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A HISTORY OF RAILROADS IN
MICHIGAN TO
NINETEEN-TWENTY-FIVE

Thesis for the Degree of B. S.
MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE

C. K. Rush

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**A History of Railroads in Michigan
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A Thesis Submitted to

The Faculty of

MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE

OF

AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE

by

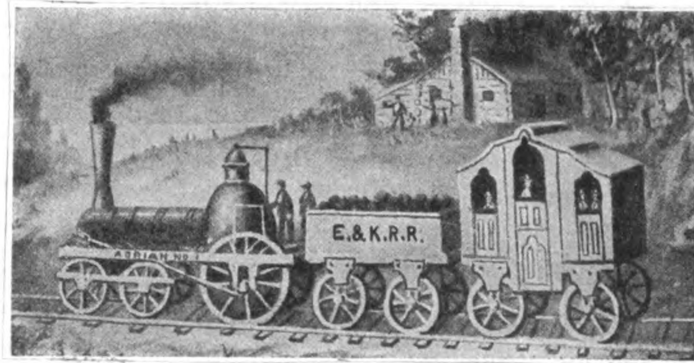
C. K. Rush

**Candidate for the Degree of
Bachelor of Science**

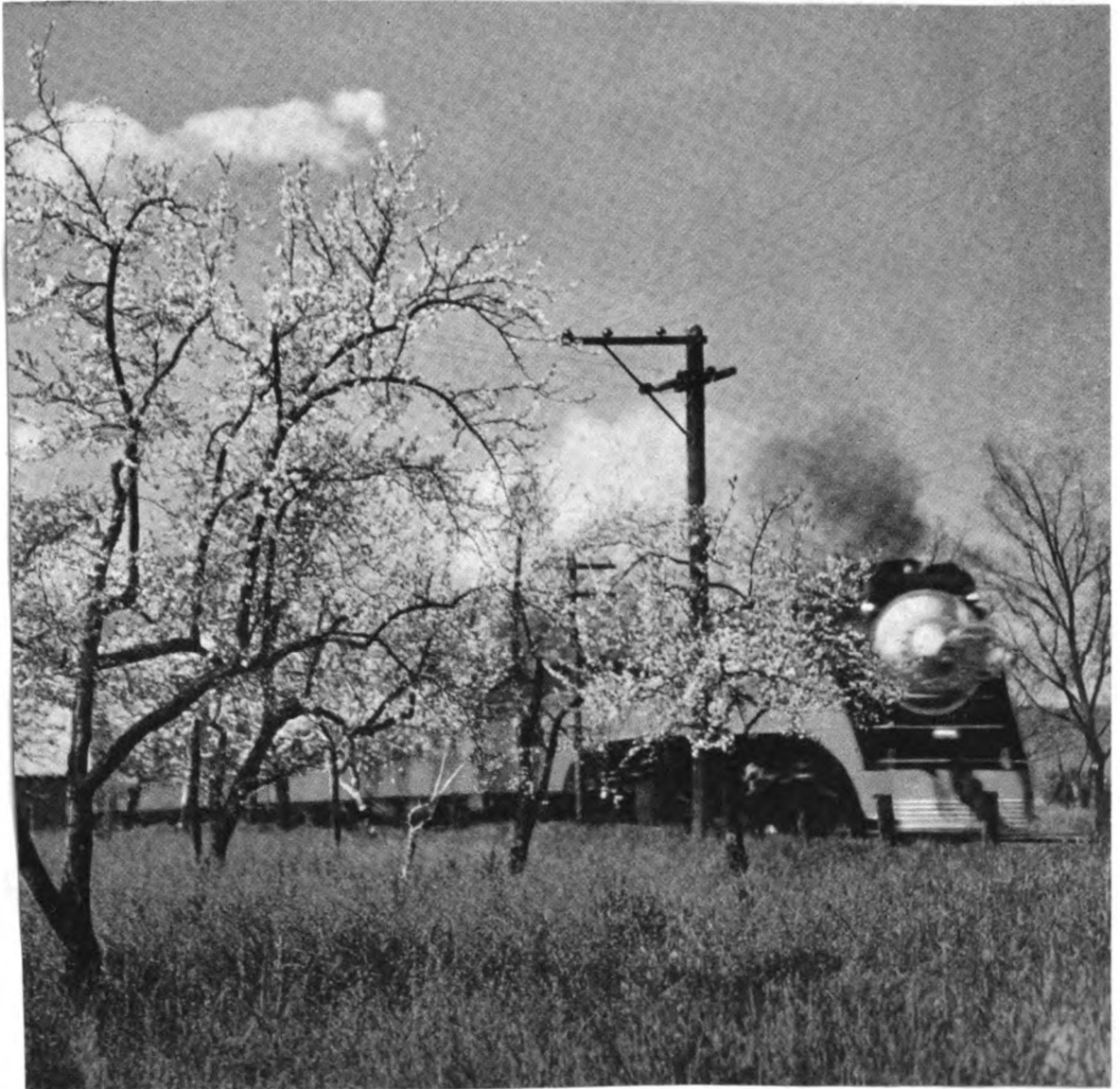
June 1947

THESIS

c.1



First locomotive in Michigan.



There've been some changes made!

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:ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:
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The author wishes to express his humble gratitude at this time to the several librarians, many writers and historians, and the Professors and fellow students whose assistance has been invaluable in the completion of this study. In omitting specific personalities, I do not wish to detract in any manner from the sources of my material. However, it was felt that the footnotes would have become cumbersome to include all references.

C. K. RUSH

May 29, 1947.

The State of Michigan was admitted to the Union at the threshold of what may properly be designated in the world's record as the "railroad age". Historians in the enthusiasm often evidenced by their writings, have perpetuated the glories of the Golden, and the splendors of the Silver Ages, but neither, with all that can be said, with reference to the advances made in civilization, enlightenment and material development of the world's resources during those progressive periods, are at all comparable with the wonderful accomplishments that have distinguished the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

It is difficult to realize the fact that when Michigan entered upon her career in the sisterhood of States, ---less than ten years had elapsed since Stephenson with the little "Rocket" had demonstrated upon the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, the practicability of its operation with steam carriages, and the movement of cars loaded with passengers and freight at a speed of twenty-five miles per hour without hurt or damage to the persons or property carried. In our own country as early as 1825, Col. Hohn Stevens of Hoboken, N.J., had constructed a miniature engine, the success of which was demonstrated upon a circular track in front of his residence. It was not until four years later that Peter Cooper, the distinguished citizen and afterwards capitalist of New York City, had placed upon the track of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad a rudely constructed machine, but able to draw after it a passenger car carrying

thirty-six people at a speed of eighteen miles per hour. This last accomplishment supplementing Stephenson's success in England, left no room for doubt that railroads would in the near future replace all other agencies for inland transportation for decades to come.

New York, inspired by the foresight and energy of DeWitt Clinton, had just completed the Erie canal by which the waters of the great lakes had been connected with the ocean, and the rich and unoccupied area that bordered upon the shores. This made accessible to the teeming thousands, who, forsaking the mountainous and less fertile regions upon the Atlantic slope, sought new homes where milder skies and more generous soil offered easier and larger returns to the hand of labor and toil.

