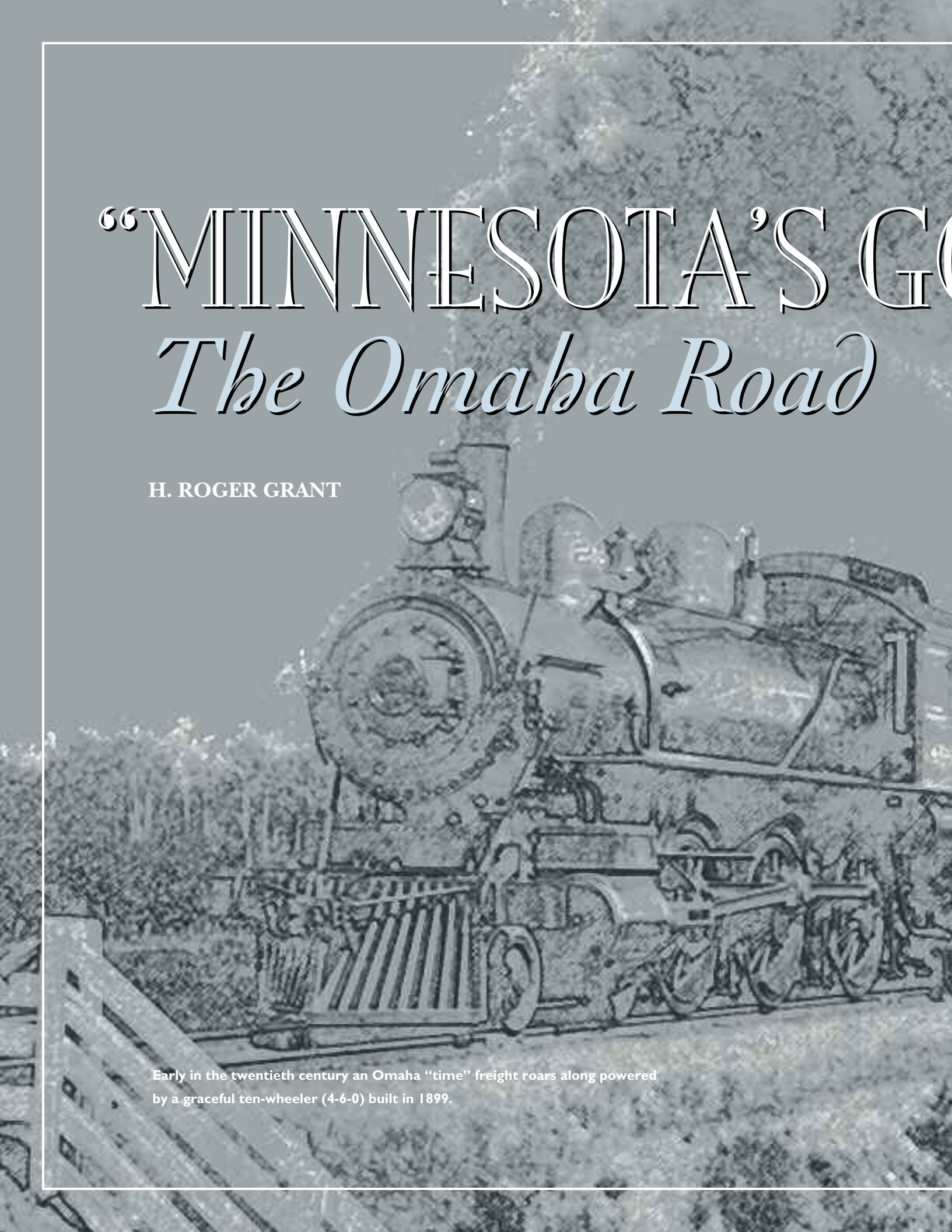


“MINNESOTA’S GO *The Omaha Road*”

