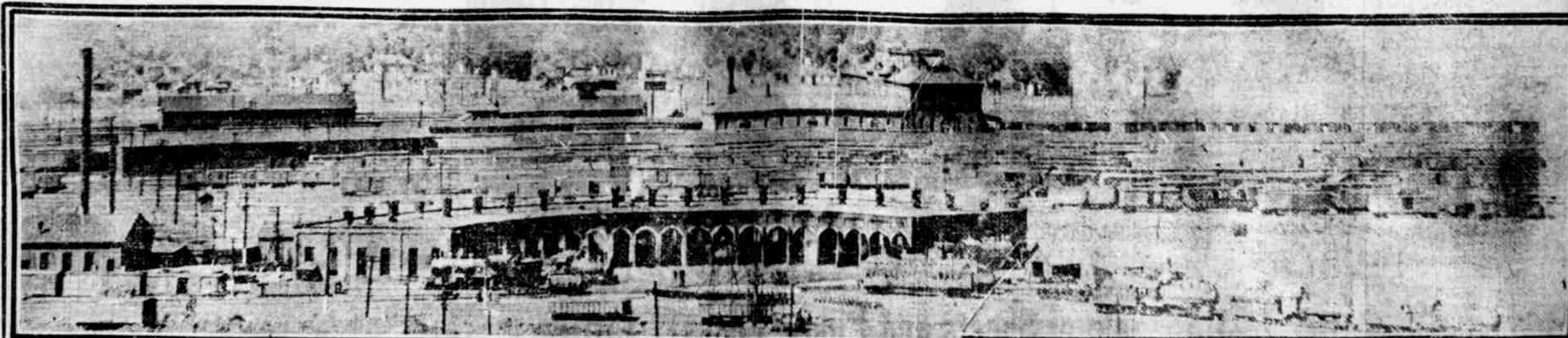


# "Andy" Traynor, Boss Baggage Man, Goes on Retired List



Panorama of Transfer Yards



Old Transfer Station - Council Bluffs

**A**NDREW TRAYNOR is his dress name. In Omaha, as well as to thousands of people in the west and throughout the country, he is just plain "Andy" Traynor. Since 1869 he has been an active member of the Union Pacific working force, but with the opening of the new year he went onto the retired list. J. C. Stubbs, the traffic manager, took his place on the pension roll the same day, with a very substantial retiring allowance.

"Andy" Traynor insists he has been busy dodging the acquaintance of the sheriff all his life, and does not want to talk about himself. Those who know him best say that kind of talk is just bluff, to protect him from the probe of the interviewer. Traynor likewise insists he is a graduate of Notre Dame university.

"I was one of the first graduates," he said, in a burst of confidence. "My father put me there to learn things when I was quite young, but not young enough. Yes, I graduated fast—through the back door a day or two after I entered. And I recall quite vividly that I never stopped running until I got to Chicago. When you hear about counting ties, put me in the counter class, for on that trip I was the real tally clerk."

Before taking up his entry into Chicago, or departure therefrom into the ranks of the struggling mass, we will have to go back a bit and set down why the youngster left Notre Dame, and how he came to go there. Born at Rome, New York, he grew up into a husky lad who hadn't any consuming love for school. The elder Traynor had an idea that education was to be cultivated for its own sake, but "Andy" could not be convinced. So he hiked away from home to a neighboring town and started in to learn to be a brewer—first job that offered. He had no suspicion at this time that he was born a master baggageman. Nor did he realize this important fact, either, when he quit brewing to go to work in a blacksmith shop. This was hardening, muscle-making exercise, and strong arms and a good grip came right handy when he quit the smithy to drive stage. It will be noted that young Traynor was moving pretty fast, and the stage driving stunt just suited his bent of mind.

"At first I had only a pair of plug horses," he said, "but later on I got a four-horse team, and drivers of four-horse stages would hardly speak to the two-horse men. A good money times since it has struck me that's the way all through life, more or less. We used to get tips of a copper or two or three coppers in those days from travelers, and often we would make a copper or two for posting letters written by people along the stage route. Postage stamps, cost three cents, and if we were given a 5-cent piece we were told to keep the change. I let my wages accumulate for a year almost, having no particular use for money beyond the tips that came my way."

