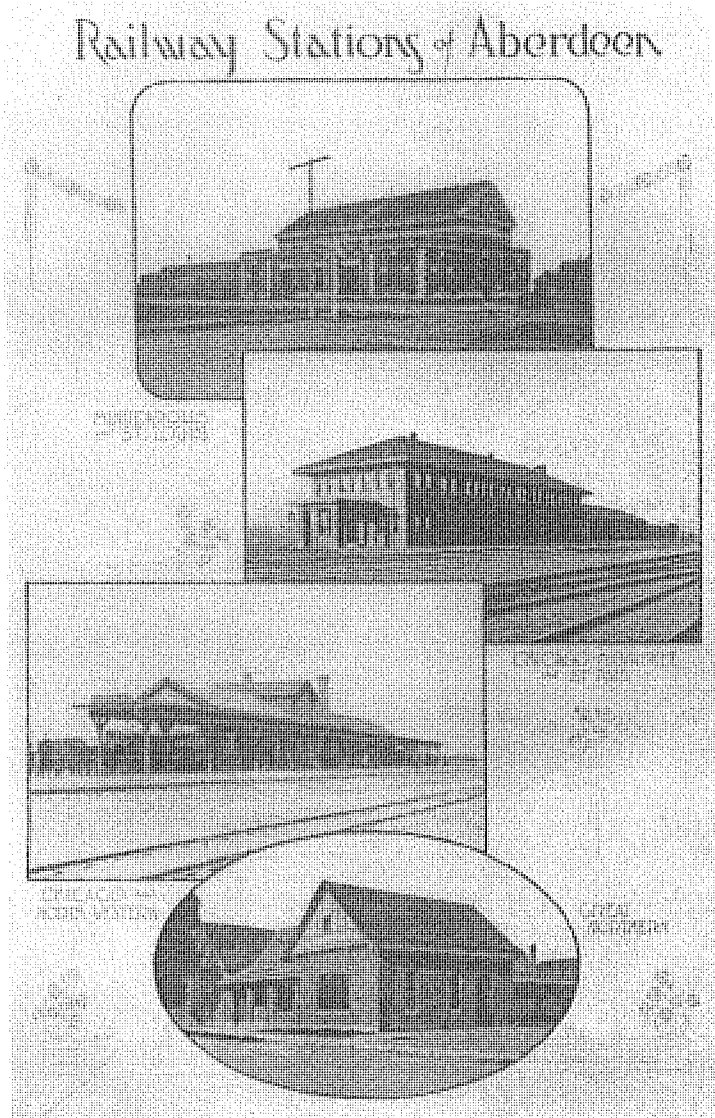


*Office copy*

# *Living Legacies: Railroad Stations of Brown County, South Dakota*



*Pictures from the 1918 "pasque" Yearbook P. 26*

Dr. Art Buntin  
PUBLISHED BY THE ABERDEEN/BROWN COUNTY  
LANDMARK COMMISSION 2002

# "Living Legacies" Dedicated to the Memory of Helen J. Bergh

1908-2002

This booklet on "Living Legacies" is dedicated to life-long resident of Brown County, the late Helen Bergh, who has left an educational legacy of her own. After 35 years of public school teaching in Brown County and 20 years dedicated to the Dacotah Prairie Museum educational efforts, she continued after retirement to share her knowledge by speaking and counseling. An expert in crafts and quilts, a researcher and author of county history, head of many organizations including the Territorial Pioneers, and Brown County Historical Society, she received many honors. Three of them were: First Lady of Aberdeen 1978, a Certificate of Commendation from the American Association for State and Local history and membership in the South Dakota Hall of Fame.

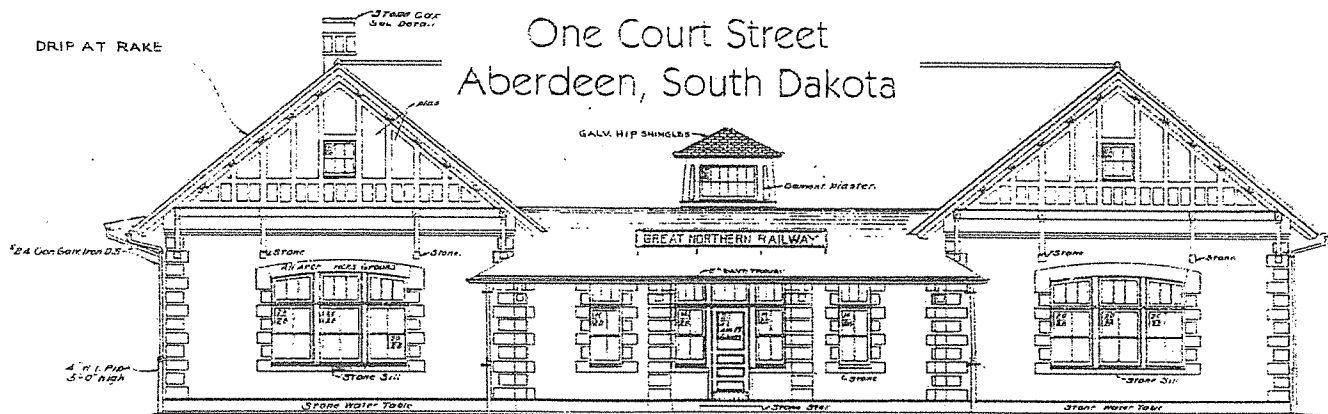
## ABERDEEN RAIL STATION LEGACIES

"The station and its surroundings have much to do with attracting strangers contemplating a location."

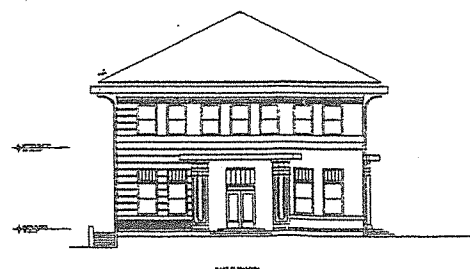
Aberdeen Daily News, September 11, 1911

### GREAT NORTHERN DEPOT 1906

One Court Street  
Aberdeen, South Dakota



### MILWAUKEE PASSENGER DEPOT 1911



Aberdeen  
Train Depot  
Aberdeen  
South Dakota

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

LIVING LEGACIES: RAILROAD STATIONS  
OF BROWN COUNTY, SOUTH DAKOTA

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LIVING LEGACIES: RAILROAD  
STATIONS OF BROWN COUNTY, SOUTH  
DAKOTA 1881-2002

PART I INTRODUCTION: FROM TENT  
CITY TO HUB CITY: THE RAILROAD  
IN CITY PRIDE AND PROGRESS

Initially, a few pioneer farmers preceded the railroads into Brown County, Dakota Territory. However, as railroads penetrated the prairie more settlers followed the railroads and settled at townsites plotted by railroad personnel. More railroad grades, tracks, trains and depots followed to bring civilization to the frontier.

For many towns and country folk the entry of railroads into the area lessened the need to walk or to utilize horse power to reach railheads. Towns without rail connections were often referred to as island or inland towns. Towns at the end of the line, temporary or permanent terminal points, were magnets attracting homesteaders and townsmen from inland towns for miles around.

By May 1880 Ortonville, Minnesota was the western terminus of the Milwaukee Railroad in the north and Watertown, Dakota Territory was that terminus for the Chicago and Northwestern as they both were poised to compete for sites in Dakota Territory's James River Valley as well as to race westward toward the Missouri River banks and the sites of future Chamberlain and Pierre. In 1880 their surveyors staked claims and established grades east of the James River. Where would the junction be when and if the two competitors crossed tracks?

During summer and fall 1880

several thousand workers prepared the grade to the as yet uncertain junction of the two railroads. In the vicinity of future Aberdeen railroad graders gathered that summer. William Rehfeld in 1931 recalled his railroad days when no organized government policed such events;

"We would gather on Sundays and see who could run the fastest, jump the highest and whistle the loudest, etc... Little did I think that a big, busy city would grow up in that locality within a few years."

Rehfeld recalls receiving \$35 from railroad surveyors to break 5 acres of prairie on each side of future 6th Ave. SW--the Dayton tree claim, the future West Hill area.

By June 1880 Milbank had become the terminus of the Milwaukee railroad in that portion of Dakota Territory; however, extension westward by means of steam power followed in 1880 and 1881 although snows of 1880 and the melt thereafter slowed construction. The Milwaukee reached Webster in October, 1880 and Bristol in March, 1881. The first train reached Groton June 18, 1881.

In April, May and June 1881 before arrival of the track and train, schooners and wagons brought supplies to the site of Aberdeen. Samuel A. Jumper, real estate agent for Charles M. Prior a Milwaukee Road townsite agent, arrived by wagon May 24, 1881. The first freight train arrived July 6 when about 350 people greeted its arrival. The first passenger train arrived August 1, 1881. By July 28 1881 tents and shanties marked the area.

The first issue of the Dakota Pioneer August 4, 1881

reveals the three-week old Aberdeen, then a tent, sod and frame-dwelling town which boasted 64 buildings. That paper described the local railroad business:

"There are about fifty men employed on the yards and at the depot in the different capacities of switchmen, clerks, agents, bosses, carpenters and train-men.... Hundreds of cars are brought to Aberdeen, taken away, or stand on the yard everyday. They are loaded with merchandise, household goods belonging to immigrants and railroad material. The railroad is always a busy place here. At present a large force of carpenters are at work on a coal house 20 x 216 feet, located immediately north of town across the track. These workmen will begin work on freight and passenger depots as soon as they finish the coal house."

A news report of September 22, 1881 noted that the new Milwaukee depot was completed and that Humphrey was the telegraph operator. August Witte in late January 1929 recalled his first year of business in a 16 x 24 foot frame structure and perceived the Milwaukee depot of 1881 as "but a box car". This structure--whether boxcar or in size comparable to a boxcar--must have been a temporary makeshift until a more permanent depot had been constructed. Witte remembered about ten businesses lining Main Street along with the small depot.

By mid August 1881, 250 people and by November hundreds more had converged on what was later to be called the Hub City. The city directory of 1887 listed 2871 persons over age 18. Major factors in Aberdeen's growth during the

boom years 1882-88 were the railroads that serviced the city and its trade territory and the creation of a land office in 1882 which drew many landseekers.

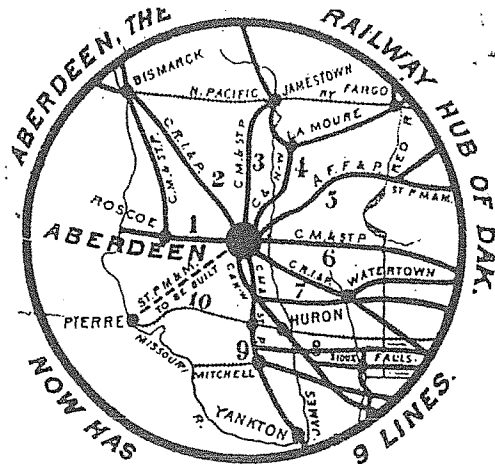
The Dakota Press of November 29, 1883 indicated that "immigrants arrive on every train" in response to new township plats placed on file at the U.S. Land Office. Later, the eventual acquisition of the county seat temporarily in 1887 and permanently in 1890 contributed to growth. Throughout, the energetic leadership of its businessmen, bankers, retailers and whole-salers became important factors in progress.

After a recent visit to Aberdeen in 1889 New York Tribune correspondent L. F. Quigg asserted that its growth was due to railroads and the vast tributary trade area rail transportation had made possible: "It has grabbed for railroads every time it saw the chance of getting one." A Cincinnati Daily Post editorial quoted in the Aberdeen Daily News of May 22, 1889 asserted Aberdeen had grown to 6000 population, possessed "magnificent stone and brick business houses" and had "seven radiating lines of railroad with 125 tributary towns in its trade area. Temporary immigrants may have contributed to that population estimate. The 1890 census gave a more conservative figure of 3,182 Aberdeen residents.

The Butler maps of 1886 and 1888 established Aberdeen's image as a hub with varied railroad spokes directed outward throughout the county and territory and referred to hub and spokes as a "wheel of

fortune". The Aberdeen Daily News of 1888 in promotion articles referred to the city as "the Hub" and its residents as "people of the Hub". The term appeared as modifiers in ads of commercial concerns such as a meat market and a fruit store and the city band. A Daily News section called "Late Hub City Notes" appeared in 1889. The term Hub City appeared frequently as a noun and a substitute for the word Aberdeen.

## THE "HUB CITY"



### WALTER BUTLER'S MAP

Pride in progress from tent city to Hub City is evident by 1890 when the congregational church ladies, sponsors of the unique mardi gras-like Merchants Parade, versified their pride in the past decade of achievements by personifying Aberdeen as one who speaks:

"Discover the great and diversified trade/ My people have wrought in one brief decade.

I am proud of my factories, my railroad, my trade/ I am proud of the glorious record I've made

Of being the best city in this Prairie state/ Where "Push" is the

watchward, both early and late

I am proud of my schools, my church, my home,/I am proud of my blocks of brick and stone."

The railroad depots, the station with its waiting room, ticket office and telegraph facilities, baggage and freight spaces, depot lunch rooms and adjacent yards, side and main tracks, switches, coal sheds, freight facilities, platforms, snow fences, dispatcher offices and other areas of a railroad complex proved to be a social, news and business center for employees, community residents, visitors and travelers.

Aberdeen's depots and the Brown County railroad stations of 24 villages and towns along the routes of four railroads helped build a railroad legacy. In addition to Aberdeen Four towns were served by the C&NW's north branch: Hecla, Houghton, Columbia and Ordway. On the C&NW's two south branches five communities benefited: after 1887 Verdon, Ferney and Groton; Mansfield and Rudolph after 1881. After 1886 the Manitoba or Great Northern served five sites: Plana, Tacoma Park, Putney, Huffton, Claremont. The Milwaukee built stations at three sites on its main line: Groton, James and Bath, On its north branch it served: Westport, Barnard, Frederick and Winship. Warner was an activity center on its south branch.

The last railroad to reach Aberdeen was the Minneapolis & St. Louis in 1906-07. Its main line served a route from Watertown to the Missouri River at Le Beau with the Aberdeen branch going north from Conde through Brown County's Randolph, Stratford, Nahon and

Richmond and to Leola in McPherson County. Each county community manifested pride in its birth and looked to future progress along the railroad. Some would not endure; others survived into the 21st century.

These four railroads, their depots and yard complexes, receive attention in this booklet where pictorial and narrative evidence permit.

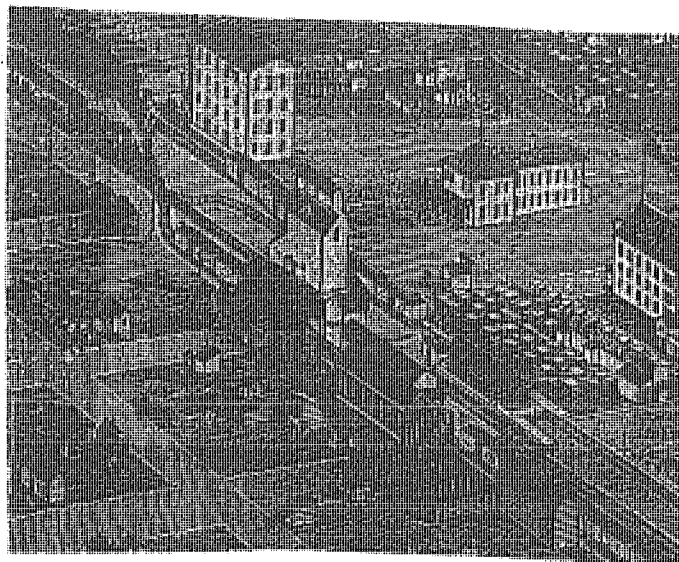
As railroad lines were abandoned in the later twentieth century many smaller depots were moved and used for other purposes; some were demolished. In Aberdeen depots also found alternative uses in the evolving era of the automobile and airplane. In 2002 four major Aberdeen depots remain and illustrate alternative uses. Two others were imported from county towns of Nahon and Rudolph/Columbia. These were placed at Centennial Village in 1980 and StoryBook Land in 2001. This booklet will focus on depot history and significance both as they functioned originally and in their alternative uses. Return with us to the era of a railroad civilization in the prairieland of Brown County.

#### PART I ABERDEEN'S 19TH CENTURY RAILROAD DEPOTS

Sources testify to location of Aberdeen's railroad depots in the 1880s. Newspaper railroad time schedules since 1885 often cite the depot's street location. Two maps of Aberdeen--one in 1883 and another in 1888--reveal depots and railroad complexes of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul and the Chicago & Northwestern. A sketch plan of 1884 showed

Milwaukee depot location and sites of an engine roundhouse. The 1888 map reveals also a new depot, that of the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba of 1886, later to be known as the Great Northern.

With the growth of Aberdeen and its trade territory the need for greater depot and railyard spaces increased during the boom years 1882-1888. During the depressed years 1889-1898 expansion declined. The Milwaukee depot was more centrally located at the north end of present south Main street.



#### DEPOT LOCATIONS 1883

Left is north; south is on right; The Milwaukee depot is east of Main St. which is blocked by cattle pens.

The C&NW facilities were on the periphery at the east end of First Avenue.

With the entry of the Manitoba in 1886 a third depot and adjacent yards emerged not far from the C & NW's 1st Ave. site. That depot remained at the east end of Second Avenue until 1906 when the Great Northern constructed a new



depot more centrally located near the new Brown County Court House and two blocks east of Main Street.

#### COAL SHED AND WATER TANK

In the steam engine era both coal and water were essential for operating the steam locomotives which pulled the trains and made the depots viable business sites. Locomotives burned coal as did many residents in town and country. Coal storage houses formed a part of the depot complex. Groton had its coal shed and depot by Sept. 1881.

In Aberdeen a first priority for the Milwaukee in 1881 was building a 20' x 216' coal house before construction of passenger and freight depots. The Milwaukee in August 1884 promised improvements which included a new coal shed as well as round house, machine shop, store house, carpenter and blacksmith shops south of the depot.

The C&NW in August 1883 erected near its depot a 100'-coal house in which 60 feet were added to a current 40' coal storage facility. An Illinois Coal Company ad of August 9, 1883 announced sale of coal at the C&NW depot. In both good times and bad thievery of coal from the railroad yards focused the attention of police. In December 1884 and January 1885 several coal thieves were arrested.

Coal issues surfaced especially during the winter of 1889-90. The Aberdeen Daily News of Feb. 4, 1887 judged that the coming of the Manitoba had resulted in cheaper coal. Freight rates from Duluth were cheaper than from Chicago. The

C&NW reduced rates for nut coal which was distributed to the destitute in January 1890 but they would not provide free coal to persons "tributary" to its competitor, the Milwaukee.

During winter of 1889-90 the Manitoba or Great Northern railroad sent relief coal to the Hecla area while the Milwaukee in late November, 1889 sent five coal cars westward to railroad towns, some outside of Brown County, for distribution to the needy. Finlanders of Savo and Liberty townships complained that their people had been unable to get to Hecla early enough to secure the Manitoba coal and asked that coal be distributed by townships rather than at one distribution point near the Hecla depot.

#### LUMBER ON THE PRAIRIE

The railroad depot and yard relationship to lumber proved to be another key ingredient in building homes and businesses in the treeless, prairie lands of Brown County. In towns lumber was crucial for business and home building. The first depots were framed wood structures. Lumber companies are frequently listed in county histories as initial town businesses. They were often found near the railroad depot and its track system.

Aberdeen's St. Croix Lumber Company advertised in 1883 its office and yard at the east side of Main near the C.M. St.P. Depot. The Aberdeen Weekly News reported on Feb. 4, 1887 that the St. Croix Lumber Company since Christmas had shipped by way of the Manitoba tracks 12 carloads of lumber to the new town of Claremont.

In the pioneer period the lumber wagon was a basic form of transportation. It was especially useful in conveying bulky items unloaded at rail terminals and reshiped by wagon to non-railroad towns. Numerous lumber wagons loaded up with lumber at Ipswich between 1883-1886 before the railroad moved further west. No more wagon trips to Frederick, Ipswich or Aberdeen to secure bulk items such as lumber.

#### RAILROAD-CITY RELATIONS THE QUEST FOR WATER

Aberdeen's earliest railroad, the Milwaukee, illustrates both the negative and positive relationships with the city of Aberdeen. Issues between 1882 and 1886 focused first on artesian water supply for railroad and city and later over access to North Main blockaded by railroad structures and fences. In such issues the depot and its personnel were involved.