H. ROGER GRANT

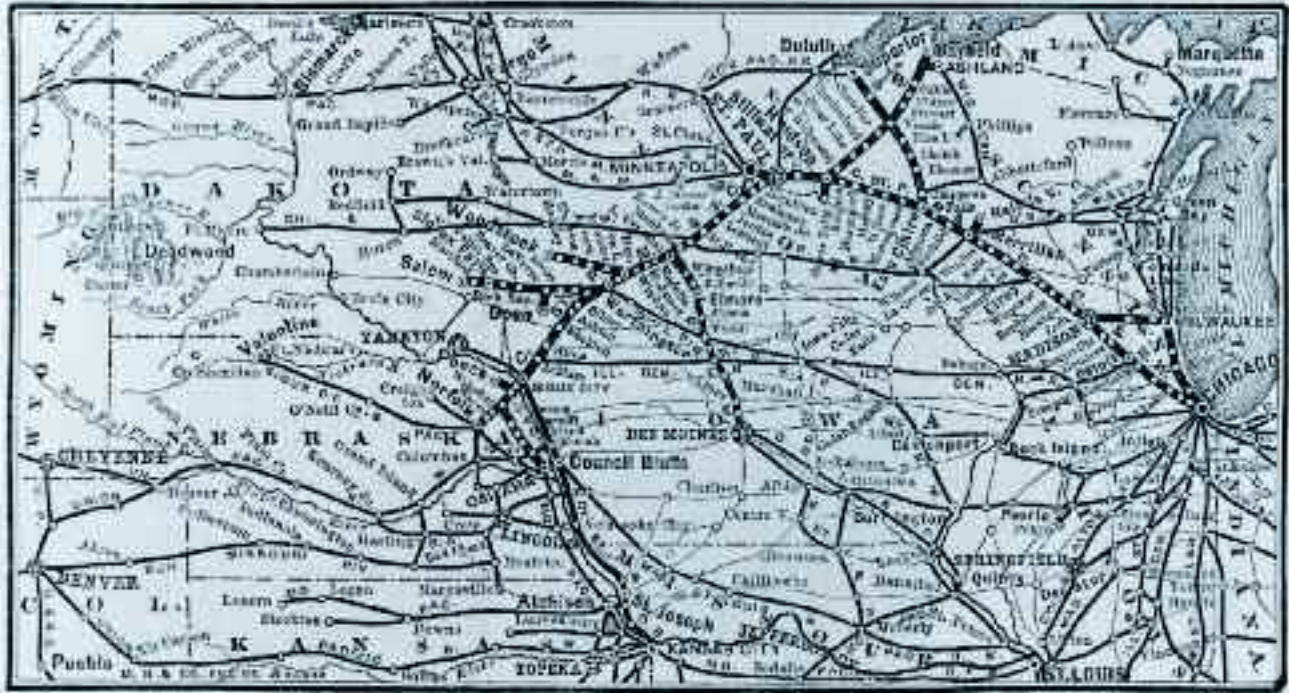


Early in the twentieth century an Omaha “time” freight roars along powered by a graceful ten-wheeler (4-6-0) built in 1899.

“GOOD RAILROAD”

UNLIKE MOST NEIGHBORING STATES, Minnesota has been the corporate home of a variety of railroads, including the mighty Great Northern and the spunky Minneapolis & St. Louis. Perhaps the best liked and most respected among the North Star-state carriers was the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway, commonly called “The Omaha.” Although nearly forgotten now, in the 1880s this St. Paul-based carrier rapidly became popular with almost everyone associated with it.





MAP OF THE C. ST. P. M. & O. RY. AND CONNECTIONS.

An 1884 map of the Omaha Road and its connections, from the *Land of Plenty* booklet

As with so many roads of the post-Civil War era, the Omaha evolved out of several predecessor companies and, in turn, rapidly united with a larger railroad. This “system building” began with an amalgamation of three core local railroads that emerged in the late 1860s and 1870s: the North Wisconsin Railway, the West Wisconsin Railway, and the St. Paul & Sioux City Railroad. Then, in 1880 and 1881, respectively, a group of out-of-state capitalists led by Henry H. Porter of Chicago merged the two Wisconsin lines and then the St. Paul & Sioux City to form the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway. In November 1882 the group’s speculative efforts were handsomely rewarded when the much larger Chicago & North Western took stock control of the Omaha. Over the years there would be

several additional corporate acquisitions and new construction: by 1910 track mileage reached 1,738, more than a quarter of which was in Minnesota. But throughout its long life the Omaha retained its distinctive bow-like configuration, extending from Elroy, Wisconsin (and a strategic connection with the North Western to Chicago), through the Twin Cities, St. James, and Worthington to Sioux City, Iowa, and, finally, Omaha, Nebraska. The Omaha also reached Duluth via Spooner and Superior, Wisconsin. It was a medium-sized railroad comparable to its midwestern rivals, the Chicago Great Western, the Minneapolis & St. Louis, and the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie (the Soo Line).¹

Even though the North Western controlled the Omaha for decades and finally absorbed it in 1972, the Omaha generally operated independently but harmoniously with its parent. Both railroads showed consumer sensitivity, even before the massive regulatory controls sparked by the Populist and Progressive crusades to reform the railroads. When a Blue Earth County farmer commented in 1889 that the “Royal Route,” the self-proclaimed nickname of the Omaha, “is Minnesota’s good railroad,” he captured its essence, both before and long after his observation.²

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A century ago Minnesotans held strong opinions about the railroad industry and even about individual carriers. A “love-hate” relationship commonly emerged. People needed the iron horse to compete in a continually more market-driven economy. They enthusiastically applauded the May 1869 ceremony at Utah’s isolated Promontory Summit that marked completion of the first transcontinental railroad, and they eagerly backed the growing web of track that splayed across much of the nation. On the other hand, the public might quietly rejoice when heavy competition between railroads led to shipping rebates, rate wars, and other cutthroat tactics. Railroad users fussed about “monopoly” of rail services, objected strongly to rate discriminations and particularly to the higher rates charged for hauling over shorter distances, blasted carriers for equipment shortages, especially during the crop-moving season, and resented anything that smacked of corporate selfishness.