It was when he drew his money and went home for a visit that his father decided he ought to go to Notre Dame, and after some argument the trip was made. At that time the students used to devote half the time to work and half to study. Whether it was the study hours or the workshop tasks that disagreed with his notions Mr. Traynor does not now remember. At any rate, to make sure he would not be put back in school he left Chicago very quickly after arrival, as fireman on a lake steamer. At Buffalo he was paid off in Michigan state currency, which was not popular in New York.

"That was the day of state banks," he said, "and the old Irishman who kept the hotel where I put up told me the Michigan money was no good. He went to the steamboat office with me and had the cashier give me New York shipplasters."

From Buffalo young Traynor took another boat to Detroit, shipping on as cabin boy. From there he went to a new railroad building from Owasso to Lansing, and it was from Michigan he enlisted for the war. During the war, he maintains, he had about as little trouble as any man, although he experienced all the dangers and aggravations incident to a soldier's life.

In 1869 Traynor began work for the Union Pacific. In the old depot on what is now the shop grounds he wrestled baggage strenuously, and from there went to what was known as "the cattle sheds," near where the flour distillery stands. Here

he had more money troubles, since as baggage agent he took in a good deal of cash, much of it late in the day and at night. To keep it safe he was in the habit of hiding the coin at different places in the freight shed, and he often had to carry home large sums, but none of it ever got away.

"I got so tired of fussing with that money," said Mr. Traynor, "that I finally insisted the company make different arrangements, and a cashier was provided." His anxiety can easily be understood when some facts are set out. In those days a good deal of excess baggage was carried and payment therefor was made in cash at the baggage room. Mr. Traynor says Lawrence Barrett, the actor, was the man who always carried the most excess baggage. One time he paid Traynor \$5,000 for his excess trunks, scenery and other paraphernalia.

"Nobody was exempt in those days," says the veteran. "Collis P. Huntington came through one trip, returning from Europe, and it cost him \$500 to get by our depot with his traps. Ben Holliday, the famous stage route man, had to pay \$250 on one trip, and Chief Justice Field, of the United States supreme court, gave up \$150 on a trip to the coast. John McCullough, the tragedian, carried with him on one trip excess weight that called for \$2,500, and Joe Murphy, the Irish comedian, had to put up \$3,000 in one bunch. One Chinese ambassador came through with oceans of presents for the big chaps in Washington, and paid \$5,000 to get his stuff cleared at Omaha. D. O. Mills, General Thomas and a good many other prominent men of those days contributed very substantial sums for excess baggage. To care for the money sometimes gave me much worry until a definite system was adopted."