Between 1882 and 1884 artesian well water became a factor in city-railroad relations. The company sank its own well in October 1881 completing it in 1882 south of the tracks east of Main Street and north of the present courthouse. Excess water flooded some areas and became a factor in John Firey's choice of Aberdeen to locate a pharmacy instead of in future North Dakota.

Arriving in Aberdeen at night Firey stepped off the train as it slowed down for the station. He stepped into waist-deep water beside the railroad grade. While registering at a hotel to dry his clothes, Firey met Father

Haire who persuaded him to remain in Aberdeen where he became associated with the Jewett wholesale business, served in city government and as postmaster; in 1908 he became immigration agent for the Milwaukee and a real estate developer.

The Milwaukee shared that water with the city until 1884 when the city dug its own artesian well about 300 feet from the Milwaukee well. In May 1884 the city well erupted, flooding Main Street before it could be controlled and excess water drained to Moccasin Creek.

Later when that city water stopped flowing through pipes, on purpose or accidentally, the railroad initiated legal proceedings for damages according to the Dakota Pioneer of June 24, 1884. By July 3 of that year the Milwaukee abandoned its artesian well citing that repairs were too expensive and that a new well site would be more convenient. Therefore, at least temporarily the railroad would rely on the city's new artesian well. Apparently the railroad opened a new well as the Dakota Pioneer of October 9, 1884 asserted the city had two "good artesian wells" which included the newly opened railroad well.

#### THE MAIN STREET WAR OVER ACCESS

The sketch map of 1883 shows fencing or cattle pens across the southern end of North Main Street blocking access from South Main Street. This became a hotly contested issue by 1885. The city had petitioned the railroad several years before 1885 but had been ignored. Historically referred

to as the Main Street War, it was not resolved until 1886.

In July 1885 a test of wills between the city and railroad peaked. Carrying out a city council directive, Marshal Knapp with men and teams announced the tracks that crossed Main Street as open and that both South and North Main should be joined without railroad interference. A loading platform, cattle pens and a coal shed were demolished. Then Agent Smith and his lawyer appeared ordering them to stop and instructed two engineers to move their locomotives and several cars across Main to foil the city force.

In response several hundred Aberdonians piled ties and logs across the tracks to impede the locomotives. Those engineers drove into the ties scattering them. The crowd resorted to a hose cart, attached the hose to a hydrant and shot a stream toward the engineers. However, this did not discourage the engineers.

This action prompted calling of the city council which passed an ordinance forbidding the railroad from permitting their engines or cars to block the street any longer than ten minutes. The city marshall and others arrested an engineer and fireman. Planks were nailed down and filling placed between the tracks so teams and wagons might cross safely. The street was successfully opened at least temporarily. The city sent a bill for \$350 damages to the railroad officials who ignored it. The Aberdeen Republican observed that this "greatly improves" the street's

appearance.

However, on Saturday morning the Fourth of July 1885 when many townsmen were out of town some 200 railroad men appeared and rebuilt the sheds, yards and platforms across Main street. The Aberdeen Republican of July 9 indicated that the Milwaukee had a temporary injunction preventing future city intervention. Mayor Skillman led a delegation to Milwaukee July 15, 1885 to resolve the issue with General Manager Miller.

The Aberdeen Republican of July 16 inserted a telegram--labeled "Aberdeen Depot Trouble"--from Milwaukee which stated that Aberdonians claimed that railroad structures "blockaded the most important crossings in the city, and should be removed. It was this that led to the recent riot" where the objectionable structures were torn down. Manager Miller "refused pointedly" to order removal of the rebuilt structures but promised to open another street, one block from the depot.

Over a year later, the Aberdeen Republican of November 5, 1886 reported under the headline "The Cruel War is Ended" that the matter had been settled and Main Street will remain open. Mayor Skillman had recently travelled to Milwaukee and Minneapolis to resolve the issue. C. W. Case, assistant general superintendent had full power to end the stalemate. Officials in both cities assured the Mayor that they wished to maintain the city's good will and claimed the company was "misinformed regarding the true status of

affairs in Aberdeen" and now they were disposed to an agreement.

The Republican asserted:

"Main street across the Milwaukee track is an acknowledged legal highway. This is what Aberdeen fought for, this is what she had procured, and this is what the C.M. & St. P. had conceded to her."

Indicating that the mayor received fair treatment, the paper suggested Aberdeen can be fair toward the Milwaukee and that resolution of this issue would expedite a new depot. Assessing the significance of this settlement the paper predicted:

"increased prosperity for Aberdeen in that the Milwaukee company will now proceed to make improvements in our city which have heretofore been delayed on account of this fight between the company and the city."

Yet two years went by before that depot became a reality. A Milwaukee action of April 1887 testified to improved relations with the city. The city council accepted a deed by which the Milwaukee conveyed an easement across its right of way for the extension of Third Avenue. In the 20th century with increased traffic new issues arose: locomotive whistle nuisance and railroad crossing safety.

#### THE HOUSING RELATIONSHIP

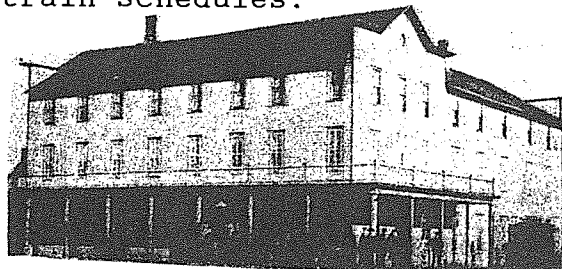
Proximity to railroad depots motivated decisions to locate hotels and boarding houses to lots nearby. This is evident from 1881 through the foundation decade and is especially evident in the relation of the Main Street Milwaukee depot to downtown hotels. Convenient access to

rooms and other accommodations were important for railroad workers, travelling men and other visitors to Aberdeen.

With the entry of the Manitoba railroad Dec. 24, 1886 enterprising persons envisioned boarding facilities in the eastern part of Aberdeen. On March 11, 1887 the Weekly News reported that "J.H. Wylie will soon remove his building, which is just west of the Wisconsin House, to a lot near the Manitoba depot" for hotel or boarding house purposes. In May 1887 the old Hagerty & Pierce bank building on First Ave. in the rear of Firey's drug store was moved near the Manitoba depot for conversion into a residence again emphasizing the impact of the new depot on real estate development nearby.

One estimate of registered, Aberdeen hotel arrivals for 1886 totaled 69,500; a city directory estimate of 1889 soared to 70,000 registered guests in twenty hotels.

The Park Place, built in 1881 east of the 1904 court house well illustrates the economic value of being close to the railroad. Hack service to and from depots promoted the hotel business. The popular Sherman House, three blocks from the Milwaukee depot, placed, in early March 1887 a new, large bulletin board in its office area announcing the train schedules.



THE SHERMAN HOUSE 1881

The Weekly News of June 4, 1887 quotes the editor of the East Claire Daily Free Press who had recently toured South Dakota labeling Aberdeen as "The Liveliest Town in Dakota":

"I found the hotels thronged... the hotels bespeak its surprising growth...It is a favored railroad center, having practically five outlets, three penetrating the north and west.

#### EXPANSION OF DEPOT COMPLEXES, ACCESS & SERVICES 1881-1887

In subsequent years increased business required more space for personnel, passengers and freight and facilities to service engines and cars. However, despite the need, facility expansion became a slow process. Until August 1883 Aberdeen was the terminus of the Milwaukee east-west Hastings Division. In late 1883 Ipswich, 25 miles west of Aberdeen, became the end of the line for over two years. By November 29, 1883 the Dakota Pioneer reported completion of the Aberdeen-to-Ipswich line and observed:

"Ipswich and Mina citizens may be seen in the city daily now, since the running of daily trains. It was no longer a tedious journey to the metropolis of Edmunds County."

Aberdonians constantly looked for signs that new railroad depots and freight houses would be built. In June 1884 the Milwaukee built a derrick to aid shippers unloading freight. This was located at the foot of Nicollet Avenue (future 6th Avenue) and aroused speculation that the railroad was planning to build there. In June 1888 the C&NW also built a derrick near their depot. In the eyes of Aberdonians

the derrick seemed to be a visible sign of progress toward advanced service.

Entry of the Manitoba in late December 1886 may have motivated more speed in implementation of Milwaukee railroad expansion of its Aberdeen yard complexes as well as later extensions of the line westward and northward into what is now North Dakota. The Manitoba's arrival probably encouraged more rumors and speculation about Milwaukee building plans in Aberdeen. Thus, the Aberdeen Weekly News announced on January 7, 1887 that "determined not to be outdone, the Milwaukee has decided to build freight and passenger depots equally as fine" as that announced by the newest railroad in the city. The News predicted "the depots on these lines will be completed during the present year.(1887)" In 1886 the Milwaukee had completed the Ipswich to Bowdle line and extended the line from Ellendale to Edgeley while in 1887 the Milwaukee completed the line from Roscoe to Eureka and Orient. Did service facilities keep up with such expansion?

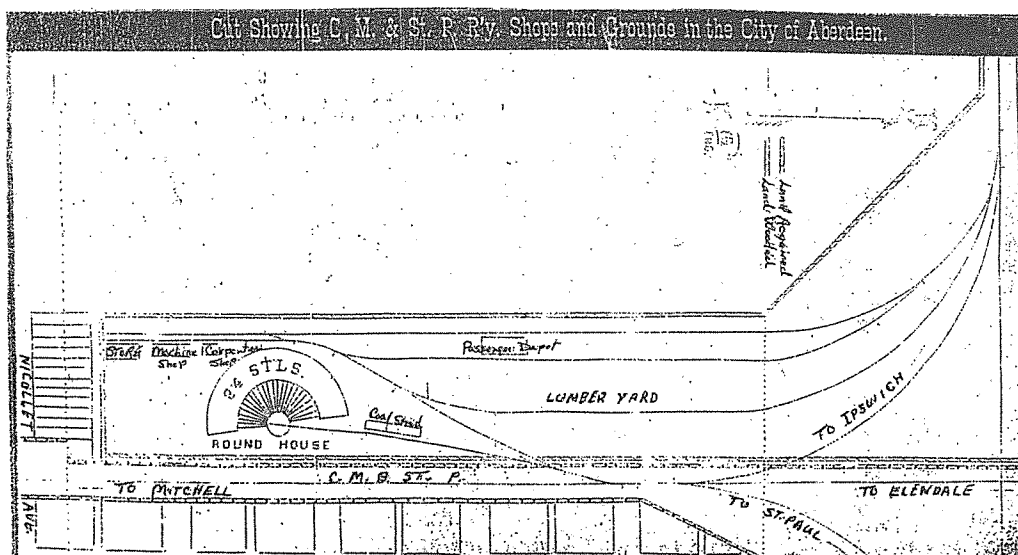
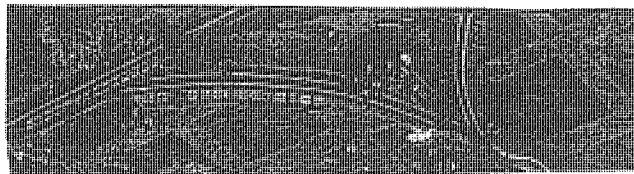
#### THE YARD: MILWAUKEE ROUNDHOUSE, SHOPS & TRACKAGE

William Rehfeld's letter of 1931 recalling his 1880-1881 experiences refers to a roundhouse in 1881 when the Milwaukee located in Aberdeen and that the Rice brothers moved their store southeast of this roundhouse before moving to Main Street.

The 1883 etching shows a roundhouse about three blocks west of the Main Street depot

which may have been the one built in 1881. Evidence of a projected newer round house appears in a Dakota Pioneer article of August 28, 1884 which alerts the public to the projected buildings.

1883 sketch of the old roundhouse within the track "Y"



They were:

"a large round house, a machine shop, a carpenter shop, a blacksmith shop, storehouse and coal shed at Aberdeen this fall.... The round house will be large and contain twenty-four stalls for engines. The machine shop will be thirty feet wide and one hundred feet long. The carpenter shop will be about the same size as the machine shop. The blacksmith shop will be thirty by forty. A large store room will also be built, and a new coal shed will be put up in the vicinity of these buildings which are to be located on the east side of the north and south track, just south of a line drawn from the present depot west to the straight line of the Ipswich branch."

A sketch chart of the round house location and other structures is given in the previous week's edition of the Dakota Pioneer and may be found above. Also inserted is a

#### SKETCH OF 1884: PROJECTED MILWAUKEE ROUND HOUSE

A September 4th Pioneer indicates quit-claim deeds had been secured from "contestants of the Dayton property, just west of the city" on which these structures were to be erected. Yet by October 23, 1884, according to the Dakota Pioneer, the Milwaukee had gathered building materials on the site for possible construction in the fall of 1884. An element of uncertainty appears as negotiations for the land might be completed by that time. It is possible that the projected roundhouse of 1884 was to be an enlargement of, or more likely a replacement of, a previous, smaller roundhouse built in the years 1881-1883. The location appears to be similar in both the 1883 sketch and the 1884 drawing. Round

houses were often enlarged by adding stalls in increments over time.

Three years later the Aberdeen Weekly News of Jan. 7, 1887 reported: "arrangements have been made for a 15-stall round house on the Milwaukee." Aberdeen was to become the Hastings & Dakota Division headquarters; the Milwaukee planned to build offices "at the same place where their new shops are located." Nothing had been done during 1886 other than to decide that Aberdeen would be the site of Milwaukee shops. The paper reported "Milwaukee had arranged to change one of their curves in the "Y" in order to give them room for new round houses and shops. Foremen are looking for laborers to work in the spring." This implies that these structures would be located in a site already occupied by older railroad buildings. Not until January 14, 1889 was the Weekly News able to inform its readers of station agent Smith's assurance that a "large round house" would be erected in Aberdeen during 1889.

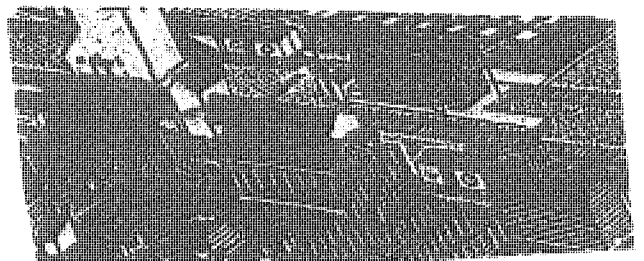
#### TRACKAGE CHANGES OF 1889

In April 1889 the Milwaukee listed one of its improvements that year would be "to straighten the west line so that trains will not be forced to back in and out when approaching and leaving the depot." In October 1889 the company initiated track straightening in the west yard to eliminate the former way of "running cars in and out of the city on the Bowdle line". Thus, use of the "Y" declined. The Daily News of November 8, 1889

reported that the train from the west entered on this straightened track the evening of Thursday November 7; this was the first usage of this improved trackage--the result of a month's work. Furthermore, a widened, extended yard was in the works, especially improving the repair track located north of the main track on the east side of Main. These were used for freight car and coach repair and cleansing cars with railroad artesian well water.

#### MILWAUKEE DEPOT

The Aberdeen Pioneer of August 4, 1881 observed that the depot had not yet been built; however, construction of a 40-90 foot depot would be soon. The paper predicted that it would be "a very first class depot in every respect, such as Aberdeen needs and will for all time to come." By September 1881 the first Milwaukee depot was completed. As recalled in 1929 by August Witte it was in size like a boxcar. It is possible that in 1882 an enlarged depot was constructed as a sketch map of 1883 reveals a Milwaukee depot located at the north end of present south Main and on the east side of Main street rather than on the west side where the 1911 depot now stands. The sketch reveals a structure that seems larger than boxcar size.



SKETCH MILWAUKEE DEPOT 1883

Perhaps, Witte's memory was faulty on depot size if he was referring to the more permanent depot pictured in the 1883 sketch rather than a temporary use of a boxcar in those August days OF 1881. The sketch above positions the depot between St. Clair Lumber Co. and cattle pens blocking Main Street.

Another 1883 sketch map published by Hagerty and Marple shows two Milwaukee depots -- the Main Street one and a two-story structure, labeled with letter E as a Milwaukee depot on the James River Valley Railroad between 5th and 6th Avenues. The Main Street depot site is supported by verifiable data. However, no narrative evidence supports the existence of this latter depot; this could be a fanciful, promotional touch not based in reality. Perhaps this was a wishful vision for a freight and or passenger depot for the Milwaukee serving the line from Mitchell via Woonsocket, Wolsey and Ashton to Aberdeen and Ellendale. This line was "completed and ready for traffic" according to the Dakota Pioneer Oct. 18, 1883.

Through 1888 numerous speculations appeared in the newspapers as to the building of a "commodious, new depot". Although some additions were made to the depot area, it was about eight years after 1881 before a new Milwaukee depot serviced Aberdeen. In September 1883 G. P. Smith of Ortonville replaced former agent A. Burlock and thus was active in developing city-railroad relations throughout the decade.

So frequent were hopes raised and dashed that after

another visit by the Milwaukee General Manager Merrill the Aberdeen Daily News of August 31, 1888 referred to hopes of a new Milwaukee depot as an "oft told story". The paper asserted

"It is the same story that has been sung to Aberdeen people before and it has no more significance now that it had the last time it was sung. The Milwaukee company, in common with all railroad companies this year, is not spending one dollar unless it is absolutely needed. When they get ready to build a new depot it will be built and not till then."

The paper advised that visits by officials are not satisfactory indicators; only when lumber is brought to the site could Aberdeen expect a new depot.

The American Express Company built a freight office near the Milwaukee depot according to the Dakota Pioneer of November 29, 1883. However, that office did not remain long in that depot area due to railroad expansion. By July 1884 that express office moved from the site to make way for offices to be used by the new Milwaukee Superintendent and Train Dispatcher.

Workers constructed west of the depot a temporary office for Superintendent Beechem who had recently arrived. A more permanent and suitable quarters would soon be constructed and available before train dispatcher Rogers and his assistants moved from Milbank to Aberdeen. The Dakota Pioneer of July 31, 1884 noted a Saturday reception had been given for Assistant Superintendent Beecham and Chief Dispatcher Rogers. That paper reported Beecham's office



"is almost completed" and would be occupied by the first week in August.

Renovations in the depot itself were necessary; workers removed from the depot telegraph wires and instruments to the train dispatcher's office thus enlarging the space for freight and ticket business which had "long since outgrown the capacities of the old depot in every respect." On Sunday August 1, 1884 telegraph lines which had been on the north side of the tracks running through Aberdeen were moved to the south side of the tracks through the city in order to enter the dispatcher's office from the building's south side.

The Pioneer noted on October 16, 1884 that "a fine double desk" had been moved into dispatcher Rogers office indicating that space was now furnished adequately. By October and November 1886 that office was enlarged in order to accomodate the railroad's Department of Construction.

Occasional repairs to the depot were needed. The Aberdeen Weekly News Nov. 19, 1886 reported an accident which necessitated repairs of a broken bay window caused by a moving train hitting a platform truck.

Speculation continued between 1886 and 1888 about new depot construction. There was a felt need according to the Aberdeen Weekly News of November 5, 1886:

"It is an acknowledged fact that the present one is no good whatever, and the large amount of passenger business at this station demands the speedy erection of a passenger depot."

Visiting railroad officials

frequently stated a new and more spacious depot was in Aberdeen's near future. As a result some Aberdonians might agree with one of the cynical ten commandments regarding railroads which in essence was don't believe everything a railroad official tells you.

Ilustrative of such speculations are those appearing in varied issues of the Aberdeen Weekly News between 1886 and late 1888.

A November 5, 1886 article indicated Aberdonians had for some time been absorbed with a new passenger depot on the Milwaukee. Superintendent Case had informed Mayor Skillman that the passenger depot would be forthcoming in a short time. The News editorialized

"it is safe to say that it will be located on the site of the present Main street rather than the west end of Nicollet Ave. which Mr. Prior had favored because it would increase the value of his Nicollet Ave. property".

The ensuing year of 1888 appeared to be the year of decision and action regarding new depots.

The Daily News of October 26, 1888 reported the short visit of Milwaukee President Roswell Miller, successor to Alexander Mitchell who had died in April 1887. Miller

"said that the plans were now in the hands of General Superintendent Collins, that he himself had approved them and was surprised that no work had yet been done....He fully recognized the poor faciilities of the company in this city for the proper reception of its patrons and said that the old barracks should be replaced by a handsome and commodious structure."

