

ABANDONED RAILROADS OF IOWA

Possibly no phase of Iowa history is more replete with disappointments to individuals and communities alike than the chapter which deals with the building of railroads. By the mere stroke of a draftsman's pen, often in some remote office, the destiny of entire communities has hung in the balance, and their welfare has been sealed "for weal or for woe". The location of the principal arteries of commerce spelled financial ruin for some and fortune for others.

Railroads are usually considered reasonably permanent, but scattered widely throughout the State of Iowa may be found the remains of numerous abandoned lines. The traveler along the public highways or upon the existing railways may observe these mute evidences of unrealized or shattered dreams, occasionally in most unexpected places. While the history of the State is not yet old, it is frequently with great difficulty that a casual inquirer may find persons who can furnish satisfactory information concerning these phantom roads, or throw a correct light upon the purposes and intentions of the builders.

The principal concrete evidences of such previous lines are always earthworks, known as "grades". The obliteration of the "cuts", "fills", and "barrow pits" belonging to these old "grades" has proven a most difficult task for either the hand of man or of nature: these so-called "roadbeds" persist indefinitely and may often be easily traced for many miles at a stretch by the most inexperienced observer.

All artificial earthworks serving at present no apparent useful purpose should not, however, be indiscriminately classed as abandoned railway grades, and reasonable care

should, therefore, be exercised before announcing definite or final conclusions. Considered from the viewpoint of the purposes for which these earthworks were originally intended, old embankments fall into three distinct classes or groups: railroads, highways, and levees. The works of ancient man may also be confusing, but in Iowa there are but few such embankments which by any possible chance can be mistaken for modern works. Serpentine kames or "eskers", sometimes built as deposits upon the glacial outwash plane, frequently bear striking resemblance to old grades, but these are likewise rare in Iowa and need receive no further consideration.

Abandoned railway grades are usually quite readily distinguishable from abandoned public highways. A railroad grade is generally so narrow on top as to preclude the likelihood of its ever having been used for highway purposes. The gradients of the railway also run smoothly over hill and dale on gently undulating profiles following alignments composed entirely of tangents connecting graceful curves, while the profiles of the early abandoned highways are usually quite erratic, their alignment being composed of straight lines, irregular curves, and angular corners, often with right angles, which could never have been intended for railway purposes.

Levee embankments often bear a striking similarity to old railroad grades, especially those levees which were constructed in the early days by pioneer settlers along the banks of the interior rivers to protect individual farms or fields. Since railroads frequently followed the course of streams in seeking the most practical route from one place to another, and both the levee and the old grade are now frequently obscured by heavy undergrowth and more mature timber, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two. Levees, however, differ from the railways in that

their gradient is uniform, always conforming to the gradient of the valley. They have abrupt angles and may usually be traced to their termination at some not far distant point on the valley wall at a place slightly above the high water mark.

Railways which have been abandoned after completion, upon close investigation of the surface of the grade, show the imprint of the cross-ties in the turf, these prints and pieces of the old oak cross-ties being yet plainly discernible on the grades of our earliest abandoned roads. Indeed they have been known to persist over a period of sixty years, furnishing unmistakable evidence as to the purpose of the grade. Iron spikes, bolts, nuts, and washers, as well as cinders, ballast, and an occasional old "link and pin" may also be found, and a short walk along the line is certain to reveal the remains of stone culverts or the decayed wooden piling of former bridges, with piers or caissons at places where the larger streams were crossed.

In the classification of abandoned railroad grades or embankments, there are four distinct types or groups, each representing in the aggregate a considerable mileage: (1) those thrown up along the route of projected lines which were never completed, no trains ever having been operated over them and for the most part never having had the "ties or iron" "laid down" upon them; (2) those grades which have been abandoned by existing roads, upon relocation of their right-of-way, in the process of securing reduced curvature, easier gradients, or shortened mileage; (3) those grades which represent service of a temporary character, rendered to some form of industry, such as switches, spurs, or extensions to mines, quarries, shale, clay, and gravel pits, or for the building of bridges, canals, levees, or the purpose of riprapping along the shores of meandering rivers, no regular service ever having been inaugurated upon

them for the benefit of the general public; (4) grades representing lines, promoted and built in good faith with the idea of permanency, which later failed. These were built largely for the purpose of serving and securing better marketing facilities for agricultural districts remote from existing railroads, or for the purpose of obtaining better railroad connections with competing neighboring lines for already well established communities.

It is this class only, including some thirty roads and involving in the aggregate over three hundred and fifty miles of track, built at a cost of approximately ten millions of dollars, that is to receive our attention at this time, and only such roads as were operated by steam power are to be considered. These thirty lines and their involvements afford an intimate background for further economic studies of local character and have relatively greater historic significance than their number and importance would at first seem to indicate.

While the first steam railroad in America began operation in 1830, the railroad building epoch so far as Iowa was concerned did not begin in earnest until 1855. At first only a few hundred miles of track were laid each year, the total increasing annually until the peak mileage for steam roads was reached in 1914, at which time there were 10,018.92 miles of railroads in operation in the State. Since 1914 the total mileage has steadily decreased. The report of the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners for 1925 shows the following figures:

10,002.39 miles in 1915,	showing a net loss of 116.53 miles
9,942.75 miles in 1916,	showing a net loss of 59.64 miles
9,871.78 miles in 1917,	showing a net loss of 70.97 miles
9,841.17 miles in 1918,	showing a net loss of 30.61 miles
9,842.05 miles in 1919,	showing a net gain of .88 miles
9,841.99 miles in 1920,	showing a net loss of .06 miles
9,841.97 miles in 1921,	showing a net loss of .02 miles

9,835.69 miles in 1922, showing a net loss of	6.28 miles
9,827.37 miles in 1923, showing a net loss of	8.32 miles
9,834.17 miles in 1924, showing a net gain of	6.80 miles
9,756.92 miles in 1925, showing a net loss of	77.25 miles

So it will be seen that during this period new construction has failed to keep pace with the abandonment of existing lines by 262 miles. Other minor factors have contributed to this shrinkage of mileage. These include: (1) straightening of track, thereby shortening existing mileage; (2) lessening of mileage reported, upon correction of length upon remeasurement; (3) drawing in of the stub ends of branch lines by removal of track; (4) arranging joint operation over a single track, for and by two parallel lines for the purpose of reducing the expense of maintenance of way, one existing line being removed, or similarly by consolidation or the purchase of one parallel road by another, one of the tracks being abandoned and removed; and (5) reclassifying mileage reported, some main line track being set over into secondary track mileage column for the purpose of avoiding the higher taxation in the former class.

One of the questions most frequently asked by those interested in the history of abandoned railroad lines is, how is it that so few of these independent railroads, built at much expense and usually rendering logical and legitimate service to communities in need of such railroad facilities, are absorbed by the great existing systems? It is a well known fact that during the early or formative period of railroad building many of the present large systems were created "piece-meal" by the absorption and consolidation of numerous small, weak, and bankrupt lines, but with changing conditions this practice has now ceased almost entirely. A number of factors enter into the answer to this question.

In agricultural regions the income and prosperity of a

railroad is related directly to the size, productivity, and population of the territory served. In the early stages of railroad development most Iowa roads were "through roads", enjoying a considerable percentage of so-called "through", or "long haul" business along with their local patronage. Those roads which were in the line of the trans-continental flow were often prosperous beyond all expectation and became the nucleus of the great trunk line systems of the present time. Branching and parallel lines were absorbed, frequently as feeders or for the purpose of heading off the growth of other formidable combinations which threatened to become serious rivals within their territory.

At first railroad mileage increased at such an enormous rate annually that the increase of the supporting population did not keep pace. As a result the point was soon reached where mileage and profits on the one hand and population and business on the other balanced, and further construction of branch lines in new and competing territory became less and less profitable. Railroad officials were not slow in recognizing the laws governing this supply and demand and once they became thoroughly understood by railroad managements territorial limits between adjacent competing systems were definitely established by gentlemen's agreements or by treaty arrangements and when this stage was reached the days of railroad building upon a large scale in Iowa were over. This period was reached in Iowa in the early nineties, when further extensions of lines slowed down rather abruptly, leaving numerous thriving communities in various parts of the State without the boon of the much coveted "iron horse".

When these abandoned roads were going under the hammer, the larger rail systems of adjoining territories, which would have been logical purchasers of these failed lines and could have made better use of them than any other,

were themselves sometimes in financial straits or in the hands of a receiver, and were not, therefore, in a position to make the necessary outlay for acquiring additional property. At other times these larger systems were engaged in developing virgin territory elsewhere along their routes and felt that the capital needed to acquire the property of these bankrupt lines could be used to better advantage elsewhere. Again, in view of constantly increasing wage scales and taxes, there was little incentive to assume or invite the liabilities which must be incurred through the operation of increased branch line mileage when the greater share of the business of these bankrupt lines, having no other outlet, would naturally fall to them anyway upon the removal of the short line road.

Other factors might be considered. Some railroad executives reasoned that if railroad companies made a practice of acquiring and operating these lines promiscuously, promoters would make it a business to encourage the building of such lines; and communities, desirous of securing railroad facilities, would see to it that the roads were financed even though there was a great probability that the money so spent would be lost. This explains why larger systems often refused to absorb a short line road.

Contrary to the prevailing popular opinion, the larger systems with which these short line railroads connected were almost without exception cordial and friendly to the independent lines, furnishing cars without discrimination and often going out of their way to render assistance in emergencies by the loan of equipment, by the extension of credits for freight charges, and by assistance in repairing motive power. Indeed the larger railroads were exceedingly careful not to contribute to the failure of these smaller roads. Among the creditors of these failed lines, the names of the larger connecting systems almost always appeared

for substantial amounts, along with the balance of the creditors.

LIFE HISTORY OF ABANDONED ROADS

The story and life history of no two of these abandoned roads is exactly alike, but the stages between the period of their inception and their failure and dismantlement are strikingly similar. A composite story of the process is about as follows. At first there developed an increasing demand for the construction of the road, either the outgrowth of a real need for service due to remoteness from existing railroads, or an attempt to satisfy the pride of certain communities which for one reason or another were left without a railroad at the close of the great railroad building epoch. During this formative period, routes were planned, and presented by the promoters, and surveys were frequently made along the route of some proposed road of an earlier period.

From time to time meetings were held, and the interest was aroused to fever heat by rumors that some belated building program on the part of strong lines was about to come their way. These rumors subsided but usually left the desire for a railroad even greater than before. This intense desire on the part of whole communities grew until it amounted to almost an obsession, citizens sometimes imagining that all that remained for their town to become a thriving metropolis was a proper railroad outlet, whereupon manufacturing would spring up spontaneously and prosperity would everywhere abound.

As the sentiment further crystallized, some one appeared upon the scene with the necessary initiative to direct this enthusiasm into definite, concrete action. Sometimes this leader came from within the community itself, but more frequently some promoter, sensing the situation, dropped in from the outside, occasionally with the secret ambition of

“fleecing the flock” for his own benefit by taking advantage of the inexperience of the average individual inland community in the matter of high finance.

