

IOWA'S FIRST RAILROAD

By Dwight L. Agnew

One January day in 1855 the regular stage jolted its way from Muscatine to Davenport. From the swaying coach the editor of the *Muscatine Journal* observed a crowd of laborers throwing up an embankment for a railroad. With shovels busy, they were cutting through the hills and hauling earth to fills. From Muscatine to Davenport the rich land was already being settled. Prospects for the country were excellent, business was already there for the railroad, and the railroad would bring more business. The editor saw all this, and for more personal reasons he eagerly anticipated the passing of stagecoach transportation. On the return trip to Muscatine his experiences furnished him with what he called "a break-neck argument in favor of the early completion of the Railroad."

We were in one of two full coaches that left Davenport about 7 o'clock of a night, cloudy, foggy, and as dark as Egypt. The horses steamed so that the drivers could not see and the ground was extremely slippery. The drivers were very careful, drove in a walk most of the time, and stopping frequently, sent a light ahead to examine the road. We met a wagon load of pork in a ditch, which our coaches narrowly escaped, and the shouting in the dark backwards and forwards, was not only animating, but foreboding of harm to ourselves. We were three hours in going six miles. At last our coach, the hindmost, slipped on a sidling place, and just then striking a bridge was whirled from it, turning a summerset, and striking on its top on the ground, about three feet below, and the top of the coach describing a circular movement of ten or fifteen feet. One got a bloody gash in his head another his collar bone broken and torn loose from his shoulder blade, and Judge Grant was severely injured in the shoulder, some of the muscles being probably jerked from their sockets. Another was got out raving like a maniac, ignorant of whence he came from or whither he was going, or the name of his friend. A German named Hetzell was kind enough to take care of the wounded. Dr. Fountain, a skillful physician, of Davenport, attended to the wants of the invalids.¹

¹ Davenport *Gazette*, January 17, 1855.

This experience was not unique in the annals of stagecoaching. The discomforts of land travel in the days before railroads are well known. Of course the railroad would not solve all transportation problems, but it would help. Iowans had been thinking about railroads for a good many years. As far back as 1836, John Plumbe, Jr., of Dubuque, talked about a railroad to Oregon. About the middle of the century dreams began to take form in projects and charters, some of which later materialized into rails and locomotives and cars.

Iowa had certain advantages. A rich soil beckoned a population whose produce and industry demanded railroads. The early prominence of Chicago insured early railroad building across the upper Mississippi and the inclusion of routes through Iowa in schemes for transcontinental lines.²

In accordance with the constitution of 1846 which provided that corporations, other than for political or municipal purposes, should be provided for in general laws, Iowa's First General Assembly had passed an act permitting any number of persons to incorporate themselves for the establishment of ferries, construction of railroads, and "other works of internal improvement." The constitution forbade the state to be a stockholder in any such corporation, but Iowa was not slow in calling on the national government for aid to railroads. In the extra session of the First General Assembly (1848) "memorials and joint resolutions were adopted praying Congress to grant lands to aid in the construction of certain railroads. These were the first of a series of some twenty-five joint resolutions and memorials which were sent to Congress praying for land grants to aid in the construction of railroads in Iowa."³ In these early years of railroad building, state legislation looked to the encouragement of any and all projects except those in which the state itself might be involved. Counties and municipalities were permitted to bond themselves for the encouragement of railroad companies.⁴

The Mississippi and Missouri Railroad Company, familiarly known as the M & M, was formed by articles of association in December, 1852. Notarized by John F. Dillon, these articles were filed in the office of the Scott

² Robert E. Riegel, *The Story of the Western Railroads* (New York, 1926), 27.

³ Ivan L. Pollock, *History of Economic Legislation in Iowa* (Iowa City, 1918), 35, 36-7.

⁴ *Iowa City Daily Iowa State Press*, March 13, 1901; *History of Johnson County, Iowa . . .* (Iowa City, 1883), 237-42; Clarence Ray Aurner, *Leading Events in Johnson County Iowa History* (2 vols., Cedar Rapids, 1912), 1:218-23.

County Recorder on January 26, 1853.⁵ In May, 1853, meetings were held to organize the company. The board of directors was elected on May 28. Most of the officers were elected on May 30, but the president and vice-president were elected on the following day.⁶

The M & M was to become a part of the Rock Island system, the beginning of which was the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad already under construction. The latter had been chartered in 1851. Late in that year construction was started and in October, 1852, when the M & M was being organized, the Chicago and Rock Island had reached La Salle, Illinois, and construction was under way for the remainder of the line to Rock Island, a point reached by rail in February, 1854.

Promoters of the M & M planned to build their lines in three directions from Davenport — straight west through Iowa City, southwest, and northwest. It was obvious of course that the rails could not be laid in all three directions at once. Much rivalry developed, particularly between Iowa City and Muscatine, over the question of what direction the road was to take out of Rock Island. Muscatine, Washington, and Oskaloosa wanted the route to follow the east bank of the Mississippi and cross at Muscatine. Iowa City and Davenport would have the road cross at Davenport and proceed directly to Iowa City. The newspapers of the various cities entered the fray with vigor. W. Penn Clarke and LeGrand Byington of Iowa City were authorized by the city council to subscribe to stock in the company in the name of the city and to cast votes as representing stockholders, provided that Iowa City was made a point on the road.⁷

The matter of routing was settled at a conference in Davenport. An early history of Johnson County declares that at the last meeting of the board of directors of the Davenport and Iowa City Railroad, held on the eve of the

⁵ *Second Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners . . . 1879, 88.* A record was filed with the Secretary of State of Iowa on February 1, 1853.

⁶ Concerning dates of association and organization there is considerable confusion. One company history, George H. Crosby, *History of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad Company* (Chicago, 1904), gives the date of association as February 22, 1852; another company history, Frank J. Nevins, "Seventy Years of Service . . ." *Rock Island Magazine*, 17:9 (October, 1922), gives the date as February 22, 1853; still another (that appearing in the *Report of Iowa Railroad Commissioners . . . 1879, 88*) gives December 22, 1852; Franc B. Wilkie, *Davenport Past and Present . . .* (Davenport, 1858), 109, gives January 1, 1853. There is equal difference of opinion as to date and place of organization.

⁷ *Iowa City Daily Iowa State Press*, March 13, 1901.

