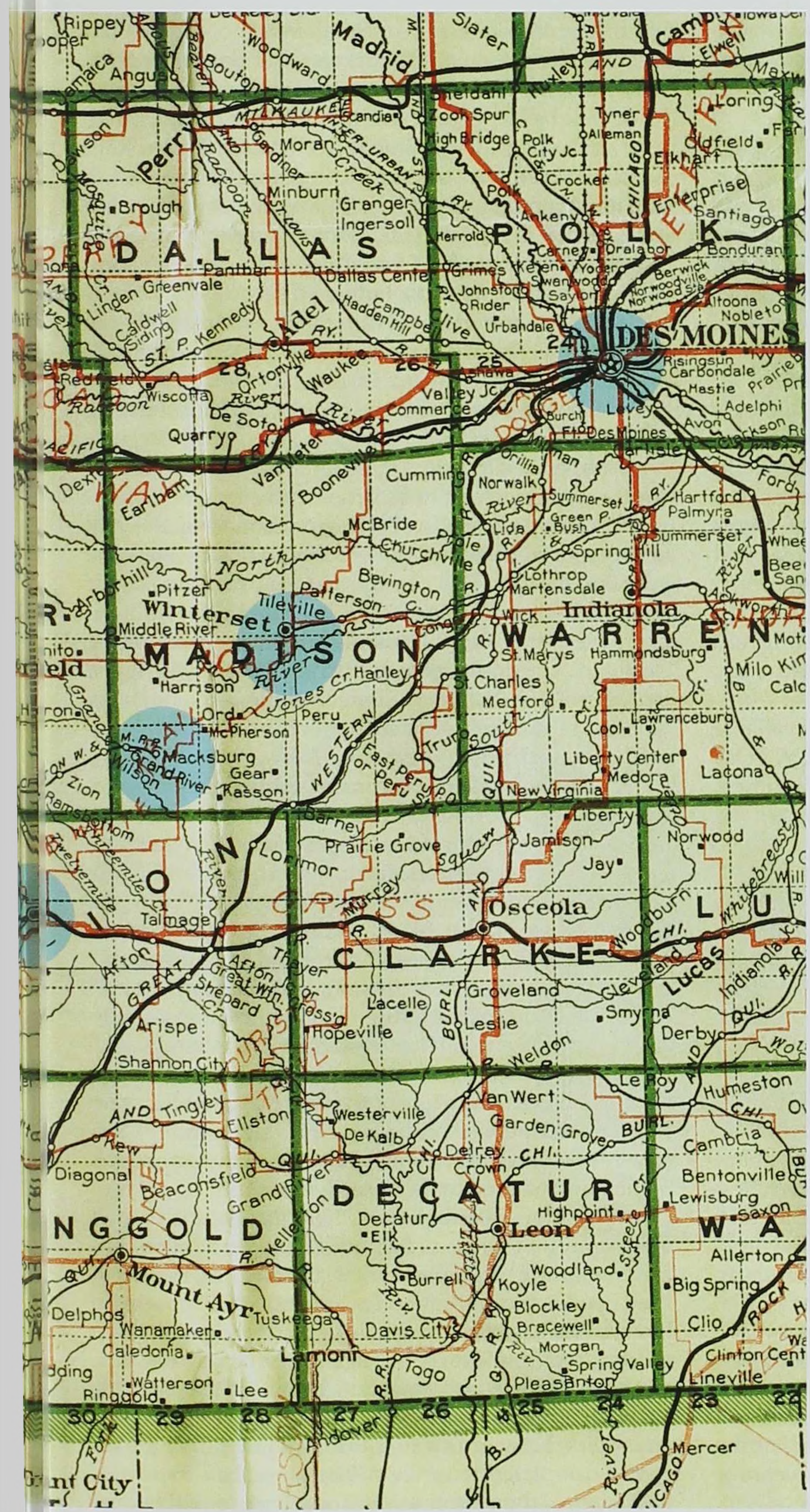
Iowa's Brightest Railway Project

The Creston, Winterset & Des Moines Railroad, 1907–1920

CLASON'S GUIDE MAP OF IOWA, CIRCA 1920 (SHSI: IOWA CITY). COPY PHOTO BY CHARLES SCOTT



Plans to build a railway connecting Creston and Winterset to Des Moines were backed by community leaders in the village of Macksburg, which lay midway between the two county seats. (Four blue dots added for clarity.)

by H. Roger Grant

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than rates charged by steam carriers. There were also perceived advantages for managers and investors, including the possibilities of selling excess electricity to commercial and residential customers.

The nation experienced two great bursts of interurban electric railway construction, 1899–1903 and 1905–1908. Although Iowa's interurban trackage was less than 500 miles in 1910, the number of passengers exceeded seven million. In Iowa most interurbans ran north and south, interchanging with major steam lines that ran east and west. By 1907, Des Moines had electric interurbans operating to the east, north, and northwest. But connections to the southwest were nonexistent.

