

# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

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## Manchester's Own Railroad

As the nineteenth century neared a close, the businessmen and citizens of Manchester, Iowa, became more and more dissatisfied with their lot. Here was a county seat of 2,887 people — growing, yes, but not as they felt it should grow. The trouble was that the town had only one railroad, while most of the faster-growing communities had two or more, with correspondingly better service.

It seemed ironical, too, that although Delaware County was favored with several roads, all of them, except the Illinois Central, shied away from Manchester. The IC first built into Manchester in 1857 on its way to Sioux City under the banner of the Dubuque & Pacific. The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul went through Delaware, six miles to the east, in 1873 as the Davenport & St. Paul. The Chicago Great Western, the last road to enter the county, thrust its main line diagonally across the northeastern part of the state, going no nearer than Thorpe, a half dozen



miles away. That was in 1886, when the CGW was known as the Minnesota & Northwestern.

For a brief spell the people of Manchester entertained high hopes in the building of the Cedar Rapids & Chicago Railroad from the IC depot, in the southwestern part of town, to Cedar Rapids. Indeed, Major E. M. Carr, one of the town's promising young lawyers, acted as secretary and land agent and did much to further its construction. But this "independent" road, completed in 1888, soon became a branch of the Illinois Central.

Time was running out on Manchester. The railroad map was jelling in Iowa. With the new century just around the corner it looked as if all the "railroad talk" was just that. Such, however, was not the case. Speeches turned into action as Manchester dispatched committees to wait upon Albert J. Earling, president of the Milwaukee, and A. B. Stickney, head of the Great Western. Both men expressed interest in Manchester's desire for an independent outlet. At the same time, however, neither showed any serious desire to run a branch into the city. Plainly, if the people of Manchester wanted another line, they would have to build it themselves.

Something of the strategy of railroad building may be learned by reviewing the status of the Milwaukee Road and the Great Western about 1900. The Milwaukee was a vigorous, profitable



Granger line, well entrenched in the Midwest. It as yet had not weakened its financial standing by building to the west coast; and, save for entering Omaha, it remained east of the Missouri River. To build into Manchester it would have to "spear" the territory of the Illinois Central and probably suffer retaliation from that road at some other point. Then, too, it had only a secondary branch in Delaware County. Building to Manchester would be a branch on a branch and as such would have to compete with the IC's main line. In either case it was hardly worth the cost.

How different was the picture of the Great Western. Concieved and executed by Alpheus Beede Stickney, it was the last road of any size to be built in the Midwest, hence in the weakest position. Except in South St. Paul, it had to take whatever terminals it could get and generally obtained these by lease or trackage. It was paralleled on almost every hand by seasoned and profitable trunk lines and branches. It, nevertheless, reached the gateways of Chicago, the Twin Cities, and Kansas City, with Omaha shortly to come into its fold. It desperately needed better connections, more traffic. With Manchester only a few miles from its main stem, it eyed the town covetously. On the other hand, it did not want to commit the sin of "spearing another road" and suffer reprisals. But if the townsmen of Manchester would build their own road, the good of-



fices of the Chicago Great Western would lend encouragement and support.

From the start the men from Manchester, particularly the jovial, enthusiastic Major Carr, got along well with the red-headed, outspoken Stickney. Years later in testifying before the Interstate Commerce Commission in valuation hearings (June 24, 1923) Carr recalled the help given by the colorful CGW president. Apropos the formation of an independent short line, Carr stated: "Mr. Stickney put his finger across the table at me. He wouldn't talk to anybody except one man. He wasn't going to talk to a town meeting." Mr. Stickney concluded by saying:

"I will tell you how you can get that road, but if you ever tell any man what I tell you, if necessary I will go on the witness stand and say I never saw you."

Unfortunately the ICC transcript did not include Stickney's advice, and one can only guess what he had in mind. It is the opinion of the writer that it concerned a tax assessment plan for raising money. At any rate, that was the method used to ensure the building of an independent railroad in Manchester. The matter of a five per cent tax on the assessed value of property was broached, and on May 7, 1900, it was put to a vote. In what *The Democrat* called "The Largest Vote Ever Polled in the City," 1,017 freeholders voted for the tax and only 101 against it.



The paper, after the results of polling were made known, related how "a great bonfire was built on the Clarence House corner, the cornet band helped to sort of sweeten the din of tin horns, fire crackers and almost every other conceivable kind of noise. . . . Taken as a whole it was an evening long to be remembered in Manchester. . . . They [the figures] proclaim by a majority of more than ten to one that Manchester will no longer stand idly by and see her good men and good women, her good boys and good girls going away to find homes elsewhere."

Prior to the election, Judge A. S. Blair and E. M. Carr drew up the articles of incorporation, and on April 10, 1900, the road was duly chartered as the Manchester & Oneida Railway Company. Carr was elected first president and S. A. Steadman, mayor of Manchester, vice-president. B. W. Jewell, a lumberman, served as secretary; C. J. Seeds, an owner of the historic Quaker Mill, filled the post of treasurer; and Joseph Hutchinson, head of a private bank, was chosen auditor.

To get the best possible connections the M & O officers selected Oneida as their northern terminus. Only eight miles away, Oneida was the nearest point served by two railroads other than the Illinois Central. On the main line of the Great Western and on a branch of the Milwaukee, it gave the M & O greater bargaining power than if the road had merely connected with a



single carrier. Moreover, the CGW, in conjunction with the home road, would form the shortest route from Manchester to the Twin Cities and to Chicago.

