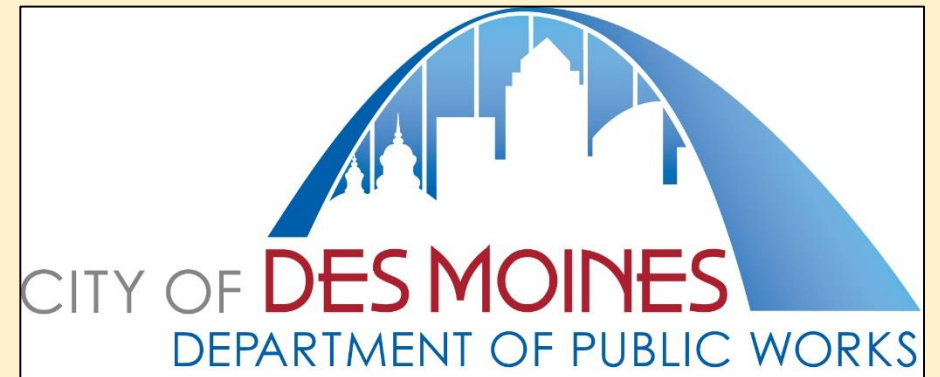


History of Trees in Des Moines

1843-1909

presented by City of Des Moines
Department of Public Works
Forestry Division



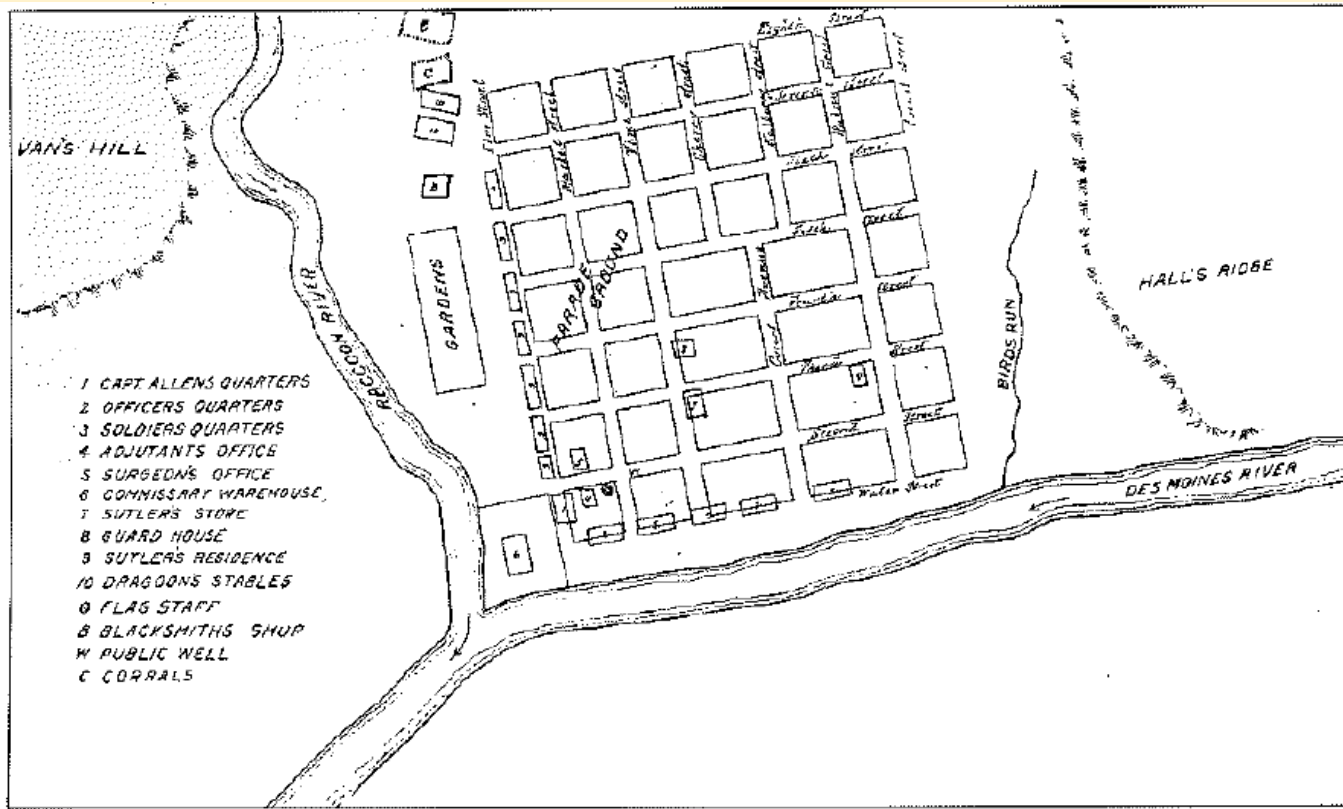
RESEARCH CREDITS

The research for this series of historical themes relating to Des Moines and trees in the city is limited to surveying the hard work of other people. The following sources, found at the State Library of Iowa and the State Historical Society of Iowa Research Center, were used to find this sampling of history.

- Images of America: Des Moines 1845-1920 by Craig S. McCue, 2006
- Images of America: East Village by Sarah C. Oltrogge, 2010
- Dynamic Des Moines: A History in Pictures by Allen Gardiner
- Postcard History Series: Des Moines by Craig S. McCue, 2007
- Then & Now: Des Moines by Craig S. McCue, 2012

The general theme throughout this History of Trees in Des Moines, is to learn about the history of the city 'and' city trees. To that end, many photos have trees in them, or at least in the background.