Movers and shakers in counties directly southwest of Des Moines started pushing in 1907 for a 65-mile interurban. Besides serving Des Moines, the line would connect two county seats—Creston in Union County, and Winterset in Madison County—and small towns along the way. Arguments for its feasibility seemed convincing. Success at finding the money, however, would take five years.

A Creston civic leader made the case that a railroad was needed. He stated that the "total tributary population" of 116,000 produced 250,000 tons of crops, livestock, and other commodities that were "available for haul, either long or short." Although the CW&DM was estimated to cost $1.8 million [over $37.5 million in today's dollars], the *Creston Advertiser-Gazette* claimed already in August 1007 that "we have . . . deeds and contracts over eighty per cent of the right of way already secured." In addition, Creston, Winterset, and Macksburg had awarded franchises, allowing the railroad to operate in the towns. "This road, when constructed will be one of the biggest payers in this section of the country. . . . People of this vicinity have hitherto patronized Omaha and St. Joe and other points south in preference to coming to Des Moines."

Enthusiasm was particularly strong in and about the village of Macksburg, halfway between Creston and Winterset. "Some of the people around Macksburg are very much elated over the prospects of the interurban railroad," noted the Macksburg reporter for the *Winterset Madisonian* in January 1908. "They know personally of the benefits the people have in sections where there are trolley lines." Added this writer, "Liberal subscriptions [pledges and contributions] are being offered. . . . A railroad through this section will benefit every farmer within five miles of the line, to the extent of one dollar per acre every year for the next twenty years."

If the road were to be more than a "hot-air" proposition, major financial support was mandatory. Backers took heart in February when the press revealed that F. M. Hubbell, a prominent Des Moines businessman who controlled the profitable Des Moines Union Railway, indicated that he would pledge to invest $5,000, and that members of the Des Moines Commercial Club expected to raise $250,000. Winterset interests agreed to buy $30,000 worth of securities, and Creston's commitments would be "substantial." "PROGRESS, ADVANCEMENT, MODERNISM" became the slogan. According to the press, Leslie M. Shaw, former Iowa governor and U.S. Secretary of the Treasury in the Theodore Roosevelt administration, endorsed the project, and Parkersburg "capitalist" C. C. Wolf planned to commit $60,000. Newspaper readers in Union and Madison counties surely expected "dirt to fly" momentarily.

But efforts to sell construction bonds of the still unincorporated enterprise were failing. A recent state law, the Peterson Act, designed to tighten the sale of securities, deterred investors. Moreover, the fall-out from the Panic of 1907 made bonding houses more cautious. Creston attorney Richard Brown believed that these two factors "will necessitate a much larger amount of money being subscribed by the people locally than was previously asked for."

CW&DM backers now rethought their construction strategy, "seriously considering the road in sections, either building from Des Moines to Winterset, or from Creston to Macksburg," explained the *Creston Semi-Weekly Advertiser*, "the plan being to complete the road in two or three years." Individuals who had already subscribed to stock would need to agree to this new arrangement since the original proposition had called for building the entire road at one time.

News worsened. "The Creston Road Is Abandoned," announced the *Des Moines Capital* in March. Even though "the project was practicable," the financial obstacles were huge. Subscriptions had lagged, and franchises in Creston, Macksburg, and Winterset were about to expire. Some doubted they could be easily renewed.

Supporters reemphasized that "this road is owned and controlled by your own neighbors and fellow citizens who are . . . determined to build the road. All they need is the continued loyal support of those who have befriended the undertaking in the past. We have not been talking much noise, but we have been quietly and persistently at work." By July, Judd & Ross, a Chicago-based firm that had financed and built several interurbans and steam shortlines (including the recently completed ten-mile Albia Interurban Railway), had agreed to participate. "A survey gang will be put

to work soon to complete the survey commenced and well progressed about a year ago and as the facilities of the Judd & Ross Company will permit construction work."

Unfortunately, Des Moines interests had by now retreated. Instead, local supporters would lead the project: Robert Brown of Creston as president; Jerry Wilson, Macksburg, first vice president; and M. E. Harris, Winterset, second vice president. "The new organization has nothing to do with the old organization, which has been wholly abandoned." Plans had changed as well. A Des Moines destination was no longer an immediate objective, and construction would be in two stages: first, between Creston and Macksburg, and later, between Macksburg and Winterset. Perhaps most newsworthy was the announcement that the CW&DM would be a conventional steam rather than an electric road. Even if constructed to the cheapest standards, an electric interurban involved not only rails on a graded right-of-way or alongside a public road, but also an overhead and pole line stretching over the entire route, electrical substations, and a source of electricity, supplied either by existing power companies or from the railroad's own generating plant. A steam road, though, could be built inexpensively, perhaps for as little as $6,000 per mile. Used locomotives and cars could be bought at reasonable prices.