These remarks were affirmed in November 1888 when news

items revealed that finally a new depot would replace the old one. On November 14 two surveyors staked out grounds for the new freight and passenger depots. The Daily News for November 15, 1888 provided further information:

"The depot will be built on the present site of the dispatcher's office. The freight depot will be located a short distance directly south with appropriate track extension. The old depots will be used in the construction of the freight house and other buildings of minor importance."

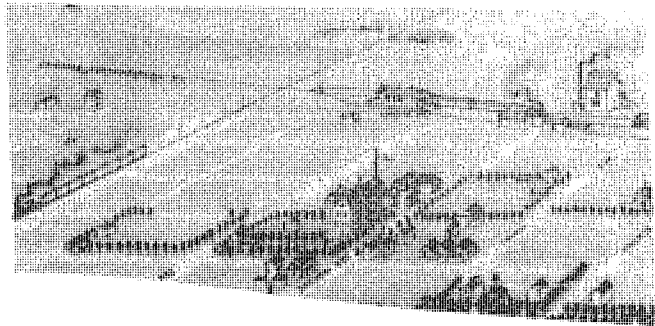
In an interview Supt. Hadley indicated foundation work is starting within the week and plans for a two story, 200 ft long depot designated upper story's five rooms for officials while the lower floor housed two waiting rooms, ticket office, baggage room, lunch counter and kitchen. However, he hedged with the words "depending on labor supply".

On Nov. 22, 1888 the Daily News reported that side tracks were torn up in the railroad yards near the roundhouse and relocated to the "proposed location of the freight depot." That paper reported on November 26, 1888 that a gravel train filled up a depression which was the site of the new depot. With the arrival of the new year 1889 the Weekly News reported on January 14:

"George P. Smith, the Milwaukee station agent, affirms that in his opinion the Milwaukee Company will erect a commodious brick depot and also a large round house in Aberdeen during the present year.

This new depot of 1889 by April was connected with the Aberdeen sewer system and the

city's water works and hydrants. These connections were made on the east and west sides of the depot so that employees could more easily turn on the water in case of fire. According to the Daily News of April 26, 1889 painting the passenger depot was to be undertaken and thus improve the depot's appearance.



HAGERTY/MARPLE MAP  
1883 SKETCH C&NW DEPOT  
EAST END OF FIRST AVE. SE

#### THE CHICAGO & NORTHWESTERN

The Chicago & Northwestern depot at the east end of First Avenue where it intersects with present Dakota Street was located north of the existing 1910 depot structure now used for credit union purposes. Initially, the track of the Dakota Central Railway Company, a subsidiary of the Chicago and Northwestern, crossed Moccasin Creek and reached Aberdeen in 1881, but it was not until 1883 before a depot existed and a passenger could buy a ticket or have C&NW freight service.

C&NW officials became frustrated by a changed placement of Milwaukee tracks and consequent demise of Grand Junction or Crossing. That crossing, located two miles south of Aberdeen, had been viewed as a future town serviced by the C&NW line.

With the emergence of Aberdeen along the new route of the Milwaukee, C&NW spitefully sold tickets and shipped freight only to Ordway.

According to J. H. McKeever in Early History of Aberdeen, South Dakota 1880-1900

"passengers for Aberdeen had to jump off the cars when the train was forced to stop by law before crossing the Milwaukee tracks. But many were carried by and had to find horse transportation back. This went on for a couple of years until the Northwestern built a station here to get a share of the growing traffic."

As indicated earlier the C&NW erected in August 1883 a coal house near their depot and on August 3, 1883 the Illinois Coal Company announced sale of coal at the C&NW depot verifying the presence of a depot at that time. A sketch of Aberdeen drawn in 1883 also locates the C&NW depot at the east end of First Ave.

Access to depot complexes were improved over time and with increased business. In 1883 the Dakota Pioneer reported that C&NW constructed a new side track. By August 30 ties had been placed and they were in process of being ironed with track to be completed by September 27, 1883. That paper also indicated that materials would be on the ground by September 27 for a new sidewalk, described as "nearly finished" to the C&NW depot. That depot was enlarged in 1884 and painted. On July 17, 1884 the Dakota Pioneer reported that necessity forced enlargement of the depot to about twice the former size and resulted in some internal alterations to improve customer useability and convenience.

The Dakota Pioneer of August 21 observed that the newly painted depot "now presents a neat and tasty appearance".

In early January, 1887 the Aberdeen Weekly News reported improvements at the Northwestern Depot which included "a new ticket case." In June 1888 increased freight business prompted the C&NW to establish a new derrick and machinery platform in the depot area. On June 18 the Aberdeen Daily News reported the depot and freight house had been endangered by a fire which burned the nearby farmers elevator. Fire-bearing winds favored the depot complex; as a result only a box car was burned.

Charles E. Williams served as station agent for the C&NW in 1883. Thereafter, W. E. Lovejoy filled that position. He earned community respect as he became involved in Aberdeen's business and social circles. Newspapers noted his varied activities including his love of gardening and pride in growing green peas and potatoes. Under his name the C&NW offered excursion trips at special rates. One such excursion was to New Orleans Exposition in January 1885 when passengers boarded an excursion car at Aberdeen. Customers used it for eating and sleeping while at the exposition. A \$77 ticket covered everything except for food.

#### ST. PAUL, MINNEAPOLIS & MANITOBA

Aberdeen business leaders and officials eager to secure a third railroad to lessen the monopoly impact on rates enjoyed by the Milwaukee and the C&NW sought a northeastern

shipping outlet to Duluth and the Great Lakes. Organizing the Aberdeen, Fergus Falls & Pierre Railroad Company, Aberdonians secured a right of way. Contractor Brennan and his men graded the road from the Northwest corner of the Sisseton Reservation to Aberdeen. The city promised \$25,000 if the road would be finished by January 1, 1887. This monetary incentive motivated ironing the grade during very adverse weather conditions. Rails were laid several rods ahead of the construction train and then the spikers secured the rails in position. The Aberdeen Weekly News on December 31, 1886 elaborated: "The men were kept together with an iron grip and daily did they work through blinding snows and piercing winds."

On December 24, 1886 the last rail was laid and Aberdeen celebrated what the Leola Northwest paper called "Aberdeen's Christmas Present". Some 250 railroad men were dined at the National rink as part of the celebration. Quoted in the Aberdeen Weekly News of Jan. 7, 1887 the Leola paper predicted the Manitoba

"is worth millions of dollars to central Dakota....It will cheapen coal and lumber and raise the price of all kinds of grain. It is in fact the greatest achievement yet reached for this section of country. Aberdeen is proud, and well she may be." The Brookings Press, quoted in that same issue of the Weekly News, commented on Aberdeen's "grand blow-out" upon arrival of the Manitoba:

"Those Aberdeen people want to look out or their town will be so totally covered with railroad tracks that building sites cannot be found."

#### MANITOBA DEPOT OF 1887

E.E. Kerney, freight and ticket agent from 1887 to 1890, initially worked from what the Aberdeen Weekly News of Jan. 7th called "a diminutive building" fit for future use as a section house. Initially, Kerney had three assistants, one operator and two freight handlers. As in the initial arrival of railroads in Aberdeen, temporary frame quarters for personnel and engines were necessarily utilized until more permanent structures could be built.

On October 15, 1886 the Weekly News reported Manitoba surveyers at work:

"The depot grounds are located between second and fifth avenues and the depot will be built somewhere between second and fourth, three full blocks east of the school house." The Weekly News reported

"carpenters are busily engaged in erecting the depot, and as cold as the weather is, they have not ceased work. It will be finished the latter part of the week and used as a passenger and freight depot until the brick structure can be erected in the spring."

Once the depot and a temporary engine house were finished, work ceased until temperatures warmed.

The Aberdeen Weekly News on December 17, 1886 heard reports of "a most substantial and elegant depot of brick" planned for Aberdeen's Manitoba station. According to "good authority" that depot might be located between Third and Fourth Avenues, east of the Catholic church property. The editor optimistically speculated that even this future brick depot would not meet the city's needs:

"it will be only a few years at most when this city will need as commodious depot facilities as any city west of the Mississippi."

Traveling by team from Hadley, then end of the Manitoba track, Manitoba officials in mid-December 1886 came to Aberdeen for an overnight stay at the Sherman House. The Weekly News of December 24, 1886 accredited these officials with promising a brick depot in the spring, a commodious round house and machine shops. A temporary engine house would be available immediately to service engines. Block 15, Smith's Addition had been selected as the site for the round house.

On January 7 1887 that paper observed "ground has been surveyed and contracts let for a full circle, 30-stall round house on the Manitoba to be constructed next summer." In addition to the main line just completed and the temporary frame, 24' x 40' depot, side tracks followed in early January. Located on one side of the freight depot, this side track joined the main track just north of the proposed frame passenger depot.

The first outgoing, regular passenger train on the Manitoba line departed from Aberdeen on Sunday evening at 6:15. The first incoming regular passenger train arrived from St. Paul at 9:10 a.m. Monday morning. The trains carried one sleeper, one coach, a smoking and baggage car. It was about a twelve hour trip between St. Paul and Aberdeen.

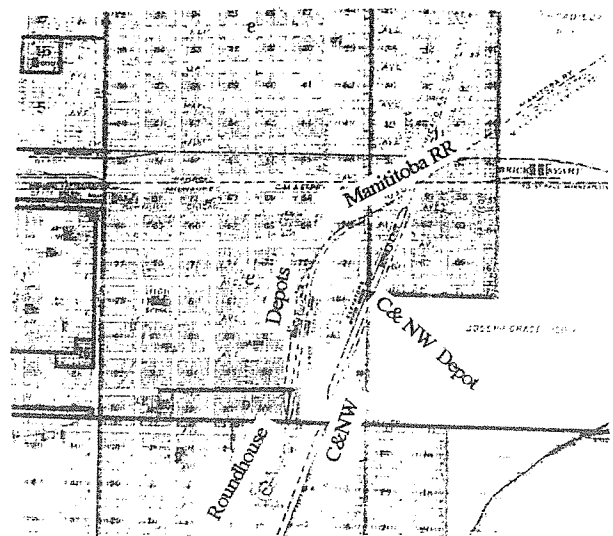
One freight train serviced Aberdeen initially. It carried one coach and arrived at Aberdeen 7:35 p.m. and departed

the next morning at 6:30 a.m. daily except Sunday. Passenger tickets with unlimited time and stay-over privileges cost \$12.40 and those with one day, limited time cost \$9.88.

In 1887 Aberdeen newspapers and citizens displayed pride in their status as a railroad center. The Weekly News of January 7, 1887 asserted that it is "an axiom that Aberdeen is not only destined to be, but is already the railroad center of the great territory of Dakota". Hearing that both the Milwaukee and the Manitoba will build freight and passenger depots later that year, the News declared: "Then Aberdeen can proclaim to the world that she is without a peer in the matter of railroad depots."

The Daily News of June 13, 1888 speculating on Aberdeen's upcoming Fourth of July celebration proudly asserted:

"Aberdeen is the proper place for a patriotic demonstration. All the railroads, to vary an old Roman adage, lead to Aberdeen."



BUTLER MAP: CITY'S EAST END  
MANITOBA DEPOT & ROUNDHOUSE

SEASONAL SCHEDULING:  
WAITING AT THE DEPOT

Winter weather impacted the scheduled arrival and departures of trains. Depot waiting rooms were well used during such occasions. Sometimes passengers awaiting connections with another train had to wait when their train was late. The Weekly News of January 14, 1887 observed "It has become almost necessary this winter, when a fellow starts on a trip over either of the Milwaukee branches north and west, that he should make his will and kiss his wife and babies good-bye. Snow and poor engines have rendered railroad life on these branches miserable and trains have been unable to run on time."

Aberdonians, as well as residents of all Brown County's railroad towns, became time-conscious regarding arrivals and departures of trains. The railroads recognized irregular schedules, late trains, long depot waits, delayed produce, mail and cattle shipments were not good for public relations and did their best to create an image of reliability in a competitive market where rival companies also tried to run the trains on time.

The Milwaukee, according to the Dakota Pioneer of December 11, 1884 prepared for winter by erecting more snow fences, utilizing larger snow plows and engines in order to "keep their H&D division open all winter." On January 22, 1885 the Dakota Pioneer congratulated the Milwaukee in keeping the H&D division open despite huge snowfalls; snow fences were credited with keeping the road open when other divisions

suffered from delay and blockade.

Railroad officials provided Aberdeen newspapers with regular schedules and when changes were upcoming informed the editors who in turn reported those changes to the public. The railroad time table published in the Dakota Pioneer of October 11, 1883 provided data for the east-west Hastings & Dakota Division as well as the north-south James River Line of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul.

Two passenger trains--one early morning and one evening--departed for the east--one at 4 a.m.; the other at 9:35 p.m. Those passengers arriving at the depot from the east would alight at 6 a.m. and 9:35 p.m. This change of time effective Sunday afternoon October 7, 1883 occasioned several remarks in the paper.

One disadvantage was that the morning train permitted only one mail delivery during the day as the evening mail arrived too late for distribution until the next morning. Also, readers were informed that the early morning train included a sleeper which remained in Aberdeen during the day to be taken back by the evening train. The Aberdeen-to-Minneapolis night train sleeper service became popular. The Dakota Pioneer of August 5, 1884 reported

"Passengers complain that the sleepers on the C.M. & St.P Ry. are crowded full on every run between Minneapolis and Aberdeen. Many passengers are compelled to forego the comfort of a sleeping berth on the night trains."

The table of October 1883 testified to the greater

importance in railroad history of freight traffic as the chief money maker. Three H&D Division freight trains were scheduled to leave Aberdeen at 7:30 a.m., 12:10 p.m. and 4 p.m. while freights arrived at 12:10 p.m., 7:10 p.m. and 7:25 a.m. James River line passengers south bound arrived in the morning and departed Aberdeen in the evening.

In October 1883 the Chicago & Northwestern time card indicated the southbound trains were early morning and the northbound from Aberdeen were late afternoon and early evening trains. One freight train departed northward at 4:20 p.m and one southward at 7:55 a.m. Examination of the varied schedules reveals the importance of switchmen who maneuvered freight cars and passenger cars to side tracks and dispatchers who monitored and directed these varied trains to avoid collisions.

By 1884 the Milwaukee extension westward required entry of that route in the schedule which provided for one mixed train. In time as more western stations were opened more trains would be involved, especially when the line became transcontinental in 1909

The Milwaukee time table in September 1884 changed drastically from the October 1883 schedule in that only one passenger train operated instead of two. Also, in December the one passenger train departed for the east at 2 p.m. instead of the September time of 11:15 p.m. and the train from the east arrived at noon instead of the previous 5:50 a.m. One can understand the need of such published

schedules with seasonal changes as well as unexpected changes due to construction, accidents and marketing factors.

Both railroad and public were interested in reducing travel time between Minneapolis and Aberdeen. The Weekly News of June 3, 1887 described time changes for the night train: effective Sunday at 12:30 p.m.

"the time between St. Paul and Aberdeen is shortened considerably. Its westbound leaves St. Paul at 6:20 p.m and arrives in Aberdeen at 6:20 a.m. Stopping here for breakfast, it goes south at 6:55 a.m."

NEW  
DAYLIGHT  
TRAIN  
--- BETWEEN ---  
ABERDEEN, ELLENDALE  
AND  
ST. PAUL, MINNEAPOLIS  
VIA THE  
ST. PAUL,  
MINNEAPOLIS  
AND  
**MANITOBA**  
RAILWAY.  
QUICK TIME,  
COMFORTABLE COACHES,  
COURTEOUS TREATMENT.

AD OF MAY 24, 1888 DAILY NEWS:  
#7 LEAVING ST. PAUL AT 10:00 AM  
ARRIVING AT ABERDEEN 8:30 P.M.

By May 1888 the "daylight" trains of the Manitoba and the Milwaukee competed on the St. Paul to Aberdeen run leaving that city in the morning and arriving in Aberdeen in the evening. The Daily News of May 29, 1888 noted they had "several close races of late, from a point, where the smoke of the one is visible from the cars of the other....Last night the Jim Hill courser could be seen from a point just west of Groton, some eighteen miles from Aberdeen."

Arrival time of the Manitoba was five minutes in advance of the Milwaukee; but on this occasion the Milwaukee's "shooting day star", ahead of schedule, crossed the tracks of the Manitoba just as the Manitoba's "diagonal steed" halted to avoid a crash. The News observed that daytime travel was more convenient and that "both "daylights" are an institution and their traffic is said to be greater than {that} of the evening trains." Yet the Weekly News observed on May 27, 1888 that there was an "increased demand for night train sleepers on the Manitoba run between Aberdeen and Fargo."

#### RETRENCHMENT 1889

By 1889 harder times were beginning to replace the boom times of the early and mid 1880s. One way to meet downturns in the economy was reduction of train service. Rumors circulated in spring of 1889 about reduction of Sunday passenger service. The C&NW cut Sunday service as of April 28, 1889 on its Oakes and Hawarden lines. The Daily News reported on April 21, 1889

"Railroad men say there is a great difference between the amount of business transacted now and at this time a year ago., the receipts for the last three or four weeks showing a decided falling off."

The Milwaukee had planned a similar reduction but learned that government mail contracts required seven trains a week. Such contracts would have to be amended before Sunday reductions occurred on the Milwaukee.

However, several days later

after a visit by high officials Milwaukee Supt. Hadley posted a bulletin on April 22 that Sunday trains would no longer run on the south branch between Aberdeen and Mitchell, the north branch between Aberdeen and Edgeley as well as on the westward extension between Aberdeen and Bowdle. Apparently Sunday service was retained between Aberdeen and St. Paul.

On April 23 the Daily News editorialized: "the sentiment was unanimous among the officials that the present condition of travel and trade did not warrant the outlay ...and that in the line of economy and retrenchment, a policy which all the roads are pursuing, good business principles demanded their abandonment."

The Daily News of May 11, 1889 reported that the

"Northwestern has joined the entrenchment crowd for a certainty. Its Sunday Dakota train leaving Chicago at 9:00 a.m. and running through Wisconsin and Minnesota into Dakota will be taken off for good after tomorrow."

On May 14, 1889 the Daily News observed: "The taking off of Sunday trains has lessened the number of visitors in this city on that day to a considerable extent. Sunday is now the lightest day of the week at the hotels and restaurants." Also, this was true for depot usage.

In the shadow of Milwaukee retrenchment policy, rumors circulated about layoffs of railroad personnel. Blaming the "dullness of the times", the Daily News of Nov. 24, 1889 reported:

"In some sections the track laborers and even the operators are being laid off. There is also a well defined rumor that the train service north and west of Aberdeen is liable to curtailment for the winter."



With the approach of the winter season Milwaukee management decided in November to reduce passenger services further.

The Daily News informed its readers on November 29 that "due to the stringent times and light travel" effective November 30th day-passenger trains on the Hastings & Dakota division between Aberdeen and St. Paul were suspended but night trains continued. Apparently night trains attracted more passengers. The evening passenger for Thursday November 22, 1889, according to the Daily News, was "heavily loaded and the seating capacity was taxed to its utmost".

On the James River division between Aberdeen and Edgeley a three-times-a-week schedule-- Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays-- went into effect. The present schedule remained for Bowdle, Eureka and Mitchell trains. The decision to retain, rather than eliminate, the night train between St. Paul and Aberdeen was a relief to Aberdonians since a day train trip to St. Paul was "a whole tedious day's travel".

However, the residents of Frederick, accustomed to a daily train except Sunday, were unhappy with the tri-weekly service.

A petition to the Postmaster General dated December 24, 1889 pointed out the inconveniences:

"a two-day mail arrives at 11:06 a.m. at Frederick, generally delayed and therefore cannot be distributed until about 12 o'clock, and closes at 4:30 p.m. of the same day. Being the heart of the busy day, it is impossible to attend the ordinary running business and still be able to answer the letter before mail is closed, resulting in a serious block

to business, caused by delay of two and generally four and five days."

The Frederick Free Press characterized as fictional in its issue of February 27, 1890 the argument that only a few businessmen supported daily mail: "Everyone big enough to lick a postage stamp not only desires it, but they have matters pending which leave by mail which often make it essential to have a daily mail."

For a brief interval (about April 24 to the end of December 1890) the daily schedule was reinstated on the Frederick-Ellendale branch. However, by January 1, 1891 The Milwaukee restored the tri-weekly Monday, Wednesday and Friday schedule. The Free Press of that date stated that policy "most damaging ... to the railroad and an outrage to the people."

