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WINTER IN WINTERSSET

Text and Photography by Brian Abeling

I love the Winterset City Park in the winter because it is completely closed to vehicles. You can explore the park on foot, and you get to create your own path.

Last January, I trekked down to Winterset during a snowstorm to explore the park. With six inches of new snow, the scenery was largely untouched, as there were minimal tracks in the snow made by a few locals who appeared to have taken their dogs for walks. In a short distance, you'll be able to explore three main attractions:

CUTLER-DONAHOE COVERED BRIDGE is one of the last remaining covered bridges in Madison County. Cutler-Donahoe is 79 feet long, was built in 1870, and originally crossed the North River in Bevington (it was moved to this location in 1979).

STONE ARCH BRIDGE (this photo) was featured in the movie "Bridges of Madison County" with Clint Eastwood and Meryl Streep. It was the location for Francesca's and Robert's getaway picnic.

The **HEDGE MAZE** could be the only one of its kind in the state (although you'll find many corn mazes in Iowa). The goal is to find your way to the center, where there's a sundial. The iron gate at the entrance is gorgeous, especially in fresh snow cover.

By the way, did you know how Winterset got its name? One of the original names proposed was Summerset. After apparently drinking too much, one of the commissions responded that "Winterset" would be more accurate than Summerset, and it stuck. Summers are lovely here, too, but winters in Winterset shouldn't be missed.

A fresh layer of snow covers the landscape near the stone arch bridge.



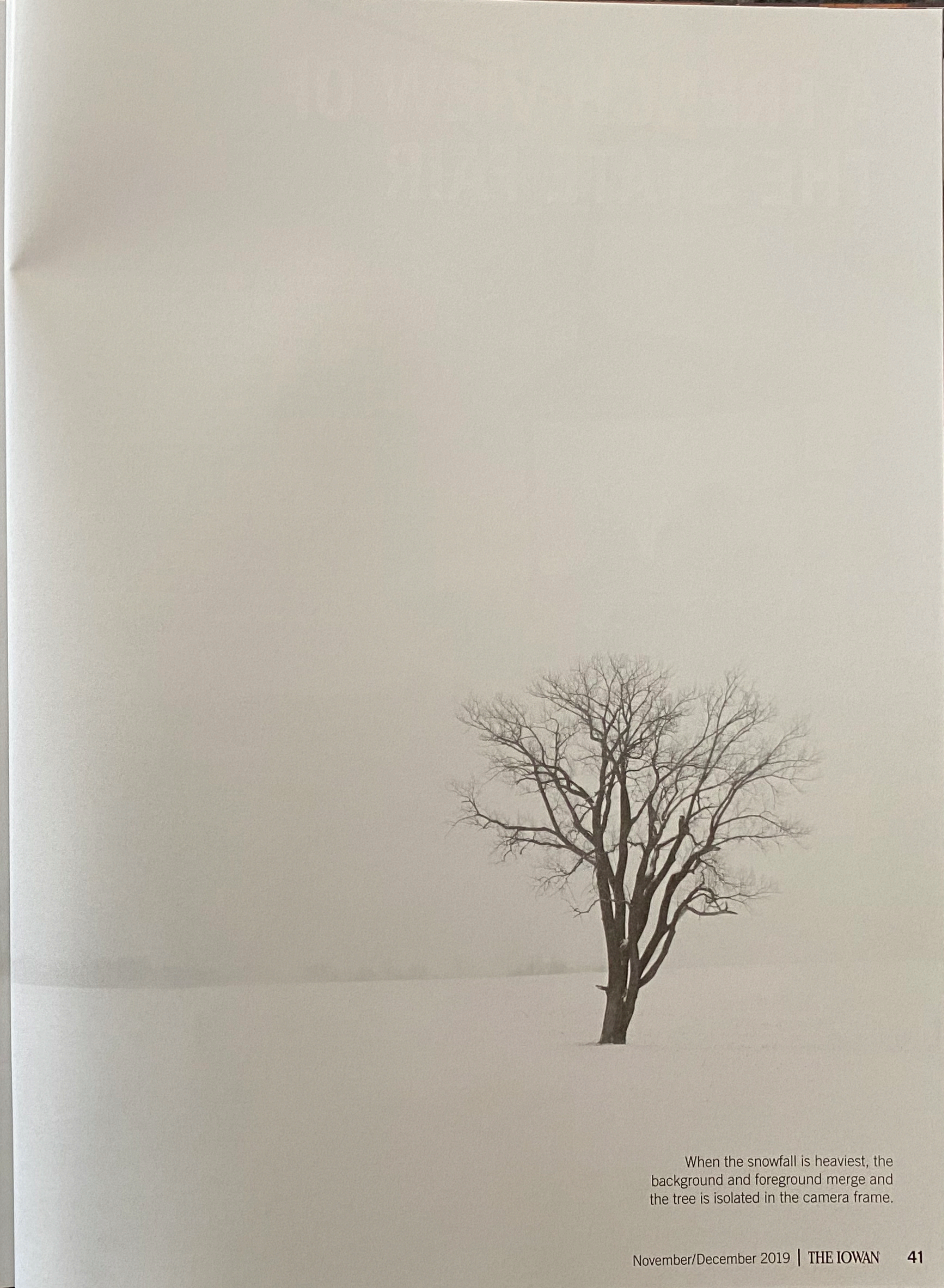
Cutler-Donahoe is one of just six covered bridges in Madison County.



An aerial view of the hedge maze.



Snow gathers on a bench near the hedge maze.



When the snowfall is heaviest, the background and foreground merge and the tree is isolated in the camera frame.