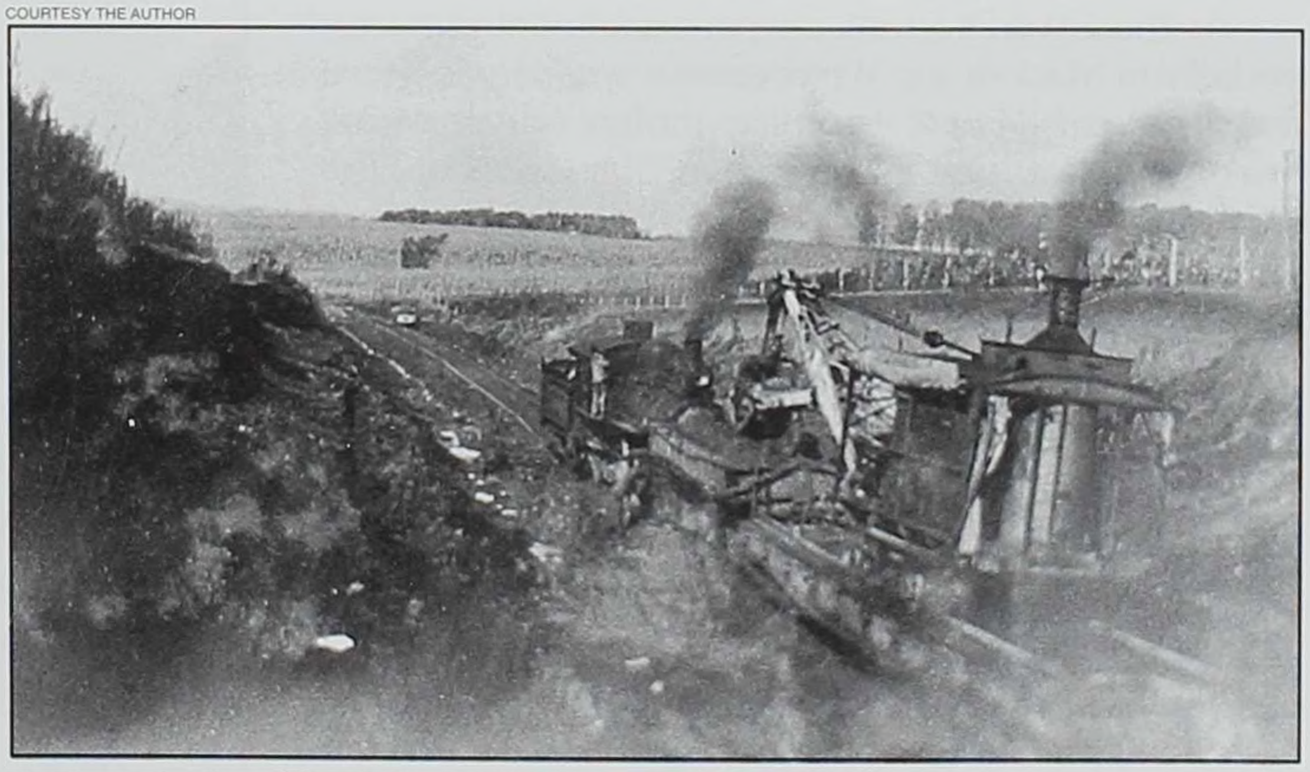
The local press kept pressure on the citizens. "Nearly every farmer [who will be] benefitted by the road has agreed to subscribe to stock." Stock solicitors were now seeking investors in adjoining townships along the route. In nearby counties, the press remarked that another shortline, the Atlantic Northern & Southern Railroad, had been "entirely paid for by farmers and business men in towns and country along the route." But it was a full two years before the CW&DM backers filed articles of incorporation with the Iowa secretary of state. Authorized with a capital stock of $500,000, the company finally had the right to operate "in whole or in part by steam, electricity, gasoline, or any other motive power which may be adopted by [the] board of directors." In the next month, October 1911, voters in two townships along the route overwhelmingly approved a 5 percent property tax increase. Surely a combination of stock subscriptions and tax monies would make bonds attractive to investment houses, thus completing the financing.

The new year began with news that "Macksburg is about to get a railroad—a hope deferred from time to time during the past forty years." In the time-honored spirit of boosterism, the *Madisonian* added that "if the road is built [from Creston] to Macksburg, it is certain to be built on to Winterset and Des Moines."

But all was not certain. The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad ("Rock Island"), like the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy ("Burlington"), did not want the CW&DM built, for fear they would lose "a valuable slice of territory." These railroads pressured bonding houses in New York and Chicago to avoid CW&DM bond offerings. Until bonds were sold, stock subscriptions were out of reach.

Shifting their target to mostly Iowans, the CW&DM formed a subsidiary firm, the Iowa Bond and Security Company, that marketed the 6 percent gold first-mortgage securities. Some prospective investors were skeptical; several Iowa steam shortlines and interurbans were experiencing financial reversals. But eventually, with $135,00 raised from stock and taxes, and $144,000 generated from bonds, the CW&DM let the construction contract in August 1912.

COURTESY THE AUTHOR



A thorn in the side of the CW&DM was the need for a deep cut immediately west of Macksburg. A local photographer captured one of the railroad's two American Standard-type locomotives working with the company-owned steam shovel in 1913, probably several months after the line opened officially.

