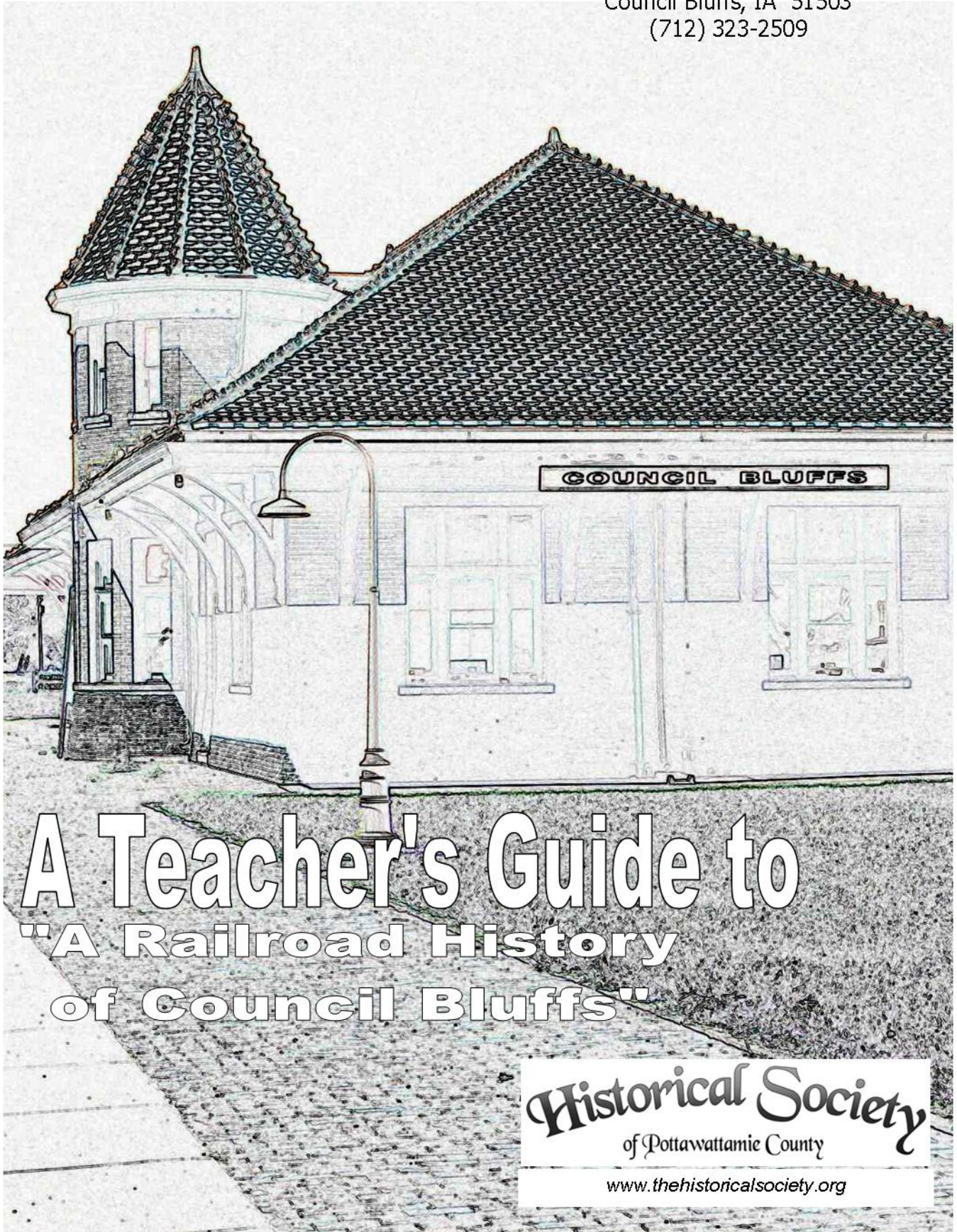


# **RailsWest Railroad Museum**

16 Ave and South Main Street  
Council Bluffs, IA 51503  
(712) 323-2509



## **A Teacher's Guide to "A Railroad History of Council Bluffs"**

*Historical Society*  
of Pottawattamie County

[www.thehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.thehistoricalsociety.org)

**The Historic General Dodge House  
The RailsWest Railroad Museum  
The Union Pacific Railroad Museum**

**Patricia LaBounty, Outreach Coordinator**  
200 Pearl Street • Council Bluffs, IA 51503 • 402.501.3841 • FAX 712. 323.4973  
*plabount@upcontractor.up.com*

Dear Educator,

Welcome to an exciting resource for incorporating the RailsWest Railroad Museum into your classroom curriculum! Our goal is to make it easy for you to incorporate this exciting History into your planned classroom activities or before your visit to the RailsWest Railroad Museum. This Teachers Guide is designed to be flexible enough for you to pick and choose which areas you need to accomplish your goals in the classroom.

To begin, read through the Introduction and Curriculum/Bibliography to see how this Unit will fit into the standards for your grade, and then read the background information. This section can be used either as a student reading, or for your own information. There are many activities included at the end of the Unit.