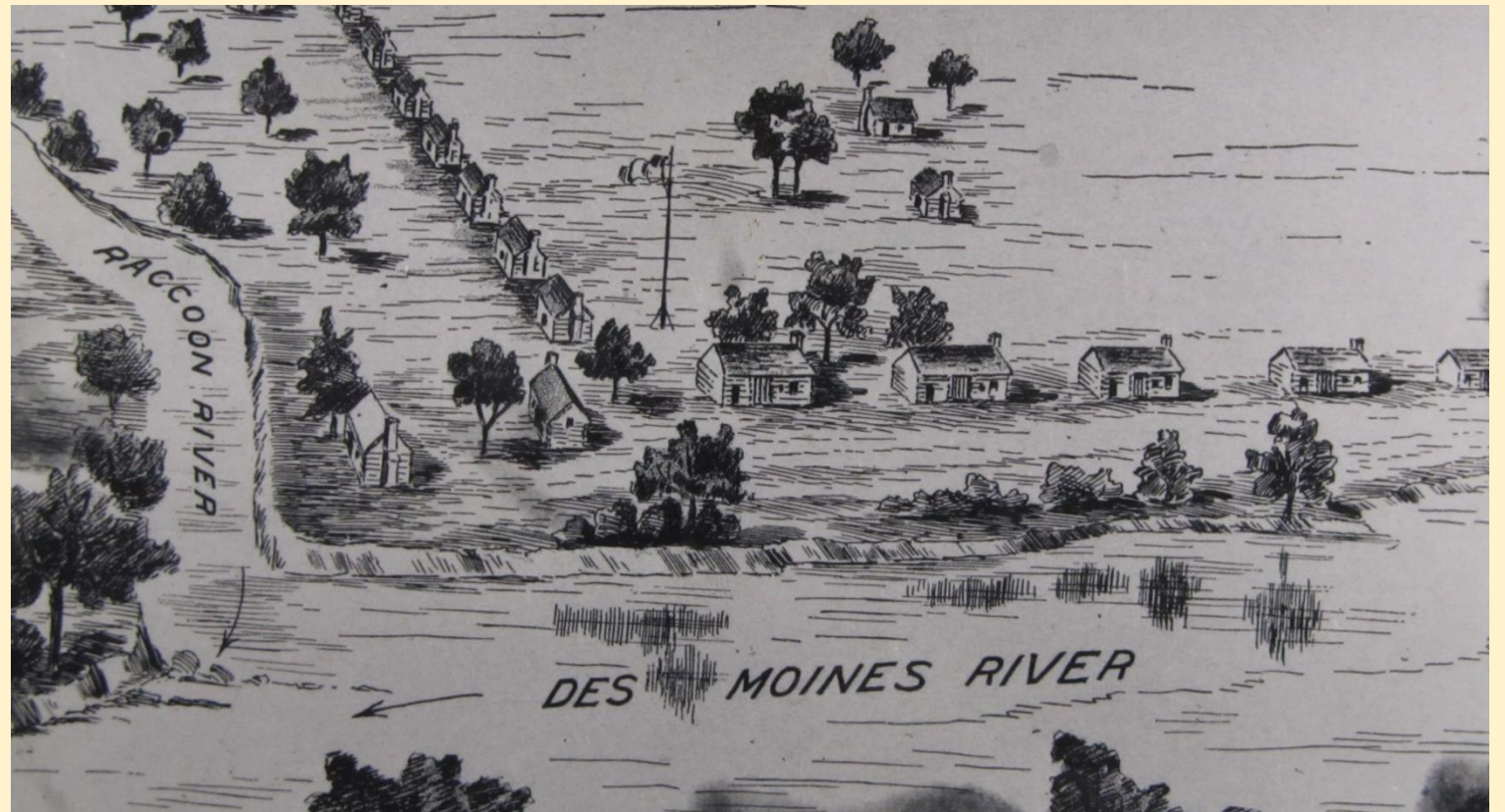
The early days of Fort Des Moines 1843



Ownership of the land surrounding Des Moines passed from French to American control with the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. However, Native American claims, plus several incursions culminating in the Black Hawk War of 1832, prompted the United States government to step in, negotiate several purchases, set up a neutral zone, and begin to explore the territory. To keep the peace, a temporary fort was built on the Des Moines River near the Raccoon Forks area in 1843.

In 1846, the fort was vacated, and a small group of settlers moved in. They formed a rudimentary government and proclaimed the settlement the county seat of the newly formed Polk County. Thus the city of **Fort** Des Moines was born.

You can see from our earliest days that trees were a natural part of the landscape. This is particularly true state-wide along riparian borders, that area where land meets water. Birds and animals come to drink, they deposit seeds, and trees are the result. The water's edge also provides water for trees to survive and thrive. Some of the historical photos we will see today are included just to tell the history of the city, but I've tried to include trees in as many of them as possible. I'm also blending the past with the present where I've been able to insert modern photos of the same location.