To qualify for the tax monies, though, the railroad had to be completed by the stroke of midnight on December 31, 1912. This was a daunting task, especially since the territory to be spanned was hardly flat as a floor, necessitating considerable earthwork and one huge cut. Quickly, the 21-mile route between Creston and Macksburg turned into a construction zone. Steam traction engines and earth-moving equipment shaped the right-of-way. Laborers unloaded rails, ties, and other track materials in Creston, Orient, and Spaulding. Carpenters built three wooden-deck bridges, including a substantial span over the meandering Grand River. Graders faced an especially steep ascent coming out of the river valley; reported to be a 5 percent incline, it would perhaps be the steepest piece of trackage in Iowa. A massive clay ridge also lay immediately west of Macksburg. Contractor C. B. Judd traveled to Chicago to acquire used rolling stock. He found two American Standard (4-4-0) steam locomotives, a large steam shovel, and several cars for hauling dirt—all essential for work on the difficult terrain near Macksburg. He also acquired a passenger coach and a few freight cars.

As the CW&DM took shape, excitement grew, especially in Macksburg. Well before townspeople heard the shrill whistle of a steam locomotive (albeit a used one), they read ecstatic promises of prosperity. The local press described Macksburg (population 197 in 1910) as "the farthest from competition of any town in the state, being thirteen miles from Lorimor, seventeen miles from Winterset, twenty miles from Creston, and twenty-two miles from Greenfield. . . . In consequence of this large territory, and being located in the richest farming district in Iowa, it is safe to say that it will be a town of several thousand within the next two years." E. G. Barker, who owned 160 acres adjoining Macksburg, vigorously promoted the sale of 150 lots at a public auction scheduled for mid-November. The Fullerton Lumber Company, which operated a chain of yards in western Iowa, also entered local land transactions. "With three lumber yards," a Macksburg citizen commented, "it looks as if one could certainly get lumber at the right price."

Workers—sometimes numbering 200 in day and night shifts—pushed the steel rails forward, aided by "splendid weather." By December 20, the track-laying gang was five miles from West Macksburg, technically within the town's corporation limits. The last few miles were built to the barest standards—no grading was done and only the surface soil was removed before laying the track. Helped by this drastic shortcut, the first train arrived at the hastily installed West Macksburg siding at 4:30 p.m. on New Year's Eve. There was no driving of a golden spike or celebrating by a local crowd—only relief that after five long years, rails had finally reached greater Macksburg.

On January 4, 1913, CW&DM directors and others proudly rode the first passenger train from Macksburg to Creston. And after a favorable inspection by an examiner for the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners, the CW&DM become a bona fide common carrier. By June 30 the company had spent $235,000 on its physical plant and rolling stock, or approximately $11,000 per mile, somewhat less than an average contemporary shortline in the Midwest.