Good Luck and happy journey through this exciting time in American and Railroad History. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

*Patricia LaBounty*

Patricia LaBounty  
Outreach Coordinator

# RailsWest Railroad Museum

## *A Railroad History of Council Bluffs*

### *Introduction*

For over 150 years railroads have played an important role in the history of Council Bluffs and of Pottawattamie County. The railroads shaped the growth of the region and made Council Bluffs one of our nations largest rail centers. The effect on Council Bluffs was extraordinary as the city grew from an isolated town on the Missouri River with a population of about 2,000 in 1860 to a bustling city with a population of just over 10,000 residents a decade later. By 1870, Council Bluffs had become the fifth largest city in Iowa. The railroads retained their importance into the 20th century as Council Bluffs became one of the nation's largest rail centers. And while the heyday of rail travel may be gone, railroads remain a vital part of our community and of our history.

**Lesson Grade Level: 2-8<sup>th</sup>**

### **Council Bluffs, IA Social Studies and Math**

#### **Grade 3:**

Compare and Contrast similarities and differences in why communities develop and grow

Use various maps to discuss characteristics of places including distances

#### **Grade 4:**

Compare regions based on Historical patterns

Explain the importance of transportation and communication to economic growth

Describe relation between Iowa's geography and settlement patterns

#### **Grade 5**

Identify major events, people and periods of growth in American History

Recognize technological /scientific advances and their effects on history

Recognize contributions of men, women and groups of people.

### **Lewis Central Schools and Tri-Center Schools**

#### **Grades 2,3,4,5**

Social Studies: Time, continuity and change

People, places and environment

Production Distribution and consumption,

Science, Technology and society

### **Nebraska Schools:**

#### **Grades 2-4 United States History, Nebraska History, Geography, Civics/Government and Economics**

4.1.3 Explain the impact of advance in transportation, communication, immigrations and economic development.

4.1.5 Explain how historic and geographic factors affected the expansion and development of Nebraska

4.1.7 Identify, analyze and make generalizations using primary sources...

# **RailsWest Railroad Museum**

4.1.8 Identify how changing modes of transportation and communication by entrepreneurs have changed the economic system of the United States and Nebraska

## **Grades 5-8 United States History**

8.1.5 Describe how the physical geography and various incentives influenced the movement of people goods and services  
Describe the impact of inventions...

### **Lesson Objectives:**

- 1) Understand how rail travel influenced the growth of Council Bluffs.
- 2) Discuss what changes occurred in Council Bluffs and in Omaha as a result of the Railroads converging on the region.
- 3) Discuss the impact on the community to have 1 out of every 4 working residents be an employee of a Railroad.

### **Preparation to teach these lessons:**

- 1) Review the background information provided.
- 2) Investigate the books and internet sources listed.
- 3) Choose and prepare for a specific activity.

### **Bibliography:**

Alexander, Edwin P. *Down at the Depot: American Railroad Stations from 1831 to 1920*. CN Potter: New York. 1970

Ambrose, Stephen E. *Nothing Like It in the World: The Men Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad 1863-1869*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002

Corliss, Carlton Jonathan. *Main Line of the Mid-Americas: the Story of the Illinois Central*. Creative Age Press: New York. 1950.

Daniels, Rudolph. *Trains Across the Continent: North American Railroad History*. Pacific City graphics: South Sioux City, NE. 1997.

Douglas, George H. *All Aboard: The Railroad in American Life*. Paragon:NewYork. 1992

Follmar, A. Joseph. *Locomotive Facilities, C & NW, and CS & PM & O: engine Terminals*. Chicago and Northwestern Historical Society: Elmhurst, Ill.1996

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Heimberger, Donald J. *Wabash*. Heimberger House Publishing Company: River Forest, Ill. 1984.



# RailsWest Railroad Museum

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Mailer, Stan. *The Omaha Road: Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha*. Hundman: Mulkteo, WA. 2004.

Overton, Richard Cleghorn. *Burlington Route; a History of the Burlington Lines*. Knopf: New York.1965

Signor, John R. *Council Bluffs: A Union Pacific Town*. The Streamliner vol. 20 No. 2 pages 6-32.

Signor, John R., Dave Seidel and Jeff Root. *The Big Switch to the Milwaukee Road*. The Streamliner vol. 20 No. 2 pages 33-37.

Tschudy, Kim D. *Illinois Central Railroad: 1854-1960 Photo Archive*. Iconografix. Hudson, Wis. 2002.

## **Links:**

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/tcrr/tguide/index.html#hist>

This is a great Teacher's guide on the PBS Transcontinental Railroad Series. There is a lot of background information on the building of the transcontinental railroad.

[www.catskillarchive.com/rextra/Page0002.Html](http://www.catskillarchive.com/rextra/Page0002.Html)

This site has information on anything you could want to know about Railroads. The building, the careers, and some interesting Tall Tales!

<http://www.thehistoricalsociety.org/Depot%20extended.htm>

This is the Historical Society of Pottawattamie County's railroad history page. This has a lot of good information.

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/rrhtml/rrhome.html>

This is the library of Congress Railroad Maps section. You can search here for detailed maps of Iowa and the surrounding states.

[http://freepages.books.rootsweb.com/~cooverfamily/pottawattamie\\_2/pot\\_2\\_1.htm](http://freepages.books.rootsweb.com/~cooverfamily/pottawattamie_2/pot_2_1.htm)

This is the online version of the History of Pottawattamie County Volume One. This is a great resource for biographies.

[http://www.kindredtrails.com/IA\\_Pottawattamie.html](http://www.kindredtrails.com/IA_Pottawattamie.html)

This site will direct you to census reports and other biographical data on Council Bluffs and Pottawattamie County.