The usual course was to perfect a preliminary organization. Prominent men of the locality, particularly those of some affluence, were conspicuous among the tentative officers and directors of the company. Subscription papers were circulated, the proceeds of which were to be used for the purpose of hiring engineers to “run” preliminary surveys, generally along two or more routes. Needless to say the reports therefrom were almost without exception flattering, and the routes were generally pronounced “entirely feasible”. The road now entered the embryonic stage. Enthusiasm grew. Everybody got into the game of railroad building, personal business was neglected, and all other interests were “side-tracked” for the railroad.

The temporary organization was then made permanent, and the momentous question of selecting a name for the road was decided. A euphonious name was often chosen which would have done justice to a great transcontinental system. Articles of incorporation were next obtained, and the campaign was opened for the sale of stock, which was made easier by the intense enthusiasm. This step was followed by the selection of the permanent officers and the employment of a civil engineer to make the permanent surveys and oversee the construction of the road. Grades had to be established, a route laid out, and the right of way had to be secured. Often much of this was donated, either outright or by subscription for common stock of the road, which was frequently quite worthless.

Local bond issues were also frequently resorted to, and liberal amounts were often voted for the benefit of the railroad enterprise. To be legal, these had to contain certain provisions fixing a date for the completion of the road and

the beginning of operation between specified terminals. Herein lay great difficulties for the promoters, as railroad building, under the most favorable auspices, is a slow and tedious process beset with frequent and unforeseen delays.

These bond issues also required that the process of construction should proceed with dispatch, so contracts were let for grading the right of way, and the occasion of breaking the first sod was celebrated as a "gala" day. The construction of the road had at last begun in earnest: the long awaited railroad had become almost a reality. Everybody was happy, felicitations were extended, old communities took on new life, and an air of importance and expectancy pervaded the local atmosphere.

The prosaic matter of grading was prosecuted with more or less efficiency; contracts were let for ties, timber, bridges, and steel; and town sites were selected and named, often in honor of prominent local personages, but more often for officers of the road who sought thus to immortalize their names for all future time. Equipment was purchased, the interest centering in the question of "motive power"—should it be called a "locomotive" or just plain "engine". Of course whatever it was called, it was a "mogul". Another question of all consuming interest was whether the road would be able to buy a new coach or would the patrons have to be content to ride in one purchased second-hand.

Grading was a slow process and in the interval the better business minds and those with more mature judgment who had invested in the road had time to size up the situation before the road was actually completed. On figuring the mounting costs, they often decided in their own minds that the prospects for the financial success of the road were really none too optimistic, and many stock subscriptions—apparently made in good faith—were never paid. At the same time there was much quiet and skillful maneuvering

on the part of the better financiers among the original stockholders to protect their interests in one way or another, should the venture ultimately collapse.

By this time the officers of the road were getting a good insight into the problems involved in railroad building. Many had pledged their private fortunes, at least in part, to see their pet hobby become a reality, but their visions of becoming great railroad magnates rapidly waned. The cost of the road usually exceeded the modest estimates made by the engineer, a fact which added financial embarrassment to the management; and to provide funds to complete the building of the road, bond issues were resorted to.

These were generally first mortgage bonds covering all the property of the corporation, and the rate of interest was usually high. These bonds were frequently sold to innocent purchasers, sometimes to small investors in the eastern bond markets, who were inexperienced in methods of railroad finance, but were attracted by the high interest rates and too far removed from the road in question to investigate its merits easily. At this stage the high sounding name of the road was an asset. With the money raised by the sale of bonds, the road was at last completed, though sometimes there was not enough cash to make final settlements with all of the creditors, so mechanics' and material liens were filed for labor, equipment, and supplies. It was not, however, until the final completion of the road, when operation had commenced, that the greatest difficulty of the management ensued. Before the end of the first year of operation, it was often apparent to all that the road was a financial failure, the entire revenue frequently failing to pay the actual operating expenses to say nothing of providing for the depreciation of the property, repairs to track and equipment, payment of taxes, insurance, and interest charges, and for the retirement of the bond issues.

Lawsuits were soon brought against the road, usually by those least interested in its continued operation; judgments were rendered; and the real process of disintegration began. The officers of the road were often capable and energetic men and made heroic efforts to save the road. The floating of new bond issues was sometimes attempted, occasionally with some degree of success; additional stock was sold; and frequently cash subscriptions, gifts, and donations of labor were solicited from parties interested along the route in keeping the road going. Thus matters would drift from bad to worse.

Eventually a receivership was requested, in the hopes of untangling the now complicated financial affairs of the road. By this time the track and equipment had so disintegrated for lack of adequate repairs that only a low degree of efficiency in operation could be maintained; wrecks, breakdowns, and frequent delays occurred, and much dissatisfaction developed, in addition to the general apprehension as to the ultimate outcome of the venture.

Finally the operation of trains might be reduced to a minimum or perhaps stopped altogether. Little hope for a successful reorganization could be entertained, and it was more and more evident that nothing could stop the final disintegration of the entire project, although in certain rare instances a complete reorganization served for a time to rehabilitate a road.

Then came the scramble for advantage between the creditors in the matter of the final distribution of the assets, if it developed that there were any. Much litigation followed. The material men who had placed liens for ties, rails, bridge-timber, and other supplies, seemingly had the advantage over the other creditors, for the "iron" was the most tangible of all the assets, as it was the least subject to decay, and usually found a ready sale in the second hand

rail markets. The real estate, especially the right of way, was of the least value, as under the basic laws governing the right of eminent domain it reverted to the owners of the original property from which it was taken in case a railroad failed and ceased to operate.

Usually there was little left for distribution among the bond holders. Eventually the property was ordered sold by the courts, usually being bid in by the lien holders, who had the advantage over the balance of the creditors. Permission would then be secured by the receiver from the Board of Railroad Commissioners, now in conjunction with the Interstate Commerce Commission, for a certificate of abandonment, permitting the dismantlement of the track, which was usually removed for its junk value. Such other equipment as was of value would likewise be sold, but usually there may still be found around the terminals of these abandoned roads the remains of a few old cars and coaches rotting down with age, which were too worthless to find a market. Steel bridges were generally sold for a very small fraction of their original cost, as were also the old depots and other buildings. Ties and timbers of small culverts and bridges were usually left in site, sometimes to be dug up and torn down for firewood and for other purposes by the residents along the route.

THE EFFECT OF ABANDONMENT UPON THE COMMUNITY

It is with a feeling of sincere regret, to say nothing of humiliation, that most communities view the loss of a railroad, especially if it is the only one and the people realize that this is to be the only chance they will have for securing and maintaining railroad service. Entire communities are frequently divided into factions over the loss of the road, charges of fraud, graft, and mismanagement are frequently made, friendships are destroyed, fortunes lost, and the

community would have been far better off had the railroad idea been abandoned without an attempt at construction.

Before the days of the truck and automobile, the matter of losing a railroad was a much more serious matter for a community than it is at present, though the particular community affected by the loss is obviously little worse off after the railroad is "pulled up" than before it was built, so far as marketing its produce is concerned. In these days of improved roads, carrying busses and trucks, the short, independent or branch line railroad is not nearly so essential as formerly, especially in the matter of handling passengers, mail, express, or small shipments of local freight. Indeed, in some respects auto service is superior to railroad facilities for the purposes mentioned, being more frequent. The passengers are carried direct to the heart of the town, while shipments of freight and express are delivered direct to the door, thus saving delays in handling and drayage charges from depot to store. Auto service, however, can not be compared with rail service, in such matters as handling car-lot shipments of fuel, brick, lumber, cement, and similar material, which usually are brought in from a distance, and out-going shipments of grain, stock, and farm produce to remote markets. Communities can scarcely dispense with railroad service for these purposes.

With traffic divided almost equally between the auto carrier and the railroad, the one great question which now confronts both the public and the common carriers alike is whether these branch lines can possibly be continued in operation without constant loss. If this division of revenue continues, a choice must be made of several possible solutions of the difficulty. (1) Freight rates must be increased upon such commodities as must continue to be handled by the railroads over these branch lines, and passenger fares likewise raised on these lines. (2) Some method may be

found whereby the operating expenses may be reduced to a point corresponding with the income of the line. (3) The lines in question may be abandoned by the railroads, as it is obviously unfair to the common carrier to be compelled to operate certain property at a loss, or even less fair that such deficits be made up from their long haul revenue upon their main lines.

That the first two of these suggestions would prove effective is a matter of some doubt, for higher rates would certainly drive more and more business away from the railroad into the hands of the auto carrier, thereby defeating the purpose of the increase. Likewise the curtailing of expenses must certainly involve a like curtailment of both the quantity and the quality of service rendered and the auto carrier will receive the greater profit by this alternative. The maintenance of the branch line railroads is one of the most difficult problems confronting railroad executives today. These problems are immediately before the people of Iowa for solution, and it appears that, in the interest of economical and efficient railroad administration, many of our present branch lines must be abandoned as soon as the consent of the Interstate Commerce Commission is obtained for their removal.

The coming of good roads, built and maintained at public expense, connecting all of the principal centers and county seats, coupled with the greater efficiency in automobile construction, maintenance, and operation, is favorable to the enlargement of automobile transportation facilities and makes the position of the railroads much more difficult of adjustment.

What will be the effect of the ultimate withdrawal of rail service upon branch lines, or its curtailment to the status of freight switching of car load lots only, as is already the case on several such lines, is problematical. In the past the

loss of railroad facilities has cast considerable blight over communities, with attendant loss of population and morale. Reduction to the status of an inland town has usually been followed by decadence in the life of a community. Many of the younger or more progressive of the citizens remove to larger places, desiring to keep in touch with progress, as symbolized by the spirit of the railroad, leaving behind only the particularly well established and the older element so attached to their old homes that they refuse to be torn away from them. The community generally settles back to a drab existence, broken only by the coming of the modern consolidated school, which lends a certain metropolitan aspect to its life. Under these circumstances, only the well established communities survive; upon the removal of the railroad the waystations, switches, and embryonic towns fade away into nothingness.

THE LEGAL ASPECTS OF ABANDONMENT

There are two aspects which need to be considered in a discussion of the legal phases of the abandonment of railroad mileage in Iowa. First, there are those legal processes by which a railroad exercises the right of eminent domain, as provided by statute, and condemns a right of way. Corresponding with this are the privileges which the owner of the original tract from which the right of way was taken may have to repossess such land in case of its abandonment for railroad purposes. The second group of the legal processes is made up of the various steps which must be taken by railroads or receivers before a line may become inoperative or the track be dismantled.