One temporary benefit stemming from railroad retrenchment policy was decrease in freight rates as a result of rate wars between railroads. Jewett Bros. of Aberdeen was influential in persuading the Milwaukee to reduce local rates out of Aberdeen and Sioux Falls placing those towns on a par with St. Paul and Minneapolis merchants in Dakota trade territory. Previously Aberdeen and Sioux Falls paid higher rates on goods shipped out than paid by St. Paul businesses for goods shipped to the Dakotas.

The Daily News asserted on November 23, 1889:

"If the Milwaukee adheres to this decision and reduces the local rates it will wipe out much of the prejudice that has existed against it in this section and at Sioux Falls for some time...an end to discrimination will assist the Hub to supply country merchants."

Aberdeen claimed to have gained a terminal point status and thus secured terminal rates which were 25-30% less than local rates. Local jobbers were on equal par with St. Paul merchants ending the previous "thralldom" to the railroads.

The Daily News on November 24, 1889 declared this concession "one of the most important strides that Aberdeen has ever taken." The Manitoba followed by accepting "just freight rates" an action which impacted everyman. On December 8, 1889 the Daily News asserted that Jewett Bros. wholesalers had received terminal rates from the Chicago & Northwestern. The Milwaukee reduction was confirmed in the Daily News of January 22, 1890 with statement that "fifth class freight will be shipped for 45 cents per hundred or 11 cents cheaper than under the old rate."

#### PLATFORM AND DEPOT ENCOUNTERS

Changes in the Milwaukee depot platform received newspaper attention. Increased freight transfer and delivery traffic necessitated platform extension by 150 feet eastward for that purpose as well as extensions for passenger use. Workers constructed a transfer track just south of the existing transfer track on this side of the depot and a delivery track just north of the main track.

The depot--its platform and sidetracks--received brief, annual visits of Milwaukee officials on inspection tours. On June 12, 1884 the Dakota Pioneer described such a visit of railway magnates who arrived from the south on Saturday at 4 p.m. "One of the finest trains

that ever passed through our city," this special included a baggage car, parlor car, dining car and two sleepers plus C. H. Prior's private car. President Alexander Mitchell was amongst those officials. They paused at the depot for 20 minutes before heading east to St. Paul. In early June 1888 a special four-coach train carrying Milwaukee officials stopped briefly at the Main Street depot and then proceeded southward on another inspection tour.

The passenger depot platform served as a meeting and departure site for individual families and groups. Such was the case in late September 1884 when the Saturday night passenger arrived. Twenty North Dakota delegates returning from Pierre swarmed out on the depot platform, gave three cheers for their favorite, but recently rejected, candidate Raymond and sang to the tune of John Brown "We'll nominate Raymond for Congress next time as we go marching home".

In late May 1887 workmen extended eastward the Milwaukee depot platform. This permitted passenger unloading east of Main rather than on Main street as previously. There would also be more room for group farewells and welcomes.

In June 1887 Aberdeen prepared to welcome its champion hook and ladder company who were arriving on the Milwaukee passenger from Mitchell. According to the Weekly News of June 24, 1887 two bands, local fire company, a broom brigade, a hose company and plug hat brigade gathered at the depot after parading through town. Upon arrival, the

champions heard the cheers, music and saw the banners, one of which read: "Aberdeen against the world".

On October 9, 1888 curious Aberdonians crowded the depot interior lunch counter and later the exterior boarding platform. Medicine man, Sitting Bull and thirteen chiefs in the company of agent McLaughlin ate their meal before boarding the eastbound passenger on their way to Washington, D.C. where they hoped to resolve differences over land prices. The Daily News of October 10, 1888 reported:

"The red men were arrayed in a line on one side of the counter while the people, anxious to catch a glimpse of the renowned Sitting Bull and his young and fit successors, Gaul and Grass, crowded into the room to its utmost standing capacity".

"Throughout these scenes not a smile or a change of countenance was noticed in the visitors. Although there was no attempt to conceal the interest they had awakened among the people, yet they gave no sign or any particular notice of it. Until the departure of the train the same eager throng besieged them at every turn and the depot platform could not hold all the men, women and children who congregated."

The tradition of a Milwaukee lunch counter was continued with the building of the new depot in 1888-89 as the Daily News indicated on April 3, 1889: "The lunch counters at the Milwaukee depot are now in running order and are feeding the hungry daily."

#### DEPOT, YARD SECURITY & SAFETY

Attractions of the depot's interior were not only the lunch counter but also restrooms, men's and women's

waiting rooms, wall space containing bulletin board and poster information. For example, in August 1883 reward posters offered \$500 for the arrest and conviction of persons meddling with Western Union wires or poles. Security in the depot and adjacent areas of the yard were important and occasionally newsworthy.

On May 30 1888 the Daily News focused on the spring-time tramp problem:

"Already there are a large number of this persuasion lurking in the neighborhood of the several depots. They are not bent upon any good and it would be well for the citizens to keep a sharp lookout during the summer months at least."

Police reports in the May 14, 1889 issue of the Daily News indicated "one drunk and disorderly at the Milwaukee depot" requiring quite a tussel between policeman Jones and the offender.

Practical jokers occasionally caused confusion by switching platform baggage or freight items to another railroad's platform and depot. The Aberdeen Daily News reported such an incident on August 6, 1886. Expressman C. B. Mount received a wire screen for a smoke stack on the Milwaukee train from St. Paul. Since the item was billed to Ipswich, Mount left the item on the depot platform awaiting the departure of the Milwaukee's westbound train to Ipswich. When Mount returned, the screen had disappeared. A traveling man had carried it over to the Northwestern depot with his baggage. In time the screen was returned to the Milwaukee depot and eventually arrived at Ipswich.

Accidents in the yard and near the depot were infrequent but occasionally occurred. More accidents occurred on varied routes especially in wintertime than in town. Aberdeen had been accident free until one Wednesday in December 1886. The Milwaukee's Ipswich train backed into the Aberdeen depot area and collided with a switch engine which was headed for the water tank. The engineer of the switch engine did not notice the Ipswich train's approach. The rear coach of the train suffered loss of its platform. The collision shook up several passengers and broke the brakeman's wrist. The incident became one of many stories recounted at the depot and the yards.

The depot platform served as a welcoming site for distinguished visitors. Visiting Mason leaders who had established a chapter at Yankton arrived on the Milwaukee from the south on January 7, 1889. Local Masons met them on the depot platform, escorted them to the Dayton hotel where they were hosted at a two-hour reception before departing for Fargo via the Northwestern on the afternoon of January 8.

The depot platform occasionally was a jump off point for a newly married couple. The Daily News of November 16, 1889 reported that P. E. Kennedy and bride from Bowdle, along with the bride's brother and the groom's sister, took the Northwestern southward to visit friends in the east.

The depot, its platform and adjacent areas found trainmen such as conductors informing

reporters and depot personnel in summer and fall about crop conditions along the line. Favorable reports were passed on to newspaper readers. At the Manitoba depot conductor Bert Cummings became noted for his "sonorous bass" call: "all aboard for the Man-i-to-ba". The Daily News of June 24, 1888 labeled that call as "one of the features of Aberdeen." and judged "it's worth a bus fare to hear him shout."

#### SPECIAL COACH CARS

The depot, its platform and nearby tracks provided access for locals to visit special coach cars positioned for easy access. The Daily News of June 21, 1888 reported the arrival on Wednesday, June 20 of a special Pioneer Press car, "The Success". This "elegant" car was positioned on a sidetrack near the Milwaukee depot. It had attraction power equal to "a four tented circus with a giraffe." Aberdeen businessmen and a "throng" of citizens greeted the executives of that Minnesota newspaper who accompanied this special hotel car, a Northern Pacific sleeper.

At one end was an 18-foot office room with bookcase, desk and tables. A dining room occupied the car's middle with a kitchen at the car's rear end. Sleeping births were available for ten people. The Pioneer Press newspapermen offered Aberdonians a special subscription rate as well as publicity for Aberdeen in special Dakota editions and a weekly correspondence section.

Some of the visitors most likely frequented the depot itself before or after viewing

"The Success". Pioneer Press representatives issued a special invitation to Aberdeen ladies to view the car and meet them between three and four on that afternoon. On Thursday night June 21 a large crowd gathered at the Milwaukee depot to bid farewell to "the Success" which had been attached to the "twilight express".

Another special was the Milwaukee "Grain Coach" which was positioned on a track near A.H. Moses' office, one door south of the depot. Moses, the travelling immigration agent, invited residents to examine samples in the car as well as asking for additional grain samples and other agricultural products to be left at his office for the fall tour publicizing the area's agriculture.

The Dakota Pioneer of September 25, 1884 described the coach as "a model of beauty." Gilt letters on a dark background positioned above each window on both sides of the coach identified the railroad: C.M. & St. P. Upright wheat heads adorned the ventilation deck. Oat heads drooped down from the roof to the eaves. Wheat heads framed the glass paneled doors. Evergreen sprigs covered the coach's platform and wheels. Wheat heads tied with blue and red ribbons loomed above and below each window.

#### TRAFFIC PATTERNS: EXCURSION TRAINS

At 11:30 a.m. one day in mid July, 1884 a St. Paul Jobbers' excursion train arrived at Aberdeen's Milwaukee depot. According to

the Dakota Pioneer of July 17, 1884 Mayor Skillman and a delegation of Aberdeen merchants welcomed them on the platform and then proceeded to show them Aberdeen's famous flowing artesian well.

On July 24, 1884 an excursion train to Minneapolis readied itself for veterans and others to attend the Grand Army of the Republic reunion. The Dakota Pioneer of July 24, 1884 reported: "Every available coach on the C.M. & St.P has been put into use to transport veterans to the reunion." Coaches had been brought from Ellendale and Ipswich to meet the need.

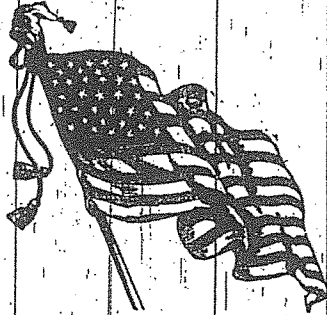
As early as October 8-10, 1884 at the time of the first Brown County Fair in Aberdeen, the two railroad companies provided special trains for people in surrounding towns to see the agricultural displays.

The Dakota Pioneer of October 16, 1884 credited the fair with drawing "people from railroad towns of Columbia, Groton, Frederick, Westport, Ordway, Warner, Rudolph, Bath and Mina." Depots and platforms were especially crowded as people arrived and departed. This trend continued for the ensuing annual fairs culminating in 1893 with the 9th fair and the September opening of Aberdeen's Grain Palace.

Individuals as well as large groups met at the depot platform. On Wednesday evening May 30, 1888 a bride-to-be stepped off the Milwaukee passenger from the south and joined her awaiting fiance at the depot; they both headed to the Park Place Hotel to be married. The next morning they boarded the Milwaukee train for his farm in Walworth county.

## THE STATEHOOD TRAIN

ON to WASHINGTON



Due to numerous applications for fare without meals, excursion tickets for the round trip on the

Statehood Train  
TO WASHINGTON

will be sold for

\$60 Good for 30 Days \$60

Including Sleeping Car Accommodations.

The national congress recognized the emergence of the Dakotas from territorial status to statehood in 1889. Editor of the Aberdeen Daily News George Schlosser arranged with the Manitoba for a special excursion to Washington DC. so Dakotans could be present to see their representatives seated in the newly organized Congress.

Traveling the Manitoba offered certain advantages not embodied in tickets of other railroads. The Manitoba's Statehood Train offered a thirty day ticket instead of fourteen day ticket and stop-over privileges compared to continuous travel requirement of other railroads.

The train consisting of two sleepers and a baggage car arrived on November 28, 1889 and departed that night after 9p.m. with 39 passengers. The evening hours of November 28 were busy in the station and on the boarding platform.

On each side of the cars were identifying banners: "Aberdeen Daily News Statehood Train from Aberdeen SD to Washington DC". The train would add an additional sleeper for North Dakotans at Evansville, Minnesota, the main line of the Manitoba system.

Numerous passengers came from Pierre, Watertown, Sioux Falls, Groton, Redfield and other towns to join with Aberdonians on this patriotic tour. Round trip fare without meals cost \$60.00. Fare with meals cost \$75.00. Passengers utilized a side tracked sleeper and the dining car while in Washington DC.

## IMMIGRATION CARS

Since 1884 German Russians arrived in Brown County from which they moved westward to Edmunds and Walworth counties by train and by wagon to McIntosh county. Aberdeen proved to be a waystop for Russian emmigrants. One group of about 100 camped overnight April 23, 1889 in Milwaukee coaches on their way to Eureka.

On April 28, 1889 the Daily News reported that

"Four extra passenger coaches were attached to the morning passenger west yesterday to accomodate the 200 Russian immigrants who arrived from the east. The total number of immigrants for the week exceeded 300--and still there's more to follow."

In later November 1889 a Daily News reporter interviewed banker Pfeffer of Eureka who was in Aberdeen to escort over 100 Russians from Europe to the area north of Roscoe. He indicated that 5000 Russians had arrived during 1889.

## DEPOT TICKET SALES AND RAILROAD FARES

The depot ticket office became an important news source center for local reporters. Observant ticket agents passed on newsworthy items about human behavior to visiting reporters. The Weekly News of June 24, 1887 filled its column "The city in Brief" with stories of supposedly needy women who had been begging in Aberdeen and another who had been given cash for train fare as displaying considerable money at the depot inferring they had taken advantage of charitable Aberdonians. The comings and goings of varied persons, train usage--arrivals and departures--as well as number of passengers were not only of interest to the press and public but also useful in promoting the railroad's public image.

Newspaper advertising paid for by the national headquarters promoted local ticket sales. The Dakota Pioneer of September 27, 1883 contained a Milwaukee advertisement labeled: "The Railway to Patronize". Milwaukee "passenger coaches are always clean, well warmed and ventilated, which cannot be said of its competitors. Therefore we wish to say to our readers in the east, if you contemplate visiting Dakota or any part of the northwest be sure that your ticket reads Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway, otherwise you will regret it."

Earlier, a timetable of 1882 appealed to the drummer or traveling men who smoked:

"The comfort of lovers of the weed has not been overlooked. On each Through Train will be found right next to the sleepers an elegant brand new smoking car, thoroughly

ventilated, filled with rattan seats, always fresh and clean, brilliantly lighted by beautiful lamps".

Prior to 1885 companies had issued a bargain commercial ticket for trips of 1000 miles to traveling business men. Effective January 1 1885 commercial men must buy a local ticket to their destinations paying regular rates. However, ordinary travelers could continue buying 1000-mile tickets for \$25.00.

From time to time references to ticket sales appear in the newspapers perhaps to testify to the popularity of train travel. On Nov. 12, 1886 the Weekly News indicated that Milwaukee ticket agent R. L. Bowes had informed them that:

"more tickets were sold to other points Monday than have ever been sold in any one day since he has been in the Aberdeen depot. A large number of people are going east to spend the winter with old-time friends."

C&NW station agent Lovejoy reported in early December 1886 that 75 tickets to Columbia, the county seat, had been sold on Monday, mostly to lawyers, jurors and witnesses enroute to district court. In 1888 the Aberdeen Daily News of May 29 informed the public through a special CM&St.P Gossip column that "Yesterday's ticket sales include three round trip five month limit tickets to St. Albans, Vermont." On June 1, 1888 that paper announced: "The agents at the three depots report ticket sales very good for this season."

Advertised bargain rates to specific destinations drew customers to the ticket office. The Dakota Pioneer of June 26, 1884 reprinted a message to Milwaukee ticket agents from

headquarters passenger and ticket department. The company offered veterans and families attending the Grand Army of the Republic encampment at Minneapolis July 23-25, 1884 a one-way fare for a round trip. Signed honor certificates as to veteran status were required of such passengers.

A similar offering appeared in the Aberdeen Daily News of May 27, 1888 which contained ticket data for those wanting to attend the Knights of Pythias June convention in Cincinnati. The usual one-way fare could buy a round trip ticket. Also, round trip tickets were available for \$75.87 to attend the June Teacher's National Educational convention in San Francisco.

The Manitoba in late May 1888 offered conventioners headed for St. Louis a round trip first-class ticket from Aberdeen for \$20.88. Passengers boarded the Saturday morning train for a 6:30 departure and arrived at St. Louis Monday morning at 6:30 with a stop at the twin cities Saturday evening through Sunday morning.

Stop-over privileges versus a continuous trip requirement became an issue for travelers. In periods of rate wars such as the early 1890s railroads such as the Chicago and Northwestern offered reduced rates of \$12.28 on tickets limited to continuous train passage to Chicago and Milwaukee. These were first class tickets from towns of Oakes, Aberdeen, Redfield, Huron and Wolsey.

#### CUSTOMER SERVICES

Customers sometimes lost or misplaced items in waiting rooms or trains. A lost and

found service helped a few lucky ones to recover their property. Illustrative is an ad in The Dakota Pioneer of Feb. 7, 1884: "Lost at the C.M. & St. Paul depot in this city, on last Sunday, a gold locket, with magnifying glass and picture inside. The finder will be liberally rewarded by returning to this office."

In July 1888 a change in the Milwaukee freight schedule was made for the convenience of Aberdeen merchants. New policy decreed that both freights from the east which previously arrived about 6 p.m. and way freight from the east formerly arriving at 9 p.m. would be delivered at 3:15 p.m.

With the approach of summer the C.M. & St.P scheduled a "butter and egg refrigerator car" over its H & D. division twice a week leaving Aberdeen Wednesdays at 5 p.m. and Thursdays at 9:15 a.m. While icing these cars increased the work load of railroad employees during the summer months, farmers appreciated the service

Mail service helped conquer the barriers of distance. Railroads gradually replaced stage coach mail service. A daily mail pouch came to be considered essential; complaints arose over delayed mail and infrequent train delivery of mail. Public awareness of arrival times for mail trains increased. Closure times and railroad carriers of mail appeared in a postoffice directory of August 13, 1886:

MAILS CLOSE.		
Going South, via C. & N. W.	.....	7:30 a. m
North, " " " "	.....	4:30 p. m
East, " C. M. & St. P.	.....	7:30 "
West, " " " "	.....	7:30 "
South, " " " "	.....	7:30 "
North, " " " "	.....	7:30 "



MAILS OPEN.		
From East via C. M. & St. P.	.....	8:00 a. m.
" West " " " "	.....	8:00 a. m.
" North " " " "	.....	8:00 a. m.
" South " " " "	.....	8:00 a. m.
" North " C. & N. W.	.....	8:25 a. m.
" South " " " "	.....	5:25 p. m.
Office hours from 8:00 a. m. to 7:30 p. m. Sun-		
day from 12:00 to 1:00 p. m.		
CHAS. A. FISHER, P. M.		

## POSTOFFICE DIRECTORY AUG. 1886

With the building of the Manitoba line in 1886-87 new railroad towns sprang up in northeastern Brown County. Both town residents in Aberdeen's growing trade area and Aberdeen businessmen appreciated the convenience of this method of communication. Aberdeen postmaster Firey as of June 18, 1887 instituted delivery to the Manitoba towns. As indicated previously mail service suffered in late 1889 when tri-weekly train service took the place of daily train service on the Milwaukee's Aberdeen-to-Ellendale branch.

Once the mail arrived by train, delivery of mail within Aberdeen took place. On May 4, 1889 the Daily News observed a man pulling a mail cart from the Milwaukee depot along the Main street sidewalk to the postoffice. The paper considered it a lumbering vehicle which annoyed pedestrians. A horse-drawn truck should carry the mail bags and that awkward cart should be "sent to some water tank station".

A service link existed between the Milwaukee and Aberdeen's Western Union Office. In early April 1889 the Western Union Telegraph manager Blood informed reporters of the

Daily News that when his city office closed at 8 p.m., the Milwaukee train despatcher's office should be visited. Since it was also a Western Union office, the Milwaukee would handle messages left there after that hour.

As the one railroad with a main line route through Aberdeen, the Milwaukee established food service for locals and those travelers between trains who used the depot and its facilities. The new depot continued that service offered at the previous depot. The Daily News of April 3, 1889 reported "The lunch counters at the Milwaukee depot are now in running order and are feeding the hungry daily."