<http://www.nps.gov/gosp/>

The Golden Spike National Historic Monument

<http://www.ourdocuments.gov>

## **Railroad History of Council Bluffs**

*Introduction and Bibliography*

# RailsWest Railroad Museum

Us National Archives, printer friendly version of the Pacific Railway Act  
[http://freepages.books.rootsweb.com/~cooverfamily/pottawattamie\\_2/pot\\_2\\_2.htm](http://freepages.books.rootsweb.com/~cooverfamily/pottawattamie_2/pot_2_2.htm)

History of Pottawattamie County  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/rrhtml/rrhome.html>

Railroad map collection  
[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/tcrr/peopleevents/p\\_durant.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/tcrr/peopleevents/p_durant.html)

About Thomas Durant, President of Union Pacific Railroad  
[http://libr.unl.edu:2000/westward\\_through\\_nebraska/index.html](http://libr.unl.edu:2000/westward_through_nebraska/index.html)

## **GUIDE TO THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD LANDS**

Union Pacific Railroad Company, 1870

## **THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD: A TRIP ACROSS THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT FROM OMAHA TO OGDEN**

Nelson's Pictorial Guide-Books, 1871

<http://cpr.org/Museum/Chinese.html>  
Central Pacific Railroad Museum

# RailsWest Railroad Museum

## A Railroad History of Council Bluffs

For over 150 years railroads have played an important role in the history of Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County and Omaha, NE. The growth and unique character of Council Bluffs was largely shaped by the construction of the railroads during the 19th century which was also responsible for settling much of Pottawattamie County and Omaha. The railroads retained their importance into the 20th century as Council Bluffs became one of the nation's largest rail centers. And while the heyday of rail travel may be gone, railroads remain a vital part of our community and of our history.

The effect of the railroads on Council Bluffs was extraordinary as the city grew from an isolated town on the Missouri River with a population of about 2,000 in 1860 to a bustling city of just over 10,000 residents a decade later. By 1870 Council Bluffs had become the 5th largest city in Iowa. By 1883 Council Bluffs boasted *eight* railroad depots and roundhouses and *six* freight depots along with 51 livery stables and 31 hotels. That year the city's residents were also introduced to running water, electric lights, and standardized time.

The lure of jobs with the railroads brought many people, including immigrants, to Council Bluffs. The Irish who came to Council Bluffs during construction of the Union Pacific's Transcontinental Railroad were soon joined by immigrants from other European countries. Railroad land companies were particularly influential in promoting the immigration of farmers from Europe to turn the wild prairies of Pottawattamie County, Nebraska and Kansas, into productive fields. At the same time, Railroads were laying out new towns along their railroad lines. One such town was Minden, IA which was almost entirely settled by German immigrants.

The city and the region continued to prosper because of the railroads and when World War II began, 21 different passenger trains stopped in Council Bluffs from 6 different carriers! Many of these trains also carried troops and goods from one coast to another. It was this ease of transport that made the Railroads instrumental in supporting the United States military both in Europe and in Asia.

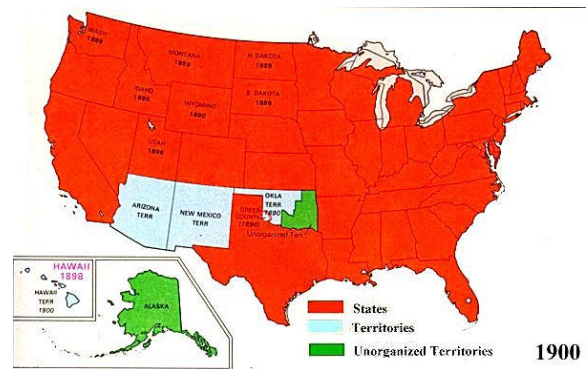
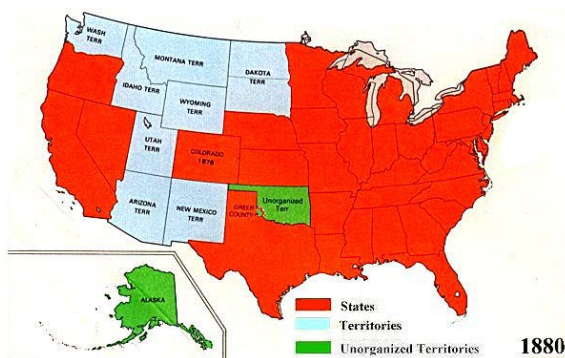
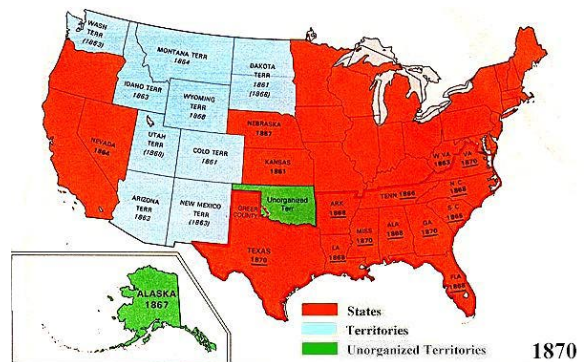
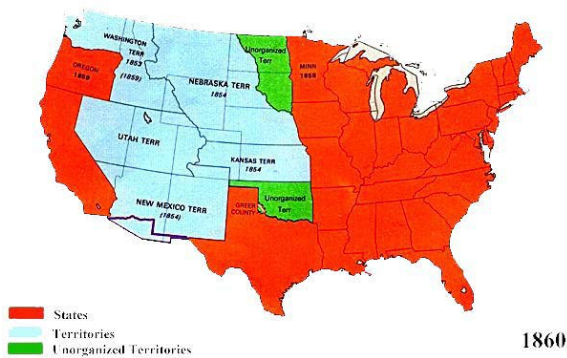
The great era of passenger service began to come to a close within a few years after the end of World War II. Nonetheless, Council Bluffs remained a lively rail town and was aptly titled the "*Blue Denim City*" after the blue jeans worn by railroad employees. In 1953, one out of every four people in the city were employed by the railroads. At this time, Council Bluffs population was 47,000! It was also at this time that Council Bluffs became the 5<sup>th</sup> largest mail terminal in the United States! Think of all the cities that could have included: Chicago, Denver, St. Louis, New York, etc...