Davenport meeting, a transfer of "all the rights, privileges, benefits, franchises, etc.," was made to the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad Company, provided the road was routed through Iowa City. The directors dispatched Dr. Henry Murray to Davenport with the proceedings of the Iowa City meeting in his pocket. After an all night ride he arrived in time to lay before the M & M directors Iowa City's proposition.⁸ Whatever may have been Dr. Murray's influence, final plans called for a main line by way of Iowa City and a branch line to Muscatine. Celebrating the triumph of Davenport, a cartoon of the time represented the Muscatine supporters astride a bull and a jackass confronting on the track an engine representing the Davenport and Iowa City project.⁹ Boys of Davenport sang on the streets a little ditty to this effect:

Our friends of Muscatine,
With bull and jackass,
Can't esteem
The beauties of a railroad train.¹⁰

An examination of the list of officers and directors of the M & M reveals that the new company was made up largely of men already deeply involved in the Chicago and Rock Island and in the Peoria and Bureau Valley railroads of Illinois. The secretary was John E. Henry of Iowa, at the time of his election superintendent of the Chicago and Rock Island. A. C. Flagg was treasurer of both companies. Norman B. Judd, counsel for the Rock Island and the Bureau Valley roads, was named solicitor of the

⁸ *History of Johnson County . . .*, 237. Accounts of the meetings of the Davenport and Iowa City board are somewhat contradictory. H. W. Lathrop, in an article in the *Iowa City Daily Iowa State Press* for March 13, 1901, says: "Work had progressed so far from Chicago westward that on the 20th day of May 1853, a special meeting of the Iowa City council was held, and W. Penn Clarke and Legrand Byington were sent as delegates to Chicago to attend a meeting called to organize the Mississippi and Missouri Rail Road Company to represent Iowa City in that meeting, and in the name of the city to subscribe stock in the company, payable in bonds of the city, to be issued by the city council, and in the case a company is formed and stock subscribed to cast the stock votes in the meetings of said company in the name of the city, provided Iowa City is made a point on said road. On the same day a meeting of the directors of the D. & I. C. R. R. Co. was held, and Mr. Byington was authorized to sell and transfer to such company when organized, all the property rights and franchises of the Davenport and Iowa City Rail Road Company provided that Iowa City be made a point on their road."

⁹ A copy of the cartoon is in the possession of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

¹⁰ Charles H. Dibbern, "An Interesting Reflection on Pioneer Days," *Rock Island Magazine*, 20:45 (December, 1925).

new concern. Henry Farnam, president of the Chicago and Rock Island, became the chief engineer, and John B. Jervis, a former president of the Chicago and Rock Island, was made consulting engineer. The president was John A. Dix, a prominent political figure from New York, expected to be of service in securing a land grant and in promoting a Pacific railroad bill. The vice-president, William B. Ogden, was already involved in railroad lines which were to become part of the Chicago and North Western system. In addition to some already named, the directors included William Walcott of New York, Joseph E. Sheffield, Ebenezer Cook of the banking firm of Cook and Sargent, Davenport, and Thomas C. Durant of New York. Durant was to become more and more prominent in the councils of the group which controlled the Rock Island, Bureau Valley, M & M, and the Mississippi bridge.¹¹ He had been associated with Farnam as a contractor in building the Peoria and Bureau Valley road. As Sheffield withdrew from active participation in the affairs of the group, Durant took over the New York office and handled the negotiation of securities.

Capital stock was fixed at \$6,000,000 with shares of \$100 each. A 5 per cent subscription was to be paid down, the remainder in installments at intervals of not less than three months. The debt limit was fixed at \$4,000,000.¹²

While the promoters of the M & M were deliberating on a choice of officers, surveys were already under way. Haste in beginning the surveys was occasioned by the appearance of a rival project which planned to employ almost the same route to the Missouri. Crews were already laying out a line from Lyons on the Mississippi River to Iowa City and thence west. This Lyons Iowa Central project apparently had excellent chances of success.¹³

Beginnings of surveys for the M & M involved two men whose careers are especially worthy of mention — Peter A. Dey and Grenville M. Dodge.¹⁴ Dey, easterner by birth, had gradually drifted west with western

¹¹ For the story of the building of the first bridge across the Mississippi, see Dwight L. Agnew, "Jefferson Davis and the Rock Island Bridge," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY*, 47:3-14 (January, 1949).

¹² Wilkie, *Davenport Past and Present* . . . , 109-110.

¹³ Aurner, *Leading Events in Johnson County Iowa History*, 1:211; Ruth Irish Preston, "The Lyons and Iowa Central Railroad," *Annals of Iowa* (third series), 9:284-301 (January, 1910).

¹⁴ Standard biographies are: Jack T. Johnson, *Peter Anthony Dey: Integrity in*

enterprises on which he was employed as an engineer. He was first associated with Farnam and Sheffield on the Michigan Southern and Indiana Northern projects. Later he became assistant to William Jarvis, chief engineer of the Chicago and Rock Island, by whom he was assigned to a division whose headquarters were at Tiskilwa, west of Peru. Assisting him on the Rock Island and on the Peoria branch was young Grenville M. Dodge. "Very soon," said Dey, "I discovered that there was a great deal in him. I discovered a wonderful energy; — for instance, if I told him to do anything he did it under any and all circumstances."¹⁵

In the spring of 1853, Dey was told to leave his job on the Rock Island and commence surveys in Iowa. With his principal assistant, Grenville Dodge, he crossed the Mississippi River on May 17, 1853, and started to lay out a preliminary line from Davenport to Iowa City. The Mississippi bridge had already been located, so that the initial point of the survey was determined. By May 26 a preliminary line had been run to Iowa City.¹⁶

Two months later Hiram Price, one of the original organizers of the M & M, set out along the proposed route from Iowa City to Davenport to interest Iowa pioneers in the M & M. Agents of the Lyons Iowa Central had been over the same road. Both enterprises hoped to persuade towns and counties to issue bonds in support of their respective roads and to arouse individuals to the point of subscribing to railroad stock. Price wrote:

My special business was to see the people at their homes or at their places of business, and where practicable call public meetings at different points along the contemplated line of the road, and to so present the advantages to result from the construction of a railroad as to interest them in the enterprise. By agreement I was to continue in this work along the line of the proposed road for sixty days. My experience . . . was not such as to make me anxious to renew it.¹⁷

He found to his surprise and disgust that the people of western Iowa were not generally eager to see the first railroad. They seemed satisfied to rely

Public Service (Iowa City, 1939); J. R. Perkins, *Trails, Rails, and War: The Life of General G. M. Dodge* (Indianapolis, 1929).

¹⁵ Johnson, *Peter Anthony Dey* . . . , 59-60.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁷ Hiram Price, "Recollections of Iowa Men and Affairs," *Annals of Iowa* (third series), 1:6-7 (April, 1893). For a sketch of Hiram Price, see B. F. Gue, "The Public Services of Hiram Price," *ibid.*, 1:585-602 (January, 1895).

on the slow and uncertain transportation good enough for their fathers. "I could only account for these strange notions," said Price, "on the supposition that this class of persons had read and were in sympathy with the man described by Pollock in his 'Course of Time,'

'Who thought the moon that nightly o'er him rolled
No larger than his father's shield;
Lived where his father lived, died where he died,
Lived happy, died happy, and was saved.'"¹⁸

Hiram Price reminded Iowans that a railroad would raise the price of farm produce 50 or 100 per cent, but they refused to believe him. He recalled a meeting in Des Moines in the middle of August, held on the ground floor of the courthouse. Those who could find no room inside peered through the open windows.