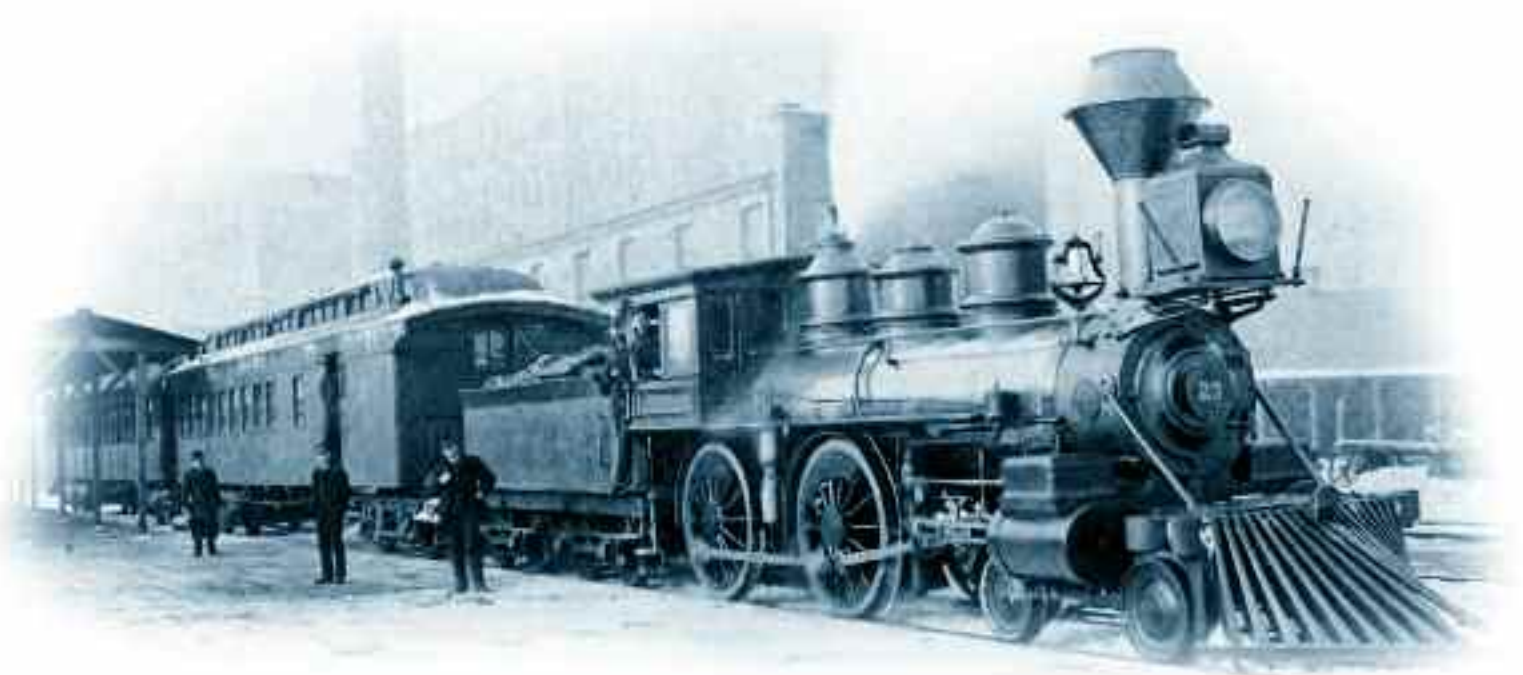
Much to the satisfaction of Minnesotans and residents of adjoining states, the Omaha labored more than most railroads to facilitate economic development in its service territory. Although hardly unique, the new carrier played a town-building role that meant much to thousands of residents of the Upper Midwest. The Omaha aggressively promoted such places as Adrian, Blakeley, Kasota, Le Sueur, Luverne, Madelia, Windom, and Worthington. It was utterly convinced that these and other communities on its line offered go-getting entrepreneurs enormous economic opportunities. Having acquired, through its predecessors, thousands of acres from federal and state land grants, the company disposed of them rapidly and at fair market prices. Newspaper advertisements, pamphlets, broadsides, and other outlets extolled the desirability of raising spring wheat, a crop that was easily grown, conveniently shipped, and always marketable. Typical of the Omaha’s booster copy is the following passage from the railroad’s 1884 book promoting southwestern Minnesota: “One sees farmers, business and professional men . . . capitalists, representing almost every line of mercantile life, flocking into Southwestern Minnesota, asserting that it is singular how such a rich and promising section should have been overlooked for so long a time, while other localities [Dakota Territory]—less favored by nature in every way, and vastly inferior in possibilities for the future—should have progressed so rapidly.”³

