underneath Republicans shifted. Third party victories emboldened reformers and frightened incumbents enough that the members realized it was no longer “if,” but rather “how” the state would regulate railroads. From the second day of the Fifteenth General Assembly, freshman legislators that arrived from across the Iowa demonstrated they came to take on the status quo. Nowhere was this challenge to an established norm more apparent than the fight over electing a House Speaker.

At the outset of a new session, the Iowa House’s received and accepted the credentials of those arriving and recognized them as duly elected representatives for their district. After that, the next step was to select a House speaker. This fight illustrated Anti-Monopolist member ardor towards making fundamental changes. At ten o’clock on the morning of January 13, the House convened for the routine tasks of “organizing” themselves to conduct the State’s business. Reverend Granger Smith read a brief prayer, representatives approved the previous day’s journal and the Speaker *pro tem* representatives administered an oath of office to the members. Their next duty was election of a permanent Speaker for this session. Republican Eli Stedman rose to nominate John Gear, the former Burlington mayor and first president of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids, & Minnesota Railway Company to fill the seat. This was Gear’s second

---

33. “The Election,” *Toledo Chronicle*, October 16, 1873.

34. “General News Summary,” *Iowa Voter*, October 23, 1873.

term in the Iowa House after Des Moines County voters first sent the forty-seven -year-old businessman to the General Assembly in 1871.<sup>35</sup>

In a legislative body where GOP members lacked a majority, Gear had competition. Smiley Bonham, an antebellum Iowa House Speaker himself, put forward an Anti-Monopoly party candidate Jacob Dixon. Dixon was a forty-two-year-old attorney from Ottumwa, with hair that made him look like he was always facing into a windstorm. Initially a member of the GOP, Dixon left the Republican party in 1873 and joined forces with the reform-minded Anti-Monopolists.<sup>36</sup> Members offered no other nominations and the House voted. The result was a vote split down evenly down the middle—fifty to fifty where Republicans all supported Gear and a coalition of Anti-Monopolists and Democrats endorsed Dixon. Representatives immediately voted again with the same result. A third ballot yielded no movement and members continued to vote again, and again “with the same result, all members voting as before.”<sup>37</sup> After they failed to select a Speaker on this first morning of the session, the House adjourned until two o’clock that afternoon.

When the House reconvened that afternoon, members voted eighteen more times for Speaker with no change in result. In the midst of these votes, Smiley Bonham noted

---

35. Editorial Department, “John Henry Gear,” *The Annals of Iowa* 4, no. 7 (1900): 555–56.

36. “Obituary,” *Ottumwa Weekly Courier*, January 9, 1889.

37. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, In Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 12, 1874* (Des Moines, Iowa: State Printer, R.P. Clarkson, 1874), 9.

the lack of seating for proceedings spectators, many of whom were women and asked to direct the Sergeant-at-Arms “to furnish the ladies in the lobby with seats.” Gilmore City’s Mike Leahy, an Irish immigrant asked that men have seats also, an accommodation simply one step too far for the House which refused chairs to the gentlemen.<sup>38</sup> Interspersed between the Speaker votes, representatives moved for adjournment in order to caucus with members of their party, lobby individual opponents, and try to develop a strategy to resolve the deadlock. These attempts failed by wide margins which suggested members thought a member or members of the one side might tire of the circus and cast a vote to break the loggerhead. They were wrong.

Over the next nine days, the pattern of convene-vote-disagree over adjournment-then finally an adjournment, controlled House operations. Though such a conflict implied a tense atmosphere, for the first few days, reports suggested collegiality rather than contention. To end the impasse, Delaware County’s former sheriff, Cornelius Peet “proposed to drop all the candidates except the two having the highest number of votes.”<sup>39</sup> How this solved the problem with an evenly divided body was unclear. By the fourth day of voting, patience with the jocularity wore thin amongst a few of the legislators. Anti-Monopolist, Benjamin Franklin Brown, offered a resolution to end “introducing resolutions of a ludicrous character.” The humorless Brown inveighed against “excessive levity” and argued such actions “justly taint this House with public

---

38. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, In Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 12, 1874* (Des Moines, Iowa: State Printer, R.P. Clarkson, 1874), 11.

39. “The Fun of It,” *Iowa State Register*, January 14, 1874.

odium.” As redress, the House should “discourage every resolution, or motion, calculated to produce such a result.”<sup>40</sup> That “odium” he feared manifested itself at Turner’s Hall, a Des Moines opera house. On Wednesday evening, the Kendall Combination performed “Rip Van Winkle” and when Kendall, who played a Van Winkle that awoke from his twenty-year slumber, he first asked “Has a Speaker been elected” which received “hearty rounds of applause.”<sup>41</sup> Did the Iowa House appear to be the elected body that could not shoot straight? Apparently. Did representatives care? Apparently not. Only eleven other member supported Brown’s resolution.

In the periods between repeated tie Speaker votes and arguments over adjournment mechanics, members from both sides offered proposals and counters to these overtures—some of which were ludicrous—to resolve the deadlock. At one point, Anti-Monopolists suggested candidates “draw cuts” for the office. Another suggested the two candidates share the speakership with Republicans holding the office for half the session while Anti-Monopolists assumed the role during the other half.<sup>42</sup> While those ideas gained little traction amongst the differing House members, others in the Republican caucus offered up more realistic proposals. The parties tried using a smaller committee, with equal representation from both sides, to hammer out a proposal. But

---

40. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, In Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 12, 1874* (Des Moines, Iowa: State Printer, R.P. Clarkson, 1874), 28.

41. “Last Night,” *Iowa State Register*, January 16, 1874, Daily ed.

42. “The Hanging House,” *Iowa State Register*, January 16, 1874, Daily ed.; “No Speaker Yet,” *Iowa State Register*, January 21, 1874.

when the group reported back to their respective memberships, Anti-Monopolist rank-and-file rejected the plan to which their own committee members agreed.<sup>43</sup> Monday night, seven days after the General Assembly convened, Republicans proposed meeting in a joint caucus “and proceed to ballot for Speaker and other officers, the persons receiving a majority of all votes cast to be the unanimous choice.”<sup>44</sup> How this approach differed from the current floor action is unclear—a tie vote is a tie vote, whether captured by roll call or not.

Then, on Thursday night, nine days after starting the Speaker election process, both sides agreed to a plan proposed by Henry Kelly, a freshman representative arriving from Osage. Kelly manufactured plows and other implements in Mitchell County, which lies along the Iowa-Minnesota border. A forty-three-year-old Irish immigrant, Kelly actively advocated for temperance, and successfully eliminated saloons from Osage, and a member of the local Methodist Episcopalian church.<sup>45</sup> Though elected as a member of the People’s Party, Kelly joined the GOP in supporting Gear. He offered a deal whereby members would cast ballots for Gear, but then all subsequent House officers came from the Anti-Monopoly party. Additionally, standing committee chairs would be Republicans,

---

43. Iowa State Register. “No Speaker Yet.” January 21, 1874.

44. “A Fair Proposition By The Republicans Rejected By The ’Anti-Monopolists,” *Muscatine Weekly Journal*, January 23, 1874.

45. Iowa General Assembly, “State Representative,” The Iowa Legislature, accessed February 15, 2023, <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/legislator/legislatorAllYears?personID=4859>.

but any investigative committees headed by the reformers.<sup>46</sup> Though similar proposals circulated between the groups earlier in the contest and failed to move either side, nine days of stalemate, derision by local newspapers, and Anti-Monopolists remembering that they were sent to Des Moines to regulate railroads, not elect one of their own to the House Speakership, probably motivated them to reach a compromise. Friday morning, January 23, seventy-nine representatives elected Gear as House Speaker with eight votes sprinkled amongst five other nominees. In compliance with the compromise, Anti-Monopolist members assumed other officer positions.<sup>47</sup> The Iowa House finally organized and could move on to railroad rate regulation.

Surprisingly, Republicans, rather than the Anti-Monopolists moved first. On the Monday morning, that followed resolution of the Speaker election, Representative Absalom Anderson and his peer, Representative Michael Leahy, offered the first two of at least seventeen bills, that proposed some form of railroad regulation.<sup>48</sup> asked “to limit the charges of railroad companies ... and to prevent and punish extortion.” In contrast,

---

46. “An Agreement Finally,” *Iowa State Register*, January 23, 1874, Daily ed.

47. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, In Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 12, 1874* (Des Moines, Iowa: State Printer, R.P. Clarkson, 1874), 48; “Notes From The Capitol,” *Buchanan County Bulletin*, January 30, 1874; “An Agreement Finally,” *Iowa State Register*, January 23, 1874, Daily ed.

48. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, In Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 12, 1874* (Des Moines, Iowa: State Printer, R.P. Clarkson, 1874), 62.

Rep. Leahy sought merely “to establish uniform and reasonable rates.”<sup>49</sup> The drive and tone of their legislative language likely reflected the representatives' constituencies.

Anderson represented Grange dominated Lee County in southeastern Iowa whereas Franklin County voters in north central Iowa sent Leahy to Des Moines. This variation in approach illustrates the differences of opinion between Iowans living in different areas of the state.

During the next thirty days, representatives offered another thirteen bills—four Republican, four Democrat, three Anti-Monopolist, and one bipartisan—that fit into either the Anderson theme of setting maximum rates or the Leahy “reasonableness” approach. With allegedly seventy Patrons of Husbandry members that occupied House seats, the Grange possessed significant influence over the legislation’s language but that influence had a limit. Henry Wood tried to get the House to formally endorse Grange efforts through a resolution that encouraged the Grange organization to submit draft railroad tariff legislation. It appears that despite Grange membership, representatives felt they were in a better position to draft a regulatory regime than the Patrons of Husbandry organization. Wood’s resolution failed to receive House endorsement.<sup>50</sup>

That defeat of Wood’s resolution, however, did not keep the Grange views out of bills. On February 16, Patrons of Husbandry representatives appeared before the House

---

49. Iowa House, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth General Assembly*, 62.

50. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, In Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 12, 1874* (Des Moines, Iowa: State Printer, R.P. Clarkson, 1874), 152-153; 172; 177.

Committee on Railroads to offer the Grange perspective.<sup>51</sup> Instead of considering each of what were now fourteen different rate regulation bills separately, the House Committee on Railroads produced a substitute bill that combined various elements of at least eight different pieces of legislation. On February 24, the committee chairman, John Quincy Tufts reported back to the House this substitute language which went onto the calendar during the House's special consideration period.<sup>52</sup> This substitute, at least as a House file, technically was never debated. That is because in the Senate, the same general theme of railroad oversight legislation made its way through that chamber.

Because Iowa's Lieutenant Governor was President of the Senate and because voters chose fewer reformist senators—likely a function of less than half the Senate's seats on the 1873 ballot—and because those senators who did not face reelection in 1873 received a message of voter dissatisfaction with the current political environment, less conflict materialized between incumbents and the new arrivals in the General Assembly's upper chamber. Within two weeks after the Senate organized, Republicans submitted a number of bills targeting railroad rates. Senate Railways committee member James McIntyre, who was not up for reelection in 1873, introduced legislation “to define the crime of extortion,” along with a companion bill “to provide for the appointment of

---

51. “Notes From The Capitol,” *Buchanan County Bulletin*, February 20, 1874.

52. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, In Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 12, 1874* (Des Moines, Iowa: State Printer, R.P. Clarkson, 1874), 299.

railroad commissioners.”<sup>53</sup> Two days later, the heavily bearded Moses McCoid, who also did not face the 1873 voters, proposed two bills to “regulate transportation by railways.”<sup>54</sup> Fayette County’s, William Larrabee, who ten years later became Iowa’s twelfth governor, proposed a bill “to protect the people against the abuses and unjust discriminations of railroads,” and finally, Butler County’s Alonzo Converse suggested language “to limit the charges of railroad companies for the transportation of passengers and freights.”<sup>55</sup> Between January 28 and February 6, four GOP senators, none of whom faced voters in the 1873 election, introduced eight pieces of legislation to regulate aspects of railway company operations.<sup>56</sup> Voters spoke loudly in the October, 1873 ballot that they wanted railroads reeled in. When the Fifteenth General Assembly convened on January 12, voters already settled the question of whether or not to regulate—regulation was going to occur. The uncertainty circled around what the General Assembly would enact and “whether that law will give the relief hoped for.”<sup>57</sup>

---

53. Iowa Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Assembled at the Capitol at Des Moines, January 12, 1874*. (Des Moines: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1874), 39

54. Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Fifteenth General Assembly*, 40.

55. Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Fifteenth General Assembly*, 65; Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Fifteenth General Assembly*, 95.

56. Iowa Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Assembled at the Capitol at Des Moines, January 12, 1874*. (Des Moines: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1874), 39.

57. “From The Capitol,” *Tipton Advertiser*, February 5, 1874.

Senate railroad regulation bills all funneled through that body's Committee on Railroads. Thirteen senators made up the membership—eleven Republicans, one Democrat, and one Anti-Monopoly party member.<sup>58</sup> The group reviewed eight separate pieces of legislation then chose to consolidate these proposals into one omnibus bill. On February 13, Railway Committee member Frank Campbell, a thirty-eight-year-old freshman GOP senator from Newton, who apparently never met a comb, reported “substitution” language for the eight individual bills “comprising eighteen large pages,” fifteen of which contained nothing but classifications and rate tables.<sup>59</sup> If enacted as proposed, the General Assembly, rather than a gubernatorial appointed board of commissions, would be the primary regulator of railroad rates across Iowa.

At the same time the House Committee on Railroads reported its version of railroad tariff legislation, the Senate was already considering its bill. Senators filed a blizzard of amendments, eighteen in all, that ranged from tinkering with the language to outright replacement with a different regulatory regime. Larrabee, Stone, and McCoid all proposed their own substitutes to the Committee's language only for each amendment to overwhelmingly fail. Larrabee mustered just twelve supporters for his approach and Stone was only slightly better with fourteen. Though the Senate split nearly evenly on ending debate over the McCoid substitution, when asked to approve his language, a scant seven senators voted in favor. In all, just five amendments—or portions thereof—made it into the final legislation. Once legislators disposed of these proposed changes, the Senate

---

58. Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Fifteenth General Assembly*, 36.

59. “The Senate Railroad Bill,” *Burlington Weekly Hawk-Eye*, February 26, 1874.

overwhelmingly endorsed the substitute with forty members voting in favor.<sup>60</sup> Larrabee justified his “no” vote when he said the Senate language was “a demagogue measure.” Senator Merrill told the *Ottumwa Weekly Courier* that the Senate “they could do better,” but failed to describe what “better” meant.<sup>61</sup>

In the House, on Saturday, February 28, Reverend Ingalls offered the daily prayer, members approved the previous day’s journal. Then the House’s secretary, J.A.T. Hull announced Iowa’s upper chamber approved language that regulated railroad shipping rates. After reports on enrolled bills, ten petition presentations, and the results of Ways and Means, Banks and Banking, and Judiciary committee meetings, the Committee on Railroads Chairman John Tufts told representatives the group approved language consolidating nine different House proposals. Representatives faced a choice to either press forward with their own language or act on the Senate bill. The two pieces of legislation were not substantially far apart with the Senate version having “some of the best provisions” of Representative Tuft’s draft already.<sup>62</sup> That is not to say House members unanimously endorsed the Senate’s approach. The roll call vote on a motion referring the Senate’s substitute to the House’s railroad committee illuminated this disagreement. Normally, reading a bill and referring to committee is a perfunctory

---

60. Iowa Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Assembled at the Capitol at Des Moines, January 12, 1874*. (Des Moines: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1874), 198-219.

61. “Iowa Legislature: Yesterday’s Proceedings of the Regular Session of the Fifteenth General Assembly,” *Iowa State Register*, February 28, 1874.; “Understanding Senator Merrill’s Vote,” *Ottumwa Weekly Courier*, March 5, 1874.

62. “Notes From The Capitol,” *Buchanan County Bulletin*, February 20, 1874.

activity decided by voice vote. Not this time. In a rare parliamentary move, Representative Jim Mickelwait demanded a roll call vote to memorialize each member's viewpoint on the Senate substitute. No record was uncovered that revealed Mickelwait's motivation, but perhaps he wanted to send a message of strength to those pushing for the House substitute. His referral motion carried the day, sixty-seven to twenty-eight. After the roll call vote, Leahy added a prescription that "the bill be made a special order" Monday morning.<sup>63</sup> Voters sent representatives to Des Moines who would regulate railroad rates and they needed to get that done.

Each day, both the House and Senate begin their business day with a prayer. On Monday, March 2, Reverend Kooker led the chamber's daily prayer and after dealing with the routine details of starting the day, that included a petition from Lee County pleading that livestock, including asses, can continue "running at large," Hull, the House Secretary, read a message from the Senate that they agreed with a plan to end the session the following week.<sup>64</sup> Time for action suddenly got short. Just before noon, the Committee on Railroads Chairman Tufts set forth results of the group's deliberations on the Senate substitute. His report included thirteen changes, proposed by the committee, that would be voted on individually. That afternoon and throughout the following day,

---

63. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, In Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 12, 1874* (Des Moines, Iowa: State Printer, R.P. Clarkson, 1874), 328-334.

64. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, In Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 12, 1874* (Des Moines, Iowa: State Printer, R.P. Clarkson, 1874), 337.

representatives debated these amendments and overwhelmingly approved the committee's changes while they beat back a wave of other alterations introduced from the floor. This legislative process went smoothly until Tuesday afternoon. When the House reconvened at two o'clock, Darius Hanan had just moved a change to section ten when the Chair recognized Representative Tufts. He immediately asked the bill go back the railroad committee for further review.<sup>65</sup> House members found a problem.

In building their rate tables, senators fixed tariffs based on the freight type and railroad classification. Legislators defined a railway company's class based on their annual gross revenue. Class A companies received more than four thousand dollars in fees, class B railroads between three and four thousand, and class C—the smallest—anything under three thousand.<sup>66</sup> But contained within the fee matrix, "roads of the first-class were allowed higher rates ... than second and third-class roads."<sup>67</sup> Essentially, the bill allowed railroads already capturing the largest share of business to also charge the highest rates thereby rewarding railway companies Grange members despised the most. Tufts pulled the substitute back into the committee to fix the discrepancy.

As the House continued with its regular business during the next two days, railroad committee members reviewed tariff amounts in the tables. But rather than get bogged down in a series of amendments to the Senate's matrix, the committee

---

65. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, In Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 12, 1874* (Des Moines, Iowa: State Printer, R.P. Clarkson, 1874), 351.

66. "The Senate Railroad Bill," *Burlington Weekly Hawk-Eye*, February 26, 1874.

67. "The Railroad Bill Under A Cloud," *Dubuque Daily Times*, March 5, 1874.

recommended the House replace the Senate's language with the House's instead. That simplified the process immensely that prevented a floor fight between representatives about pennies per mile charges. Friday morning, Tufts reported the committee's result back to the lower chamber members who agreed to put the bill on that afternoon's agenda.<sup>68</sup> When debate began Friday afternoon, opponents laid siege to the bill by filing a variety of amendments ranging from minor adjustments in amounts to Mr. Dixon's effort to replace the entire substitute with his own version. With few exceptions, the majority fought off the changes by voting against further modifications by large margins. Members haggled through the Saturday morning session, but by the time lunch rolled around, the remaining few holdouts surrendered. Speaker Gear pounded his gavel at two o'clock that afternoon and read the substitute for the third time. The final result was anticlimactic for anyone that observed the past two days' proceedings. By a vote of ninety-three to four, the Iowa House of Representatives approved sweeping regulation of railroad rates.<sup>69</sup>

That vote, however, was not the final word on railway company oversight. Because the Senate approved a version of the bill that contained that rate flaw, they had to approve the House's changes. Monday morning, March 9, the Senate's Chief Clerk,

---

68. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, In Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 12, 1874* (Des Moines, Iowa: State Printer, R.P. Clarkson, 1874), 388-391.

69. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, In Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 12, 1874* (Des Moines, Iowa: State Printer, R.P. Clarkson, 1874), 395-404.

James Weart alerted senators the House passed the Senate file, but with changes to the regulatory language and the bill with the rate fixes went back to the Senate's railroad committee for immediate review—which they did.<sup>70</sup> The next morning, senators convened at nine o'clock and received word from Senator Campbell, the railroad committee chairman, members recommended four changes—two minor percentage clarifications along with removal of two sections that did not significantly alter the regulations. Again, more amendments landed in the Senate Well from the floor ranging from minor wording changes to complete replacement and supporters again thwarted those efforts. In the end, the Senate voted thirty-nine to nine to advance the legislation. The Legislature was just two days away from its agreed upon date to close out the Fifteenth General Assembly and the House still needed to concur to the Senate's changes. Iowans wanted railroads reigned in.

The next morning, the House session began with a Reverend Davis prayer and members almost immediately took up the Senate's four changes to the House substitute. They quickly approved all four changes with no more than five voting against any amendment.<sup>71</sup> Within a week, legislative officers enrolled the language and Governor Carpenter signed the bill into law. The state, but more specifically, the General Assembly

---

70. Iowa Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Assembled at the Capitol at Des Moines, January 12, 1874*. (Des Moines: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1874), 277-279.

71. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, In Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 12, 1874* (Des Moines, Iowa: State Printer, R.P. Clarkson, 1874), 448-449.

was now in the railroad regulation business, setting rates for both freight and passenger traffic throughout Iowa. But this approach contained at least two glaring flaws. First, railroads operated twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and fifty-two weeks a year. The Iowa Legislature convened on the second Monday in January and sat in session for ten to twelve weeks. Someone had to “mind the store” during the General Assembly’s adjournment period. The second issue revolved around rate setting. Under this structure, each year either the House or Senate had to revisit railroad tariffs to decide if they should increase or decrease. This left the railroad’s financial performance up to the whims of elected officials immune from financial pressures. The pendulum swung from conceding too much control to businesses to allowing the state to dictate remuneration to railroads for carrying freight.

Ultimately, kitchen table economics altered the desire by voters for government regulation of railroad rates. As the economy slowly recovered and farmers saw commodity prices improve, the outrage that drove growth of the Grange faded and the Patrons of Husbandry lost some of their political clout. During the next two years, intra-state transportation costs dropped and while the price of corn climbed three hundred percent from the fifteen cents per bushel to forty-five cents. Senator Campbell summed up voter satisfaction in a committee report that “we believe our people are content with the law.”<sup>72</sup>

---

72. Iowa Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Sixteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa Which Convened at the Capital at Des Moines, January 10, 1876* (Des Moines, Iowa: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1876), 157.

That equanimity manifested itself in the 1875 general election results. Absent the anger towards railroads, composition of Iowa's Sixteenth General Assembly reverted back towards the traditional two parties. Voters returned just one member of the Anti-Monopoly Party to the House, Jacob Dixon, but he ran on the Democratic ticket. In the Senate, four of the six Anti-Monopoly Party members switch parties, two going Republican and two going Democrat. The rebellion against unfettered capitalism fizzled out and traditional power structures reasserted control which altered the legislative landscape. A number of railroads chafed at the rate limits and sought ways to tilt the regulatory environment back in their favor. Attempts by railroad lawyers to invalidate the law through the judicial system failed which left change through legislation as the only option. This meant companies needed a business-friendly legislature. In October 1875, they got one. When the Sixteenth General Assembly convened on the second Monday in January 1876, members who opposed the current regulatory approach wasted no time trying to quash it.

Jefferson County residents first sent Fairfield attorney Moses McCoid to the Iowa Senate in 1871. Four years later, the thirty-six-year-old sported a full head of dark hair, combed back in the style of a pompadour and a wiry black beard that fully covered a narrow bow tie and stretched down to the top button of his suit vest.<sup>73</sup> He also belonged to the group of Senators who attempted to either water-down or kill off the Senate's substitute language two years earlier, being one of the few to vote in favor of many

---

73. Charles Aldrich, ed., "Moses Ayres McCoid," *The Annals of Iowa: A Historical Quarterly*, Third, 6 (May 1903), 157.

amendments and even offering one of his own. Time's passage did not change the young attorney's point of view and two weeks into the 1876 session, McCoid offered a resolution on the Senate floor asking that the Committee on Railroads "inquire into the justice and necessity of amending the present railway tariff law" to set a "uniform station rate for loading and unloading," and distance-based rate changes "to prevent consolidation of parallel and competing lines."<sup>74</sup> Two weeks later, on February 4, George Perkins, a member of the Committee on Railroads, offered his own resolution for the Senate's railroad committee to consider repealing the 1874 law and replacing with alternate language.<sup>75</sup>

Neither resolution gained traction but did lead to competing reports back to the Senate that revealed a schism between those that supported the General Assembly approach and a minority seeking change. Frank Campbell, the committee's chairman who originated the 1874 Senate substitute language, praised the current law saying "our people have been benefitted by it, the interests of the State advanced, and can find many reasons why said law should be retained upon our statute books."<sup>76</sup> Senator Perkins, however, offered a much different view. Perkins earned his income through ownership of

---

74. Iowa Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Sixteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa Which Convened at the Capital at Des Moines, January 10, 1876* (Des Moines, Iowa: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1876), 51.

75. Iowa Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Sixteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa Which Convened at the Capital at Des Moines, January 10, 1876* (Des Moines, Iowa: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1876), 116.

76. Iowa Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Sixteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa Which Convened at the Capital at Des Moines, January 10, 1876* (Des Moines, Iowa: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1876), 157.

the *Sioux City Journal* and he used his reasoning and writing skills to both criticize the current law and mock the majority's support of it in a lengthy critique that included newspaper editorials and notes from the Iowa State Grange's annual convention. Implying Senator Campbell disregarded his February 4 resolution, he wondered why it "for some cause, has never been in possession of the committee." Perkins argued for an "opportunity very justly to question the immaculate character of the present law" and questioned whether or not the regulation achieved the goals set out. He closed out this minority report with a piece from the *Iowa State Register* that calculated shipping costs of produce from Newton—Senator Campbell's hometown—to Chicago and also to Davenport. In the former case, the transportation expense increased fourteen percent while in the latter instance, the rate declined thirty-two percent. The paper pointed out the overwhelming majority of grains went to Chicago at a greater cost than they did to Davenport. Despite the efforts of regulatory opponents to shine an inquisitorial light on the current railroad statute, elected officials made no changes to the law. But the discussion clearly showed a growing weakness in Senate will to maintain the status quo.

Representatives in the Iowa House somewhat more aggressively pursued changes to the 1874 law. Two freshman Democrat Ed Thayer from Clinton and Republican Henry Bush from Garner.<sup>77</sup> Though members of opposing parties, both men's biographies were strikingly similar. Both served in the Civil War, both became attorneys, both moved to Iowa, both owned at least part interest in their local paper, and from a legislative

---

77. "Edward H. Thayer," *The Annals of Iowa* 6, no. 8 (1905): 637–38; "Mustered Out," *Hancock County Democrat*, September 21, 1905.

perspective, both sought to establish a three-member railroad commission. Each drafted their vision of an oversight board with both bills going to the House's Committee on Railroads for consideration.<sup>78</sup> Just like what happened two years earlier with the plethora of railroad regulation legislation introduced from the floor, the railroad committee combined Thayer and Bush's language into one bill, taking nearly a month to achieve a suitable compromise. On March 3, Representative Rush Clark, Committee on Railroads chairman, reported this substitute back to the House saying "a majority of the committee recommend do pass."<sup>79</sup>

Unlike the House during the Fifteenth General Assembly, the House for the Sixteenth lacked any sense of urgency in making changes to railroad oversight. Two years earlier, the moment a consolidated bill arrived from the Senate—on the same day as the House committee reported its substitute language—the legislation went to the railroad committee with directions to report back post-haste. Not this time. After House members accepted the committee's report on Friday, members proceeded to act on other business finally taking up the bill on March 7. But even once consideration began, representatives acted as though the proposal carried little importance. Like before, a blizzard of amendments flew from the floor ranging from minor wording changes to complete

---

78. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Sixteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, January 10, 1876* (Des Moines, Iowa: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1876), 103, 192.

79. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Sixteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, January 10, 1876* (Des Moines, Iowa: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1876), 386.

language replacements. But members debated for limited periods and would then immediately adjourn or, while in the middle of considering changes, abruptly shift their focus to other business.<sup>80</sup> On Saturday morning, after five days of spasmodic amendment haggling, Lewis Stuart asked the Speaker to appoint “a special committee of five with instructions to report Monday morning.” House members approved the idea on a voice vote with Rush Clark, John Stone, Ed Thayer, John Dixon, and Josiah Given assigned to the review.<sup>81</sup> Complying with the House mandate, this special committee reported back on Monday recommending twelve changes. In a snap vote, representatives quickly approved the changes and set final consideration for 2:15 PM that same day.<sup>82</sup> Despite the special committee’s recommendation, seven House members simply could not help themselves and proposed more changes, three of which members agreed with before a final vote. Answering “shall the bill pass,” supporters lost by a wide margin, thirty-six to fifty-nine. Though Thayer, one of the originators, voted in favor, Bush, another advocate

---

80. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Sixteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, January 10, 1876* (Des Moines, Iowa: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1876), 475-478.

81. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Sixteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, January 10, 1876* (Des Moines, Iowa: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1876), 482.

82. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Sixteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, January 10, 1876* (Des Moines, Iowa: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1876), 506-7.

for change, did not cast a ballot.<sup>83</sup> Two years after enactment, Iowa's railroad regulation law stayed on the books, unchanged.

But the 1877 election evinced a political reality that single issue movements, upon successful resolution of their issue, fall apart and opponents of change erode the gains made by a body politic when the fervor was hot. Even in the nineteenth century, four years is a long time and Iowans' number one enemy switched from the railroads to the bankers. Farmers mobilized a new state entity, the Independent Greenback Party in response to federal efforts towards putting the nation back on a gold standard. Transitioning away from paper money and back to specie contracted the nation's money supply leading to price deflation. At first glance, the person able to buy more using less money appears as a positive. But that is only the case when paying cash. During deflationary periods, creditors benefit by receiving monies worth more than when lent. In this dynamic, debtors suffer greater financial hardship and moves by the national financial houses pushing for hard money caused a backlash amongst the agricultural class who relied heavily on credit to the supplies and equipment necessary to raise their crops. The Independent Greenbackers became one of a number of Populist organizations seeking economic policies to inflate the money supply.<sup>84</sup>

---

83. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Sixteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, January 10, 1876* (Des Moines, Iowa: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1876), 530-532.

84. Elizabeth Sanders, *Roots of Reform: Famers, Workers, and the American State 1877-1917*, American Politicis and Political Economy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 108-117; Richard White, *The Republic For Which It Stands: The*

When election officials finished counting ballots, the result put Republicans firmly in charge of the Seventeenth General Assembly. In 1873, the GOP controlled fifty seats leading to that long fight over the Speakership. In 1877, then held seventy-one. Over in the Senate, Republicans went from thirty-three to thirty-seven seats and with farmers distracted by the bankers, opponents of Iowa's intrusive railroad tariff law attacked.

In the House, representatives introduced five different bills to repeal the railroad rate law and replace it with new language that put oversight into the hands of a three person railroad commission. Legislators acted with determination. The clearest indication of a desire amongst representatives for decisive action came on February 27. Orlando Manning, the Republican Chair of the Committee on Railroads reported back to the House a bill combining various aspects of the five individual legislative proposals. Manning, a Republican who resided in Carroll in west central Iowa, asked not only that substitute be "made the special order for Tuesday, March 5," but that consideration "be continued from day to day until disposed of" and the House did just that.<sup>85</sup>

Tuesday morning, March 5, Reverend Murphy prayed for House members and then the body received eighteen petitions, five temperance related, three on other topics, seven that opposed repeal of railroad regulation, and three which supported its

---

*United States During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896*, Oxford History of the United States (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 181-187.

85. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Seventeenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, January 14, 1878*, House Journal (Des Moines: Iowa Legislature, 1878), 285-286.

elimination. The House addressed Senate messages, introduction of new bills, and messages on the Speaker's table before finally getting to the railroad commission bill. When consideration started, representatives could only deal with a single amendment that shortened a commissioner's term to two years—which they defeated—before members adjourned for lunch.<sup>86</sup> When the Speaker gaveled the House into its afternoon session, they complied with the motion to do nothing else until they resolved this bill. From March 5 to March 7, members filed nine floor amendments, of which they accepted four and rejected five others. Two of those tried to replace the bill's language with much of the 1874 regulatory regime. At least ten more petitions, all which opposed repeal, arrived on Thursday morning but had no effect.<sup>87</sup> Debate continued with legislators that argued as much about speech limits and attempts to set a time-certain for a final vote, as they did on amendments. Republicans wanted this bill pushed through and took the relatively rare step of convening an evening session. At seven o'clock, representatives gathered in the hall to finish debate. They addressed the few remaining amendments before members answered the Speaker's question, "shall the bill pass?" By a vote of fifty-five to forty-three, the Iowa House approved repeal the railroad tariff and replaced that structure with

---

86. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Seventeenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, January 14, 1878*, House Journal (Des Moines: Iowa Legislature, 1878), 330-334.

87. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Seventeenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, January 14, 1878*, House Journal (Des Moines: Iowa Legislature, 1878), 339-340.

a three member commission.<sup>88</sup> The House decision was bipartisan. Seventeen Democrats, more than half their caucus, voted with thirty-eight Republicans for a railroad commission. The House substitute headed to the Senate.

When one branch of the legislature passes a bill, that chamber first “enrolls” the bill, making sure that the printed language matches what the members agreed to. Then, that language goes to the other body for its consideration. On Monday, March 11, Representative Russell reported the railroad commission bill ready for transmission to the Senate. The message, along with the House’s approved language arrived at the upper chamber. on March 12 and was referred to the Senate’s railroad committee. Senate commission supporters were as anxious to get this bill into law as had been their House counterparts. So much so that just two days after receiving official word of the bill and one day after the Committee on Railroads received the bill, Senator John Stoneman, the former McGregor Mayor in the last two years of his four-year Senate term, tried to put the bill on the Senate’s special orders calendar for the next day. As Senator Daniel Chase pointed out, “the bill was not in the possession of the Senate” which made setting a date for consideration impossible. Undeterred, Stoneman moved the Committee on Railroads “report the bill back at 10 o’clock, March 15<sup>th</sup>.” By a slim majority, the motion carried.<sup>89</sup>

---

88. Iowa House of Representatives, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Seventeenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, January 14, 1878*, House Journal (Des Moines: Iowa Legislature, 1878), 334-345.

89. Iowa Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Seventeenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol at Des Moines, January 14, 1878*, Journal (Des Moines, Iowa: Iowa Legislature, 1878), 306-307.

Lafayette Young was a thirty-year-old senator from Atlantic. Born near Eddyville, Young apprenticed in the printing trade, traveled to Saint Louis where he ran a press by day and attended school at night, before returning to Iowa becoming a newspaperman. At the moment, however, he was chair of the Senate's Committee on Railroads and on Friday morning, March 15, he reported back to the Senate that Stoneman's motion "did not allow the committee ... time in which to consider and perfect a bill." Moreover, committee members were "aware that the session is drawing to a close, but a majority ... believe that further time should have been granted us for consideration of a measure so full of power." "Hasty legislation should never be done."<sup>90</sup> His warning went unheeded as Senators plowed ahead on the House substitute, setting the consideration date for Tuesday, March 19.

After senators finished up changes to Iowa's military code, they launched immediately into debate on the proposed railroad commission. Through nearly all day on Tuesday, opponents filed amendments, attempted to replace the entire bill's language, and spoke at length about this change. Like their House compatriots, Senate supporters insisted on completing work on the bill before doing anything else and also like the House, forced members back into session that evening. Senators offered eighteen different changes with every one of them going down in defeat. Were the Senate to make any alterations to the House bill, the legislation would have to go back to the lower chamber for its concurrence and that created the risk that the session could end without

---

90. Iowa Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Seventeenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol at Des Moines, January 14, 1878*, Journal (Des Moines, Iowa: Iowa Legislature, 1878), 315-316.

passage. Shortly after midnight, came the question “shall the bill pass?” By a margin of four votes, the Senate approved the House substitute bill. The Senate adjourned at 12:55 AM on March 20 which ended the General Assembly’s foray into railroad rate management.<sup>91</sup> Here on out, Iowa’s Railroad Commission oversaw railroad companies.

As Ketchum, Eaton, and Palmer stepped through the Marshall County Courthouse’s oak doors and into the building’s main area, they carried with them a commission legacy focused on rate management, conflict resolution between roads and municipalities, and buried in the back of their portfolio of legislative prescriptions was safety. But accident investigation was not the Commission’s forte. Ten years passed between Governor John Gear’s appointment of the first three railroad commissioners in March 1878 and 1888 when commissioners published six accident investigation reports to former senator and then Governor William Larrabee.<sup>92</sup> Those reports, however, were the exception rather than the rule. Often, the inquiry reports contained within the “Accidents” section came from the railroads themselves rather than by an independent evidentiary investigation performed by a board representative. For the 1890-91 annual report, commissions merely reprinted letters received from railway companies describing accidents that occurred on their line. On February 13, a passenger train left the tracks three miles north of Maynard. A “combined postal, baggage and express car, and coach

---

91. Iowa Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Seventeenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol at Des Moines, January 14, 1878*, Journal (Des Moines, Iowa: Iowa Legislature, 1878), 350-368.

92. Board of Railroad Commissioners, *Eleventh Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending June 30, 1888* (Des Moines, Iowa: George E. Roberts, State Printer, 1888), 107-118.

... rolled down an embankment” and quickly burned due to hot coals spilled out of a stove in one of the cars. Thirteen people suffered injuries yet commissioners apparently accepted the railway’s crash explanation that “it is supposed” the locomotive hit a broken rail.<sup>93</sup> When two freight trains collided near Hubbard on February 7, 1898, killing two and injuring another, commissioners only undertook an investigation and received testimony from witnesses after Iowa’s Twenty-Seventh General Assembly passed a resolution introduced by Senator Joseph Wallace asking them to investigate.<sup>94</sup> Accident investigation was an activity the Board of Railroad Commissioners did not do and because members lacked a basic toolbox of skills necessary for an effective inquiry, the men who took their seats in the county’s lower courtroom faced a daunting challenge.

---

93. Board of Railroad Commissioners, *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending June 30, 1891*. (Des Moines, Iowa: G. H. Ragsdale, State Printer, 1891), 839-841.

