

Surveying the M. and M.

Early in 1853 the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad Company was organized for the purpose of extending the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad across Iowa. Peter A. Dey was made chief engineer to survey the route and he appointed Grenville M. Dodge as his principal assistant. This narrative of the location of the main line of the Rock Island is from the manuscript of Dodge's autobiography written in 1911. — The Editor.

We crossed the Mississippi River at Rock Island on May 17, 1853, and commenced our survey. The location of the bridge determined the point where we should commence and the topography of the country was such that the line I laid passed immediately through the premises of Antoine LeClaire. He was greatly disturbed to see a railroad line passing through his orchard. His residence was on the side hill and he called me up there and protested very strongly and tried to get me to change my line. He argued the question with me and offered every inducement, except money, to have me try to find another route, but I told him the location of the bridge controlled the line through Davenport and that he had better make arrangements to move. He appealed over

my head to Mr. Dey, but Mr. Dey only sustained the location. We ran the first preliminary line crossing the Cedar River at Moscow and reached Iowa City on May 26th, distance, 54 miles.

On this survey, I became acquainted with John F. Dillon, who was then studying law with John P. Cook of the firm of Cook & Sargent. He was sent out by them to obtain the right of way on my line. During the running and location of the line, we had to make a good many trial lines, and we obtained right of way on more than one line in order to bring them in competition. One of the settlers told me that Mr. Dillon criticized my line very much, which, being a young engineer, I took great exception to and wrote Cook & Sargent that they had better have Dillon tend to his duty of right-of-way agent and I would tend to the location of the line. Mr. Dillon was notified of this and he immediately wrote me a letter in which he insisted that he had attended strictly to his duties. I acknowledged it and, from that time on, we became great friends.

On September 4, 1853, I started the line west of Iowa City to the Missouri River. The names of the men composing my party were as follows: J. E. House, Transitman; George House, Leveler; Carpenter, Daily, Irish, Wilson, Dunham, Drake, Thompson, Edwards, Stephenson, Sinew, and

Perrin; 2 wagons, six horses, and 2 dogs. We ran up Old Man's Creek, at the head of which was a well-to-do farmer by the name of Williamson, who had a large family, three or four daughters, one of them afterwards married my leveler, George House.

I crossed from the head of Old Man's Creek into the Iowa Valley, passing through Marengo, following up Bear Creek to its head, crossing the divide where Grinnell now stands, dropped into the Skunk Valley, following it out, passing through Newton. I continued west and ran down Four-mile Creek into the Des Moines Valley and reached Des Moines, then a very small place. I selected forty acres of land for the depot grounds, just where the present station of the Rock Island stands. Thirty acres of the land were afterwards released, leaving only ten acres for the road and that ten acres was in a large cornfield. From Des Moines we ran the line up on the north side of Raccoon River for twelve miles to Daniel Boone's (a relative of the Kentucky Boones).

The long summer's work in the field and in the rank vegetation had given many of my party the fever and ague and I was short on hands. As we ran up to Boone's place, October 6, 1853, a young, robust boy, Wiley Lane, about sixteen years of age, was watching our surveying and seemed to

be taking quite an interest in it. I asked him how he would like to join the party. He said he would if his mother was willing, and, being anxious to have his services, I went to see his mother and she consented to his going. He joined the party and was a very valuable man. He was a strong axeman, well up in all woodcraft, and a bee-hunter. He could follow a bee to the tree its hive was in and kept us in honey all the way to the Missouri River. He was with us two or three years and lives now (1911), some four or five miles west of Des Moines.

We followed up the 'Coon to the mouth of Beaver Creek and up the Beaver to its head, crossed the head of Middle and Troublesome Rivers, and passed on to the East Nishnabotna, which we crossed some miles north of where Exira now stands. From there we rose out of the 'Botna Valley and struck the head of Indian Creek, followed it down to the forks and up the west fork, crossing the divide between it and the West Nishnabotna at Cuppy's Grove.

The party was out of meat and, as I rode up towards Cuppy's Grove, I was looking for a deer. I thought I saw one in the brush on the outskirts of the timber and drew my rifle to shoot, when a man rose up out of the brush with a rifle in his hand and a red bandanna handkerchief on his

head. He said, "For God's sake, don't shoot me." I was as much surprised as he was. He was Ad Cuppy. He had just settled in the grove. The only other party in the grove was a Methodist preacher by the name of Johnson. I found that Cuppy was pretty well acquainted with that country and utilized his information. We pushed the line on to the West 'Botna and camped there.

Continuing our survey down Pigeon Creek, we struck the Missouri Valley and ran down, making a connection with the Mormon "Winter Quarters" across the river. On November 22nd, we reached Kaneshville, its name having just been changed to Council Bluffs. We were cordially received by the citizens. They were greatly pleased at the possibility of a railroad coming to them, and ours being the first survey made considerable excitement in the place. They entertained us by giving us a ball. On December 1st, an engineering party under the supervision of Col. S. R. Curtis arrived in the Bluffs making a survey for the road known as the Lyons Air Line.

While we were camped at Council Bluffs, Mr. Dey received instructions to examine the country between the Missouri River and the Platte Valley to determine at what point on the Missouri River a railroad coming from the east should strike the river, with a view of connecting with a Pacific

railroad that would run up the Platte Valley. We crossed the Missouri where the town of Omaha now stands and, taking Saddle Creek, we ran up that valley until we reached the divide. We followed the divide northwest making towards the Platte Valley. Mr. Dey remained with the party and I rode on to examine the country for some twenty-five miles west, reaching the Elkhorn Valley about noon of the next day.