While I was making the best presentation of my case that I could truthfully do, and trying to persuade the people that a railroad to Des Moines would be a great benefit to all concerned, some man on the outside, who must have been a near relative of Ananias, crowded his way to the window, listened for a few moments, and then turning away said to those on the outside, "Oh! that is Judge Rice who is speaking, and he is the greatest liar in the State of Iowa." My name was not Rice and the title of Judge did not belong to me, but it answered the purpose of the anti-railroad men, and was a "good enough Morgan" for the time. This is a sample of the manner in which my mission was received in what is now the city of Des Moines, and a great railroad center for the State of Iowa and of the Northwest.¹⁹

In his letters to Henry Farnam from Des Moines, Price indicated some good reasons for the seeming apathy on the question of voting bonds for the M & M. For one thing, there was a strong feeling in favor of the Lyons road. "I signed the petition," they would say. "I said I would vote for it, before I heard of the Davenport road. . . ." But what Price terms "crazy and unreasonable people" may not have been so devoid of good sense after all. Price himself pointed out that the taxable property of the three counties lying between Des Moines and Iowa City (Iowa, Poweshiek, and Jasper) was only \$80,000, and the distance across them was only seventy-

¹⁸ Price, "Recollections of Iowa Men and Affairs," 7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

eight miles.²⁰ And these counties had already pledged their support to the Lyons road.

At Kaneshville (Council Bluffs) Hiram Price met with a slightly more encouraging reception. After making the best presentation of the case of which he was capable, he sat down, feeling

. . . that the people of Council Bluffs did not think a railroad of much consequence, but rather an unjustifiable interference with the Divine plan, and therefore not to be encouraged because when the Supreme Architect finished the world He pronounced it good without a railroad.

However . . . a gentleman in one of the back seats arose and broke the (to me) awful silence, in a speech not longer than a Lacedemonian letter. . . .

"My friends, I have listened to this man's railroad speech, and while I am free to confess that I have grave doubts as to the practicability of the project, yet it may be wise to give it a fair trial, and possibly some day we may see the locomotive coming across these prairies head and tail up like a bedbug."²¹

Lack of faith in railroad enterprises was not confined to the people of western Iowa. Price recalled a Muscatine lawyer's claim that a railroad could not possibly carry grain and livestock on cars the great distance to the eastern market. "And flour," he said, "cannot be carried such a distance on a railroad without shaking the barrels to pieces, unless the barrels are strong and heavy as pork barrels, and that would be so expensive as to make it unprofitable."²²

In spite of these discouraging receptions, surveyors were soon hard at work in the field. Grenville Dodge left Iowa City with his party on September 4, 1853. On the eve of his departure he wrote his father:

Yesterday I started my lines west of Iowa City and tomorrow I leave for good. Today I bought a saddle horse for \$125.00. I have one wagon for camp chests and provisions and one for stocks and baggage. We have in all, six horses and fourteen men, including the cook and the hunter. The season is late and we cannot look ahead without seeing hardships and exposures never experienced by any of us. The snows on the Missouri are unusually severe, nor can we expect to arrive before they come on.

²⁰ Henry W. Farnam, *Memoir of Henry Farnam* (New Haven, 1889), 52-3.

²¹ Price, "Recollections of Iowa Men and Affairs," 8-9.

²² *Ibid.*, 13.

There is also a probability, after arriving at Fort Des Moines, of our locating several hundred miles in order to keep ahead of the so-called Lyons road which is nearly parallel with ours west of Iowa City. The projectors have no money, but they are pushing lines through the state and making a cry to get the counties to take stock. We have moneyed men to back us. My expenses reach \$1,000 a month.²³

The Lyons party left Iowa City three or four days ahead of Dodge, but somewhere between Iowa City and Council Bluffs the M & M party took the lead. At Des Moines, Dodge selected forty acres for depot grounds. His party reached the Missouri on November 22, 1853, and was there entertained at a reception and a ball by the people of Council Bluffs. In less than three months Dodge had made a so-called survey of a line which by air would be nearly two hundred and fifty miles. Allan Slack, the Lyons surveyor, admitted that his survey from Iowa City west was a mere reconnaissance, but Dodge left after he did and reached his destination several days in the lead.²⁴

The Lyons Iowa Central Road which had campaigned so audaciously was doomed to early failure. H. P. Adams of Syracuse, New York, the principal backer (and a fugitive from justice), had put laborers to work between Lyons and Iowa City and persuaded a number of counties to vote bonds. In June, 1854, he absconded with the bonds and left the counties with taxes to pay and the Irish laborers with a few groceries and some dry goods for their wages.²⁵ The "Calico Road" faded out completely but not before it had worried the M & M promoters into speedier progress.

Meanwhile Henry Farnam was striving to get construction started. In September he was urging that contracts be let, assuming that money to pay them would be forthcoming from Sheffield, but his old friend and partner insisted on withdrawing from any further responsibilities in the West except to meet obligations already incurred. He wrote "that . . . at the meeting in September following [1853] in New York, when you so warmly invited a vote giving you authority to put the road from Iowa [City] to Des Moines under contract, against which I strongly objected, unless you could point out the means of payment, I again said, that I *could not* and

²³ Perkins, *Trails, Rails, and War* . . . , 23.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 25-8.

²⁵ Aurner, *Leading Events in Johnson County Iowa History*, 1:214.

would not undertake to financeer for said company in any shape. . . .” Davenport, however, fully persuaded that the railroad would soon be hauling produce to its markets, subscribed to \$75,000 worth of stock. Scott County, by a vote of 299 to 10, subscribed to \$50,000 in stock, and individual subscriptions amounted to \$100,000.²⁶

One of the heavy individual subscribers was Antoine Le Claire, the famous three-hundred-pound proprietor of the Le Claire House. Of mixed blood (Indian and French-Canadian), he had been one of the original settlers at Davenport. His choice of land at the site of the future city brought him wealth which he handled with sagacity and yet with public-spirited generosity. When Dey and Dodge crossed the Mississippi and started their line through the city, Le Claire, alarmed that the route would pass through his orchard, protested to Dodge, and then appealed to Dey. The latter, however, confirmed Dodge in his choice. Soon mollified, Le Claire became a booster for the railroad, and his residence became its storehouse and later the first passenger depot. His property, so Ralph Waldo Emerson said, rose to the value of five or six hundred thousand dollars. “Tony” Le Claire subscribed to \$25,000 stock of the railroad and sold eleven acres to the M & M for \$15,000.²⁷ The Le Claire House was a famous hostelry. Emerson, visiting there in 1856, noted in his journal: “Rules of the house. ‘No gentleman permitted to sit at the table without his coat.’ ‘No gambling permitted in the house.’ . . . They talk ‘quarter-sections’ ‘I will take a quarter-section of that pie!’”²⁸

Le Claire also figured prominently in the ceremony of breaking ground for the M & M. “It was a day full of interest to the people of Davenport,” wrote one of the city’s historians. “Many of the old citizens, who had for years been living on in hope and confidence, now began to feel all their most sanguine wishes gratified.” On the morning of September 1, 1853, a crowd of some two thousand people gathered to watch the procession

²⁶ Sheffield to Farnam, August 17, 1854, *Leonard Collection*, 3-4-26-4. (The Leonard Collection, State University of Iowa Library, is contained in 4-drawer filing cases; 3-4-26-4 signifies third case, fourth drawer, folder twenty-six, item four.) Wilkie, *Davenport Past and Present* . . . , 113.

²⁷ M. M. Kinnavey, “Le Claire and the Beginning of Davenport” (Unpublished thesis, State University of Iowa, 1918); Perkins, *Trails, Rails, and War* . . . , 20; [John L. Scripps], *Rock Island and Its Surroundings* (Chicago, 1854), 26, 27.