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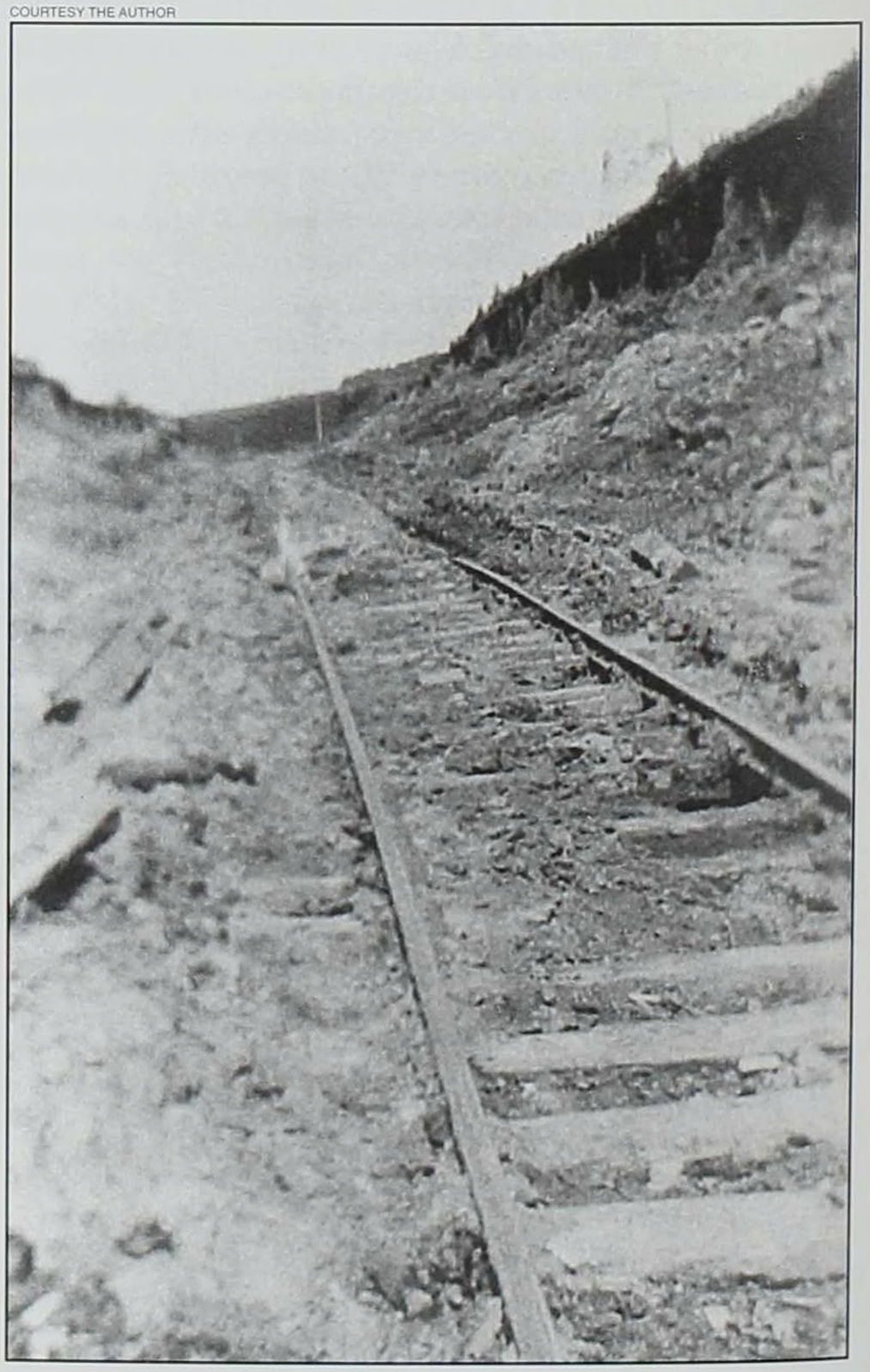
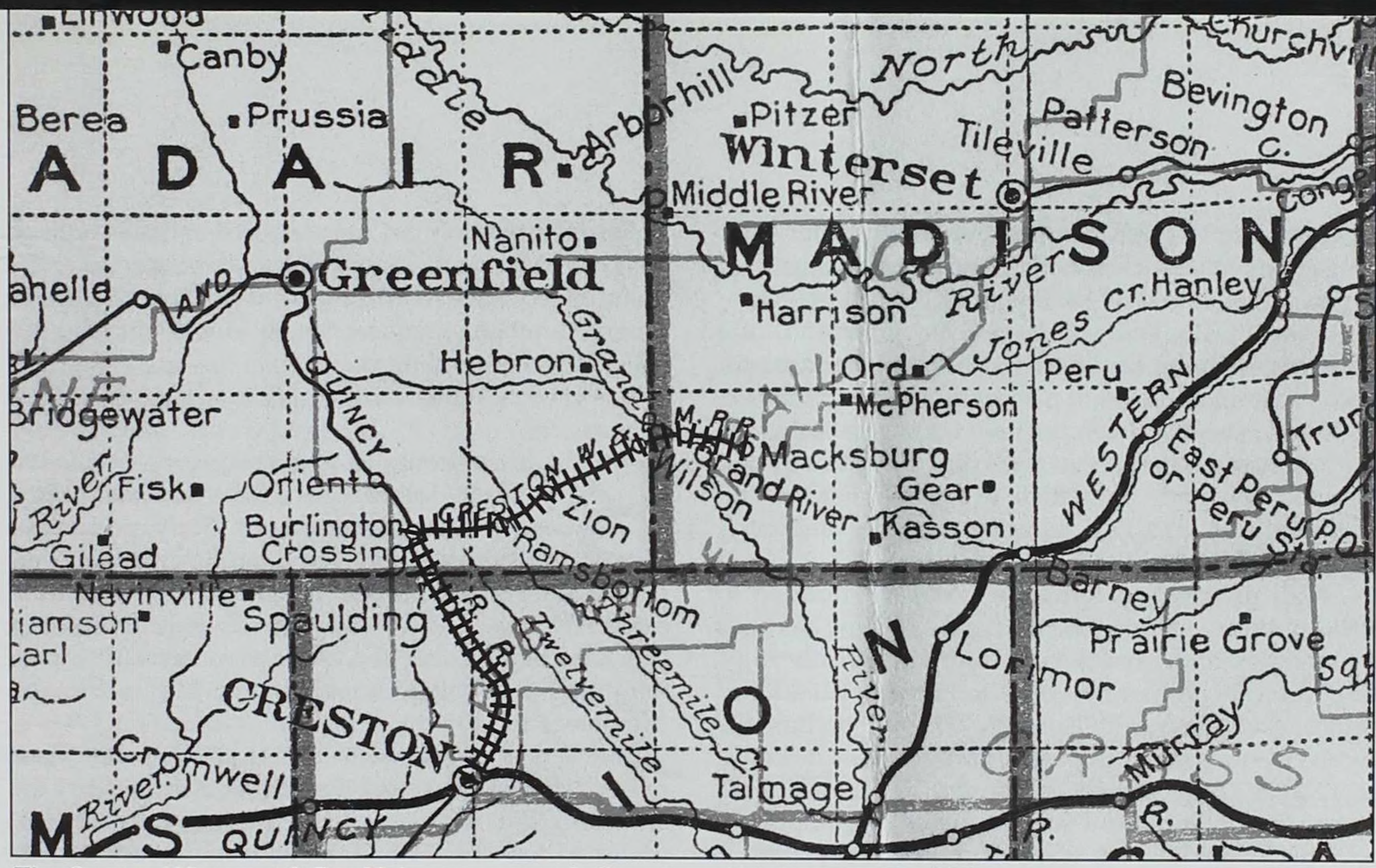


By mid-1913 track-layers had installed the ties and rails through the West Macksburg cut. Most of the steel used on the CW&DM weighed either 60-pound or 65-pound to the yard, typical of rail selected for shortlines in the Midwest.