In the first code of Iowa, published in 1851, the subject of railroads was not mentioned. On January 18, 1853, however, an act was passed by the Fourth General Assembly,¹

¹ *Laws of Iowa, 1852-1853, Ch. 31.*

taking effect on February 9, 1853, which granted railroad companies the "Right of Way". This act was embodied in the *Revision of 1860* under the section which provides for "Taking Private Property for Works of Internal Improvement". It provided "that any railroad corporation in this state heretofore organized, or that may be hereafter organized, under the laws of this state, may take and hold, under the provisions contained in this act, so much real estate as may be necessary for the location, construction, and convenient use of the road. Such corporation may also take, remove, and use for the construction and repair of said road and its appurtenances, any earth, gravel, stone, timber, or other materials, on or from the land so taken: *provided*, that the land so taken otherwise than by the consent of the owners, shall not exceed one hundred feet in width, except for wood and water stations, unless where greater width is necessary for excavation, embankment, or depositing waste earth."²

"Such railroad corporation may purchase and use real estate for a price to be agreed upon with the owners thereof, or the damages to be paid by such corporation for any real estate taken as aforesaid, when not agreed upon, shall be ascertained and determined by commissioners to be appointed by the sheriff of the county, where such real estate is situated."³ Certain provisions were added in the sections following.⁴

The exercise of these rights on the part of corporations in taking private property for public use is known as the right of "eminent domain". The unjust exercise of these privileges by corporations is, however, restrained by coun-

² *Revision of 1860*, Sec. 1314.

³ *Revision of 1860*, Sec. 1315.

⁴ *Revision of 1860*, Secs. 1316-1320. These describe the method of procedure for condemnation.

ter-rights of the individuals owning the real estate so taken. The laws provide that in case of the abandonment or disuse of the property under certain conditions, as set forth by statute, such property reverts, with all appurtenances thereto, to the owners of the tract to which it originally belonged. The earliest Iowa statute relating to the subject contained the following provision: "In any case where a railway, constructed in whole or in part, has ceased to be operated or used for more than ten years, or in any case where the construction of a railway has been commenced, and work on the same has ceased for more than ten years, and same remains unfinished, it shall be deemed and taken that the corporation or person thus in default has abandoned all right and privilege over so much as remains unfinished as aforesaid",⁵ but "in every such case of abandonment, any other corporation may enter upon such abandoned work, or any part thereof, and acquire the right of way over the same and the right to any unfinished work or grading found thereon and the title thereto, by proceeding in the manner provided", but "parties who have previously received compensation in any form for the right of way on the line . . . which has not been refunded by them, shall not be permitted to recover the second time".⁶

In general, these provisions of the law as regards abandonment or non-use of railroad right of ways hold through to the present day with the modification that now in the case of non-use or abandonment for a period of five years, if the rails have not been removed, or four years after the rails have been removed, the interested parties may enter and appropriate the property of the railroad so left,⁷ and if "the railway or any part thereof shall not be used or

⁵ *Code of 1873*, Sec. 1260.

⁶ *Code of 1873*, Sec. 1261.

⁷ *Code of 1897*, Sec. 2015.

operated for a period of eight years the right of way, including the roadbed, shall revert to the owner of the land from which said right of way was taken."⁸ These statutes have been amply tested in the courts so their interpretation and constitutionality can no longer be questioned.⁹

The first question of abandonment in Iowa, which was really an abandonment of service, was created in 1882, when on March 7th the citizens of Northwood and Worth County filed a complaint with the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners against the Central Iowa Railway Company, demanding that the company reestablish train service into Northwood from Manly Junction. The service had been inaugurated upon the completion of the Central Railroad Company of Iowa in October, 1871, and the road had operated until August, 1880.¹⁰ In the hearing it was brought out that the people of Northwood induced the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern to operate its trains into Northwood over the Central Iowa's tracks from Manly Junction thereby dividing the patronage over that portion of the line leased to the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern to such an extent as to render the operation of trains by this road impracticable. It was further stated that the Central Railroad Company of Iowa was foreclosed upon in 1875 and transferred to the Farmer's Loan and Trust Company of New York, that the Central Iowa Railway Company was organized on May 15, 1879, to acquire a road which was already built, and that the second company did not promise to carry out the plans of the former com-

⁸ *Code of 1897*, Sec. 2015; Senate File 187, Sec. 58, Fortieth General Assembly, Extra Session.

⁹ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1899, p. 390.

¹⁰ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1882, pp. 468-481.

pany and was not bound by them. The commissioners demanded that the company reinstate its service. A rehearing on the subject was denied on July 25, 1883, and this opinion was subsequently sustained by Judge Ruddick in the district court.¹¹

This was a very important decision, for it was the first real test of the authority of the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners which had been created by an act of the Seventeenth General Assembly.¹² This act also repealed Chapter 68 of the *Acts of the Fifteenth General Assembly*, the first serious attempt at railroad regulation in the State.¹³ The powers, duties, and scope of the Board of Railroad Commissioners were gradually broadened and became well defined by usage, precedent, and court decisions. In general the Commissioners, occasionally in conjunction with the courts, have had full authority over the matter of abandonment of service and mileage. The usual procedure was somewhat as follows. A road suspended or withdrew service; interested parties then filed complaint against the company with the Commission; a hearing was arranged; and the decision of the Board was rendered in accordance with the evidence.

Since the adoption by Congress of the Interstate Commerce Act as amended on February 28, 1920, popularly known as the Esch-Cummins Bill,¹⁴ this procedure has changed. The hearings are now held jointly before the Board of Railroad Commissioners and the Interstate Commerce Commission, but the final decision is rendered by the

¹¹ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1886, pp. 473-474.

¹² *Laws of Iowa*, 1878, Ch. 77.

¹³ *Laws of Iowa*, 1874, Ch. 68.

¹⁴ Lewis's *Laws of the Sixty-sixth, Sixty-seventh, and Sixty-eighth Congresses, Relating to Interstate and Foreign Commerce*, p. 25.

latter body, the Iowa Commission acting in an advisory capacity only. Under this new law, whenever permission for abandonment is sought, a hearing is requested by the parties interested, and abandonment and dismantlement may take place only upon the issuance of a certificate of authority for abandonment by the Interstate Commerce Commission which specifies what track may be abandoned and the date after which such abandonment may take place.

SKETCHES OF ABANDONED ROADS

The Atlantic Northern and Southern Railroad.—For many years prior to the building of the northern division of the Atlantic Northern and Southern Railway Company's line from Atlantic, Cass County, to the towns of Elk Horn and Kimballton, in 1907, these thriving Danish settlements had sorely needed railroad communication with the outside world. To build and equip the seventeen miles of road cost in round numbers about \$300,000, much of this sum being raised by subscription for stock in the road by the residents and business men of Atlantic and of the other territory to be served. In addition to these subscriptions the sum of \$48,000 was raised by taxes levied in Clay Township, Shelby County, and in Sharon Township, Audubon County. To secure the money voted by Sharon Township a promise was made that the road should be completed to the town of Kimballton by the close of December, 1907, but ground was not broken on the job until July 15th of that year, and December 31st found the railroad some little distance from the town.

That the legality of the tax might not be questioned, however, the citizens of Kimballton met on the afternoon of December 31, 1907, and decided to incorporate so that the corporate limits of the village might be extended to meet the railroad. Thus Kimballton literally greeted the coming

of the "iron horse" with outstretched arms. February 1, 1908, found the road completed into Kimballton.

This portion of the road served a number of small but exceedingly prosperous communities, was well built and equipped to handle the business, and at first seemed to be a paying venture. So much so that visions were entertained of a much longer "through road" which would connect the communities on the north with some point on the Omaha division of the Chicago Great Western and with the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy's main line on the south at Villisca. It was also considered possible that a road might be extended to Clarinda where the line of the proposed Iowa and Southwestern Railroad Company might be picked up, giving a connection with the Wabash at Blanchard. This scheme contemplated in all about one hundred miles of road.

The first link in this new line was to be the gap between Atlantic and Villisca, a distance of about thirty-eight miles, which with the line to Kimballton would give the road about fifty-five miles of track and a valuable connection with the Burlington's main line at Villisca. Using the argument that seventeen miles of railroad had paid operating expenses and fifty-five miles would pay a great deal better, much additional stock was sold, and construction was commenced on the southern division about July 10, 1910, when Shugart and Barnes Brothers of Des Moines started grading through what was known as Marker's Summit, seven miles south of Atlantic. By December 15th, the grade was completed ready for the laying of the ties and the sixty pound steel rails, which was done by two gangs. One worked by hand from the south and the other, with the aid of a gigantic Hurley overhead track-laying machine, worked from Atlantic. Favored by unusually good weather this work was completed on December 29, 1910, when the two

gangs met. The "Silver Spike" was driven by President H. S. Rattenborg at 3:10 P. M., one and one-half miles south of Grant, a station about fifteen miles north of Villisca.

The event was celebrated amid great rejoicing, felicitations, and banquets. No road ever commenced operating under more auspicious circumstances. The first train, an extra, reached Villisca, on Thursday, December 29, 1910, carrying sixty-three officials and passengers. Regular service was inaugurated on January 1, 1911, the company having on hand three engines, one passenger car, and about fifteen or twenty work cars and freight cars. The construction of this southern extension cost between \$500,000 and \$600,000. For a while two trains daily were operated on the Villisca division and three on the Kimballton section but in the end it proved a bitter disappointment to its promoters and to the patrons along the line. From the beginning it failed to pay its operating expenses, and after a hectic career of a few short months the road passed into a receivership on May 20, 1911, the entire line being placed in the hands of E. S. Harlan of Atlantic as receiver. He was succeeded by W. A. Follett, also of Atlantic, who kept the road going until December 13, 1914, when it ceased to operate.¹⁵

On August 9, 1913, the receiver reorganized the original or northern end of the road under the name of the Atlantic Northern Railway Company, and this section of the road is still operating. The name of the southern or Villisca end was changed to the Atlantic Southern Railway Company, with the hope that it too might be rejuvenated. By this time, however, the property had so disintegrated, and the financial involvements were so complicated, that the possibility of maintaining the road with any assurance of success

¹⁵ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1909, p. 262, 1910, p. 272, 1911, p. 224, 1912, p. 232, 1913, p. 274, 1914, pp. 270, 271.

seemed altogether improbable. Further financing being out of the question the property was deeded to Robert Ables of St. Louis, who, upon authority of the Interstate Commerce Commission, removed the track in 1916 and the road passed into history.¹⁶

The Boone Valley Railroad.— The Boone Valley Railway Company was organized in 1894 by interests of the Boone Valley Coal Company. This company owned property on both sides of the Des Moines River surrounding the town of Fraser, which is located on the east side of the Des Moines River about ten miles above the city of Boone. By constructing a line of railroad three miles in length the company hoped to give its property and the town of Fraser connections with the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad — Minnesota and Iowa Southern — at a place known as Fraser Junction, near the present site of the town of Wolf, where the present Fort Dodge, Des Moines and Southern crosses the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad.

The Boone Valley Railroad was taken over by the Marshalltown and Dakota Railway Company in 1899 and the following year was extended a distance of nineteen miles to the town of Gowrie. The Fraser end of the line was subsequently pushed east a short distance beyond Fraser for the purpose of tapping new coal fields, but no further extension towards Marshalltown was attempted. In 1903 the entire property was acquired by the Newton and Northwestern. The Fraser stub was leased to the Boone Coal and Mining Company in 1904.

