

Westward to Omaha

The Milwaukee's second trans-Iowa line, which went through the central part of the state, was late in reaching Omaha. The North Western, the Burlington, and the Rock Island had already preceded it. Perhaps it never would have been built had it not been for the management team of Alexander Mitchell and S. S. Merrill. They were not content to see the Milwaukee play a minor role in the Hawkeye State.

The Omaha-Council Bluffs gateway had been the acknowledged entrance to the West ever since the first transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869. True, the Milwaukee dominated the Twin City portal to the Pacific Northwest, but in an expanding economy this was not enough. With only one significant western gateway, it made the Milwaukee second best to the North Western, which through affiliated lines reached *both* Omaha and the Twin Cities. To Mitchell and Merrill such a role was unthinkable. The Milwaukee, under their aggressive leadership, recognized no superior. They would see to it their railroad would dominate the central west as it did the northwest. They would go to Omaha!

The first lap of the route across mid-Iowa was

under the banner of the Sabula, Ackley & Dakota Rail Road, which was organized in 1870. As a matter of fact, the road was built with the helping hand of the Western Union Railroad, which had reached Savanna, Illinois, opposite Sabula. The Western Union (no relation to the well-known telegraph company of the same name) was in turn controlled by Milwaukee interests. To the uninitiated it looked like a haphazard assortment of strange railroads, but under the shrewd maneuvering of Alexander Mitchell it was the making of a new trunk line.

Western Union agreed to advance \$3,000 a mile for the Sabula road so it could reach Marion. A contract was let to the Sabula & Marion Railway Construction Company; and by December, 1870, the trains were running to Preston, twenty miles westward. Less than two years afterward the whistle of locomotives was heard in Marion. In the meantime, the "Sabula" was purchased by the Milwaukee, and through service was instituted over affiliated roads to the city of Milwaukee. Money troubles, accentuated by the panic of 1873, however, checked westward progress for a decade. But when work was resumed on the 260-mile stretch across the prairie from Marion to Council Bluffs, track was laid within a year's time! This long section of line, built by the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul itself, was in operation by the end of 1882.

There is no question that the new line was a good investment. The Milwaukee, according to one authority quoted by the *Railway Gazette* of February 22, 1884, had "from the very beginning captured one-fourth of the Chicago-Council Bluffs through freight and almost ruined the value of the passenger business."

On the other hand, the road had great difficulty in getting the trains into Omaha over the Union Pacific. At one time, the Milwaukee teamed up with the Rock Island in an attempt to build a separate bridge over the Missouri River before wresting trackage rights over the UP's structure.

During the late 1870's and through the 1880's, numerous independent railroads built in Iowa. Aware of this, the Milwaukee management took steps to control and purchase those they considered desirable feeders. Then, too, there was always the likelihood a competing trunk line would purchase the "independents" and muscle in on Milwaukee preserves.

The oldest of the independents which came into the Milwaukee fold was the meandering Dubuque South Western Rail Road, which was leased in 1878 and purchased three years afterward. The "Dubuque" road began its existence as the Dubuque Western Railroad and was incorporated September 10, 1855. It started at Farley, a point on what is now the Illinois Central, twelve miles west of Dubuque. By 1859, the little road had

reached Sand Springs, fourteen miles to the southwest. In 1860, trains were running into Amana, when financial difficulties led to its reorganization as the Dubuque, Marion & Western Rail Road. Once again the road became insolvent. It emerged as the Dubuque South Western, which managed to extend the track to Marion by 1863. In another two years, it had laid track into the much more important community of Cedar Rapids.

The "Dubuque" road for a time was headed by Captain J. P. Farley, who operated a line of steamboats on the Mississippi and was instrumental in running the first "steam cars" on the present-day Illinois Central in Iowa. Also associated with the enterprise was William B. Allison, Morris K. Jessup, Platt Smith, and others, all prominent men, who later did much to get the Illinois Central started across Iowa. But, unlike the IC, the line to the southwest was never a financial success and remained local in character. It was poorly built and had steep grades and inferior equipment. There was an especially severe grade on the 9-mile section between Sand Springs and Marion. Shortly after the road was controlled by the Milwaukee this section was abandoned and a 2-mile connection built from the Springs to Paralta. Thereafter trains ran on the Milwaukee tracks from the latter town to Marion.