²⁸ Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes (eds.), *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (10 vols., Boston, 1909-1914), 8:585.

formed in honor of the occasion. The *Gazette* thus described the celebration:

About 10½ o'clk. the citizens of Davenport, Rock Island and vicinities, assembled in front of the Le Claire Buildings, formed a procession and proceeded to the corner of Fifth and Rock Island sts. where the great work was to be commenced. In the procession were included the two brass bands of this city, the Odd Fellows in regalia, the German Verein Society and a large vehicle drawn by four horses containing Mr. Burnell and some thirty-five or forty men who are employed at his saw-mill.²⁹

A. C. Fulton, marshal of the day, gave the honor of turning the first shovelful of earth on the M & M to Antoine Le Claire, who descended from the platform and with coat off performed the ritual amid shouting and waving of flags. At intervals in the program the bands "enlivened the scene by performing some of the most appropriate airs and the members of the Verein Society sung [sic], while a small company of artillery men from the old country, having in charge the 'cast-iron,' and stationed on a neighboring eminence [sic], made the welkin ring." Afterwards a dinner was served at the Le Claire House by the "Messrs. Lowry" to some one hundred fifty or two hundred people.³⁰

Contractors soon had graders busy at the west end of the road. The *Gazette* announced on September 15 that another gang was to commence that day on the grade near West Liberty and that other crews were soon to begin operations on the line near Davenport. A month later the Davenport paper pronounced false a report "put in circulation at Iowa City, by a party just suited for that business," that M & M operations had ceased. Work at five points along the route was progressing rapidly.³¹ At the end of October a Chicago editor on tour through the country found that a large amount of grading had already been done by some two or three hundred hands.

This road, as the continuation of the Chicago and Rock Island road, is one in which our citizens are greatly interested. It is

²⁹ Davenport *Gazette*, September 8, 1853.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Harry E. Downer, *History of Davenport and Scott County Iowa* (2 vols., Chicago, 1910), 1:196; Ambrose C. Fulton, *A Portion of Life's Voyage* (Davenport, 1902), 29.

³¹ Davenport *Gazette*, September 15, October 13, 1853.

opening up a country of unsurpassed natural resources to the trade of our city. Of the value and extent of its commerce, after it shall have been subjected to cultivation, I will not hazard an estimate, lest those who have not seen the country might suspect me of a design of over-stating the importance of the road to Chicago, and of the profitable character of the enterprise as an investment for capital.³²

In January of 1854 there were rumors that the force of laborers was about to strike in consequence of a reduction in wages, but the strike failed to materialize. Most of the six hundred hands then employed were concentrated near Davenport where the Mississippi bluffs made extensive grading necessary. At West Liberty there were some sixty men at work, and Peter Dey was about to set out with a surveying crew to make final determination of the line west of Iowa City.³³

During the year 1854 the work slowed down, and even through the first half of 1855 very little was done. June of 1855 was almost gone before a single rail was laid in Iowa. The company was having difficulty negotiating its securities. Certainly by the end of 1854 the stringency of the money market presaged the greater depression of 1857. Then, too, the company had relied too much on the success of the federal land bill which failed of passage in 1854. Again, there were troubles within the company which hindered smooth performance. All of these difficulties are reflected in the correspondence of company officials. William Walcott thought that Farnam was spending too much time on the M & M to the detriment of the Rock Island. Sheffield suggested that General Dix be replaced by someone else as president of the M & M. Dix had been selected, said Sheffield, because "his position with the administration was such as to give us much to hope for, in our Land Bill and our Bridge matter." Sheffield suggested further that "some good reason — excuse — for opening a new subscription" be found. A new president who could bring assurance that the iron would be laid and the road opened during the summer would encourage subscriptions.³⁴

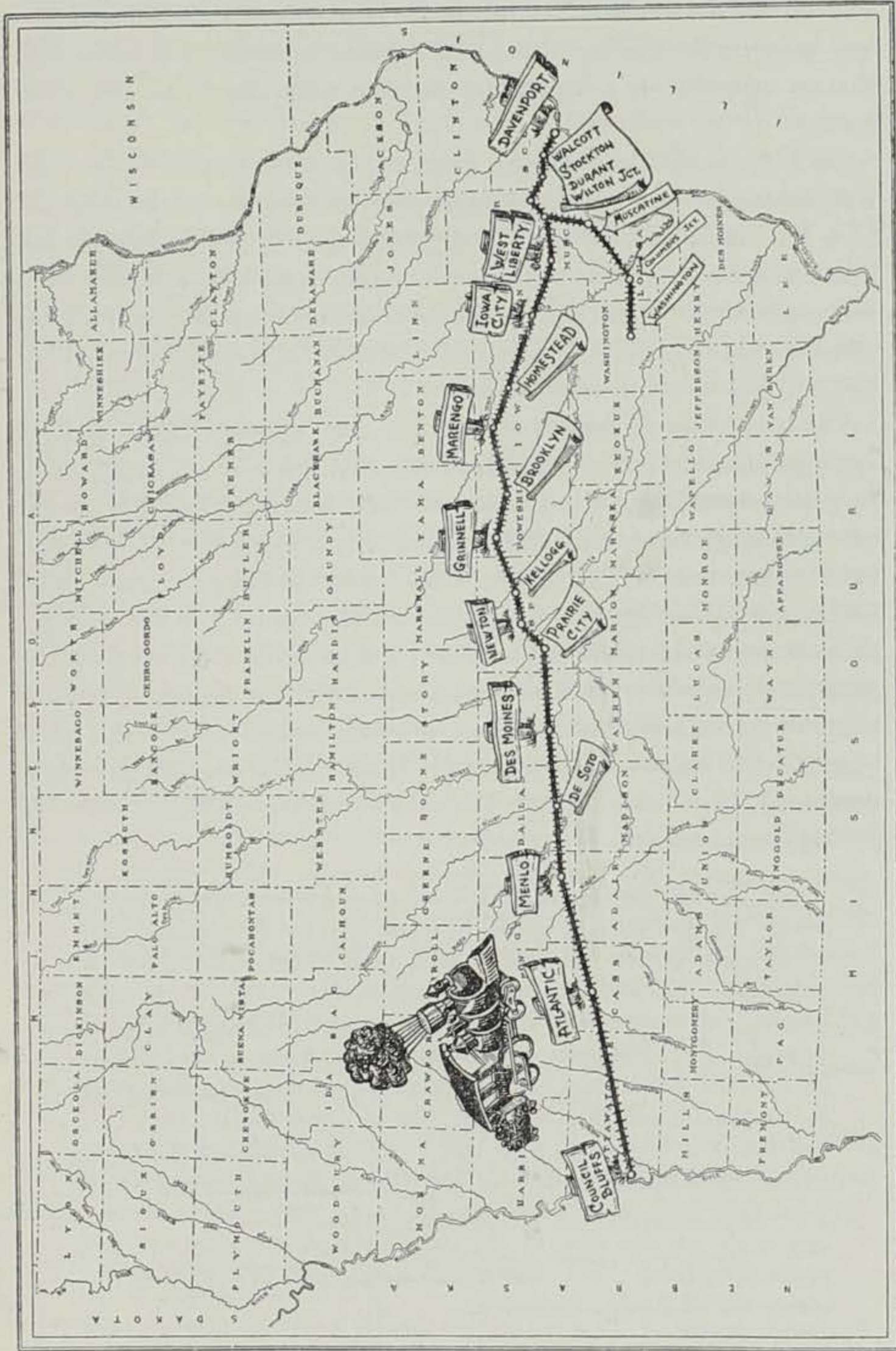
The threatened reshuffle in the company did not occur, however. Farnam

³² [Scripps], *Rock Island and Its Surroundings*, 23-4.