## TRANSITION YEAR: 1889

### TERRITORY TO STATE

In 1889 a decade of hard times emerged. During the previous boom years in Brown County three railroads centered in Aberdeen with branch lines west, north and south, new railroad towns emerged and populations grew. Yet there were hopeful signs: the restrictions of territorial status had been cast aside. In 1889 Aberdeen boasted a new Milwaukee Depot and a Manitoba depot only two years old and growing passenger and freight activity.

By 1889 Aberdeen had established the Hub City image. As early as 1886 Walter Butler's map included an inset circle with Aberdeen at the center and nine railway lines extending in all directions. In 1888 a revised version of the map circulated. It included also the logo "Wheel of Fortune". Some lines were projected and not built; grades

were built for a line to Pierre but was not ironed. Only three railroads serviced Aberdeen in 1889 and through the 1890s with seven tracked routes until 1906 when the Minneapolis & St. Louis came to Aberdeen. All provided connections with the Twin Cities and Chicago. The Daily News announced on Feb. 11, 1890 that the Manitoba had become the Great Northern with connections to the Northern Pacific and the West Coast as well as eastward connections.

#### RAILROADING IN THE 1890S

Despite the fact that the first five years of this decade were economically depressed and filled with labor troubles, there were promotional events that inspired people to board trains to find escape from life's realities as well as conduct business. Railroad depots and their platforms as well as their freight yards became activity centers. Railroads also aided the county to alleviate coal and seed wheat shortages by distribution of those scarce products.

Aberdeen's hosting of the state fair until 1894, the Grain Palace expositions from 1893, the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 were helpful to railroading in Brown County. Circus Day brought many to town especially in the later 1890s when Ringling Brothers Circus visited Aberdeen in 1897-1899. Ringling Day brought thousands to town. In 1895 and 1898-99 hundreds used the Great Northern Depot to board the excursion trains to Tacoma Park summer resort.

Depot platform farewells to departing soldiers of the

Spanish American War era were the first of other such farewells and homecomings of later decades. The hobo, the harvest worker, con artists, the socially disgraced, the elite--authors, generals, politicians and even a president, became part of the drama of the depot, its platform and track sidings.

Apparently hard times and drought of the early 1890s did not reduce freight train activity. A report of October 30, 1891 in the Weekly News indicated railroad yards at both Milbank and Aberdeen were "chock full of business". A businessman returning from Milbank saw four heavily loaded freights. This "immense traffic" suggested need for increased train service.

By 1894 Milwaukee officials justified restoration of the tri-weekly service on trains between Aberdeen and Edgeley, westward to Eureka and southward from Bowdle to Orient and way freight between Aberdeen and Mitchell by pointing to "depressed business due to the labor trouble." Later, the Milwaukee's Hastings & Dakota Division abandoned the night passenger train between Aberdeen and St. Paul but continued the day passenger. Superintendent Bunker asserted in the Weekly News of July 5 1894 that a business slump exists:

"We have cut down our train service and discharged several men from the round house and yards solely on account of the lack of something profitable for them to do."

An incident at Aberdeen's Sherman Hotel testified to rising tensions. A Milwaukee conductor and a Great Northern

conductor brawled over one calling the other a scab for engaging in switching duties in order to rush his train out of Sioux City despite a labor boycott. The Great Northern man received two black eyes and a swollen nose.

Scheduling greatly concerned Aberdeen citizens and those of small county towns particularly as it affected mail delivery. Aberdeen was a mail, as well as wholesale, distributing point. Trains from St. Paul brought much of the mail to Aberdeen for distribution in all directions. Postal cars in the daytime often stood in the railroad yards awaiting usage. Sometimes postal clerks slept in them in the morning and worked in them during the day before a locomotive arrived for a rail journey.

The tri-weekly schedule of late 1889 for the Milwaukee north branch line lasted until April 1890 at which time the daily schedule returned for the rest of the year. In 1891 the tri-weekly service became standard. By 1894 towns along the branch line took action to maintain proper mail delivery.

On the Aberdeen-Ellendale route locals contracted for a stage coach mail service leaving Aberdeen at 7 a.m. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and leaving Ellendale Tuesday and Wednesday at 8 a.m. Thus, Westport and Frederick residents received mail on days the train did not run. The stage took about 7 1/2 hours over a 39-mile route.

#### QUEST FOR PASSENGERS 1890S: SPECIAL & EXCURSION TRAINS

Aberdeen's three railroads found specials and excursion

trains useful in profit seeking while improving their public images. The 1890s was a decade of populist rural politics, criticism of freight rates and labor unrest in the railroad industry. Railroads encouraged excursions and offered special rates to events in Aberdeen and outside of Aberdeen.

In October 1891 the C&NW made connections with Hot Springs, SD-- resort town in the Black Hills. The C&NW promoted excursion tickets at reduced rates and encouraged visits to local ticket offices.

Excursions eastward to the resort area at Big Stone Lake are illustrated by the school children's excursion of 1895 and the A.O.U. Workman excursion of July 1899. For \$1 school children could have a round trip ticket providing they showed the ticket agent a certificate from their teacher verifying their student status. Accompanying adults paid \$2.

On the morning of July 19, 1899 about 150 Aberdonians, the Redfield band and the Mitchell juvenile band gathered at the Milwaukee depot to board the train to Ortonville and Big Stone Lake. About 50 more had boarded the previous night to be on hand for the early morning festivities.

#### CHICAGO BOUND!

"How to visit the world's fair?". Each railroad had its answer favoring their road. National headquarters of the C&NW submitted paid advertisements to local papers. Calling that event "the greatest exposition the world has ever known", the C&NW urged purchase until October 31, 1893 of tickets good until November 15,

1893. Theirs was "the popular route, with its frequent and fast express trains, with magnificent through car service of modern day coaches, sleeping cars, parlor cars and dining cars." Return trips were good thirty days from date of ticket sale.

#### ABERDEEN BOUND!

Brown County Fairs and State Fairs held in Aberdeen before 1895 attracted large crowds and exhibits from towns and the countryside within and outside the county. Aberdeen's advantages as a state fair site were: accessability by way of rail transportation to ship stock, machinery, products and people. Hotel accommodations, a race course, and grand stand capacity were also important.

Advertisements for the county fair Sept. 30, Oct. 1 & 2, 1891 and state fair of September 11-15, 1893, announced "excursion trains and reduced fare on all railroads." The C&NW offered half fares, that is the usual one way ticket would be good for the round trip. Such tickets were good for the return trip until September 16, 1893.

GOING NORTH		GOING SOUTH	
Leave 7:15 a. m.	Huron.....	9:25 p. m. Arrive	
" 7:48 "	Brondland.....	8:59 "	"
" 8:13 "	Hitchcock.....	8:38 "	"
" 8:41 "	Crandon.....	8:16 "	"
" 9:04 "	Redfield.....	7:59 "	"
" 9:33 "	Athol.....	7:38 "	"
" 9:52 "	Northville.....	7:16 "	"
" 10:04 "	Mapsfeld.....	7:03 "	"
" 10:16 "	Rudolph.....	6:48 "	"
Ar. 10:35 "	Aberdeen.....	6:30 "	Lv.
J. S. OLIVER, Superintendent.			

#### C&NW FAIR TRAIN TO ABERDEEN SEPTEMBER 13-15, 1893

Passenger depots and platforms were crowded upon

arrival and departure of this "floating" population. Amongst these was the Fourth Regiment Band of Sioux City scheduled for concerts. Upon arrival on the C&NW September 12 the Grain Palace Band met them on the platform and escorted them to the Grain Palace. On September 20 that band departed for Sioux City on an early Milwaukee train.

Attracted by the state fair and the opening of the Grain Palace in 1893 300 to 400 people from Edmunds County arrived at the Milwaukee depot on September 14. They thronged about upper Main Street and distributed printed material boosting their county. At the C&NW depot crowds debarked from the south special and also from Milwaukee specials at that depot. As a result "main street was a solid jam a great deal of the time." according to the Daily News of September 14, 1893.

The Grain Palace brought special guests to town including the state governor, a Russian delegate and a English official to Chicago's Columbian Exposition.

In 1894 excursion trains once again brought people to Aberdeen's palace exposition and to its last state fair. The C&NW from Watertown and Huron arrived about 10 a.m. with 250 excursionists. The Milwaukee train from the south was "fairly well filled" and the H&D morning passenger special coach for Twin City people brought in 150 or more. The regular evening trains for September 19 were "also loaded". All trains were to be held until conclusion of the evening Grain Palace concert on September 20.

### RINGLING DAY

In the last three years of the 1890s the arrival in Aberdeen of Ringling Brothers Circus and menagerie drew huge crowds from out of town as well as from within town. While many came in horse-powered transportation, hundreds arrived on the trains. Over ten thousand people witnessed the gigantic parade and saw the performance on June 1897. Circus ads of July 11, 1899 refer to 65 railroad cars which carried their 25 elephants, 500 horses and 1000 performers and workers. The street parade on July 12 was free. Admission to the ground was only fifty cents for adults and half that for children under 12. Publicity included an incentive to those not living in Aberdeen: "Special Cheap excursions on all railroads". The trains arrived usually at the C&NW depot early in the morning so as to have time to set up on the site between the C&NW and the Great Northern yards and depots. Curious crowds watched the arrival, the set up, attended the parade and thronged the circus grounds.

### TWIN CITIES BOUND! AUGUST 1896

The GAR encampment for 1896 met in St. Paul. A headquarters train departed from Aberdeen on the C&NW on August 31. However, more activity occurred at the Milwaukee depot as that railroad had a more direct route for people of central Dakota. About 150 passengers who had purchased from agent Hilliker \$7 round trip tickets boarded a 7 a.m. special with its passenger coaches and a baggage car. The depot platform was a lively spot for about

fifteen minutes with passengers and their friends mingling before departure.

The Milwaukee sent extra coaches westward and northward on the morning of August 31 to be attached to the evening eastbound train. Two trains--twenty minutes apart--serviced these travelers. One section had four coaches and four sleepers. The second section consisted of seven day coaches. More travelers were to be picked up along the route. Most coaches were filled and the sleeping car accommodations taken.

From the south came 103 excursionists. Ninety came from the west and 111 from the north. About 50 Aberdonians joined them. Before departure according to the Daily News of September 2, 1896 a holiday spirit prevailed: "hundreds of town people gathered at the depot to witness the departure of friends and acquaintances. The station room ...was packed to the limit." South Dakota would be well represented at the encampment.

### POLITICAL EXCURSIONS

During the election year of 1896 special trains left Aberdeen for neighboring small towns where reform and political rallies were held. The depot platforms became exciting and noisy spots before and after boarding.

At 7 p.m. September 22, 1896 approximately 75 people boarded the Milwaukee special to hear Mary Lease speak at the Groton opera house. They returned by midnight. On Saturday night October 3 the McKinley club, a drum corps and about 75 persons boarded a special train of two coaches.

At the Groton depot a band met them. About a thousand listened to Republican Attorney General Crawford. The train returned at 11:30 p.m. in what was considered "especially fast time".

On the night of October 12 Aberdeen's Republican McKinley Club sponsored a rally in Groton. A drum corps and about 150 men and 25 ladies boarded the Milwaukee three-coach special for Groton to participate in a torch light parade to the opera house where they heard Minneapolis attorney Frank Nye, returning shortly before midnight.

The Hub City band, Coe Crawford and over sixty Republicans left Aberdeen on the Milwaukee at 7 p.m. Friday October 30, 1896 for Frederick on the last campaign trip before election. Fifteen more boarded at Westport. They returned home about midnight with Mr. Crawford taking the southbound train in the morning headed to another speaking engagement.

#### ABERDEEN BOUND: BRYAN & THE CROWD: OCTOBER 9-10, 1896

A special C&NW train brought presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan to Aberdeen arriving late about 1:30 a.m. on October 10, 1896. He had been expected to arrive about 11 p.m. on October 9. Aberdeen experienced a wild night before and after his arrival.

Thousands had flocked to Aberdeen to see and hear him. Four to five hundred excursionists arrived from Milbank about 8 p.m. on the Milwaukee. Edgeley, North Dakota furnished 367 arriving

on the Milwaukee on its north line and about an equal number came from Bowdle and Eureka on the west line. The C&NW train from the south as well as the south line Milwaukee contributed its share of travelers. Hundreds came by other means of transportation. Three US senators and the state's governor were present as Bryan spoke at the Grain Palace.

Bryan's private car which featured a dining room and sleeper with parlors and smoking room was switched to the Great Northern for a journey to Fargo after the exciting night in Aberdeen.

#### HUMANITY'S STAGE; THE DEPOT PLATFORM IN THE 1890S

During this decade both noteworthy and average persons strode the depot platforms of Aberdeen's railroad depots. Arriving and departing passengers were often the focus of emotional greetings and farewells. Newspapers noted these passengers and platform encounters. They also noted trainmen such as Engineer West who brought in a live hawk with a five-foot wingspread. Depot railroad men and travelers in the depot joked about the "beast".

Among the noteworthies was author Hamlin Garland who debarked at the Milwaukee depot on a Monday November 10, 1891 and proceeded to Columbia on Tuesday to visit briefly his parents Mr. & Mrs. Richard H. Garland. On Tuesday November 17 he left the city aboard the C&NW morning passenger train.

The Weekly News noted an unusual sight at the Milwaukee depot on the night of September

24, 1891. Passengers eyed an Indian mother in the waiting room. She carried a baby behind her back. In the face of stares, she stood proudly for baby and motherhood.

Returning from hunting in North Dakota, Major General Nelson Miles, one of his staff and a guest disembarked at the C&NW depot late Saturday afternoon Sept. 9, 1893. Several Aberdonians met him and gave him an hour tour of the city including the Grain Palace, an impromptue performance by the city band and a fire department exhibition. The Miles group departed on the southbound Milwaukee train.

Since the Great Northern depot was the embarking point for those headed for Canada, that exodus received much unfavorable attention. So called "boomers" had been convincing numerous people that Manitoba, Canada was a land of opportunity, more so than South Dakota which experienced hard times.

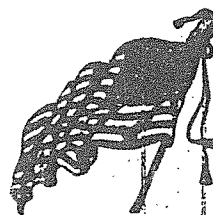
The Weekly News of September 25, 1891 observed that the Great Northern depot had been quite busy of late with many boarding the train for Canada. Boomers had generated bad will in the business community as people had fled to Canada leaving unpaid debts behind. Boomers were suspected of encouraging emigrants to be dead beats and skip town.

The News negatively portrayed not only the boomers but those foolish enough to board the train. On November 27, 1891 the News was quite pleased when some of these returned from Manitoba saying that the boomers had given them

an untrue picture.

Gossip had branded an Aberdeen barber who had left his wife and children for Emma, a 21 year old lady friend who had been married to a Warner teacher and who had deserted her three year--old daughter. The couple's meetings by horse, carriage and bicycle had been the talk of Main Street.

The night of September 14, 1896 they departed on the eastbound Milwaukee train. A closed hack transported the couple to the Milwaukee Depot where Emma spent time in the ladies waiting room. Several dozen people noticed her as she walked the platform and entered the sleeping coach. Barber Warren was also on the platform some time before the train departed, tearfully meeting with his son for five or ten minutes. The engineer waiting for the late west train had delayed departure. When that time came barber Warren strode forward, grasped the step rail and swung on to the day coach.



## OFF FOR THE WAR

Salvos of Cheers and a Big  
Demonstration for Com-  
pany F Boys.

Escorted by Grizzled Veter-  
ans, a Long Line Follows  
Them to Depot.

PATRIOTIC HEADLINE 1898

The Spanish-American War of 1898 provided dramatic depot platform departures of volunteers. People flocked to Aberdeen from Milbank in the east to Mobridge in the west to say farewell to Company F-- its captain Charles A. Howard and its 105 soldiers.

The Daily News of May 2, 1898 reported the march up Main and then First Avenue SE to the C&NW depot and the ensuing events: Company F's parade escorts opened its lines to permit the volunteers to enter the depot grounds:

"cheers rent the air, bunting fluttered, guns shone, and pulses quickened and eyes moistened with patriotic pride; the young soldiers marched through and took place upon the platform in parallel lines with the coaches which were to bear them away." Major C. Boyd Barrett, ex confederate soldier, marched with them representing veterans of the Civil War.

The News described the multitude that watched. Downtown hotels and sites had emptied. All had eyes on the C&NW depot where two passenger coaches, a box car for baggage and a caboose awaited:

"Thousands of others had approached the depot several minutes before the arrival of the procession and had established themselves on platforms and cars and even upon adjacent buildings. Hundreds upon hundreds of ladies were present. The crush was tremendous at times, as the facilities to approach the cars were greatly overtaxed. The best that man could do was to view the striking scene from afar, and join their cries of enthusiasm with the masses nearer the center of the scene. Hundreds of vehicles were in close proximity to the depot."

Throughout, the 19-member

city band played war melodies. The locomotive whistle gave notice of departure and as the cars moved, thousands cheered again and again as the Company F men waved good by through the coach windows.

#### ABERDEEN BOUND: 1899

In the summer and fall of 1899 three major national figures arrived at Aberdeen's depots along with the return of Company F and the South Dakota First Regiment.

William Jennings Bryan who had received a wild welcome as a presidential candidate in 1896, arrived at the Milwaukee depot 7:10 a.m. July 1, 1899 about forty minutes later than scheduled. Since 6:30 a band and about 33 people awaited on the depot platform.

Upon learning that the train was late the band moved to the Main Street crossing and played to attract the attention of early risers. Some street people "straggled" toward the depot. Reception planners pinned badges on about 25 who reached the platform including state governor Andrew Lee and Adjutant General Humphrey. According to the republican Weekly News platform numbers were about twice those who appeared on weekday mornings to meet an incoming train.

Bryan debarked from one of the forward coaches. Major Barrett grasped Bryan by the arm and escorted him to a carriage to join Governor Lee for breakfast at the Sherman. The News' version suggested little democratic support based on numbers appearing on the depot platform. Editor Fletcher of the State Democrat reported differently. Upon the train's



arrival "the vast multitudes of citizens were in waiting to give the gentlemen a rousing reception. As they alighted from the car rousing cheers went up from the patriotic citizens." In any case the orator had arrived and Aberdonians would be hearing him in town and at Tacoma Park.

Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and Rough Riders came to Aberdeen on Wednesday September 6, 1899 for an afternoon and evening performance. On Tuesday visitors began flocking into the city before train arrivals and filled the hotels. Wednesday's trains from the north and east brought in hundreds more to swell the numbers who came by horse-drawn transportation. An estimated 11,000 to 12,000 were drawn to the attraction which featured a 10 a.m. parade.

The Milwaukee arranged for five special excursion trains for Saturday October 14, 1899 covering territory east, west, north and south of Aberdeen. On that day they anticipated a tremendous desire to be present at the simultaneous presidential visit and return of Spanish-American war veterans.

The Waubay, Eureka, Edgeley and Bowdle trains started at 5 a.m. arriving in Aberdeen between 7:30 and 7:45 a.m. with a return trip scheduled at 3:30 p.m. for all but the Edgeley train which departed at 7 p.m. The Redfield special left at 5 a.m. arriving in Aberdeen at 6:25 a.m. and returned that night at 8:35 p.m.

On Saturday October 14, 1899 President McKinley arrived at the Milwaukee depot about 8 a.m. to celebrate the arrival of the First Regiment, South Dakota Volunteers who arrived a little

after 9 a.m. that Saturday at the Chicago & Northwestern depot. The president's car--located at the train's rear end--had three drawing rooms, two bedrooms, and a kitchen.

The Daily News reported

"an enormous jam of people in the vicinity of the Milwaukee depot. It was only with great effort that the multitudes were kept back so that the president and his party could pass from the train to the carriages... every whistle in the city was blowing and every bell clanging its welcome" as the President and Aberdeen's Mayor Hute entered the carriage.

A committee of four Aberdonians including W. G. Bickelhaupt had gone to Oakes ND to meet the regiment when their Northern Pacific cars transferred to the C&NW.

First South Dakota  
United States  
Volunteers  
First in War  
First in Peace,  
First in the hearts  
of their countrymen.



#### RETURN OF THE VOLUNTEERS

The Daily News estimated the town population would increase five times for this event. All hotel rooms were booked. At the Northwestern depot that Saturday morning a "thunderous tumult of cheers" welcomed the First Regiment. Many waved flags or handkerchiefs. A "mass of humanity"

filled the open lots about the station. "As the "boys" left the cars, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sweethearts of nine company members including Aberdeen's own company F joyfully awaited.