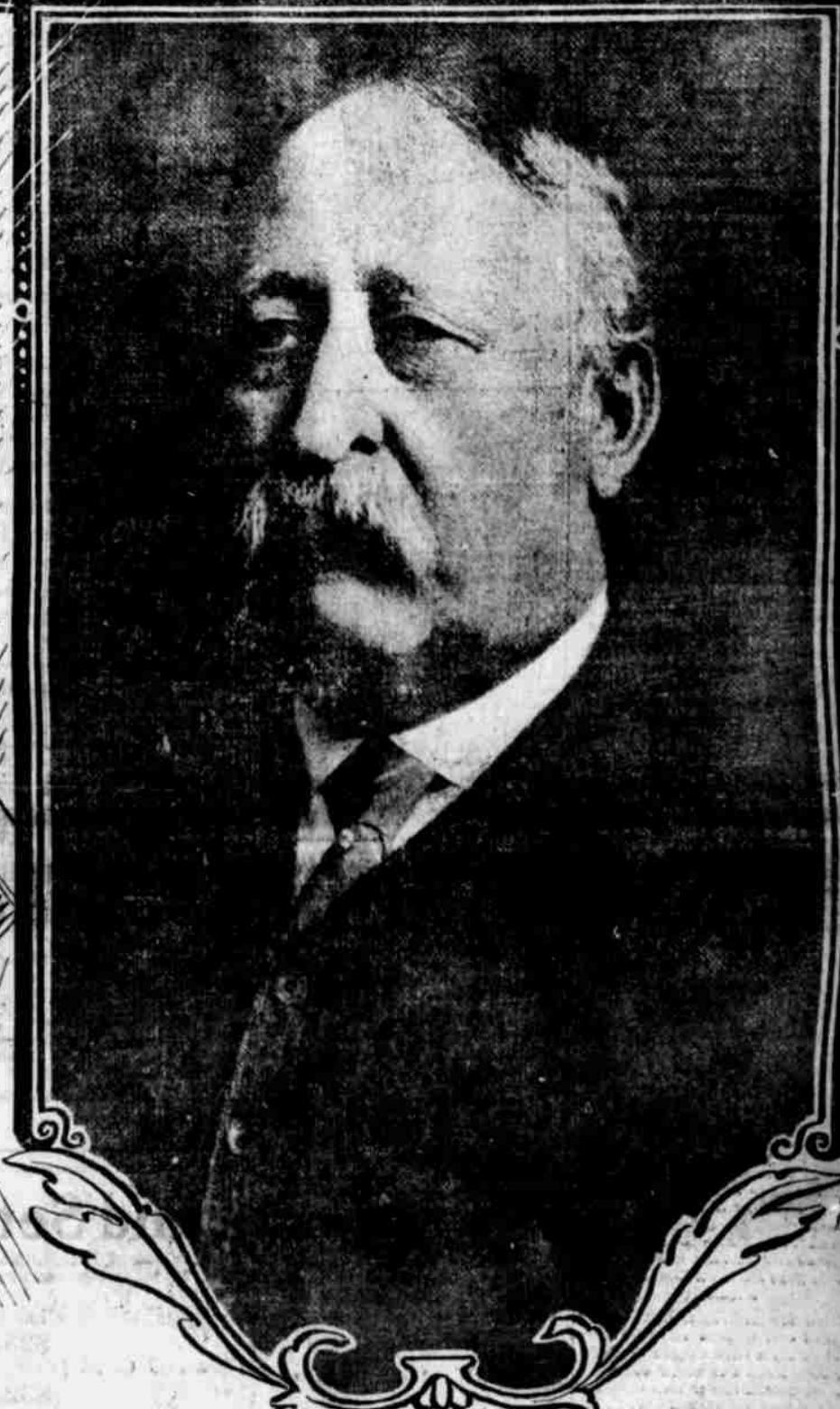
In the days before the old Transfer depot at Council Bluffs was built and occupied the general baggage agent sometimes went on trips with important trains. Mr. Traynor tells a story of one such trip that is worth repeating. In the winter of 1871 he was with a train that spent twenty-three days making the trip to Ogden. Thirteen days of this time the train was anchored in a snowbank some miles from Lookout, Wyo. Anticipating trouble, because of the state of weather, six ca-

gines were hitched to the train on leaving Laramie.

"One engine would have been as good as twenty under the circumstances," said Mr. Traynor. "The snow in the cut in which we were stalled was packed like sand on the seashore. One time when the engines were bucking into a small drift ahead the wheels ran up on the snow, and only the flanges made a mark on the packed surface. In anticipation of just such a contingency as arose, we had a car of supplies on the train and a car of coal. In the supplies were halibut, ham, bologna sausage, tea, crackers, ginger snaps, coffee, condensed milk, fresh beef, and most everything to make a meal. When we came to feeding the 161 passengers and crew we found cups had not been provided, so as fast as we opened canned stuff we hammered down the edges and made drinking cups of the cans. We found six new coal scuttles on board, and in these we made the coffee and carried it through the train. The scuttles were also used for carrying coal from the car ahead, and I'm going to tell you something I don't want much said about. We had to do considerable washing of clothes in those scuttles in the baggage car at night, but of course we cleaned them out good before we used them for coffee again, and no one was hurt. Our supply of water gave out, and we had to melt snow. This water made many of the passengers sick at first, but they all got used to it after a day or two."