A far longer railroad system was the Davenport & North Western Railway which was acquired by

the Milwaukee in 1879 and consisted of about 150 miles. Incorporated as the Davenport & St. Paul Rail Road, August 26, 1868, the road seems to have had as stormy a financial existence as that of the hectic Dubuque property. By 1872, it boasted of a main line running from Davenport to Delaware, a distance of eighty-nine miles, and a 38-mile branch from Eldridge to Maquoketa. When a scant year later, tracks were laid between Delaware and Fayette, the railroad was only forty-eight miles short of the Minnesota state line. Indeed, it had graded most of the way from Fayette to Cresco, the latter being on the Milwaukee's line to the Twin Cities. Here was a serious threat of competition, especially if the newcomer would be picked up by one of the larger systems in Iowa.

When the Davenport & St. Paul Rail Road defaulted on its \$6 million mortgage held by J. Edgar Thomson, head of the powerful Pennsylvania Railroad, William Dennison of Ohio, and others, the company was reorganized as the Davenport & North Western. Still in a precarious financial state, the Milwaukee had little trouble in getting control. The line was extended from Fayette to Jackson Junction by its new owners in 1880. Here it linked up with the Milwaukee's Iowa & Dakota Division and was soon integrated into the bigger system.

With the Omaha gateway in their hands, Mitchell and Merrill had out-generated the North

Western, which had vigorously tried to defeat them. The Milwaukee had eclipsed the North Western, more than held its own with the Rock Island, and ably competed with the powerful Burlington. In the cutthroat competition of the 1880's, the Milwaukee was a stormy petrel, getting new lines under its wings each year.

Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul R'y.

To Rockford, Rock Island, Dubuque, Clinton, Sioux City, Yankton, Council Bluffs, Omaha, etc.

STATIONS.	No. 1. Daily.	No. 3 Daily.	No. 5. Ex. Sun.	No. 7. Ex. Sun.
Chicago.....lve	12 30pm	10 40pm	8 30am	4 00pm
Elgin .....arr	1 55 "	12 05am	10 05 "	5 10 "
Rockford "	3 55 "	b 2 20 "	12 05pm	7 15 "
Forreston "	4 23 "	2 30 "	12 33 "	.....
Lanark..... "	4 54 "	3 04 "	12 59 "	.....
Mt. Carroll..... "	5 07 "	3 18 "	1 12 "	.....
Savanna..... "	5 30 "	3 40 "	1 30pm	.....
Bellevue..... "	6 46 "	b 5 15 "	.....	.....
Dubuque..... "	7 45 "	b 6 10 "	.....	.....
West Union..... "	.....	b 10 30 "	.....	.....
Fulton..... "	b 7 07 "	.....	.....	.....
Moline..... "	b 8 27 "	.....	.....	.....
Rock Island..... "	b 8 40 "	.....	.....	.....
Sabula..... "	5 52 "	4 17 "	.....	.....
Lyons, (Ia.)..... "	b 6 42 "	b 10 00 "	.....	.....
Clinton, (Ia.)..... "	b 6 52 "	b 10 10 "	.....	.....
Preston..... "	6 48 "	5 09 "	.....	.....
Delmar Jct..... "	7 21 "	5 40 "	.....	.....
Maquoketa..... "	b 7 40 "	b 7 05 "	.....	.....
Oxford Jct..... "	8 15 "	6 22 "	.....	.....
Monticello..... "	b 9 12 "	b 9 10 "	.....	.....
Anamosa..... "	.....	b 9 50 "	.....	.....
Marion..... "	9 30 "	7 35 "	.....	.....
Tama..... "	11 41 "	10 08 "	.....	.....
Madrid..... "	1 58am	12 35pm	.....	.....
Perry..... "	2 46 "	1 50 "	.....	.....
Coon Rapids..... "	3 41 "	2 50 "	.....	.....
Manning..... "	4 31 "	3 35 "	.....	.....
Manilla..... "	4 55 "	4 00 "	.....	.....
Sioux City..... "	8 20 "	b 7 40 "	.....	.....
Yankton..... "	b 10 54 "	b 10 05 "	.....	.....
Neola..... "	6 19 "	5 40 "	.....	.....
Council Bluffs..... "	7 00 "	6 10 "	.....	.....
Omaha.....arr	7 30am	7 05pm	.....	.....

Additional trains leave Chicago for Elgin at 10 30 a. m., 5 15 p. m. and 6 20 p. m. daily except Sunday, and at 4 p. m. Sunday only, arriving at Elgin at 12 10 p. m., 6 35 p. m., 8 00 p. m. and 5 50 p. m. respectively.