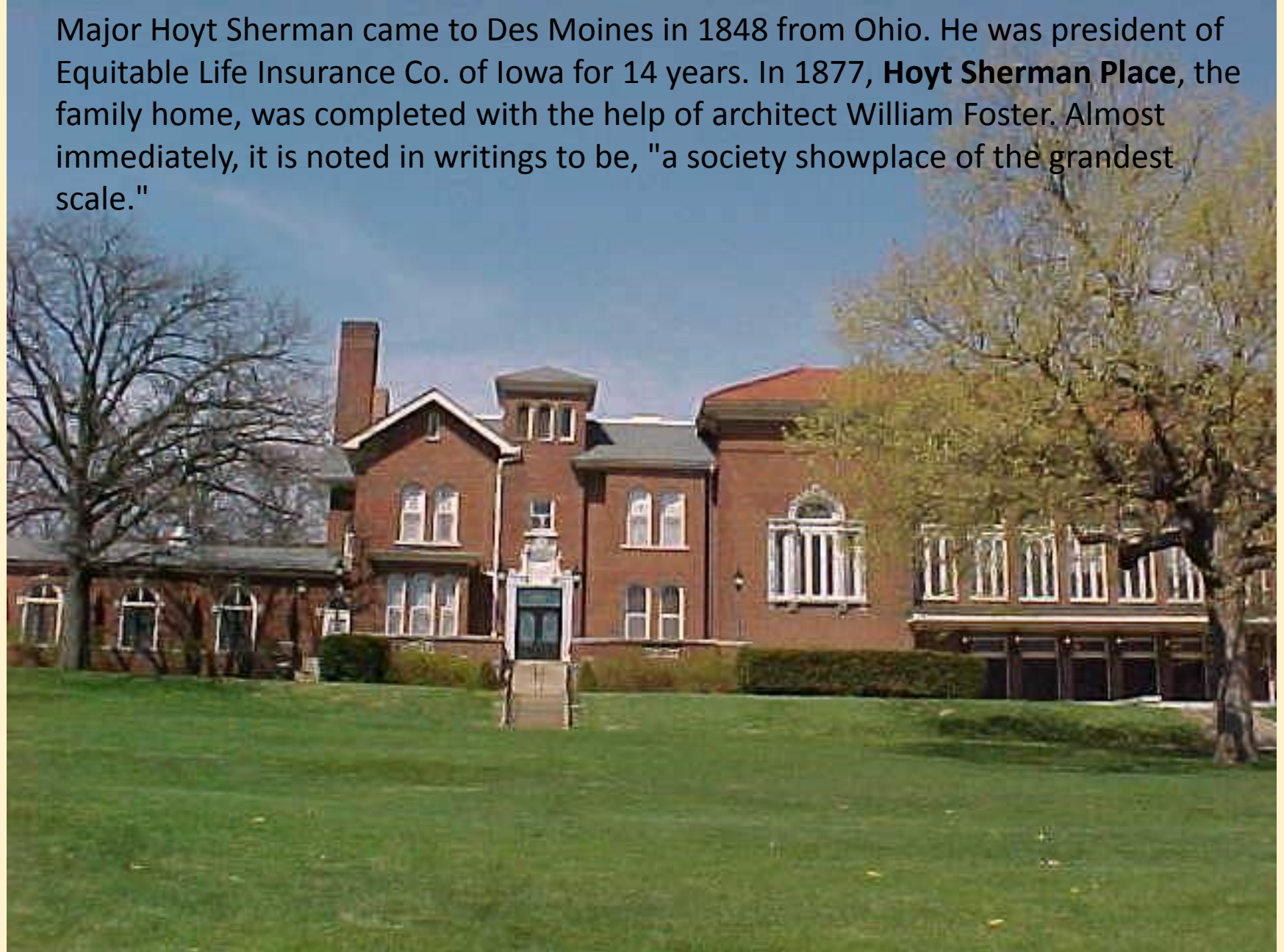


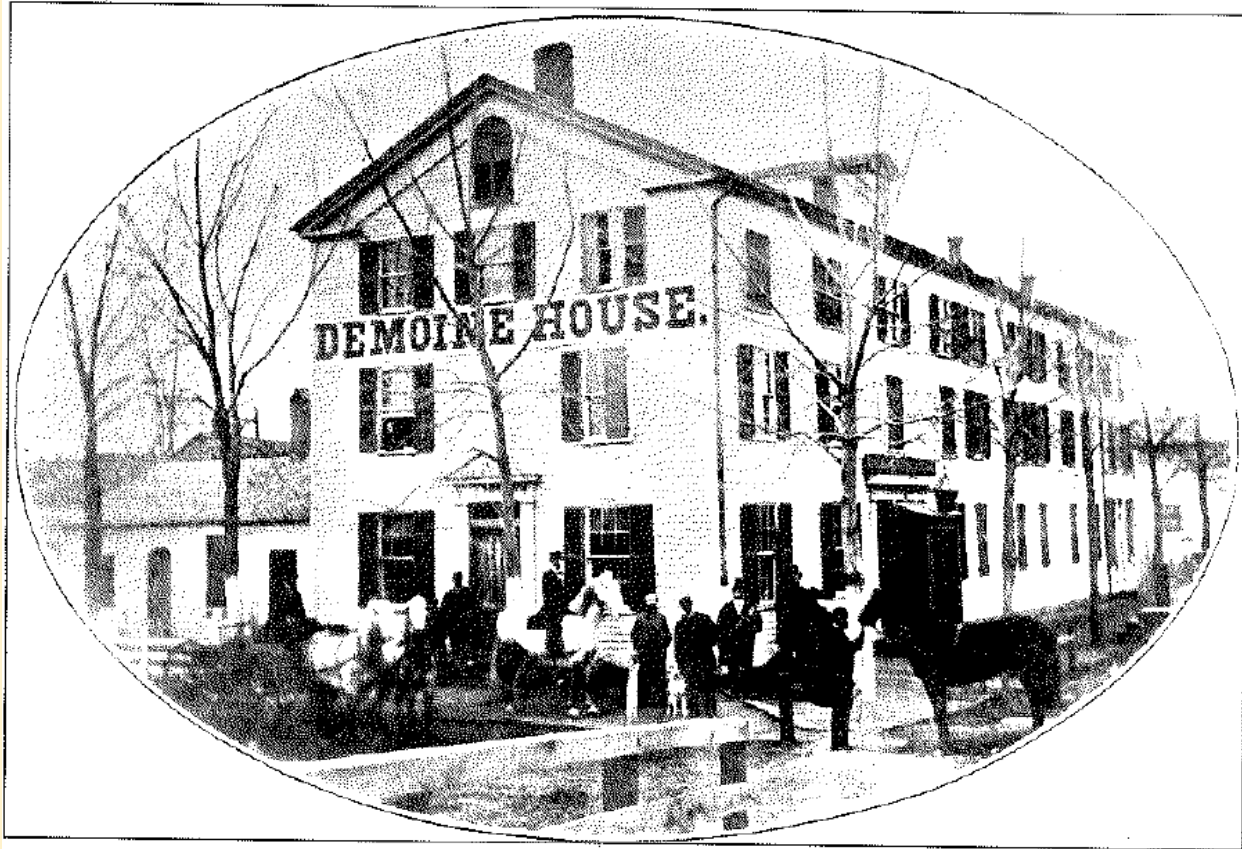


Major Hoyt Sherman
(1827-1904),
shown here with his wife



Major Hoyt Sherman came to Des Moines in 1848 from Ohio. He was president of Equitable Life Insurance Co. of Iowa for 14 years. In 1877, **Hoyt Sherman Place**, the family home, was completed with the help of architect William Foster. Almost immediately, it is noted in writings to be, "a society showplace of the grandest scale."





Demoine House, 1855

First and Walnut Streets

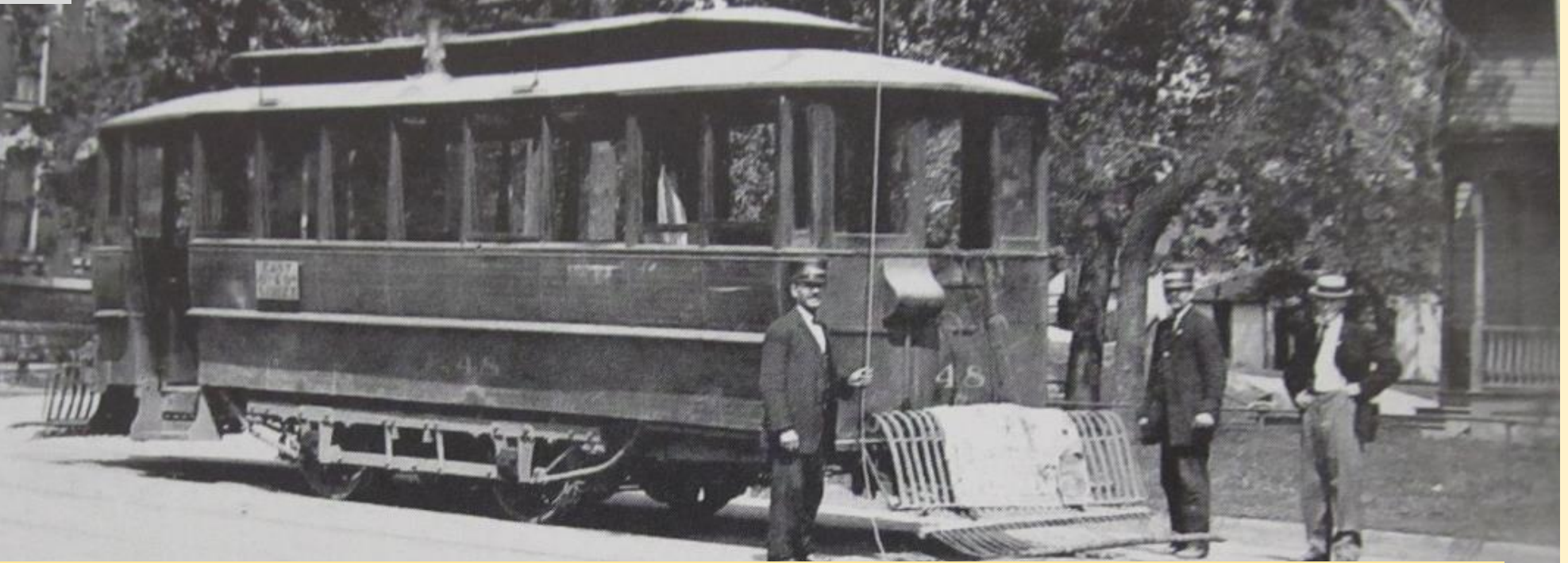
The landscape trees provide character when leafless, but we can also imagine the shade these trees provided during the summer.

