

## The North Western

Out of a maze of mergers, rechartering, and consolidations, emerged the Chicago and North Western Railway in June of 1864. The Chicago, Iowa and Nebraska Railroad had been built from Clinton to Cedar Rapids during the three years ending in June, 1859; the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River company, taking four years for the work, had laid tracks from Cedar Rapids to Boone by the close of 1864. Meanwhile this connecting line, without a change of name, had become a part of the first "octopus" in the history of American railroads; and the same energy that had created the Chicago and North Western was not willing that the Iowa spur of the system should rest in mid-State, with the rich prizes of a connection with the Union Pacific only a hundred and thirty miles away.

In July, 1864, Congress made another grant of land, with the State of Iowa as the intermediate party, to the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River road, with the authorization to build to the Missouri River. In December, with wonderful promptness, construction was begun, as the grading crew struck out for the Boyer Valley. Certainly the directors must have planned from the first that Council Bluffs should be the terminus; but they were in a position to exact favors, and remained coy. "It is yet an

unsettled question", soberly reported the *Nonpareil* in September, 1865, "whether this road will come down the Boyer to Council Bluffs, or cross the river at De Soto, but we have reason to believe, from what we have seen and heard of the feelings of the company, that if a reasonable inducement is offered by Pottawattamie County the road will make its connection with the Union Pacific at Council Bluffs. This road will reach the Missouri several years in advance of any other coming across Iowa, and that town upon the river which secures the advantage of its terminus, will derive an impetus therefrom with which rival points will find it difficult to compete."

In early spring the piers and abutments for the bridge across the Des Moines River were erected, and in April one of Howe's Patent Truss bridges was swung across the stream. The iron rails began to arrive that same month, and construction trains crossed the river in pursuit of the graders. Work progressed uneventfully and speedily. Thomas C. Durant, vice-president of the Union Pacific, and Grenville M. Dodge, chief engineer of the Pacific line and native son of Council Bluffs, travelled to Chicago, spoke the right words, and came back with the assurance that the Chicago and North Western would build into Council Bluffs. "Under this new arrangement between the two companies," announced the *Omaha Herald*, "the Union Pacific are to build and furnish two hundred and fifty cars for the transportation of their own material over the

Chicago and North Western. These cars are all to be manufactured in this city, in the extensive carshops of the Company, where they are now constructing large numbers of superior platform and freight cars."

On July 9, 1866, the railroad was ready to ask its favors. Burhop's Hall that night was a lively place, housing the enthusiasm of a city. Stages had been erected at either end of the hall, one for the guests of the evening, John I. Blair and W. W. Walker, and the other for the band; both stages were crowded with American flags. The list of the speakers at that meeting was a roll of the "first citizens" of old Council Bluffs. The resolutions that the concourse adopted by acclamation were almost as numerous as the speakers. The final resolution was a verbal high-ball for the visitors: "Resolved, That we feel under obligations to Messrs. Blair and Walker, the gentlemanly officers of said company, for their visit to our place, and for the interest manifested by them in the early completion of their road to our city, and for the free, full and frank expressions given by them of the prospects for the speedy completion of their road, and of the future prospects of our city." There seems an alcoholic fragrance in that redundancy.

Major M. Turley headed the list of subscriptions with the gift of eighty acres of land within the city for a depot and other railroad buildings. One business firm gave two thousand dollars; eleven sub-

scribers pledged a thousand each; a hundred and six additional signatures swelled the total to thirty-six thousand dollars. And in the infectious enthusiasm echoed the words of editor Burke of the *Nonpareil*: "It would be better for every lot owner in the city to donate one half of his possessions — be they much or little — if, thereby, these railroad connections could be secured, than to own twice what he now has and allow them to go elsewhere. Without her railroads, we would scarcely give a baubee for the best vacant lot in Council Bluffs; with them, we will see how rapidly every stagnant impulse will be stirred into life, and the flush of a radiant but permanent prosperity mantle all the future."

A fortnight later Walker was advertising in the *Chicago Times* for five thousand laborers to work on the western division of the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River road; and the *Chicago Tribune*, with complacence which time has not withered, was predicting that by the first of June, 1867, the *Tribune* would be laid on breakfast tables in Council Bluffs and Omaha on the morning after its publication, and ten hours later would brighten the tea-time hour at Fort Kearney, six hundred and sixty miles west of Chicago.

By mid-September the road was within fifteen miles of Denison; the huskies from Chicago were laying the rails down the valley of the Boyer. The contractors asked that the citizens of Council Bluffs coöperate to keep away the men who were following

the line-camps and establishing grog-shops under canvas. But the work went on.

On September 15th ground was broken for the depot at Council Bluffs: with Thomas Jeffries as master of ceremonies, the townspeople again made their enthusiasm known. The procession began at the Pacific House, and marched and countermarched along Broadway, with the Council Bluffs Brass Band in the lead. At the depot grounds the assaults of the artillery and the band, followed by four speeches, were necessary before the first shovelful of earth was turned.

And on Tuesday, January 22, 1867, answering the call of Mayor Caleb Baldwin, the citizens of Council Bluffs assembled, in sleighs, buggies, carriages, and omnibuses, at the Pacific House at two in the afternoon; thence they went to the depot grounds, to witness the laying of the last rail on the Council Bluffs and Missouri River Railroad — the binding of Council Bluffs in one unbroken line of iron to the whole sisterhood of States. At the Board of Trade rooms later in the evening, congratulatory telegrams were read, the directors and the superintendents of construction of the road were honored by resolutions; and out of the abundance of speeches rang one, the address of General Grenville M. Dodge, linking the labor of the present with the labor of the future:

“CITIZENS OF COUNCIL BLUFFS: We have met here to-day to celebrate the completion of the Cedar Rap-

ids & Missouri River Railroad to Council Bluffs — thus finishing the last connection and closing the last link that gives us the only all rail route from the Missouri River to the Atlantic coast. . . . Nature has been lavish in concentrating here in this valley and around this city advantages for a commercial and railroad centre, possessed by no other point between St. Louis and the head of the Missouri River. If we but will it and use the ability, energy, enterprise and capital we have among us, we can within the next two years — if financial matters continue prosperous, and no great revulsion overtakes our country — concentrate here five great trunk railroads, that shall bring to and through us the trade and traffic of the North, East, West and South. I therefore appeal to you, to-day, to awake from the sleep that has possessed us, and each one and all of us determine from this day henceforth to place our shoulders to the wheel, and use all our ability, capital and enterprise in building up here a city and a railroad centre, that shall be second to none in the State of Iowa; and which shall be the metropolis of the Missouri Valley. To do this, we must extend the right hand of fellowship to labor, commerce, capital, manufactures, and to men of all trades, of all nations, climes and colors — and make it of interest to them to seek here a home, a fortune, and hereafter be one of us.”

E. DOUGLAS BRANCH