³³ *Iowa City Republican* as quoted in the *Davenport Gazette*, January 19, 1854.

³⁴ See Farnam to T. C. Durant, September 10, 1854, *Leonard Collection*, 1-2-17-40; Farnam to Durant, October 14, 1854, *ibid.*, 4-1-10-20; Sheffield to Cook and Walcott, March 10, 1855, *ibid.*, 3-4-26-2.

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still retained the confidence of at least the majority of the directors, and he was as before the leading spirit. John Adams Dix remained president and Farnam took over as a contractor, this time with Thomas C. Durant as partner.

On May 8, 1855, the *Gazette* jubilantly announced that "Farnam, the Railroad King," had personally taken over the contract for building the M & M. "Its speedy construction depended upon so many contingencies, that stockholders had begun to fear years must elapse before they received any return whatever for their investments, but now that Farnum [sic] has taken the matter in hand, they feel an assurance that the work will steadily and rapidly advance to completion."³⁵

The partnership of Farnam and Durant came apparently as a result of the suggestion of Sheffield. Farnam had urged the latter to accept more financial responsibility in Iowa, and Sheffield had subscribed \$50,000 in the stock of the M & M and had endorsed with Walcott for \$50,000 more, but beyond this he refused to go. "Now, under such circumstances, to be told," he wrote to Farnam, "that if the work stops in Iowa, it will 'ruin my personal credit and character,' will not for a moment divert me from my purpose, or frighten me into new engagements which prudence, and justice to my own family, and my own peace of mind, forbid." In the same letter he went on to suggest that Farnam and Thomas C. Durant, with possibly a third party, offer to contract for the road to Iowa City and Muscatine. He praised Durant highly.

Mr. Durant has shown himself a man of business and a man of nerve. He had shown himself, in relation to the Peoria road, and in all other matters, in such a light, as to command our utmost confidence and esteem, — with such a man, you are in safe hands: you and he have the means — good & valuable securities, to pledge for 12 months, as security for the Iron; so that it may go forward this season, — Chateau & Co. must extend the credit to 12 months with the securities you can give them; Gen'l Dix will take London on his way, and I think may succeed in having the credit extended to any further parcels of Iron from year to year, that the Company will hereafter need, and in this way you can easily get the stem of the road early in operation. It will prove profitable, . . . which will enable you to command the means for all further extensions.

³⁵ Davenport *Gazette*, May 8, 1855.

Sheffield evinced great confidence in the M & M project. He had, he said, more confidence in the Iowa project than he had had in the Chicago and Rock Island at its inception. He remarked a certain prejudice against railroads might "soon die away, so far at least as good lines, in the hands of good & honorable men, are concerned." The Rock Island road would soon become known as the leading line to California; the land bill would pass; and the undertaking beckoned young and enterprising men.³⁶

By the terms of their contract with the M & M, signed May 2, 1855, Farnam and Durant had agreed to complete the construction of the roads from Davenport to Muscatine and Iowa City according to plans already drawn up by engineer B. B. Brayton. They were to build shops, engine houses, and station buildings and furnish equipment to the amount of \$310,750. They agreed to take over all contracts for iron, grading, bridging, and engineering already in force. For the above they were to be paid \$31,000 per mile. The sum was to be paid as follows: \$400,000 in cash; 1,000 M & M bonds of \$1,000 each, at the rate of 80 cents to the dollar; 70 Muscatine bonds of \$1,000 each, at 90 cents on the dollar; 50 Johnson County bonds; and 50 Iowa City bonds. The balance of the amount was to be paid in M & M stock at 75 cents on the dollar. The road was to be completed by January 1, 1856, and was to be surrendered to the company on July 1, 1856. Farnam and Durant were to have an option on contracts contemplated for extensions of the road: from Muscatine to Oskaloosa, from Iowa City to Des Moines, and from the main line to Cedar Rapids.³⁷

Henry Farnam had entered into the contract with some misgiving. Thomas C. Durant, known among his acquaintances as "Doctor" Durant, was not noted for the scruples which distinguished Joseph Sheffield, Farnam's former partner.³⁸ Yet had not the twin disasters of depression and war struck the company, it seems probable that Farnam and Durant would have pushed the M & M across Iowa in much the same fashion that Farnam and Sheffield had handled the Rock Island in Illinois.

For a few months prospects brightened. At the end of May, 1855, timber which had floated down from Wisconsin and Minnesota arrived at Rock Island, and ties sufficient to complete the first division (to Iowa City)

³⁶ Sheffield to Farnam, August 17, 1854, *Leonard Collection*, 3-4-26-4.

³⁷ Copy of Contract, *ibid.*, 1-3-24-1.

³⁸ Farnam, *Memoir of Henry Farnam*, 50; Farnam to T. C. Durant, August 13, 1855, *Leonard Collection*, 1-3-15-24.

were on the way. At the end of June the first iron was laid, on a temporary track from the river to the bed of the road, to convey iron and rolling stock now in readiness for the track laying.³⁹

On July 19, 1855, Iowa's first locomotive arrived. The "Antoine Le Claire" had been ready for its distinguished work for several months. Back in January the editor of the Peru (Illinois) *Chronicle* had "accidentally stumbled against the engine" in the Peru roundhouse. The decorations of the locomotive were impressive.

On the side pannels of the "sand box" we observed two bronze statues of Capt. Le Claire, in half-relief, terminating at the knees in an elaborated bronze scroll, also, in half-relief under these statues, are paintings, on either pannel illustrative of his early life and adventures. . . . We have not the honor of an acquaintance with Capt. Le Claire, but the corpulent, hearty-looking, bronze gentleman, with his stout cane, and benevolent face, that looks down upon us from the sand box, may be a careless sinner, but we will warrant him the king of good fellows, open handed, and possessed of a heart capable of assuming any breadth of capacity that hospitality may require.⁴⁰

When the day came for the locomotive's first work, it was brought over on a flatboat especially rigged for rolling stock. A temporary track laid the length of the boat received the locomotive from the Rock Island tracks and discharged the "Antoine Le Claire" on a spur track across the river. The historic incident was witnessed, so B. B. Brayton recalled, by an Indian, much less impressed by the mechanical products of the white man's genius than was the white man himself.

He [the Indian] was seated by a large boulder that lay near the water's edge at that place, hard by a certain stately cotton wood, and was absorbedly engaged in streaking his coppery face with a certain whitish clay that he pawed out from the bank at that spot, directing his efforts by means of a fragment of mirror that was conveniently placed upon the rock. With all the unparalleled interest of the performance of the pale faces in landing the Antoine Le Claire this unmoved son of the forest pursued his frescoing without the slightest evidence that he felt any interest in what was doing hard by. A few times he did deign to squint an instant in

³⁹ Davenport *Gazette*, May 26, June 30, 1855.