There is no typo on this photo. Originally the Pennsylvania House, the hotel was later rechristened after a popular spelling of the city's name at the time

The opening night of Demoine House on July 4, 1855, was marred by tragedy when a young man mistook a bottle of corrosive cleaning solution for whiskey. He died that evening during the festivities. (BTH)

Operating until 1877, the Demoine House proved to be the first residence of many settlers in the early years of the city and was a popular nightspot, featuring dances and other entertainment.

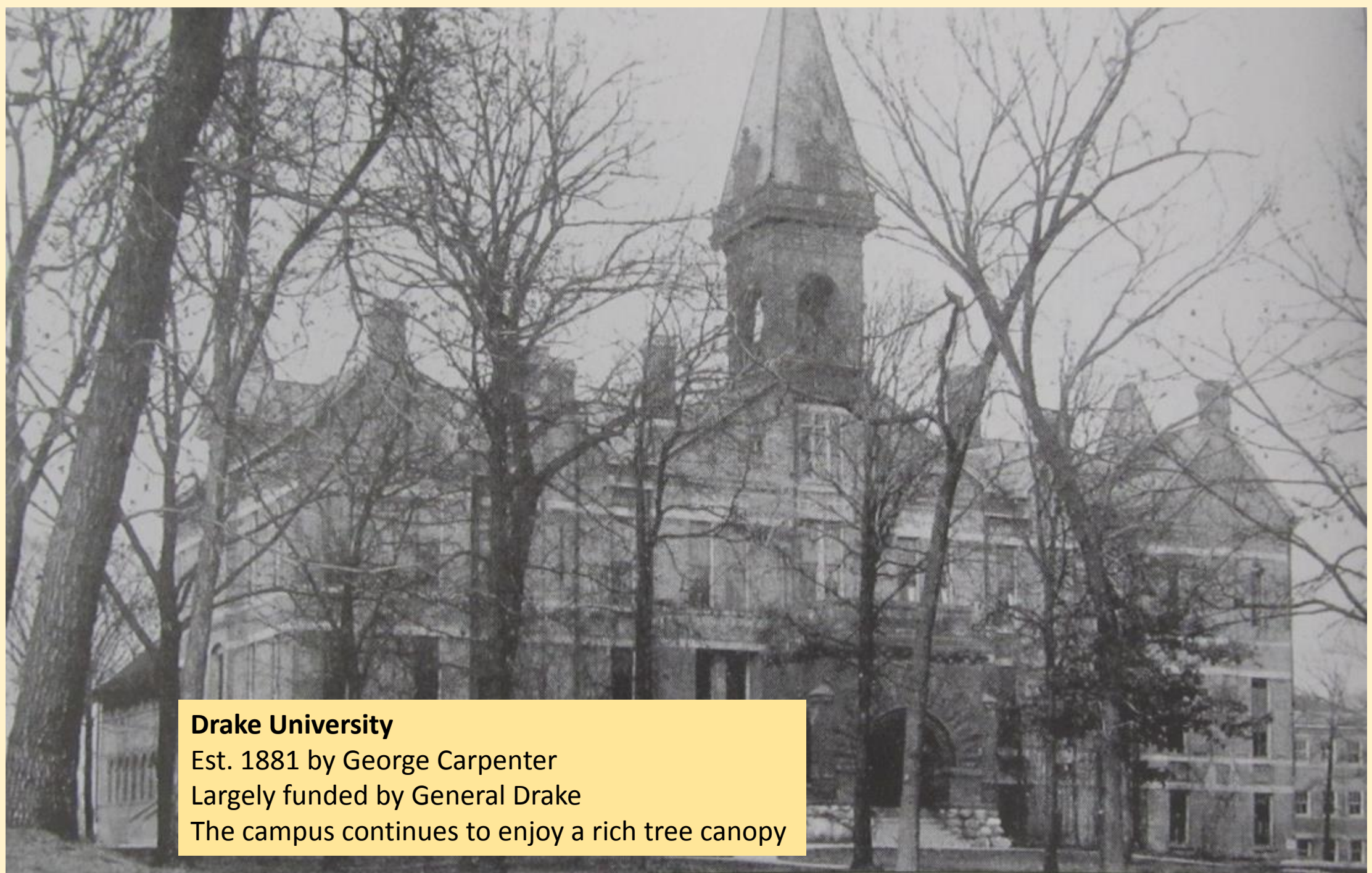
Trolley Services Began in 1866



The first streetcar services began to appear in 1866, built and managed by Dr. M.P. Turner, who owned a city charter for all horse-drawn trolleys. To get around Turner's monopoly, H.E. Teachout formed a new company and began using steam trolleys and eventually switched over to electric trolleys. They travelled the lengths of Ingersoll Ave, and Sycamore Ave. (now called Grand Ave). As trolley lines kept extending out from the city center, development followed them. By the 1880's there were eight 'trolley suburbs' surrounding Des Moines.



In this view along Walnut Street, looking east from Fifth Street, is another sign of a changing Des Moines: the first street railway lines, almost covered in the muddy dirt roads of the early 1870's using horse-drawn trolleys, the first line was simple loop running down Court Avenue to the courthouse, across Fifth Street to Walnut Street and then back up to East Seventh Street near the capitol. To complete the loop, an alleyway was traversed behind East Seventh Street.



