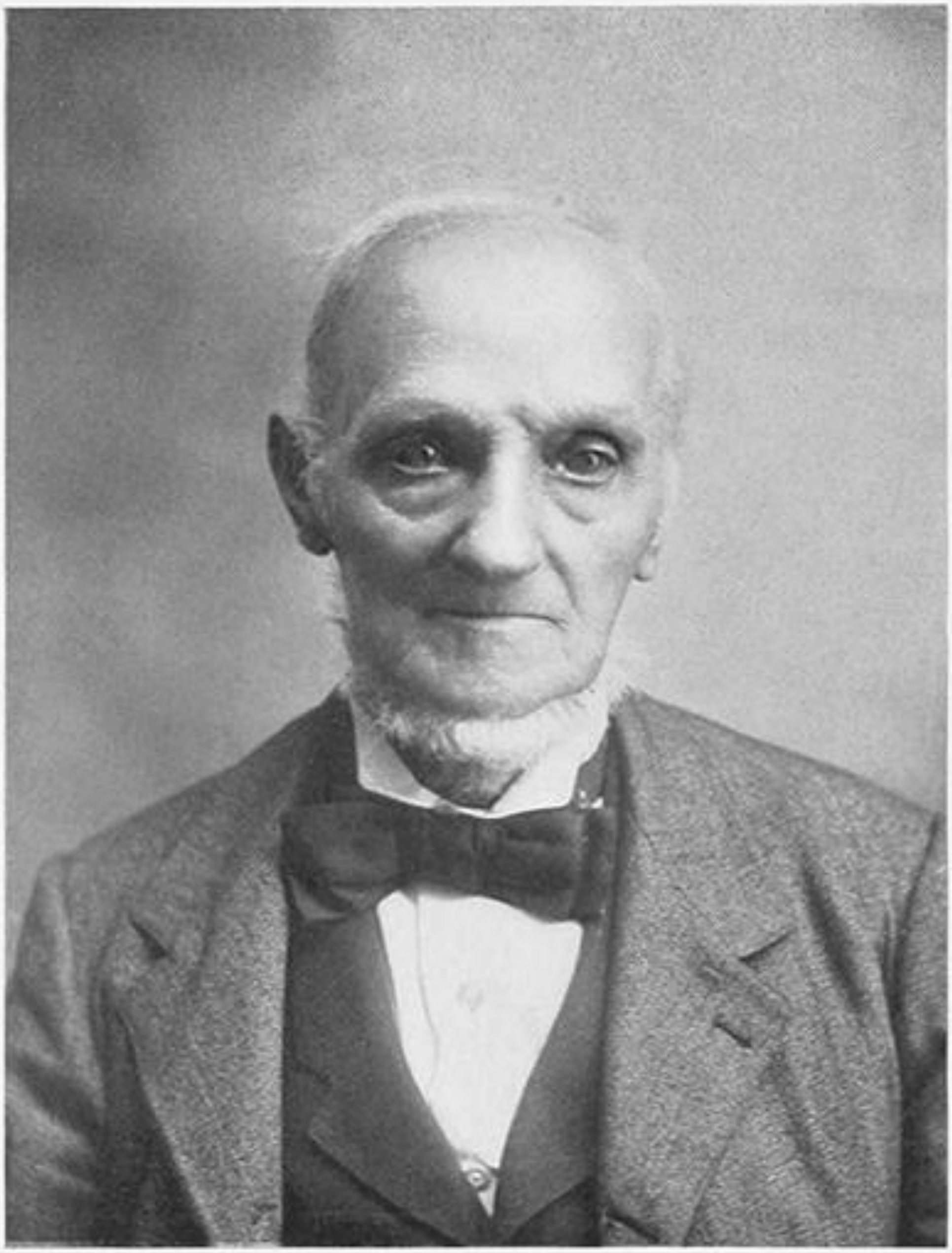

EDWARD ENTWISTLE

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One of the most notable of the early settlers of Des Moines—notable in that he represents an epoch, one of the most prominent in the industrial history of the world—is Edward Entwistle, now quietly living at the corner of Second and Des Moines streets. He has seen the development of steam power for transportation purposes, from the first locomotive, and the first railway, until they have encircled the globe and gridironed its continents. The remarkable feature of it is, that he was in it at the beginning, and ran the first locomotive put on a railroad.

