

A GREAT EPOCH

The Breaking of Ground for the First Railway Across the Continent Twenty Years Ago.

The Inauguration of the Union Pacific on the Banks of the Missouri in 1863.

A Memorable Day at Omaha--George Francis Train Makes The Speech of His Life.

Andrew J. Poppleton Delivers an Eloquent and Patriotic Address.

The Building of the Road, the Early Struggles of the Projectors and Final Triumph.

The Most Gigantic Enterprise of Modern Times Completed in Six Years.

An Excursion to the End of the Track, and the Speech of Senator Wade.

The Celebration of the Completion of the Road at Promontory Point and Omaha.

A Vast Amount of Interesting Data Bearing on the Construction of the Great Highway.

For two hundred years after the first shipload of Englishmen landed upon North American soil at Jamestown, in Virginia, the greater half of the continent west of the Mississippi remained as much an unknown land as was central Africa before the explorations of Livingstone and Stanley.

Seventy years ago an expedition to explore this unknown region was fitted out under President Jefferson. The explorers, Captains Lewis and Clarke, crossed the Mississippi somewhere near St. Louis and ascended the Missouri river with boats corded by hand.

On August 3, 1804, they reached a point about nineteen miles above Omaha, near the present site of Fort Calhoun, where they held a council with the Indians, and named the spot Council Bluffs.

Explorations of the country between the Missouri river and the Pacific slope were made by various army officers, and in 1842 Lieut. John C. Fremont led the first expedition to explore the country from the Missouri river to the Rocky mountains on the line of the Kansas and Great Platte rivers. In 1845 he led another expedition across the Rocky mountains and the Sierra Nevada to the Pacific coast.

The preliminary expeditions, which were followed by the migration of the Mormons into Utah during the years that succeeded the annexation of California, led to the establishment of the overland stage route and pony express. In 1861 congress chartered the Pacific telegraph, of which Edward Creighton of Omaha, was the chief projector and builder, and who, upon its completion, July 4th, 1862, located its terminus in Omaha. The Pacific telegraph was the forerunner of the Pacific railway.

While the Pacific telegraph was under construction, the Pacific railroad bill was pending in congress, and only four days before the electric spark flashed across the continent in one continuous circuit, the Pacific railroad act was signed by President Lincoln.

The twentieth anniversary of the breaking of ground at Omaha for the first railway across the continent occurs on the 21 of December, 1883.

That day marks an important epoch not only in the history of Omaha, but also in the history of the United States and the entire North American continent.

The Bee celebrates this anniversary by presenting an extended account of the exercises that took place on that day twenty years ago, in Omaha. We also publish a brief history of the gigantic undertaking, which has so materially developed the western country and caused a revolution in the commerce of the world.

The first steam railroad in the world was the Darlington & Stockton, in England, a distance of 37 miles, completed in 1825, and the first successful locomotive was the Rocket.

The first railroad in the United States was the Baltimore & Ohio, which was begun on the 4th of July, 1828. To Peter Cooper was due the construction of the first American locomotive, which was built for the Baltimore & Ohio, to show that steam might be adapted to carred roads. A trip made by Elliott's Mills, drawing an open car filled with the directors and others, was the first land-journey, by steam in America.

Between the years 1828 and 1833, in addition to the Baltimore several other roads were started, among the number being the Baltimore & Susquehanna, the Camden & Ayles, the New Castle & Frontstown, the Hudson & Mohawk, the Charleston & Augusta, the Boston & Providence, and the Boston & Lowell. These were the pioneer railroads of the United States. There was but little prospect of a great future connecting system; these roads were generally projected to supply an immediate necessity--to fill up a gap in an otherwise easily available line of transit. And even now it may be said that in general our present

great lines of communication with the Mississippi valley and the west are made up of parts originally having little relation to each other. Indeed, the American roads, especially in the west, have been gradually called into existence to supply a need which themselves have created, and which did not in the beginning exist. The Baltimore & Ohio and such a later date, the Pennsylvania roads connecting the Ohio with Baltimore and Philadelphia, the Metrola & Ohio, connecting that river with the Gulf of Mexico, may be called the first through lines. The necessity of connecting newly developed Pacific states with the older east gave rise to the most extensive and costly expansion of mountain-chain and desert, as the plains were called, for the determination of practicable routes, and finally to the rapid construction of the most remarkable through line of railway in the world in 1850.