94. Iowa Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Twenty-Seventh General Assembly of the State of Iowa Which Convened at the Capitol at Des Moines, January 10, 1898* (Des Moines, Iowa: F.R. Conaway, State Printer, 1898), 813; Board of Railroad Commissioners, *Twenty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending June 30, 1900* (Des Moines, Iowa: B. Murphy, State Printer, 1901), 13.

## Chapter Nine

### Right Answer To The Wrong Question

At ten o'clock on Tuesday morning, March 29, 1910, Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners Chairman David Palmer opened the commission's formal inquiry into the deadly Green Mountain train wreck. Residents and newspaper reporters packed Marshall County's East Courtroom.<sup>1</sup> Sitting with Palmer were his fellow commissioners, Nathaniel Ketchum and Willard L. Eaton, all three in Marshalltown to hear testimony from a variety of witnesses from three railway companies that represented various railroad operations disciplines. Accompanied by the board secretary, Dwight Lewis, and a Des Moines stenographer, commissioners hoped to identify "the cause of the wreck." Despite a lack of significant crash investigation experience, the trio hoped to learn why the double-header train derailed.<sup>2</sup> At first glance, this seemed to be the fundamental question to answer. More than fifty people died, another thirty were injured and all of this mortality and morbidity came about because this passenger train left the tracks in a cut at

---

1. "Rail Board Takes Wreck Testimony," *Des Moines Register and Leader*, March 30, 1910; "Investigation of Wreck Commenced: Railroad Commissioners Begin Probe to Learn Cause of Great Disaster," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 29, 1910; "Fix Blame For Deadly Train Wreck," *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, March 29, 1910; "Commission Makes Report of Its Work," *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, April 6, 1910.

2. "Wreck Inquiry to Be Held Tuesday: Many Railroad Officials and Employees Cited to Appear Before Commission," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 28, 1910.

the Marshall-Tama County border. When board members Centered the inquiry on explaining why the No. 828 tender jumped the rails, commissioners assumed the derailment is what led to the massive death toll. They saw the derailment as the wreck's keystone. It was not. The No. 828's tender falling off the tracks was simply one event, albeit a catastrophic catalyst, to a disaster chain that resulted in Iowa's deadliest train wreck. When members failed to recognize their inaccurate assumption, the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners started this inquest from the wrong spot in a linear event sequence and failed to probe aspects of the crash that contributed most to the death toll but were unrelated to the derailment.

Civil War veteran and seventy-year-old board chairman David James Palmer led the board triumvirate. With a round, yet solid face, thinning dark hair and defiant gaze, Palmer communicated both leadership and fortitude to all he encountered. Col. Palmer was an experienced member of the commission having just began his thirteenth year on the board. Though an elected position, voters did not put him on the commission initially. Governor Leslie Shaw appointed Col. Palmer, a Washington County farmer, to fill Charles Davidson's seat after Davidson's died in 1898.<sup>3</sup> Newspaper articles frequently referred to Palmer by his Civil War rank when mustered out of the Army in 1865. He did not enter the war as a colonel, or for that matter, even an officer but rather a private with Company C, Eighth Iowa Infantry in 1861. Private Palmer earned a promotion to Corporal and at the Shiloh battle, was wounded and captured during the fighting. Though injured, Palmer successfully slipped away from his captors and crossed back over to the

---

3. "Col. Palmer Is Named," *Des Moines Leader*, March 23, 1898.

Union side. Union doctors treated his wounds and then shipped Palmer back home to convalesce.

Apparently dissatisfied with sitting on the sidelines, Palmer took it upon himself to organize a new company of soldiers in 1862. Those men elected him captain of their unit, and together they rejoined the fight as an element of the Twenty-Fifth Iowa Infantry. They quickly entered the conflict marching to the White River and participated in a variety of campaigns along the Mississippi River.<sup>4</sup> In 1863, Army officials promoted Palmer to Lieutenant Colonel and the Iowa Twenty-Fifth fought in a number of campaigns in Tennessee and Georgia, including Atlanta in 1864. Discharged in 1865, Palmer returned to Iowa and took up “farming and stock raising.”<sup>5</sup> That lasted nearly ten years before Palmer reentered public service as the Washington County auditor serving two terms. Though away from elected office during the 1880s, Palmer returned to government service in 1891, selected by Washington County residents as their state senator in 1891.<sup>6</sup> During his time in the General Assembly, observers described Palmer having “a good record as a railroad member of the legislature” with an “unremitting devotion ... toward the every interest of the railroad.”<sup>7</sup> Whether that view was a compliment or insult depending on a person’s point of view. However, a commissioner

---

4. “Union - Iowa Infantry (Part 3),” accessed March 14, 2023, <http://www.civilwararchive.com/Unreght/uniainf3.htm#25thin>.

5. “David James Palmer,” *The Annals of Iowa* 16, no. 8 (Spring 1929): 632.

6. “David James Palmer,” *The Annals of Iowa* 16, no. 8 (Spring 1929): 632.

7. “Col. Palmer Is Named,” *Des Moines Leader*, March 23, 1898.

with a reputation for railway company devotion chairing an investigation might not lead to a thorough investigation, especially given that five days before the Rock Island crash, Marshalltown's *Times-Republican* endorsed Clifford Thorne, Palmer's opponent, for election to the commission. Editors wrote "Palmer has long been conceded to the railroad corporations" and if railroad customers hope to see any rate reductions, "they will elect Thorne and leave Dave Palmer at home."<sup>8</sup>

With Col. Palmer was Nathaniel Ketchum, a long, gray goatee accentuated his soft features and melancholy gaze, Ketchum looked appeared more comfortable sitting at a drafting table than in front of a crowd.<sup>9</sup> An engineer by training, Ketchum came to Iowa with a corps of engineers in the early 1860s to construct a line for the Chicago, Iowa and Nebraska railroad and, after completing the line to Marshalltown, left his job building roads for the grain business. In 1872, fire destroyed the grain elevator he owned with E.G. Sleight, and Ketchum started over, now selling farm implements with Joseph Johnson. Leaving that business in Johnson's hands, Ketchum spent the next five years back and forth between Marshalltown and Illinois, first starting a factory to manufacture farm implements and school furniture in Sterling, Illinois and then managing the Moline Wagon Company. While there, Ketchum received visits from Marshalltown's business elite, George Kirby, George Glick, and A.C. Abbott, along with other city leaders who convinced the Princeton-trained engineer and in 1881, Marshalltown's Ketchum Wagon

---

8. "Clifford Thorne's Candidacy," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 16, 1910.

9. "Kethum's Winning Gait," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, July 23, 1902.

Works was born. The company grew into a regional farm implement supplier during the next twenty years.<sup>10</sup> At the outset of the new century, Ketchum left the corporation he started to enter politics.<sup>11</sup> Two years later, the sixty-three-year-old Ketchum ran for a seat on the railroad commission in 1902, but lost during the primary to Edward Dawson, an alleged railway company favorite.<sup>12</sup> In the next election cycle, Ketchum again sought a board position and won nomination on the second ballot during the 1904 GOP convention and went on to win in the general election and took his seat on the board on January 1, 1905.<sup>13</sup> Being a civil engineer, Ketchum's election satisfied a legislative mandate that at least one of the three commissioners be a civil engineer.

Willard Eaton both rounded out the railroad board triumvirate and brought a substantial legal skillset to the commission. Born in Delhi, Eaton attended a local community school and matriculated at the Cedar Valley Seminary before going on to study law at the University of Iowa.<sup>14</sup> After finishing law school, Eaton set up a private

---

10. "N.S. Ketchum Is Called By Death," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, January 18, 1915; "Nathaniel S. Ketchum," *The Annals of Iowa* 12, no. 1 (1915): 78.

11. George F. Kirby, "He Built A Railroad," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, June 14, 1902; "Nathaniel S. Ketchum," *The Annals of Iowa* 12, no. 1 (1915): 78.

12. "Railroads Too Strong," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, July 31, 1902.

13. "N.S. Ketchum Wins On The Second Ballot," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, July 20, 1904; "Nathaniel S. Ketchum," *The Annals of Iowa* 12, no. 1 (1915): 78.

14. "Osage Loses Foremost Citizen," *Osage News*, June 15, 1911.

law practice in Osage and his performance impressed local leaders enough to talk Eaton into running for County Attorney. After one term, Eaton went on to serve as Osage's mayor for three terms before following in his father's footsteps to become a state representative in the Twenty-Seventh General Assembly in 1897, won reelection twice and was selected as Speaker of the House in 1902. Two years after the Twenty-Ninth General Assembly term ended, the fifty-seven-year-old Eaton, wore thin wire-rimmed glasses, with thinning grey hair and an ample mustache, won the 1905 election for a seat on the Board of Railroad Commissioners. Much of the commission's work involved adjudicating disputes between various parties and railway companies. These conflicts took the form of legal filings making Eaton a valuable asset for interpreting the law and drafting board decisions. On Monday evening, twelve hours after the Nos. 19 & 21 derailed, Eaton traveled from Waterloo to Des Moines along the Diagonal and stopped at the crash site, offering him a firsthand picture of the wreck.<sup>15</sup> Not that his visit offered any special insights. Eaton was not an engineer, nor did he possess any special knowledge of railroad operations. The courtroom was the Osage attorney's territory and on that March 29 morning, Eaton was in space well known to him.

The three men that prepared to hear testimony were all educated and experienced men. Each brought to the inquest, a robust set of intellectual tools with which to conduct their inquiry. But possessing tools and knowing under what circumstance a particular skill is best, demands the specific experience of crash investigation which was a background none of these men possessed. The injury or death of nearly one hundred

---

15. "Eaton Views Wreck," *Register and Leader*, March 22, 1910.

people generated quite a bit of public interest in discovering a cause. That attention created pressure to identify a cause for the crash. Public interest can either improve performance or lead to mistakes. In the thirty-two-year history of Iowa's railroad commission, members never faced an investigation with this much import.

How members handled two days of testimony in Marshalltown provided some indications. On the first day, witnesses from the Northwestern and Great Western railroads offered their recollection of events and expert analysis. During the two-hour morning session, six witnesses—the Northwestern superintendent, and five Great Western employees, testified about the train's route from Cedar Rapids and actions taken in Marshalltown. Likely because of his litigation experience, Commissioner Eaton, assumed the role of questioner and probed witnesses about the conditions and this catastrophe's sequence of events. In particular, board members sought to understand what led to the CRI&P train locomotives running in reverse and the general safety of trains operated by backwards facing engines.<sup>16</sup>

Robert Beale, the “boyish” twenty-one-year-old Great Western operations clerk in Marshalltown testified first. On the stand, he recounted the discussion between three men—John White, the Great Western's conductor assigned to pilot this CRI&P passenger train over the Diagonal, train conductor, Jacob Nauholtz, and F.C. Balkie, the Great Western Chief Night Train Dispatcher in Des Moines, about turning the engines around. A track section, shaped like the letter “Y,” connected the Great Western and

---

16. “Cause of Wreck Is Still Unknown: No Cause yet Brought Out For Terrible Rock Island Wreck Disaster,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 30, 1910.

Northwestern tracks that allowed movement of cars from one line to the other. Such interconnections appeared throughout the state in locales serviced by multiple railway companies. Balkie said Marshalltown's Y connection could accommodate the Rock Island engines while White disagreed. Beale described Nauholtz pointing out that the train was already late and getting later the more the two men argued. According to Beale, Balkie relented to White because White was there in Marshalltown whereas Balkie was in Des Moines. When Balkie took the stand, he confirmed Beale's details telling commissioners he argued the Great Western had engines just as long and just as heavy that turned using the "Y." he confirmed leaving the locomotive orientation up to White.<sup>17</sup> How the locomotives ended up running backwards suggests an assumption on the part of commission members that running these engines in reverse caused the derailment. However, understanding White's choice, while interesting, offered no insight into how the crash occurred. Moreover, answering why the locomotives were not turned reflected just one aspect of the board's inquiry. The logical followup question to why the engines ran backwards was how fast could locomotives travel in this orientation. Were their speed limits, what were they, and why did those limits exist?

Though tenders carried thousands of gallons of water and tons of coal, the fuel necessary to drive steam engines, these locomotive lunch boxes weigh less than the sixty-seven-ton locomotives—even when fully loaded. Lighter cars sway back and forth more,

---

17. "Rail Board Takes Wreck Testimony," *Des Moines Register and Leader*, March 30, 1910; "Investigation of Wreck Commenced: Railroad Commissioners Begin Probe to Learn Cause of Great Disaster," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 29, 1910; "Fix Blame For Deadly Train Wreck," *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, March 29, 1910.

particularly when not coupled on both ends. The probability of a tender, as the lead vehicle on the tracks, derailing was greater, hence the twenty-five miles an hour speed limit. However, engineers testified that running locomotives backwards was “not especially hazardous.”<sup>18</sup> J.A. Gordon, Great Western Division Superintendent, produced station train sheets from Marshalltown and Green Mountain that reported departure times from both stations. In particular, the time when this train passed through Green Mountain was important. According to the Green Mountain log, the Nos. 19 & 21 rolled through Green Mountain at 8:05 A.M. Gordon put the derailment time at 8:16 AM, eleven minutes later. With a distance of four miles between Green Mountain and the wreck site, he calculated the train’s speed a “trifle less than twenty-two miles an hour,” which was certainly under the twenty-five miles an hour train order.”<sup>19</sup> Einwalter, the surviving CRI&P conductor who testified the following day, told commissioners he was in the second to last car and “the train was not running faster than a rate of twenty-five miles per hour.”<sup>20</sup> Curiously, during his testimony, Gordon said that twenty-five miles per hour speed limit should be the rule over that section of track for trains pulled by forward-

---

18. “Rail Board Takes Wreck Testimony,” *Register and Leader*, March 30, 1910; “Cause Of Wreck Still A Mystery,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 1, 1910.

19. “Investigation of Wreck Commenced: Railroad Commissioners Begin Probe to Learn Cause of Great Disaster,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 29, 1910.

20. “Says Speed Of Train Not Too High,” *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, March 30, 1910; “Conductor Einwalter Star Witness Yesterday,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 31, 1910.

facing locomotives and with engines in reverse, “He did not know what would be a safe speed.”<sup>21</sup>

Gordon’s comment hinted the roadbed at that spot suffered some degradation warranting slower speeds. This fed into another focus of commissioners that was the ballast and base conditions on which the ties and tracks sat as a contributing factor to the derailment. The CRI&P Shellsburg crash not only forced Rock Island northbound trains to detour through Marshalltown, it forced southbound trains to detour along the same tracks, down the Diagonal. The roadbed’s state did contribute to the crash. Eaton quizzed one of the Great Western freight conductors to hear his assessment of the tracks that day. Early Monday morning, March 21, in Waterloo, Great Western dispatchers assigned W. Gilbert to pilot the CRI&P’s No. 22 Minneapolis to Saint Louis passenger train across the Great Western “Diagonal” with its engine reversed. He testified Waterloo yardmen did not turn the southbound locomotives because the CRI&P Cedar Falls turntable “was out of order,” and using a “Y” there required “two to two and one-half hours,” to get them switched around. That was an unacceptable wait.<sup>22</sup> Gilbert’s train passed through the Marshall-Tama County cut about an hour before the Nos. 19 & 20 drove through. When Eaton asked Gilbert about that section of track, the conductor testified “he noticed

---

21. “Rail Board Takes Wreck Testimony,” *Des Moines Register and Leader*, March 30, 1910.

22. “Investigation of Wreck Commenced: Railroad Commissioners Begin Probe to Learn Cause of Great Disaster,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 29, 1910.

nothing wrong ... and that the engine rode well.”<sup>23</sup> Contradicting an implication that portion of track was less safe, Superintendent Gordon described two trips over that section on Saturday, two days before, and called the road “in a normal and fair condition.”<sup>24</sup> Another Great Western employee, Division Roadmaster William Flynn, told commissioners the bed and track were “normal and in good condition,” though admittedly “a trifle soft.” Other witnesses said it was in better shape than normal “for this time of year.”<sup>25</sup> However, a CRI&P official, C.M. Marshall described “soft” soil, noting “water filled ditches on either side of the tracks“ down the entire length of the train.”<sup>26</sup>

Adding to the unstable roadbed and reversed engines explanations, two other abnormal equipment conditions emerged during the commission’s two-day inquiry that clarified little, but instead added to the wreck’s complexity. A Rock Island equipment foreman hinted at loose rail that caused the wreck. C.M. Marshall was a CRI&P “road foreman of equipment” who traveled to the crash for the company to investigate the

---

23. “Investigation of Wreck Commenced: Railroad Commissioners Begin Probe to Learn Cause of Great Disaster,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 29, 1910; “Rail Board Takes Wreck Testimony,” *Des Moines Register and Leader*, March 30, 1910; “Fix Blame For Deadly Train Wreck,” *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, March 29, 1910.

24. “Investigation of Wreck Commenced: Railroad Commissioners Begin Probe to Learn Cause of Great Disaster,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 29, 1910; “Fix Blame For Deadly Train Wreck,” *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, March 29, 1910; “Cause Of Wreck Still A Mystery,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 1, 1910.

25. “Cause of Wreck Is Still Unknown: No Cause yet Brought Out For Terrible Rock Island Wreck Disaster,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 30, 1910.

26. “Says Road Was In Bad Shape,” *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, March 31, 1910.

wreck's cause. In looking for clues to what drove the tender off the tracks, he found one of the rails underneath the No. 1008 engine. After recovery crews lifted the locomotive onto a set of repaired tracks, Marshall examined the steel and recorded the rail's "bent and twisted," condition. He surmised it "might have been out of place" when the locomotives approached and to him, a substantial dent "on the end of the inside of this rail" indicated a significant amount of force applied at that point by the tender's wheels. Marshall said that could have caused that dent at the end but was not certain "that the rail being loose caused the derailment."<sup>27</sup> In addition to the loose rail evidence, T. H. York, the Great Western's Division Master Mechanic, during his time on the stand pointed out a "broken brake beam on the head tender," attached to the No. 828 locomotive. This failure also offered "a possible cause for the derailment."<sup>28</sup> "Possible," however, is not likely and neither York, nor any other witness offering testimony "would say that it was the cause." Moreover, even York conceded the derailment could have broken the beam rather than the beam causing a wreck.<sup>29</sup>

More by accident, rather than on purpose, commissioners heard testimony that described how train car alignment resulted in the high number of deaths. Only one witness, C.M. Marshall, testified about the passenger car configuration. He told board

---

27. "Cause Of Wreck Still A Mystery," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 1, 1910.

28. "Cause of Wreck Is Still Unknown: No Cause yet Brought Out For Terrible Rock Island Wreck Disaster," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 30, 1910.

29. "Cause of Wreck Is Still Unknown: No Cause yet Brought Out For Terrible Rock Island Wreck Disaster," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 30, 1910.

members that placing two wooden cars between steel ones made “many deaths ... inevitable” and the steel cars “crushed the wooden cars between them like ... egg shells.”<sup>30</sup> Commissioner disinterest in this detail indicated a failure to appreciate why they were in Marshalltown hearing witnesses in the first place. They thought it was to figure out why the train derailed. It was not. They were in Marshalltown because fifty-one people lost their lives—a point lost on board members despite Dr. G.W. Newman’s, becoming the fifty-first death on the night before the inquiry began.<sup>31</sup> But in the audience, at least one person kept the victims forefront. On Wednesday afternoon, Pritchard suggested “railroad officials and employees ... remember those who were at the hospital by sending them flowers.” Commissioners agreed and Pritchard passed a hat around the room collected sixteen dollars. Giving the money to Nathan Ketchum, he “ordered flowers be sent to the injured each day as long as the money lasted.”<sup>32</sup> This was not a situation of a board that missed the forest for the trees. In this instance, commissioners looked at the wrong forest.