Drake University

Est. 1881 by George Carpenter

Largely funded by General Drake

The campus continues to enjoy a rich tree canopy



Victoria Hotel

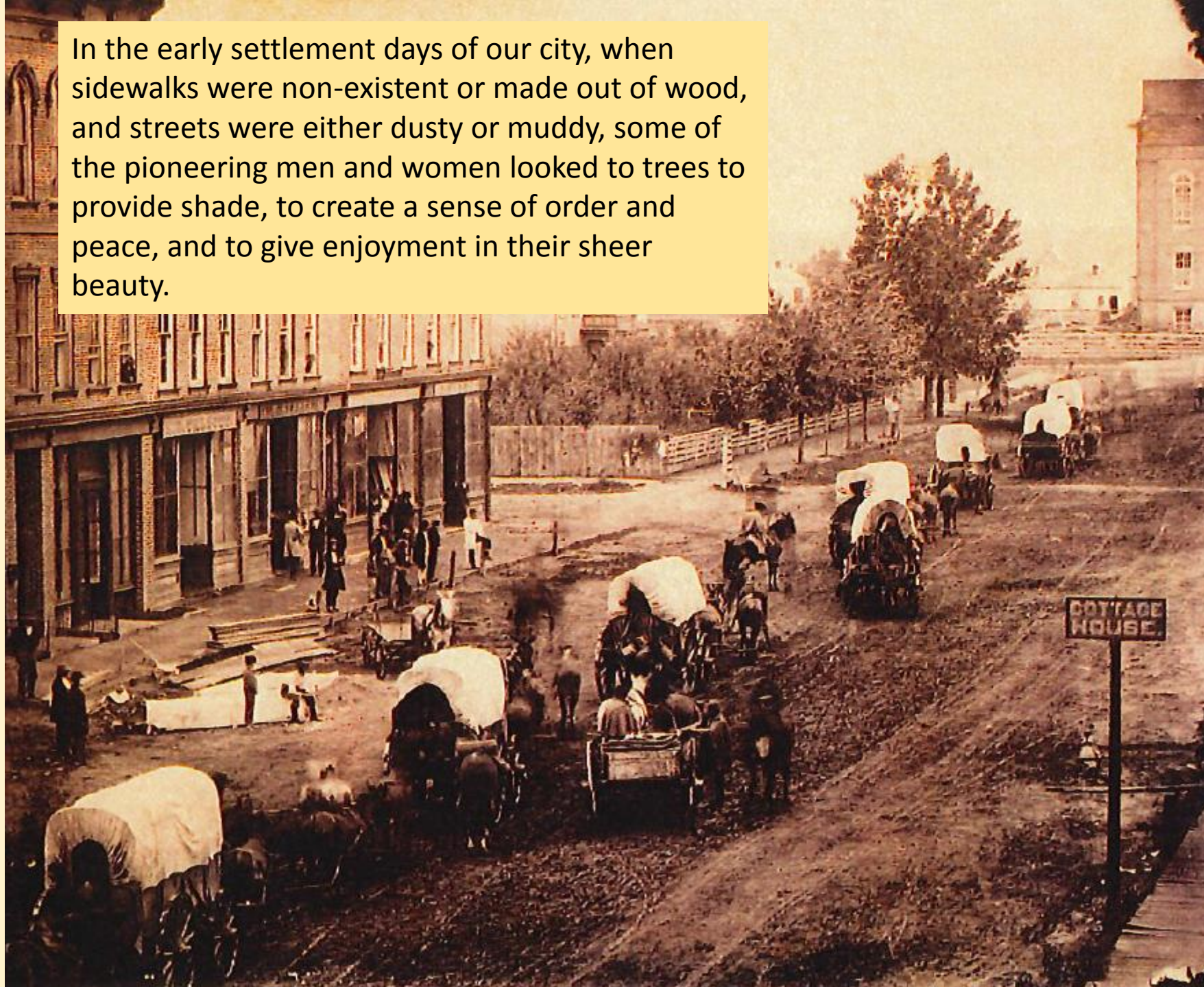
601 6th Ave

In 1899 the Victoria Hotel was built in a European style at a cost of \$50,000. Notice an ample supply of trees surrounding the hotel.

Today the Victoria Hotel is long gone. In its place is the American Republic Insurance Company. They have developed a beautiful outdoor art park with lots of trees and sculptures.



In the early settlement days of our city, when sidewalks were non-existent or made out of wood, and streets were either dusty or muddy, some of the pioneering men and women looked to trees to provide shade, to create a sense of order and peace, and to give enjoyment in their sheer beauty.



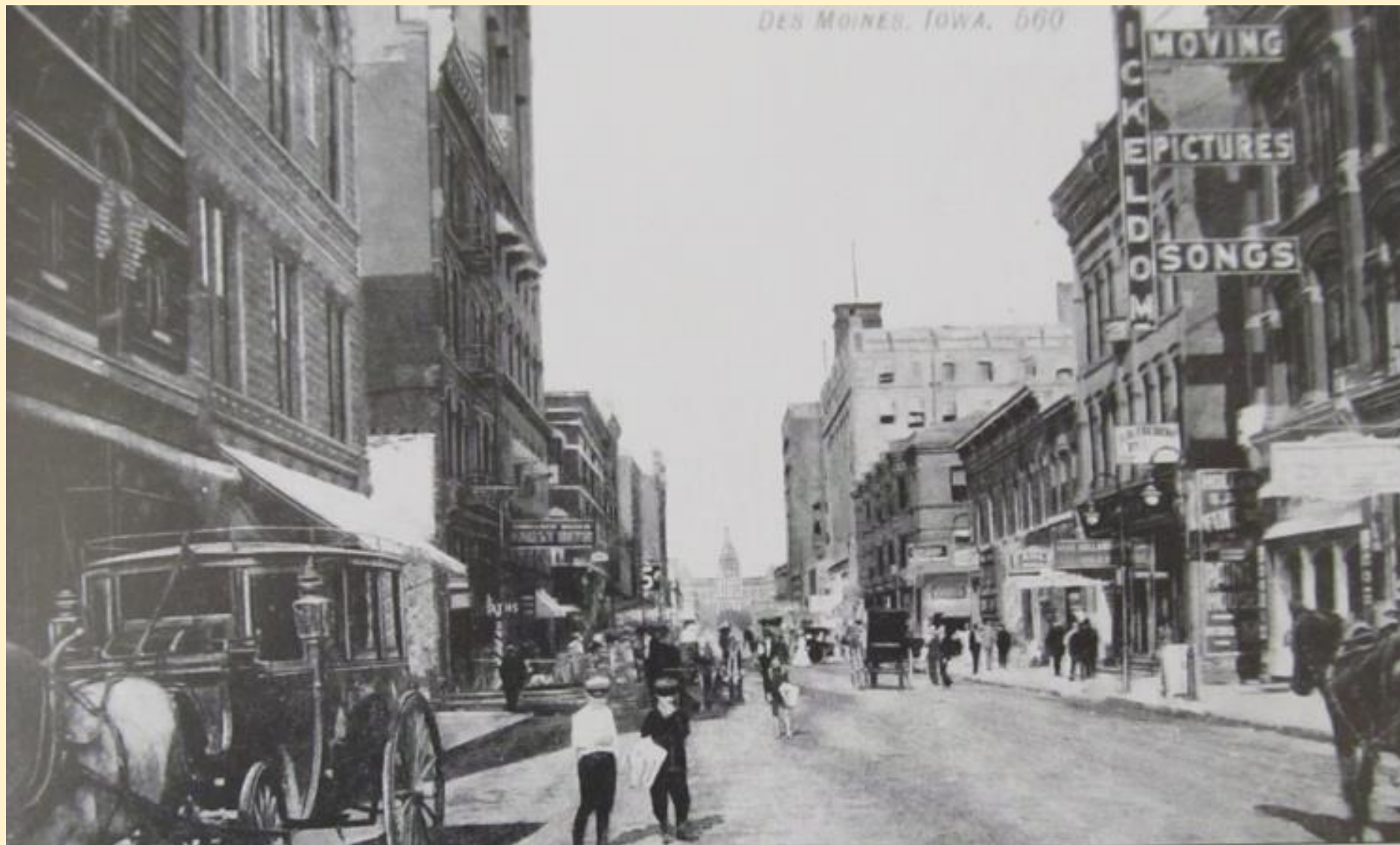
White Line Transfer & Storage Co., DES MOINES, IOWA.