On March 31, 1909, the Newton and Northwestern was acquired by the Fort Dodge, Des Moines and Southern Railroad and was subsequently electrified, the Fraser stub being operated until about 1911, when because of the failure

¹⁶ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1917, p. viii.

of the coal fields on the east side of the river the line was abandoned and the track removed.¹⁷

Cedar Valley Branch, Cedar Rapids and Clinton Railroad.—The Cedar Rapids and Clinton Railway Company was organized on November 28, 1882, for the purpose of taking over the property of the defunct Chicago, Clinton and Western Railway Company. This transaction was consummated in February, 1883, and the Cedar Rapids and Clinton Company assumed control of 23.5 miles of line built by the earlier company, extending from Clinton to Noel, and 9.3 miles from Iowa City to Elmira. The following year the new owners succeeded in completing the line between Clinton and Iowa City, 79.2 miles in length. The same year, 1884, a short branch line was completed from Plato Junction south to the Cedar Valley Stone Quarry, 2.74 miles in length.

An extensive quarrying and lime burning industry sprang up at the end of this branch and for a time was the life of a flourishing village of happy, industrious people. As many as ten or twelve trains daily ran out of the quarry during the busy season, and though regular train service was never maintained, the stub was listed in reports as a regular branch line. Later the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern Railway Company assumed control of the Cedar Rapids and Clinton line, under leasehold, which in 1902 was in turn transferred to the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway Company when the latter road gained control of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern Railroad.

In time the prosperity of the quarrying industry at Cedar Valley waned, concrete construction having largely

¹⁷ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1894, p. 102, 1896, p. 239, 1900, p. 324, 1903, p. 181. For additional information on this road see the account of the Newton and Northwestern Railroad in this article.

superseded heavy stone masonry. After the closing of the quarries service on the stub was discontinued, the last train to be operated over the branch was run in 1918, and one of Iowa's most romantic and picturesque industries came to a close. Huge blocks of uncut stone may still be seen scattered about on the river banks at Cedar Valley as though dropped there by some giant's hand, and the serpent-like trail of the old railroad grade may be easily traced along the west bank of the Cedar River, all the way up to Plato, mute evidence of the tireless energy of a former generation of earnest, capable craftsmen. Much of the track was never removed.¹⁸

Muchakinock Branch, Central Railroad Company of Iowa.—The Central Railroad Company of Iowa was organized in June, 1869, for the purpose of creating a north and south line of railroad across the State of Iowa. This was accomplished by acquiring and consolidating the property of the Iowa River Railway Company with the projected St. Louis and St. Paul Railway Company which had graded about twenty-three miles to the north of Ackley, and another projected line known as the Iowa Central Railroad Company which had graded about sixty miles in the southern portion of the State. Additional track was constructed under the name of the Iowa Valley Construction Company as well as under its own name, so that by October 10, 1871, the road owned and operated a continuous stretch of railroad from Albia, on the southern border of the State, to Northwood near the northern border, a total of 189.14 miles, and in addition operated a branch line from Given to Muchakinock in Mahaska County, 1.5 miles in length.

Because of the default of interest on its first and second mortgage bonds, J. B. Grinnell, of Grinnell, Iowa, was ap-

¹⁸ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners, 1896, p. 184.*

pointed receiver in 1873, and in 1875 the road was acquired by the Farmers' Loan and Trust Company under foreclosure. After the foreclosure sale, the Central Iowa Railway Company was organized on May 15, 1879, to take over and operate the property. This company in turn passed into a receivership on December 1, 1886, and fell into the hands of the Iowa Central Railway Company, now a part of the Minneapolis and St. Louis system, which was organized on May 15, 1889, for the purpose of taking over the defunct road.

The Muchakinock Branch, which served extensive coal fields, was maintained in operation until about 1900, when upon the failure of the coal fields it was abandoned and removed with the permission of the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners.¹⁹

Chicago, Anamosa and Northern Railroad.—The Iowa Midland Railway Company was organized on March 2, 1870, to construct a line of railroad across Iowa, starting at Lyons, Clinton County, passing through Maquoketa to Anamosa, and thence in a northwesterly direction to some undetermined point, probably Cedar Falls. The company was successful in completing a line from Lyons to Anamosa in 1871, but on account of financial stringency could build no farther at that time. This line was afterwards acquired by the Chicago Northwestern Railway Company on October 24, 1884, and operated by it as a branch, thus, for the time, blighting the railroad prospects of the towns farther to the northwest.

After periodic agitations by these towns for a railroad, a company was organized in 1904 under the name of the Chicago, Anamosa and Northern Railroad Company. The

¹⁹ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1882, pp. 468-481, 1884, p. 45, 1896, pp. 222-225.

following year this company succeeded in opening a line as far as Coggon, a distance of 19.6 miles. This road was constructed, operated, and owned largely by stockholders of the Midland Railway Construction Company of Dubuque, and it was hoped that they might succeed in inducing the Northwestern to take over their line and extend it on to Waterloo through Quasqueton, a prosperous inland town on the Wapsipinicon River in Buchanan County. Times, however, had changed the viewpoint of the large systems toward branch lines, which had come to be recognized as a liability rather than an asset; and the Northwestern would do nothing concerning the matter. In 1913, by herculean efforts, the Chicago, Anamosa and Northern extended its line from Coggon to Quasqueton, a distance of 14.1 miles, making a total mileage operated of 33.7 miles.

This effort, however, was too much for the road, and left it so impaired financially that it failed, passing into the hands of G. E. Farmer, receiver, on February 21, 1914. The line was operated under the receivership until November 20, 1915. After the usual hearings and litigation, it was finally sold by order of the court to Herman Sonker, of Kansas City, Missouri, on December 12, 1916. The new owner dismantled it for its junk value during the latter part of 1917.²⁰

Chicago, Fort Madison and Des Moines Railroad.—The Fort Madison and Northwestern Railway Company was organized in 1879 with the following officers: President, John Atlee; Vice President, H. Ketchum; Secretary, F. D. Harney; and Treasurer, S. B. Kenrick. On October 16th of that year, it purchased a narrow gauge (3 feet) line,

²⁰ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1905, p. 3, 1908, p. 199, 1914, p. v, 1915, p. viii, 1917, pp. viii-25; *Records of the Statistical Department of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*.

which had previously been built from Fort Madison, Lee County, to West Point, a distance of 12 miles, paying "forty thousand dollars for the whole concern, including road-bed, right of way, iron, locomotives, cars, buildings, etc., with all other appendages thereto". By 1883 this line had been extended to Birmingham, a distance of 41 miles, and two years later to McKee — afterwards called Collett Station — 45.067 miles from Fort Madison.

Soon afterwards the Fort Madison and Northwestern passed into the hands of a receiver and in March, 1890, was sold under foreclosure to W. T. Block, who took possession in April, that year, and immediately transferred the property to the Chicago, Fort Madison and Des Moines Railway Company organized under the laws of the State of Iowa for that purpose. On taking over the property it was found to be in such a run-down condition as to be unsafe to operate, and the new company immediately set about rebuilding the line and widening it to standard gauge. This work was done by the Western Construction Company during the years of 1891-1892, and by the end of 1892 the line had been extended a distance of five miles to the town of Libertyville, in Jefferson County. It was completed into Ottumwa, 71 miles from Fort Madison, in 1893.

The Chicago, Fort Madison and Des Moines Railway Company was finally absorbed by the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy System, whose main line closely paralleled the Fort Madison line from a point about 1.5 miles east of Batavia where the two roads crossed each other, all the way on into Ottumwa. When the Burlington completed its double track system across Iowa, it tied the Fort Madison Branch into its main line at Batavia, constructing about 1.5 miles of new track east from Batavia in so doing. About the year 1901 it tore up about 16.55 miles of the west end of the old Chicago, Fort Madison and Des Moines line, on

which were two unimportant stations, Bladensburg and Yampa (or Tunis), but no serious objections were made to the change.²¹

Phildia Branch, Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad.— The Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Company was organized on May 5, 1863, and by 1880 had grown, largely through the gradual acquisition of many small, independent lines, into a great railroad system, spreading a net-work of track throughout the States of Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa. Early in 1881 this company decided to make a bid for a share of the transcontinental business originating at the "Omaha Gateway". Accordingly a line was projected across Iowa from Sabula on the Mississippi River to Council Bluffs on the Missouri.

This Omaha Division was built in the most matter of fact manner imaginable. No favors were asked, none were shown. Land grants, bonuses, local tax bonds, or subscriptions for stock were not sought, up to this time an unheard of procedure in railroad construction. When the surveyors for the road were asked what towns would be touched, they laconically replied, "Omaha", and today this line, for its entire distance across Iowa, does not pass through a single county seat town.

When the valley of the Des Moines River was reached in the northeast corner of Dallas County, a sharp swerve down stream was made in order to reduce the cost of bridging the Des Moines on a high level. After crossing the river the line swerved north again to its original course near the Des Moines River. The town of Phildia was established between the stations of Madrid and Woodward.

²¹ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1880, p. 550, 1883, p. 508, 1885, p. 467, 1890, p. 425, 1891, pp. 223, 723, 1892, p. 225, 1893, p. 106, 1900, p. 334, 1901, p. 118.

In 1909 when the road was straightened and double-tracked across Iowa, a cut-off 5.5 miles in length was built over a high bridge across the Des Moines, several miles to the north of the original line. Soon afterwards the old track between Madrid and Phildia was removed, but the track between Woodward and Phildia, 4.37 miles in length, remained in operation as a branch line until 1923, when it also was abandoned and dismantled.²²

Estherville Branch, Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad.—Soon after the close of the Civil War a land grant was made by Congress to aid in the construction of the McGregor and Western Railroad Company's line across northern Iowa from the Mississippi River to South Dakota. The property of this line, while yet in an embryonic stage, passed into the hands of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad Company which, by the autumn of 1878, succeeded in completing the line through Mason City, Algona, and Emmetsburg as far west as Spencer.

Intense rivalry sprang up in this portion of the State between the Milwaukee system and the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern, a newcomer in the field, which had strong backing by both the Burlington and the Rock Island systems. When it was seen that the Dakota extension of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern was to be built across the tracks of the Milwaukee at Emmetsburg and proceed on north toward Estherville, the Milwaukee road immediately decided to build a parallel and competing line from Emmetsburg to Estherville, and began construction at once with the view of finishing its line first.

After battling its competitor in one of the most interesting "crossing wars" in the history of railroad building in

²² *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1896, p. 208, 1923, p. x.

Iowa, the Milwaukee succeeded in completing its line into Estherville a day or two ahead of its rival by laying rails on ties six or seven feet apart.²³

The race had stimulated public interest, and on April 17, 1882, the town council of Estherville appropriated the sum of \$180 to be used for the purchase of depot grounds for the Milwaukee line "which was soon to be completed". This site was subsequently purchased and donated to the Milwaukee Company, which continued to operate its branch trains into Estherville for a period of seven years or until August, 1889. At this time the line found itself unable to operate its Estherville Branch without loss since it was in direct competition with a main line railroad which was enabled by its through business to render superior service. The branch line was, therefore, abandoned and the tracks dismantled. The old grade lies to the east of the present Rock Island line, closely paralleling this line all the way up to Estherville.²⁴

Lime Kiln Branch, Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad.—In 1883 the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway Company contemplated building a branch line running north from Wilton Junction on their main line to Tipton, the county seat of Cedar County, a distance of about 15 miles. This would give Tipton an outlet on the south to the main line of the Rock Island and a direct connection at Muscatine with the Southwest Division of that road.