In the depot's vicinity marchers, including Aberdeen's leading business men, lined up for a parade down Main to the Grain Palace where President McKinley awaited. The soldiers lined up for this last march to be reviewed and greeted by the President. Friends and families had to wait for a more personal reunion.

Upon the President's departure a platform incident drew newspaper attention. A three-year old girl with the middle name of McKinley had sent roses to Mrs. McKinley who had the child brought to her. She and the President kissed and talked to her when the train began to move out of the station. McKinley "caught her in his arms and carried her to the platform and passed her to a gentlemen standing near the track after the train was well under way."

#### GRAIN PALACE EXPOSITION OCTOBER 1899

The seventh annual Interstate Grain Palace Exposition in October 1899 occasioned once again the use of excursion trains. The Weekly News labeled October 4 "H & D day" in that state residents of Ortonville and Big Stone Lake attended the Palace event. Six packed coaches arrived at the Milwaukee depot where the Aberdeen City band met them and the Ortonville band before marching downtown. On October 4 a special excursion train came from the south on the Northwestern to

increase the crowds at the Grain Palace. Also on that evening the El Riad Temple of Sioux Falls arrived at the Milwaukee depot about 8:35. The Aberdeen city band met them and escorted them to the Grain Palace. The Shriners would parade at 7 p.m the next day and hold a special ceremonial meeting at the Masonic temple before heading home.

#### PASSING THROUGH; HOBOES AND HARVESTERS

Amongst the more average transients using the rails and the depot complex were the above. Illustrative of this movement were the harvest excursions of August 1899. On the morning of August 3 the Milwaukee train from the east featured extra cars to house adventurous, young male harvest hands from Michigan & Illinois.

Columbian D.I. Huff had gone to Michigan to recruit. At the state border the train had about seven coachloads of men, some of whom had been getting off at varied stations such as Andover and Groton. Only a dozen stopped at Aberdeen while others went on to Ipswich. Also the Great Northern had two coachloads from St. Paul but it was uncertain how many would debark at Aberdeen. Farmers met the train at train stations to persuade men to work for them.

Annually hoboes rode the rails, more often the freights. Many stopped at Aberdeen. The Daily News noted an incursion of perhaps 200 harvest hands and "thoroughbred hoboes" who arrived on Thursday July 22. 1899 from Mitchell. The police chief made them aware of Bowdle's need for harvesters at \$1.50 to \$1.75 a day with board

There were no immediate takers. The usual excuse was they were headed to North Dakota and Montana where wages were higher.

#### HERITAGE OF THE 1890S

In the later years of the 1890s--1897 through 1899--economic conditions improved as did railroad traffic, railroad employment and cash receipts. The Weekly News noted on May 13, 1897 that in "the Milwaukee yards alone from three to seven refrigerator cars will be iced each morning to accommodate traffic in perishables in various directions."

Trains, especially mixed trains of box cars and a passenger car, delivered grocery produce. Such was the case when a car of watermelons arrived on the Northwestern passenger on September 21, 1893. This practice continued into the late 1890s.

Freight shipments came in smaller packages as well as carloads of cattle and bulk machinery. For example, the Masons during Grain Palace Week on a Saturday afternoon in October 1896 gathered at the Northwestern freight station to secure the 385 pound cornerstone and keystones for their new temple. Led by the police they paraded on First Avenue to Main. The high priests and prelates who carried the stones deposited them at the new building site. The stones were direct from the quarries of King Solomon at Jerusalem, a gift from the US consul there and one of the more unusual shipments by rail. The last years of the decade saw the beginning of the Tacoma Park excursion trains. In 1895 the great Northern built a wooden

platform at Tacoma park on which excursionists might disembark. In the next century they would build a small depot there to handle the hundreds that traveled to that resort located only a half hour's ride from Aberdeen. At the Aberdeen depot this was the beginning of platform activity which accelerated through 1922.

A few material improvements had been authorized in the rail complexes of Aberdeen. The C&NW depot saw positive changes. On the north end of the depot a large addition extended the depot to the street line of First Avenue east.

As a result agent Lovejoy enjoyed a larger office. The depot had a new waiting room and more spacious baggage and freight rooms. New, heavy plank platforms awaited passengers and baggage wagons. Across from the depot C&NW stockyards doubled in size and were provided with city water.

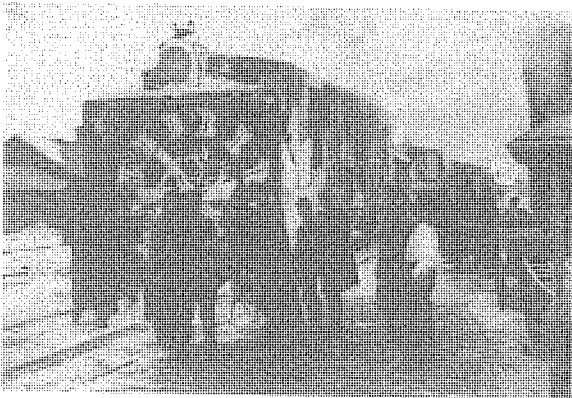
In July 1899 west of the Milwaukee freight depot workers built a heavy, freight platform to aid shippers of heavy machinery. A spur track ran along one side for unloading cars at a level with the platform eliminating former use of plank and block runways from car to platform.

In December 1899 the Great Northern secured approval for a Y connection with the Milwaukee and the C&NW to be implemented by May 1900. This Y" shaped track from the main line substituted for a turntable enabling redirection of trains.

The only blight of these later years was winter's snow and wind which delayed travel or blocked it altogether for

days at a time. The snow blockade of January 1897 reminded old timers of previous winters in 1882-83 when there had been a 101 day blockade lasting from December 3 to March 23 or winter of 1887-88 when the Hastings and Dakota division was snowbound for weeks. Then came the snow melt of spring and flooding.

During January 1899 news headlines reflected the frustrations of passengers, rail personnel and townsfolk dependent on the railroad for mail, fuel and produce: "Not a wheel turning" and "Tied up Again".



ROTARY PLOW; ABERDEEN MILW. DEPOT

With ability to throw snow 20 feet upward and 50 feet from the track, rotary plows worked determinedly to penetrate 10 to 30 foot snow drifts. The Daily News of January 8, 1897 described the entry of a rarely seen rotary snow plow into Aberdeen:

"The arrival of the Milwaukee yesterday afternoon was witnessed by several hundred of people including business and professional men, society ladies and children. The big machine tackled a drift near the

depot, cleaned the track as slick as a whistle and incidentally covered a part of the spectators...with a shower of fine snow."

Upon arrival of a train from Andover observers noted the snow covered car platforms and steps and heard crewmen tell stories of drifts. The newspapers carried such stories: A snow plow had been broken on January 7; so on January 8 a GN crew cleared 1700 feet of snow with depths of 8 to 12 feet:

"They took a one-mile run into this cut and buried their engine to the top of the smoke stack, knocking out the front cab windows and hurling the headlight a distance of fifty feet."

Drifts on January 22 were "so hard that in many places the train had to be stopped while men went on ahead and loosened the crusts of snow with shovels and spades."

Adherence to regular schedules was difficult. Lightened loads and car numbers and use of double headers to pull trains were some means to combat the drifts. The great Northern seemed to have the worst record as Daily News judged on January 29, 1897: That railroad "seems to have abandoned its Ellendale and Watertown lines for the remainder of the winter". Horse-drawn teams were used to carry mail to post offices along GN routes.

Connections with other trains were difficult to make and heated, depot waiting rooms found many users where hotel space or homes were not available. Nonetheless, spring, summer and fall came. Depots and their yard complexes continued to become focal community centers. Increased passenger and freight needs for larger space marked the boom

years in the decade ahead as new depots and enlarged facilities emerged to serve the Hub City trade territory.



MILWAUKEE DEPOT OF 1888-1889  
SOUTH & EAST SIDE VIEW 1896



MILWAUKEE DEPOT OF 1888-1889  
NORTH OR TRACK SIDE VIEW 1892

The Milwaukee depot of 1888-89 pictured above as it was in 1896 would be replaced in 1904 and in 1906 a new railroad, the Minneapolis and St. Louis, would build a new

depot on Aberdeen's South Main street while the Great Northern would move from its site on the east edge of town to build on a more central site across from the new court house of 1904.

### PART III 20TH CENTURY RAILROAD STATIONS

#### ERA OF SECOND & THIRD MILWAUKEE DEPOTS 1889-1910

During the first years of statehood, this wood-frame depot of 1889, located west of Main street instead of east as was the first depot, served the company and community well. Over the years space and congestion problems gradually emerged as rail traffic increased. With the building of a new depot in 1904 this structure continued to be of use as it was moved and used for freight offices until the fire of January 1911 destroyed both the old depot (then a freight office) and the new depot which replaced it.

Comparing the photos on this page, one notices that the two-story, rectangular depot had a center chimney stretching skyward from the center gabled roof. At the east and west ends triangular roof wings joined the center gable. The sweep of the roof wings create a pagoda-like effect at least as viewed from track side. A station identification sign spreads across the east end reading Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul Railway.

Windows at the south and north sides provide natural light for upper rooms in the depot's mid section. Elongated windows of that era provide some interior, natural light. The track-side dormer protrudes

more visibly than that of the south side. Five lower floor windows are visible including the two that make up the bay window area directly under the upper dormer area. A sizeable overhang on all four sides provides protection for those underneath. At least two entrances are visible on both the south and north sides. A raised platform above street level surrounds the building as well as on track-side. To the west are several smaller structures. Baggage wagons stand ready at the east-end while several people congregate track side. The 1896 photo on the previous page shows a steam engine of the 1890s with its large headlight and cowcatcher as well as its engineer and onlookers.

Among the lower floor rooms of the two-story, 200-foot-long depot of 1889 was the lunch room so important to the "gulp, gobble and go" generation of railroad workers and customers. This continued the tradition of the first depot's lunch counter service.

In April 1900 the Aberdeen Daily News observed that Terry Woods, formerly employed in Aberdeen's Ward's restaurant, had taken charge of the depot lunch counter and renovated it into "first-class condition" to meet the traveling public's needs. He served breakfast from 5:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. and supper from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. These hours coincided with train arrivals. The News quoted the Milbank Review about the management change which inferred that previous service had not been satisfactory: the lunchroom "is now being run up to the standard; that people

can now get a good lunch there." Apparently, one criticism developed over the lunchroom and its kitchen previous to construction of the 1904 depot. That new depot was so designed as to lessen "cooking stench floating through the building" so prevalent in the depot of 1889.

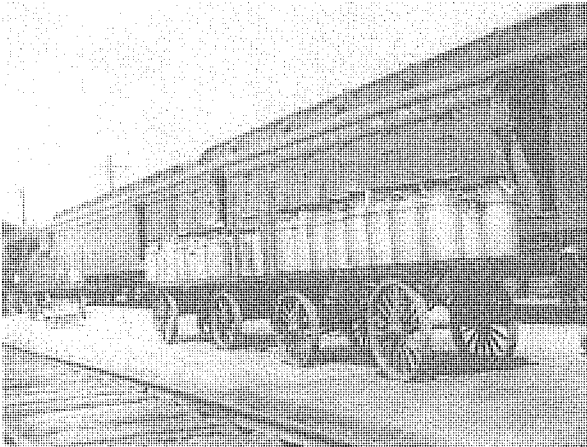
The platform of the 1889 depot had become congested by August 1903 when general baggage agent W. Carrick visited to resolve congestion problems. The Weekly News described the situation:

"When trains are arriving and departing...there is scarcely room enough for people to get through between the depot and the cars, on account of the trucks of baggage and cream cans."

Carrick's solution was building a special, portable platform of car-floor height to handle cream cans. The portable unit was placed near the end of the city track on the east side of Main street. All loading and unloading of cans took place on the east side of Main and were far from the depot platform west of Main.

Trainmen detached cream-carrying baggage cars carrying cream and switched to the cream unloading track. A truck with the portable platform snuggled up against the railroad car. When not in use the platform was moved back 3 to 4 feet so that rail cars passed safely without hitting the platform. This removed one passenger complaint and lessened heavy lifting for cream handlers as they could now slide cans into the freight car. Frequently each evening personnel unloaded some 350 ten-gallon cans and the next

morning they placed the empties back on the cars. The undated photo below shows cream cans either awaiting loading or already unloaded.



CREAM CANS ON DEPOT PLATFORM

Freight and passenger business thrived in the first years of the 20th century. The stockyards saw increased usage. During this first decade of the new century the 3 established railroads were motivated to build new depots and expand facilities to solve space needs in an expanding economy. The Milwaukee was the first of these railroads to construct a new depot. Plans were available in 1903.

Where would the third depot be built? The first depot had been located south of the tracks on the east side of Main street whereas the depot of 1889 had been constructed on the west side of Main street.

What would be the fate of the second depot when a third one was constructed in late 1903 and early 1904? How would service be continued during the construction period? Plans called for placing the new depot further from Main street,

that is slightly west of the 1889 depot--the location of the dispatcher's office, enlarged in 1886 to house also the Department of Construction. Would officials be housed in the new depot as in the past or in separate quarters? What would be the proximity of the freight house to the passenger depot? What would happen to the slough-like depressions in the vicinity of the depot and freight house?

Officials decided that the new depot of 1904 would be devoted entirely for use by the traveling public rather than to house division officials as in the past. This necessitated use of the old depot not only as a temporary public service structure but also to house officials. Two moves of the old depot evolved. First, it was moved eastward to Main street and Railroad Avenue where it continued to fulfill its regular functions until the new depot was finished. In order to clear and landscape the site where the former depot stood, the old depot was rolled in April 1904 about 100 feet west of Main street on Railroad Ave.

The Daily News of February 23, 1904 revealed the floor plans for the relocated old depot. In repositioning the depot, workers moved it south and further west than it had previously been. The side that had faced the tracks now faced Main street at the east-end of the freight house and offices. The main lower floor served as office space while the baggage room end was separated and moved to city residential lots where H. R. Drum planned to convert that structure into a larger dwelling.

The five rooms of the upper floor served to house the superintendent and train dispatcher. A corridor running the length of the building occupied the former ticket office and lunch counter space. The former ticket office's north side center provided an entry door into the corridor. Two offices were carved out of the women's waiting room. Mr. O. F. Waller, division freight and passenger agent, occupied the office in the southeast corner and S. E. Lynch, local agent, took the other office. Across the corridor front room space served as an immigrant room for foreigners staying overnight or through part of the day. Roadmaster Johnson and Ashton occupied the next room back.

In its new location the old depot would be heated by steam conveyed by underground pipes from the new passenger station's heating plant. Along with the depot of 1904, this renovated depot of 1889 became victim of fire in January 1911.

While ready for occupancy by mid January 1904, additional work continued on the new depot grounds. Upon moving the old depot in April, landscape and walkway improvements followed through August 1904. A brick platform extended from the new depot to Main street. Grounds were filled in and fenced, lawn grass sown along the south side of the depot and trees planted. Workers placed vitrified brick walks in front of the station grounds and connected them to a 700-foot platform between the depot and main tracks.

The 1904 depot was the third major Milwaukee depot in Aberdeen.



MILWAUKEE DEPOT 1904  
NORTH OR TRACK SIDE VIEW

Plans revealed in August 1903 described it as 182 feet long including a pavilion between the main building and the baggage/express rooms. Its stone and brick exterior contrasted with the previous wood-frame depot of 1889. At the east end a large women's waiting room continued that refuge tradition. It featured dark green and white finished walls, a fireplace and mantle, rocking chair seats and toilet rooms. A broad corridor stretched westward to the similarly-sized men's waiting room into the lunch room and beyond that the pantry and kitchen. Customers walked on hardwood floors in well-lighted rooms with wainscoting of wood stiles and cement panels. The basement heating plant and coal bunkers provided steam heat comfort in cold weather.

West of the lunchroom and kitchen stood a 27-foot long open-sided pavilion with seats for passengers at both ends. There passenger baggage and trucks awaited loading on incoming trains. At the west end of the pavilion were the baggage and express rooms.



The north or trackside featured a bay window area with an ocular window in the dormer above. Chimneys loomed skyward at each end of the depot section. Signage at the east end and trackside identified the station as "Aberdeen". An extensive overhead protected passengers from sun and rain. The south side perspective reveals the center flanked by two doors and a gabled roof with roof dormer ocular window. However, the lower floor lacks the bay window of the main track side.



MILWAUKEE DEPOT OF 1904  
SOUTH SIDE VIEW

This new depot coincided with the building and opening of the new Brown County courthouse. Pride in Aberdeen's progress symbolized by these new structures is evident in Judge James Well's poem of 1904 "To Aberdeen"--thoughts parallel to those quoted in 1890 at the time of the Merchant's Parade: "Fair city of the Valley Jim,/Fullof push and grit and vim./A town not made by tongue or pen,/But by it's 'get there' business men /"Fair Aberdeen, Fair Aberdeen,/Of all Dakota towns the Queen,/A town not made by tongue or pen/But by its 'get there' business men."

During the ensuing eight years this depot and its associated buildings and yards testified to tremendous growth in freight and passenger traffic as the company prepared for the future of its west coast extension and its branch line business in the cattle country of western Dakota and Montana. The opening of reservation land in 1910 became a factor in the Milwaukee's preparations for influx of homeseekers in that year. A Daily News report of September 9, 1909 provides insight into the heavy homeseeker traffic to come: A two section train arrived from the Twin Cities, one of eight cars and the other with five sleepers plus baggage car and diner. Every Tuesday homeseekers received excursion rates from Chicago making extra sleepers necessary plus day coaches for passengers traveling west.

A new era of larger locomotives, roundhouses, stockyards and expanded trackage contributed to greater speed and efficiency in customer service.

Officials announced in late November 1906 plans for a large new turntable in front of the roundhouse to accomodate future, larger passenger engines traveling from Minnesota to Aberdeen. In that same month workers completed a new water tank in the Aberdeen yards. Engines for the north and west runs and the switch engines in the local yards would be the prime users of this artesian water.

By summer 1907 observers noted continual increase of cars moved on Milwaukee tracks. The local yards handled about

600 cars a day in July 1907. On the route west long waits for one train to pass another impacted traveling time. To lessen such wasted time the company built five side tracks between Aberdeen and the Missouri. The Aberdeen dispatcher monitored these 3000-foot long sidings to expedite movement of several eastbound and westbound trains.

On October 8, 1907 a 100-man force began work on a freight yard one mile east of the city and south of the Catholic cemetery. The six tracks totaling three miles and capable of holding nearly 400 cars temporarily relieved congestion in the old Milwaukee city yards.

Despite the portable cream can platform of 1903 as a solution to platform congestion, the passenger depot and its track-side platform experienced further congestion as train travel increased. Sudden influxes due to special events accentuated the problem. Such was the case in the fall of 1907 when at 6:30 a.m. one Saturday morning the platform became alive with hunters who had alighted from four sleepers and coaches which had left Minneapolis the previous night.

How to avoid congestion at train time? Ticket office changes took place in August 1907. The ticket office and baggage room opened all day so as to spread out numerous ticket purchases and avoid long lines. One man sold tickets while the other, J. A. Cummings city passenger agent, helped counsel people on routes and secured tickets for them.

Depot expansion in late summer 1907 included an

addition to the freight depot which increased its length to 24 x 100 feet. Also, in June 1907 the railroad advertised for bids on a 20-foot addition to the west end of the passenger depot to be used for a new express office as the current express office and baggage room were to be combined for baggage use only.

Another solution to depot congestion arose in April 1909. Work gangs constructed new trackage at the station. To eliminate "the present cramped state of the passenger station" five passenger tracks permitted five trains at a time. The Daily News reported on September 8, 1909 further track changes in front of the depot. Five feet were removed from the brick platform located between tracks 1 and 2. A third track was positioned in that five-foot space. A cement platform was placed north of track 3 and the depot platform was extended some distance.

One solution to freight house and passenger platform congestion arose about that time. The terminus or loading-unloading site for trains on the Mitchell -Aberdeen route was relocated from the south side of the main line to north of the round house. This allowed more platform room in front of the depot.

Despite such solutions to congestion, the Daily News as early as April 1909 suggested the probability of a new depot this season or at least by next year. Officials asserted this was not a certainty however. The park-like area between the 1904 depot and Main street might be a possible location for such a depot. Thus, even

before the great fire of 1911 which forced building anew, thoughts were expressed about a new depot and even plans drawn up which perhaps explains the amazement expressed in 1911 about the speed in which a new depot was built.

