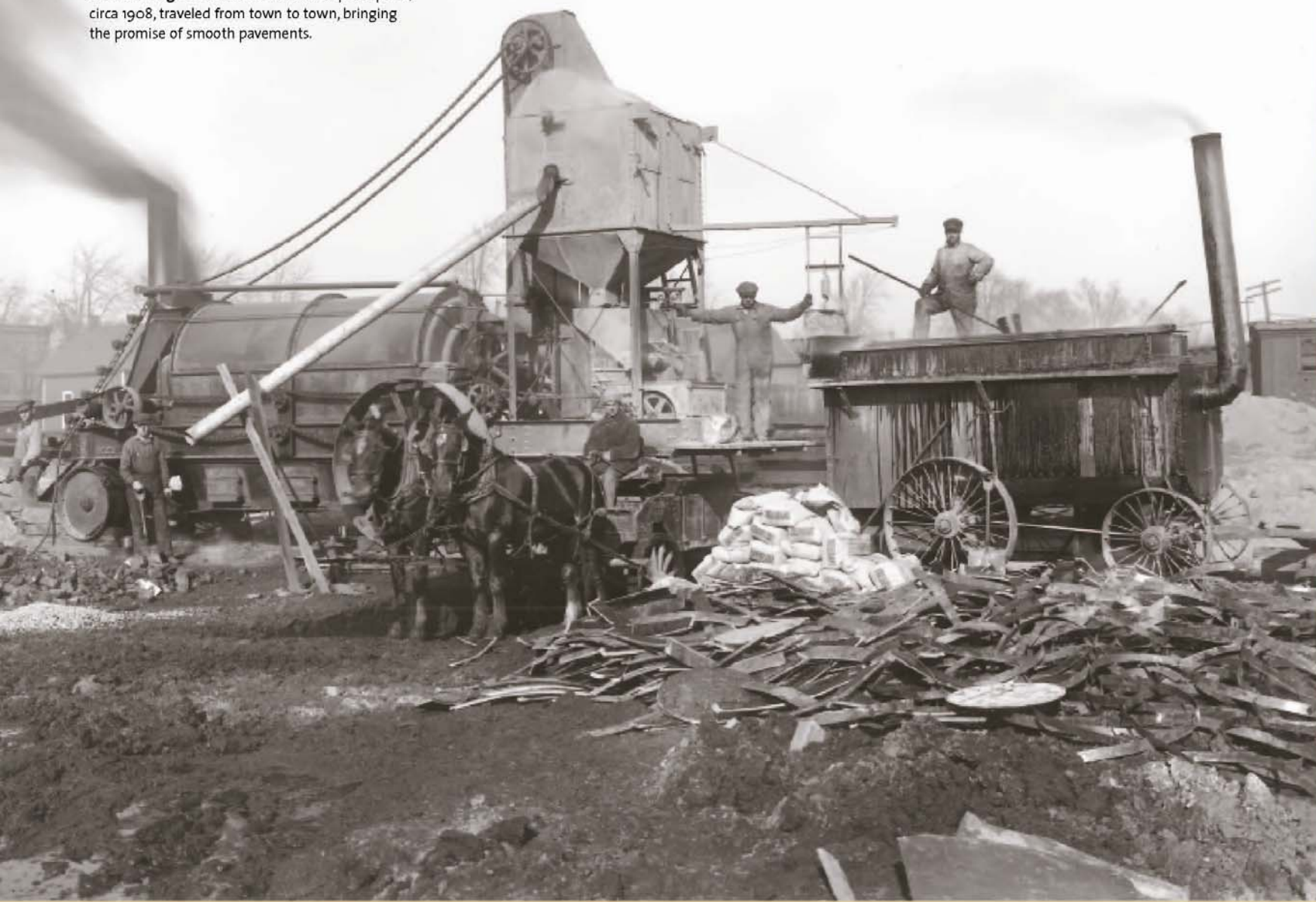


A Hetherington & Berner railroad asphalt plant, circa 1908, traveled from town to town, bringing the promise of smooth pavements.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Hot Mixing, Raking, and Rolling

"By and large, the difference between a rich nation and a poor one is the difference between a mechanized and a muscular society."

IN THE 50 YEARS between the first patented bituminous hot mix in 1871 and the last days of the original Bitulithic patent in 1920, the asphalt industry moved slowly through a long, awkward adolescence. The golden age of road building that was kicked off during the Roaring Twenties marked the industry's entrance to adulthood.

If not for the intrepid inventors, scientists, and businessmen who kept the mechanization process of the industry moving forward, asphalt might have died at birth. The development of the asphalt plants and the constant improvements to equipment and machines used to haul hot mix to the work site and lay it down made asphalt the material of choice for a new generation of road builders. But it was a childhood of hard knocks—an upbringing of trial and error.

Innovations during these first 50 years positioned asphalt for greatness. By the end of World War I, the maturing asphalt industry was taking its position at the forefront of the most ambitious road-building campaign on earth. Unfolding during what has become known as the American Century, the golden age of road building was under way. Three quarters of a century later, asphalt would provide the surface for 93 percent of all roads in the country.