Apart from "tax money" the M & O was to be financed by issuing up to 7,500 shares of capital stock at \$10 a share, and \$100,000 in First Mortgage gold bonds sold in denominations of \$500. The Manchester Construction Company, organized by officers and directors of the railway, contracted to build the road. The Construction Company in turn was assigned bonds and given stock for its services.

Much of the right-of-way was either deeded to the railway in exchange for stock or donated outright. The M & O did not have to resort to the courts to get any land nor were there ever any damage suits filed against it. The line ran about half a mile on River Street, thereby coming to within a block of the main business district. No doubt having the mayor as a vice-president helped the road to get this permit. Here again we see the astute counsel of A. B. Stickney. To quote Carr's ICC testimony once more — "Mr. Stickney . . . advised the officers of the Manchester & Oneida Railway Company to run the road in as close to the business center of the city as possible, because they could do it at that time when feeling in favor of the road was dominant, but might not be able to do it at a later date."



When the M & O needed rails, Messrs. Carr and Hutchinson made a trip to St. Paul to see the M & O's "godfather." Yes, Stickney could make available some 56-pound Bessemer relay rails at \$21.00 a ton f.o.b. Oneida. The short line purchased 800 tons at this bargain rate.

The M & O promoters, having a flair for timing, set July 4, 1901, as the date of operation. No doubt Carr thought that launching another railroad would make a grand "independence" day for Manchester. At any rate, Edward Michael Carr had worked hard and long to produce the M & O. Born in Cattaraugus County, New York, June 28, 1850, Carr came to Iowa with his parents at the age of six. Upon graduating from high school at Independence he taught school for a time and then enrolled at the State University of Iowa. He was graduated with an LL.B. in 1872 and admitted to the bar the same year. He subsequently practiced in Manchester and in 1873 married Emma Preussner of that city. A gregarious person with a quick analytical mind and a capacity for long hours of continuous effort, he became one of Manchester's most popular and successful attorneys. Together with his law partner, C. E. Bronson, Carr owned the *Manchester Democrat* and was known for his provocative editorials. Stout, jovial, and friendly, Carr was liked by everyone.

Despite the Major's prodding, men and mate-



rials were slowed down by inclement weather. Morse & Son of Manchester, who held the contract for the first four miles of grading nearest the city, hoped to finish in the fall of 1900. An early winter, however, made it necessary to postpone some of the grading until spring. The Great Western "iron" was tardy in reaching Oneida. As a result construction crews ran out of track north of Manchester before Independence Day. Not to be daunted, the M & O officers went on with their plans to give the town a double-barrelled "Fourth."

Train or no train, the villagers decided to make sport of the road with the nearest likeness of a locomotive and cars they could muster. It took the form of Tom Elder's steam traction engine pulling a number of dilapidated old wagons. Clanking along and belching steam, the contraption proved to be an ingenious "take-off" on the M & O and the most popular parade entrant.

The all-day celebration had its quota of speeches, most of which concerned the M & O and what it would mean to the community. Major Carr told how the Milwaukee Road "divided the county into nearly equal parts but made a broad detour to avoid coming close to our gates." As for the Great Western to the north, he averred it was of "little use to any part of Delaware County." Warming up to his subject, he pointed out how the M & O "for all practical purposes



will bring the two railways at Oneida down into this city. By so doing," he declared, "all the railway losses of the past could be retrieved, all the discriminations wiped out, all the benefits of ample shipping facilities procured."

Judge Blair dwelt on the urgency of getting the M & O. According to Blair:

A study of our state railroad map will satisfy anyone that there is no town in the state of any importance that has but one railroad, and none of any considerable size or importance that has but two roads, and that all cities of any size and importance have three roads and upwards with six or more outlets. These facts, satisfy us that it is the railroads that build up our towns.

M. F. LeRoy, another prime mover in the enterprise, referred with pride to the fact that "the money to construct the railroad is all Delaware County money." Finally Joseph Hutchinson exhorted his townsmen to "Remember . . . the road is yours — guard the stock you hold — support and patronize the M & O in every way you can."

The last speech, delivered by Col. D. E. Lyon of Dubuque, dwelt on the significance of the Fourth of July. Contemporary accounts declared it "brimmed with patriotism" and elicited "frequent and continued applause." All in all, the Independence-Railway Day festivities were well received, notwithstanding the weather. The temperature reached 104° during the day, and rain marred the evening's band concert, dancing, and



fireworks. A month later, on August 5, 1901, the City Council, Board of Directors, and some 100 guests made an inspection trip over the M & O.

According to the directors' minutes, George Fullich was the road's first locomotive engineer, and his salary was to be "in accord with the C. M. & St. P. Ry. schedule." When it was found the Milwaukee's wages, according to Fullich, were "from \$128.00 to \$130.00 a month" the directors felt this was more than the company could afford, and he was replaced by C. D. Slusser at \$90.00 a month. The fireman, B. F. Miles, received \$45.00 "per calendar month." Conductor Welcome A. Abbott, although "boss" of his train, received only \$60.00, and his brakeman, M. F. Cunningham, settled for \$35.00. John L. Sullivan, formerly employed by the Great Western, was appointed general manager.

The first timetable, dated August 9, 1901, shows five daily trains scheduled each way.

	No. 2	No. 4	No. 6	No. 8	No. 10
Lv. Manchester	5:00am	7:15am	8:45am	2:05pm	4:20pm
Ar. Oneida	5:30	7:45	9:14	2:35	4:49
	No. 1	No. 3	No. 5	No. 7	No. 9
Lv. Oneida	5:35am	7:50am	9:20am	3:20pm	4:55pm
Ar. Manchester	6:05	8:20	9:50	3:50	5:25

Manchester was now connected with the outside world by another railroad — its very own.

FRANK P. DONOVAN, JR.