Among the Territories of the Northwest, Michigan was among the first to feel the impulse given to immigration by the enterprise of the Empire State, and her broad domain, so long reported by trappers and the agents of the fur companies which at that early day held almost exclusive possession within her exterior borders, as only an extended swamp, swarmed with the hardy pioneers whose resounding axes soon made it evident that they had come to stay. The fiction by which the tide of people seeking their fortunes in the new west had been turned in other directions once dissipated, an inflow of immigration commenced, before unprecedented in the history of the country. The class of population that made up the early inhabitants of Michigan was exceptional in

enterprise and intelligence, largely from New England and Eastern New York. The founders of our State brought with them habits of thrift and industry, and sharply defined ideas of policies, that could not fail to stand them on firm ground in forming the institutions of the new commonwealth, so soon to grow up under their guidance and supervising care. The building of a new State could not have fallen into better or more certain hands. From the first, there was a thorough appreciation of the magnificent possibilities, and a firm determination to carry them to their most successful end. Prominent among other agencies to be relied upon for the accomplishment of such purpose, was the devising and completion of a system of internal improvements, to supplement the advantages already secured by the navigable waters which washed the outer boundaries of the Territory. Our fourteen hundred miles of coast, indented with innumerable bays and inlets, furnished the finest of harbors for commerce and refuge, to the shipping already beginning to multiply on the great Northwestern lakes (Great Lakes). The successful outcome of the canal system of the Atlantic States had for some years previously given to such method of internal traffic, the first place in popular favor, but with the certainty at last, that the steam locomotive for so long a time almost ridiculed as the wildest of Utopian fancies, had become an assured fact, public sentiment quickly underwent a change, and the demand for the railroad instead of the slow-going canal, everywhere asserted undenied

supremacy. Our early settlers exposed to the fever before leaving their Eastern homes, very soon developed out clear cases of the desire for the iron horse, real evidences which became manifest in our early territorial legislature.

The first railroad charter granted in Michigan was an act to incorporate the Pontiac and Detroit Railway Company, approved July 31, 1830. This was less than nine months subsequent to Stephenson's successful operation of the "Rocket" in England, and before there could be said to be a mile of track in practical use for general traffic within the limits of the United States. Certainly there was none upon which locomotive engines had replaced the horse-power common to the tramways in use to a limited extent during the earlier years of the century. In reviewing the provisions of that first charter it is impossible to suppress a smile as we read of some of the conditions imposed upon the corporation in the construction of their road. "They were generously permitted to use a strip of the United States road, commonly called the Saginaw road, not exceeding twenty feet in width running parallel with center of said road from the village of Pontiac to the city of Detroit, but with the following very unusual provision: 'that such railroad should not interfere with the ditches and traveled part of said road; nor pass upon the ground lying between said ditches. Another section provided that such railroad should be so constructed as to admit of the easy and safe passage of wagons, carts, sleds, and teams at the points where public and private roads intersected the line of the said Saginaw

road." Certainly there was no subordinating the public interest and convenience to the demands of a soulless corporation, in that charter, and one looks through the entire instrument in vain to find that a single franchise was granted beyond that of the right to build a railway. And as to what manner of creature the latter was to be, if we may judge from their legislation, our early lawmakers were in blissful ignorance. The archives of the State do not indicate that the above mentioned charter was ever utilized. Nevertheless, it remains upon the statute book, a silent witness of the fact that our founders fully intended to keep well up with the procession in all that appertained to the material progress of the times.

On the 22d day of April, 1833, an act of the territorial legislature to incorporate the Erie & Kalamazoo Railroad Company became a law. The road of this company was the first to be opened for traffic in Michigan, and among the earliest of any in the United States. (Various historians are in disagreement as to the possibility of its being the first railroad west of New York.) The termini of the road were to be Port Lawrence and Adrian, and thence to such point on the Kalamazoo river as should be deemed most proper and useful. Port Lawrence is now known as Toledo, and was then supposed to be within the limits of Michigan, but as the result of the bloodless contest for State supremacy over the mouth of the Maumee, Ohio was confirmed in her claim to the right of possession, and in lieu thereof,

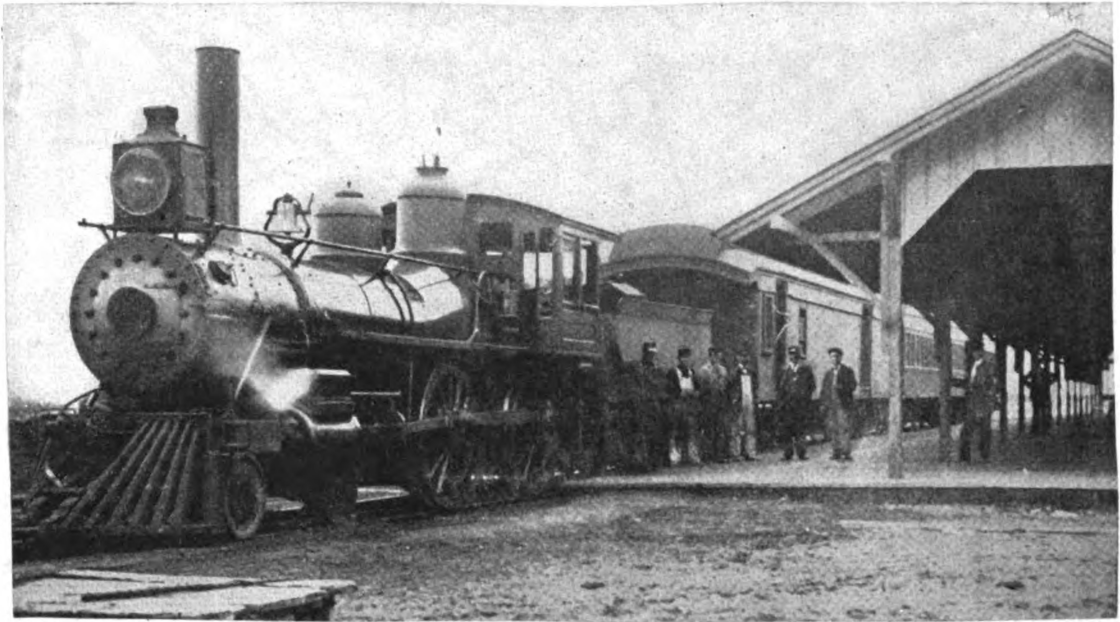
Congress generously gave to the State of Michigan the Upper Peninsula. It was then thought to be only a waste of rock and wilderness, on the solitude of which civilization would long hesitate to intrude, though now it is often entered to its innermost parts by thousands of hunters each fall. It is hardly necessary to say that what was then deemed a misfortune, has proved a blessing in disguise, and six hundred and fifty miles of railway trackage were completed by 1885, carrying towards the trade centers of the country the inexhaustible and invaluable product of its iron and copper mines. This is just to mention two things that have benefited us by the acquisition of this large tract of land.

The Erie and Kalamazoo railroad was opened for traffic in 1836: it was cheaply constructed upon the plan generally adopted for nearly all of our primitive roads. First, heavy mud sills hewn from the longest sticks of timber obtainable from our almost unequalled forests, were planted in the roadbed. To these were firmly spiked the ties first properly notched to receive the oak stringers, which by means of wedges were secured in position, and chamfered at the upper inside face so as to permit a safe bearing of the car wheel flanges. To these stringers was spiked a thin, narrow strap rail, weighing no more than six to eight pounds to the yard, easily loosened from the fastenings by the engagement of the car-wheels passing over it. As experience frequently proved it was wonderfully apt to intrude upon the comfort of the passengers seated above by coming

up through the car floors and wreacking things generally. Technically, these car inspectors were known as "snake heads". Compared to the solid superstructures to which we are accustomed at the present day, the roadways of half a century ago seem absurd enough. Nevertheless, they were "pointed to with pride" by the pioneers of that early period, who firmly believed that when the journey from Toledo to Adrian and return could be made through the hitherto almost impassable recesses of the Maumee swamp in two days, but little in the way of rapid transportation seemed left to be desired at that particular time.