"It was necessary to get about all of the passengers into two cars to save coal, and let me tell you they were a merry crowd in spite of the desperate situation in which they found themselves. We had two or three musicians along, and it was a common thing for a crowd to climb up on the snowbank and have a dance. Two eastern editors were the life of the party, and the experience gave them subjects for stories later. A butcher from Sacramento kicked on his peak one day, and he was forced to leave the train and walk to a construction train ahead and stay there. We cooked the steaks on shovels pushed through the stove door, and naturally, it was hard to get every steak just right. That butcher was too particular, but he didn't win anything by it."

When the Union Pacific took possession of the

ANDREW TRAYNOR  
General Baggage Master Union Pacific - Retired

Transfer station at Council Bluffs in 1878 the days of glory began for General Baggage Agent Traynor and his men. "Andy" took so much pride in that building, the greatest of its day in the west, that when any subordinate let a trunk fall with too much force on the floor he was severely reprimanded, if not dismissed, "for damaging the company's property." That was one thing Traynor would not stand for. He believed trunks were made to carry things in, not to smash baggage room floors.

"I saw the settlement of the west beyond the Missouri river through that old Transfer building," he said. "And I also saw the United States mail going through our hands increase from 750 pounds a day, when we were on this side of the river in the early days, to the point where over 100 tons went out on one train."

Mr. Traynor is not exaggerating about the great flow of people through the old Transfer building to the lands farther west. Only recently Harper's Weekly printed a special article devoted to this building, which was spoken of as "the gateway of the west." Discussing Omaha, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Kansas City as gateways, the writer in Harper's said:

"Of all these busy gateways, Omaha was the first to attain a pre-eminence that she has never really yielded. In other days men talked of 'St. Jo', Missouri, and of Atchison and Leavenworth in Kansas, but when the miracle of a railroad across the high plains had been worked Omaha was made the terminus. In course of time other roads came to join it, spinning steel strands after steel strand across the face of the land and back to such great traffic centers as St. Louis and Chicago; forward up to the base of the eternal fastnesses, and, finally, through the infinite genius and patience of men, over them and on to the master of all seas—the Pacific."

"Council Bluffs is the terminus of Omaha, you might say—the beginning of the beginning. A famous supreme court decision of 1875 made it both

the legal and actual terminus of the Union Pacific railroad. This decision was the result of a lawsuit that became historic by virtue of the fact that this was the first time the government had ever sought to direct the operation of a railroad—although it came to pass that it was by no means the last time. But the Union Pacific accepted the situation gracefully, building at Council Bluffs the great Transfer depot that was considered one of the architectural triumphs of that day. The people of Council Bluffs and of Omaha drove across the ice-bound Missouri on a winter's day and held a love feast in celebration on an island in midstream. And as for the railroad, it has been compensated abundantly for its graceful acquiescence in the fact that it today possesses in the three miles from Council Bluffs to Omaha one of the most profitable stretches of track in the land. Its tolls from the Missouri bridge, as they roll in from the coffers of tenant roads, amounts to almost a million dollars a year."

"Andy" Traynor, since the days when he threw baggage in the old sheds near the ferry landing, has seen the pioneer road grow to proportions commensurate with the vast country it serves; has witnessed tens of thousands of west-moving settlers, investors and victors pass through its successive depots; has seen the real headquarters of the big railroad permanently established in Omaha. He has gone with it through good years and bad, ever active and faithful, and worked his way up the line until, when he quit, his office force was a large company in itself and his office was palatial in appointment as compared with the days when he began his service. He goes on the pension roll of the road honored and remembered in substantial form, with troops of friends and a reputation as man and citizen that must recompense him in full measure for the struggle and striving of the years after he graduated from Notre Dame in his own seek-your-fortune fashion.

This week Mr. Traynor and his wife leave for California to spend the winter months, but Omaha will continue to be their permanent home.