---

30. “Says Road Was In Bad Shape,” *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, March 31, 1910; “Inquiry Is Ended; Cause Not Known: Road Foreman Says He Thinks Loose Rail Caused Rock Island Wreck,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 31, 1910; “Cause Of Wreck Still A Mystery,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 1, 1910.

31. “Investigation of Wreck Commenced: Railroad Commissioners Begin Probe to Learn Cause of Great Disaster,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 29, 1910.

32. “Inquiry Is Ended; Cause Not Known: Road Foreman Says He Thinks Loose Rail Caused Rock Island Wreck,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 31, 1910.

Finally, no disaster inquest is complete without firsthand testimony from a victim, particularly one who participated in the action. On Wednesday, one of the only surviving engine cab crew members, Electus Pritchard, took the stand to narrate his experience in the No. 1008 cab as the engines traveled northeast along the Diagonal. He described sitting in the windowsill “standing on his right foot” and looked out over the No. 1008’s tender to see Robinson hanging through his engineer’s window as the train rolled through this low cut. A moment later, he said the No. 828 “swayed” and Robinson was gone. “The next instant, I felt myself being thrown” Pritchard said. As he described the wreck, emotions from that tragic morning welled up that “caused tears to spring to his eyes and his voice grew husky and all but broke.”<sup>33</sup> Pritchard’s testimony contributed two ways. First, it confirmed other testimony that described the wreck happening suddenly with nothing engineers could do to mitigate it. Secondly, he put faces to the people who lost their lives. Commissioners heard from local doctors who traveled to the site and that treated victims at Saint Thomas. Catastrophes are catastrophes because of their impact on humans. Though the information they provided at a hearing rarely offers or reinforces any kind of causal explanation, imparting their stories provided a human dimension to the calamity and that is why this type of testimony was important.

After hearing from thirty-six witnesses over two days, commissioners packed up their notes and exhibits, left the courthouse for a short trip to the Marshalltown train station, and rode back to Des Moines. Witnesses provided detailed information that

---

33. “Cause Of Wreck Still A Mystery,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 1, 1910.

covered the circumstances leading up to the crash and information from the scene. The inquiry's center now shifted from the East Courtroom witness stand to the Board of Railroad Commission offices in Des Moines where members could review everything they received and try to synthesize a cause for this horrible wreck.

"It is evident that the real cause of the Rock Island ... will never be known," was a common sentiment amongst reporters that covered the Marshalltown hearing and attendees who sat in the gallery."<sup>34</sup> Observers hoped for a quick determination, but board members would not commit to a timeline when asked. After commissioners arrived back in Des Moines, support staff transcribed the stenographer's notes into a document that could be printed and distributed to commissioners for review. Those who did not record witness testimony, organized the exhibits offered by witnesses that contained "train orders, photographs, rail road rule books, blue prints of engineers, cars, and the scene of the wreck," for board member review."<sup>35</sup> In their April 6 weekly activity report, commissioners tersely wrote the board had "not as yet completed its report to the governor."<sup>36</sup> Two factors contributed to the commission not immediately publishing its conclusions. Primarily, members still awaited publication of the witness testimony transcript, "desiring to study the evidence before reaching a conclusion." Also, rumors of

---

34. "Cause Of Wreck Still A Mystery," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 1, 1910.

35. "Inquiry Is Ended; Cause Not Known: Road Foreman Says He Thinks Loose Rail Caused Rock Island Wreck," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 31, 1910.

36. "Commission Makes Report of Its Work," *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, April 6, 1910.

crash eyewitnesses who “saw the train rolling up to the point where it was derailed,” and “that the train was running at a high rate of speed and the tender was bobbing and swinging” as it traveled over the tracks.<sup>37</sup> The witnesses who testified on March 29 and 30 were all railroad employees or medical staff. No one that claimed to have seen the train wreck appeared. If these “unknown persons” did see the crash happen, their recollections would be “of the utmost value.”<sup>38</sup>

Because board members wanted to conduct a thorough investigation and hear from anyone having direct information about the wreck, commissioners dispatched two staff members back to Marshalltown. Dwight Lewis, the Board of Railroad Commissioners Secretary, and William Henry, a commission staffer, left Des Moines on a train, the evening of April 6, headed back to Marshalltown. Commissioners asked the pair to find these alleged eyewitnesses and collect any information they offered. During the next four days, Lewis and Henry canvassed Marshall County and recorded statements from “a half dozen” eyewitnesses. More often than not, the rumor failed to live up to its hype. Instead of evoking the image of a train, barely under control that lurched wildly as it raced up the tracks, none of those questioned described the train running at a high speed nor “any unusual bobbing or swerving.”<sup>39</sup> Bart Harders, Bert Hern, M.L. Berry, Milo Haregan, Walter Bilbur and Lusetta James offered affidavits to Lewis and Henry

---

37. “Returns Without Fixing The Blame,” *Des Moines Register and Leader*, April 12, 1910; “Lewis In Wreck Probe,” *Des Moines Register and Leader*, April 7, 1910.

38. “Lewis In Wreck Probe,” *Des Moines Register and Leader*, April 7, 1910.

39. Returns Without Fixing The Blame,” *Des Moines Register and Leader*, April 12, 1910.

that reinforced railroad employees' conclusion that the train operated at or below the twenty-five mile per hour limit. Like the wildcatter who just “knows” there is oil under that rock outcropping, but never finds “black gold,” the rumors of eyewitnesses that contradicted expert testimony was in reality—a dry hole.

Through April and May, board members reviewed their witness transcripts and evidence provided to the commission on the wreck. Then, on June 6, nearly ten weeks after they closed their hearing in Marshalltown, commissioners released a nine-page report on the wreck. Though members did not categorically identify a cause for the wreck, commissioners suggested the confluence of four findings that all contributed to the catastrophe—track condition, locomotive orientation, train size, and car alignment. That commissioners discussed the roadbed and track’s state at the time of the crash first is not particularly surprising after the attention members gave to this topic during their hearings. Board members wrote the track at that spot “was in a dangerous condition,” pointing to “improper drainage” that made the clay base “wet and springy.” This allowed one side of the railroad ties to sink into the base of clay that “toppled over” the first tender leading to the rails spreading due to locomotive weight.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, members concluded pulling a train with its engines pointed towards the read “is dangerous” because a tender “is top heavy and easily thrown out of balance.”<sup>41</sup> Third on their list was

---

40. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending December 4, 1910, (Des Moines, 1910), 149.” Crash Investigation, Board of Railroad Commissioners Report (Des Moines, Iowa: Iowa Utilities Board, December 4, 1910), 154.

41. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report,” 154.

the Rock Island decision, made in Cedar Rapids, to couple the two trains into one much heavier train. Strain on the rails from that weight exceeded the rail's true capacity given the weakened base which also contributed to the wreck's cause.<sup>42</sup>

The first three factors commissioners identified, related directly to a reason why the lead tender derailed. Their last factor, the passenger car arrangement, looked to explain the loss of life. Writing "The merest tyro in railroading knows that ... light, wooden day coaches between heavy sleepers and modern steel cars, greatly increases the danger to persons riding in such cars in case of an accident." They note no passenger suffered an injury "in the seven rear cars" and though "it is common custom" to configure trains similarly to Nos. 19 & 21, "such a method greatly increases the danger."<sup>43</sup> Nowhere in reporting on the commission's Marshalltown hearings, did any newspaper identify a witness from the Cedar Rapids station to describe how they assembled the train in the first place. In the report, the Commission wrote the No. 1008 engine, followed by the No. 828 left Cedar Rapids and then a paragraph on the order of the cars.

"Attached to the engine No. 828 was a Pullman sleeper, an ordinary day coach, a day coach used as a smoker, an express car, and following the cars above mentioned were the cars which made up its Chicago train and which were mostly new, modern, steel cars.

When the train left Marshalltown for Waterloo over the Chicago Great Western tracks, the cars were in the same order except that the engines were not turned and were

---

42. "The Thirty-Third Annual Report," 154.

43. "The Thirty-Third Annual Report," 155.

running backward, with the tenders ahead, with the No. 1008 in the lead, and the No. 828 attached to it.”<sup>44</sup>

There is substantial reason to believe their description of the car order leaving Cedar Rapids is completely reversed and the description of engine 1008 lead the train out of Marshalltown is simply wrong. Photos taken of the crash scene show two locomotives and their tenders laid over into the cut’s ditch, their side numbers obscured by dirt and glare. However, in one photo, two zeros, one easily discernible and the other faded, appear on the engineer’s side of the second locomotive.<sup>45</sup> When the train left Marshalltown, the No. 828 led. That clear error opens a door to questioning the car order leaving Cedar Rapids. When the Minneapolis Express arrived in Marshalltown, the locomotives pointed west. A debate erupted between the chief dispatcher and conductor assigned to pilot the train over whether or not the locomotives could be turned to face east, in the direction the train would travel next. That meant the cars were also “facing” the wrong direction, though rail cars have no per se front or back. The “front” of each coach as the train traveled west would be the “rear” when headed northeast. That also means the first car in the line on the way to Marshalltown was now the last car in the line on the way to Waterloo. Unless Great Western hostlers uncoupled every car moving each one separately into the same running order. Given Jacob Nauholtz’s legitimate concern about the amount of time they sat at the depot, it does not seem reasonable for the No. 19

---

44. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report,” 147.

45. “Rock Island Train Wreck, March 21, 1910” (AZO, 1910), Iowa Historical Postcard Collection (IHPC), Grinnell College Libraries Special Collection.

conductor to remain silent on reordering the cars. Moreover, typically an express car follows the locomotive, then passenger coaches with a sleeper in the rear which is likely exactly how the No. 19 was when it arrived in Cedar Rapids.

Absent hard evidence pointing to one conclusion, logic and past railroad practices drive an evaluation of the commission report's description and it makes no sense. With Nauholtz concerned about time, there is no scenario where he would have been comfortable taking the time in Marshalltown to rearrange ten cars into the order they ended up in when the crash occurred. Instead, what likely happened is that the Saint Louis CRI&P train cars, that arrived in Cedar Rapids after the Chicago train, and running in the standard order of express-coach-coach-sleeper, were added to the end of the Chicago train. When the combined train arrived in Marshalltown, yard workers there disconnected the cars from the No. 828 and both Pritchard and Robinson, engineers on the two locomotives, ran their engines up a parallel track, past the cars and then pulling back on to the main line. The pair pulled forward and reconnected to the cars, this time, with what had been the last car leaving Cedar Rapids now as the first car out of Marshalltown. The two lightweight wooden coaches did not end up between a sleeper on one end and steel coaches due to ignorance on the part of railroad operators or hostlers, the two cars were in that spot because crews and staff for both companies were in a hurry to get a significantly behind schedule train on its way.

No one questioned the commission's description because reporters did not cover the car order since it was why the train derailed being the issue. Newspaper treatment of the report's publication varied from blaming the track, to blaming the railroads, to finding

no blame at all. The *Missouri Valley Times* headlined its article simply with “Commission Reports On Railroad Wreck” and summarized the report’s conclusions.”<sup>46</sup> Marshalltown’s *Evening Times-Republican*, arguably the lead paper on this story because their community was affected most, wrote “R.R. commission Finds No Cause.”<sup>47</sup> In contrast, the *Des Moines Evening Tribune* said “Railways Blamed In Wreck Report” while the Tribune’s competitor, the *Des Moines Register and Leader* cited commissions who “Say Roadbed Was Unsafe.”<sup>48</sup> Each composed a headline based on their own reading of the report, but generally, the articles themselves accurately detailed what the commission concluded.

If the train’s derailment caused fifty-one people to lose their lives, then certainly poor track quality described by the report makes sense. Moreover, newspaper reporting focused on why the two locomotives left the tracks is appropriate. Running the locomotives backwards and combining the two passenger trains into one heavier conveyance may have contributed, but the commissioners lacked direct evidence as to the amount of involvement. The final element—car arrangement—offered no input into the derailment’s cause, but rather was the factor leading to so many deaths in the wreck. Their analysis reveals a goal of answering two questions—why did the train derail and

---

46. “Commission Reports on Railroad Wreck,” *Missouri Valley Times*, June 9, 1910.

47. “R. R. Commission Finds No Cause,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, June 6, 1910.

48. “Railways Blamed In Wreck Report,” *Des Moines Evening Tribune*, June 6, 1910; “Says Roadbed Was Unsafe,” *Des Moines Register and Leader*, June 7, 1910.

why did so many people die? But these were the wrong two questions on which to base their inquiry.

What they should have first asked, is why did anyone die at all? Getting to that question, however, required board members to explicitly understand *why* they were conducting an independent inquiry in the first place. The Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners emerged in 1878 from railroad company backlash to General Assembly direct regulation of railroad rates in 1874. Part of that law directed commissioners to report on safety related issues, rarely did members conduct individual inquiries. As already noted, the commission relied on railway lines to self-report and self-investigate crashes. Had either Palmer, Ketchum, or Eaton asked the question, “Why are we investigating this,” they would have inevitably realized that the large loss of life motivated the inquiry.

That recognition meant commissioners would still need to understand why the train derailed, but answering that question was secondary to first learning why so many people died. Obviously, car alignment offered a significant contribution and by looking at the disaster through the lens of substantial death, the report’s determination of passenger car arrangement would have rose to be second in the list instead of appearing almost as though it was an afterthought.

But what commissioners would have focus on was the sudden stop. It was not as though they failed to recognize this was a factor, they wrote “this train was stopped almost instantaneously.” The report detailed measurements from the first railroad tie flange marks to the locomotives along with a description of the position various engine

brake and throttle members to show “engineers had no time to react.”<sup>49</sup> Early in their report, commissioners noted the tender-locomotive combinations ran “into the mud and embankment” but failed to connect the clay embankment to the sudden stop.<sup>50</sup> Failing to see that connection meant commissioners did not recognize the keystone that led to so many deaths and the reason no one evaluated approaches to railroad construction and track maintenance in these cuts. Commissioners possessed nearly all of this disaster’s pieces but could not assembled them into a comprehensive picture of the Green Mountain catastrophe.

Eight days after the Nos. 19 & 21 trains left the tracks and killed fifty-one people, the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners opened two days of hearings in Marshalltown to produce a report on the wreck. They heard from thirty-six witnesses across a wide spectrum of disciplines that included at least two people directly involved in the Green Mountain crash. Two weeks later, after rumors circulated in Marshalltown and then got back to Des Moines that additional witnesses existed, commission representatives returned to Marshall County to collect additional testimony. After reviewing transcripts, evidence, and affidavits, commissioners issued their report to Governor Beryl Carroll answering why the train left the tracks and why so many people died. Though correct for the two questions asked, the four contributing factors to the wreck were wrong because they answered the wrong question.

---

49. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report,” 151-152.

50. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report,” 147.

Iowa's railroad commission was not set up to investigate wrecks. They existed to address complaints about rates, disputes between different railroads, and find resolutions municipal-railway company conflicts. They periodically inspected bridges and aggregated railroad company performance data. The law required one board member to be a civil engineer but placed no minimum qualifications for education or work experience, other than an ability to convince voters he cared about their interests. Some saw commissioners more interested in protecting railroad interests than the public's. In 1910, at least 304 people lost their lives either riding in or working on trains, a thirty-two percent increase over the previous year and nearly all of it resulting from the Green Mountain wreck.<sup>51</sup> During the previous ten years, the number of passengers killed on trains in Iowa varied from a low of two in 1909 to a high of twenty the previous year. Generally the numbers ran between seven and thirteen and that explains Iowans' limited railroad safety awareness. At least for a short period of time, the wreck outside Green Mountain and the many communities it impacted from Waterloo to West Branch to Cedar Rapids to Fairfield and beyond, caught the attention of Iowans for a short period of time. The question then became, "Would anything change?"

---

51. "The Thirty-Third Annual Report," 12.

## Chapter Ten

### Conclusion

Paul Swift hobbled up the sidewalk towards the Black Hawk County courthouse's concrete steps, a pronounced limp that revealed permanent compromise of the young man's right leg. With neither handrails nor wall with which to brace himself, Swift carefully placed his left foot on the first concrete riser then used the rest of his body to hoist the permanently maimed right leg up. After each step he paused just a moment to ensure he had his balance before repeating the process. Step-lift-pause. Step-lift-pause. On the courthouse roof overhead, Robert De Glass' statues that represented Industry, Agriculture, Justice, Knowledge, Science, and Peace silently watched the dark-haired young man climb the five steps and past the two granite pillars.<sup>1</sup> Swift carefully stepped through the building's heavy wooden doors and onto the first-floor rotunda. April's morning sun beamed through a prism glass skylight which bathed the courthouse's marble floors in a warm glow. On each door, specially etched plate glass identified the office.<sup>2</sup> An observer could not help but feel pity for the young man for whom simple ambulation was an ordeal. Especially since his destination was two floors up—the Black Hawk County Courtroom. The young man sought thirty-thousand dollars from the

---

1. Grant Veeder, "History of Black Hawk County Courthouse and Jail" (Cedar Valley Historical Society, November 22, 2016), Grout Museum.

2. "Turned Over To County," *Waterloo Courier*, August 6, 1902.

railroad.<sup>3</sup> The CRI&P offered 1,500 dollars. Swift declined the offer and chose to present his case to a jury for twelve men to decide. On this day, April 20, 1911, Paul Swift faced off against the CRI&P in court.

Swift's lawsuit was just one of many filed on behalf of the injured and survivors of those killed. Any disaster that results in significant loss of life or property, produces a long list of legal filings and arduous road pretrial motions, discovery, negotiations, and an occasionally trial for victims. Guiding plaintiffs down this path—and earning substantial fees along the way—are attorneys representing victim interests. The Rock Island wreck was no different. As the railroad commission began its inquiry, “a horde of lawyers from over the state ... seek to close up contracts for the collection of claims.”<sup>4</sup> Harry Pennington died in the crash. The next day, his wife, Vera, gave birth to a son that survived just a short time which was then followed by Vera's death due to complications. Three weeks after the wreck, John Moore, Vera Pennington's estate administrator, filed the first lawsuit against the Rock Island due to a death from the crash.<sup>5</sup> More came. John Parish sued the Rock Island for causing his father, Professor Parish's death and asked for twenty-thousand dollars in compensation.<sup>6</sup> Representatives of the two surviving Brown

---

3. Mears and Lovejoy, “Petition at Law” (Black Hawk County District Court, January 1911), Black Hawk County Clerk of Court.

4. “Rail Board Takes Wreck Testimony,” *Des Moines Register and Leader*, March 30, 1910.

5. “First Wreck Suit,” *Des Moines Bystander*, April 15, 1910; “Iowa News Notes,” *Perry Daily Chief*, April 15, 1910; “Victim's Wife Dies,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 28, 1910.