Expansion of facilities continued in September 1909 when work began on a new turntable at the roundhouse. It was 75- feet long compared to the older turntable's 65 feet. It featured a concrete circle 8'6" in depth, weighing 200 tons. West of the Roundhouse in 1910 a track gang laid rails for a coach and repair yard. According to R. Lathrop the coach yards were located on South Fourth Street and First Ave. SW. and repair yard at Fifth and Railroad Ave.

A larger, new ice house also added to the expanded Milwaukee facilities by early 1909. A \$10,000 ice house with capacity of 5000 tons replaced the older one which had a 700-ton capacity. The new ice house was located 300 feet west and 25 feet north of the older ice house. Increased transportation of perishables necessitated more ice for refrigerator cars. More ice was needed also for the passenger service, diners and company offices.

The ice house featured seven separate compartments each 32 feet by 34 feet. The platform for iceing cars ran the building's full length. New tracks were required on both sides of the ice house. Special construction techniques for roof, wall thickness and use of dead air spaces were employed to lessen the sun's impact on the structure.

Another building, temporary

in nature, appeared in the fall of 1908. Workers positioned an exhibit building on the grassy area in front of the freight office. On September 8 1909 workers unloaded lumber for this structure. This exhibit was built for promotional purposes during the great registration of homeseekers in 1910. Realizing that all immigrant homeseekers would not be succesful in staking claims, the exhibit hopefully would persuade them to remain in the Aberdeen area.

From 1904 through 1909 draining the slough area in the depot and yard area received press coverage. The Evening News of July 2. 1904 complimented the Milwaukee for:

"a good job of filling at the station grounds. The low land south of the house freight track has been filled to the street line and the low ground and pond between the depot and the round house is now being filled in. This hole alone will take about 300 carloads of clay. When the filling here is completed it will afford much additional yard room and remove an unsightly spot near the handsome new station."

In 1907 under pressure to prepare for August grain shipments new tracks were built behind the round house. In preparation for track laying, workers hauled gravel to fill much of the remaining slough north and west of the depot so the tracks would have a solid foundation. The two new tracks contained about 500 feet at the rear of the round house and 300 feet of track north and slightly west of the depot running parallel to exisitng track.

Concern over excess water, sloughs and depressions on

railroad property surfaced at various times. In early 1908 the Milwaukee contributed \$3000 toward construction of a city storm sewer in return for the right to drain surface water from depot grounds, yards, round house and machine shops. They dug ditches, laid drain tile and connected with the city-storm sewer at the intersection of Railroad Avenue and First Street and at a terminus near Second Street. This included lowering culverts west of the depot to drain water from the slough north of the tracks instead of relying on open ditches directing flow to the storm sewer.

A swamp lay between Aberdeen and West Hill when the Milwaukee purchased land in West Hill from private individuals and from the city in 1909 and 1910. The intent was to enlarge track and switching space. Carloads of gravel and dirt were needed to fill in the swamp. The Daily News asserted on April 29, 1909 "the land has been an absolute waste up to this time and furnished a mosquito breeding ground." Before mid June 1909 some 75,000 cubic yards of dirt were taken from leveling the West Hill area and dumped into the slough.

West Hill, some three miles from the Main Street depot and the uptown yard, became the site for a growing railroad facility for switch yards, shingle yards, and stockyards. The city sold six blocks of a park reserve and parts of four blocks lying south of the Main line. The railroad also acquired land north of the main line. By August 1909 eight of sixteen projected tracks had been installed. Imported Italian,

Greek and Rumanian workers helped in land fill and track laying. During the Balkan Wars of 1912 many of these workers left for the homeland creating a labor shortage.

In late July and early August 1909 a large feeding yard arose at the West Hill site. Its mission was to feed stock sent from the east in the spring to feed on the western plains and when fattened sent to market in the fall. Since the law required stock to be unloaded, fed and watered at certain intervals in the shipping process, this yard served that purpose. Initially there were six pens--each 48 foot square; some 35 to 40 cattle could be held in a yard of 18 feet by 128 feet. Compared to the later stockyards this project was small indeed.

The new shingle yard of November 1910 in West Hill provided storage of shingles from western manufacturers until the shingles were sold and re-consigned for shipment. This increased Aberdeen's role as a distributing point for surrounding states. A systematized monitoring system emerged. The yard was divided into lots and 6-foot wide alleys with each 8'x40' lot holding a car of shingles. Workers unloaded 200 cars of shingles by November 1909 with more to come.

These foundations of 1909 made railroading more convenient in the succeeding year 1910. Still more changes came in following years. In February 1910 one of Aberdeen's oldest landmarks--the Milwaukee water tank of 1884--located about 2 miles south of Aberdeen

was torn down as it had outlived its usefulness.

#### 1910: BEFORE THE GREAT FIRE

Wind-blown snow of January and February 1910 blocked most of the railroads centered at the Hub City. Regular plow engines had to be supplemented by rotary plows. In January many Northern Normal students were unable to get to Aberdeen after the end of Christmas break on M&StL, C&NW and Milwaukee branch lines. On February 27 the Milwaukee discontinued indefinitely two trains between Aberdeen and Mobridge due to snow, cold and coal shortage.

In mid February Milwaukee passengers trapped in Aberdeen complained they were not provided food and lodging by the railroad. Milwaukee officials responded that no precedent existed for such aid:

"When trains are stuck between stations the situation is different and the road cares for the passengers. If any passenger absolutely without funds were here, the road as a matter of humanity would care for them, and in fact an old lady in the depot here now is being given food by the road. The passengers with money can not blame the road for an act of providence which causes them to remain here."

As of July 1, 1910 through trains were scheduled to run over the main line through Aberdeen to and from Seattle and Tacoma, Washington. However, due to shortage of Pullman cars that did not occur until spring 1911. Previously several changes of trains and stopovers were needed to reach coast cities on the Milwaukee. Through trains ended this inconvenience and necessitated

more dining, parlor and sleeping cars to the coast instead of ending at Butte, Montana. Aberdeen's dining car headquarters needed enlargement due to increased demand.

Some Aberdeen hotel keepers and businessman requested the railroad designate the city as a stopover site comparable to Chicago and Minneapolis to promote Aberdeen's image and encourage travelers to stop here between trains.

In anticipation of a through line to the coast which began in spring 1911, The Hastings & Dakota Division as of July 1, 1910 merged with the James River Division of 409 rail miles to create a 1000 mile track unit administered from Aberdeen. Five South Dakota branch lines outside Brown County were included: Roscoe to Linton and to Orient; Milbank to Sisseton; Bristol to Madison; Andover to Harlem. These changes increased space needs for Superintendent Gillick's office.

New buildings and services marked the months after July. In late August a new 80' by 10' roofed building graced the Milwaukee yards replacing the current carpet cleaning unit. Whereas previous cleaning of car carpets took place outside, the new structure provided for inside cleaning with a vacuum cleaning system to supplant an air system.

On Nov. 1, the car yards workers completed a wheel pit which reduced labor hours and operational time in changing car wheels. Previously cars had to be jacked up whereas tracks over the pit enabled laborers to work from below with aid of air pressure hoists.

On October 6, 1910 with multi colored corn in imitation of Mitchell's corn palace workers began covering the old exhibit hall of 1909 retaining the monogram initials C.M. & St. P.

In December at the cost of about \$1800 work began on a roof covering over the long freight platform at the freight depot. Increased shipment of less than carload lots to and from Aberdeen had motivated this action.

Platform activity of 1910 revealed the arrival of noted individuals such as Carrie Nation. Arriving from Lemmon, SD on the Milwaukee at 7 a.m. April 6, she sighted men smoking cigarettes on the depot platform. Scolding them, she said: "It is shameful, a dog would not do it, a hog would not do it, and there is no reason why a human being should do it." She delivered her message on prohibition and tobacco in various nearby towns before boarding the train for the coast. This was her last visit as she would die in 1911.

In 1910 the Daily News reported a platform incident of June 19 about lesser known persons and the platform crowd:

"Two newsboys had a fight at the east end of the station platform last night while the crowd was waiting for the passenger train from the west. One of the lads had but one arm, and he was hardly a match for his two-armed adversary. A large crowd of alleged men stood about the ringside and urged the little fellows to keep up the fight. A great stunt for "noble manhood"."

Occasionally incoming passengers delayed by weather or accidents contributed to the variety of platform activity. At midnight on a Wednesday in

late September 1910 coach passengers rescued from a work train-passenger train collision one mile east of Bath arrived at the Aberdeen depot and told their story.

#### ERA OF THE 4TH MILWAUKEE DEPOT 1911-

As early as July 11, 1910 the Aberdeen Daily News reported unofficial sources had leaked the news that the Milwaukee was contemplating a larger depot for its Aberdeen operations now that Aberdeen with its new H&D division headquarters was to be on the future coast route and the idea of a southern route through Mitchell and Rapid City had been abandoned. The News referred to "congestion" and a crowded "old frame station" which had been converted into district offices beyond the comfort level.



#### MILWAUKEE DEPOT FIRE 1911

A fire on January 23, 1911 forced the issue of new facilities. In the cold winter weather oil stoves had been provided for offices as the heating plant could not provide adequate warmth. About 8 a.m.

on January 23 one of these oil stoves exploded in the east end of the freight house triggering a fire which destroyed the passenger depot of 1904, and freight offices (the renovated depot of 1889).

On the warehouse's north side freight cars with barrels of gasoline and oil exploded at intervals sending wind-driven burning material to the adjoining brick passenger depot where it triggered an attic fire. Within a half hour the roof fell. Rail personnel saved a safe, tickets, ticket office and waiting room furniture and some restaurant equipment as well as baggage. Then the wood agricultural exhibit building of 1909 facing Main caught fire causing some damage before water quenched the flames.

Emergency measures followed in order to serve the traveling public. On the evening of the fire the ticket agent used a passenger coach for an office and an adjoining, second coach served as a waiting room. East of the burned passenger depot facing Main street workers built a frame station with a pine-walled ticket office which opened January 24 at 7 p.m. It was about the size of the old station's waiting room.

The Daily American reported "a lively crowd of travelers and people who were not travelling...thronged the station...The line at the ticket window was a long one." Ticket agent W. B. Farnum's makeshift desk was a door resting on a keg of nails and a tier of desk drawers.

Division offices relocated to the 112' x 120' Advance Thresher building on Railroad Ave. and 2nd street. By 1 p.m.

on January 23 the railroad began to accept freight for shipment. A temporary baggage and freight room emerged on the floor of the old baggage room. Freight office personnel moved into a bunk house brought from 3d Ave. S. joined to another structure making a 75 foot-long building. A lunch room near the temporary passenger station was constructed and turned over to leasee Murphy System.

Six months passed before construction began on a new passenger and a freight depot. During that period the Milwaukee served its customers reminding them though the newspapers of the magnificent new depots and other facilities to be finished before year's end.

On May 24, 1911 the new transcontinental west-bound Olympian arrived in Aberdeen. This was the beginning of through train service with greater dependence on sleeping cars which made a continuous journey to the coast terminal.

Aberdonians gathered at the Milwaukee depot including members of the Commercial Club and the state band to show the train passengers the Aberdeen Way of hospitality. They boarded the coaches, distributed promotional literature, and created the impression of a lively town which appreciated what the newspaper called "the finest train that has yet run on rails".

Effective June 15, 1911 Aberdonians could board in Aberdeen or in St. Paul at 9:30 p.m. A standard sleeping car between Aberdeen and the Twin Cities was attached to the new transcontinental train, "The Columbian" leaving Aberdeen at

12:40 a.m. and arriving in Minneapolis at 8:45 a.m. and St. Paul at 9:30 a.m. For the return trip the Columbian left St. Paul at 10:45 p.m. and Minneapolis at 11:45 p.m. with arrival in Aberdeen at 7:45a.m.

Another change of the summer took place after July 20 when Milwaukee passengers were charged 10 cents more when they paid a fare on the train rather than buying a ticket before boarding.

Through freight service also became a Milwaukee perk in June 1911. Cold storage trains supplemented fast freights. Shippers westward were offered the Sealed Car for direct through movement to a final destination without reloading, transfers or delays. Two refrigerator trains a week on Wednesdays and Fridays provided this direct service.

In addition to a new passenger depot, a separate freight house and a freight office, the Milwaukee yard terminal expanded with new and enlarged structures from July through December 1911. A thousand yards west of the old engine house on the west side of the Y track and south of the yard office 60 men began work on the engine or roundhouse July 17, 1911. A three month construction period at a cost of about \$50,000 was projected. Spectators were amazed at the steam shovel scooping out 2 1/2 yards of hard turf from West Hill and placed in the lowland site of the new engine house.

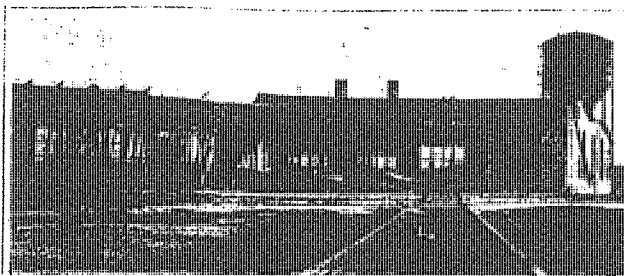
During winter 1911-1912 both the old and new engine houses were used with the old brick one built in the early 1880s torn down by May 1912. New side tracks from the

freight house to the West Hill yards filled that space. The resultant straightened house tracks increased the storage and transfer facilities at the freight house by about 33%

The eventual goal was a circular, 50-stall round house 470 feet in diameter but in 1911 only 16 stalls were built. By March 1912 plans were revealed for an additional 15 stalls with room for 22 more in the future. Four of the 15 were built to house big Malay engines while 11 served regular engines.

The former roundhouse was too small to hold K1 engines which stuck out of the roundhouse about eight or ten feet. Over this area vestibules had been built to provide weather protection. The new roundhouse stalls were larger, 96 feet for regular engines and 106 feet for the huge Malays.

Constructed of brick and concrete it was heated by hot air to maintain a 55 degree temperature. Long rows of windows below the roof line admitted natural light. Additions in 1912 featured a similar window placement. In 1956 after dieselization began in 1953-54, a wrecking company demolished this roundhouse.



WRECKERS LEAVE ONLY MEMORIES OF 'OLD DAYS'

ROUNDHOUSE DEMOLITION 1956



An important adjunct to the roundhouse was a new steel 90-foot turntable capable of handling the largest engines.

Other structures in proximity were combined machine and blacksmith shops with side and sky lights for more natural light and overhead ventilators. This structure was 133' length by 66' width. Northward stood the power house, 45'x65' to light and heat the whole engine terminal and the brick and concrete store house, 48'x70', with large platforms for storing heavy parts. This facility enabled most repairs to be made here rather than sending them to Minneapolis or Milwaukee for repairs.

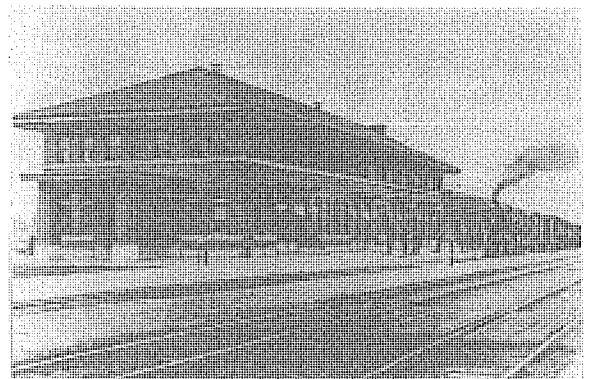
West of the Round House stood several structures--a 16'x 30' barrel house for oil storage, and sand storage house 16 x 106' with two sand towers with spouts to service engines much like a water tower. A 20'x40' room served as the roundhouse foreman's office and as a railroad personnel lounging room.

A coaling station 48'x42' 80 feet high could process 40 ton of coal per hour. Two tracks enabled two engines to coal at the same time. After a water tank stop, this was the second stop for a locomotive preparing for its next run. A 80,000 gallon water tank, 18' high and 26' in diameter, was situated west of this site.

This yard terminal servicing engines was some distance from the downtown depot terminal complex. To prepare this terminal yard 110,00 cubic yards of dirt fill was used in the roundhouse area alone. In 1911 about two miles of track were laid about the roundhouse.

Section by section over a month's time workers moved the Aberdeen stockyard from its site near the yard office to a point west of town where the line crossed tracks of the M&StL. On July 15, 1911 work had begun on the concrete floor of the stockyards. Aberdeen became one of the most important stock shipping points in the northwest.

Closer to Main street the new passenger and freight depots took shape. The depot grounds were 200' wide and 300' long. Planners positioned the passenger station 150' west of Main street sidewalk and 38' south of the tracks. A park area was planned for the space facing Main. Landscaping was implemented in spring 1912.



MILWAUKEE DEPOT OF 1911

A two-story structure 50' x 164', the station occupied the site of the previous depot. Adjoining were one-story baggage and express rooms which increased the depot length to 316'. A roofed pavilion 35' long and 30' wide separated the baggage room and the depot proper. Here heavy baggage and baggage trucks were sheltered.

Nearby a locker room 8-feet wide and 34-feet long serviced trainmen.

Basement heavy concrete reinforced beams supported the first floor. Excavations for foundation began July 1, 1911. The basement 50 x 164 feet contained a boiler room, a railroad commissary and a dining room provision storage space.

At the east end of the basement the commissary department stored supplies to be delivered to train porters. It contained shelving, storage compartments and a large counter; also it featured a 12'x12' icebox, a 18'x35' wine closet and a 12x18' linen closet.

The ground level featured a large general waiting room with floor space of 2976 square feet containing a man's smoking room and a women's resting section. The women's restroom measured 550 square feet. This sanctuary contained a reclining couch, a large table, several rockers and chairs.

In March 1912 the Superintendent in response to a petition signed by 440 Aberdeen women appointed a matron to oversee the welfare of "the traveling gentler sex". The Weekly News of April 4, 1912 printed a lady's impressions of this service: "I was much surprised to find a matron here on my return this time, and must certainly say that seems to be the right woman in the right place. I needed the assistance of such a person on my first trip here, and this time she has been a great assistance to me. It was a wise move...and ...will be greatly appreciated by us women who are compelled to remain over between trains while traveling."

Along the south side a centrally located ticket office featured a row of 5 ticket windows facing north. West of these rooms was the dining room and lunch counter occupying 2350 square feet. Dining room tables seated 60 and the lunch counter 50. The kitchen occupied the west end adjacent to the roofed pavilion. It's range was capable of cooking for 500 people. A private rear entrance led to the basement food storage area. On Sunday March 20, 1912 the Interstate News Company had a formal opening of the dining room. During the hours of 11:30 to 2:00 p.m. Over fifty professional and business men were present.

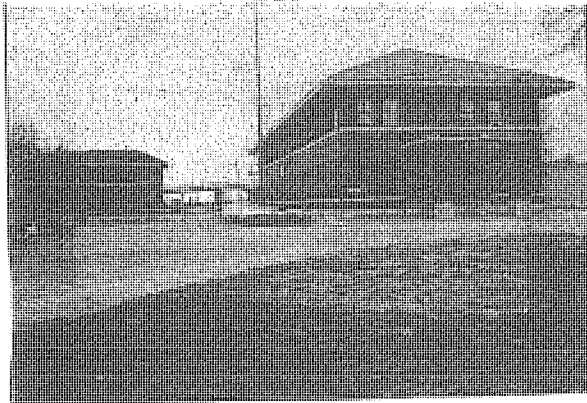
The first floor was three steps higher than the tracks. There were four vestibuled, public entrances with push doors track side. All but one had two large windows between each pair of doors. One porch-covered entrance on the east-end faced Main street. This entrance lobby measured 350 square feet. A newstand occupied lobby space. Employees had a special entrance on the depot's south side.

Track side a 200-foot concrete platform extended from Main street to 50 feet west of the depot's west end and 15 feet south of the tracks. This broad platform replaced a narrower brick one. By June 1923 the cement had begun to disintegrate in places and a new vitrified brick platform took its place.

The 194-foot second floor harbored division offices including legal counsel.

The 24' x 66' two-story freight depot to the south had a full basement with a fire-

proof vault. Local freight agent offices filled the first floor and clerical personnel occupied the second floor. Below is a photo of the freight depot after the construction of the 2d St. overpass seen in the background:



MILWAUKEE FREIGHT DEPOT  
ADJACENT TO PASSENGER DEPOT

To supplement this administrative building was a warehouse 28' x 400' which had an unloading platform 24' x 66' for freight handling. By September 1912 workers completed a 550-foot extension of its platform permitting spotting of 150 freight cars at one time for loading and unloading. The house tracks were six deep, each with a capacity of 25 cars.