This commitment to residents, both current and expected, did not end with the closing of the farmers’ frontier. The Omaha remained active in promoting sales of its land and in stimulating growth. James E. Moore, who headed the road’s small but vigorous town-lot company, for example, worked to develop Avoca, a village in Murray County on the Pipestone branch: “I am very much in earnest in trying to procure for Avoca a bank, a good hotel and a drug-store and I do not propose to rest content with the situation until [the] town is supplied with all three.”⁴

Merely building track and advancing the territory did not alone ensure that the Omaha would become a

The cover of the 1884 Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha booklet promoting development in southwestern Minnesota





On a dreary winter day in 1884 an Omaha passenger-train crew—conductor, baggage master, brakeman, engineer, fireman, and roustabout—posed for a photographer at the station in St. Paul.

popular railroad, however. The company, which rapidly developed a substantial freight and passenger business, wisely spent heavily on motive power and rolling stock. Better equipment resulted in better service, making it possible, for instance, to avoid shortages of grain cars. Although most Omaha passenger trains could not rival the best of the Pennsylvania Railroad, “The Standard Railway of the World,” or some of the other powerful trunk roads, they adequately met travelers’ needs. An 1892 public timetable gave those who planned to travel from St. Paul to Chicago the following information: “Go East via St. Paul and over the North-Western Line—C.St.P.M.& O.Ry. This is the Only Line running Pullman and Wagner Complete Vestibuled Trains to Chicago.” Although trains to Duluth, Sioux City, and Omaha were less posh, they hardly disgraced the carrier. Not surprisingly, in 1898 a representative from an eastern investment firm who examined the road concluded: “This is a handsome railroad with an obvious commitment to providing modern equipment for its patrons, whether they are established businesses or new settlers who have taken up farms along its lines.”⁵

There was more to commend about the Omaha. Early on, the company established a superior safety record, one that improved with replacement equipment, most of all steel cars; better mainline signaling devices, including “continuous automatic block signals of the most modern type from Elroy, Wis., to St. Paul

... a distance of 194.57 miles,” completed in 1913; and an aggressive, nationally recognized Safety First program after 1910. In 1916 a Minnesota lawmaker asserted that “maybe with the exception of the Great Northern, the CMStP&O is the state’s safest railway.”⁶

Although the Omaha Road enjoyed an outstanding safety record, major accidents occurred, including this smashup of wooden cars and an American-type (4-4-0) steam locomotive in an unknown location, about 1910.



Even though the freight-car fleet of the Omaha lacked the glamour of its passenger rolling stock, the *Official Railway Equipment Register* for 1892 revealed a substantial, up-to-date roster. The number of the road's 40,000-pound or larger-capacity boxcars—3,420—stood proportionally higher than most of its competitors', impressive for a 1,475-mile road. And total freight equipment exceeded 7,600 pieces. Moreover, the Omaha claimed a substantial ratio of locomotives to mileage, .159, whereas the Chicago, St. Paul & Kansas City (soon to be the Chicago Great Western) and the Minneapolis & St. Louis had ratios of .132 and .118, respectively.⁷

ALTHOUGH PATRONS APPRECIATED the large, modern fleet of equipment, they also applauded the Omaha's general level of service. While the company daily dispatched scores of workhorse freight, passenger, and utilitarian mixed-car trains, it also provided more impressive "consists," or groupings of cars. "Limited" passenger trains making few stops and fast "time" freights testified to the carrier's response to regional transportation needs.⁸

Perhaps Omaha officials continually accelerated and upgraded their mainline "varnish," or wood-paneled passenger cars⁹ which ranged from Nos. 1 and 2 (Twin Cities-Omaha) to the Duluth-Superior-Chicago Fast Mail, for the public recognition or "marque value." Quality passenger service would surely enhance the company's corporate image and thereby win and retain freight customers. A splendid testimonial to the excellence of Omaha trains came in a November 1904 letter to the general passenger agent in St. Paul from a Lake Crystal rider: "Last month I boarded Train Number One *on time* at my home station for a trip to Omaha, Nebraska. . . . We speeded through the night." Added the writer, "The trainmen were courteous and always assisting. . . . This is so very important to me since I am aged and must use a walking cane. I plan to tell all about your magnificent rail-road."¹⁰

Appealing passenger service arguably meant less to most patrons of the Omaha than did reasonable freight rates, however. Before the company largely lost control of its pricing policies to progressive-era intrastate and interstate reform statutes, shippers frequently praised the company for its equitable transport charges. Particularly gratifying was the



A 1905 timetable promised comfort and safety to Omaha passengers.

promotion-minded railroad's attractive fees for shipping timber products. Lumber from the white-pine forests of Minnesota and especially Wisconsin could travel at relatively low cost to customers on the prairies of Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, and Nebraska. As settlements took shape, demands for wood products soared, and the Omaha responded. Boxcars laden with forest goods moved to lumberyards that dotted the countryside. In 1882 the company launched the Wisconsin Lumber Line, created specifically to give Chippewa River Valley mills the same type of rate advantages for shipping lumber to the West that wholesalers in Chicago enjoyed. Opined a Mankato builder: "I can afford to erect more and bigger houses because of the lumber rates levied by the CMStP&O Ry."¹¹



By 1900 passenger cars on Minnesota rails such as this one photographed by “flash light” at 8 P.M. on the Great Western Limited to Chicago featured individual reclining chairs, gas lighting, and steam heat.

