

The River Road

We have traced two Milwaukee routes across Iowa, leaving only one significant part of the system unmentioned. This is the line hugging the west bank of the Mississippi, formerly known as "The River Road," and stretching from the Minnesota border through Dubuque to Clinton. Up until its purchase by the Milwaukee in 1880, the route was more or less independently operated.

The initiative for a north-south line along the Father of Waters stemmed from the desire of Dubuque to get more river trade, particularly during the winter months, when ice halted navigation. Moreover, McGregor, its principal Iowa rival on the north, boasted of being on the new railroad to the Twin Cities.

One of the chief promoters of the "River Road" was Platt Smith, who was active in railroad building in eastern Iowa, especially around Dubuque. A big, robust man, Smith had migrated from New York State to the Territory of Iowa where he engaged in lumbering. Possessing only a meager education but determined to be a lawyer, Smith studied in log cabins, in sawmills, and on steamboats, whenever he had the chance. After passing the bar examination, he practiced law and later

opened an office in Dubuque. A man of great versatility and keen intellect, he was associated with many of the city's business enterprises, particularly the new industry of railroading. It was Platt Smith, for example, who helped bring the Illinois Central to Dunleith, better known as East Dubuque, Illinois. It was Smith, too, who aided its course westward from Dubuque.

Platt Smith was a leading spirit in organizing the Dubuque & McGregor Railway, which was incorporated March 20, 1868. It was chartered to connect the two cities in its title. The following year, the name was changed to the Dubuque & Minnesota Railway and the articles amended so it could extend to Winona, Minnesota. A branch up the Turkey River and beyond to Mankato, Minnesota, was also authorized. Smith, as head of the Dubuque & Minnesota, started construction northward along the Mississippi. In 1871, when the road was renamed the Chicago, Dubuque & Minnesota, it already had a 117-mile route carved out of the river bluffs from Dubuque to La Crescent, Minnesota. By this time, however, James F. Joy and his Burlington associates were dominating the road. In 1872, it completed its 13-mile Turkey River Junction-Garber Branch.

Meanwhile, a separate corporation called the Dubuque, Bellevue & Mississippi Rail Way, organized January 31, 1870, commenced building southward from Dubuque. It was affiliated with

the road to the north, and many of the officers held identical positions in the two companies. In view of the fact that the "south" River Road was also interested in making connections with Lake Michigan, it was retitled the Chicago, Clinton & Dubuque Railroad in 1871. That year its rails reached Sabula Junction, forty-four miles to the south. From the Junction, running rights were had over the Sabula, Ackley & Dakota for about five miles. Beyond that point, an additional two miles were constructed, bringing it to the "Midland Railroad" (now the North Western), over which it operated into Clinton.

To service and to repair equipment, the two River Roads built extensive shops in Dubuque which, until the time of their purchase by the Milwaukee, employed about 100 men. Dubuque, likewise, served as headquarters for the two lines, and later, under the Milwaukee's jurisdiction, it became the operating base for the Dubuque Division.

The panic of 1873, together with high construction cost and other factors, put the River Roads into receivership. After a merry round of reorganizations, name changes, and consolidations, the River Roads were combined to form the Chicago, Clinton, Dubuque & Minnesota Rail Road in 1878.

In the meantime, branches were being built into the hinterlands. By 1877, the narrow gauge Waukon & Mississippi (organized April 15, 1875) fin-

ished its 23-mile line between Waukon Junction on the Mississippi and Waukon. Its first train, pulled by a neat American-type locomotive coupled to five flat cars filled with excursionists, arrived in Waukon on October 27, 1877, amid much rejoicing. The road soon came under the Joy interests, and plans were made to extend it to Decorah and into Minnesota. Considerable grading was done, and tracks were laid several miles beyond Waukon. Then the Chicago, Clinton, Dubuque & Minnesota acquired it and all building ceased. It was converted to standard gauge shortly thereafter.

Further south, the Turkey River Branch had been extended to Wadena in 1878. Still further to the south another road, long in name and narrow in gauge, ended its little rails at Cascade. This was the bucolic Chicago, Bellevue, Cascade & Western Railway, whose line started in Bellevue. It was likewise taken over by the Chicago, Clinton, Dubuque & Minnesota in 1880. Because the Cascade road was the oldest narrow gauge in Iowa, and the last to survive in the state, a separate chapter is devoted to it.

The River Road with all its branches was now a 300-mile entity which connected with the main line of the North Western at Clinton. On the north it hooked up with the Milwaukee's Iowa & Dakota Division at McGregor, and at La Crescent, Minnesota, both with its line running to

Madison, South Dakota, and its Milwaukee-Twin Cities main line.

The River Road, while associated with J. F. Joy, was still independently operated and never made a part of the Burlington Railroad, which the Joy interests dominated. As a consequence, the North Western and the Milwaukee looked with envy at the River Road. A clash soon resulted between the two trunk lines when both sought control. The North Western officials, a contemporary account records, were riding over the line in their business car and were getting ready to buy the River Road. Unfortunately for them, the Milwaukee officials got wind of the negotiations. While the North Western car was tied up for the evening at Lansing, the Milwaukee beat them to it by purchasing the road that night! At any rate, the Milwaukee took title to the Chicago, Clinton, Dubuque & Minnesota on October 19, 1880.

Shortly after the purchase, the new owners extended the rails into Clinton, but only after a spirited crossing fight with the "Midland" to get into the city. Trackage rights over the North Western were then quickly terminated.

In securing the River Road, the Milwaukee had matched its wits against the North Western and won. It had purchased the road from under the nose of the Burlington (Joy) interests and entrenched itself along the Mississippi. The loss to the Burlington, however, was not great, for it later

built a fine new road on the east side of the river. But if the North Western had succeeded in picking up the property, it would have seriously affected the growth of the Milwaukee system. In short, the River Road was not so valuable in itself as it was a competitive threat in the hand of a rival!

Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul R'y.

To Northern Iowa, Central and Southern Dakota.

STATIONS.	No. 1. P. du C.	No. 1. C. & C. B.	No. 3. P. du C.	No. 3. C. & C. B.
Chicago.....lve		a12 30pm		c10 40pm
Savanna....."		5 40 "		4 10am
Dubuque....."		8 10 "		6 15 "
NorthMcGregor.....arr		11 00pm		8 40am
Chicago.....lve	b11 30am		c10 30pm	
Milwaukee....."	2 55pm		1 30am	
Madison....."	7 10 "		5 00 "	
Prairie duChien.....arr	10 50 "		8 20 "	
NorthMcGregor....."	11 30pm		9 05am	
NorthMcGregor.....lve	a11 45pm		b 9 15 am	
Postville.....arr	12 50am		10 20 "	
Calmar....."	1 30 "		11 00 "	
New Hampton....."	2 40 "		12 40pm	
Charles City....."	3 24 "		1 30 "	
Nora Springs....."	4 02 "		2 47 "	
Mason City....."	4 25 "		3 15 "	
Clear Lake....."	4 49 "		3 53 "	
Garner....."	5 12 "		4 19 "	
Britt....."	5 33 "		4 44 "	
Algona....."	6 15 "		5 33 "	
Emmetsburg....."	7 05 "		6 30 "	
Ruthven....."	7 29 "		6 55 "	
Spencer....."	7 55 "		7 25 "	
Spirit Lake....."	11 15 "			
Sanborn....."	9 10 "		9 00 "	
Sheldon....."	9 44 "		10 05 "	
Rock Valley....."	10 36 "		11 22 "	
Canton....."	11 20 "		12 25am	
Sioux Falls....."	b12 11pm			