### *1940's passenger trains in Council Bluffs, IA*

*Burlington's* Silver Streak Zephyr,  
California Zephyr, and Chicago  
Express  
*Great Western's* Nebraska Limited,  
Omaha Express, Twin City Express,  
and Twin City Limited  
*Northwestern's* City of Denver, City  
of Los Angeles, Gold Coast, National  
Parks Special, North American, and  
San Francisco Overland  
*Milwaukee's* Arrow and Midwest  
Hiawatha  
*Rock Island's* Corn Belt Rocket,  
Des Moines-Omaha Limited, and  
Rocky Mountain Rocket  
*Wabash's* Omaha Limited and Saint  
Louis Limited

# RailsWest Railroad Museum

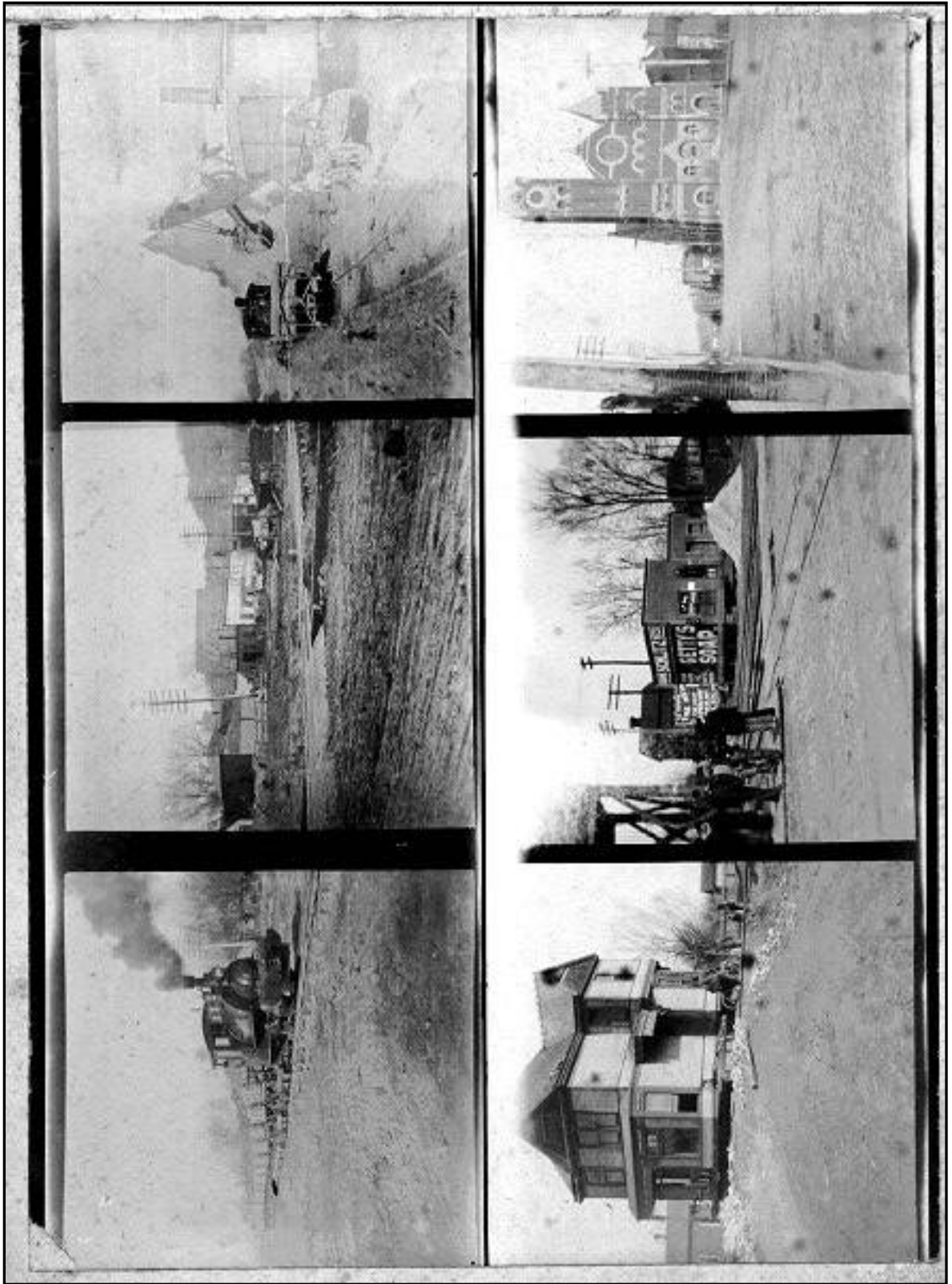
The 1960's brought even more changes to Council Bluffs and to the railroads. People were becoming used to driving cars instead of taking the train. The national system of highways and freeways had improved and it was easier to travel by car. Many railroad companies stopped offering passenger service altogether and several more tried to merge, or combine companies, with each other to avoid financial ruin. While passenger service is no longer available, today's railroads are not only a constant reminder of the city's past but also the possibilities of its future. Now the only passenger service left is the government subsidized AMTRAK which operates out of Omaha and the only remaining passenger Depot in Council Bluffs is the Rock Island Depot at the RailsWest Railroad Museum.