The Creston, Winterset & Des Moines was never built as far as Winterset or Des Moines, but rather ended at Macksburg. (Tracks have been added to this map to indicate the final route.)

The CW&DM ran two daily "mixed" trains (freight cars with an attached coach for mail, express, and passengers) between Creston and Macksburg. Passengers expecting the 21 miles to fly by were surely disappointed. The trip took two hours, with stops along the way at Spaulding, Burlington Crossing, Ramsbottom, Zion, and Wilson. Speeds averaged about ten miles per hour. What a Creston journalist had proclaimed as "Iowa's brightest railway project" was hardly a showcase for modern railroad technology. The final mile into Macksburg was still not finished, nor was the town's depot, turntable, and engine house. Not long after the Creston depot was finished, fire—fueled by barrels of oil stored inside—reduced the wooden structure to ashes.

If there was a grand opening of the CW&DM, it took place a few weeks after the fire. Commercial interests in Macksburg undoubtedly wished to show that their community was full of "live wires." At their invitation, Creston's Boosters Club, Business Men's Club, and Concert Band made a special trip over the CW&DM. Passenger coaches were packed; one was reserved for "the ladies." Perhaps sponsors anticipated a raucous group of males.

Almost immediately, the CW&DM became the transportation artery for Macksburg and the surrounding countryside. Cattle and hogs, destined for Swift & Company in Creston and packing plants elsewhere, moved over the somewhat rickety tracks. Inbound shipments brought lumber and cement, hardware and farm machinery. The figures for total volume carried are not known, but the railroad probably handled 300 to 400 cars during its first year of operation.

Eventually several grain elevators and lumber yards appeared at trackside in Macksburg. Livestock pens were built in Macksburg, Zion, and other designated stations en route to Creston. While the company's steam shovel scoured out the big cut at West Macksburg, crews tamped the ballast (mostly dirt rather than gravel) and attended to other maintenance associated with a freshly graded right-of-way. Not only was the railroad burdened with the steep ascent east of the Grand River, it also had to deal with the not-so-friendly Burlington, its only interchange partner. The company forced the CW&DM to maintain the expensive crossover near Spaulding. More troubling were rate divisions on freight traffic. The Burlington refused to grant the shortline a favorable percentage of receipts derived from these inter-line movements. Residents blamed the Burlington's "lack of good will" for the shortline's growing financial woes. The carrier lacked any real bargaining power, and the only recourse was to file complaints with the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners and the Interstate Commerce Commission.

Discussion had resumed about extending the tracks 17 miles to Winterset. The hilly terrain would

be expensive to cross, but backers thought that shipping commercial rock outside Winterset alone justified expansion. Even though the Rock Island monopolized that traffic and would resist competition, rate divisions with the Burlington and Rock Island might become more attractive if a second outlet could be established. This had been the case for several other recently opened shortlines in Iowa. But the balance sheet damped down any immediate expansion. For the first six months of 1913, net operating revenues amounted to a paltry $513.11.

With prospects gloomy, the company decided to seek court protection from creditors. "The line has been in operation under many vicissitudes practically all its life," a local chronicler wrote. On June 25, 1914, longtime backer Clarence Wilson of Macksburg became the receiver and general manager. Hopeful that he could reorganize the company, he raised additional funds from stockholders, sold several pieces of equipment, and improved the road. Track workers attended to soft spots that plagued the line during wet weather and replaced rotten ties with ties treated with creosote. In a creative move to supplement mail and passenger service, the company acquired a "motor car." This piece of equipment is a mystery, but perhaps it was a small gasoline-powered chain-drive vehicle. At least on paper, the twice-daily motor car offered superior service over the mixed trains; according to the schedule, it averaged speeds nearly two times as fast as earlier runs. But it operated only on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays, the poky mixed train, which handled the more lucrative freight shipments, made a single round trip between Creston and Macksburg.

PROVIDED BY AUTHOR: RALPH BREAKENRIDGE COLLECTION

Several laborers take time to accommodate a photographer while they complete a cement floor for a storage building near the Fullerton Lumber Company yard in Macksburg. A boxcar immediately adjoins the construction site.

But losses continued. A staggering net deficit of $16,000 for 1914 faced the company. Yet it hardly squandered money. Sixty percent of expenditures involved payroll, but when compared to larger roads, wages for the 31 employees were extremely low. The 20 trackmen averaged $166 per year, and the three section foremen earned $220. Trimming the workforce did not help. On July 1, 1916, the company shut down.

