

**OVERLAND THE PIONEER ROUTE**

General Dodge Tells of the Start of the Great Transcontinental Route.

TO CONNECT THE TWO COASTS

President Lincoln Favored the Road as a War Measure.

MILLIONS FOR BETTERMENT

During Last Seven Years Harriman Has Been Lavish.

ROAD MEANS MUCH TO OMAHA

Growth Has Been Coincident with the Growth of This City—Has Meant a Great Deal to Omaha in Many Ways.

From the standpoint of railroad accommodations Omaha is one of the country's most favored cities. Every day ten great trunk lines operate a multitude of trains in and out of the city and each of these great railroad lines holds a warm place in the hearts of Omaha's citizens. But for several reasons the Union Pacific has always been just a bit closer to the hearts of Omaha people than have the other roads and has always seemed to Omahans a bit more their road than has any of the others. This feeling is largely accounted for by two facts, one the prominent place which Omaha occupied in the events immediately preceding and connected with the building of this first great transcontinental railway to make this city a center for administering the immense business of the road and for building, equipping and repairing much of the vast accumulation of rolling stock which is the road's property. The history of the Union Pacific railroad is interwoven with that of the country itself and for each step in the development of the United States is found a corresponding development in the Union Pacific. The idea of building a railroad to connect the two coasts of the United States was not a late development, the project having early been proposed by Dr. Samuel Bancroft Barlow of Granville, Mass., who in 1834 first advo-

cated the construction of a road from New York City to the mouth of the Columbia river.

Robert Mills, however, in a speech in congress in 1840, in which he advocated the construction of the road, called attention to his design for connecting the Atlantic and Pacific with steam carriages which has been published, with other suggestions, in a work which he had compiled in 1819. In all probability the honor of having first suggested the road belongs to him, childless as it may seem, coming at a time when not a mile of railroad had been laid in the United States.

**Transcontinental Line Proposed.** For many years this idea of building a great line of railroad from Atlantic to Pacific was talked about and alternately advocated and opposed. Ignatius Webster, who never believed that any good could come from the Pacific coast, was one of its strongest opponents, while Senator Thomas H. Benton of Missouri never lost an opportunity to say a good word for the plan. It is probable, however, that a majority of the men in the public eye at that time were opposed to the scheme.

General Grenville M. Dodge it was who surveyed the line upon which the Union Pacific was built. He commenced his explorations in 1853 and continued to make them until 1861. Mr. Dodge had been connected in earlier days with the Rock Island railroad as it was built westward from Chicago and had assisted in establishing the terminals of the road in Council Bluffs. When these terminals were established General Dodge purchased eight acres upon which they were located and subdivided the tract, a portion being taken by the Rock Island interests and a portion by the citizens of the town. A part of the Rock Island's share of this tract fell into the hands of N. B. Judd, the general attorney for the road, a prominent Illinois republican and a personal friend of Lincoln, who purchased from him a portion of this interest.

In 1859 Mr. Lincoln visited Council Bluffs, then a frontier town of some 1,000 inhabitants, to inspect his holdings there, and it was while on this trip that he met General Dodge, just then returned from one of his surveying trips into the country west of the Missouri, and after a dinner at the old Pacific hotel sought out the clever surveyor and engaged him in earnest conversation about the western country, in which the Illinois statesman showed a marked interest.

The next time the two gentlemen met was in 1863. Meantime Lincoln had become chief executive and two years of the bloody civil war had been fought. Mr. Dodge at his country's call had given up the transit for the sword, and at this time was a brigadier general of volunteers and in command at Corinth. While there he received

an order from General Grant to report to the president in Washington. When he reached there he found that the president had not forgotten the conversation on the porch of the Pacific hotel in Council Bluffs and had called General Dodge to Washington to consult him as to the proper location for the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific railway, which under the act of congress of 1862 he was empowered to select.

**Competition for Road.** "There was great competition from all the towns along the Missouri for fifty miles above and below Council Bluffs," says General Dodge in his own narrative of the building of the road, "for the distinction of being selected as this initial point. I found Mr. Lincoln well posted in all the conflicting reasons covering such a selection, and we went into the matter at length and discussed the arguments presented by the different competing localities.

"It is a singular fact that while the United States had spent a great deal of money in exploration for a feasible line for the Pacific railroad, the government never had examined the natural routes along the forty-second parallel of latitude. All the surveys had been made and all the data obtained by private citizens connected with the Rock Island railroad, at the head of which was Henry Farnam of Connecticut. President Lincoln, after going over all the facts that could be presented to him, and from his own knowledge, finally fixed the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific railroad where our surveys determined the proper locality—at Council Bluffs, Ia.

**Lincoln Interested.** "After this discussion of the location he took up with me the question of building the road. The law of 1862 had failed to bring any capital or men to undertake the work, and I said to him that in my opinion private enterprise could not build the road. Mr. Lincoln said that the government had its hands full and could not undertake the work, but was ready to support any company to the fullest legal extent, and amend the law so as to enable such company to issue securities that would furnish the necessary funds.

"From Washington I went to New York, where I met the parties then connected with the Union Pacific railway, John A. Dix, Henry Farnam, T. C. Durant, George Francis Train and others, and informed them of the result of my visit and what President Lincoln had said. They were greatly encouraged, and immediately went to work on the preparation of the measure which was afterwards presented to congress and passed as the Union Pacific bill of 1864. Under this the road was built in some four years, although congress had allowed ten years for its construction, and

I feel that it was Lincoln's faith, energy and comprehensive grasp of what the building of the road meant to the United States that induced congress to pass liberal laws and made it possible to raise the funds to accomplish the work.

**Military Necessity.** "President Lincoln regarded the building of the road as a military necessity for the purpose of protecting and holding California in the union. The task of its construction proved too much for private individuals and the government gave help; it was too much of a task for one company and so the work was divided, the Central Pacific railroad to build eastward from Sacramento, Cal., and the Union Pacific westward from Omaha. Ground was first broken at Omaha on December 2, 1862, and the golden spike joining the two roads at Promontory Summit, Utah, was driven on May 10, 1869. Of the entire road, the Union Pacific had laid 1,136 miles of track and the Central Pacific 638 miles. In later years, the western terminus of the Union Pacific was fixed at Ogden, Utah, 1,008 miles from Omaha, but the entire line from Omaha to San Francisco is now one route, controlled by the Harriman System."

The story of the trials and triumphs connected with the building of this first transcontinental road are filled with interest and dramatic quality, the weary, tedious work through a hostile country, the exceeding difficulty of obtaining supplies, the marvelous engineering skill which was exhibited and the multitudes of discouragements and disappointments until victory finally crowned the efforts of these pioneer road builders at Promontory are incidents from real life which exceed the most brilliant efforts of the most skilled novelist.

The line of the Union Pacific proper, that old line which was first built from Omaha to Ogden, measures 1,008 miles and traverses that territory which, before the modern days of irrigation and dry farming was oftentimes known as "The Great American Desert." This was the desert, the home of wild beasts, of sage brush and of cactus. Some idea of what irrigation has done for this land may be gathered from the fact that millions of acres of land, apparently worthless, have advanced to \$1,000, and in some cases, as high as \$4,000 an acre. This increase is, of course, due to the astonishing yield of crops. And it is a curious fact that where there is sufficient water for irrigating purposes, better results are attained than


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