# RailsWest Railroad Museum

## Scenes from Council Bluffs, 1900



Council Bluffs Public Library

# RailsWest Railroad Museum

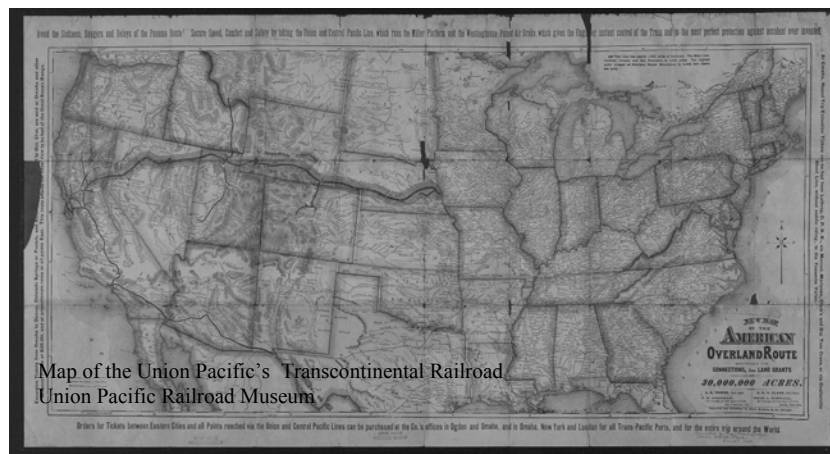
## The Railroads

There were 8 original railroads that contributed more than any others to the growth and development of Council Bluffs, IA and Omaha, NE. They are: The Union Pacific Railroad, the Council Bluffs and St. Joseph's Railway, later known as the Burlington, the Chicago and Northwestern, The Rock Island, the Chicago and St. Paul Railroad, later known as the "Milwaukee Road", the Illinois Central, the Chicago Great Western and the Wabash.

### The Union Pacific:

This Railroad came into being after the Pacific Railway Act was signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862. Lincoln had visited Council Bluffs in 1859 and spoken to Grenville Dodge, a noted railway surveyor.

Dodge convinced Lincoln that Council Bluffs would be the best place to begin the Transcontinental Railroad and that is what Lincoln signed into law with the Pacific Railway Act. The Union Pacific began construction of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1863, but it was not until 1865 after the Civil War and when General Dodge was hired as the Chief Engineer, that it really got past Omaha.



The Union Pacific had passenger service from Council Bluffs from 1865 onward and cross country after 1869 when the Transcontinental Railroad was completed. Celebrations were held from coast to coast and the cracked Liberty Bell was even rung in Philadelphia to mark the beginning of freight and passenger service to California. The lack of a Missouri River bridge became the only missing link in a transcontinental railroad. This made Council Bluffs an important hub for travelers and immigrants trying to reach the Western United States and the West Coast.

In 1878, the Union Pacific's famous Council Bluffs Transfer Depot and Hotel opened on the West End of town. Designed by U.P. Superintendent Clark, the building supposedly cost almost \$100,000 and featured black walnut and white pine interior with 20 foot high ceilings on the first floor. The south wing of the Depot was home to five express companies while the north wing included an elegant dining room, saloon, barbershop, newsstand, lunch counter, and waiting rooms segregated by gender: male and female. The hotel was on the second floor and stretched along a 207 foot long hallway with two large parlors located at each end. Nearby was the less luxurious Emigrant House with a bakery, laundry, land office, and room for cold storage where thousands waited on their way to make a new life in the West. Large stockyards were also located at the Transfer Grounds as Council Bluffs grew into a major shipping point for western livestock.

### **Railroad History of Council Bluffs**

*General Information*

# RailsWest Railroad Museum

## The Council Bluffs and St. Joseph Railway (the Burlington):

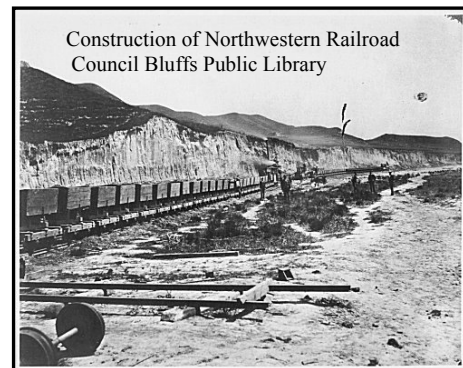
In May 1858, the Council Bluffs and Saint Joseph Railroad was organized in Council Bluffs by representatives from southwest Iowa, southeastern Nebraska, and northwest Missouri. The CB & St. Joe intended to build south along the Missouri River to Missouri where they hoped to connect with the Hannibal and Saint Joe Railroad.