M. G. Mills, the owner of a limestone quarry about six miles northwest of Wilton Junction, was anxious to secure

²³ *Emmet County and Dickinson County History* (Pioneer Publishing Company), Vol. I, pp. 169, 170.

²⁴ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1882, p. 177, 1889, p. 44, 1890, p. 22.

railroad facilities for his industry, and entered into an agreement with the railway company to acquire and furnish the right of way, gratis, if the railroad would build the line. This he did and in the spring of 1883, he incorporated the United States Lime Company and erected lime kilns to which the Rock Island built its track. The following year this track was extended three-fourths of a mile to the property of the Sugar Creek Lime Company.

The village of Lime City sprang up about this quarrying industry and in due time acquired a post office. During the following twenty years an average of nearly 500 cars of freight a year was derived from this branch. Most of this was stone and lime, but at times grain, livestock, lumber, and other commodities were shipped in considerable quantities. The Sugar Creek Lime Company alone furnished over \$30,000 in revenue during five years of the operation of this branch road.

For some reason the line was never extended to Tipton and little or no improvements or repairs were made on the property. By 1900 the ties and bridges had so deteriorated as to become unsafe for locomotives, and the railroad company refused flatly to risk engines on the line. For three years, 1901-1903, W. L. Johnson, then owner of the lime industry, attempted to haul the cars to and from the quarries by means of horses, but this method proved impracticable and unsatisfactory, and so on March 4, 1904, he filed a complaint with the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners asking that the Rock Island be compelled to recondition the track and furnish him with the original service.

The railroad company replied that it would require an outlay of about \$12,000 to repair the track and place it in safe operating condition, and that there was not sufficient business in sight to warrant so great an expense. The Rock Island offered to sell the property to Mr. Johnson, allowing

him to make his own repairs, and agreed to enter into a reasonable arrangement for switching as soon as the track was made safe. The company also claimed that it was under no legal obligation to operate or maintain a side or stub track of this character at a constant loss, and requested a hearing before the Commissioners at which all of the facts might be set forth.

Johnson also brought suit against the Rock Island in the district court of Muscatine County to compel the company by writ of mandamus to reinstate the service. The Board of Railroad Commissioners had considerable correspondence in regard to the case, hearing both sides "exhaustively", but before a conclusion had been reached they were advised that the parties had reached an amicable adjustment of their differences and the track was removed in 1907. It is not known whether or not any regular train service was ever inaugurated on this branch or whether trips were made only as occasion warranted.²⁵

Creston, Winterset and Des Moines Railroad.—The town of Macksburg, Madison County, was a long distance from a railroad. Consequently little difficulty was encountered in securing a large subscription for the purchase of stock in 1909 when it was proposed that an electric inter-urban line, between Des Moines and Creston via Winterset and Macksburg, be built under the name of the Des Moines, Winterset and Creston Electric Railway Company. People of other communities also subscribed liberally.

For some reason the plans were changed and the line was finally constructed as a steam railroad under the name, Creston, Winterset and Des Moines Railway Company. The road was completed from Creston to the plateau, West

²⁵ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1906, pp. 299-305, 1907, p. 5.

Macksburg, a mile west of the town of Macksburg, by December 31, 1912, and built on in across the ravine to Macksburg about a year later — a total distance of 20.72 miles. The road cost in round numbers a third of a million dollars, and was financed by the issue of \$98,600 in stock actually subscribed and paid for, and a 6 per cent, first mortgage bond issue of \$200,000, handled by the Iowa Bond and Security Company. No interest was ever paid on these bonds. Almost the entire line was laid with 60 and 65 pound steel rails. The company purchased two engines, one combination way car, three flat cars, two grain cars, four work cars (two center and two side dump), and a steam shovel. The original service consisted of two mixed trains daily each way.

Beginning operations with a financial handicap which no road might reasonably expect to overcome, the line passed into the hands of Clarence E. Wilson, receiver, in July, 1914. The operation of the line was continued for a time in the hope that it might at least be completed as far as Winterset where connections for Des Moines could be had with the Rock Island. It was even thought that in such an event the Rock Island might be induced to take over the operation of the road. During the receivership and the period just preceding, the sum of \$30,000 additional was spent. To this fund nearly \$10,000 in cash was contributed by farmers and other interested parties along the line for a continuance of the road.

Reorganization having failed, the property was finally sold by order of the United States District Court to Ralph H. Beaton and S. Ornstine of Columbus, Ohio, who in turn sold the steel and equipment to a Chicago junk dealer, who had about six miles of the track removed before he was restrained from further dismantling of the property by Attorney General Horace M. Havner. After a legal battle

in the courts, in which the purchaser was successful, the dismantling was completed in 1918.²⁶

Crooked Creek Railroad.—In 1876 the Crooked Creek Railway and Coal Company, a corporation composed of seven stockholders, constructed a narrow gauge railroad from Judd, Webster County, a station on the Illinois Central Railroad, south to the town of Lehigh, situated at the mouth of Crooked Creek on the west bank of the Des Moines River, a distance of about eight miles.²⁷ The purpose of this road was to tap extensive coal fields in the vicinity of Lehigh, and subsequent extensions to the various mine shafts soon increased the mileage to 9.7 miles. The road began operation with one engine, one combination passenger car, twenty-eight coal cars, three other cars, and no telegraph. The road became a standard gauge line by November 8, 1880.

In 1887 the Crooked Creek line leased and began operating the Webster City and Southwestern Railroad Company's property which had just been constructed from Webster City to Border Plains, a station on the Crooked Creek line about two and one-half miles above the town of Lehigh. This gave the Crooked Creek line 13.5 additional miles of track, the total being given as 23.27 miles. On July 12, 1890, the Crooked Creek railroad purchased the leased line at a sheriff's sale for \$85,000. Soon afterwards that part of the original line running between Border Plains and Judd, a distance of 5.66 miles, was abandoned and removed, leaving in operation only 17.61 miles from the end of the line at Lehigh to Webster City.

²⁶ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1913, p. v, 1914, p. v, 1917, p. 309, 1919, p. vi.

²⁷ Auditor's map of Webster County, Webster County Courthouse, Fort Dodge, Iowa.

In 1917 a complete rearrangement was made in the operation of the old Crooked Creek and Webster City lines, the property being taken over by the Des Moines, Fort Dodge and Southern Electric Railway. That part of the Webster City and Southwestern track between Border Plains and Brushy Station for a distance of nearly three miles was abandoned and a new road was built between Brushy Station and Fort Dodge. This new line together with the Webster City end of the Webster City and Southwestern goes to make up the present Webster City Branch of the Des Moines, Fort Dodge and Southern, and electric cars are now operated directly between these two cities.

From a point where the newly constructed electric line intersected the old grade running between Border Plains and Judd, a track was relaid along the old grade south to Border Plains where it connected with the Lehigh end of the old Crooked Creek line. This was electrified and together with the relaid track goes to make up the Lehigh Branch of the Des Moines, Fort Dodge and Southern Railway, the new arrangement meeting the needs of the respective communities much better than the old. Many switches and stubs have since been constructed along the new electric interurban to accommodate the gypsum industry.²⁸

Davenport, Iowa and Dakota Railroad.—The Davenport, Iowa and Dakota Railway Company began the construction of a railroad from Davenport to a point near Bennett, about 1886. Here it was to cross the tracks of the Cedar Rapids and Clinton Railway Company. In 1890 the line was leased to the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern Railway Company, which had obtained control of the Cedar

²⁸ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1879, p. 402, 1881, p. 313, 1887, p. 372, 1891, p. 364, 1892, p. 399, 1900, p. 349, 1904, p. 80, 1917, p. viii.

Rapids and Clinton line under leasehold. Henceforth it operated the line from Bennett to Davenport as a part of the Davenport Division.

In 1902 the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway Company acquired control of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern and "all its holden roads", which of course included the original Davenport, Iowa and Dakota line. This line crossed over the main line of the Rock Island at the station of Stockton sixteen miles west of the city of Davenport, and then followed a circuitous route of 17.15 miles through the town of Blue Grass into Davenport. When the Davenport and Muscatine Electric Interurban was constructed it also passed directly through the town of Blue Grass giving direct connection with Davenport. The interurban, furnishing more frequent and convenient service, soon had nearly all of the passenger business and a fair share of the freight business out of Blue Grass leaving the Rock Island with a number of miles of nearly useless track on its hands. It was obvious to all that the traffic on the remainder of the line might be better served by tying it into the main line at Stockton than by following the older, rather poorly maintained track into Davenport via Blue Grass.

The Rock Island, however, stoically continued to operate the Blue Grass line until 1925 when it petitioned the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners for permission to remove the track from Stockton on into Davenport, representing that the interests of the citizens of Blue Grass would be served just as well by the interurban. A hearing was held at which there was considerable objection to the abandonment, but the Commissioners ruled in favor of the Rock Island and permitted the removal of the tracks between Stockton and Davenport. This was done during the summer of 1926 and the name of Blue Grass has now dis-

appeared from the long list of places served by the Rock Island System.²⁹

Farmers Union Railroad.— The Farmers Union Railroad Company was organized on March 22, 1875, by John W. Tripp, who had been a successful business man at Albion and had laid out the town of Liscomb. Having made considerable money out of his town site venture and wishing to boom the town further, he conceived the idea of building an east and west railroad across the State through Liscomb, intersecting the north and south line of the Central of Iowa at that place. The route proposed was to start at some point on the Mississippi River and to pass west through Mapleton, Ida County, to the Missouri River.

The company engaged a civil engineer, who did some preliminary surveying with the aid of some volunteer assistance en route, and the project was under way. Mr. Tripp was energetic, did grading both east and west of Liscomb, and soon succeeded in putting into operation a narrow gauge, wooden rail track from a sawmill near the Iowa River west of Liscomb through Conrad Grove — now Conrad — to the town site of Beaman, a distance of about twelve miles. From there the route was laid out to Grundy Center, and some grading was done on that end of the line. Grading was also done west of Liscomb.

A single engine, a caboose, and some freight cars made up the equipment of the road which was in operation for a few months, during which time the towns of Conrad and Beaman grew quite rapidly. Further extension of the road was pushed, taxes were voted at various places, and a right of way was secured from the town of Traer as far west as the Des Moines River. About this time Mr. Tripp was

²⁹ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1890, p. 99, 1891, p. 311, 1925, pp. 31, 32. See also the historical sketch of the Cedar Rapids and Clinton Railroad in this article.

seriously injured in a railroad accident, when a car in which he was riding left the track and tumbled down a steep embankment. He was so incapacitated as to be unable to attend to his business, and this soon brought on financial troubles. The Farmers Union Railroad Company, of which he seemed to be the most important member, soon went into the discard. The ties and track being wholly of wood soon rotted out and the road was no more.