Backers and patrons were not about to lose their railroad. Boosterism remained strong, reinforced by the launching that summer of the *Macksburg Independent* under editor Charles Saiser. Although area entrepreneurs had established an "Auto Passenger and Freight Service to and from Macksburg and All Neighboring Points," the local citizenry didn't consider it a substitute for a freight-carrying railroad. In early September, about 50 men gathered at the home of CW&DM receiver Clarence Wilson and voted unanimously to push for solicitations to reopen the road. At least $18,000 was needed. By late September, all but $1,600 had been raised. "There are men, men of ample means who ought to be interested in this project to take care [of] all that is yet needed," chastised Saiser's *Independent*. "But there are some folks who are always willing to go coasting if some one else will pull the sled to the top of the hill. Yes, they are even willing to ride up the hill."

Within weeks, however, Saiser rejoiced: "STOP—LOOK OUT FOR THE CARS!" The funds had been raised and "train service will be established just as rapidly as the track and equipment will warrant." He continued to agitate for a connection with either the Great Western, whose Des Moines/Kansas City artery ran east of Macksburg, or the Rock Island and to have, within at least three years "a line of railroad through Macksburg that will be worthy of the name and a credit to all."

Keeping the CW&DM alive remained a largely com-

munity affair in Macksburg. "Last Friday morning a hurry call was sent out for help to get the C. W. & D. M. track repaired some so that the old 7 spot might be taken to Creston for some repairs," Saiser reported in early November. "A number of our town folks responded and by night the track was in shape so that early Saturday morning the engine was started out. Owing to dirt covered crossings and pasture fences across the track, it was not until about five o'clock that Creston was reached."

Although officially reborn on December 1, 1916, the CW&DM remained in receivership and now provided only freight service. Expenses for 1917 were twice as high as revenues. Although America's entry into the Great War increased the need for railroads, the CW&DM continued to hemorrhage red ink. The district judge who had overseen the bankruptcy in 1914 now warned the receiver that "the road must not cause any more indebtedness" and that it "had better sell to the highest bidder." A sale made sense; wartime conditions had escalated scrap metal prices. But in the end the judge bowed to the receiver's commitment of additional money to replace 3,000 rotted ties and to repair No. 7, the remaining locomotive. The *Independent* called the commitment "courageous loyalty."

The little railroad limped along, its ups and downs noted in the Macksburg *Independent*. "The CW&DM experienced a delay in traffic this week due to a derailment last Wednesday, which tied up the services until Wednesday of this week," reported the newspaper in one issue. "After working until night to get the cars back on the rails, the crew started for Creston and after a few miles travel the tender became derailed. Altogether the track repairs and putting the rolling stock on track again used up the major portion of the week." To haul grain, livestock, and much-need coal during wartime rationing, the railroad occasionally borrowed a locomotive from the Burlington.

The tangled saga of the CW&DM was approaching its end. In November 1918, the receiver, with court approval, sold the mortgage for $30,000 to Ralph Beaton and Sigmund Ornstine, junk dealers from Columbus, Ohio. They, in turn, quickly peddled the track and rolling stock to Harris and Greenberg of Chicago, another salvage firm. In early December junkers began lifting the rails in Macksburg.

Former CW&DM president Robert Brown brought suit in district court to restrain Harris and Greenberg from dismantling the line. He argued that the property could be operated at a profit; that stockholders, including taxpayers, had not been fairly compensated for their investments; and that the line had not been legally abandoned. By the time the judge issued a restraining order, about six miles of track had been removed. The heaviest steel rails went to Japan. The used ties were offered to area residents.

of my ability, I depend on the prompt payment of accounts due me for the settlement of my own bills. I, therefore, solicit your early attention to your account due me. Dr. Wallace. adv.

Goblin Soap for toilet and bath Shell's.

Red Cheeked apples at Herren's Grocery. adv.

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C.W.&D.M.RR
SEE Mr. C. LAMM
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we need ours.
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Extracts all sizes—at

Ball Brand, Wool, Arm
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Shampoo with Canthrox

Foley's Cough Syrup,

Get the Genuine and Avoid Waste
MORGAN'S
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In Every

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Mrs. F. A. Bonham
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MARKET GROCERY SPECIAL

Along with shoes, soap, and apples, used railroad ties from the CW&DM were advertised in a local newspaper.

The legal battle raged into 1920, summarized by *Des Moines Sunday Register*: "The state of Iowa [in 1919] started mandamus proceedings on complaint of various parties. Later the attorney general of the state joined the plaintiffs. Various applications to various judges were made. Some were granted; others were denied. Finally the attorney general secured a restraining order and a trial was held. The state was beaten, but on Jan. 20, 1920, it appealed the case."

By summer the legal wrangling stopped. The Iowa Supreme Court allowed the track dismantling to proceed.