⁴⁰ Peru (Illinois) *Chronicle*, January 10, 1855, as quoted in the Davenport *Gazette*, January 15, 1855.

the direction of the flatboat and the locomotive, but he never paused in his work of decoration, and never missed a stroke.⁴¹

The small crowd gathered to witness the arrival of the locomotive cheered as it was hauled from the flatboat up the steep embankment to the station grounds. Antoine Le Claire was present at the event which was described by the *Gazette* as the beginning of an "ever memorable era in the history of our beautiful State. Well may Davenport feel a lasting pride in the consummation of such a step toward her future greatness." Carried away by his enthusiasm, the *Gazette* editor indulged in journalistic oratory:

While I am writing, the worthy and efficient managers of this welcome visitor are preparing it for the temporary track that will lead it to its depot, from which place it will in a few hours enter upon its destined usefulness. Who shall contemplate its destiny? Will Cedar river bound its westward labor? Will Iowa City stay its course? Will the great Missouri river say, here shall thy proud course be stayed? Shall the towering ramparts of the Rocky Mountains give limits to its onward course? No, the quiet shores of the mighty Pacific shall be awakened by the shrill whistle of its engine — the welcome tones of its alarm bell.⁴²

Provided with water and pine "rattlings" from Renwick's sawmill, the "Antoine Le Claire" made its first run loaded with passengers, red and white, clinging to the locomotive wherever space was available. At street crossings the pioneer locomotive and its burden were greeted by cheers, smiles, and the waving "of handkerchiefs from fair ladies."⁴³

An incident of this first ride was related fifty years later:

There were Indians aplenty in town just then. That night there was to be a "beggar dance," a crude performance after which the hat was to be passed. When just about opposite the spot well known to fame as the Patch, the engineer of the Antoine Le Claire, lifting up his eyes hillwards, beheld Indians, in numbers, gaily blanketed and regardant. He stopped the engine, signalled to them with emphatic wavings of his arms to come, inviting them in pantomime to take a ride with him.

Never, in all the history of trans-Mississippi railroading, was there greater eagerness on the part of the impecunious to avail

⁴¹ Davenport *Democrat*, Half-Century Edition, October 22, 1905, p. 51.

⁴² Davenport *Gazette*, July 20, 1855.

⁴³ Davenport *Gazette*, July 21, 1855.

himself of the proffer of a free pass. In their haste not to get left those bucks cast to the winds their blankets, all they had on earth perhaps, and ran with all possible speed, down the hill to the track where the Antoine Le Claire stood gently steaming, with shouts and laughter. They swarmed upon and over her, a score of them; and so, with all the passengers, red and white, that could be stuck on the tender and the cab, the first run in this section of the United States was made.⁴⁴

Very soon the snort of the "iron horse" brought its first runaway. "A span of spirited horses attached to Mr. Kincaid's buggy started at the unusual sound and becoming entirely unmanageable, that gentleman and another leaped from the vehicle and gave them the reins. They took a circuit of the city, tumbling into a deep gutter on Rock Island street and breaking the buggy, but otherwise . . . doing no damage."⁴⁵

By the end of the first week in August rails were laid five miles from Davenport. Iron was going down at the rate of a half mile a day. At the end of August, instead of unloading iron at Rock Island, the contractors were running cars onto flatboats furnished with rails and rolling them directly onto a track again at Davenport.⁴⁶ To an outside observer the work seemed to be progressing very smoothly and efficiently, but Farnam was disgusted with his sub-contractors. On his return to Chicago from Iowa at the beginning of August, Farnam wrote Durant that he had been trying to "get things going" a little more to his liking. "It is almost like raising the dead to start Carmichael & Warner out of their slow gait—I shall follow them up, & if it is possible, will get them on a little faster speed ere long—"⁴⁷ A few days later he complained again that Carmichael and Warner has disappointed him. He had pretty much made up his mind, he wrote, that if he built a thousand miles of railroad he would never turn over more than one small section to either of them. He had told John Henry that he would gladly give \$10,000 to have his sub-contractors out of the way for four months.

There were bright spots in the picture, however. The track laying on the branch road to Muscatine was not under contract and I. R. Boyle had been

⁴⁴ Davenport *Democrat*, Half-Century Edition, October 22, 1905, pp. 49-51.

⁴⁵ Davenport *Gazette*, July 23, 1855.

⁴⁶ Keokuk *Gate City*, August 8, 1855; Davenport *Gazette*, August 25, 1855.

⁴⁷ Farnam to T. C. Durant, August 2, 10, 1855; *Leonard Collection*, 1-2-17-44, 4-1-9-30.

placed in charge. Farnam had confidence in Boyle who had worked for him before. Eight thousand ties were on the spot and rails were about to go forward at the rate of one hundred tons every other day. By the middle of August, Farnam had "started both Warner and Carmichael into a little quicker speed." Carmichael was putting down 3,000 feet of track per day and he promised more, but Farnam was not satisfied. ". . . Carmichael is but very little better than a dead man. He is a Slow Coach — But I think I have got things so arranged . . . that he cannot hinder us much — I think both he & Warner made up their minds that the easiest way to immortalize their names was to keep in the way & hinder us all they can — I think they are doing their last work for me —"⁴⁸

The first station on the new road was about twelve miles from Davenport. The site of Walcott was an open prairie in January, 1854. Recognizing the town-site possibilities of the location, certain of the railroad promoters, particularly William Walcott and Ebenezer Cook, bought up the land and had an architect lay out the future community. By May, 1854, several houses were up and laborers were engaged in clearing ground for a depot. The *Gazette* editor surmised that "From the interest the company, or prominent individuals of the company, have in the town, we presume every feature that will tend to confer importance upon it, or aid in its progress, will be developed."⁴⁹ Ebenezer Cook was an Iowan, but he was as much interested in making a fortune from land and railroad schemes as was any eastern capitalist. Later, when plans were under way for extending the line west of Iowa City, Farnam observed: "I find that notwithstanding Mr Cook told you that they had no interest in lands along the line of a Road, that the moment we talk of changing the location he is on end in a twinkling."⁵⁰ Regardless of what his profit may have been in the enterprise, William Walcott donated five hundred dollars toward a school building for his namesake.⁵¹ On August 21, 1855, the Davenport *Gazette* carried an announcement by Cook and Sargent of a "Public Auction" of "Fifty Building Lots" in the new town.⁵²

⁴⁸ Farnam to T. C. Durant, August 10, 1855, *ibid.*, 4-1-9-30; Farnam to T. C. Durant, August 14, 1855, *ibid.*, 1-2-17-42.

⁴⁹ Davenport *Democrat*, May 25, 1854.

⁵⁰ Farnam to T. C. Durant, August 7, 1856, *Leonard Collection*, 1-3-15-46.

⁵¹ Davenport *Gazette*, August 7, 1855, copy in *Leonard Collection*, 3-2-23-15.

⁵² Davenport *Gazette*, August 21, 1855.