The road was of no economic importance, but is historically important as being the first line in Iowa to be abandoned. It appears on the railroad map of the State, issued in 1878.³⁰

Iowa, Minnesota and Northern Pacific Railroad.—A local company, called the Jasper County Coal and Railroad Company, was organized in 1871, with F. H. Griggs as president. Its purpose was the construction of a railroad from the town of Newton, Jasper County, to the mining district three or four miles south of Newton in which Mr. Griggs was heavily interested. The same year the Chicago, Newton and Southwestern Railroad Company was organized and agreed to build the line without bonus.³¹

About the same time another road was projected under the name of the Iowa, Minnesota and Northern Pacific Railroad, with a capital of \$12,000,000. This line was surveyed as far north as Webster City. Much litigation between the two corporations ensued over the question as to the legality and propriety of a coal company owning a right of way through the town of Newton. The Iowa, Minnesota and Northern Pacific had little cash for actual construction

³⁰ Battin and Moscrip's *Past and Present of Marshall County, Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 204.

³¹ *The History of Jasper County, Iowa* (Western Historical Company, 1878), pp. 434, 435.

and matters drifted along, the project remaining in a dormant condition until 1875, when Hornish, Davis and Company, contractors, assigned their contract to the Iowa and Minnesota Construction Company, organized for the purpose of reviving the line. The coal company accepted \$35,000 in bonds of the road in return for their rights and franchises. By December, 1876, the company was successful in completing the track between Newton and Monroe, a distance of seventeen miles, and "thus ended the much-talked-of great northwestern thoroughfare to the lake region of the upper Mississippi river and the thundering cataract of St. Anthony Falls".³²

The road was involved in financial difficulties from its beginning and on August 4, 1877, President Briggs incorporated the Newton and Monroe Railroad Company for the purpose of acquiring and operating the insolvent Iowa, Minnesota and Northern Pacific Railroad. The entire property was consolidated with the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway on June 2, 1880, being thereafter operated as the Newton and Monroe Branch.

From the beginning the branch scarcely met its operating expenses and since the advent of the automobile it was operated at a constant loss, so in January, 1926, after a half century of continuous service, the Rock Island announced its intention of abandoning the south end of the road, a distance of seven miles between Reasnor and Monroe. The consent of the Interstate Commerce Commission was secured, and train service ceased soon afterwards. An accommodation train is now operated between Reasnor and Newton. The track to the south of Reasnor, between Reasnor and Monroe, is at present in a state of disuse.³³

³² Weaver's *Past and Present of Jasper County, Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 112.

³³ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1880, p. 411, 1896, p. 211.

Iowa Northern Railroad.—The Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska Railway Company, which afterwards became a part of the Great Western Railroad Company, was incorporated on December 1, 1881, and built through from Waterloo to Des Moines, in the direction of Kansas City. In 1883, this road constructed a "stub" from Valeria to the Oswald coal mines in Jasper County, 3.20 miles in length, which it listed for a time as a branch line.³⁴ The Oswald Branch was built mainly for the purpose of tapping the coal fields in the vicinity of Colfax and was taken over by the Iowa Northern Railway Company which was organized on February 7, 1882. The new company completed the line from Colfax through Oswald to Valeria in 1885, 5.93 miles in length.

For several years, train service was maintained between Colfax and Valeria, where connection was made with the Kansas City Division of the Chicago Great Western Railway. Only mixed trains, however, were employed, these being operated by telephone as early as 1885, when there were some six miles of wire in use. Later this road was employed chiefly by the coal mining industry and was taken over by the Colfax Northern Railroad Company, which was organized for that purpose, the tracks being extended five miles south from Colfax to Seevers Mine with branches from No. 8 Junction to Shaft No. 8, 2.41 miles in length, and from Jule Junction to Black Crook Mine, a distance of one mile. Other stubs and switches were built as occasion warranted.

On May 19, 1912, the name was changed from the Colfax Northern Railroad Company to the Colfax Northern Railway Company, and about that time the track between Colfax and Valeria was abandoned and removed. Operation of the road south of Colfax was continued for a time when the mines were running, but no semblance of regular service

³⁴ *Iowa Railroad Map*, 1884.

was maintained. Only such trains were "put through" as were needed to "haul out" the coal and in transporting the miners back and forth from their homes in Colfax to the mines. Most of these shafts were exhausted by 1925, and early the following year the company asked the permission of the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners to remove their tracks. Final approval was obtained from the Interstate Commerce Commission on April 12, 1926. Soon afterwards the road was dismantled and passed out of existence.³⁵

The Iowa Northern Railroad.—Articles of incorporation for the Iowa Northern Railway Company were filed with the Secretary of State on June 10, 1912. As stated by these articles, "the terminus of said railway shall be on the south in Bellevue, Jackson County, Iowa, and said road shall run in a west and northerly direction through Jackson, Dubuque and Clayton Counties, with a northern terminus at Turkey River, Clayton County, Iowa."

After heroic efforts, five miles of road between the towns of Dyersville and New Vienna were finally completed in the fall of 1914. This was largely financed by wealthy farmers living near the latter place. Train service was begun, but owing to the temporary condition of the track and grade, it had to be abandoned the following spring, having remained in operation about six months.³⁶

The road never resumed operation and after the statutory time limit the property owners abutting the right of way reclaimed their land and again put it under cultivation. In 1919, S. G. Durant, who was still the owner of this road,

³⁵ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1884, p. 453, 1885, pp. 361-367, 1892, p. 487, 1896, pp. 216, 225, 1912, p. 289.

³⁶ Letter from A. C. Link to the writer, dated Dyersville, Iowa, December 11, 1926.

took up the rails and ties along the line and shipped them out of the country. On June 1, 1920, the articles of incorporation were cancelled by the Attorney General for failure to file the prescribed annual reports.³⁷

Iowa and Omaha Short Line Railroad.—The Iowa and Omaha Short Line Railway Company was organized in 1912 under the laws of the State of South Dakota for the purpose of constructing a short line of railway from the town of Treynor, in Pottawattamie County, to connect with the Wabash Railway Company at Neoga, a station about five miles out of Council Bluffs. From this point trackage was leased into Council Bluffs over the Wabash.

In 1912 the company reported to the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners that it owned 13.38 miles of standard gauge road, which was reduced a quarter of a mile by re-measurement the following year. This mileage was further reduced a mile in the report of 1915 by a reclassification of the track in the yards at Neoga, leaving main line mileage of 12.12 miles after that date.

From the beginning the road did not pay operating expenses, and it ceased running trains on June 30, 1916. By order of the court, it was sold on November 1, 1916, to E. A. Wickham of Council Bluffs for the sum of \$21,500. It was alleged that Mr. Wickham stated to the court that he would make an attempt to reopen the road, but this was never done. In October, 1917, the steel was sold to a St. Louis firm which immediately removed it, thereby completing the dismantlement of the line.

Considerable controversy arose concerning the reversion of the right of way property of the defunct line to the original owners, which was not settled finally for a number of

³⁷ Record Book, F-5, p. 281, in the office of the Secretary of State, Des Moines.

years. The road was of small economic importance, except to the citizens of Treynor, and even this loss has been largely mitigated by the coming of the auto-truck and an excellent highway to Council Bluffs. Much of the money for the construction of the road was obtained by the sale of stock to the farmers and citizens of Treynor. Needless to say they lost their entire investment.³⁸

Iowa and Southwestern Railroad.— On several occasions during the railroad building epoch in southwestern Iowa, College Springs, a thriving inland village in Page County, missed the boon of securing railroad facilities by a narrow margin. In fact one railroad bearing the name of the town, the Clarinda, College Springs and Southwestern, was built and is today operated as a part of the Burlington system, never getting nearer College Springs than six miles. Naturally the citizens of the town felt the need of direct railroad connections with the outside world and from the beginning were ambitious to secure a railroad of their own. Many citizens of Clarinda had also always felt that their city was handicapped materially by the fact that they had no road competing with the Burlington and that an irreparable mistake had been made when the old Clarinda and St. Louis line was allowed to go under in 1890. They were, therefore, eager to assist in the construction of a line connecting their city with the Wabash at Blanchard via College Springs.

This road was built in 1912-1913, Suggart and Barnes Brothers of Des Moines performed the grading and the firm of Ables and Taussig of St. Louis furnished most of the ties and timber, filing a mechanics' lien for the money

³⁸ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1912, pp. vi, 241, 1913, p. v, 1915, p. ix, 1918, p. vi; report of the Iowa and Omaha Short Line Railroad, 1916, on file at the State House, Des Moines.

due them upon the completion of the road. The company was not able to satisfy this lien, and Ables and Taussig commenced foreclosure proceedings and secured a judgment against the road in the United States District Court of the Southern District of Iowa. Execution was issued on April 24, 1915, and the United States Marshal sold all of the property of the road, excepting some of the equipment which was specifically excepted in the bid, for the sum of \$20,000, the certificates being issued for Mr. Barnes with a redemption period of one year.

Before the year of redemption expired on April 24, 1916, these certificates were assigned to the Western Tie and Timber Company of St. Louis. Later the Western Tie and Timber Company sold the property to W. S. Farquhar, J. W. McKinley, I. H. Taggart, G. W. Richardson, A. A. Berry, A. M. Abbott, A. F. Galloway, and Wm. Orr, as individuals. On December 26, 1916, an execution was issued upon a judgment rendered on a third mechanics' lien and all of the property of the Iowa and Southwestern Railway Company that was not sold under the sale of April 24, 1915, was disposed of at this time, leaving the road from this date with neither property nor assets. Operation of trains ceased on December 31, 1916, the line being abandoned and dismantled the following year. Collège Springs was thus deprived of railroad advantages, perhaps for all time to come, and Clarinda's ambitions of maintaining direct railroad connections with the Wabash were again blasted.³⁹

Keithsburg, Grinnell and Dakota Railroad.—The Keithsburg, Grinnell and Dakota Railway Company was organized on February 11, 1880, and by March, 1881, 26.64 miles of

³⁹ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1913, pp. v, 284, 1918, p. vi; report of the Iowa and Southwestern Railway Company, 1916, made to the Board of Railroad Commissioners.

track had been constructed between Newburg, Jasper County, and State Center, Marshall County. The property of this line was purchased by the Central Iowa Railway Company on January 1, 1882, and was in turn taken over by the Iowa Central Railway Company, organized on May 15, 1889, to absorb the property of the Central of Iowa which had passed into the hands of a receiver in 1886.

After January 1, 1912, the Iowa Central became a part of the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad system and this company assumed the responsibility of operating all of the numerous lateral "feeder" lines of the former road. Among these was the State Center Branch, the further end of which terminated in a veritable network of strong roads, such as the Chicago Northwestern, the Chicago Great Western, and the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul, lines rendering every degree of service required by the communities contiguous thereto.

Expensive crossings had to be maintained over the two latter roads, so from the beginning of its ownership, the Minneapolis and St. Louis found it impossible to operate that part of the line beyond Van Cleve without loss. To avoid this, it petitioned the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners to grant permission to remove the 10.46 miles of track between Van Cleve and the end of the line at State Center. This permission was granted and the track was removed in 1925.⁴⁰

Keokuk, Fort Des Moines and Minnesota Railroad.— In 1858 the State of Iowa granted to the Keokuk, Fort Des Moines and Minnesota Railway Company certain lands to aid in the construction of a railroad from Keokuk, up along the valley of the Des Moines River, through the city of Des

⁴⁰ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1896, p. 225, 1912, p. 282, 1925, p. 264.