A decade or two earlier, speculation about railroad building and line revitalization might have been reasonable. But by now, automobiles were replacing trains. Sales of new and used autos rose, commercial truckers transported freight, and roads steadily improved. In 1911 Ed Smith, editor of the *Madisonian*, had already sensed the revolution. "Will the motor car replace the passenger coach as a means of travel?" he asked. "If one had put this question ten years ago, his sanity might have been questioned. Today there is enough of argument in favor of the motor car to make the question a live one and there is no doubt but that the automobile has already cut deeply into the passenger receipts of the railroad companies." Smith added, "Dirt auto roads are being built and kept in good condition between the principal cities of Iowa and surrounding states. With the auto perfected and the highways further improved, the use of motor cars may soon become the ordinary mode of travel."

Those who had championed the CW&DM for 13 years had failed to grasp economic realities. It had always been a woebegone operation. In 1915, a local writer granted that "Macksburg has a railroad," but added, "Whether it always will have one or not is, as Rudyard Kipling says, another story." The shortline never connected to Winterset, and neither rebuilding nor extending it made sense. If there had been enough business in Macksburg and Zion, the Burlington would have acquired the several miles from near Spaulding to maintain service. The neighboring Great Western focused on main stems and hardly wanted to build and buy what would never become more than a minor appendage, even if it siphoned some freight traffic away from the Burlington in Creston. There was no reason for the Rock Island to buy the remains of the CW&DM and build connecting trackage. These three trunk carriers faced their own major problems, highlighted by adjustments to the end of federal wartime controls.

Sentimentality, as well as boosterism, seemed to have kept hope alive for the 21-mile line. On a March day in 1918, Saiser reported bittersweetly that "a joyful sound was heard here this morning. It was the simple toot, toot of the old 7 spot pulling out for Creston." Even after the junk dealers had bought the mortgage, Saiser decreed, "We are not ready to give up." "Cheer up! Every cloud has a rainbow." Many villagers and farmers showed a genuine love of their railroad, affectionately nicknaming the CW&DM the "Crazy Willie & Dandy Molly." The *Independent* was still pleading in 1920: "Do Your Best to Get Our Little Willie Home Again."

Macksburg survived the dismemberment of the CW&DM. About the same time, the *Independent* folded and a lumber yard and the oldest mercantile store closed, but other local businesses continued. The population never skyrocketed from 200 to "several thousand" as predicted in 1912, but for decades the population held steady.

In recent years the town lost most retailing and service activities to businesses in Creston and Winterset. Its population hovers at 100. Although the CW&DM has been abandoned for nearly 90 years, those with sharp eyes can spot the old brick-lined well near the Wilson station and some rotting bridge supports. A cement sidewalk still leads to the depot site in Macksburg, and portions of the grade are visible across pasture land. Only a few traces exist of what was once considered "Iowa brightest railway project." ❖

NOTE ON SOURCES

Important sources for this article include town and county histories and atlases; newspapers for Creston, Des Moines, Macksburg, and Winterset; and the author's interviews with Georgena Breakenridge and Ralph Breakenridge, Macksburg, Iowa, August 24, 2007. Broader sources include *A Chronology of American Railroads* (Washington, DC: Association of American Railroads, 1957); H. Roger Grant, "Electric Traction Promotion in the South Iowa Coalfields," *Palimpsest* 58 (January/February 1977); H. Roger Grant, ed., *Iowa Railroads: The Essays of Frank P. Donovan, Jr.* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000); H. Roger Grant, *The Corn Belt Route: A History of the Chicago Great Western Railroad Company* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1965); George W. Hilton and John F. Due, *The Electric Interurban Railways in America* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960); William Edward Hayes, *Iron Road to Empire* (New York: Simmons-Boardman, 1953); Don L. Hofsommer, *Steel Trails of Hawkeyeland: Iowa's Railroad Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); William D. Middleton, *The Interurban Era* (Milwaukee: Kalmbach, 1961); *The Official Guide of the Railways* (June 1914); *Poor's Manual of Railroads, 1918* (New York: American Banknote Company, 1918); Richard C. Overton, *Burlington Route: A History of the Burlington Lines* (New York: Knopf, 1965); William H. Thompson, *Transportation in Iowa: A Historical Survey* (Ames: Iowa Department of Transportation, 1989); Peter Weller and Charles Franzen, *Remembering the Southern Iowa Railway* (Washington, IA: P. Weller and C. Franzen, 1992); and Ben Hur Wilson, "Abandoned Railroads in Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 26:1 (January 1928).

Official reports include the annual reports of the Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners for 1913, 1915, and 1918; *Annual Report of the Creston, Winterset & Des Moines R. R. Co. to the Interstate Commerce Commission of the United States for the Year Ended June 30, 1915*, 1, Interstate Commerce Commission Records, Record Group 134, National Archives and Records Administration (College Park, MD); and [Map] *Board of [Iowa] Railroad Commissioners* (Chicago, 1915).

Annotations to the original version of this article are housed in *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* production files at the State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City).

For decades, remnants of the abandoned railroad remained. In 1962 bridge supports (or bents) could be seen near the former station at Wilson. Traces of the abandoned grade also were easily recognizable .

BOTH PHOTOS COURTESY THE AUTHOR

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