WHITE LINE TRANSFER AND STORAGE. At the corner of Fifth and Market Streets (now the Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway extension), White Line featured fireproof storage and relocation services. The warehouse has recently been converted to luxury condominium lofts.

Employees of the
Waldron Bros.
Foundry and Machine
Works posing for a
photo with assorted
implements.
Ca. 1900





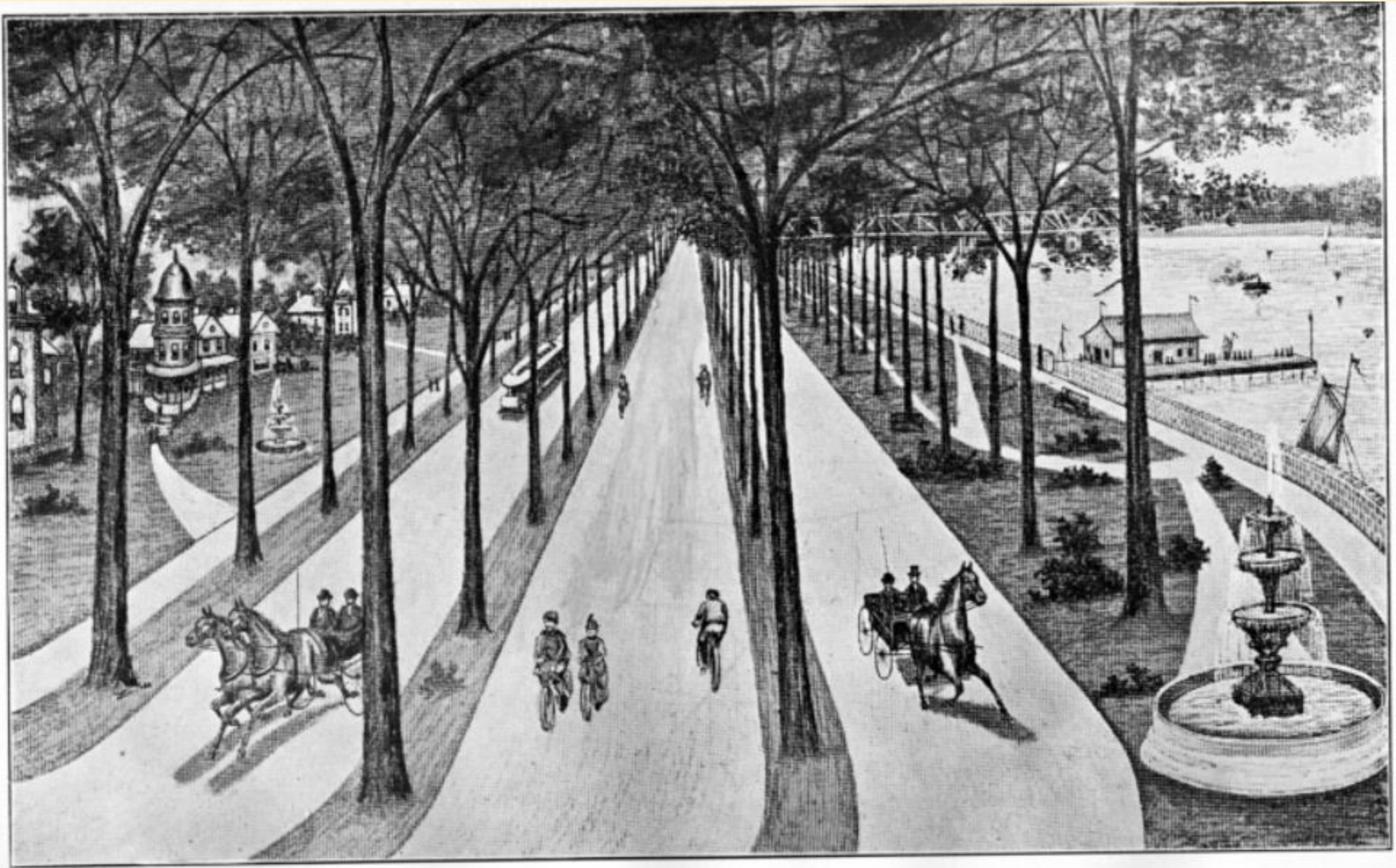
Locust Street in 1909, facing east from Seventh Street. Chamberlain Hotel far left. The Nickelodeon Moving Picture Theatre on the right was the fifth nickelodeon built in America.

1300 block of E. Walnut
Capitol Dome appears in background





Mesquakie Indians from the reservation in Tama County. At dedication of Union Park