For some months after the completion of the road, the cars were drawn by horses, but on the 20th of January, 1837, the Toledo Blade announced the arrival of the long expected locomotive "Adrian,"--No. 80, from the Baldwin works at Philadelphia. It was the third engine to be sent west of the Alleghany range, and the first to the States west of New York bordering upon the great lakes. The commissioners in charge now announced to "emigrants and travelers," that the Erie and Kalamazoo railroad was in full operation between Adrian and Toledo, and that people destined for the west, Michigan City, Chicago, and Wisconsin Territory, would save two days and the corresponding expense, by availing themselves of the new thoroughfare.

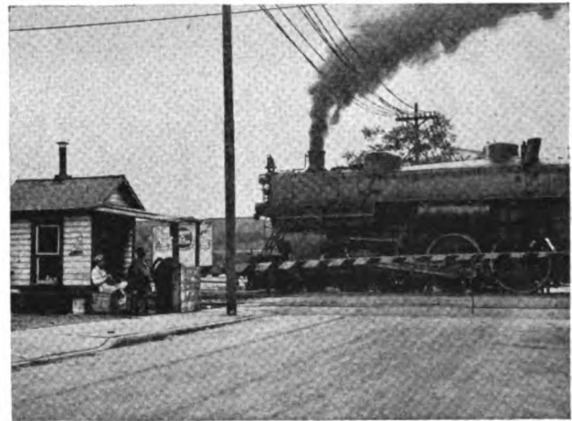
The owners of the Erie and Kalamazoo railroad also inaugurated the Palmyra and Jacksonburg railroad; and its opening to Tecumseh was celebrated with the enthusiasm



Typical scene in 1895.



CROSSING WATCHMAN — To warn highway traffic of on-coming trains, railroads hire crossing watchmen who raise and lower gates, sometimes from a tower by means of levers, sometimes by a hand crank on the supporting column of one of the gates. Last hand-operated gates in Detroit are on the Grand Trunk Western crossing at Riopelle and Franklin streets. Tony Antonelli cranks them down, then watches the 1:40 train.



Crossing scene in 1947.

usual to such occasions, on the 9th of August, 1838.

Such, in brief is the history of the inception and construction of our pioneer railroad, chiefly interesting from the fact that it was the beginning of our now extended system of internal improvements, and the first section constructed, of what is now one of the most extensive and prosperous railroad properties in the United States.

The territorial Legislature on the 29th of January, 1832, chartered the Detroit and St. Joseph Railroad Company for the construction of a road from the city of Detroit to the St. Joseph river, traversing the counties of Wayne, Washtenaw, Jackson, Calhoun and Kalamazoo, the latter county then comprising all the territory lying between Calhoun and Lake Michigan. Work under this charter was commenced by the company and some progress was made in its construction. Upon the admission of the State to the Union, and the adoption by the Legislature of a comprehensive scheme of public works to be undertaken and controlled by State authority, the Detroit and St. Joseph was purchased, and by legislative enactment, subsequently became the Michigan Central.

March 7th, 1834 the act to incorporate the Detroit and Pontiac Railroad Company was approved, and for a second time a railroad between Detroit and Pontiac was authorized. By this time, however, legislators seem to have become more familiar with the character and requirements of a railroad corporation, and the new charter conceded substantial

franchises to the incorporators, which though often attacked in the courts and Legislature, have remained unimpaired until the present time. In the mutations incident to corporate history, the Detroit and Pontiac was changed to the Detroit, Grand Haven Milwaukee, and long years after was completed to Lake Michigan. Finally, it was taken into the Pere Marquette system to be known today as one of the most important thoroughfares in the State.

Some twelve miles of this road was in use for horsecars as early as 1835, but the first locomotive did not appear upon its track until the autumn of 1838, when a little machine not much larger than a cooking stove on wheels was placed in service and continued to be the sum total of motive power employed for many years. The early patrons of this road used to claim that on one occasion a citizen of Detroit, who availed himself of its trains to make the journey to Pontiac and back, was so long absent from home that his children grew out of his recollection; and it was not uncommon for notes given by persons upon the eve of departure to Royal Oak, or Birmingham, to outlive before their return.

Charters authorizing the construction of railroads between Romeo and Mt. Clemens, and Shelby and Detroit, were also passed by the territorial Legislature, granting, in perpetuity, franchises of the most liberal character to the persons named in the acts. Such charters, however, were not utilized, and upon the organization of the State govern-

ment, by common consent, the further work of building railroads seems to have been accepted as among its principal functions.

Probably there has never been a time in the history of our country, when impracticable schemes of internal improvement and extravagant policies for the development of the State's resources, were more likely to meet with favorable consideration than in 1836. The spirit of speculation was rife, paper money "fiat" in character in all that the term implies, was seeking investment, and no enterprise, however grand its proportions, was without friends for its execution.

The first Governor, Stevens T. Mason, was a most enthusiastic believer in the splendid future of Michigan and its ability to carry to successful conclusion systems of internal improvement which would leave nothing to be desired in that particular, and attract to the State an immigration commensurate with advantages afforded by broad and enterprising policies.

It was already becoming the practice of the Federal Government to donate to the new States liberal grants of lands in aid of the establishment and maintenance of schools and universities, and the construction of works of internal improvement. This State had attached an ordinance to its Constitution, asking Congress for such assistance to build one or more railroads or canals from its eastern boundry to Lake Michigan. It was believed that the application would

meet with a favorable response in the near future. A belief realized in the act of Congress, approved September 4, 1841, by the provisions of which Michigan, in common with other Western States, received five hundred thousand acres of land, the proceeds of which were to be devoted to purposes of internal improvement. Relying upon the probability of such a grant, and the anticipated rapid settlement of the State, Governor Mason in his first message recommended the most liberal legislation for carrying forward an extensive system of public works. But that the State should be in position to exercise at least partial control of the same, he favored the idea of its becoming a large stockholder in such enterprises. Favoring also the negotiation of a loan on its faith, in anticipation of resources to be derived from the sales of lands, that might thereafter be granted for internal improvement purposes.

The Legislature fully shared the enthusiasm of their youthful Governor, and entered with alacrity upon the adoption of his suggestions for the development of the new State. A scheme for the construction of three railroads was decided upon, and a loan of five million dollars for that purpose authorized upon the credit of the State----these roads severally to be known as the Central, Southern and Northern, extending across the State. The first, from Detroit to St. Joseph; the second, from Monroe to New Buffalo; and the third, from Port Huron to Grand Haven.