6. “Sues The Rock Island,” *Des Moines Register and Leader*, August 25, 1910.

sisters, whose parents and two younger siblings died in the wreck, sued the CRI&P and settled in October 1910 for 12,500 dollars.<sup>7</sup> In Archie Price's case, who was the porter for the Pullman Palace Car *Colonia*, his widow and Rock Island agents struck a deal without notifying Thomas Jackson, Price's estate administrator. In September, Jackson sued the CRI&P and demanded two-thousand dollars in compensation for Price's mother, who was left out of the original agreement.<sup>8</sup>

With the exception of Swift, nearly all of these suits appeared to be settled without going to trial and records of the Iowa Appellate and Supreme Courts show no cases reaching them that stemmed from the wreck. This, despite railroad commissioners, who acted more like railroad protectors than consumer crusaders, described "an element of danger in the operation of any train" which arguably could have been used by the CRI&P at trial to avoid liability. However, the railroad chose settlement rather than confrontation and refused to use, what commissioners implied was a passenger assumed risk, as a defense.<sup>9</sup> The assumption of risk concept relied on the idea a participant, prior to engaging in an activity where he or she knows that injury or death may result, is responsible for the outcome. When applied, this idea precludes the injured party or their survivors from receiving damages. Assumption of risk appears in cases involving injury or death where the aggrieved person claims their injury occurred due to the negligence of

---

7. "Rock Island Stops Suit," *Webster City Tribune*, October 7, 1910.

8. "Jackson vs. C.,R.,I.&P.," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, September 2, 1910.

9. "The Thirty-Third Annual Report," 155.

another.<sup>10</sup> In Iowa, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries negligence meant failing to take “reasonable care and diligence that another person “would do, or ... would not do.”<sup>11</sup> Negligence fights often occurred over injuries and deaths in the workplace and much of tort jurisprudence focused there.

For example, the Des Moines Edison Light Company hired William Bass for general building maintenance “making such repairs as were required upon and about the building.”<sup>12</sup> In one part of the building was an iron and marble “switchboard” that Des Moines Edison used to control and direct current to energize various wires. Management pursued infrastructure improvements that required lifting the switchboard off the floor while preventing electricity from flowing into the device. During the process, a coworker allowed power to the board when Bass, up on a ladder, worked on one of the “iron taps or burrs.” As he turned the wrench, Bass touched a metal truss running across the ceiling, completing a circuit that electrocuted him.<sup>13</sup> Bass' family accused the power company of negligence and the case eventually arrived at the Iowa Supreme Court. Citing a nineteenth century liability decision, Justice Weaver wrote “It is well settled by all the authorities; that the master must provide his servant a safe place to work in.”<sup>14</sup> Certainly,

---

10. J. Weaver, *Martin v. Des Moines Edison Light Co.*, 131 Iowa 724 (Iowa Supreme Court 1906), 729-730.

11. *Martin v. Des Moines*, 729.

12. *Martin v. Des Moines*, 727.

13. *Martin v. Des Moines*, 727-728.

14. *Martin v. Des Moines*, 730.

the reasonable care bar was higher for railroads when passengers who paid to ride on trains than for workers leaving CRI&P agents with the only option being settlement with financial terms that limited the economic impact on the company. Had the locomotives been forward facing and had the train run over CRI&P rails then Rock Island management might have taken their chances in court. But then, if the two aforementioned circumstance had occurred, fifty-four people might not be dead.

Notably, Swift's lawsuit was not about establishing culpability for the crash. The railroad admitted to responsibility. The judge instructed the jury to answer two questions. First, are all of the injuries Swift listed in his petition due to the crash and if not, which ones arose due to the wreck. Second, how much should he receive in compensation for those injuries.<sup>15</sup> Given the 28,500 dollar spread between Swift's demand and the Rock Island's offer, the two sides were too far apart to negotiate a settlement.

Civil actions represented the bulk of legal activity generated by the Green Mountain disaster, though not completely. There were also criminal cases. Some relatives, who arrived in Marshalltown to collect their deceased loved ones, reported valuables missing. In total, CRI&P officials estimated thieves pilfered "between \$500 and \$1000."<sup>16</sup> In addition to claims by family members, a Marshalltown surgeon who responded to the crash site lost eighty dollars in cash. According to him, he placed the bills in a coat pocket then took off his coat and vest to care for the injured. When he

---

15. "Paul J. Swift vs. C.R.I.&P Ry Co.: Instructions" (Black Hawk County District Court, February 1911), Black Hawk County Clerk of Court.

16. "Another Arrest In Wreck Affair," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 4, 1910.

retrieved his jacket prior to the relief train's departure, his coat pocket was empty. With accounts of missing money and jewelry mounted, Rock Island detectives initiated a number of investigations to determine where the missing property went and who, if anyone, took it.

Police work relies as much on criminals bragging about their exploits to others—and those people telling officers—as it does on shoe leather. Charles Fielding, a news butcher, epitomizes that instance. His mouth led lawmen right to him. At nearly six feet tall and in his early twenties, the somewhat athletic Fielding was a bit of a character with a checkered past. On an earlier trip to Minneapolis, Fielding reportedly started an argument with the Golden West hotel's desk clerk and then began "throwing eggs at everybody in the hotel lobby, the clerk and bell boy included."<sup>17</sup> Gus Cunningham, a Rock Island special agent, subdued Fielding and arrested him, though not for pitching eggs. Fielding swindled a train passenger out of his money and Cunningham followed the young man to this hotel and arrested him. Fielding, who also went by the alias Charles Ryan, stood trial and the court convicted him "on a charge of short changing."<sup>18</sup>

On March 21, Fielding worked coaches on the No. 419, another Rock Island passenger train headed northeast on the Diagonal that ran about two miles behind the Nos. 19 and 21.<sup>19</sup> When the wreck happened, the No. 419 was the first train at the crash

---

17. "Suspected of Heinous Crime," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 2, 1910.

18. "Suspected of Heinous Crime," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 2, 1910.

19. The *Marshalltown Evening Times-Republican* reported Fielding working on the No. 419 rather than the No. 19. No passenger or worker manifests exist to resolve the source conflict, however given the *Times-Republican's* closer proximity to crash details, I

site. Fielding hopped off his train and walked up to the wreck site where he joined the rescue efforts. According to one physician at the scene, the young man labored “like a Trojan” and “helped remove the dead bodies ... and had assisted in caring for the injured.”<sup>20</sup> However, when doctors thanked Fielding for his help and asked him to step aside, he “flew into a rage” and “began to curse and swear and called the doctors every vile name that he could” then “burst into tears.”<sup>21</sup> His erratic behavior continued through the rescue and then during the relief train ride back to Marshalltown. Between Fielding’s appearance at the wreck site and arrival back in Marshalltown, he allegedly filled his pockets with money and jewelry off the bodies of dead passengers. Likely his outbursts reflected some level of mental instability rather than a diversion calculated to steal. But according to news reports, he stole from train wreck victims.

Once back in Cedar Rapids, Fielding quit his news butcher job, rented a room at the Allison Hotel in downtown Cedar Rapids then started “a prolonged drunk. “The combination of booze and cocaine” removed any inhibitions towards remaining silent about how he suddenly came into so much cash.”<sup>22</sup> He told bartenders in the establishments where he imbibed about the Green Mountain wreck, what he did, and that

---

chose to assign Fielding to the No. 419. “Suspected of Heinous Crime,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 2, 1910; “Suspect ‘Newsy’ Of Robbing The Dead,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, April 2, 1910.

20. “Suspect ‘Newsy’ Of Robbing The Dead,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, April 2, 1910.

21. “Suspect ‘Newsy’ Of Robbing The Dead,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, April 2, 1910.

22. “Suspected of Heinous Crime,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 2, 1910.

Rock Island detectives were after him. On Friday afternoon, April 1, Fielding inexplicably walked over to the CRI&P office in Cedar Rapids and unsuccessfully tried to pick a fight with a Rock Island special agent in his office on the building's second floor. Failing that, he left, walked down a flight of stairs and ran into a CRI&P detective. Though the special agent later said had no desire for a fight, the CRI&P detective willingly obliged the young man. The two began their round of fisticuffs in the building's stairwell, carried on down the steps, through the office's first floor, and then out onto the street. There, officers finally subdued Fielding. The detectives summoned a Cedar Rapids Police patrol who took Fielding to jail on charges of drunkenness and resisting an officer. The police court fined him thirty-five dollars and sent Fielding to jail for ten days. As he sat in jail awaiting arraignment, Rock Island officials searched Fielding's room at the Grand Hotel—he relocated there from the Allison after a few days—discovering jewelry, hat checks, and counterfeit money.<sup>23</sup>

But Fielding was not the only one who allegedly liberated valuables from their deceased owners. The next night, detectives picked up nineteen-year-old Harry Rierson upon his return to Cedar Rapids. Agents suspected the young man of stealing money and jewelry from victims killed in the Green Mountain wreck, in particular, a pin Mae Hoffman wore on the train.<sup>24</sup> Like Fielding, Rierson was a news butcher, but actually worked the No. 19 train that March 21 morning. He told officers Hoffman gave him the

---

23. "Keokuk Officers Saw Capture," *Daily Gate City*, April 4, 1910; "Suspected of Heinous Crime," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 2, 1910.

24. "Another Arrest In Wreck Affair," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 4, 1910.

pin before she died and, in one version of the story, he lost it and in a later version “sold the pin ... for \$6.” However, he “denied having taken any money or jewelry from the wreck victims.”<sup>25</sup>

Rierson’s confession, as reported by the newspapers, should engender a high index of suspicion. State investigators that interrogated suspects in 1910 operated with broad powers, unfettered by suspect rights found in the Fourth, Fifth or Sixth Amendments. Much of the US Constitution’s civil rights protections afforded the accused did not come into effect until the 1950s and 1960s. Though section one of the Fourteenth Amendment expanded the limitations on federal action to state representatives as well, changes only came after a series of Supreme Court cases post-World War II. For example, in 1966, the Supreme Court finally required suspects to remain silent or right to a lawyer in *Miranda v. Arizona* decision.<sup>26</sup> Those decisions forced all law enforcement agencies to recognize those protections. Rierson lacked those rights in 1910 and reporters wrote police officers “sweated” the news butcher “at the police station.” He eventually confessed to selling the pin “after being put through a course of questioning.”<sup>27</sup> His subsequent release from custody after Hoffman’s mother could not identify the pin her daughter supposedly wore the morning of the wreck, adds even greater weight to the conclusion detectives coerced a confession. They arrested a frightened nineteen-year-old

---

25. “Another Arrest In Wreck Affair,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 4, 1910.

26. John Arthur and William H. Shaw, *Readings In The Philosophy of Law*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993), 273 - 284.

27. “Another Arrest In Wreck Affair,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 4, 1910.

at three o'clock in the morning right after he stepped off a CRI&P train where he worked selling newspapers. Probably not well educated, tired after his trip, and subjected to intense interrogation, it would not be surprising to learn Rierson admitted to taking the pin. Law enforcement history is replete with examples of suspects that admitted committing a crime just to end the inquisition. The Rierson case appears to be another example of that.<sup>28</sup>

But railroad police were not finished making arrests. Shortly after Rierson's arrest, law enforcement officials nabbed a third news butcher, William Stacy, in Cedar Rapids. The thirty-year-old Chicago native, claimed an injured passenger gave him money and according to a Cedar Rapids report, "had in his possession a diamond ring and pin," though not the missing Hoffman one.<sup>29</sup> Then, on April 6, officers detained a fourth suspect who, at least, was not a news butcher. The Marshalltown police chief and Marshall County sheriff walked into the Great Western's depot on Nevada Street and arrested Robert Beale, the twenty-one-year-old telegraph operator and key witness in the railroad commission's investigation who provided details on the argument about turning the locomotives between train pilot, John White, and the railway's Chief Night Dispatcher F.C. Balkie. Beale allegedly snatched a ring "containing a number of small diamonds and opals" removed the stones from their setting, then sold them to local Marshalltown jewelers. What made Beale's crime somewhat less atrocious was the belief

---

28. "Suspects Had Jewels," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, April 7, 1910; "Another Arrest In Wreck Affair," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 4, 1910.

29. "Third Arrest Made," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, April 5, 1910.

that he took the ring from some clothing left at the station rather than from the finger of a dead body.<sup>30</sup> Apparently, not all theft carried the same stigma.

Legal wrangling was but one of the many outcomes of the Green Mountain train derailment. Those riding in the two wooden coaches that survived the crash and subsequently recovered, bore physical scars and infirmities from those injuries. Many of the dead, Jacob Nauholtz, Alfred Brown, and August Nagle, to name just three, provided the sole income for their families. Widows now had to come up with other ways to provide for their children. Wives of farmers, N.C. Heacock's wife for example, bore the immediate burden of taking care of the farm. But the number of dead and injured extended beyond the locomotive cab and the passenger cars and even beyond the train itself. Unfortunately, these victims never made the official victim's list.

John Steibling was the Chief Deputy United States Marshal in New York City. On March 21, Marshal Steibling was likely sitting in the front half of the smoking car when the Green Mountain train derailed and the smoker crashed into the rear of the Pullman sleeper. Though he escaped injury, the crash pinned the sixty-two-year-old lawman in the wreckage and required rescuers to extricate him from the debris. President Theodore Roosevelt appointed Steibling to the Marshal's Service and was a friend of the former President. Back home in New York City on March 29, Steibling "died suddenly" at his home on Ridge Street.<sup>31</sup> Though the *New York Times* attributed his death vaguely "to a

---

30. "Fourth Arrest Made Yesterday," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, April 7, 1910.

31. "John Steibling Is Dead," *New York Times*, March 30, 1910.

railroad wreck in the South,” the Associated Press dispatch offered slightly more clarity writing Steibling died “from a nervous strain following the recent disastrous wreck at Marshalltown.”<sup>32</sup> Exposed to the wreck’s horror, Steibling likely took his own life.

Mental health professionals recognize horrific events cause traumatic emotional injury to victims, witnesses, bystanders, and responders. Psychology and psychiatry represented new fields of inquiry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but practitioners' understanding of the human mind was still in an infancy. Post-traumatic stress disorder was not even a concept then and remained hidden as Americans fought in multiple wars and suffered even greater loss of life events.

Another name that did not make the official mortality list, but whose death can be attributed to the Green Mountain wreck was Marshall County Coroner Dr. Elijah Jay. An Iowa native, born in 1863, Jay attended the University of Wooster’s Ohio Medical School located in Cleveland, Ohio graduating school in 1893. Three years later, Jay received his license to practice medicine in Iowa, setting up an office in Saint Anthony, Iowa, about twenty miles northwest of Marshalltown.<sup>33</sup> In 1904, Jay relocated his Saint Anthony practice to Marshalltown. Both Jay and his wife both actively participated in the community, her a member of the local Women’s Christian Temperance Union and him

---

32. “Dies of Shock of Iowa Wreck,” *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, March 30, 1910.

33. “Elijah W. Jay,” *Iowa Register of Physicians* (Des Moines, Iowa, n.d.).

representing Marshalltown's Third Ward on the City Council.<sup>34</sup> In 1908, Marshall County voters elected Jay to County Coroner and when calls went out for doctors to meet at the Great Western depot for a relief train, Jay was one of many at the station for the trip out. Riding in one of the many ambulances the driver rounding a corner causing the rear doors to fly open. Jay, leaned up against those rear doors fell out, landing on his shoulder and striking his head against the pavement. The fall left Jay incapacitated, lying on the street. Bystanders, watching the scene of wagons racing down the street collected the physician and took him to Saint Thomas for treatment.<sup>35</sup> Though neither the head nor shoulder injury posed any significant risk to Jay—the hernia did.

Five months earlier, Dr. Jay began feeling ill and in the last week of November, traveled to Chicago for a consultation with Dr. Ed Ochsner. After listening to Jay describe his symptoms and examining the physician, Ochsner diagnosed Jay with gall stones blocking a bile duct.<sup>36</sup> After a successful surgery and a few weeks recuperating, Jay returned to Marshalltown to resume seeing patients. Though well enough to treat patients, Jay's abdominal wall remained weakened from the surgery. When he slipped on the steps at Saint Thomas and fell, Jay felt "a twinge of pain" where Ochsner incised his

---

34. "Jay For Coroner," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, April 30, 1908; "Moved to Marshalltown," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, November 11, 1904.

35. "Dr. Jay Among Injured," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, March 21, 1910, Evening-Times Republican Archive.

36. "Operation For Dr. Jay," *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, November 25, 1909.

connective tissues “and found, upon examination, a small hernia.”<sup>37</sup> Though a problem that needed addressed, a small hernia was not a life-threatening injury—until March 21.

When Jay fell from the ambulance, that small hernia turned in to a complete rupture of the internal abdominal wall. After a month of waiting to see if Jay’s condition might improve, family took the doctor back to Saint Thomas on April 21 for surgery to fix the hernia.<sup>38</sup> As is often the case, when surgeons reopened Jay, they found substantial more damage than expected. “The underlying structures surrounding the seat of the wound had separated, and even the peritoneum had been torn loose.”<sup>39</sup> Worse still, parts of Jay’s colon and stomach “entered the hernia, and had adhered.”<sup>40</sup> Despite these complications, Jay came through this second operation on April 22 “quite satisfactorily and was able to take nourishment.”<sup>41</sup> That lasted just a few days. Dr. Jay’s system strongly reacted to the anesthesia used at the time. He had the same experience after the surgery in Chicago. “For days the patient experienced severe vomiting.”<sup>42</sup> By April 28, just six days after his operation, he no longer kept any food down which is when, two

---

37. “Dr. Jay Answers Death Summons,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, May 6, 1910.

38. “The City In Brief,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, April 21, 1910.

39. “Dr. Jay Answers Death Summons,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, May 6, 1910.

40. “Dr. Jay Answers,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*.

41. “Fear Worst In Case of Dr. E.W. Jay,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, May 5, 1910.

42. “Dr. Jay Answer,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*.

days later, pneumonia clouded his physiologic picture further.<sup>43</sup> Jay held on six more days then on May 5, “Death came at 9:27 o’clock Thursday night to Dr. E.W. Jay.”<sup>44</sup> Dr. Elijah Jay became Green Mountain’s fifty-fourth, and final, victim.

Often, a catastrophe of this magnitude, one that killed or injured nearly one hundred people, that for three days, turned life for residents in Marshalltown upside down, and that deeply affected so many Iowa communities, produced powerfully deep emotions with those who witnessed the calamity unfold. They believed the wreck story would live on in memory. Moreover, catastrophes can yield significant regulatory changes designed to prevent recurrence. On June 15, 1904, more than one thousand passengers lost their lives when the steamer *General Slocum* caught fire.<sup>45</sup> Despite the massive death toll, Edward O’Donnell noted “public memory of the disaster faded with astonishing speed.”<sup>46</sup> When 146 women died in the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist fire, one year after the Green Mountain crash, New York legislators imposed a variety of regulations on businesses that included fire suppression equipment, occupant egress standards, and maximum occupancy codes.<sup>47</sup> After Green Mountain, Iowa did nothing.

---

43. “Fear Worst In Case of Dr. E.W. Jay,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*, May 5, 1910.

44. “Dr. Jay Answer,” *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*.