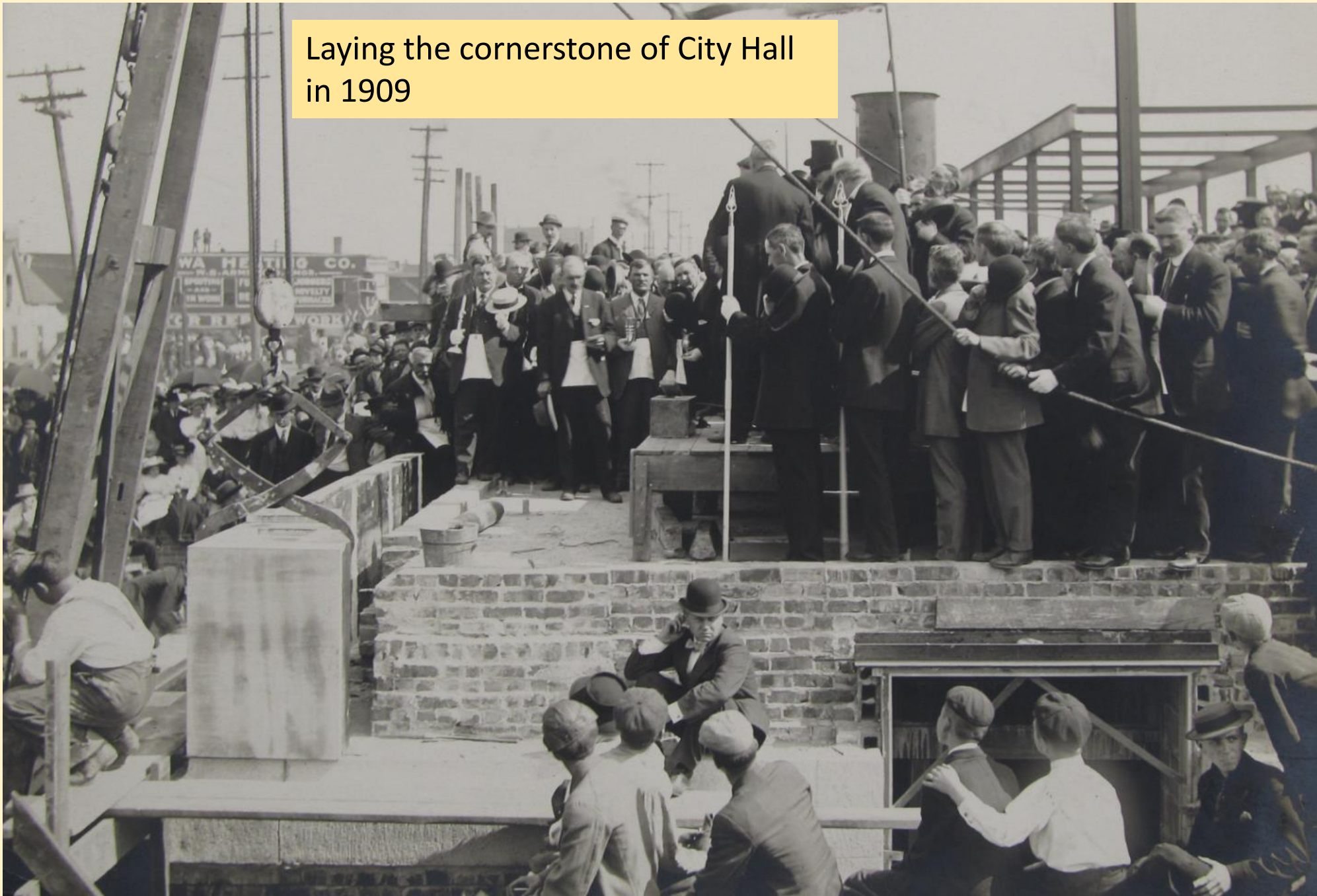


Prospective Boulevard from New Library Building to Union Park

Date unknown.
With a shift to
trolleys and
paved
sidewalks, this
period in city
history is
punctuated
with a lack of
street trees



Laying the cornerstone of City Hall
in 1909



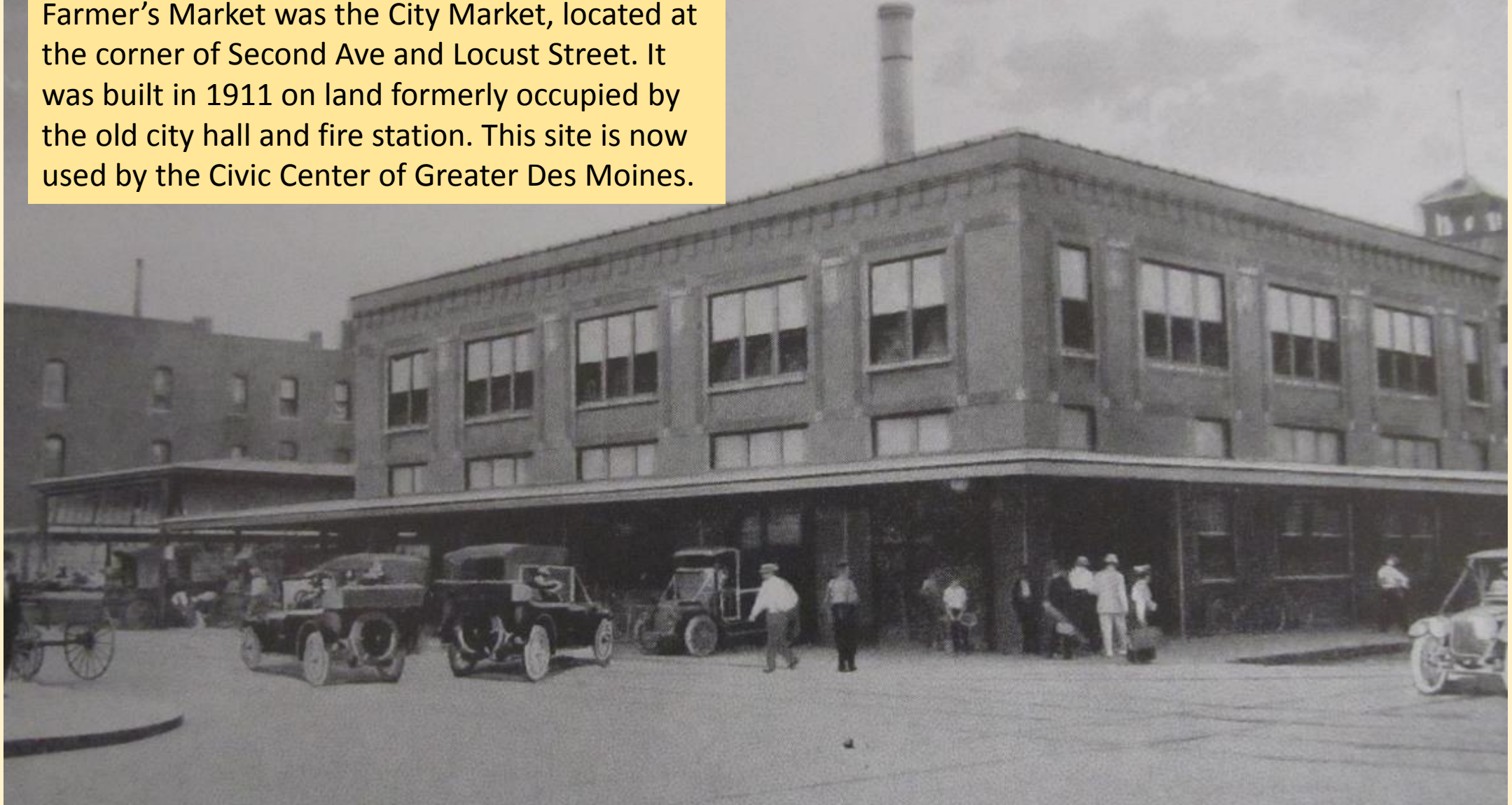
Ca. 1910

View of residential area from State
Historical Building or Capitol.
E. 11th & Capitol Ave.

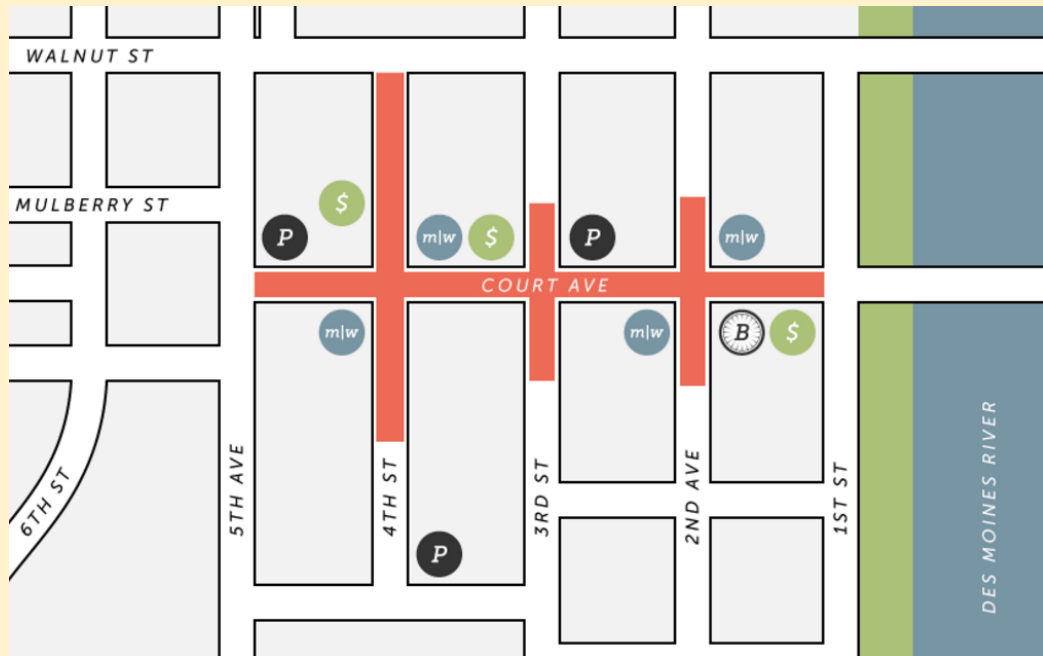


City Market, Des Moines, Iowa.