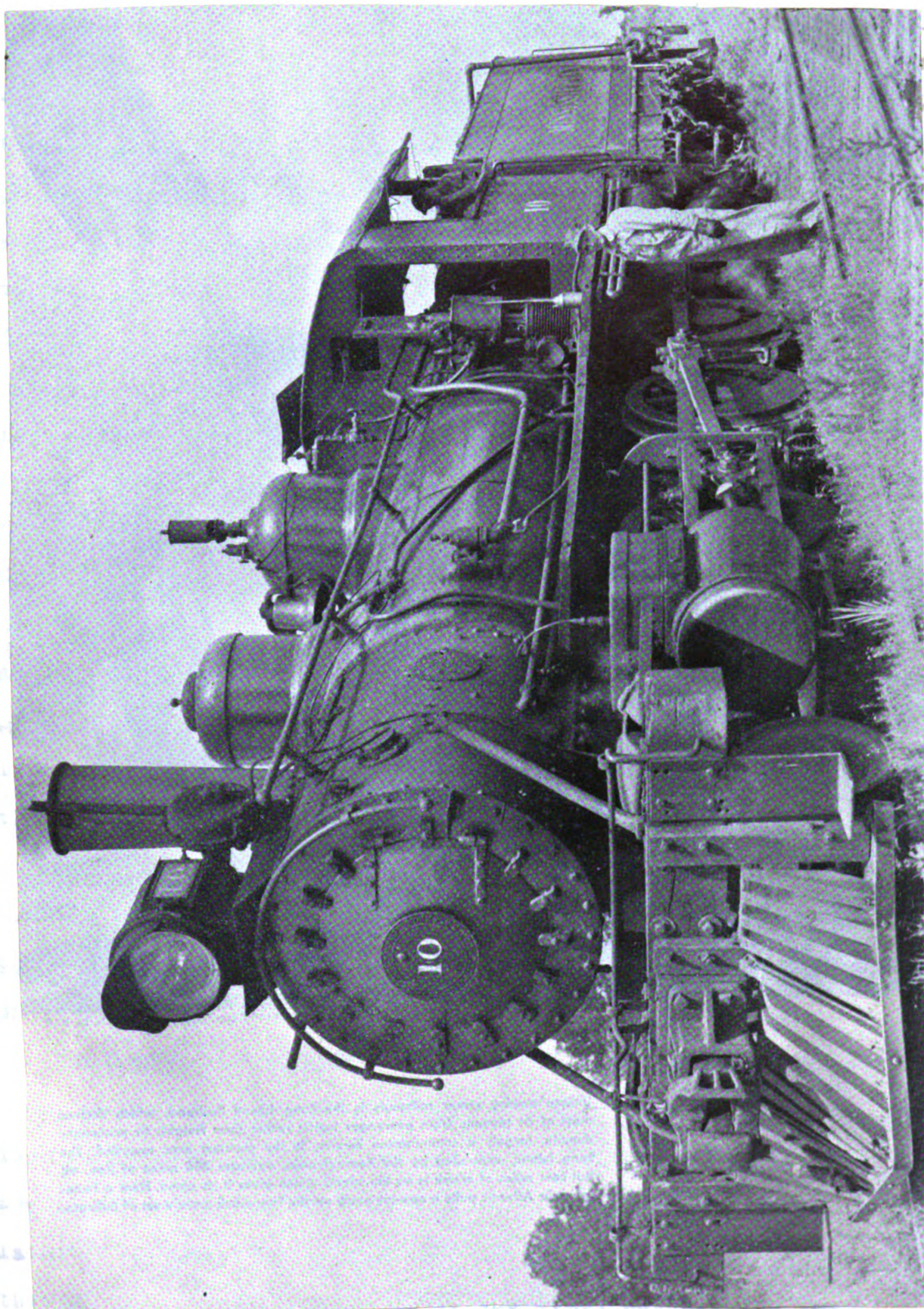
While during the years of distress and disaster that followed closely upon the era of inflation which so shaped our early legislation, the policy of our first State administration met with popular disapproval as being unwise and extravagant, who, in the light of the manner in which the railroads developed at a later date and have come to the front since, cannot say that the leaders of that time stand today fully vindicated?

The recommendations of the Governor were practically approved by the Legislature, so far as the works to be undertaken were concerned, but instead of merely giving to the State a controlling interest as a stockholder, it was thought the better policy to build the roads at the entire expense of the public treasury, and to maintain the operation and management solely under the State control. Although it required but a few years of practical experience to change popular sentiment with regard to the question which resulted in the sale of the railroads to corporations chartered for their purchase, and a provision in the Constitution of 1850, which forever inhibited the State from being interested in or engaged in carrying on any work of internal improvement, (this has been amended to exclude public roads--highways) still there is today a strong sentiment in this State, and most of the others, which may be said to be a growing sentiment, that the public interest would be largely served by State control of or more important lines in a position to fix and enforce transportation rates upon other roads connecting therewith or running parallel to it. The Interstate Commerce

Commission controls rates for most lines but has little or no control over those few lines which are complete within the borders of the State. Whether in fact such a control would be in the direction of a sound policy, I shall not discuss upon this occasion, but that it is advocated by economists who have given much thought to a solution of the question of transportation rates and traffic discrimination that have for some time past agitated the country, is alluded to merely to show that the views of Gov. Mason, by him urged over a hundred years ago, were not so entirely thoughtless and unsupported by the logic of a sound economy as many of us have been accustomed to know it. But with five millions of money supposed to be in hand, and liberal land grants from Congress in sight, operations were commenced upon all the proposed works; and for a time everything progressed to the satisfaction of the most sanguine. The Central and Southern roads, traversing as they did the most populous counties, and being on the line over which the westward march of empire was making its way, as was natural, were more favored by the Legislature and the commissioners of internal improvement under whose administration the construction was carried forward. Not a little friction was encountered between the two rival routes, each anxious to outdo the other and to make the fastest progress towards the western boundary of the State. This feeling of jealousy occasionally showed itself in a practical way, and there is a story that when the road bed of the Central was ready and waiting for the

iron, between Detroit and Dearborn, one of the commissioners residing at Monroe, anticipated the vessel freighted with rails intended for the rival of the Southern. When off the mouth of the River Raisin, and running her about a mile up that stream, he had the iron thrown overboard in seven feet of water, and ordered the schooner to return to Buffalo for another load. This sharp practice however, availed the "Independent State" but little. Henry Willis, of ship canal fame, in charge for track laying on the Central, learned of the whereabouts of the iron. Taking scow in tow of the little steamer "Ruby", and proceeding to Monroe a few nights after, he fished up every bar of the rail, carried it to Detroit, and had it securely spiked to the stringers, before the Monroe Commissioner was aware that it had gone.

But it is not necessary to the purpose of this paper that I should continue in detail the progress made in completing our railroad system under the auspices of the State. Upon the Northern line after clearing and partially grading about eighteen miles west of Port Huron, further work was abandoned and attention in that section principally devoted to the completion of what was known as the Clinton and Kalamazoo Canal, a work intended to connect the waters of the Clinton and Kalamazoo rivers, and so save to commerce the then tedious voyage by way of Mackinaw Straits. Since that time the old canal has been replaced by a railroad however.



Locomotive built in 1907.

Upon the two principal lines work was continued by the State with all the energy that its disordered finances and the general depression that followed upon the speculative period contemporaneous with the admission and first three years of our history, would permit. The fiscal agents charged with the negotiations of the five million loan had failed to realize the proceeds from the parties with whom placed, and what has been so long known upon the State ledgers as the "part-paid bonds", became a legacy for the future to care for. Of the remainder, all but about four hundred thousand dollars, as stated by the report of the Committee of Inquiry, headed by A. T. McReynolds, to the Senate of 1841, had been scattered to the four winds of heaven, and the only available resources left for the prosecution of the public improvements were warrants payable in internal improvements lands, and worth in market from thirty-five to sixty cents on the dollar. Truly, Michigan at that low ebb of her financial fortunes, might have taken for her own the legend of the Kansas Great Seal, "Ad astra per aspera," with a touching regard for the "eternal fitness of things."