Groundbreaking ceremonies of the CB & Saint Joe were held the next November with almost everyone in town on hand to celebrate the city's first railroad and Council Bluffs residents contributed \$25,000 towards its construction. For the next two years the line was graded south and about 40 men were hired to cut railroad ties from the loess hills. With almost no money in circulation, the men were paid a dollar a day, half in groceries and half in dry goods. In late December, 1867 the first locomotive steamed its way into Council Bluffs from the south on the far from completed CB & Saint Joe Railroad. Finally, in July 1868, the CB & Saint Joe Railroad line finally was opened between Council Bluffs and Saint Joseph, Missouri.

In 1869, the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad was completed across Iowa to the Missouri River several miles south of Council Bluffs. Trains of the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad entered Council Bluffs from the south by way of the KC, Saint Joe, & CB Railroad from the new town of Pacific Junction. Construction of the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad continued west across Nebraska and reached Kearny on the Platte River in 1872. By the 1880's the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad and KC, Saint Joe, & CB had both become part of the Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy Railroad.

In 1884, the Burlington Railroad's engine # 29 made the first run of the famous Fast Mail train between Chicago and Council Bluffs in just 16 hours. The Fast Mail from Chicago remained in operation until 1967.



## The Chicago and Northwestern (The Cedar Rapids and Missouri River Railroad):

On January 16, 1867, the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River Railroad (later became the Chicago and Northwestern) became the first railroad to reach Council Bluffs from the east. It entered Pottawattamie County from the north with stations at Loveland, Honey Creek, Crescent Station, and Council Bluffs. A two and a half mile spur line was laid west from the Council Bluffs depot at Broadway and 11th Street to the river where railcars and passengers were ferried across the Missouri by large steam ferries. German immigrant Peter Rapp opened a saloon near the ferry landing at about 37th and Broadway for the convenience of those in transit.

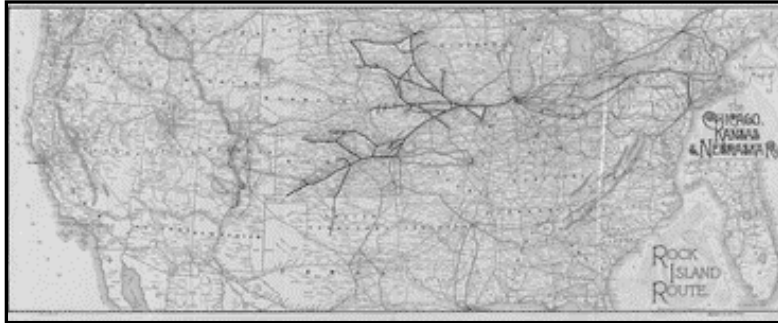
## The Rock Island (Mississippi and Missouri Railroad):

The day after the Golden Spike festivities, May 11, 1869, tracks for the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad entered Council Bluffs on the route of the old Mississippi and Missouri Railroad.

## **Railroad History of Council Bluffs**

*General Information*

# RailsWest Railroad Museum



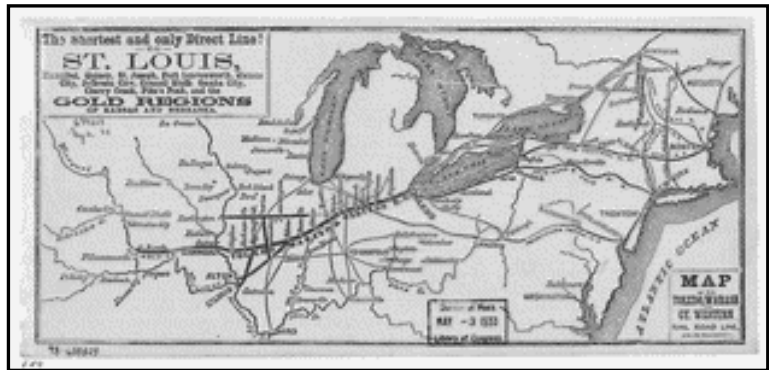
The Rock Island's arrival in Council Bluffs put an end to most of the Western Stage Company's operations in southwest Iowa and also led to the establishment of the Pottawattamie County towns of Weston, Neola, and Pacific. Located on the eastern edge of Pottawattamie County, Pacific

eventually changed its name to Avoca.

## The Wabash:

Tracks of the reorganized Council Bluffs & Saint Louis Railway finally reached the city in 1879. Stations on the line southeast from Council Bluffs included Neola, Dumfries, Mineola, and Silver City. Jay Gould soon took over control of the railroad which was consolidated into his sprawling Wabash, Saint Louis, & Pacific

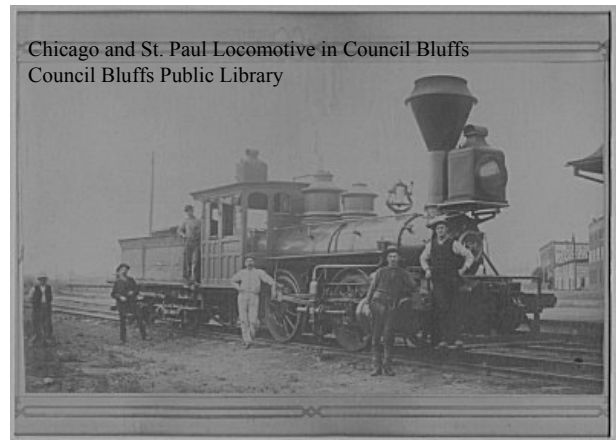
Map of the Wabash Railroad, 1859 Library of Congress



In 1984, the old Wabash line from Council Bluffs became part of the Colorado & Eastern Railroad and was later operated by the Iowa Southern until 1988 when the rails were removed and the line from Council Bluffs to Blanchard, Iowa became the Wabash Trace Nature Trail.