To conclude that Minnesotans endorsed every action and policy of the Omaha would be incorrect. Occasionally the shrill cries of antirailroad and anti-Omaha protests could be heard. By the early years of the twentieth century, Socialists were the road’s most vocal opponents. These followers of long-time railway labor leader Eugene V. Debs believed that only through public ownership could the railroad “problem” be permanently solved. Other critics were more mainstream. For example, James Manahan, a Minneapolis attorney who represented the Minnesota Shippers’ Association, charged that a railroad “ring” worked to defeat honest candidates for state and national offices. “Who knows, today,” asked Manahan in 1906, “whether the capitol of Minnesota is located in this beautiful, marble building, on the hills, or down in the valley on Fourth Street, in the sordid offices of the Great Northern or Omaha railroads?” Yet there existed no groundswell of public opinion to press for government acquisition of the railroads or to take them to the woodshed for political misdeeds.¹²

Occasionally the Omaha sparred directly with politicians and regulators, though the company usually

avoided being a direct target. In 1899, when John Lind, the victorious Democratic-Populist-Silver Republican fusion candidate, became the state’s first modern reform governor, he blasted opposition Republicans for being “unduly generous to railroads, large lumber firms, telegraph companies, and other big corporations.” Yet his mostly failed program of reform, stymied by a conservative legislature, avoided mention of any acts of corporate arrogance committed by the Omaha. Lind’s successor, progressive Republican Samuel R. Van Sant, focused on James J. Hill and the Northern Securities Company, a holding firm launched in 1901 that included both the Great Northern and the Northern Pacific railroads. With invaluable support from President Theodore Roosevelt and his attorney general, Philander C. Knox, the Van Sant juggernaut, backed by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1904, smashed what a majority of Minnesotans probably considered to be that evil trust. Even when the state’s most famous progressive, Democrat John A. Johnson, became governor in 1905, his antirailroad attacks did not specifically target the Omaha. The Johnson administration successfully concentrated its efforts on outlawing

complimentary passes, setting intrastate passenger rates at two cents per mile, and fixing maximum intrastate freight charges. If there were individual railroad targets, they were the two Chicago roads, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul and the Chicago & North Western, even though these “foreign” carriers hardly misbehaved.¹³

Although Omaha executives grumbled about regulatory restrictions, especially rate controls, they accepted them without much of a public fuss. “Railroads in Minnesota are attacked by Gov. Johnson only because they are railroads and are before the people’s eye,” concluded the superintendent of the Omaha’s Minnesota and Iowa Division in an internal memorandum. “It is well known that our road has been a decent citizen and still there has been malicious rate meddling.”¹⁴

In fact, the most publicized clash between the Omaha and the state of Minnesota had erupted some years earlier. Although the pronounced policy of the company was “to comply with all orders [from regulatory bodies]. . . without serious loss to its revenues,” an 1887 decision by the Minnesota Railroad and Warehouse Commission seemed so unjust that the road felt compelled to fight. What rankled officials was the commission’s requirement, issued without notice or hearing, that carriers with trackage in Minneapolis’s milling and warehouse district charge the same fee of \$1.00 per car for all switching. Railroads, including the Omaha, had mutually agreed to a \$1.50 rate, however, and the Omaha swiftly complained to the regulatory body. When it refused to make an upward adjustment, the Omaha sought relief from the federal courts. The Omaha’s legal brief contended that the commission denied fair compensation and “would confiscate property.” After reviewing the voluminous evidence, the court found that the actual cash cost to the Omaha stood at \$1.31 per car. Wisely, it ordered a permanent injunction, reestablishing the rate at \$1.50 per car switched. Although greatly annoyed, the commission did not appeal.¹⁵

STATE AND, ESPECIALLY, FEDERAL REGULATION of railroads, most notably the Hepburn and Mann-Elkins Acts of 1906 and 1910, did not make the Omaha’s leadership either despondent or complacent. Like most carriers of the day, the road repeatedly spent heavily on betterments. In 1912 company President William A.