But with characteristic persistency work was continued upon the roads in the face of every discouragement until in 1846 the Central had been completed to Kalamazoo, and Southern to Hillsdale. Early in the session of the Legislature for that year a syndicate of Boston capitalists, through their agent, proposed to the State authorities the

purchase of the Central road. The proposition was favorably received by the Legislature to whom it was referred by the Governor. A bill chartering the Michigan Central Railroad Company, and providing for the sale to it of the Michigan Central Railroad for the sum of two million dollars, in due time became a law. Inspired by the enterprise of the Boston people a number of gentlemen, for most part residing in Monroe, in this State, came to the Legislature with a proposition to purchase the Michigan Southern Railroad Company. This proposition was also favorably received by that body; and a law passed disposing of the road, the price to be paid for the property being five hundred thousand dollars. The companies, chartered in connection with the sale, were promptly organized, and the roads transferred to the purchasers. From that time on Michigan has left the building of railroads within her borders entirely to private enterprise.

When the State disposed of her railroads there were remaining unappropriated nearly one-half of the lands granted by Congress for their construction. These lands had been selected from the public domain with special reference to their value for their timber and agricultural purposes; and without doubt in these qualities were unexcelled by any equal area in the State. Had a wise policy prevailed, no disposition would have been made of the residue of the grant until, in the course of years, sales at increased value would have returned millions of dollars

to Michigan's exchequer. As it was, improvident legislation that no remonstrance of faithful and far-seeing executives could avert, appropriated the lands for every wild scheme that ingenuity or stupidity could devise. In a short time, what should have been held a most valuable reserve for the benefit of the State at large, was squandered and frittered away, in most instances, to no permanent usefulness whatever.

With the acquisition of its property the Michigan Central railroad company at once commenced the extensions and improvements that have made it the chief railroad property in our State. Under the most able and energetic administration of John W. Brooks, its first general superintendent and chief engineer, its east terminal at the Campus Martius in Detroit was transferred to the foot of Third Street, and the splendid river front which gave the Central its unequalled dockage and ware-house room, was built up from the bed of the river. The old line was relocated and reconstructed along its former tortuous course up the Huron Valley, relaid with heavy rail to Kalamazoo; and in the spring of 1849, the locomotive for the first time roused the echoes among the dunes of Lake Michigan.

The year 1852 and the few following years were eventful ones in Michigan railroad history. In 1852 the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana Railroad and the Michigan Central Railroad reached the City of Chicago. During the year 1854, through standard guage, connections from New York to Chicago by what are now the New York Central Lines were

effected, although they were then more of a possibility than a reality. Experience had already proven the law of the increment of traffic, and in obedience to its inflexible demands the two roads prominent in Michigan at the time naturally were diverted to the growing emporium of trade and commerce, Chicago. To effect this the Michigan Southern Railroad Company had been consolidated with an Indiana Corporation as the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana Railroad Company, the Michigan Central had received an enlargement of its powers. In May 1852 the two companies reached Chicago with their trains, and for many years continued as rival lines supplying its eastern transport needs. Michigan had at this time but 417.3 miles of operating railroad, consisting of the Michigan Central Railroad, 222 miles; the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana Railroad, 168.9 miles; the Detroit and Pontiac Railroad, 26.4 miles.

In the decade 1850-60 railroads began to take shape as systems. At the outset conceived as local enterprises, organized with local capital to connect developing centers not distantly situated, often planned, evident as a misconceived measure of self protection, with gauge type of construction and equipment not suited to the conditions of their connection carriers at either terminal, they had hitherto been merely a medley of disconcerted efforts. They had, however, followed the growth of population and wealth fairly up to that time and had slowly proven the

economic value and place of the railroad. The Michigan Central and Michigan Southern had been as large units as any developed up to this period. From then on local influences had less force than at first in railroad development, although it has even yet to be reckoned with in railroad matters.

The trend and economic force of the railroad in this period may be indicated by the results of the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana Railroad. In 1851 it had annual net earnings of \$305,686 over its 158.5 miles of road extending from Monroe and Toledo to South Bend, Indiana, the portion from Coldwater to South Bend having been opened late that year. In 1853, following the entrance to Chicago, the earnings were \$1,573,181 over 283.3 miles and in 1855 they were \$2,595,630 over 303.1 miles, an increase of 849% in revenues and 444% in revenues per mile in four years. Such proofs of utility could not fail to enlist the support of the financier and arouse in every detached community the purpose to gain for themselves a share of the benefits to be realized from the railroad.

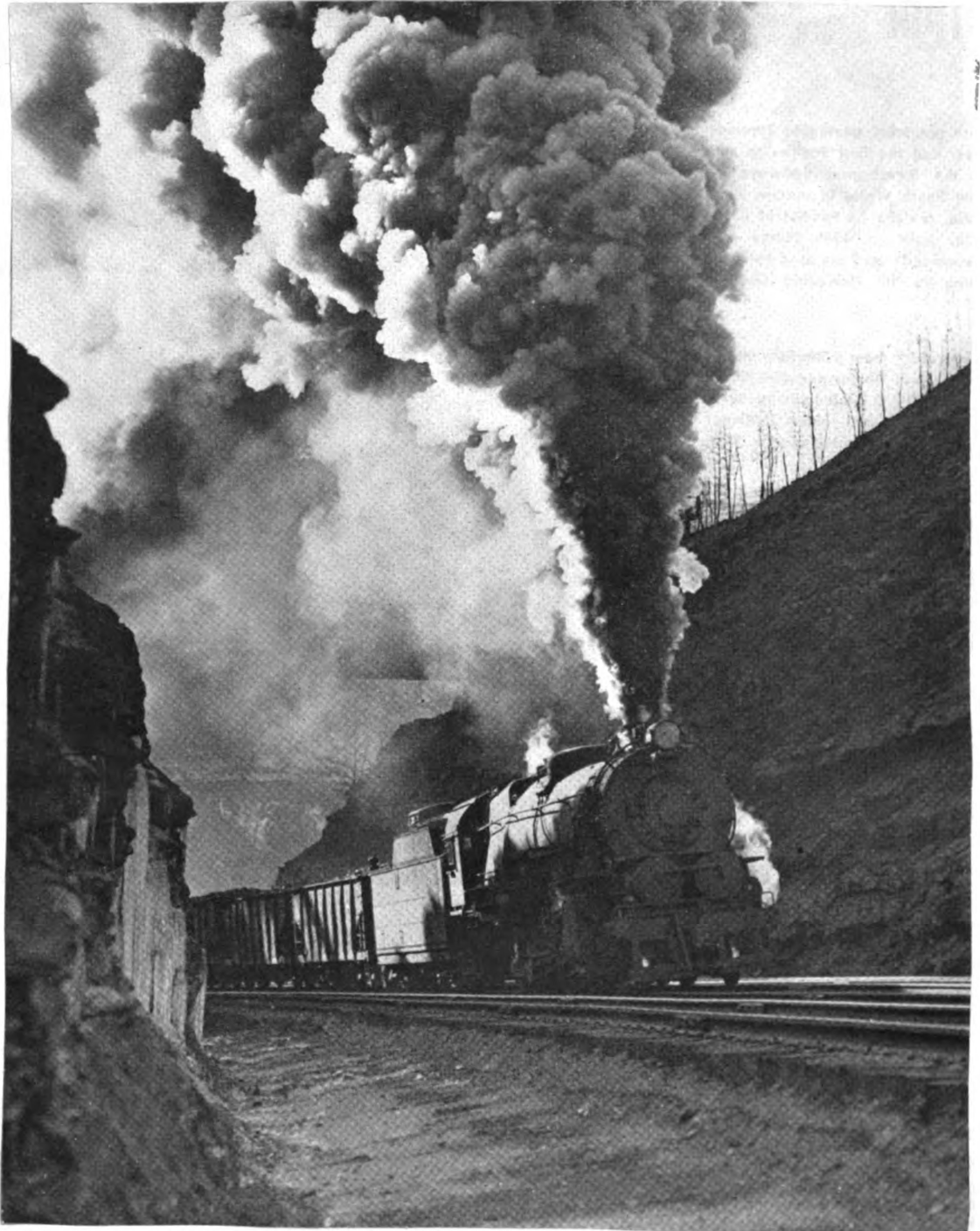
Under its impulse, government, finance, industry and other related forces were clearing the way for the railroad. Governor McClelland in his message to the Legislature of 1853 recommended the passage of a General Railroad Law for Michigan. Mr. Heman D. Ely, a native of Rochester, New York, who then represented the Marquette District in the House was active in the formation of such a law but it failed at