THE FIRST PACIFIC RAILROAD BILL was introduced into congress by Senator Benton, of Missouri. The project of a Pacific railroad, however, had been discussed at times for several years before Senator Benton introduced the initial bill. The idea was not original with him, and it is safe to say that the idea was suggested to him by his son-in-law, John C. Fremont, the great American pathfinder, whose early explorations across the continent are matters of well-known history, who in 1842 explored the South Pass. Then followed several other expeditions through the vast west, and he surveyed a route for a great road from the Mississippi to San Francisco. After the close of the war of the rebellion he accepted himself to a great extent in forwarding the interests of a southern transcontinental railway. Incidentally it might be mentioned that had not the war of the rebellion occurred the first transcontinental railway would very likely have been by a southern route, probably starting from St. Louis. In 1851, Hon. S. Butler King submitted a plan which was universally approved. It was to the effect that the government should guarantee to any company or persons who would undertake and complete the road a net dividend of 5 per cent for fifty or one hundred years; the road to be constructed under the supervision of an engineer appointed by the government, the cost of the road not to exceed a certain sum, and the guarantee not to begin until the road was completed and equipped for operation. In 1853 54 nine routes were surveyed across the continent on various parallels, under the supervision of Jefferson Davis, then secretary of war. With each returning session of congress new benefits and peculiarities of these several routes were submitted, and the results were summarized in the interests of the extreme southern line. Finally it was demonstrated that the route along the north side of the Platte river was the most practicable. In June 1857, a number of distinguished gentlemen from various sections of the United States visited Omaha and conferred with parties having in view the construction of the Pacific road by way of the Platte valley and South Pass. The visiting party consisted of Col. Orr, of South Carolina; Gen. Robinson, John Covode and Mr. Bradshaw, of Pennsylvania; Judge Barlow, of Wisconsin; G. Curtis, of Iowa; Mr. Hosmer, of Ohio; Mr. Pierce, of Indiana, and others. They united in a recommendation to congress that such a reasonable grant of land and other aid be contributed as would prove a sufficient inducement to build the road, and they also recommended the Platte valley route. The project of a Pacific railroad was agitated at every session of the Nebraska territorial legislature, and it became one of the most cherished hopes of this new country.

During the session of the thirty-third congress a Pacific railroad committee was appointed, and on the 26th of January, 1858, the committee, through Senator G. W. Brown, of California, reported a bill which proposed to locate the eastern terminus of the road at some point between the Big Sioux and Kansas rivers. The bill provided for the donation of alternate sections of land on each side of the road, and \$12,500 per mile, the same to be adjusted upon the completion of every 25 miles, and \$25,000,000 should be reached; the amounts thus advanced to be returned in mail service and transportation of men and munitions of war; 5 per cent of the stock to be issued; the President of the United States to receive bids and locate the road. The bill, however, was killed in the senate. Another effort was made at the session of 1859-60, when a new bill was introduced by Mr. Curtis, of Iowa, which met with more favorable consideration, but with no better results.

On the evening of January 29th, 1859, a meeting of citizens of Omaha was held at the city hall, which had before a memorial was adopted which had been presented at a previous meeting by a committee consisting of William A. Gwyer, G. C. Merrill and A. D. Jones. This memorial was forwarded to Washington. This the matter rested until February 5th, 1862, when Mr. Rollins, of Missouri, by unanimous consent, introduced a bill to aid in constructing a railroad and telegraph line from the Missouri river to the Pacific ocean, and it was referred to the Pacific railroad committee. It was substantially the same as that introduced by Gen. Curtis at the previous session. On May 6th, 1862, the bill, with various amendments, was passed by the house by a vote of 79 to 49, and was then sent to the senate for concurrence.