Gardner aptly stated the Omaha philosophy, which understandably paralleled that of its parent corporation: “If the Omaha Road or any other Railroad is to meet its obligations to the general public and to its stockholders and debt-holders, it must continuously be kept up in the most exacting way.”¹⁶

While the ebb and flow of earnings affected expenditures—low during the depression of 1893–97 but high between the end of the panic of 1907 and federal management during World War I—the Omaha constantly strove to become a better property. It spent extensively on rolling stock, including evermore powerful steam locomotives and all-steel passenger cars. It also invested in “maintenance of way.” During the 1906–07 fiscal year, for example, the Omaha system installed 8,574 tons of new steel rails and 6,526 tons of “usable rails,” along with 311,281 replacement hardwood ties. Furthermore, it ballasted 77 miles of line with gravel and 15 miles with cinders and slag. The company also replaced 4,302 feet of wooden bridging with “permanent work,” mostly steel bridges and earthen fill. Repeatedly the Omaha rehabilitated its rights-of-way, eliminating grades and curvatures. In 1906–07 it also completed line changes in Minnesota between Minneopa and Lake Crystal and between Ottawa and St. Peter. Structures, too, were replaced, remodeled, or expanded. During that same reporting period the public saw new depots at Dovray and Lake Elmo and a 12,000-square-foot brick addition to the freight house in Duluth. For many Minnesotans, however, a new



Complimentary Omaha Road pass, one of dozens issued over several decades to a Minnesota judge

general office building at 275 East Fourth Street in St. Paul, which opened in February 1917, symbolized the progressivism and commitment of the Omaha Road.¹⁷

The decade of the 1920s began an era of dramatic struggle for the Omaha and most other carriers in Minnesota and the nation. The episode of wartime control or “federalization” under the U.S. Railroad Administration that finally ended on March 1, 1920, did not leave it in stellar condition. Moreover, operating costs soared. Comparing 1923 with immediate prewar conditions, the road reported that “Wages of employees are 100 per cent. higher and the materials and supplies cost approximately 60 per cent. more than in those years.” Furthermore, the company felt the growing effect of competition from automobiles, buses, and trucks. In response it made adjustments, reducing freight and passenger train movements and abandoning its weakest appendages.¹⁸

Yet the Omaha did not ignore its tradition of quality service. Illustrating this commitment was its approach

to local passenger operations. In August 1927 an official of the Northern Pacific Railroad in St. Paul asked an Omaha executive about a newspaper report of service expansion: “I happen to see press notice about your new train between St. Paul and Spooner. . . . In view of the practically unbroken tending toward passenger train elimination, I was wondering how you came to put on another train.” He added, “I am simply curious about the situation because in providing of additional train service these days is an unusual proceeding.” A response came shortly. T. W. Kennedy, assistant general manager of the Omaha, replied that “Relative to our new train between St. Paul and Spooner, this train is in operation only between Spooner and Hudson [Wisconsin] where it connects with mainline trains. We, like yourselves, are doing everything in our power to curtail rather than extend passenger service, but in this case were confronted with the fact that we have no morning service into the Twin Cities from that territory.” Obviously the Omaha

The Omaha built attractive but standardized depots for important mainline stations such as this one at Lake Elmo.



factored in both public-service and economic considerations and hoped that this new connection to the Twin Cities would generate little, if any, red ink.¹⁹

In the 1930s the railroad industry, including the Omaha, did not entirely give up on passenger trains, but the era of the poky local was disappearing. Unfortunately for the Omaha in Minnesota, state regulators demanded that at least minimal passenger service be maintained. By early in the decade they had grudgingly allowed the Omaha, for example, to decrease and downgrade accommodations from twice-daily passenger trains to a once-a-day mixed run on the 55-mile Pipestone branch. This adjusted “hogs and humans” service, however, failed to connect conveniently with mainline varnish at Heron Lake and handled mostly carload, less-than-carload, and Railway Express Agency shipments instead of revenue-generating passengers. An Omaha representative expressed the belief that if any traveler wished to undertake an extensive trip, “he can drive to our main line or take a bus or jitney.” And he correctly added, “No railroad can afford to run largely empty passenger trains over any branch or to stay in the short-haul business.” This was hardly a “public-be-damned” pronouncement. And by the early 1930s both the Interstate Transit Line, which the North Western Railroad partly owned, and the Jack Rabbit Lines offered several daily buses through Pipestone and nearby communities to Mankato, Sioux City, and other area destinations.²⁰

While Minnesotans might resent local-service retrenchments, they heartily applauded the Omaha’s up-grading of mainline trains. Even though an aggressive Good Roads movement agitated to “Lift Minnesota Out of the Mud,” the state’s network of primary roads remained a far cry from the multilane, limited-access superhighways spawned by the National Defense Highway Act of 1956. The Omaha concluded that passenger



trains on its principal stems held a comparative advantage: they could compete profitably with other modes of transport, namely private cars and commercial buses, for medium and long trips. Accordingly, on January 16, 1930, the Omaha introduced a smart overnight “name train,” the Nightingale. It ran between the Twin Cities and Omaha with intermediate stops at Le Sueur, Mankato, St. James, Worthington, Sioux City, and Council Bluffs, Iowa. In addition to an attractive observation car and coaches, the Nightingale contained sleepers that also connected directly to Sioux Falls and Mitchell, South Dakota. In its inaugural publicity folder, the Omaha highlighted features of the consist: “The Cafe-Lounge is an

innovation in car design that will be a source of gratification to travelers. It is the creation of Chicago & North Western Line designers and car construction engineers—and was developed after intensive study of the wishes of the traveling public.” The press enthusiastically reported the train’s debut, emphasizing that it “will be equipped with radio, and programs will be furnished every evening.” Even though the ensuing national depression kept the Nightingale from becoming a smashing financial success, the train developed a faithful ridership and showed, one newspaper reported, that “the Omaha Road cares about the needs and comfort of travelers.”²¹