Born at Tilsey's Banks, Lancashire, England, March Twenty-fourth, 1815, at less than fourteen years old he was apprenticed for seven years to the trade of Mechanical Engineer, in the large works of George Stephenson, and his son, Robert, at Newcastle. In 1828, the Liverpool and Manchester Railway Company began building a railroad across Chat Moss, an immense bog, between the two cities. Steam carriages had been in use for some time, carrying light merchandise at slow speed over the ordinary roads. The Stephensons believed engines could be made to run on iron rails, at high speed. The Directors of the railway company were decidedly skeptical, but finally decided to offer a price of five hundred pounds (two thousand, five hundred dollars), for an engine, conditioned that if of six tons weight, it must consume its own smoke, draw day by day twenty tons weight, including its own water tank and tender, at ten miles per hour, with a steam pressure not exceeding fifty pounds per square inch, and must be delivered at the Liverpool end of the road before October First, 1829; the price not to exceed five hundred and fifty pounds (two thousand, seven hundred and fifty dollars).

The Stephensons decided to compete for the prize, notwithstanding the opinion of the leading engineers of the country that, not only a high-speed engine, but the building of the road, would be a failure. The elder Stephenson contracted to build the road across the bog—a difficult undertaking.

The locomotive was completed, was named "Rocket," and at the trial won the prize against three competitors, and settled the question for all time whether horse traction or steam traction was to be used on railroads. By the skill and inventive genius of Robert Stephenson, it took on the form, in all essentials, maintained in the leviathan locomotives of to-day.

After the trial test, it was put in service hauling material for construction of the road. Its gauge was four feet eight and one-half inches, or that of the ordinary wagon road, Stephenson doubtless intending to make sure that if it failed on a rail, it would do service on a dirt road. It is a singular fact that the gauge of the "Rocket" has since been the standard gauge of railroads all over the world. Other widths have been tried, but abandoned. The great New York and Erie was built and equipped for a six-foot gauge, and when the gauge was changed to the standard, occurred the famous "Railroad War" at Erie, Pennsylvania.

When the road was completed, September Thirteenth, 1830, was set for the first trip of a passenger train over it. The train consisted of two double-decked carriages, each seating eighteen persons, nine on deck and nine below. The weight of the train was not quite ten tons. The average speed was fourteen miles, though at times a maximum of twenty-nine miles was made.

Entwistle worked in the shop where the "Rocket" was built, on some part of it, and manifested so much interest in it, he was given a permit by Stephenson to go with it on the trial trip. On the return, he was given the throttle, and for two years made two round trips each day between Liverpool and Manchester, thirty-five miles, to the great surprise of the pessimistic prognosticators, and thus was established the first high-speed railroad passenger train in the world. The labor was so exacting—he was only a lad—and the exposure to the elements so great, there being no protection therefrom, he asked to be relieved. Stephenson was so well pleased with him, he secured a berth for him on one of the Duke of Bridgewater's coasting steamers, as second engineer, where he served the remaining five years of apprenticeship and one year more, when, in 1837, he decided to come to America. That was the memorable year of hard times. There was no demand for labor, and wages were low, but he secured employment as engineer on Hudson River steamboats, at one dollar per day, and in iron mills, until 1844, when he came to Chicago, where he readily found employment as stationary engineer, and one season with Henry Perrior, as engineer on the lake propellor, *Rossiter*.

In 1854, Perrior and his brother-in-law, William Shepard, came to Des Moines and took possession of the flour and woolen mill which had been started by "Old Johnny" Dean and N. P. Jordan, on the river bank between Locust and Keokuk (now Grand Avenue). In 1856, Shepard went to Chicago, purchased machinery, four pairs of buhrs, and equipment for the mill. While there, he employed Entwistle to be the engineer of the mill. He came by the Rock Island Road (he thinks the train was hauled by the first locomotive that crossed the Mississippi River) to Iowa City, and thence by wagon to Des Moines, arriving in March, 1856. The machinery got as far as the proverbial terror, Skunk River bottoms, where it was laid up nearly six months.

Entwistle remained with the mill until 1877, when it was burned. He then went to the Ankeney linseed oil mills, where he remained twenty-two years, and in 1899 shut off steam, closed the throttle, and retired to Easy Street, to pass the remainder of his days in a cottage where he has lived fifty years, and where, on the Twenty-fourth of next March, he will pass the anniversary of his ninety-first, birthday.