45. O’Donnell, Edward T. *Ship Ablaze: The Tragedy of the Steamboat General Slocum*. New York: Broadway Books, 2003, 264

46. O’Donnell, *Ship Ablaze*, 313.

47. Peter Dreier and Donald Cohen, “The Fire Last Time: Worker Safety Laws After the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire,” *Race, Poverty & the Environment* 18, no. 1 (2011), 33; Arthur F. McEvoy, “The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911: Social Change,

Humans have a relatively short recall for events from which they suffered no lasting impact. On the wreck's tenth anniversary, the *Marshalltown Evening Times-Republican* published two short paragraphs in the middle of page seven, below an article on the Marshalltown Country Club's demise and next to a story about a "Promised Storm Sewer; Withdraws House from Sale." Events during the subsequent ten years that included Iowa's contribution of men for Europe's Great War, a deadly flu epidemic, fears of Bolshevism, women's suffrage, and temperance all pushed the wreck into the backs of Iowans' minds. The dead were forgotten and almost no lessons learned.

Granted, exactly four months after Green Mountain, the Rock Island Line notified railroad commissioners they planned to purchase "that 100 new passenger coaches" that "would be placed in commission ... immediately" with "a second installment of sixty cars" arriving later. With these deployments, "all the wooden passenger cars will be superseded, except on the smallest of branch lines."<sup>48</sup> Their inventory change represented the only significant action taken due to the disaster. Though the Iowa Railroad Commission urged roads built on "good foundations, heavy rails, solid and thorough ballast," that members were "strongly of the opinion" that running steam locomotives in reverse is risky, and they "condemn the operation" of consolidated passenger trains, commissioners promulgated no new rules.<sup>49</sup> Members inadvertently expressed the

---

Industrial Accidents, and the Evolution of Common-Sense Causality," *Law & Social Inquiry* 20, no. 2 (Spring 1995), 622.

48. "Railroad Notes," *Des Moines Register and Leader*, July 20, 1910.

49. "The Thirty-Third Annual Report, 154-155.

attitudes of many regulators at that time when they wrote “there is an element of danger in the operations of any train, over any track, and at any speed.”<sup>50</sup> In their view, riding on a train involved risk for which railway companies are not responsible. Riding on a train was a roll of the dice. Commissioners did nothing regarding track construction techniques because during the first decade of the twentieth century, there was little new track laid in Iowa. Between 1905 and 1909, mileage increased just forty-two miles.<sup>51</sup> In 1914, it hit 10,019 miles before starting a slow decline began that never ended.

Families buried their dead and moved on. Mae Hoffman became the first internment at a new mausoleum built in Fairview Cemetery.<sup>52</sup> Shortly after construction and its first permanent resident, funding to support the facility ran out and over the next fifty years, it fell into disrepair. Sixty-two-year-old Martha Jane Scott joined her daughter in the ill-fated mausoleum in 1926 upon her death in Illinois. Fifty years after the crash, Hoffman’s sister Bess, removed both her mother and Mae’s remains from the Waterloo building and buried the pair in a Whittier, California cemetery. Eight years later, delinquents breached one of the containers and stole the remains leading cemetery officials to remove the remaining bodies in the structure and bury them in unmarked graves along a cemetery road.

---

50. “The Thirty-Third Annual Report, 155.

51. Charles Webster, Dwight N. Lewis, and Fred P. Woodruff, “Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending December 4, 1922,” Annual (Des Moines: Board of Railroad Commissioners, 1922), v.

52. “Miss Hoffman Laid To Rest,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 23, 1910.

Iowa's deadliest train derailment quickly faded to insignificance in the state's history. Iowans forgot the wreck because the event did not change the everyday lives of residents in the least. Train passengers experienced nothing different post-crash that they experienced pre-crash when they climbed onto a coach. After the wreck, conductors did not recite "In the event of a derailment" instructions prior to departure and safety belts never appeared. Railway companies were already replacing their wooden rolling stock with new steel coaches. Glass remained the staple of window construction in steel cars. The state's General Assembly made no legislative change to railroad laws. The car was the future. Train travel was the past.

But Green Mountain did draw back the curtains on a period of cultural transition for a few. Twenty-year-old Mae Hoffman represented young women that shed Victorian constraints on women's roles who started entering the workforce. Moreover, her travels illuminate an increased mobility by young people who sought to make their fortunes in the world. But at the same time, Hoffman also reveals a dark side in business—objectification of these same women and the attitude that men were still superior. The crash also demonstrates an inflection point with medicine. Dr. Jay, rather than being operated on in his home, came to the hospital for surgery though that invasive treatment likely killed him. Hospitals which had been only for the indigent and to recover, began the transition to centers for treatment. Surgeries occurred in operating theaters rather than on a table in the patient's kitchen. Most significant however, is a celebration of life for those who died. Each should have been chronicled but were not. The wreck did not change anything. But it did make life in 1910 Iowa manifest.

If a prominent feature of the Progressive Era is government intervention through regulation of business, the both the state and federal reactions to the wreck outside Green Mountain represent a counter-narrative. In a case of stepping on the dying embers of a fire after the house burned down, the Interstate Commerce Commission demanded railroads report “all accidents that involved injury or property damage,” as though the mere act of admitting to a wreck would change behavior.<sup>53</sup> Iowa had required railroads to self-report crashes for twenty-nine years and that changed nothing operationally. The ICC mandate was no better. At the state level, the commission’s reaction was “let them eat cake.” Neither the Iowa board, nor legislators in the General Assembly promulgated regulations or legislation that could make a change. Though protection of business interests likely motivated both governmental groups to remain seated and not create any new operational edicts, in the longer term, another structural factor changed the railroad dynamic.

With the benefit of hindsight, however, the first years of the twentieth century represented railroading’s zenith in Iowa. Even if the commission recognized that the construction approach created the environment for this disaster, new rules changing the builder’s approach would have had little impact. Iowa was not laying very many miles of new track. One factor may have been the railroads’ substantial state penetration, but another, exogenous variable likely changed the transportation environment much more significantly. Introduction of the automobile dramatically changed the lives of

---

53. H. Roger Grant, “The Green Mountain Train Wreck: An Iowa Railroad Tragedy.” *The Palimpsest* 65, no. 4 (July 1, 1984), 142-3.

Americans. Combined with the construction of a vehicle-friendly transportation infrastructure of roads and filling stations, the auto offered owners a choice in how to move about a region. Ten years after Green Mountain, Residents of Waterloo or Vinton could choose to ride in their car to Cedar Rapids rather than catch a train. Roads for cars did not incur the large initial investment for construction or long-term maintenance that did railroads, allowing governments to build a significant network at a much lower cost. Importantly, a wreck on a road did not necessarily block travel by other drivers. At worst, a people traveling by automobile could pursue a range of alternate routes much more easily than could a train detour. This leads to another important advantage of cars over trains. Cars going opposite directions could pass one another on the same road without having to pull off and wait. Automobiles did not incur the scheduling penalty trains suffered in the case of only one set of tracks. This was readily apparent in the Shellsburg wreck whereby the Nos. 19 & 21 could not get around the freight train crash using the same line, but required a detour. In the end, Progressives might not have seen the need for new regulation because Henry Ford and others permanently changed the transportation landscape.

Fifty-four deaths, due to the wreck of the Nos. 19 & 21 Minneapolis Express trains, makes the Green Mountain crash a disaster. Events negatively affecting large numbers of people, whether through mortality, morbidity, or economic measures, is the single determinative characteristic of a catastrophe. This is where the investigator begins his or her inquiry by answering the question why so many people died, why so many people suffered injuries, or why so many people lost so much of their lives. But stopping

at that point fails to create a comprehensive picture of the disaster. Next, a researcher looks at where the event occurred. How did that location come to look like it did and did the area contribute to the body count or property loss? Digging a little deeper, a researcher understands who suffered? Were there common characteristics amongst the victims? Perhaps most all experienced financial hardship or were members of a specific ethnic community. Maybe the victims experienced discrimination and segregation that placed them at greater risk of injury or death? After understanding the victims, the analyst must know if an entity existed that was charged with providing reasonable protections to the victims. Were protections in place? If not, why? Finally, did anything change from the disaster's carnage? New laws, regulations or codes promulgated? Did changes in oversight occur? Was negligence punished?

On that March morning, a substantial loss of life occurred because the train on which the victims rode, came to an almost instantaneous stop. That sudden halt happened because the lead tender buried itself into a six-foot-high clay embankment created thirty years earlier when the Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska Railway Company built that section of road. Rather than following the land's gentle contour, engineers chose to dig through even minor elevation changes in blind genuflection to the idea of flat and straight tracks. Using the "cut" construction approach demanded greater maintenance diligence from the railway company to ensure adequate drainage, suitable amounts of ballast, heavy rails, and sound ties. Railway companies experienced significant gyrations in economic performance with financial famine quickly following a year of feast. Establishing a consistent year-in-year-out maintenance regimen could not exist. That

resulted in stagnant water-filled ditches along the Great Western's tracks in the trench that softened the soil making the roadbed unstable. When the No. 828 rolled over that section of track, the rails most likely spread apart causing the tender to derail.

But ignorant construction practices and inadequate maintenance contributed just a certain amount to this mass casualty event. When railroad car manufacturing companies introduced steel coaches to the marketplace, they increased passenger risk, probably without recognizing the impact of the new product when incorporated into a railway company's rolling stock. Certainly, passenger safety increased for the man or woman seated onboard one of these newer, more luxurious coaches, but the heavier weight of the car placed riders with tickets on the wooden cars at risk of crushing injuries when these coaches collided after a train derailed and came to a sudden stop. When the CRI&P's No. 1978 fell through the bridge over Bear Creek, just outside of Shellsburg, observers noted the crash completely destroyed an empty wooden boxcar arranged between two heavier steel freight cars. At Green Mountain, the injured and death—other than the train crew—came from passengers in two wooden coaches placed between a Pullman sleeper in front and seven steel cars behind. Inertia from the much heavier steel cars, pushed the wooden coaches underneath the rolled over Pullman, crushing the passengers in these two cars. Though the Iowa Railroad Commission's report suggests the cars arrived from Cedar Rapids in this arrangement, full examination of the Great Western's track and operational structure contradicts that view. The only remaining record of the inquiry are newspaper articles that do not specifically address car order, but also fail to identify any CRI&P operational witnesses from Cedar Rapids to definitively describe the rail car sequence.

Had the Rock Island retired its wooden stock when it began introducing the new steel coaches or had it established clear operational guidance that wooden and steel cars could not be mixed in a train, the death toll would have been much lower.

As for the victims themselves, no particularly identifying characteristics emerge. About the same number of men and women died in the wreck. Ages ranged from young children to adults in their seventies. No specific ethnicity theme emerges amongst the various victims and economically, the dead and injured earned income through a variety of ways from housekeeping to store clerk to manufacturer to business manager to college professor. Many were traveling relatively short distances. The trip distance for Paul Swift and Mae Hoffman was just forty-five miles. In Olga Swenson's case, her destination was Vinton, a mere twenty-five miles up the CRI&P line. The Brown family started in Fairfield with a Waterloo destination, around one hundred miles, but still not a length requiring overnight accommodations. In looking at characteristics of the victims, the only common theme is the absence of a common theme.

Green Mountain epitomized a catastrophe that offered lessons no one wanted to learn. The coach survivors carried with them, scars from the wreck and the Rock Island successfully escaped both regulatory changes and substantial economic impact. Agents worked quickly to settle all compensation claims filed against them but could not dispose of Paul Swift's. Doctors from Marshalltown along with Dr. Waterbury from the local area all testified to the injuries Swift suffered in the crash and his permanent disability.<sup>54</sup> On April 24, 1911, the jury for *Swift v. Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway*

---

54. "District Court Proceedings," *Waterloo Times Tribune*, April 21, 1911.

*Company*, received the case. Twelve men deliberated just two hours in the Black Hawk County Courthouse third floor jury room. They voted and then returned a terse handwritten verdict back to the judge. “We the Jury find for the Plaintiff and assess the amount of his recovery at Four Thousand and Eight Hundred Dollars. Ralph A. Ellis, foreman.”<sup>55</sup>

---

55. Paul J. Swift vs. C.R.I.&P. Rwy Co, No. 15059 (Black Hawk County District Court April 24, 1911).

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

*Acts and Resolutions Passed at the Regular Session of the Seventeenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa: Begun January 14, And Ended March 26, 1878.* Des Moines, Iowa: State of Iowa, 1878.

*Albert Lea Times-Enterprise*. "Horrible Wreck on Rock Island." March 23, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.

*Ambulances, Train Wreck, March 21, 1910, Green Mountain, Iowa. March 21, 1910.* Photograph. Iowa Historical Postcards Collection (IHPC). Grinnell College Libraries Special Collections.  
<https://digital.grinnell.edu/islandora/object/grinnell%3A14399>.

Battin, John R. "Sunshine Mission Soon to Open Home For Working Girls Where Rooms May Be Had At Moderate Cost; Fine Work," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, May 3, 1919.

Blech, Dr. Gustavus M. *Bauer & Black Hand Book of First Aid In Accidents, Emergencies, Poisoning, Sunstroke, Etc.* Household ed. Chicago: Bauer & Black, 1916.

Board of Medical Examiners. *Registers of Physicians*. Vol. 1. Record Group 61. Des Moines, Iowa, n.d.

Board of Railroad Commissioners. *Eleventh Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending June 30, 1888*. Des Moines, Iowa: George E. Roberts, State Printer, 1888.

—. *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending June 30, 1891*. Des Moines, Iowa: G. H. Ragsdale, State Printer, 1891.

—. "Report to the Governor in re Investigation of Wreck of C., R. I. & P. Train on Line of Chicago Great Western Railway, Between Gladbrook and Green Mountain." *Thirty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*. Rep. No. 4389-1910 at 147 (1911).

—. *Twenty-Third Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending June 30, 1900*. Des Moines, Iowa: B. Murphy, State Printer, 1901.

Bowman, M.L. "Insect Pests On The Farm: Their Life History and Remedies." *Waterloo Evening Courier*, March 19, 1910. Newspapers.com.

Brewer, Luther A. and Barthinius L. Wick. *History of Linn County Iowa: From Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time*. Chicago: The Pioneer Publishing Company, 1911.

*Buchanan County Bulletin*. "Farmers Efforts for Cheap Transports." January 3, 1873. Chronicling America.

—. "Notes From The Capitol." February 20, 1874. Newspapers.com.

—. "Patrons of Husbandry." April 4, 1873. Chronicling America.

—. "The Election." October 17, 1873. Newspaperarchive.com.

Bureau of the Census. *Bicentennial Edition: Historical Statistics of the United States 1790-1970*. Part 1. Washington, D.C.: Department of Commerce and Labor, 1975.

—. *Eighth Decennial Census of the United States: 1860*. Census. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, July 26, 1860. familysearch.org.

—. *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 Population*. Washington, D.C.: Department of Commerce and Labor, 1910.

—. *Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920 Population*. Washington D.C.: Department of Commerce, 1920.

*Burlington Daily Hawk-Eye*. "Notes and Gleanings." March 13, 1868. Newspaperarchive.com.

*Burlington Weekly Hawk-Eye*. "The Senate Railroad Bill." February 26, 1874. Newspaperarchive.com.

"By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation of the Iowa Mutual Tornado, Cyclone and Wind Storm Insurance Association," n.d. Box 2, Folder 1. State Historical Society of Iowa, Library Archives, Des Moines.

Campbell, D.B. "Traveler Writes A Very Warm Roast." *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*. March 30, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.

*Canada West, the Last Best West, Homes for Millions* (Ottawa, Dept. of Agriculture, 1908), <http://archive.org/details/canadawestlastbe00unse>.

Carpenter, Cyrus C., Governor, Josiah T. Young, Secretary of State, Buren R. Sherman, Auditor, and William Christy, Treasurer. *Thirteenth State Census. The Census of Iowa, as Returned in the Year 1875, Showing in Detail the Population, Agricultural Statistics, Domestic and General Manufactures, and Other Items of Interest*. Des Moines, Iowa: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1875.  
<https://publications.iowa.gov/id/eprint/35554>.

*Cedar Rapids City Directory of Cedar Rapids, Marion and Kenwood, Iowa. Cedar Rapids, Iowa*: The Torch Press, 1910.

*Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*. "45 Killed and Score Injured; Frightful Wreck of Double Header-Rock Island Train." March 21, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.

—. "Another Arrest In Wreck Affair." April 4, 1910. Newspapers.com.

—. "Archie Price." March 22, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.

—. "Avalanche Death Toll Reaches 84; Peril Not Ended" March 3, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.

—. "Awful Tales Told of Wreck; Death List Is Appalling." March 22, 1910. Newspapers.com.

—. "Cards of Thanks." March 26, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.

—. "Cause Of Wreck Still A Mystery." April 1, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.

—. *Cedar Rapids City Directory*. April 16, 1906. Newspaperarchive.com.

—. "Cedar Rapids First Annual Automobile Show." March 12, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.

—. "Depot's Last Days." June 25, 1961.

—. "District Court." September 12, 1910.

—. "Doctor Thinks News Agent Fielding Insane." April 6, 1910. Newspapers.com.

—. "Fourth Arrest Made Yesterday." April 7, 1910. Newspapers.com.

—. "Jackson vs. C.,R.,I.&P." September 2, 1910. Newspapers.com.

—. "Marshalltown Wreck Delays Wedding." April 1, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.

- . “Mortuary Record of Awful Wreck of Rock Island Trains Near Gladbrook Yesterday-Brief Sketches of Cedar Rapids Victims and Their Portraits.” March 22, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Must Keep Hands Off.” April 26, 1907.
- . “One Is Killed At Shellsburg.” March 21, 1910.
- . “Rescuer Tells Graphic Story of Avalanche.” March 5, 1910.
- . “Special Edition Tonight.” March 21, 1910.
- . “Suspected of Heinous Crime.” April 2, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “The Auto Show.” March 12, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “The Mortuary Record.” March 23, 1910.
- . “Trains Buried By Avalanche; Death Toll 23.” March 2, 1910.
- . “Union Depot’s Last Stand.” July 23, 1961.
- . “Victim Refuses To Accept Offer.” April 22, 1911. Newspaperarchive.com.
- . “Wrecked Train Arrived Today.” March 26, 1910.
- Cedar Rapids Daily Republican*. “Chicago and Northwestern.” March 18, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.
- . “Met An Open Switch; Went Down Into Creek.” March 22, 1910. advantage-preservation.com.
- Cedar Rapids Gazette*. “M.B. Dillon, Retired Railway Conductor Dies.” February 29, 1936. cedarrapids.advantage-preservation.com.
- Cedar Rapids Times*. “Commercial: Cedar Rapids Markets.” June 12, 1873. cedarrapids.advantage-preservation.com.
- Cedar Rapids Tribune*. “Rock Island Shop News.” March 25, 1910.
- The Cedar Valley Times*. “Commercial: Cedar Rapids Market.” June 11, 1863. cedarrapids.advantage-preservation.com.