The forerunner to the popular Downtown DM Farmer's Market was the City Market, located at the corner of Second Ave and Locust Street. It was built in 1911 on land formerly occupied by the old city hall and fire station. This site is now used by the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines.



Today's Farmer's Market is one of the state's premier destinations on summer Saturdays



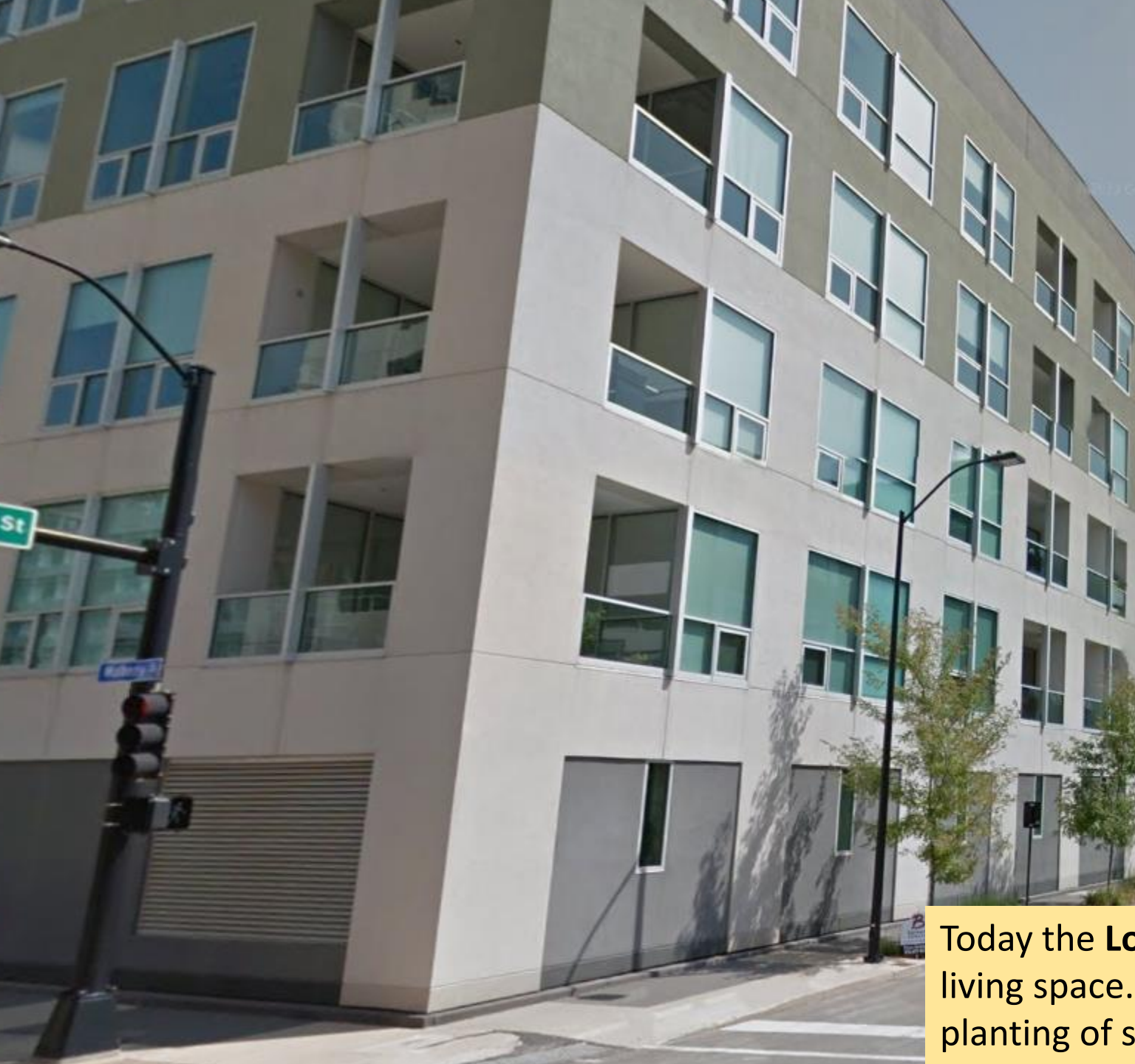
The Chicago and Northwestern Station was built on East 4th between Walnut and Locust streets. This gave the east side of Des Moines a convenient access to railway service.



LOOK BUILDING • DES MOINES, IOWA



LOOK BUILDING. *Look* magazine was published in Des Moines from 1937 to 1971 and was similar to *Life* in content and emphasis in pictorials. Its two- to three-month delay in releasing issues sometimes lead to embarrassing results, such as the 1964 election poll that was released three weeks after Pres. John F. Kennedy's assassination. The building was recently converted into residential lofts.



Today the **Look Building** has been converted to modern loft living space. You can see where that redevelopment triggered planting of street trees to benefit the neighborhood.

TWENTY OF THE OLDEST COMPANIES IN THE DES MOINES AREA

1. Iowa Star/Des Moines Register	1849
2. Weitz Co.	1855
3. Gilcrest Jewett Lumber	1856
4. Hubbell Realty	1856
5. LaMair Mulock Condon Co.	1865
6. Equitable of Iowa/ING	1867
7. Amend Packing Co.	1869
8. Josephs Jewelers	1871
9. Hammer Pharmacy	1872
10. Tone's Spices	1873
11. Century Link	1874
12. Drake Roofing	1875
13. Keefer Overton Architects	1876
14. Des Moines Marble and Mantel	1877
15. Des Moines Winterset Monuments	1878
16. Banker's Life/Principal Financial Group	1879
17. Des Moines Stamp Mfg. Co.	1880
18. Merchants Distribution	1880
19. Rowat Cut Stone & Marble Co.	1882
20. IMT Insurance	1884

As of June 1, 2017,
more than ½ of
these companies
were doing
business. Do you
know which ones?

Source: Des Moines Register

What do we learn from this short history (1843-1909)?

- Early inhabitants of Des Moines inherited trees as part of the natural areas along river banks
- Early development soon included trees. Some early American cities included laws against hitching horses to street trees, so they wouldn't chew the bark
- Appreciation for trees had both high and low points, depending on transportation and development needs at the time