About nine o'clock Saturday morning, August 25, Iowa's first passenger train left Davenport for Walcott. Farnam had loaned Cook and Sargent two coaches from the Rock Island road for the trip.⁵³ Five flatcars used for hauling railroad iron were rigged with a temporary railing and provided with chairs and settees. The locomotives "Le Claire" and "Iowa" pulled in these conveyances some five hundred people, including in their number seventy-five ladies and a brass band. The steep grade out of the town was surmounted without difficulty, and some of the citizens of Davenport viewed their own hinterland for the first time. After an hour's trip over the twelve-mile track, the excursionists and buyers were welcomed by Walcott residents and others gathered for the occasion.

Proceeding to the Walcott House, the ladies there found ample accommodations, while the gentlemen repaired to a convenient spot to engage in the mission that had brought them thither, which was to purchase at public auction the lots yet [sic] remaining unsold on the town plot of Walcott. Mr. H. Kilbourn, the popular auctioneer, mounted a rostrum and with the happy faculty he possesses of showing the good points of anything he wishes to dispose of to the highest bidder, soon had lots in Walcott selling at from \$200 to \$250 each. These were choice lots, however, and they soon depreciated in price until from \$100 to \$150 were the ruling rates and outlots even went so low as from \$50 to \$75.⁵⁴

On Monday night Cook wrote Durant that the sale had gone off well and that the five hundred people were brought back safe and well pleased. On September 4 he wrote: "The sale of Lots in Walcott on the [account] with you & Farnam on the 25th amounted to over \$2500 at good prices."⁵⁵

Walcott was not the only town along the line from Davenport to Iowa City which sprang suddenly into being in anticipation of, or in response to, rail transportation. "Many of our readers," said the *Gazette*, "have undoubtedly observed the magic-like progress of the stations on line of the Chicago and Rock Island Road; places that a year and a half ago resembled Walcott in its present primitive state, but are now depots of commercial importance, surrounded by a country rapidly improving, receiving its impulse from the

⁵³ Farnam to T. C. Durant [about August 1, 1855], *Leonard Collection*, 1-2-43-13.

⁵⁴ Davenport *Gazette*, August 28, 1855. An account of this trip may be found also in the *Des Moines Register and Leader*, August 26, 1905.

⁵⁵ E. Cook to T. C. Durant, August 27, September 4, 1855, *Leonard Collection*, 1-2-12-36, 1-2-18-5.

sparks of enterprise cast along its course from the nostrils of the 'iron horse.'"⁵⁶ Fulton, now called Stockton, was one such station. A. C. Fulton, a great booster for A. C. Fulton and for Davenport, had laid out the town. On September 15 another crowd of prospective buyers with a few ladies who "notwithstanding a threatening sky, graced the construction cars," steamed through Walcott and on to Fulton. Another artificially located town was Durant, just a few miles beyond Fulton. B. B. Brayton, one of the railroad engineers, platted the town in 1854. According to one account, probably correct, this Cedar County land was owned by Brayton, John Adams Dix, and T. C. Durant, and the original location of the railroad was moved slightly north in order to strike their holdings. Durant, named by Brayton after T. C. Durant, was recorded as a town in June, 1855, and was reached by the railroad in October, 1855. In this case the three proprietors had donated a half section of land for a town-site. The first shipment of produce on an Iowa railroad consisted of two hundred and thirty-four bushels of wheat shipped by Benjamin P. Putnam of Durant to a dealer in Davenport, on September 15, 1855.⁵⁷

Construction continued and the track reached the Cedar River in the middle of October. Time was running out on the contract which called for completion of the road to Iowa City and Muscatine by January 1, 1856. A further incentive for speed was Iowa City's proposal of a \$50,000 subscription, providing the first train reached the town by midnight of December 31. In October Farnam had high hopes of meeting the terms. As soon as the main track reached the Cedar River, Carmichael's crew was shifted to the branch line from Wilton Junction to Muscatine. Meanwhile Boyle was working north from Muscatine so that only a few miles remained to be completed before the Muscatine celebration on November 20.⁵⁸ Work on the main line progressed less satisfactorily. John E. Henry, general superintendent, wrote engineer Samuel B. Reed on October 25:

Can you fill up your gang of Track Layers by putting up wages? My idea would be to find some way to draw off the men from the work west of Muscatine, until this work is closed up, provided we cannot get men enough to keep both going. Suppose you should

⁵⁶ Davenport *Gazette*, August 24, 1855.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, September 18, 1855; *Durant Daily Times*, December 6, 1927.

⁵⁸ Farnam to T. C. Durant, October 14, 1855, October 15, 1855, *Leonard Collection*, 4-1-9-20, 4-1-9-28.

see your Contractors on that part of the line and talk this over with them; I should rather pay 1 50/100 dollars per day now, than have the work drag along so slowly. If we do not lay to grade now, we shall not be able to get our track up before winter setts [sic] in; you will do better to lay to grade wherever the material will allow of it.⁵⁹

If these top wages of \$1.50 per day seem extremely small when compared with present-day wages, it must be remembered that living costs of that day were correspondingly low. Just a year before, a Muscatine resident wrote that corn was selling at 20 and 25 cents a bushel, beef at 6 and 7 cents a pound, pork at 5 and 6 cents per pound. Prairie chickens and domestic chickens could be bought for \$1.50 a dozen and turkeys for 50 cents each. Butter was 10 and 12 cents per pound.⁶⁰

The celebrations at Muscatine and Iowa City, marking completion of the railroad to those two points, were matters of interest not only to local citizenry but to eastern capitalists and Chicago boosters who were feeling out the business potentialities of the rising young state. The first of these festive occasions occurred in Muscatine on November 20, 1855.

The excursion train made the trip from Davenport to Muscatine in four hours. Proper caution was exercised on the newly-laid track so that all arrived safely.⁶¹ Unfortunately for local boosters, Muscatine that morning was

. . . a sea of mist and rain. Above, the heavens were arrayed in a shroud of gloom, and beneath, the earth presented one magnificent mass of mud. It was a day above all others best calculated to dampen the spirits and chill the ardor of our citizens, and doubtless succeeded in keeping at home hundreds who had every preparation made to spend a joyous day in our city.

Iowa mud, proverbial for its depth and stickiness, kept many out-of-towners away until evening. By noon, however, the town's leading hotel, the Ogilvie House, and the area around it were thronged with strangers and the entire population of Muscatine turned out to witness what one enthusiast styled "one of the sublime triumphs of mind over matter that perhaps the history of the world records." "It was an event that can never

⁵⁹ Henry to Reed, October 25, 1855, *ibid.*, 1-1-49-23.

⁶⁰ Isaac Lane Usher, "Letters of a Railroad Builder," *The Palimpsest*, 3:26 (January, 1922).

⁶¹ Davenport *Gazette*, November 22, 1855.

have its parallel in Iowa," this journalist went on to say. "From this event, civilization with all its attendant blessings of religion, the arts and sciences, literature and commerce, will start a part in the great work of redeeming, purifying and saving the world. Can it, in all its vastness of interest and importance, be justly and wholly appreciated?"