- “Certificate of Death: Mary Robinson.” Linn County, August 3, 1909. Book 3, Page 109. Linn County Recorder.
- “Certificate of Death: Mrs. Hester A. Robb.” Linn County, February 8, 1910. Book 3, Page 118. Linn County Recorder.
- Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway Company. *Local Passenger Tariff No.2*. Issued July 3, 1907. B.R. Dw Collection of Railroadiana. Box 2, MsC 497.
- . *Rules and Regulations for the Government of Employés of the Operating Department*. Chicago. Cameron, Amberg & Co, 1904.
- . *Station Directory: June 13, 1917 to January 10, 1918*, undated. Form 859 A James H. Windsor Collection of Railroadiana. Windsor, James H. n10:01:3-n10:03:1; mp:15:6, msc0521, Box 2.
- . *Rock Island Lines January 1910 Train Schedule*. Chicago: Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway Company, 1910.
- Clarke, George W., Governor, William S. Allen, Secretary of State, William C. Brown, Treasurer, and Frank S. Shaw, Auditor. *Census of Iowa For The Year 1915*. Des Moines, Iowa: Robert Henderson, State Printer, 1915.  
<https://publications.iowa.gov/id/eprint/38119>.
- Clayton County Journal*. “A New Secret Organization.” November 3, 1869. Chronicling America.
- Coe College*, “A Personal Tribute.” Coe College, n.d. Faculty, Individual. George T. Henry College Archives, Stewart Memorial Library, Coe College.
- Daily Gate City*. “Keokuk Officers Saw Capture.” April 4, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- Delano R.N., Jane A. *American Red Cross Text-Book on Home Hygiene and Care of the Sick*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: P. Blakiston’s Son & Co., 1918.
- Des Moines Bystander*. “First Wreck Suit.” April 15, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Robber of Dead Arrested.” April 8, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- Des Moines Evening Tribune*. “Commission Makes Report of Its Work.” April 6, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Fix Blame For Deadly Train Wreck.” March 29, 1910. Newspapers.com.

- . “Railways Blamed In Wreck Report.” June 6, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Says Road Was In Bad Shape.” March 31, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Says Speed Of Train Not Too High.” March 30, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Two More Die of Injuries.” March 23, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Weather Record Goes By Board.” March 23, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “White Died A Hero In The Wreck.” March 25, 1910. Newspapers.com.

*Des Moines Leader*. “Col. Palmer Is Named.” March 23, 1898. Newspapers.com.

*Des Moines Register and Leader*. “Awful Scene Follows Derailment of Double Header Passenger Near Green Mountain.” March 22, 1910.

- . “Eaton Views Wreck.” March 22, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Held For Robbing The Dead.” April 2, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Lewis In Wreck Probe.” April 7, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “One Des Moines Man Dead.” March 22, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Rail Board Takes Wreck Testimony.” March 30, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Railroad Notes.” July 20, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Says Roadbed Was Unsafe.” June 7, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Sues The Rock Island.” August 25, 1910. Newspapers.com.

*Disastrous Wreck March 21, 1910, Gladbrook, Iowa*. March 21, 1910. Photograph. Iowa Historical Postcards Collection (IHPC). Grinnell College Libraries Special Collections. <https://digital.grinnell.edu/islandora/object/grinnell%3A14407>.

Dodge, George M. *The Telegraph Instructor*. Valparaiso, Indiana, 1901.  
<https://books.google.com/books?id=zrxLAAAYAAJ>

*Dubuque Daily Times*. “The Railroad Bill Under A Cloud.” March 5, 1874.  
 Newspaperarchive.com.

Dunn, Leslie. Letter. "Grandmother Farnham's 96 Years of the 19th Century." Letter, n.d. Folder 1. University of Iowa Women's Archives.

*Fairfield Daily Journal*. "Obituary." March 30, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.

"First Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners for the Year Ending June 30, 1878." Annual. Des Moines: Iowa Railroad Commission, 1878. [babel.hathitrust.org](http://babel.hathitrust.org).

Frazer, Fredrick Taylor. "What Men Will Wear This Autumn." *Ladies Home Journal*, September 1909. [babel.hathitrust.org](http://babel.hathitrust.org).

*Freeborn County Directory: 1909*. St. Paul: R. I. Polk & Co, 1909.

Getz, H. L. "Dr. Getz Has A Word." *Marshalltown Evening Times-Republican*. November 26, 1901.

Gibson, Charles R. *How Telegraphs and Telephones Work: Explained in Non-Technical Language*. London: Seeley and Co. Limited, 1909.

*Gladbrook, Green Mountain, Iowa, Rock Island Railroad Wreck, Ambulances at Marshalltown*. March 21, 1910. Photograph. Photolibrarian. flickr.com. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/photolibrarian/4320668788/>.

Graham, C. R. "Strong Commendation." *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, May 18, 1907. Newspapers.com.

*Greene Recorder*. "Loren W. Reynolds Answers Summons While at Post of Duty." March 23, 1910. Newspapers.com.

Grimes, James W., E. Sells, and J. Pattee. *The Census Returns of the Different Counties of the State of Iowa, For 1856: Showing in Detail, The Population, Place of Nativity, Agricultural Statistics, Domestic and General Manufactures, Etc.* Iowa City: Crum & Boye, Printers, 1857. <https://publications.iowa.gov/id/eprint/38115>.

Historic Iowa Postcard Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Grinnell College Libraries.

Huston, George. "Check to J.W. Murphy for Services as Lecturer," December 14, 1878. Box 2, Folder 1. State Historical Society of Iowa, Library Archives, Des Moines.

Iowa. Board of Railroad Commissioners. "Map of Iowa, Issued by the Board of Railroad Commissioners, 1915." 8 Miles to 1 Inch. Rand McNally and Company, 1915. Map Collection. University of Iowa Libraries.  
[https://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/islandora/object/ui%3Asheetmaps\\_2](https://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/islandora/object/ui%3Asheetmaps_2).

"Iowa State Census, 1905," State Historical Department, Des Moines. [familysearch.org](http://familysearch.org).

Iowa House of Representatives. *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, In Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 12, 1874*. Des Moines, Iowa: State Printer, R.P. Clarkson, 1874.

—. *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Sixteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Convened at the Capitol, in Des Moines, Iowa, January 10, 1876*. Des Moines, Iowa: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1876.

—. *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Twenty-Fifth General Assembly of the State of Iowa Which Convened at the Capitol in Des Moines, Iowa January 8, 1894*. Des Moines, Iowa: State of Iowa, 1894.

—. *Journal of the House of the Thirty-Second General Assembly of the State of Iowa Which Convened at the Capitol at Des Moines January 14, 1907 and Adjourned Sine Die April 9, 1907*. Des Moines: State of Iowa, 1907.

Iowa Railroad Commissioners. "Railroad Map of Iowa." Des Moines, Iowa, 1881. Geography and Map Division. Library of Congress.  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/98688480>.

*Iowa Recorder*. "Miss Mae Hoffman." August 18, 1909.

Iowa Senate. *Journal of the Senate of the Fifteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa, Which Assembled at the Capitol at Des Moines, January 12, 1874*. Des Moines: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1874.

—. *Journal of the Senate of the Sixteenth General Assembly of the State of Iowa Which Convened at the Capital at Des Moines, January 10, 1876*. Des Moines, Iowa: R.P. Clarkson, State Printer, 1876.

—. *Journal of the Senate of the Twenty-Seventh General Assembly of the State of Iowa Which Convened at the Capitol at Des Moines, January 10, 1898*. Des Moines, Iowa: F.R. Conaway, State Printer, 1898.

*Iowa State Register*. "A Diagonal Deflection: A Plan by Which East Des Moines May Loose Some Prospective Railway Track." April 27, 1883.

- . “An Agreement Finally.” January 23, 1874, Daily edition. Newspapers.com.
- . “Diagonal Activity: Reports of Progress and Energy from the North End of the Line.” March 10, 1883. Newspapers.com.
- . “Iowa Legislature: Yesterday’s Proceedings of the Regular Session of the Fifteenth General Assembly - Senate.” February 6, 1874, Daily edition. Newspapers.com.
- . “Iowa State Register: Laws of Iowa.” February 28, 1874. Newspapers.com.
- . “Last Night.” January 16, 1874, Daily ed. Newspapers.com.
- . “No Speaker Yet.” January 21, 1874. Newspapers.com.
- . “Railroad Matters: The Diagonal Company Still Independent and Alone.” September 23, 1883. Newspapers.com.
- . “Railroad Matters: The Diagonal Headquarters.” August 4, 1883. Newspapers.com.
- . “The Diagonal In Town: Arrangements Made for It to Come in on the C., B. & Q Road.” December 21, 1883. Newspapers.com.
- . “The Diagonal Push: Brief Statements Made by Messrs. Fisher, Woolston and Gillman--To Des Moines By Christmas.” March 13, 1883. Newspapers.com.
- . “The Diagonal Transferred.” n.d. Newspapers.com.
- . “The Fun of It.” January 14, 1874. Newspapers.com.
- . “The Hanging House.” January 16, 1874, Daily edition. Newspapers.com.
- . “What Of The Diagonal? Mr. Wilson Has Left It for the People to Decide.” May 1, 1883. Newspapers.com.
- Iowa Voter*. “As Democracy Sees It.” November 6, 1873. Chronicling America.
- . “General News Summary.” October 23, 1873. Chronicling America.
- Jackson, Frank D. “Census of Iowa for the Year 1885.” *Census*. Des Moines, Iowa: Iowa Secretary of State, 1885.
- Journal and Tribune*. “Sixteen Hour Service Law.” January 19, 1907. Newspapers.com.

Kirby, George F. "He Built A Railroad." *Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*. June 14, 1902. Chronicling America.

Lynch, Colonel Charles. *American Red Cross Text-Book on First Aid*. 2nd Woman's. Philadelphia: P. Blakiston's Sone & Co, 1918.

*Marshall Statesman*. "Almost Unanimous." May 6, 1882. Roll D6-5. Marshalltown Public Library.

—. "Glad-Broke Merchants: Their Grief--Attempt to Blame the Railroad Officials." September 30, 1882. Microfilm Roll 6-5. Marshalltown Public Library.

—. "The Contract Is Let for the W.I.N." July 1, 1882. Microfilm Roll 6-5. Marshalltown Public Library.

—. "The Diagonal, or W. I. & N.: Who Is Building It, What Is Proposed, The Kind of Road Being Built." January 1, 1883. Microfilm Roll 6-5. Marshalltown Public Library.

—. "The First Shovel on the Great Diagonal." July 15, 1882. D 6-5. Marshalltown Public Library.

—. "R. T. Wilson, the Diagonal Magnate." December 1, 1883. Marshalltown Library Digital Archive.

—. "Who Owns The Diagonal." December 15, 1883. Marshalltown.advantage-preservation.com. Marshalltown Digitized Park Library.

—. "The W.I.N. North." April 29, 1882. Roll D6-5. Marshalltown Public Library.

—. "W.I.N." April 8, 1882. Roll D6-5. Marshalltown Public Library.

—. "Will It Succeed: Concerning the Diagonal." May 5, 1883. Digital Archives of the Marshalltown Public Library. <http://marshalltown.advantage-preservation.com>.

—. "Wilson Visit November 1883." December 1, 1883. Marshalltown.advantage-preservation.com. Marshalltown Digitized Park Library.

*Marshalltown City Directory 1910: Comprising an Alphabetically Arranged List of Business Firms and Private Citizens--Miscellaneous Directory, City and County Officers, Public and Private Schools, Churches, Banks, Secret and Benevolent Societies An A Complete Classified Business Directory*. Fargo, North Dakota: Pettibone Directory Co, 1910.

- Marshalltown Evening Times Republican*. "Anniversary of Wreck." March 22, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . "Cause of Wreck Is Still Unknown: No Cause yet Brought Out For Terrible Rock Island Wreck Disaster." March 30, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . "Clifford Thorne's Candidacy." March 16, 1910. Chronicling America.
- . "Cold is Intense," *Marshalltown Times-Republican*, January 6, 1910.
- . "Conditions Fast Becoming Normal." March 24, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . "Contract Let At \$1.97." June 10, 1902.
- . "Death List in Monday's Terrible Wreck near Green mountain Reaches total of Forty-Seven." March 22, 1910.
- . "Dr. Jay Among Injured." March 21, 1910. Evening-Times Republican Archive. Chronicling America.
- . "Dr. Jay Answers Death Summons." May 6, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . "Dr. Jay Very Ill." May 4, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . "Dr. Jay's Funeral." May 9, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . "F.L. Doherty, C.G.W. Agent, Will Quit." August 4, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . "Fear Worst In Case of Dr. E.W. Jay." May 5, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . "Jay Elijah Obituary." May 6, 1910.
- . "Jay For Coroner." April 30, 1908. Newspapers.com.
- . "Five Added To List; More Are Identified." March 22, 1910.
- . "Hospital Fund Growing Nicely." May 7, 1903.
- . "Hospital Is Complete." May 18, 1900.
- . "Hurried With Help." March 22, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . "Investigation of Wreck Commenced: Railroad Commissioners Begin Probe to Learn Cause of Great Disaster." March 29, 1910. Newspapers.com.

- . “Kirby Gives \$1,000.” January 18, 1902.
- . “Landslide for Ingledue In Monday’s Election.” March 26, 1907. Newspapers.com.
- . “Local Comment.” November 3, 1900.
- . “Mayor And Dr. Jay Have Lively Tilt.” March 17, 1908. Newspapers.com.
- . “Mighell Gets C. G. W.” March 30, 1906. Newspapers.com.
- . “Moved to Marshalltown.” November 11, 1904. Newspapers.com.
- . “Mr. Slimmer’s Plans.” January 21, 1902.
- . “Nearly Forty Dead, Many Hurt In Wreck.” March 21, 1910. Chronicling America. Library of Congress.
- . “New District Surgeon.” March 23, 1906. Newspapers.com.
- . “Operation For Dr. Jay.” November 25, 1909. Newspapers.com.
- . “Parrish Is Mourned.” March 22, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “R. R. Commission Finds No Cause.” June 6, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Railroad Time Table: Chicago Great Western ‘Maple Leaf Route.’” January 29, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Railroads Too Strong.” July 31, 1902. Newspapers.com.
- . “Ready For Dedication.” October 29, 1903. Newspapers.com.
- . “Section Man Meets Death Under Wheels.” May 29, 1908. Newspapers.com.
- . “Start Hospital Fund.” January 14, 1902.
- . “Suspects Had Jewels.” April 7, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Suspect ‘Newsy’ Of Robbing The Dead.” April 2, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “The Narrow Road Problem.” January 1, 1910.
- . “The Parrish Funeral.” March 23, 1910. Newspapers.com.

- . “Third Arrest Made.” April 5, 1910. Newspapers.com.
  - . “Topics of the Times.” August 18, 1899.
  - . “Twenty Below Zero.” January 6, 1910.
  - . “Victim’s Wife Dies.” March 28, 1910. Newspapers.com.
  - . “Wreck Attracts Thousands.” March 22, 1910. Newspapers.com.
  - . “Wreck Inquiry to Be Held Tuesday: Many Railroad Officials and Employees Cited to Appear Before Commission.” March 28, 1910. Newspapers.com.
  - . “Wreck Thief Held.” April 2, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- McCoy’s Waterloo City Directory 1909-1910*. 7th ed. Rockford, Illinois: The McCoy Directory Company, 1910.
- Mears and Lovejoy. “Petition at Law.” Black Hawk County District Court, January 1911. Black Hawk County Clerk of Court.
- Missouri Valley Times*. “Commission Reports on Railroad Wreck.” June 9, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- Moltke, Helmuth Graf von. 1900, *Moltkes Militärische Werke: II. Die Thätigkeit als Chef des Generalstabes der Armee im Frieden. Aufsatz vom Jahre 1871 Ueber Strategie*. Zweiter Theil., 1871. books.google.com
- Muscatine Weekly Journal*. “A Fair Proposition By The Republicans Rejected By The ’Anti-Monopolists.” January 23, 1874. Newspapers.com.
- . “An Election Was Held at Cedar Falls.” November 16, 1883. Newspapers.com.
- New York Times*. “John Steibling Is Dead.” March 30, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “WILSON DEATH PUTS MANY IN MOURNING,” November 27, 1910.
- Occasionally, “Iowa Correspondence: Importance of Developing Local Business,” *Railroad Gazette*, April 16, 1870, pub\_railway-age, Internet Archive.
- Osage News*. “Osage Loses Foremost Citizen.” June 15, 1911. State Historical Society of Iowa, Library Archives, Des Moines.

*Oskaloosa Herald*. "Gideons of Iowa: Annual Meeting of Association of Christian Traveling Men in Oskaloosa Is a Grand Success." January 7, 1904. Newspapers.com.

*Ottumwa Weekly Courier*. "Obituary." January 9, 1889.

—. "Ottumwans Are Chosen." October 1, 1907. Newspapers.com.

—. "Understanding Senator Merrill's Vote." March 5, 1874. Newspaperarchive.com.

Parish, L. W. *Institute Economics and Civics for Iowa Teachers*. Cedar Falls, Iowa: Gazette Book And Job Printing House, 1896.

"Paul J. Swift vs. C.R.I.&P Ry Co.: Instructions." Black Hawk County District Court, February 1911. Black Hawk County Clerk of Court.

Perkins, Jay, M.D. "The Fresh Air School." *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 164, no. 1. 1911.

*Perry Daily Chief*. "Iowa News Notes." April 15, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.

*Railroad Gazette*. "Railroad Construction in the United States in 1871," January 13, 1872. Pub\_railway-age. Archive.org.

"Railroad map of Iowa, 1881," Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners, Western Litho Co., 1881. Courtesy of University of Iowa Libraries and Archives

*Record of Charters Sent Out and Consolidations of Granges Revocals*, n.d. State Historical Society of Iowa Library Archives, Des Moines. Box 1. Folder 2. BD-IO765

Richards, J. W. "Railroad Talk: A Few Words Concerning the Advantage of Railroads in General, and the Necessity of Securing the W., I. & N. In Particular."

*Waterloo Courier*. April 26, 1882. Newspapers.com.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/356569032/>.

*Rock Island Argus*. "Fix Blame In Terrible Iowa Wreck." March 22, 1910.

*Rock Island Lines Train Schedule*. Chicago: Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway Company, n.d.

*Rock Island Train Wreck, March 21, 1910, Green Mountain, Iowa.* March 21, 1910. Photograph. Iowa Historical Postcard Collection (IHPC). Grinnell College Libraries Special Collection.  
<https://digital.grinnell.edu/islandora/object/grinnell%3A14396>.

“Rock Island Train Wreck, March 21, 1910.” AZO, 1910. Iowa Historical Postcard Collection (IHPC). Grinnell College Libraries Special Collection.  
<https://digital.grinnell.edu/islandora/object/grinnell%3A13547/datastream/OBJ/view>.

Russell, F. F., M.D. “The Prevention and Treatment of Typhoid Fever.” *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 164, no. 1 (1911).

*Second Engine and Pullman Green Mt. Wreck.* March 21, 1910. Photograph. Grinnell College Libraries Special Collection.  
[https://digital.grinnell.edu/islandora/object/grinnell:14480/datastream/MEDIUM\\_SIZE/view](https://digital.grinnell.edu/islandora/object/grinnell:14480/datastream/MEDIUM_SIZE/view).

*St. Louis Globe-Democrat.* “The Iowa Diagonal.” March 12, 1883. Newspapers.com.

*Sioux City Daily Journal.* “Another Iowa Road: Prospectus of the Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska--The Township Bonds Plan.” April 7, 1882, Morning edition.  
<http://www.newspapers.com/image/416375712/>.

—. “Mere Mentions.” November 7, 1879. Newspapers.com.