Moines, to the northern border of the State. On June 3, 1864, the name of this company was changed to Des Moines Valley Railroad Company. Additional legislation was passed in 1864, and in 1868, 100,000 acres were specifically set aside for building a railroad between Des Moines and Fort Dodge. The date of completion was fixed at 1870.

The line being finally completed, the company received the land grant. Four years later, on November 10, 1873, a mortgage on the road was foreclosed, the property falling into the hands of a new company which was organized for the purpose under the name of the Des Moines and Fort Dodge Railroad Company.

Beginning in September, 1878, the Des Moines and Fort Dodge Company dismantled that portion of the line running from a point east of Tara into the city limits of Fort Dodge, a distance of six miles. Connections for the benefit of the Fort Dodge patrons were then made over the Iowa Falls and Sioux City Railroad, operated under leasehold by the Illinois Central, whose main line west of Fort Dodge paralleled the piece of track which was abandoned by the Des Moines and Fort Dodge road.

In 1887 the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway Company acquired the Des Moines and Fort Dodge property under leasehold. The residents of Fort Dodge soon became dissatisfied with the service rendered and filed a complaint with the Board of Railroad Commissioners in August, 1888, petitioning for a reopening of the old line running out to Tara. They claimed that since this branch had been built under land grant the railroad companies had no moral or legal right to dismantle it.

On May 3, 1889, the Railroad Commissioners ordered that the branch be rebuilt and the original service restored, the installation to be completed by November 1, 1889. The railroad appealed from this decision to the district court.

The action of the Commissioners was sustained by a decision rendered by Judge S. M. Weaver of Webster County, whereupon the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific appealed the case to the Iowa Supreme Court, which reversed the ruling of the inferior court, the opinion being rendered on January 30, 1892.⁴¹

This line has never been replaced but the old grade is easily discernible, running along the south side of the Illinois Central right of way from Tara, all the way down to Fort Dodge. For a large part of the distance both grades occupy the same ravine to a point where the two grades cross each other within the western limits of the city of Fort Dodge. There were no intervening stations, and at the present all trains of the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad which now operates the old Des Moines and Fort Dodge line enter Fort Dodge over the Illinois Central track from Tara, the passenger trains using the Illinois Central depot, thus eliminating any dissatisfaction or cause for controversy. These trains return again to Tara and proceed to Des Moines if south bound, or to Ruthven, to which point the line was extended in 1882, if north bound.

While economically of small importance, this case of abandonment was one of the most important in Iowa history. It came early, and was hard fought both in the courts and before the Commission, and has wielded much influence over subsequent decisions, setting a precedent which has been followed both in this State and others.⁴²

Coalville Branch, Mason City and Fort Dodge Railroad.
— In 1886 the Mason City and Fort Dodge Railroad Company completed its line from Mason City to Lehigh through

⁴¹ State v. Des Moines and Fort Dodge Railway Company, 84 Iowa 419.

⁴² *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1892, p. 212; *Laws of Iowa*, 1858, Ch. 99, 1864, Ch. 108, 1868, Ch. 57.

Fort Dodge, a distance of 88 miles, crossing over the tracks of the Illinois Central Railroad near a station called Carbon Junction, about four miles east of Fort Dodge. Some time prior to 1878 the Fort Dodge Coal Company had constructed four miles of standard gauge, stub track from Carbon Junction, almost due south, tapping their coal fields in the vicinity of Coalville, Webster County. The Mason City and Fort Dodge line obtained control of this Coalville stub, four miles in length, in 1886, thereafter listing and operating it as a branch line.

Eventually the Mason City and Fort Dodge road was acquired by the Chicago, Great Western Railroad and Carbon Junction became known on their line as Gypsum Station. The mines in the vicinity of Coalville flourished for many years and in the census of 1910 this village showed a population of 350. Regular train service was operated on that portion of the line between Fort Dodge and Lehigh until the electrification of the Crooked Creek line by the Fort Dodge, Des Moines and Southern Interurban about 1917. The new electric line between Lehigh and Fort Dodge absorbed the greater share of the passenger business, whereupon the Great Western reduced its line to the status of a freight carrier only. As the mines in the vicinity of Coalville were gradually worked out, this branch was shortened by the removal of 1.10 miles of various terminals, and in 1915 upon the complete cession of the mines, the balance of the track between Gypsum and Coalville, 2.90 miles in length, was abandoned and dismantled, leaving the remnant of the former prosperous village of Coalville without train service of any kind.⁴³

Kalo Branch, Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad.—The Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway Company was chartered

⁴³ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners, 1896, p. 226.*

by the legislature of the Territory of Minnesota on March 3, 1853, as the Minnesota Western Railroad Company. After a hectic career, involving several changes in name and purpose, the name of the corporation was changed on May 27, 1870, to the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway Company.

By 1871, the line had been completed from Minneapolis to Merriam Junction, and by 1877 from Merriam Junction to Albert Lea, Minnesota. In 1879 the company began the construction of a line from Albert Lea, southwesterly to Forest City, Iowa, and thence to Fort Dodge. The road was completed to the State line in November, 1879.

The road southward from the State boundary was built under an arrangement with the Minnesota and Iowa Southern Railroad Company and the Fort Dodge and Fort Ridgely Railroad Company. It was completed to Fort Dodge by 1880. In 1882 the Minneapolis and St. Louis extended this line beyond Fort Dodge, in a southwesterly direction to the town of Agnes, a distance of 41.0 miles, and a branch was built from Kalo Junction, a station about four miles below Fort Dodge, to the town of Kalo, and to mines in the vicinity of Kalo, a distance of three miles.

By 1904 the length of this branch had been reduced to 1.46 miles and at the time it was finally abandoned and removed in 1923, only 1.33 miles remained.⁴⁴

Moulton and Albia Railroad.—At the time that the Wabash interests under the name of the Des Moines and St. Louis were building their line between Des Moines, Iowa, and Moberly, Missouri, the Burlington road was also engaged in building into Des Moines from Albia. The Wabash survey indicated a line from Moberly to Moulton,

⁴⁴ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1880, pp. 244, 480, 1881, p. 398, 1882, p. 324, 1896, p. 227, 1904, p. 200, 1923, p. x.

Iowa, thence through Moravia and Albia into Des Moines along a route paralleling more or less closely, the Burlington's Des Moines branch. Obviously these two roads were in conflict and a subsidiary line was organized by Burlington interests under the name of the Moulton and Albia Railway Company to build between those two points ahead of the Wabash.

This line, which from the beginning was operated by the Burlington, was completed as far as Moravia, 11.50 miles south of Albia, by June 10, 1880, but for some reason was built no farther. During the same year another line, the Centerville, Moravia and Albia Railroad, which was built as a branch of the Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska Railroad and later known as the Albia and Centerville Railroad Company, was completed between Albia and Centerville by General Francis M. Drake. This road paralleled the Moulton and Albia line all the way from Moravia to Albia. Being the longer line and a hobby of General Drake's and of Russell Sage's who was closely associated with him, it was enabled to furnish much better service than the shorter Burlington line and soon obtained the lion's share of the business. The service on the Burlington line was allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that for a time only tri-weekly trains were run, and then only bi-weekly trains. This unsatisfactory service, together with the condition of the track further depreciated the business on that branch. These trains were dubbed the "try weekly" by the residents along the route. The Wabash line was also looming up from the south, which would mean another competitor in the already overcrowded territory, so the Burlington chose to abandon this piece of track and divert its energy to localities where the promise of adequate returns was more certain.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Hickenlooper's *An Illustrated History of Monroe County, Iowa*, pp. 129-132.

The present Wabash tracks now occupy the old Moulton and Albia grade from Moravia to Hilton Junction, an old coal mining property, at which point the older grade crosses the present line of the Iowa Southern Utilities Interurban, now operating the old "Drake" road, and then parallels the present Interurban and Wabash tracks closely, on the west, all the way into Albia. The Minneapolis and St. Louis coal line into Hocking now also uses about two miles of the old grade immediately south of Albia for main line and storage track purposes. From the city limits on the south of Albia, the old Moulton and Albia grade passed up the center of Fifth Street to a point where it connected with the Burlington main line a few hundred yards to the east of the present Burlington station.⁴⁶

Muscatine North and South Railroad.— The eastern border of Iowa, from the Missouri to the Minnesota line, is formed by the Mississippi River. The western or Iowa shore of this stream was early skirted, for the entire distance, by one or more trunk line railroads, excepting for a stretch of about fifty miles in the counties of Des Moines, Louisa, and Muscatine, between the cities of Burlington and Muscatine. Here the railroads originally did not follow the sinuosities of the river but fell back from six to thirteen miles to the westward, leaving a considerable territory without adequate railroad facilities. Muscatine is also the only point in Iowa of any considerable importance that does not possess railroad connections directly eastward across the Mississippi.

With these facts in mind, the Muscatine North and South Railroad Company was organized on February 15, 1893, under the laws of the State of Iowa. The authorized capital

⁴⁶ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners, 1896, pp. 193, 224, 330.*

was \$10,000,000, and the purpose was to build, own, and operate a single or double track railroad from Muscatine east to Chicago, and west to some point on the Missouri River, and also a railroad bridge across the Mississippi at Muscatine. It was also to build and operate branch lines.⁴⁷ By 1899 this corporation had succeeded in constructing 28.67 miles of standard gauge railroad from Muscatine south to Elrick Junction, where a connection was made with the Peoria line of the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railway.⁴⁸ A branch line from Main Line Junction to Stewart Road, 0.69 of a mile in length, had also been constructed.

The road, however, did not prosper, and by order of the United States Circuit Court for Iowa it was sold under foreclosure proceedings. It was purchased by a syndicate and transferred by deed on February 8, 1905, to a corporation organized under the name of the Muscatine North and South Railway Company, articles of incorporation being filed with the Secretary of State of Iowa the following day. Under the new management the road was completed south from Oakville to Burlington. Ten miles of track were constructed in 1911, 9.10 miles in 1912, and the balance, 1.68 miles, in 1913, giving the road a connection into Burlington over Rock Island trackage from a point called C. R. I. & P. Junction, about 2.13 miles north of Burlington. Trackage extending 3.90 miles was also secured from the Minneapolis and St. Louis between the stations of Oakville and Elrick Junction. The road was thus enabled to operate its trains through from Burlington to Muscatine, a total distance of 55.48 miles.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Record Book K-2, p. 500, in the office of the Secretary of State, Des Moines.

⁴⁸ Richman's *History of Muscatine County, Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 411.

⁴⁹ Record Book C-4, p. 269, in the office of the Secretary of State, Des Moines.

Financial reverses again developed, however, and on September 16, 1914, a receiver was appointed by the United States District Court for the Southern District of Iowa. This receiver was succeeded on November 30, 1914, by M. Dailey, appointed by a State district court. This receivership was discharged on October 17, 1916, the company being refinanced under the name of the Muscatine, Burlington and Southern Railroad Company. On July 27, 1916, Theo. W. Krein was appointed receiver for the Muscatine, Burlington and Southern, by the District Court of the Southern District of Iowa and he was succeeded by Arthur Hoffman, who was appointed receiver on March 2, 1923.