At one o'clock the "Muscatine," bedecked with flags, pulled its train of six cars into the town "amid the stentorian shouts of the assembled people and the soul-stirring strains of music which threw a charm into the moment beyond the power of language to describe." Muscatine's mayor, in his peroration, pronounced the event a mere foreshadowing of the glorious future. The "iron horse" had paused only for a breathing spell. Soon he would reach the Pacific and would return "bearing the riches of nation and empires." Mayor Levi D. Boone, conscious of his city's widening province, declared that Chicago was proud to receive Muscatine into her great family. Following the usual toasts, a ball concluded the festivities.⁶²

Meanwhile, the \$50,000 subscription promised by Iowa City was a prize worth working for, but with winter weather upon them, could the contractors possibly fulfill their part of the bargain and secure the subscription for the company? On the evening of Christmas day the railroad was within about two and one-half miles of Iowa City. The mercury was so low that completion of the track by midnight of December 31 appeared very doubtful. Locomotives must be kept continually fired up to prevent freezing of boilers.⁶³ As December 31 drew to a close, a gap of several hundred feet still separated the end of track from the Iowa City terminal. Citizens of Iowa City turned out to assist the regular laborers. Great bonfires were built along the track to assist with warmth and light, and Henry Farnam was there to supervise personally the final effort. He afterwards told Durant that had he not been on the scene during those last critical days, the track would not have reached Iowa City before February.⁶⁴

Tradition ascribes peculiar circumstances to that exciting occasion. "It was said that among the many strange effects the cold produced was an un-

⁶² "When the 'Iron Horse' Came," *Rock Island Magazine*, Anniversary Number, 17:58-9 (October, 1922). This is a reprint of a story appearing in the *Muscatine Journal*, November 23, 1855.

⁶³ *Davenport Gazette*, December 27, 1855.

⁶⁴ Farnam to T. C. Durant, January 7, 1856, *Leonard Collection*, 1-3-15-27.

accountable excitement manifested among many of the Sons of Temperance. . . . A horse and wagon made regular trips to and from the city bringing oil and other 'trimmings' for the work." Within two hundred feet of the station platform the engine "froze up." Over the remaining gap ties were placed temporarily for the rails and the locomotive was coaxed to the platform inch by inch by the use of pinch bars. End of track was reached just as the church bells began to welcome the year 1856. At the completion of the work, the engineer, Charles Stickles, fell unconscious beside the engine and was carried to the station by his fellow-workers.⁶⁵

Not to be outdone by their neighbors of Muscatine, the citizens of Iowa City prepared an elaborate celebration. At a meeting called by the city council, \$2,500 was pledged. On the morning of January 3 the mercury stood at eighteen degrees below zero, but in spite of the cold a train of six cars left Davenport at about 9 o'clock bound for Iowa City. Another car, brought to the junction from Muscatine, was added to the train. The "comfortably warmed" cars were drawn slowly over the newly-laid track from West Liberty. A passenger wrote: "At Iowa City we were welcomed by the firing of the cannon and shouts of the citizens hundreds of whom, notwithstanding the severity of the weather, met the cars about a half-mile out and followed them into the city. Vehicles of every description were brought into requisition, but were not in sufficient number to accommodate all, the men generally however, preferring to walk."⁶⁶ At the station a procession was formed which, accompanied by the music of three bands, made its way to "Old Capitol." There the guests were welcomed by LeGrand Byington, president of the day.

Decorations and provisions for the evening banquet were described some years later by one who saw them as a girl:

The committee on arrangements consisted of thirty-five ladies and as many gentlemen. Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Berryhill were of this number and I, a schoolgirl, being one of the family at that time, had the opportunity in a small way of seeing and helping spread the four tables set the length of the Representatives' Hall. For instance, I had the privilege and pleasure of helping frost with *real loaf* sugar (a thing of luxury in those days) the thirty-two

⁶⁵ Capt. F. M. Irish, "History of Johnson County, Iowa," *Annals of Iowa* (first series), 6:315 (October, 1868); Nevins, "Seventy Years of Service . . .," 22-3.

⁶⁶ Davenport *Gazette*, January 7, 1856.

pounds of pound cake which Mrs. Berryhill had ordered from her baker for the occasion. We were told that only the white meat of the turkeys she had ordered would be used and must be sliced very thin. But the supreme time to me was when on the last day of preparation, I went with Mrs. Berryhill to the Capitol and saw the tables and hall in all their glory. Over the speaker's stand was an arch that the ladies of the committee had covered with branches of evergreen in the midst of which were balls of cotton to imitate snow balls. In one corner of the hall was an old fashioned cook stove where the committee prepared and served hot coffee and hot fresh oysters, as the coming of the railroad made fresh oysters for the first time possible in Iowa. As the tables were bountifully spread with cold food, the committee served hot coffee and oysters all night "till broad day light in the morning."

As this was before the age of the European way of serving, everything was on the tables in abundance and every one helped himself. Besides the loaves of cake supplied, each table had three pyramids of cake from three to four feet in height and at the head of one table was one of popcorn four feet in height. I remember two of the pyramids of cake in particular from the way they were decorated. In the center of one was a peach tree, of wax of course, bearing a perfect fruit with a blackberry vine with green leaves and black fruit starting from the base and winding round and round over the white surface to the top. The other one bore a tree of leaves and red apples with a vine of red raspberries. One of the trees was presented to the president of the road and the other, I believe, to the Governor.⁶⁷

Out of the \$2,500 set aside for the celebration, a considerable amount remained which was applied on surveys to the west. In the exultant hour when the railroad was completed to Iowa City, optimism reigned. No Iowan doubted the railroad president's prediction that another celebration would be held in Des Moines in 1857 and that the track would be speedily completed to the Missouri River. No one could foresee the calamities of depression and war which among other things upset the construction timetable.

Actually during the next ten years, years of great disappointment to all concerned in the M & M project, track was extended less than one hundred miles on the main line. Construction virtually stopped after the road

⁶⁷ Sarah Ellen Graves, "The Coming of the Railroad," *The Palimpsest*, 2:240-43 (August, 1921); Keokuk *Gate City*, January 11, 1856; Irish, "History of Johnson County, Iowa," 316.

reached Kellogg, a few miles west of Grinnell, in July of 1865. Just as the first division was completed, the panic of 1857 struck, constricting the money market and depressing receipts. To hold its land grant, obtained in 1856, the company was compelled to push construction westward to make a show at least of meeting the conditions of the federal and state land-grant bills. The first division, already mortgaged, was mortgaged again, the road to be constructed was mortgaged, and finally the lands were mortgaged. Bonds could not be negotiated except at a great loss and stocks fell until during the Civil War they were worth less than ten cents on the dollar. No dividends could be paid and the company defaulted on payment of interest on bonds. Bankruptcy was inevitable.

The Civil War had its effect on the M & M as it did on all western projects, tying up capital and producing a shortage of labor. Then, too, it would seem that the M & M was poorly managed, especially after Henry Farnam was forced to leave the project in the hands of men interested less in the ultimate success of the enterprise than in immediate profits of speculation. Only with the end of the war and consolidation in July, 1866, of the Iowa and Illinois projects into the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad came renewed activity and a rapid extension of the line to Council Bluffs where connection was made with the Union Pacific in May, 1869, two years after the Chicago and North Western Railroad had reached that point but only one day after the golden spike had been driven at Promontory Point, completing the first transcontinental railroad.