A LITMUS TEST OF WHETHER THE OMAHA was “Minnesota’s good railroad” is its interactions with its workers. Except for nationally called strikes by operating and shop-craft unions, relations between the Omaha’s workers and managers were mostly harmonious. Although some Omaha employees became agitated during the bitter Chicago-centered Pullman Strike of 1894, operations were only modestly disrupted. In the wake of the



Typical Minnesota section crew, about 1900; these men worked for the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad, later part of the Chicago & North Western Railway

acrimonious national shopmen's walkout of 1922, a member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive firemen and Enginemen from St. Paul reflected on the Omaha's labor-management conditions: "I know that federal judges view railroads as essential businesses and freely use federal law [Sherman Act] to break strikes, but I see this company as not a place where we have serious problems with our bosses." And he volunteered this insightful remark: "We all seem to know and respect one another."²²

It is not surprising that employees at a railroad that consisted of less than 2,000 route miles and only several operating divisions would develop a sense of kinship.

Similar familial relations developed within comparable carriers, including the Chicago Great Western and the Minneapolis & St. Louis. Early on, however, Omaha management endorsed institutionalization of these bonds of comradeship through creation of the Omaha Veteran Employees Association, a wholly voluntary social organization. Older and retired workers enthusiastically joined. In June 1931, for example, the 554-member group held its popular annual gathering at the Hotel St. Paul and "the rollicking tune of 'Casey Jones' was the rallying music," reinforcing the strong family feeling.²³

Although activities for veteran employees tapered off in the 1950s as the North Western assumed greater

corporate control, a special “Omaha spirit” continued long thereafter. While officially employed by the North Western, workers repeatedly identified themselves as Omaha men. “I was surprised that there would be train crews on the old Omaha Road,” noted a North Western official in 1986, almost 15 years after his company absorbed the Omaha, “who told a dispatcher or someone else that there was, let’s say, a cut of cars for the BN or Soo from *the Omaha*.”²⁴

As activities associated with the Omaha Veteran Employees Association diminished after World War II, public perception of the road became less pronounced and surely less favorable. Generally, the railroad industry faded from daily national life, especially in places removed from busy urban commuter districts. Most of all, passenger service declined and frequently deteriorated in quality. By 1960 passenger business on the Omaha had dwindled appreciably, remaining only between Duluth and Chicago and between the Twin Cities and Chicago. A year earlier the daytime North American had made its last run between the Twin Cities and Council Bluffs, the final varnish on the “west end”

of the Omaha. Furthermore, by this time the main lines lacked their former well-groomed appearance, and surviving branches had often grown weedy and unkempt. Depots seemed especially shabby; few had been repaired or painted in a generation or even since the start of the Great Depression. These structures had become eyesores because state regulators made it difficult for the company to close and remove them until the late 1960s.²⁵

“Oh, the old Omaha Road, the hometown railroad that has grown old and forlorn,” observed a writer for the Worthington newspaper in 1966. “Yet something good remains. Friendly crews continue to serve our local freight needs.” Significantly, Minnesota’s “good” railroad never really emerged as Minnesota’s “bad” railroad; instead, it became largely inconsequential. When salvage crews removed historic Omaha trackage, an undertaking that accelerated in the 1970s, a sense of nostalgia surely gripped onlookers who remembered personal experiences or repeated stories of the days when this carrier had been a vibrant, progressive part of their community.²⁶ □

NOTES

This article was supported, in part, by a grant from the publications and research department of the Minnesota Historical Society with funds provided by the State of Minnesota.

1. H. Roger Grant, “Three Components of the Chicago & North Western: The Omaha, the Louie, and the Great Weedy,” *Railroad History* 154 (Spring 1986): 17–23; “Corporate History of the Chicago, Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway,” typescript, Apr. 1, 1940, Chicago & North Western History Center, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb.

2. Chicago & North Western Railway Company, *Annual Report, 1956*, 11; Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway, *Annual Report, 1971*, 1; *Railroad Gazette* 41 (Sept. 28, 1906): 259; V. A. Hampton to General Agent, St. Paul, Mar. 12, 1889, Omaha Road Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, hereinafter cited as Omaha Road Papers.

3. S. M. Stockslager, *Statement Showing Land Grants Made by Congress to Aid in the Construction of Railroads, Wagon Roads, Canals, and Internal Improvements* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1888), 8–9; J. H. Hanson, *An Idyl on Ice* (St. Paul: Pioneer Press, 1887); J. H. Drake, *The Land of Plenty, As It Is. Southern Minnesota, St. Paul to Sioux Falls* (Chicago: Charles R. Brodix, 1884), 6.