## The Chicago and St. Paul (Milwaukee Road):

In 1882 Council Bluffs gained another railroad when the Chicago, Saint Paul, & Milwaukee Railroad completed its second trans-Iowa line into Council Bluffs. Rail yards for what most folks called the "Saint Paul" were located east of South 19th Avenue near 5th Street with a depot on 16th Avenue. The Saint Paul also built a station house and water tank at the newly platted town of Underwood.



## The Illinois Central:

In 1901 another railroad line was built into Council Bluffs with the completion of the Fort Dodge & Omaha Railroad. The railroad's Chief Engineer was John F. Wallace who later found fame as Chief Engineer of the Panama Canal. Stations on the new railroad line included Ascot, Clara, and Grable with a Council Bluffs Depot located near Avenue A and North 13th Street. The Fort Dodge & Omaha was then consolidated into the Illinois Central Railroad and the railroad

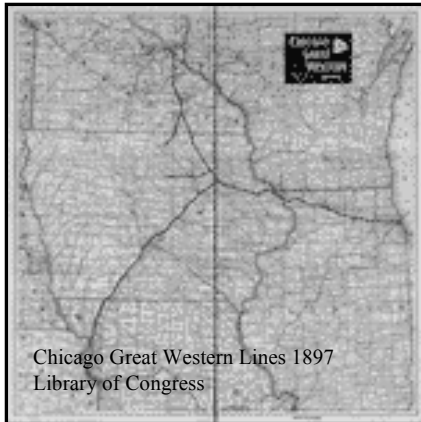
## **Railroad History of Council Bluffs**

*General Information*

# RailsWest Railroad Museum

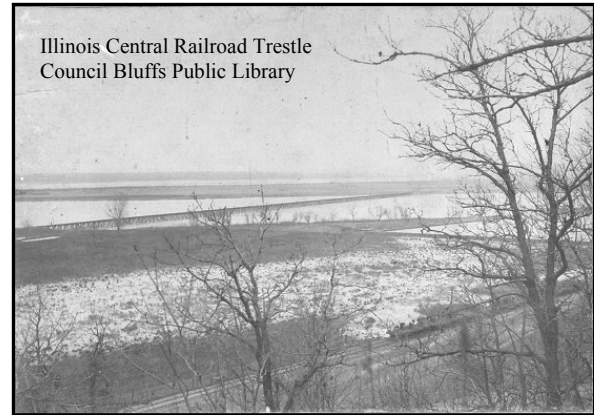
purchased the Omaha Bridge and Terminal Company's tracks and drawbridge to cross the river into Omaha. In 1911 Iowa's Governor Beryl Carroll and about 2,000 people gathered at the Illinois Central depot early one morning to welcome President William Howard Taft to Council Bluffs.

## The Chicago Great Western:



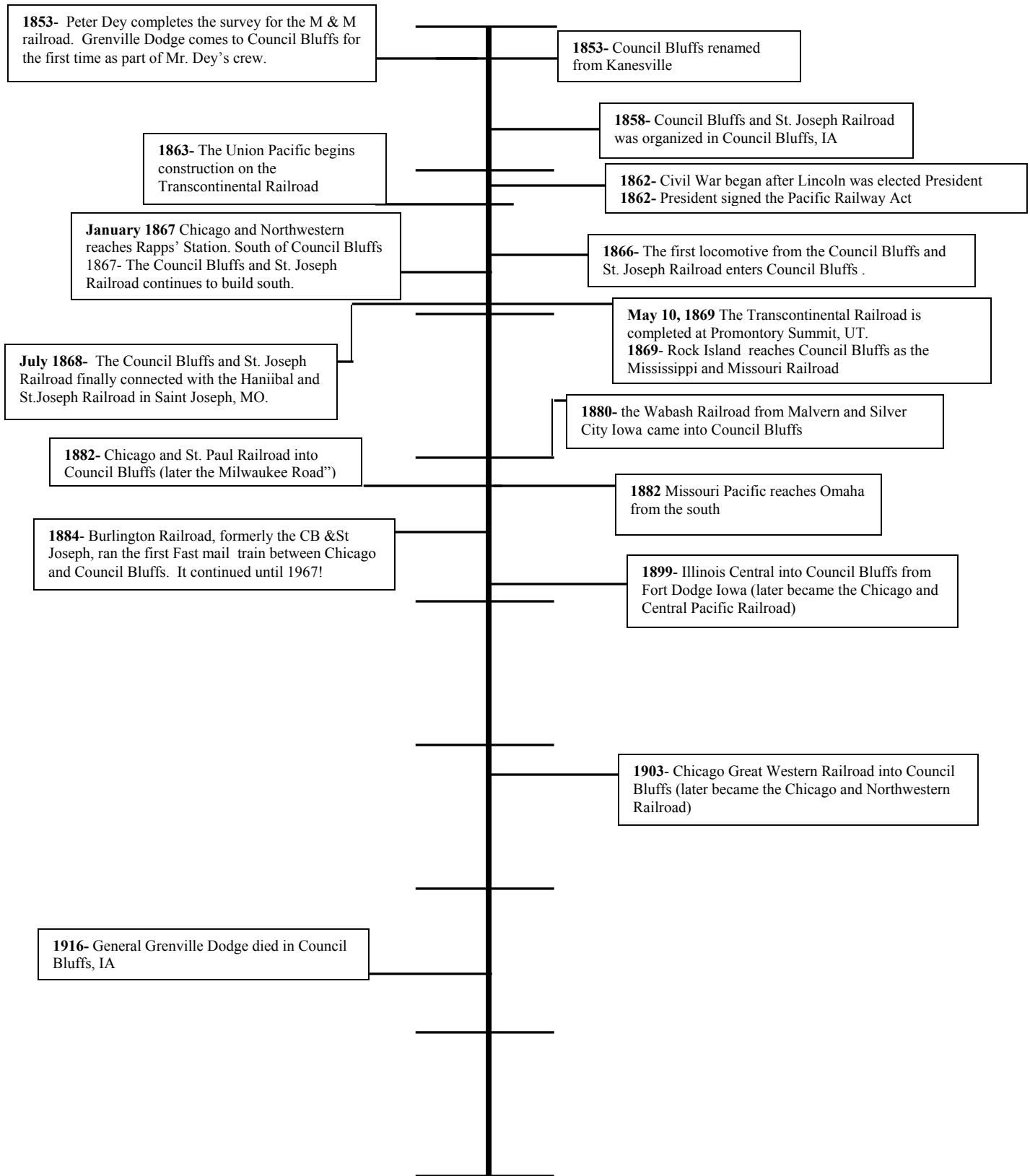
The last major railroad completed into Council