Operation of train service became intermittent and finally ceased in June, 1924, as the result of a proceeding before the Interstate Commerce Commission, in which both Commissioner Charles Webster and Judge Henderson participated. This was supplemented by an order of the district court of Muscatine County, and on May 10, 1924, the Interstate Commerce Commission authorized the abandonment of the south 47.77 miles of the line, effective 30 days after date.

About two miles of the north end of the road at Muscatine was retained and has since remained in operation as a switching and transfer railroad, serving the extensive gravel washing operations to the south of the city limits on Muscatine Island. While the road is now legally in a state of abandonment, the rails have never been torn up, and repeated efforts are being made to restore operations on at least a portion of the line.⁵⁰

The Newton and Northwestern Railroad.—The Newton and Northwestern Railroad Company was incorporated under the laws of the State of Iowa late in 1902, for the purpose of building a railroad northwest from the town of

⁵⁰ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1899, p. 244.

Newton, Jasper County, intersecting such trunk line railways as the Chicago Great Western, the Chicago, Milwaukee, and the Chicago Northwestern, thereby giving Newton the advantage of a direct connection with these important lines.

By 1904 the road had been completed from Newton, through Boone to Rockwell City, a distance of 102.5 miles. In 1903, during this period of construction, it acquired the property of the Marshalltown and Dakota Railway Company, twenty-one miles in length. In 1899, this company had taken over the line of the Boone Valley Railway Company, built in 1894 from the mining town of Fraser on the east side of the Des Moines River about ten miles above the city of Boone, to Fraser Junction on the west bank of the Des Moines River, a distance of 3.00 miles, extending their line nineteen miles beyond to the town of Gowrie in 1900. The original three mile stub, between the town of Fraser and Fraser Junction, was leased to the Boone Coal and Mining Company in 1904.

In 1906 a branch line, 4.10 miles in length, was built from Goddard, the second station northwest of Newton, to the town of Colfax, and added to the system, giving a total mileage of 106.6 miles. It seems that this branch line from Goddard to Colfax was owned by the Fort Dodge, Des Moines and Southern Railroad, and was operated by the Newton and Northwestern Railroad without consideration pending further construction on the part of the Fort Dodge line. This arrangement was later changed to a straight lease of the branch by the Newton and Northwestern for a period of 25 years upon a monthly rental basis.

For a distance of about six miles out of Newton the right of way of the Newton and Northwestern paralleled that of the Chicago Rock Island closely on the north, as far as the town of Metz where it struck off across the country follow-

ing an almost due northwesterly direction all the way to Rockwell City, crossing the Jasper County line 24.35 miles from Newton.

In addition to the sale of stock the cost of the 102.5 miles between Newton and Rockwell City was financed by the issue of \$2,500,000 first mortgage bonds maturing in thirty years. Of these, \$2,460,000 were actually sold on October 1, 1902, chiefly in Boston. On December 1, 1903, an additional \$600,000 funding bond issue was made. The road proved impracticable, being from the beginning too heavily loaded with debt, and after a checkered career of about five years, it passed into the hands of Parley Sheldon at Ames as receiver on June 8, 1908.

An effort was made to dispose of the line to both the Iowa Central and the Rock Island, but neither road was interested, and all the "property, rights, franchises, etc." of the Newton and Northwestern were sold, under a decree of court in foreclosure proceedings, to the Fort Dodge, Des Moines and Southern, a company engaged in constructing an electric interurban railroad between Fort Dodge and Des Moines. The transfer was made on March 31, 1909, on which date the corporate entity of the Newton and Northwestern passed out of existence.

All of that portion of the Newton and Northwestern running north from Des Moines Junction was incorporated into and made a part of the system of the purchasing company, which built a new line from that point directly into Des Moines. Forty-one and seven-tenths miles of the Newton and Northwestern between Des Moines Junction (Midvale) and Newton, including the Colfax Branch, was abandoned and the track removed in 1910.⁵¹

⁵¹ Weaver's *Past and Present of Jasper County, Iowa*, pp. 114, 115; *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1903, p. 181, 1904, p. 202, 1906, p. 199, 1909, p. 298.

Ottumwa and Kirkville Railroad.— This line was built to tap extensive coal fields in the vicinity of Kirkville, Wapello County, Iowa, for the purpose of hauling miners back and forth from their work and furnishing connections for the Kirkville mines with the numerous railroads radiating out of the city of Ottumwa. From Ottumwa to Comstock (Kirkville Junction) the Ottumwa and Kirkville Railroad operated under a leasehold on the tracks of the Keokuk and Des Moines Branch of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific, a distance of 8.17 miles. From Comstock to the Carver Mine shaft in the vicinity of the village of Kirkville new track was built, totaling 3.33 miles. This track was of standard gauge, well built, with excellent bridges and culverts, representing a capital outlay of over \$30,000 per mile. Only mixed trains were run between the city of Ottumwa and Kirkville, a distance of 13.5 miles, and for the greater part of the life of the road a regular schedule was maintained, consisting of two trains daily each way. Trains were operated by telephone, this being one of the first lines in the country to operate their trains in such a manner.

The coal fields served by the line became exhausted and were abandoned in 1890, and on September 4th of that year the road ceased to function. The Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad Company which had taken over the operation of the property some time prior to that date, having no further use for the extension, immediately removed the 3.33 miles of track running between Comstock (Kirkville Junction) and the end of the line. The work of dismantling the track was completed on August 4, 1890, and on November 29, 1890, the stockholders dissolved the corporation.

Aside from serving the coal mining industry, the road was of little economic importance save as a convenience to the residents of the town of Kirkville which prospered greatly through the influx of business created by the mines.

While the town of Kirkville was affected materially by the closing of the mines, it has remained until this day an important inland trading center, being served with railroad facilities by Kirkville Station on the Keokuk and Des Moines Branch of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of the village. Formerly the Kirkville hack met all passenger trains and carried the mails. This service is now performed by an auto line.⁵²

St. Louis, Kansas City and Northern Railroad.— In 1878-1879, the St. Louis and Council Bluffs Railway Company constructed its line from the southeast into Council Bluffs, passing through Page County. The business men of Clarinda, the county seat, entertained high hopes that this would pass through their city. These expectations, however, were not realized as the line was finally located and built through Shenandoah in the southwest part of the county. The citizens of Clarinda immediately set about securing a branch of this line, to be constructed northward from Roseberry, Missouri, a distance of twenty-one and one-half miles. A subsidiary company was organized for this purpose under the auspices of the St. Louis, Kansas City and Northern Railway which was operated as the Clarinda and St. Louis Railway Company. This company agreed to build the line if a five mill tax was voted in Nodaway, East River, Harlan, and Buchanan Townships, with subscriptions to bring the whole amount up to \$100,000, and donations of the right of way to, and depot grounds complete at Clarinda. This tax carried in the various precincts as follows:⁵³ Nodaway Township, for 507, against 85; Buchanan Township, for 112, against 42; East River Township, for 125, against 66.

⁵² *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1885, pp. 383-390, 1891, pp. 5, 723.

⁵³ Lewis and Dunbar's *History of Page County, Iowa*, Vol. I, pp. 169, 170.

The road was subsequently built, passing up the east side of the Nodaway River, touching parts of East River and Harlan Townships, and paralleling a branch of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad about one-half a mile distant on the east.⁵⁴ The road terminated at Clarinda and had no outlets north, west, or east. This proved a material handicap from the beginning. The road was bonded for the purpose of construction to the extent of \$20,000 per mile by eastern capitalists, and in 1880 came under control of the Wabash, St. Louis and Pacific Railway Company.

The road apparently did a fair business for some time after completion but gradually declined, and finally reached a stage where the receipts from its operation did not meet the running expenses. On April 15, 1886, it passed into the hands of Thomas McKissock, receiver. F. M. Gault was appointed receiver on April 1, 1888, on account of the death of McKissock. After a hearing, the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners did not see fit to compel the road to continue to operate at a financial loss, so the line ceased running trains on December 19, 1889, and the property was ordered sold by the court at "public outcry" to satisfy the claims of various creditors, the track being dismantled early in the year 1890.⁵⁵

Webster City and Southwestern Railroad.—This road was organized in 1887. When first built the property was operated for a time under leasehold by the Crooked Creek Railway and Coal Company and later by a joint arrangement under the caption of the Crooked Creek, Webster City and South Western Railroad Company. The road extended from Webster City to Border Plains, a distance of 13.5

⁵⁴ County auditor's map, Page County Courthouse, Clarinda, Iowa.

⁵⁵ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1889, pp. 445, 576, 1890, p. 456, 1891, pp. 1041-1043.

miles. The east 10.5 miles of this line was absorbed by the Des Moines, Fort Dodge and Southern Railroad Company and electrified in 1917.⁵⁶ The mileage abandoned consisted of the west three miles, or that part of the line running between Brushy Station and Border Plains, at which point connection was made with the line of the Crooked Creek Railway and Coal Company. Stations affected by the abandonment were Brushy Station and Border Plains.

The Winona and Southwestern Railroad.—The Winona and Southwestern was organized under special charter of the Territory of Minnesota granted in 1856. The original project contemplated the building of a railroad from Winona, Minnesota, to Omaha, Nebraska Territory. Construction of the new line was commenced in 1888 and was completed to the north bank of Red Cedar Creek, 1.3 miles west of Osage, Mitchell County, Iowa, in 1892, a distance of 117 miles. Owing to the continued depression of the '90s the balance of the line beyond that point was never constructed and in 1893 the road failed. It was purchased under foreclosure by H. W. Lambertson, V. Simpson, and M. G. Norton on September 15, 1894. In November of the same year these men sold their holdings to the Winona and Western Railway Company, which had been organized for that purpose, filing articles of incorporation with the office of the Secretary of State of Iowa, on November 13, 1894.

The line beyond Osage, to the Red Cedar, was unoperated and with remote prospects of its ever being extended beyond that point. As a result it became a useless appendage to the property and was fast deteriorating for want of use and repairs. It was also a source of continued expense for taxes and other necessary outlay, so the company asked per-

⁵⁶ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1887, pp. 6, 378, 1891, p. 883, 1900, p. 349.

mission from the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners to remove the rails temporarily from that portion of their line extending beyond Osage, ostensibly for the purpose of using them further up the line at a place where a realignment in the track was being made. The officers represented that they did not have the money on hand to purchase new rails for that purpose, and by using these rails, regular train service need not be interrupted while the track was being shifted. They promised to replace the track as soon as the change was made. This, however, was never done.⁵⁷

The Wisconsin, Iowa and Nebraska Railway Company, Oswald Branch.— The details about this road appear in the first paragraph of the section on the Iowa Northern Railroad in this article. For a time this road listed the “stub” from Valeria to Oswald, a distance of 3.20 miles, as a branch line. This branch was abandoned in 1918.⁵⁸

BEN HUR WILSON

MT. PLEASANT IOWA

⁵⁷ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1895, p. 196, 1896, p. 232.

⁵⁸ *Annual Report of the Board of Railroad Commissioners*, 1896, p. 216.