4. James E. Moore to J. N. Rivers, Nov. 22, 1892, letter, Northwestern Town Lot Co., 386, Omaha Road Papers.

5. Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway,

timetable, Jan. 15, 1892, author’s possession; clipping files, Harvey Fisk & Sons Papers, Princeton University Library, Princeton, New Jersey.

6. H. Roger Grant, *The North Western: A History of the Chicago & North Western Railway System* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996), 122–24; *Thirty-Second Annual Report of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway Company* (St. Paul, 1913), 13; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 1916, notes in author’s possession.

7. *The Official Railway Equipment Guide* 7 (Jan. 1892): 64, 74, 106.

8. A “limited” passenger train makes a limited number of stops and is considered one of the most important trains in service. A “time” freight is a fast train that operates on a specific schedule and makes only a few stops between terminals. It is the freight-train equivalent of a limited passenger train.

9. Before the era of all-steel equipment, passenger trains employed wooden cars, often with oak exteriors and highly polished (or “varnished”) mahogany and walnut interiors.

10. Wilma Olson to Omaha Road President, Nov. 12, 1904, Omaha Road Papers.

11. *Northwestern Lumberman*, July 15, 1882; G. W. Van Dusen to President, CStPM&O Ry, June 12, 1883, Omaha Road Papers.

12. James Manahan, *Trials of a Lawyer: An Autobiography* (Minneapolis: Farnham Printing, 1933), 70.

13. Carl H. Chrislock, *The Progressive Era in Minnesota, 1899–1918* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1971), 13; George M. Stephenson, *John Lind of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1935), 161–66; Winifred G. Helmes, *John A. Johnson, The People’s Governor; A Political Biography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), 107–09.

14. Memorandum from the Superintendent, Minnesota & Iowa Division, n.d., Omaha Road Papers. The favorite railroads of Minnesotans during the early-twentieth century were probably the Omaha, then the Chicago Great Western, the Minneapolis & St. Louis, and the Soo Line.

15. *Eighth Annual Report of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway Company for the Year Ending December 31, 1888* (St. Paul: Pioneer Press Co., 1889), 11; *Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Ry. Co. v. Becker et al.*, Railroad & Warehouse Commissioners, July 28, 1888, in *Federal Reporter* (St. Paul: West Publishing Co.), 35: 883–86.

16. “Statement Made By W. A. Gardner,” Feb. 12, 1913, Public Relations Dept. files, Chicago & North Western Transportation Company Papers, now held by the Union Pacific Railroad, Omaha NE.

17. *Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway Company* (St. Paul, 1907), 7, 11; *Supplement to the Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha Railway Company* (St. Paul, 1916), 15. With the return of prosperity after the depression of the 1890s, the Omaha Road decided to have stockholders contribute materially to development of the railroad, as evidenced in this report from the statistical department of the New York-based Wood, Struthers & Co. in 1918: “In 1898–1906, the directors appropriated \$4,120,000 of surplus income for an improvement fund which fund was expended *in toto* for additions and betterments in the ten years following 1898; and, furthermore, the stockholders have in effect furnished for the upbuilding of the road undistributed annual surpluses amounting in the twenty years to \$3,497,000;” “Wood, Struthers & Co. Report to Directors of CStPM & Omaha Railroad, 1918,” author’s possession. Indeed, management was hardly milking the property.

18. Grant, *The North Western*, 134–37, 139; *Forty-Second Annual Report of the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha*

Railway Company (St. Paul, 1923), 7.

19. B. O. Johnson to T. W. Kennedy, Aug. 1, 1927, and T. W. Kennedy to B. O. Johnson, Aug. 10, 1927, Northern Pacific Railway Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

20. Chicago & North Western Railway, timetable, Sept. 2, 1923, Feb. 17, 1929, Sept. 25, 1932; “The Omaha Road and Its Passenger Service,” [1931], Omaha Road Papers; *Russell’s National Motor Coach Guide* (Cedar Rapids, IA), Oct. 1933, p. 186, 196.

21. *St. Paul Daily News*, Jan. 15, 1930, p.4; “The Nightingale,” pamphlet, n.d., author’s collection.

22. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 1922, notes in author’s possession.

23. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 7, 1931, p. 9.

24. Christopher J. Burger, interview by author, Chicago, Nov. 7, 1986, notes in author’s possession.

25. Chicago & North Western Railway, timetable, Apr. 24, 1960; Charles C. Shannon, interview by author, Arlington Heights, IL, Oct. 1, 1988, notes in author’s possession.

26. Clipping, *Worthington Daily Globe*, Chicago & North Western Railway Papers, Chicago (now dispersed), notes in author’s possession.



In 1952 the Omaha’s diesel-electric locomotive No. 153 passed the once-stylish Worthington passenger depot.

The photographs on p. 199, 203, 206, 207, and 211 are in the author’s collection; the photo on p. 202 (top) is from the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The others are from the Minnesota Historical Society Library.



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