After running our line through to the Elkhorn, down Walnut Creek, where afterwards my father's farm was located, the party returned to Council Bluffs. Mr. Dey and I rode down Papillion Creek to Bellevue, which was then a mission for the Omaha Indians. We crossed the river at Bellevue and joined the party at Council Bluffs. Thence, we returned to Iowa City and spent the winter making examinations west of Iowa City up Clear Creek and other routes.

During the spring and summer of 1854, I finished the location of the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad to Des Moines, arriving there on April 19, 1854. Then I obtained a leave of absence and returned East to visit my father and mother. While there, on May 28th, I was married to Annie Brown. By July 16th we were back in Iowa City. A financial panic that year stopped all railroading in Iowa and our engineering parties were

discharged. By that time I had made up my mind to settle on the Missouri River at Council Bluffs or in Nebraska. Late in November, I located some claims on the Elkhorn River.

In the fall of 1856, the M. & M. railroad again commenced work and upon receiving notice from Peter A. Dey who still had charge of it, I returned to Iowa City and on October 6th organized a party and camped on the Iowa River. Our instructions were to go to the head of Beaver Creek, a fork of the Raccoon, and make a new survey to Council Bluffs running down the Mosquito Valley. I spent a good deal of time examining the approaches to the Missouri River to determine the best location into Council Bluffs.

A contest had arisen in relation to whether the road should terminate at Council Bluffs or Florence, the site of the old Mormon "Winter Quarters", now a suburb of Omaha. Cook and Sargent, who were prominent men in the company, had bought an interest in Florence and were very anxious that the road should be built down the Pigeon and terminate at Florence, but the topographical features of the line determined that it should come down the Mosquito and terminate at Council Bluffs. This was also the commercial feature as the town of Omaha had been established then and had become quite a place, it being

on one side of the river and Council Bluffs on the other. The citizens of Council Bluffs and Omaha both entered this contest, but the recommendations of Mr. Dey, the Chief Engineer, that the line I had surveyed down the Mosquito should be adopted, was approved by the company and the terminus made at Council Bluffs.

I returned to Iowa City in November. All winter we were encamped between Iowa City and Des Moines, locating and staking out our line. I remember the winter as a very cold one.

There came to us at this time a young man by the name of Pogue, a nephew of one of the directors of the company. Pogue had had no experience, so I put him to carrying the stakes. The heavy snows of the winter had covered the streams without their being frozen over but the crust of the snow had become so hard that it would bear up the party. I cautioned them to be careful when crossing small streams, but Pogue, the first or second day out with his stakes, broke through the snow crust and fell into a creek and got very wet. The thermometer was eight or ten degrees below zero. I was on ahead of the party and they came after me. I went back and found Pogue freezing. We stripped his clothes off and rolled him in the snow. While this was a very severe treatment, it was very effective and saved

him from freezing. Each member of the party took off some portion of their dry clothing and gave it to him, and we got him back to camp. The shock was such that Pogue did not go out for several days. He was very despondent. The stage ran right past where we were encamped and one evening when I came in I found a short note from Pogue on the table. It said that the M. & M. Railroad and myself could go to hell, he was going to New York.

There had arisen on the Missouri River a great fear that the terminus of the road would still be moved from Council Bluffs to Omaha and Mr. Farnam had said that if the county of Pottawattamie would vote him \$300,000 in bonds, and if Douglas County, Nebraska, would vote an additional sum, he would commence work at the Missouri River and grade east until the grading met. I presented this proposition to the citizens of both places. On January 4, 1857, Pottawattamie County called an election to vote upon the issue of \$300,000 in bonds. Douglas County called an election to vote on \$200,000 to the M. & M. railroad, providing work started in Council Bluffs during the year.

On March 12, 1857, while running up Bear Creek, on a bright sunny day with a light fall of snow on the ground, every man in the party, who

was out to work in the field, became snow blind. I was at the instrument that day and running to a flag set some two or three miles ahead. When we got into camp that night we began to feel the effects of the reflection of the sun on the snow and by morning none of us could see. We were all put in one of the wagons and taken to Iowa City. With most of the party the snow blindness was only temporary, but with me, being at the instrument, it was very serious and they kept me in a dark room a month before I fully recovered my eyesight.

During this summer, I negotiated with Mr. S. R. Riddle for the property which is now known as the Riddle Tract in Council Bluffs for the terminal of the Rock Island Railroad. I think I paid him \$10,000 for the tract, reserving some twenty acres of it for the terminals. The balance of it was divided into interests, the owners of the M. & M. road and some of the people of Council Bluffs each taking an interest.

During the summer of 1858 I commenced construction work on the M. & M. road carrying out the agreement of Henry Farnam with Pottawatomie County which had voted the bonds. We graded some 12 miles of road up the Mosquito Valley. This work continued until November 30, 1858, when the inability to sell the bonds stopped

the work. During this year, I also made explorations west of the Missouri River and they continued until the year 1861.

In August, 1859, when I returned from the plains, I met Abraham Lincoln in Council Bluffs. He had loaned some money to N. B. Judd, the attorney of the Rock Island Railroad, secured by the interest Mr. Judd had in the Riddle Tract. Mr. Lincoln had been to Kansas and, on his return, came up the Missouri River by boat to Council Bluffs to look at this property. He also had friends there who had formerly lived in Springfield, Illinois, — Mr. W. H. M. Pusey and Thomas Officer. He learned from them that I had returned from reconnaissances west of the Missouri River and, on the porch of the Pacific House, he spent an hour or two with me, making full inquiry as to what my surveys had developed, showing a great interest in the proposed Pacific railroad. I told him what our explorations from 1853 to that time had developed and pointed out to him what Mr. Dey's and my own views were for a proper route for a Pacific road across the continent. He virtually shelled my words and got all the information I had for my employer, Henry Farnam, who had personally been at the expense of our explorations west of the Missouri River.

GRENVILLE M. DODGE