that Session. It remained for the Session of 1855 to make such a law, which received thorough amendments in 1859, and has continued upon our books to the present period with slight further modification. In 1856 Congress made extensive grants of land to aid in the construction of railroads in the newer states, Michigan's share therein being directed "to aid in the construction of railroads from Little Bay de Noquet to Marquette and thence to Ontonagon, and from the last named places to the Wisconsin State Line; and also from Amboy, by Hillsdale and Lansing and from Grand Rapids to come to points on or near Traverse Bay; also from Grand Haven and Pere Marquette to Flint and thence to Port Huron." The state, by Act No. 126 of 1857, made disposal of the several grants to companies then seeking the benefits of the law, and created a Board of Control to administer such grants.

Within one year following the passage of the land grant act, eight new railroad corporations filed articles of association, six of which had been made specific grants and had accepted the same. Three then existing corporations also filed acceptances of grants over their routes. Of the latter, one, the Detroit and Milwaukee Railway Company, was an active carrier from Detroit to St. Johns. The Amboy, Lansing and Traverse Bay Railroad Company was the first to file certificate of completion of twenty miles of its road doing so on January 5, 1861. The Bay de Noquet and Marquette Railroad Company followed with like certificate on December 1, 1862. This latter certificate of twenty miles included the road

of the former, The Iron Mountain Railroad Company, the first railroad in the Upper Peninsula.

Notwithstanding the stimulus to railroad development anticipated by the authors of the Land Grant Act, progress was slow and some of the routes receiving grants offered little or no local promise of being feasible. Consequently, the original grants underwent considerable modifications, both by Acts of Congress and Acts of the Legislature of this State. Forfeiture of benefits was made operative in ten years by the terms of the original acts. Slow progress, however, led to extensions of time, and repeated failures to reconfering of grants. Some were never used, and on March 2, 1889 Congress took action returning the unappropriated lands to the Public Domain. Following the disposal of the United States Land Grants, the State sought to stimulate railroad development by use of its swamp lands available for public use. There was bestowed upon the several railroads of the State 3,809,826.32 acres of land under the Act of Congress and 1,695,509.99 acres under State Acts. Railroad development under land grant encouragement was slow at first and never made rapid progress, but eventually went forward with fairly stable growth. The sponsors for the plan and those seeking its benefits were mainly awaiting the call for the vast undeveloped resources of the state, at the time well known, yet at this time without that sustained demand which would make their exploitation feasible. No doubt the concurrent opening to settlement of the vast Trans-Mississippi region



Moving along at sunrise.

had its deterring effect. The Civil War worked to retard development, but when men and means were returned to civil pursuits the land grant projects began gradually to be built. In the Lower Peninsula the Jackson, Lansing and Saginaw, Railroad Company, successor to the Old Amboy, Lansing and Traverse Bay Railroad Grant completed its road to Mackinaw in 1881 after a halt of eight years at Gaylord. The Flint and Pere Marquette Railroad Company completed its line from Flint to Ludington, formerly Pere Marquette, in 1874. The Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad Company extended its terminal from Bay View to Mackinaw City in 1882, having reached the former place in 1876. These were the strictly land grant roads of the Lower Peninsula. Others shared in the grants to a limited extent only.

In the Upper Peninsula no such steady progress had been achieved. The effort was considerably in advance of the call for the resources of that region, the more necessary of which were within easy reach of lake transportation. The Bay de Noquet Grant, and the Marquette and Wisconsin State Line Grant eventually passed to the Chicago and Northwestern Railway Company. Its lines were completed from Escanaba to Negaunee in 1864, from Menominee to Negaunee in 1872 and the Menominee River Branch in 1882. The first 20 miles of the Bay de Noquet and Marquette Railroad completed in 1862, had, however, passed by consolidation to the Marquette and Ontonagon Railroad Company, and the latter company completed 20 miles on the Marquette and Ontonagon Grant to Lake Michigamme

in 1865. Finally after numerous changes in corporate entities, its projects were carried forward to Houghton in July, 1883. In 1878 the Detroit, Mackinaw, and Marquette Railroad Company was organized, to construct from St. Ignace to Marquette, with a branch to Sault Ste. Marie. Princely state land grants were conferred upon it and its construction was completed from Marquette to St. Ignace in 1881, to Sault Ste. Marie in 1887. In the latter year it was merged into the Duluth, South Shore and Atlantic Railway Company was the most richly endowed of any land grant road in the state. The Ontonagon and State Line Grant was conferred upon the Ontonagon and Brule River Railroad Company which completed its first 20 miles from Ontonagon in 1882. It later completed to Sidnaw in October 1889, presumably after the grant had been cancelled by Congress. It is now part of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway.

The land grants were not in general bestowed upon routes traversing well populated regions. They had at least one terminal in an undeveloped region, and it was the professed purpose of the land grant aids to lead population to undeveloped districts, as well as thereby to draw upon the resources of those regions to supply the domestic needs and industrial demands of the established communities. This was the first step wherein the railroad was substantially to lead the way to settlement and industrial development. The land grant roads in Michigan all tapped valuable forest or mine resources. Immediately following the Civil War, lumber and other forest

products became the leading productions of the upper part of the Lower Peninsula, and mining was the principal industry of the Upper Peninsula following the routes of these railroads, and of course in part determining the routes finally chosen for these roads. Even yet these forest resources are to some extent held intact, especially in the Upper Peninsula, but in great part they have already been exhausted. In many sections no new resource has followed to supply the exhaustion, frequently with disaster to the railroad depending upon these districts for support.

Railroads in Michigan seem largely to have waited for public aids in one form or another to give them a sufficient impetus to have carried out a project. The land grant roads had only fairly commenced their programs of actual construction when the campaign for local aids was inaugurated. Practically every detached village community in the State had by 1867 become ambitious for a railroad connection. Old railroads and new had fully proven their value as a factor in the development of the state. The growth in population and wealth which they were bringing to the communities favored with their location, had produced almost a frenzied rivalry among the towns not so favored. To compete with land grants we find municipalities voting local aids, either as capital stock subscriptions or as pure out-and-out funded aids, notwithstanding the restrictions placed by the Constitution of 1850 upon such use of the public credit. In 1863 the first local public aid act was passed by the legislature.