In the Spring of 1859, there was a big flood, and water was all over the county. Steamboats did a lively business, fourteen being tied up at one time at 'Coon Point. Doctor A. Y. Hull and others decided to take advantage of the opportunity. They got lumber at Sinclair's mill, up the river, on the East Side, built a boat on the river bank near Court Avenue, and named it *Demoin Belle*. Its first trip was started April Tenth. The mills being closed, Entwistle was employed as engineer, and made three round trips on her from Keokuk to Fort Dodge. The next year, she collapsed, went to the bottom, was raised, re-built, re-named *Little Morgan*, and continued in service until 1862, when steamboating on the Des Moines was abandoned to the railroads.

In 1876, he went to the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, where, in the locomotive department of exhibits, among the highflyers, he had the extreme pleasure of meeting his old pet, the "Rocket." His identification with it quickly made him one of the most conspicuous persons of the whole show.

During the recent World's Fair at Saint Louis, he was offered large sums to attend as the guest of the exhibitors of railway supplies, but his advanced age admonished him not to make the venture.

A few days ago, I dropped in on the veteran of the throttle, and found him wide awake, as usual. During the sitting, he related some of his early experiences:

"I came here during the panic. Times were hard, money was scarce, and what there was, was not good; you could not keep it over night and know what it would be worth the next day. Wages were low; if the very best mechanic got a dollar and a quarter per day, he thought he was getting the very best wages—an extra price. Then he had to take payment in store orders. There was not much of a town here; it was nearly all on the west side of the river. There were but few houses on the East Side. From the river to Capitol Hill, the land was very low and wet, and north of Locust Street was heavy timber. There were no bridges except a temporary floating bridge near Keokuk Street—it was Keokuk on the East Side and Sycamore on the West Side, for the East Siders could not agree on anything with the West Siders; they wouldn't even write the name of the town the same way, and wrote it 'Demoin.' Both sides were hot over the location of the State House, but, being a newcomer, I took no part in it; I was here for business. As I said, houses were scarce. Shepard had a small frame house near Fifth and Keokuk, which had been used as a cow shed. It was the only place I could get. I fixed it up and moved into it. Lots were cheap, and I bought some around this corner where we are, went down to Peter Newcomer's mill, had Cottonwood lumber sawed, and built a small frame house on this lot, and have lived on it ever since. The money being so bad, I only took enough for economical living expenses—I considered Shepard and Perrior safer than the banks—until my back pay had accumulated to over eight hundred dollars. Ira Thornton came along one day, about that time, and offered me one hundred and sixty acres of land lying one mile east of Berwick for ten dollars an acre, and I swapped my money for it. I rented it, had it cultivated and improved, until three years ago, when I sold it for sixty dollars an acre, but I didn't know then what is known now, that under every acre of it is a thick strata of excellent coal.

"No, this is not the Cottonwood house; that was built in a hurry so I could get out of the cow shed.

"Yes, living expenses were very reasonable when I came here. Flour was high, owing to the scarcity of mills. It was nine dollars per barrel. Game was plentiful, however. The timber and prairies were alive with game. You could go out with a dog and gun and come home at night loaded with game. One afternoon in 1857, a fellow named King and I went across the river into the timber north of where Center Street now is, on the West Side, and shot two deer. The prairies were thick with chickens and quail, the streams with ducks, geese and fish. I saw a wagon box filled one day with fish caught with one sweep of a small seine in the river just above Keokuk Street. Prairie chickens would come and light on the fence around my yard.

"No, sir; I was never sick a day in my life; and I never was drunk, though you could buy whiskey in those early days for thirty cents a gallon, and it was much better than the stuff you pay three dollars a gallon for now."

Entwistle's physical condition is excellent, barring slight rheumatic troubles; his memory is vivid and retentive; reads without glasses; is slightly deaf, and, altogether, bids fair for another ten-mile run on life's course.

Politically, he was originally a Whig, and cast his first ballot for "Tippecanoe and Tyler, too," in 1840. He joined the Republican party on its organization, and has remained with it, but is not a politician. He is a vigorous reader, and keeps posted on what is going on in the world.

Socially, he is of kindly temperament, loquacious, companionable, and takes much interest in the laboring classes, yet is not an agitator. Fully appreciating the benefit of education, and deeply regretting the conditions which deprived him of acquiring such in his youth, he is an earnest supporter of all means for the education of the masses. Though his ancestors were Quakers, he affiliated with the Baptist denomination and gave financial aid in building the first Baptist meeting-house, on Mulberry Street, and also the second edifice, at Locust and Eighth. He is also a veteran member of the fraternity of Odd Fellows.

February Twenty-sixth, 1906.

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