Decisive action was delayed until June 20th, when by a vote of 35 to 5, the bill was adopted and sent back to the house. The bill, as amended by the senate, was then adopted by the house by a vote of 101 to 21. The bill was approved July 1, 1862, when it became a law. The bill provided among other things that quite a large number of persons, whose names were given, should be created into a body corporate and politic, in law and deed, by the name, style and title of THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY.

The persons named were from all sections of the north, the south being then in rebellion. Those from Nebraska were Gilbert G. Monell, Augustus Kountze, T. M. Marquette, W. H. Taylor and Alvin Saunders. At that time Sam. Dailey, brother of Hon. William Dailey, of Peru, Nebraska, was the Nebraska delegate in congress, and he it was who first named Augustus Kountze in connection with the original charter. Mr. Kountze afterwards becoming one of the government directors of the road. In addition to the persons above named the bill provided for the appointment of five commissioners; also for the laying out and constructing a continuous railroad and telegraph line from a point on the Missouri river and the north margin of the Platte valley in the territory of Nebraska to the western boundary of Nevada; and for the amount of the capital stock; for the appointment of commissioners and other officers; the election of directors; right of eminent domain; the conveyance, except mineral lands; the conveyance of lands upon completion of every forty consecutive miles; and the issue and pay-

ment of bonds therefor; the designation of the route; the time of completion for the main line being 1876. The land grant amounted to 12,000,000 acres or 10,000 square miles, in alternate sections within a breadth of twenty miles on each side of the road, and along its entire length.

An amendatory act directed that a meeting should be held in Chicago on the first Tuesday of September, 1862, the object being to complete the organization and the opening of books of subscription to the capital stock. The meeting was accordingly held, Gen. Curtis, of Iowa, presiding, and Robert F. Fennell, of Pennsylvania, and R. B. Hunter, of California, acting as secretaries. There were seventy-three commissioners present. The permanent organization of the convention was effected by the election of W. B. Ogden, of Illinois, as president, and H. W. Poor, of New York, as secretary. The great project was thoroughly discussed, and a committee of thirteen was appointed to advise and co-operate with the officers.

THE FORMAL ORGANIZATION of this national enterprise was projected on the 29th of October, 1863, in the city of New York. A board of directors was elected, and two government directors were appointed, as follows: George Opdyke, John A. Dix, T. C. Durant, E. W. Dunham, P. Clark, E. M. Gibson, J. D. Long, D. L. Lewis, T. M. Davis, A. G. Jerome, August Belmont, L. C. Clark, Charles Tuttle, Henry V. Poor, and George Griswold, New York city; J. V. L. Pruyn, Albany; E. H. Rosekrans, Glenn's Falls; A. A. Lowe, San Francisco; W. B. Ogden, and J. P. Tracy, Chicago; Nathaniel Thayer and C. A. Lambert, Boston; C. S. Bushnell, New Haven; J. H. Scranton, Scranton; J. Edgar Thompson, Philadelphia; Ebenezer Cook and John E. Henry, Davenport; H. T. McConch, Wilmington, Del.; Augustus Kountze, Omaha; John I. Blair, New Jersey; S. C. Pomeroy, Kansas; John A. Dix, president; T. C. Durant, vice president; John A. Cicer, treasurer; and Henry V. Poor, secretary.

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THE NEXT STEP was the selection of the eastern terminus of the road. At this time Omaha had no railroad whatever, but there were three lines being built across the state of Iowa towards this point. The Burlington & Missouri, now the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, was in operation for a hundred miles westward from Burlington. The Mississippi & Missouri, now the Chicago & Rock Island, had reached Grinnell. The Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska, now the Chicago & North-western, was running to Marshalltown. Owing partly to the favorable location of Omaha, which was the objective point of the above roads, it was decided to make this city the initial point of the Union Pacific railroad, and on Wednesday morning, December 2, 1863, Peter A. Day, the chief engineer, received a telegram from New York announcing that the President of the United States had fixed the initial point of the road at Omaha, and that the line of the state of Iowa, opposite Omaha, and directing him to formally break ground. This was an important piece of news for Omaha, and the citizens determined to inaugurate the work of the Union Pacific railroad on that very day, and appropriately celebrate the event.

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