In 1864 twelve were passed. In 1865 eight were passed and in 1869 a general law was passed empowering townships, cities, and villages to vote municipal aids in one form or another to promote railway projects. There was frenzied haste in some cases to engage the public credit, and many astute schemes to circumvent the intent of the Constitution were practiced. Conservative statesmen deprecated the practice. One Governor opposed the ill advised scheme. Finally decisions of the Supreme Court effectually checked the movement and killed many projects for railroads which were based more upon local hopes than any real need.

The period from 1870 to 1890 was the great period of railroad development in the state in the amount of milage constructed. Yet viewing the construction of that period in retrospect, and setting apart the land grant roads, it is apparent that these lines proved to be largely feeders to the then established main routes. At first they were promoted as independent lines, and often with the expectation that traffic connections could be arranged which would make them more than short independent lines. The rush for railroads during the period outstripped the needs. Economic changes often attending their construction, and the constant trend to cheaper transportation worked a failure of their finances in most instances. Hence they naturally fell to the stronger lines one by one and became in fact feeder or branch lines to some of the important systems already developed or then developing in the state. The present Grand Trunk Western

Railway extending from Port Huron to Chicago, built largely during this period, was an exception. This line was originally consolidated from several piecework lines as the Chicago and Grand Trunk Railway. It had come under strong British financial support and had the location and terminal connections to insure reasonable success. This line together with the old Detroit and Milwaukee Railway, and extension of the original Detroit and Pontiac Railroad, became the foundation of the Grand Trunk Railway System as it exists today in Michigan.

In the decade, 1890 to 1900, there was a slackening in railroad building. It is true that in the upper part of the Lower Peninsula and throughout the Upper Peninsula there was a gradual development to bring new forest and mine resources within the reach of transportation. But public support as a public matter was no longer attempted, nor would public opinion any longer tolerate exploitation by railroad promoters to that end. Individual and community support was still resorted to, usually in the form of individual cash donations, or donations of rights of way and labor, often in the guise of stock subscriptions. Very few railroad projects were undertaken as purely original enterprises. The development during the period found support largely from the established companies, although frequently the extensions were undertaken in the name of new corporations, which received organized support of the dominant company. The Escanaba, Iron Mountain and Western Railroad in the Upper Peninsula was the principal

independent road during this decade, and proved to be a losing venture for the investors in the project.

The present century opened with a consolidation of the Chicago and West Michigan Railway, the Flint and Pere Marquette Railroad and the Detroit, Grand Rapids and Western Railroad, which were independent roads before that time, merged into the Pere Marquette Railroad. This company later acquired several short lines as feeder, constructed a line to Chicago and leased eastern connections across Ontario to Buffalo. By this merger it became the largest system in the state, and by virtue of the widely extended location of its lines throughout the Lower Peninsula it is the most important railroad to Michigan's welfare at the present time.

The first decade of the present century was the turning point in railroad development in many respects. From the struggling little railroads of 1845, barely able to survive the competition of the ox, the horse, and the stage coach, over execrable roads, they had come to be an indispensable factor in our economic life. In the beginning, public finances could make but a halting progress in their building and public management achieved a doubtful success in their operation.

Settled methods of business and habits of life usually yield but slowly to innovations. The railroad had to await in many respects the changes brought by time. From, and after, the year 1900 financial consolidations of railroads became the most important phase of railroad matters throughout

the country. New lines and extensions thereafter were in the hands of experienced railroad men and were carried out only to reach new resources or to take care of the demands upon existing lines and facilities. The mileage added in Michigan thereafter was not great but the improvements made upon existing railroads and to terminal facilities became rather extensive. On the whole, our railroads were placed in a better position for public service than they had been at any previous time. This decade closed, however, with our railroads in a somewhat unfavorable situation both as respects earnings and finances.

The contributions of railroad development in the nation, in which Michigan has shared notably, to the development of the modern corporation has been an important one. In fact, the development of the latter has been essential to the development of the former and in response to the general necessities of the case. The law and business usages have been gradually adapted to the new conditions and demands. In the beginning the railroad was not an attractive investment, but once the experimental period had been passed it grew steadily in public favor, both as a useful invention and as a field for investment. The initial successes were the prelude to continuing success in this field. From 1850 to 1910 there was a steady trend of diminishing costs of rail transportation accompanied by a broadening field of its utilization. In the period of its greatest extension following the Civil War, when competition between rival financial interests



Thru tunnels and o'er bridges we go!

became the rule, rates were constantly on a downward trend and efficiencies on the upward trend. This was but a natural result of the extension of rail facilities and the growth of industries and wealth in relation thereto.

Throughout the whole period of growth the railroads have offered an important field for the use of accumulated capital, especially when permanence of investment has been the chief consideration. Within the last few decades the trend to organized industry and the development of other utility fields has to considerable extent modified this condition. In the early years of railroad building foreign capital contributed largely to its development, but following 1880 the accumulation of domestic capital tended more and more to displace the foreign investor. The great insurance companies and other financial houses having in trust the savings of the people in whatever form have always found a most desirable field for the employment of such funds in the great railroad investments of the nation. Almost without recognition by the lay mind, the railroads have become inextricably woven into the national economic structure, not only as a utility of indispensable necessity for day-to-day existence, but as the actual, though indirect, repository of the accumulated savings of a large proportion of our people as well.

In 1882 the products of forests had become the dominant commodity in railroad traffic, and the commodities of mines and manufactures were appearing. In 1915 the products of

mines had become the principal commodity and manufactures had made a decided growth since 1882. Agriculture and animal products had kept a strong position as would be expected. These examples do not, of course, show the same relative results as the mainlines like the Michigan Central and the Grand Trunk which cross the Lower Peninsula, nor the railroads of the Upper Peninsula where much different conditions exist. They are taken as fairly portraying the conditions of the Lower Peninsula as a whole for years shown.

The close of the first decade of the present century roughly marks a turn in the conditions surrounding the railroad companies and railroad business and has affected them in different respects. For many years the trend toward organized industry on the corporate plan has created a diversified field for the employment of accumulated wealth, and has thereby tended to restrict the freedom which the railroad corporations enjoyed for a long period in financial matters. Practically throughout the history of the railroads up to 1910 the improvement of railroad facilities, with its resulting increase in the efficiencies of operation, had constantly been a factor of safety, enabling railroad managements to meet the occasional adverse conditions as they had appeared. This together with extension of transportation to new commodities coming into general use, permitted a constantly downward trend of transportation costs up to this time. The second decade of the present century brought this country into the great World War I, with its baneful effects upon

men, materials and capital. The old settled conditions were largely destroyed and while the railroad organization of the nation still continued to improve, such improvements as could be made were not enough to in any appreciable degree meet the increased burden of day-to-day costs of transportation. After a period of Federal control the railroads were returned to their corporate owners and then presented a problem of the greatest importance to the nation. It was apparent to that the old conditions had passed and that the railroads were of vital necessity to the general welfare. Becoming more and more a matter of public concern, and so recognized both in fact and in law, the problem was receiving serious consideration and merited the most careful treatment. The solution of that problem apparently was solved in due time for the railroads of today are of prime consideration in preserving our social and industrial life on its present standard.

