

Iowa People and Events . . .

Traffic Changes in Iowa

The lapse of time can and does bring changes in most all things. In the railway systems of Iowa this has been especially noticeable. In the larger cities the street cars were supplanted by buses. The increase in automobile traffic caused many buses to be taken off the lines formerly maintained for city passenger service. It is now a question how long these car and bus lines may be continued.

Likewise, the interurban lines that once connected important communities in Iowa have discontinued service. In some instances the tracks have been removed and station depots torn down or moved. The last such line to discontinue service was that between Fort Dodge and Des Moines, known for years as the Fort Dodge, Des Moines and Southern Railway. The passenger service alone is stopped. Its last coach trip, a special, was on Sunday, September 11, 1955, the passenger service having been discontinued on August 31. It is one of four last remaining interurban lines operated in the whole United States. The trolley wires since have been removed and the electric locomotives and passenger cars scrapped in preparation for becoming an all-diesel freight line.

And the great overland railway lines traversing the state have not escaped the encroaching auto and truck competition that has crowded the paved highways of Iowa the past few years. The autos have grown larger and the state legislature has greatly liberalized the dimensions of freight trucks as well as weight limits, thereby increasing highway traffic many fold and congesting the roads and streets in and adjacent to towns and cities of Iowa not having by-pass routing. Moreover, the original pavements that gave this state one

of the best highway systems in the country have been greatly damaged and bridges broken down, causing great outcry for wider and heavier highway paving and bridges, which the state highway commission is now seeking to build.

As a result, train service on the rail lines has been greatly curtailed, many trains being taken off, and on some lines all passenger trains dispensed with. Branch lines are being operated at a loss and many abandoned with consent of the state commerce commission, formerly known as the state railway commission.

A notable change of some historical significance has been made in the routing of the passenger trains of the Union Pacific railroad through Iowa. Since the 1880's they came through Illinois and Iowa between Omaha and Chicago over Chicago and Northwestern railroad trackage. This is discontinued and the new arrangement is with the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad, bringing those trains over the latter line into the state from the east at Sabula, discontinuing the terminals at Council Bluffs and centering at Omaha.

The change was effective October 31, and caused an upheaval in Chicago & Northwestern territory, particularly in the larger towns and cities along that line. Not only does it cut down their train service but affects somewhat the number of engine crews required on the Northwestern, although that road has put on some new runs of its own replacing those lost by discontinuance of the handling of U. P. trains on their line.

The towns along the Northwestern, where U. P. trains have stopped heretofore, protested, reluctant to lose the service enjoyed in the past; besides at some points like at Boone and Clinton the loss of monthly payrolls distributed in the community might be seriously felt. Appeal was made to the Iowa Commerce commission by local Chambers of Commerce, but the commission is powerless in the situation, as the matter is a contractual relation between the roads, besides being interstate commerce. Iowa officials can only

make inquiry into the subject but have no authority to do anything else, even though they might determine some action was justifiable.

The Interstate Commerce commission at Washington also holds that it is without legal authority to interfere with the proposal by the Union Pacific to re-route its passenger train service in Iowa and Illinois. An official of the I.C.C. informed Senator Hickenlooper, of Iowa, "There appears to be no violation of the interstate commerce act, and the subject matters of the protests do not appear to be within the scope of this commission's jurisdiction."

Northwestern officials reported that passenger train service although unprofitable was interfering with their moving freight traffic, thus cancelling out its profits, causing shortage in net receipts, requiring payment of preferred stockholders dividends from surplus and by-passing common stockholders for four straight years.

Union labor employees of the North Western brought legal action in Chicago in the Federal court seeking an injunction to prevent the change taking place. The judge before whom it was heard denied the right to enjoin the roads in the change of trackage to be used by the Union Pacific.

In financial circles there has been persistent talk that Milwaukee and the Northwestern stockholding groups have engaged in discussion of possible consolidation of lines, although much of the mileage of the two is competitive. Such action if taken would not affect the traffic changes made, however.

The Bootjack Gavel

When former members of the Iowa General Assembly get together, oftentimes their reminiscences are most interesting. Not always are the discussions held strictly to legislative subjects either. Not a great while ago, a group of old friends that included several who had served the state as legislators many years ago were gathered at luncheon at one of the Des Moines hotels.

Among the anecdotes related was of a western Iowa house member who at that time wore boots and had brought along with him to Des Moines his bootjack, keeping it in his room at the Chamberlain hotel. During the course of the session, his friends helped him celebrate his birthday with a party. Obtaining from his wife, the bootjack, they dressed it up in silver and gold wrappings, tied it with multicolored ribbons, and presented it to him with due ceremony. There were other equally appropriate remembrances, with several complimentary addresses after the dinner had been served and dishes removed.

It had become a hilarious party and one member acting as toastmaster sought to quiet down the uproar in order to hear what was being said by impromptu speakers. Not having a gavel, he reached over and took the bootjack from its recipient and wielded it vigorously as a gavel. This chairman later became lieutenant governor and also held other official positions.

The next day the hotel manager sought out one of the participants in the event and asked him anxiously what was used in the marring of his wife's favorite mahogany table. The top was badly split and dented, and he feared to have his wife see it in that condition. But a member of the party had a friend who was officially connected with the Des Moines street car company and he had workmen in their repair and upholstering shop get the table and expertly renew and polish its top surface, restoring it to just as good condition as it was originally. Mrs. Brown never learned of its injury or that it had been out of the hotel, and continued just as proud of it as ever, notwithstanding the hammering it had received with the bootjack on the night of the birthday party.

Territorial Apportionment

Gov. Henry Dodge, of the Territory of Wisconsin, in the first apportionment of members of its Council and House of Representatives, that included an area in

what is now the state of Iowa, announced his selection of such on September 9, 1836, by virtue of the power vested in him by an act of the congress of the United States, based upon a census duly had.

Two counties embraced a portion of Iowa, being Des Moines and Dubuque counties, respectively. To the county of Des Moines were given seven members of the House of Representatives and three members of the Council; to the county of Dubuque were given five members of the House of Representatives and three members of the Council.

In the area now designated as the state of Wisconsin, to the county of Brown three members of the House of Representatives and two members of the Council; to the county of Iowa, six members of the House of Representatives and three members of the Council; to the county of Milwaukee three members of the House of Representatives and two members of the Council; and to the county of Crawford two members of the House of Representatives.

Governor Dodge further directed and ordered that the members elected from the several counties for representatives and council should convene at Belmont in the county of Iowa, on the 25th day of October, next ensuing, for the purpose of organizing the first session of the legislative assembly of Wisconsin Territory.

Most Precious Possession

Life is growth—a challenge of environment. If we cannot meet our everyday surroundings with equanimity and pleasure and grow each day in some useful direction, then this splendid balance of cosmic forces which we call life is on the road toward misfortune, misery and destruction. Therefore, health is the most precious of all things.—Luther Burbank.

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