Bluffs was the Chicago Great Western in 1904. The Great Western's first depot was built on South Main Street and the railroad's completion set off a rate war with the other railroads terminating in Council Bluffs. The towns of Bently and McClelland were also laid out on the Great Western line through Pottawattamie County.





# RailsWest Railroad Museum



# RailsWest Railroad Museum

## Activities:

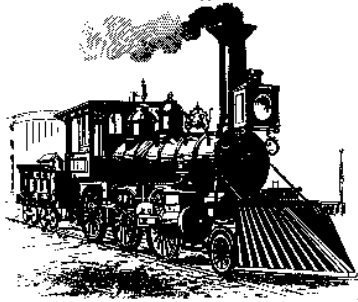
- 1) Have your class find on a map the towns that were traveled through by the different railroads to reach Council Bluffs. HINT: Use the information provided to find the towns that each Railroad traveled through.
- 2) Complete the attached worksheet and discuss each groups' answers.
- 3) Examine the maps on the Library of Congress website for railroad maps. Discuss how the region changed as time went by and more and more railroads built lines through the Midwest.

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/rrhtml/rrhome.html>

- 4) Complete the attached worksheet matching freight cars to their function/freight.

# RailsWest Railroad Museum

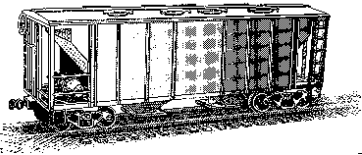
Connect the railcar to its description!



Steam Locomotive

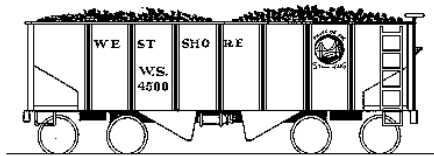
This car carries everything from newspapers to television sets. It has always been used to transport items that need to be out of the weather.

This is what pulls the train; the power.



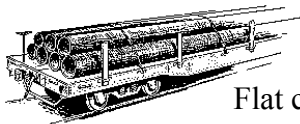
Covered hopper car

This car carries large quantities of loose things like coal or gravel. The load can be dumped out of the bottom of the car through special doors.



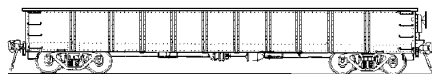
Hopper car

This car carries things that wouldn't fit inside another car. Sometimes loads are long and slender and sometimes they are bulky, like tractors.



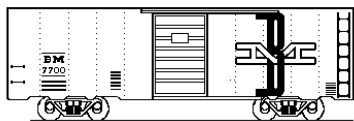
Flat car

This car carries large quantities of loose things that might blow away, so they are covered up on the top. The load can also be dumped out of the bottom of the car through special doors.



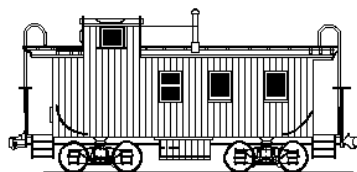
gondola

This car comes at the very end of the train and served as the office for the trains crew. Freight trains no longer have these on the end; instead they have a small box called an "end of train device".



Box car

This car carries large quantities of loose things like scrap metal, wire or metal beams.



caboose

# RailsWest Railroad Museum

Railroads effect the development of a community in many ways. Can you fill out the following worksheet to determine how the railroad changed Council Bluffs, IA. HINT: Look at things like population, settlement, culture, and things that people would not have had access to. Also, think about how Council Bluffs would have been if no settlers had wanted to come here!

## **Council Bluffs before the Railroads:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

## **Things that the Railroads did NOT effect**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

## **What the railroads changed in Council Bluffs, IA**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_