At the beginning of 1923 there were operating in the State of Michigan fifty-one railroad companies making use of 8,331.62 miles of first main track and a total trackage of 14,019.62 miles. Of this mileage 1,937.65 miles of first main track and a total trackage of 3,300.20 miles was in the Upper Peninsula. During the year 1923 only 2- miles of actual addition to first main track mileage was added by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company to enter Detroit as a terminal. This latter amount in no way reflects the real growth of the railroads of Michigan for that year. The railroads had then become great systems of established lines, almost wholly

interstate in character and with well established necessary and important functions to perform in the activities of modern life. Pressing demands for new roads, especially in Michigan, do not often arise.

At the close of 1927 there were in operation in the state forty-eight railroad entities of which twelve line carriers were in the Upper Peninsula and twenty-three line carriers and with eight terminal carriers in the Lower Peninsula. In the Upper Peninsula 1,960.55 miles of first main track and in the Lower Peninsula 6,183.37 miles of first main track was in operation, a total of 8,143.92 miles. There was a total trackage of 14,288.08 miles. But 7.13 miles first main track was constructed during the year 1927, and this was terminal road constructed in the Detroit district. Various changes in mileage of roads in the Upper Peninsula had taken place in the five years' period but they had been largely changes of classification. The net increase in first main tracks had been due to extensions to reach new resources brought into production. There have likewise been various abandonments of mileage due to exhausted resources, a cause likely to operate with greater force in the future.

In the Lower Peninsula a net reduction of first main track mileage of 209.7 has resulted in the same period. The new lines in this district have been 26.09 miles by the Pennsylvania, 23.41 miles by the Detroit, Toledo and Iron Mountain and a terminal road of 8.24 miles at Flint by the Pere Marquette, all in the vicinity of and influenced by the growth of large centers such as Detroit and Flint. During this time there

have been many miles abandoned by the former Detroit, Bay City and Western, the Detroit and Mackinac, the Manistee and Northeastern, the New York Central and the Pere Marquette Railroads, in portions of the State which have undergone a decline in resources and in population to such an extent as to nullify the necessity for the roads abandoned. The Kalamazoo, Lake Shore & Chicago Railway has passed from the list of carriers.

We are not to take it from these changes that railroads had passed the zenith of their usefulness. The modern economic organization could not go on without them. The changes noted are the outcome of an extensive shifting of economic forces following the first World War. The unfavorable position of agriculture during most of the third decade of this century had worked to bring a marked decline on the less productive regions of the State. The increasing use of motor transport and the extension of good roads for their use, had likewise to a marked degree helped to take a considerable share of the local freight and passenger business of the railroads with the result that many feeder lines have gone out of use and have been abandoned. Airplanes at the time were still in the experimental stage insofar as transportation of passengers and goods is concerned. Mileage, however, is not the index of growth or usefulness. While minor abandonments had already taken place a decline of usefulness had developed on many feeder lines as a result of the economic changes noted at the same time to meet demands at the many growing industrial and commercial centers of the State. An increase

in mileage had been necessary and a very marked increase in physical structures, equipment and facilities had been made. Following the trend of population to the growing centers, rail transportation demand likewise shifted to the principal routes linking these growing centers and in the end there was the natural increase of rail carriage tending to centralize on certain rail routes.

Thus I have attempted to bring you a brief history of our Michigan railroads up to the first quarter-century in our modern time. Naturally there have been omissions of facts and figures but to sketch nearly a hundred years of such a large endeavor in the brief space allotted could only have been done in outline form. Perhaps the few anecdotes included and the omissions will balance one another. For further study and reading I might well suggest the bibliography which includes all sources of information obtainable at this writing.

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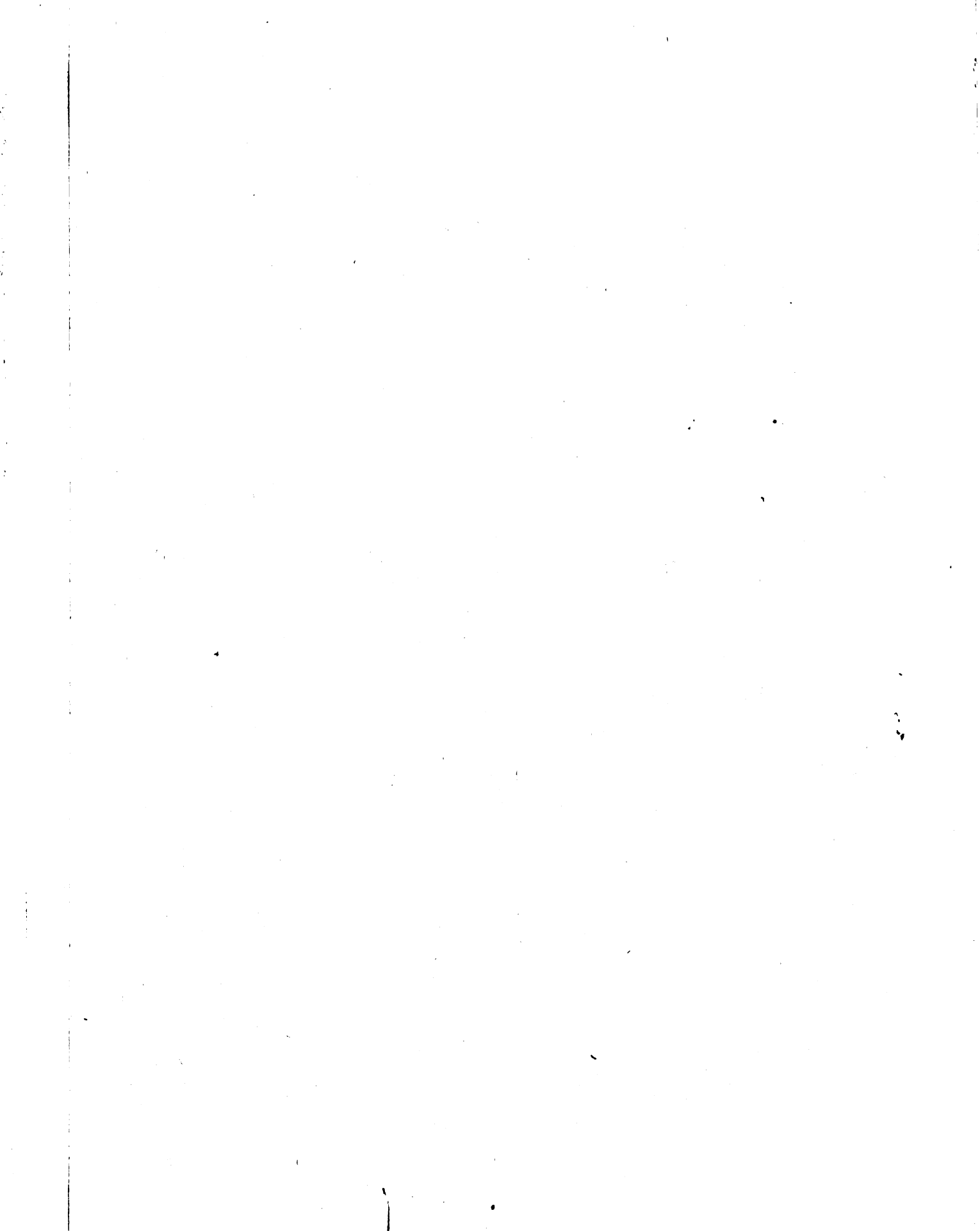
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