—. “Two Dead In Wreck.” September 13, 1909.  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/436701455/>

—. “Wanted Their Pay.” September 27, 1882. Newspapers.com.

*Sioux Falls Daily Argus-Leader.* “‘Who Is Who’ In Sioux Falls.” April 7, 1910. Newspapers.com.

*Sunshine Mission Annual Report 1912*, undated, Linn County History Center. Sunshine Mission folder.

*Sunshine Mission Annual Report*, December, 1922. Linn County History Center. Sunshine Mission folder.

“Third Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners, for the Year Ending June 30, 1880.” Annual. Board of Railroad Commissioners Annual Report. Des Moines: General Assembly, June 20, 1880. Hathitrust.org.

- Tipton Advertiser*. "From The Capitol." February 5, 1874. Newspapers.com.
- . "What the Grangers Have Accomplished." February 20, 1873. Chronicling America.
- Toledo Chronicle*. "The Election." October 16, 1873. Newspaperarchive.com.
- U.S. Census Office. "United States Census 1850." *Schedule I—Free Inhabitants of the County of Hampden State of Massachusetts Enumerated By Me On the 5<sup>th</sup> Day of Aug 1850*. FamilySearch.org.  
<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-DYXS-9WR?i=70&cc=1401638>.
- Vinton Eagle*. "45 People Die In Terrible Wreck." March 22, 1910. bentoncounty.advantage-preservation.com.
- . "Another Wreck at Shellsburg Sunday." March 22, 1910. bentoncounty.advantage-preservation.com.
- . "Banks Do Pay Interest on County Deposits." October 18, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . "Consolidated Statement of Benton County Banks." July 19, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . "Elected Manager." January 25, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . "No. 32 Derailed." March 25, 1910. bentoncounty.advantage-preservation.com.
- . "Rock Island Timetable." January 4, 1910. bentoncounty.advantage-preservation.com.
- . "Urbach Bros. & Lemis." January 14, 1910. bentoncounty.advantage-preservation.com.
- . "Victims of Rock Island Wreck Now Number 49." March 25, 1910. advantage-preservation.com.
- Vinton Review*. "Weather Crop Bulletin." September 29, 1909. bentoncounty.advantage-preservation.com.
- Washington County News*. "Land Is Cheap In Southland." September 1, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- Waterloo Daily Courier*. "32 Complete Work in W.B.C." August 3, 1909.

- . “A Glorious Victory! Railroad Tax Carried By A Majority of Nearly 1,000 In Waterloo and East Waterloo T’wps.” May 3, 1882. Newspapers.com.
- . “Again The Diagonal.” July 19, 1882. Newspapers.com.
- . “City in Brief.” July 19, 1909.
- . “Des Moines and the Diagonal.” March 7, 1883. Newspapers.com.
- . “Diagonal Doings: The Revolution in TheManagement--How Work Is Progressing and Preparations for Spring.” January 17, 1883. Newspapers.com.
- . “Diagonal Dots: Three Surveying Parties Now on the Lines Southwest of Des Moines.” March 14, 1883.
- . “Diagonal News.” September 20, 1882. Newspapers.com.
- . “Diagonal News: An Explanation of the Trouble at Gladbrook--Other Items.” October 11, 1882. Newspapers.com.
- . “Diagonal Notes.” June 27, 1883. Newspapers.com.
- . “Gov. Robert Glenn Will Speak Again.” July 26, 1909.
- . “Graduates Hear Noted Speaker.” August 11, 1909.
- . “Miss Hoffman Tells of Contest.” October 2, 1909.
- . “Miss Mae Hoffman As A Type Of ‘Beauty In Business’.” January 17, 1910.
- . “Notes of Wreck.” March 21, 1910.
- . “Notice of Special Election in Waterloo Township, BlackHawk County, Iowa.” December 5, 1883. Newspapers.com.
- . “Swift is Given \$4,800 By Jury.” April 25, 1911.
- . “Supt. McMichael.” February 11, 1885. Newspapers.com.
- . “The Diagonal.” February 21, 1883. Newspapers.com.
- . “The Diagonal: Des Moines Does Not Want It.” October 4, 1882. Newspapers.com.
- . “The Diagonal: Is It to Be Built to Waterloo or Not?” May 2, 1883. Newspapers.com.

- . “The Great Diagonal.” June 28, 1882. Newspapers.com.
- . “Turned Over To County.” August 6, 1902.
- . “W., I. & N. R’y.: Those Letters Mean the ‘Wisconsin, Iowa & Nebraska Railway’, a New Iowa Trunk Line!” April 12, 1882. Newspapers.com.
- . “Waterloo Girl Shows Great Speed on Typewriter.” August 14, 1909.
- . “Waterloo Girls to Enter Contest.” June 3, 1909.
- . “Woolston Arrested.” October 18, 1882. Newspapers.com.
- “District Court Proceedings,” Waterloo Times Tribune, April 21, 1911, Newspaperarchive.com.
- Waterloo Evening Courier*. “Like Horrible Nightmare.” March 22, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.
- . “Misery Seen In The Hospital.” March 22, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.
- . “Miss Hoffman Identified.” March 22, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Miss Mae Hoffman As A Type of ‘Beauty In Business.’” January 17, 1910. Newspapers.com.
- . “Prof. L.W. Parish Victim of Wreck.” March 21, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.
- . “Sorrowful Scenes Surround the Morgue and Hospital.” March 22, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.
- . “Thrilling Story By Eye Witness.” March 21, 1910. Newspaperarchive.com.
- . “Turned Over To County.” August 6, 1902. Newspaperarchive.com.
- Waterloo Times-Tribune*. “Court Adjourns Until Monday.” April 22, 1911.
- . “District Court Proceedings.” April 21, 1911.
- Weaver, J. *Martin v. Des Moines Edison Light Co.*, 131 Iowa 724 (Iowa Supreme Court 1906).

*Webster City Tribune*. "Rock Island Stops Suit." October 7, 1910.  
Newspaperarchive.com.

*Weekly Oskaloosa Herald*. "A Second Sober Thought." January 2, 1873.  
Chronicling America.

Wellington, Arther Mellen. *The Economic Theory of the Location of Railways: An Analysis of the Conditions Controlling the Laying out of Railways to Effect the Most Judicious Expenditure of Capital*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1887.

*West Branch Times*. "All West Branch and Vicinituy in Mourning." March 24, 1910.  
westbranch.advantage-preservation.com.

—. "Council Proceedings." June 17, 1909. westbranch.advantage-preservation.com.

—. "Of Local Interest." January 6, 1910. westbranch.advantage-preservation.com.

Wilson, Lewis A., and Oakley Furney. *Suggested Unit Course in Locomotive Firing*. Albany, New York: University of the State of New York, State Education Department, Bureau of Industrial and Technical Education, 1944.  
<https://www.railarchive.net/firing/cover.htm>.

## Secondary Sources

*A Century of Farming in Iowa 1846-1946*. Ames, IA: The Iowa State College Press, 1946.

Aldrich, Charles, ed. "Moses Ayres McCoid." *The Annals of Iowa: A Historical Quarterly*, Third, 6 (May 1903).  
<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/HD/922658.pdf>.

Arthur, John, and William H. Shaw. *Readings In The Philosophy of Law*. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993.

Aquinas, Sister Mary. Letter. "Sister Mary Aquinas, R.S.M. Gave The Following Information." Letter, n.d. Health Care HC 2.14. Sisters of Mercy Chicago Regional Community.

Backoff, William. Green Mountain Materials Review, July 20, 2022.

Barry, John M. *The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History*. New York: Penguin Books, 2018.

- Beal, Maxine, Leslie Beal, Elizabeth Hardacre Helen Degner. *Green Mountain, Iowa: Centennial Year 1983*. No publication date. Marshall County Historical Society 503 W. Main, Marshalltown, Iowa.
- Becker, Carl L. "Everyman His Own Historian." *American Historical Review* 37, no. 2 (1931): 221–36.
- Bliven, Jr., Bruce. *The Wonderful Writing Machine*. New York: Random House, 1954.
- Bourne, Jenny. *In Essentials Unity: An Economic History of the Grange Movement*. New Approaches To Midwestern Studies. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017.
- Brands, Hal, and Francis J. Gavin. "The Historical Profession Is Committing Slow-Motion Suicide." *History News Network* (blog), December 10, 2019. <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/170663>.
- Carpenter, William Sanford. *Text of the Extension Service Course of the Hohenschuh-Carpenter College of Embalming*. Lesson 1. Des Moines, Iowa: Hohenschuh-Carpenter College of Embalming, 1917.
- Cedar Rapids Historic Postcards*. Cedar Rapids: Gazette Communications, 2005.
- Cedar Rapids Gazette*. "Depot's Last Days," June 25, 1961.
- . "Union Depot's Last Stand." July 23, 1961.
- . "Union Station Nears Completion—As A Replica." April 16, 2008.
- Clampitt, Frank T. "Some Incidents In My Life: The Saga Of The 'Unknown' Citizen," n.d. Olson/Clampitt Memoirs, Box 1. University of Iowa Women's Archives.
- Dinwiddie, James C. *History of Iowa County Iowa and Its People* vol 1. Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1915.
- Bowler, Peter J., and Iwan Rhys Morus. *Making Modern Science: A Historical Survey*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020.
- "David James Palmer." *The Annals of Iowa* 16, no. 8 (Spring 1929): 632–33.
- Davies, Hannah Catherine. *Transatlantic Speculations: Globalization and the Panics of 1873*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.
- Donovan, Jr., Frank P., and Harry Bedwell. "Iowa's First Railroad." *The Palimpsest* 44, no. 9 (September 1963): 381–86.

Dreier, Peter, and Donald Cohen. "The Fire Last Time: Worker Safety Laws After the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire." *Race, Poverty & the Environment* 18, no. 1 (2011): 30–33.

*Economist*. "The Trouble With The Past." June 12, 2021.  
<https://www.economist.com/books-and-arts/2021/06/10/the-trouble-with-the-past>.

Editorial Department. "John Henry Gear." *The Annals of Iowa* 4, no. 7 (1900): 555–56.

Engler, George Nichols. "The Typewriter Industry: The Impact of a Significant Technological Innovation." PhD diss. University of California Los Angeles, 1969.

*Fanning's Illustrated Gazetteer of the United States, Giving The Location, Physical Aspect, Mountains, Rivers, Lakes, Climate, Productive and Manufacturing Resources, Commerce, Government, Education, General History, Etc. of the States, Territories, Counties, Cities, Towns, and Post-Offices in the American Union, With The Population and Other Statistics From the Census of 1850*. (New York: Phelps, Fanning & Co., 1853), <https://lccn.loc.gov/02006380>.

Goble, Dillon. "Cab Ride on the Nevada Northern 81 Steam Locomotive - YouTube." Video. YouTube, 2021. <https://youtu.be/syzQzIXfMJI>.

*Good Morning Vietnam*. 35mm, Biography. Buena Vista Pictures Distribution, 1987.

Grant, H. Roger. *A Mighty Fine Road: A History of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Company*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020.

—. *The Corn Belt Route: A History of the Chicago Great Western Railroad Company*. Dekalb: Norther Illinois University Press, 1984.

—. "The Green Mountain Train Wreck: An Iowa Railroad Tragedy." *The Palimpsest* 65 (1984). 135-145.

"Edward H. Thayer." *The Annals of Iowa* 6, no. 8 (1905): 637–38.

Ewing, Elizabeth. *History of 20th Century Fashion*. Edited by Alice Mackrell. 3rd ed. New York: Costume & Fashion Press, 1992.

*Hancock County Democrat*. "Mustered Out." September 21, 1905.  
<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/HD/922695.pdf>.

Hambrey, Michael. *Glacial Environments*. Vancouver, British Columbia: UBC Press, 1994.

- Hill, Luther B. *History of Benton County Iowa*. Vol. I. Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, n.d.
- Hillel, Daniel. *Environmental Soil Physics*. San Diego: Academic Press, 1998.
- Historic Map Works LLC. "Cedar and Rapids Township, Atlas: Linn County 1907, Iowa Historical Map." Accessed August 30, 2022.  
<http://www.historicmapworks.com/Map/US/23138/Cedar+and+Rapids+Township/Linn+County+1907/Iowa/>.
- Howe, Daniel Walker. *What God Hath Wrought: The Transformation of America 1815-1848*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Hull, Judith Yarger. *Roads, Railroads and Trolley Cars of Marion*. Marion, IA: Marion Historic Preservation Commission, 2007.
- Illinois Railway Museum. "Illinois Railway Museum: Frisco 1630 Steam Cab Ride IRM Steam - YouTube." Video. YouTube. Accessed January 28, 2023.  
<https://youtu.be/R2GrYoW80E>.
- Inkster, Ian. *History of Technology*. Vol. 33. London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2017.
- Iowa General Assembly. "State Representative." The Iowa Legislature. Accessed February 15, 2023.  
<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/legislator/legislatorAllYears?personID=4859>.
- Kitch, Carolyn. *The Girl On The Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes In American Mass Media*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001.
- Krambeck, F. Wesley, William D. Edson, and Jack W. Farrell. *Rock Island Steam Power*. Boston: Edson Publications, 2002.
- Landis, Leo. *Building Better Roads: Iowa's Contribution to Highway Engineering 1904-1974*. Ames, IA: Center for Transportation Research and Education, 1997.
- Laver, James. *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History*. 5th ed. World of Art. New York: Thames & Hudson, Inc., 1982.
- Lawrence, Susan C. "Iowa Physicians: Legitimacy, Institutions, and the Practice of Medicine." *Annals of Iowa* 62, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 151–200.  
<https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.10680>.

- Marshalltown Times-Republican*. "Memories revived at Evangelical School of Nursing Anniversary Luncheon." May 5, 2019.
- . "N.S. Ketchum Is Called By Death." January 18, 1915. Newspapers.com.
- Macdougall, Doug. *Frozen Earth : The Once and Future Story of Ice Ages*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Mayer, Robert G. *Embalming: History, Theory, and Practice*. Norwalk, Connecticut: Appleton & Lange, 1990.
- McCabe, Carol. "The Mill Girls of Lowell." *Early American Life* 32, no. 5 (2001): 34–37, 69–71.
- McEvoy, Arthur F. "The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911: Social Change, Industrial Accidents, and the Evolution of Common-Sense Causality." *Law & Social Inquiry* 20, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 621–51.
- McGeer, Michael. *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America 1870-1920*. New York: Free Press, 2003.
- Mencken, August. *The Railroad Passenger Car: An Illustrated History of the First Hundred Years With Accounts by Contemporary Passengers*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957.
- Millam, D. "The History of Intravenous Therapy." *Journal of Intravenous Nursing* 19, no. 1 (February 1996): 5–14.
- Miner, H. Craig. *The Most Magnificent Machine: America Adopts the Railroad, 1825-1862*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010.
- Nash, Gerald D. "The Census of 1890 and the Closing of the Frontier." *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (1980): 98–100.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40490574>.
- "Nathaniel S. Ketchum." *The Annals of Iowa* 12, no. 1 (1915): 78.  
<https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.4020>.
- Nitschke, Christoph. "Theory and History of Financial Crises: Explaining the Panic of 1873." *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 17 (2018): 221–40.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537781417000810>.

- Norris, Mrs. J.W., Mrs. Guilford Collison, Mrs. Nile Oldham, and Mrs. E.J. Marble.  
“Marshall County Courthouse National Register of Historic Places Inventory –  
Nomination Form,” 1972. National Registry of Historic Places.
- O'Donnell, Edward T. *Ship Ablaze: The Tragedy of the Steamboat General Slocum*. New  
York: Broadway Books, 2003.
- Puskar, Jason. *Accident Society: Fiction, Collectivity, and the Production of Chance*.  
Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.
- . “Curriculum Vitae: Jason Puskar.” University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, n.d.  
<https://uwm.edu/english/our-people/puskar-jason/>.
- Portrait and Biographical Record of Jasper, Marshall and Grundy Counties, Iowa:  
Containing Biographical Sketches of Prominent and Representative Citizens of  
the Counties*. Chicago: Biographical Publishing Co, 1894.
- Post, Charles. *The American Road to Capitalism: Studies in Class-Structure, Economic  
Development and Political Conflict, 1620-1877*. Historical Materialism Book  
Series. Leiden: Brill, 2011.
- Prior, Jean C. *Landforms of Iowa*. 1st ed. University of Iowa Press, 1991.
- Rasdal, Dave. *Czech Village & New Bohemia: History in the Heartland*. Charleston, SC:  
The History Press, 2016.
- Remes, Jacob A. C. and Andy Horowitz. *Critical Disaster Studies*. Philadelphia:  
University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021.
- Sanders, Elizabeth. *Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State 1877-  
1917*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Santino, Jack. *Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle: Stories of Black Pullman Porters*.  
American Folklore Series. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.
- Seeley, Rod R., Trent D. Stephens, and Philip Tate. *Essentials of Anatomy & Physiology*.  
6th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007.
- Sinclair, Upton. *The Jungle*. Edited by Joslyn T. Pine. Mineola, New York: Dover  
Publications, 2001.
- Snook, Jim. *Ice Age Extinction: Cause and Human Consequences*. New York: Algora  
Publishing, 2008.

- Slayton, Robert A. *Empire Statesman: The Rise and Redemption of Al Smith*. New York: The Free Press, 2001.
- Stanek, Edward, and Stanek, Jacqueline. *Iowa's Magnificent County Courthouses*. Des Moines, Iowa: Wallace-Homestead Book Company, 1976.
- State of Iowa. *A Short Description for the Advice of Immigrants*. State of Iowa, 1861. State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City Center. Box 1, MS51.
- The History of Benton County, Iowa, Containing A History of the County, Its Cities, Towns, &c.* Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1878.
- Twenty-Two Years' History of The Gideons: The Christian Commercial Travelers' Association of America 1899-1921*. First ed. Chicago: National Association of Gideons, 1921.
- Tye, Larry. *Rising From the Rails: Pullman Porters and the Making of the Black Middle Class*. New York: Owl Books, 2004.
- Usselman, Steven W. "Air Brakes for Freight Trains: Technological Innovation in the American Railroad Industry, 1869-1900." *The Business History Review* 58, no. 1 (1984): 30–50. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3114527>.
- Pine, Vanderlyn R. *Caretaker of the Dead*. New York: Irvington Publishers, Inc., 1975.
- "Union - Iowa Infantry (Part 3)." Accessed March 14, 2023. <http://www.civilwararchive.com/Unreght/uniainf3.htm#25thin>.
- United States Department of Commerce. *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*. 2 vols vols. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975.
- V12 Productions. "Cab Ride in a Steam Locomotive! - YouTube." Video. YouTube, 2022. <https://youtu.be/xDjQTLm0dEc>.
- Veeder, Grant. "History of Black Hawk County Courthouse and Jail." Cedar Valley Historical Society, November 22, 2016. Grout Museum.
- Vogel, Charity. *The Angola Horror: The 1867 Train Wreck That Shocked the Nation and Transformed American Railroads*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013.
- White, Richard. *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2011.

—. *The Republic For Which It Stands: The United States During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896*. Oxford History of the United States. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

White, Jr., John H. *The American Railroad Freight Car: From the Wood-Car Era to the Coming of Steel*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Wood, Gordon S. *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815*. Oxford History of the United States. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Zunz, Olivier. *Making America Corporate 1870-1920*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.