The company ice house serviced transit traffic as well as that originating in Aberdeen. In 1911 the ice house serviced 2880 refrigerator cars originating in Aberdeen. In mid-December 1912 erection of a new 3000 ton addition to this ice house raised its capacity to 10,000 tons. The yearly average of iced cars totaled 5000. The addition of 48' x 80' raised the total dimensions to 48' x 250'.

Such construction testified to the growing perishable freight traffic.

By 1912 the Milwaukee's Aberdeen infrastructure had been established. In spring 1913 residents living near the new roundhouse and car shops were pleased to learn that the old slough in the former Aberdeen Park Reserve purchased by the Milwaukee had finally been drained. Accumulated ice in winter had interfered with draining water while coach cleaning. The Milwaukee stockyards experienced a temporary blow when it was quarantined for several weeks as a result of foot and mouth disease. Several hundred cars had to be treated slowing stock shipment. Disinfection of the yards ended that quarantine on November 23, 1914.

In 1917 an addition to the baggage room increased that space and in the 1920s and 1930s stockyard space was expanded. Starting in 1913 double tracks were built first from Milbank to Aberdeen and later to Mobridge to permit more speedily and safely the increased freight and passenger traffic. In September 1914 a new signal system over the double tracks between Aberdeen and Milbank provided blocks at the end of a track mile allowing the dispatcher to determine the distance a train was running ahead of another train.

One sign of a decline in building activity was the movement eastward June 1, 1915 of Milwaukee construction & engineering headquarters which had come to Aberdeen in 1912.

In January 1916 about 175 section workers shoveled snow

into about twenty-five gondola cars over three days in order to clear platforms and track areas to expedite passenger traffic in the depot area. That spring an Aberdeen Daily News article testified to the Aberdeen station's key transportation role. Every 24 hours a total of 29 passenger trains and 27 freight trains passed through the city. The Milwaukee accounted for 20 passenger trains and 21 freight trains. In addition the Milwaukee ran about 20 extra trains a day, usually freight, gravel and stock trains.

What evidence of passenger usage at the new Milwaukee depot and its platform in the ensuing decades? Opening of the Cheyenne and Standing Rock reservations to the public motivated some 55,364 land seekers to swarm into Aberdeen and more at other registration points. All depots and their platforms were utter chaos. After the tremendous westbound, homeseekers crowded Milwaukee platforms in 1910, the next major impetus for huge crowds on and near Aberdeen's railroad platforms was the arrival of President Taft in October 1911,

The President, state and national political leaders arrived on the Chicago & Northwestern about 5:30 p.m. on Monday, October 23, and departed on the Milwaukee about 12:40 a.m. Tuesday. Aberdeen business men planned to make the most of it by staying open until 10p.m. for what they called "Trade and Taft Day".

Special trains arrived on all railroads. The Milwaukee had distributed 50,000 circulars advertising its specials for this event. That

railroad scheduled 3 excursions: one from Milbank & Ortonville, one from Mitchell and one from Roscoe. These specials were scheduled to arrive between noon and one o'clock on Monday afternoon and depart after the closure of festivities. Promotional committees met all trains to give those who disembarked free lunch tickets with designated eating times. One can imagine the hustle and bustle in the depot and at the depot platform upon these arrivals and departures.

With the Mexican hostilities and later the European war, Aberdeen depots became a departure point for citizen soldiers. On December 26, 1918 justifying the idea that Aberdeen should be the host city in a grand reunion of state war veterans upon conclusion of the European War the Weekly News claimed: "The Hub City has had the honor of bidding more soldiers farewell and Godspeed during the past year and a half than any other city in the state."

The Milwaukee had its share of troop trains. Company L of Aberdeen was ordered to mobilization camp at Redfield. in June 1916. Mayor Aldrich proclaimed closure of business for June 23 during the troop train's departure so as to increase the numbers to say farewell. Several thousand gathered along flag-strewn Main street. Four companies--L of Aberdeen, A of Webster, K of Lemmon and Ipswich's mounted scouts of 50 National Guard departed shortly after 2 p.m. on a special train. Prior to that they marched to the Milwaukee station along with GAR veterans, the Aberdeen band and thousands. Milwaukee train

No. 16 pulled into the station with the boys from Lemmon. Later the Webster men arrived. Each time they received an acclamation from the crowd.

Entraining 207 soldier boys filled the many coaches. The Daily News described it thus: "A vast amount of cheering a great fluttering of handkerchiefs and waving of hands, some wiping of eyes--and the guard boys were gone." A Daily News reporter aboard the train wrote that singing was a major activity as..the last cheers of the great crowd at the Aberdeen station grew faint. Company songbirds struck up a cheering carol with a Tipperary parody: "It's a long way to El Paso,/ It's a long way to go./ It's a long way to El Paso/ where the Rio Grande flows,/ Well, it's goodbye to South Dakota/ Farewell Aberdeen,/ It's a long way to El Paso,/ But we're bound to go."

Fourth South Dakota Infantry's Company L and other units returned on Sunday afternoon March 4, 1917 about 5:30 p.m. This triggered a hearty welcome by city officials, the band and citizens. The Daily News described the event:

"a great throng ...swarmed, surged and fought to gain a vantage point where they could get a better glimpse of their heroes. Mid shouts of "welcome home" the waving of flags and fluttering of handkerchiefs khaki-clad youths, in high spirits, stepped from the train. They were happy, It was good to be home."

" There was a hurried handclasp with friends, a more affectionate greeting of mother, wife and sweetheart, the men formed in line and the little column ten abreast headed by H.C. Andrus, civil war veteran carrying "Old Glory", they marched to the armory."

Occasionally an inbound passenger group consisted of those on a wrecked train who were being returned to the Aberdeen depot by a special, relief train. Such was the case in early April 1917 on the Edgeley line. One Friday afternoon about 50 miles north of Aberdeen southbound train #706 left the tracks. Scheduled to arrive in Aberdeen at 5:20 p.m. those passengers returned on a special train sent out shortly before 4 p.m. They debarked at the depot platform at 10:30 that night and received a free supper.

The depot became especially busy in December 1917. Motivated by a deadline for enlistment before the draft became effective volunteers flocked to Aberdeen by train and many recruits were sent out of Aberdeen by train. The Milwaukee shared in this traffic. A special Milwaukee five-car train left at 5:30 p.m. December 11 for Jefferson Barracks following the regular southbound passenger.

A cold winter loomed ahead; most railroads became coal conservationists considering "coal as precious as diamonds". Thus, the Milwaukee issued orders that no steam whistles be blown to welcome the new year 1918.

The Christmas holiday rush overwhelmed the mail sorting and delivery system. Mail to servicemen intensified the problem. Two 60' mail cars were positioned on Milwaukee side tracks to serve as a clearing center for all incoming South Dakota mail and outgoing parcels. A projected figure of 400 to 700 sacks of mail would be processed. Thirty regular

postal clerks were assigned plus 30 Northern Normal students hired to meet the challenge. Delivery wagons conveyed mail from the stations to the temporary terminal in the Milwaukee yards where men worked 12 and 16 hours a day.

Passenger trains at all the depots remained crowded during this season. When the Milwaukee flyer #18 arrived December 22 eleven hours late, the baggage cars as well as extra coaches and car platforms were loaded with human freight. An exodus of students and teachers added to those waiting at the depot for the trains which unloaded students and teachers wanting to visit their homes.

During the full war year of 1918 the traveling public encountered more restrictions as the government took over the railroads in order to bring order out of chaos. In order to take advantage of reduced 1/3 rate, soldiers and sailors on furlough must show credentials to ticket agents before granted that furlough fare. Nationally the government favored a Union Depot which served the community in lieu of other depots which were closed for fuel conservation reasons. The Great Northern felt that it might be that depot since the Milwaukee was so crowded and didn't have the space to take on extra duties.

Depots became centers of patriotism. Illustrative of this was arrival of the special Trophy Train on September 22, 1918. During the brief hours of 8 a.m. to noon long lines formed for blocks down Main street. This was one of ten trains touring the Ninth Federal Reserve District to raise money

for the Fourth Liberty Loan. A 30-piece blue jacket band from the Great Lakes Naval Training Station played inspirational music. A few veterans of the European war were also present. This train featured a flat car with big guns, a baggage and passenger exhibition car, passenger coaches and dining and sleeping cars. Some 15,000 viewers saw hand grenades, bayonets, daggers, helmets, German machine guns and war photographs. Speakers spoke from a platform on the station grounds.

In the years 1919-1921 the depot platform became a site of reunion of individual war veterans welcomed home by friends and relatives as well as a place of excitement for conventioners, a refuge for late train passengers and even the last station stop for the deceased.

Over 150 passengers who had been delayed 7 1/2 hours by a train wreck reached Aberdeen on #15 at 3:15 a.m. thankful they were unhurt but disgruntled at the long delay. The depot platform was the site for less than joyful occasions also. Such was the case in April 1921 when the body of a 19-year old killed in France arrived in November 1918 at the Milwaukee depot to be escorted by a Troop K honor guard.

The depot platform saw action July 4-7, 1921 when Milwaukee shuttle trains with 5 to 8 coaches brought people to Aberdeen's Tri-State Fair grounds every half hour between 11:30 a.m. and 11:30 p.m. On June 30 the platform was alive with 125 Minnesota Elks arriving to attend a state convention July 1 and 2.

They departed Saturday at 6:45 p.m. for Los Angeles by way of Seattle. Their train had 5 sleepers with drawing rooms and one tourist car for railroad employees servicing the train.

Before the auto era's peak, many students in the 1920s and beyond used the train to attend Northern Normal Industrial Institute in Aberdeen and to return home during holidays. This 1922 photo in the school yearbook illustrates that trend.



BY TRAIN: FROM HOME TOWN TO  
NORTHERN NORMAL 1921-22

Behind the depot's platform image as a place of welcome and farewell was a more somber experience in the vicinity of the depot and rail yards.

"Goodby and good riddance!" was more often the thoughts of suspicious townspeople when dealing with hoboes and harvest workers who displayed a dislike of work and attitudes of disrespect for the establishment. Illustrative of these was the police action of July 1921. Two miles south of Aberdeen police boarded a freight and

accompanied some 200 hoboes to the Milwaukee yard. Most were marched out of town. On Sunday July 17 only 50 remained "scattered about in the vicinity of the Milwaukee station" and in jungles near the tracks awaiting a freight. This was the era of action against the International Workers of the World labeled "the I won't work" crowd.

In the 1920s depot offices and waiting room served varied groups. A Perfect Package committee met in the agent's office to promote a shipping campaign; station employees and shippers met on the 2d floor of the freight office one night to implement package week.

The Milwaukee reorganized its division system November 1, 1918 when it created the Aberdeen Division and moved the headquarters of the Hastings & Dakota Division to Montevideo, Minnesota. The Aberdeen division administered all lines north, south and west from Aberdeen while Montevideo administered those lines east of Aberdeen. In 1919 between Minneapolis and Chicago all observation and lounging cars were removed from Milwaukee trains as a wartime measure.

Administrative and technological changes occurred intermittently in succeeding years. By November 1920 new switching yards were completed at the cost of \$250,000. This increased the capacity by 1000 cars and coupled with the old yard made for a total car capacity of 2500. Three tracks went to a new stockyard three miles west of Aberdeen.

The economic downturn of the early 1920s became a factor in Milwaukee economy measures.

Effective May 1, 1921 the H&D division dispatcher's office which had been in Aberdeen for twelve years was closed; thereafter Montevideo handled traffic east of Aberdeen. Nature provided further bad news when a wind storm in early July damaged the storehouse roof and part of the roundhouse. In mid July 1921 the railway commission ordered wage reductions for station employees. Also, trains #1 and #4 terminated service in December 1921 between Aberdeen and Milbank. This move shifted mail delivery to trains #15 and #18. Some good news ended 1921 when as of January 1, 1922 the 8% war tax expired on tickets and passenger baggage and the 3% tax on freight.

Effective January 15, 1922 as an economy measure the Aberdeen Division and the Hastings and Dakota Division were consolidated into one with Aberdeen as the division point between Minneapolis and the Hub City. Effective April 1, 1922 Aberdeen became a transit storage station for west coast lumber cars regulated by the lumber tariff. Cars could be held here from one to twelve months before reshipment.

In June 1923 the crumbling concrete passenger depot platform was replaced by vitrified brick in a new platform which formed a new chapter in its history as humanity's stage. On Sunday September 9, 1923 the Van Noy Interstate Company opened its dining room at the depot to the public from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. with an offer of a fried chicken dinner at 75c. That service remained until 1954 when Interstate relinquished

its lease of depot space due to lack of use by the local people and the competition of so many new eating places.

In mid November 1923 the depot site featured a Milwaukee Exhibit car reminiscent of those in past decades. That car contained agricultural produce of 3 states with promotional, white-painted slogans on coach windows emphasizing diversified farming, urgings to go west for home-making and promise of cheap land along the Milwaukee railroad in Dakota and Montana. This practice continued into later decades as seen in the advertisement below.

**IN TOWN TODAY**  
Near the "Milwaukee" Station

**FREE**  
**EXHIBIT CARS**

Containing interesting and instructive exhibits of  
agricultural products from lands along the line of



TO ST. PAUL  
MILWAUKEE  
ST. PAUL  
ST. LOUIS  
CHICAGO  
ST. CINCINNATI

IN NORTH and SOUTH DAKOTA, MONTANA, IOWA and WASHINGTON

**Everybody Invited**  
**DON'T FAIL TO VISIT THEM!**  
H. F. HUNTER, General Agent, C. M. & St. P. Ry.  
CHICAGO

#### EXHIBIT CAR ADVERTISEMENT

The depot experienced a new realm of activity in 1925 with the organization of the Milwaukee Women's Club. On November 17 the waiting room floor was waxed, benches moved to the wall for a public dance sponsored by the Women's club. Restrooms and restaurant added to the lure of dancing "on the biggest floor in the city". The 26 charter members grew to 78 at the end of the club's 1st year and 172 in its 2nd year.



Their goal of uniting Milwaukee employees and their families coupled with charity work was helpful during the depression years of the 1930s. Club headquarters on the 2nd floor of the freight office became the core work center for the depot's servicemen's canteen in 1943-1946.

As the 1920s concluded the Milwaukee experienced reorganization and a name change in 1928. It had been in receivership for 3 years. The name Pacific was added along with new directors and financial system.



In that year also came a change in management at the cafe when T. W. Cleaver of Minneapolis replaced longtime manager Bert Gilbertson.

Track and equipment improvements followed but the depression years 1929 to 1939 resulted in cutbacks and more mixed train service with freights transporting passengers on the caboose on branches such as Aberdeen to Edgeley. Freightage suffered with decline of agricultural shipments. The Milwaukee filed for bankruptcy in 1935 and accepted trustee receivership. The company then made a determined effort to capture passengers by introducing the streamlined Hiawatha trains which first ran between Chicago and Minneapolis in May 1935.

At first steam powered with 5 to 7 cars, the Hiawatha by 1941 had diesel engines pulling 10 cars. The Olympian Hiawatha initiated service to Seattle June 29, 1947. Thereafter Aberdonians viewed that train as it entered, stopped and then

departed. The depot platform was crowded by those who wished to view as well as by those who wished to board the swift Hiawathas. The domed sky car became popular.



TO THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST  
SUPER DOME HIAWATHA AD

The reorganized Milwaukee developed new stockyards in 1936 as Aberdeen was the only feeding point for sheep, cattle and hogs between Deer Lodge, Montana and Chicago. Within 36 hours cattle trains must move from point of origin to the feeding station where they were unpacked, fed and packed for the final journey to the processing plants. Thus, a main line cattle train occasionally had priority over passenger trains which were sidetracked until the freight train passed.

The Aberdeen yards could hold about 32,700 sheep, 5600 hogs and 3,125 head of cattle. These yards handled about 10,000 cars of livestock a year as late as the mid 1950s when the numbers declined due to trucking transportation.

Freight trains received an increased number of hoboes riding the rails in that depressed decade. Hoboe jungles near the tracks and depots became more noticeable.



#### CANTEEN YEARS 1943-1946

The second World War gave the railroads a respite as traffic and revenue increased. Aberdeen's passenger and freight depots hosted a service man's canteen from August 19, 1943 through March 1946. In addition to the Milwaukee railroad women and the railroad, the canteen's organizers were the Red Cross, USO, Girl and Boy Scouts, and American Legion Auxiliary. Volunteers from Aberdeen were aided by townsfolk in N.E. South Dakota and even from border towns in North Dakota.

Milwaukee officials allotted a 4' by 30' space along the north wall of the passenger depot's lobby and installed running water for the canteen. The second floor Milwaukee women's club rooms in the freight office--150 feet to the southwest--served as a work station for food preparation.

Servers sometimes learned of a special train's arrival with only 15 minutes notice. Servicemen stopped for only short rest breaks and at times had to be served at train windows when they were not allowed to leave the train.

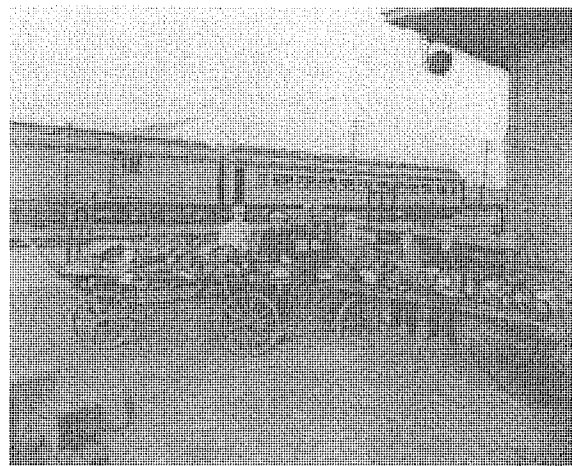
Three months after the canteen opened the American

News published remarks of R.E. Adams, Red Cross field director in England. He commented on the great impression the canteen had made on the soldiers:

"Our boys were not permitted to get off the train but for the 20 minutes that we were in your station your ladies served the boys through the coach windows."

By June 13, 1944 the News published another clipping of 1943 in the Milwaukee Sentinel about the canteen's national fame and the movement of troops inside the depot:

"Mothers, don't worry about your boys in service going hungry"--if they be passing through Aberdeen, SD....pheasant sandwiches are the speciality and their reputation reaches far and wide. The longest railroad stop between Minneapolis and Billings, Montana, Aberdeen is a comfortable oasis in the eyes of travel-weary servicemen and they flock off the train into the USO conveniently located in the railroad station. Many a hungry soldier is heard to exclaim, "Where are those pheasant sandwiches I've been hearing about all the way from New York? All food is free."



PHEASANTS FOR CANTEEN

The first year anniversary on Saturday August 19, 1944 celebrated with 47 birthday cakes and a special menu of roast turkey and cranberries to supplement pheasant sandwiches. Nine hundred servicemen were served.

Each day 60 quarts of milk, 50 loaves of bread for about 600 sandwiches, dozens of hard boiled eggs, minced ham, coffee, celery, lettuce, carrots, relishes, pastries, cookies and doughnuts were ordered from the grocer or brought by volunteers. Assembly lines were used to process this food which was carried downstairs and over to the main depot canteen where earlier in the day several coffee urns had been prepared. Helen Bergh in her article "Troop Trains and Pheasant Sandwiches: The Aberdeen Canteen in World War II" in Vol.23 of South Dakota History recalls during the canteen's last year:

"We always sent 2 girls out to meet the train and escort the boys in. One girl was a cute little redhead and the other a blonde. Within a minute they would come prancing back with a fellow on each arm and the whole trainload of boys following."

Inside the depot an information booth and reading center provided soldiers with donated books, puzzles, stationary, cards, and games for use while completing their journey.

Helen Bergh further describes the aftermath of troop train service:

"As soon as the train left, we hurried to fill more trays. In the few minutes after the warning for the next train, we filled cups and glasses. There were usually from 4 to 6 trains a day, some of them arriving

well into the night. After the final one had left, we cleaned the canteen, put all the washed milk bottles into their containers, washed the coffee urns, gathered up the soggy dishtowels and carried everything across the parking lot and back up the stairs to the clubrooms."

Between March 1943 and March 1944 130,00 personnel were served. During the concluding 2 years the canteen served 15,000 to 20,000 boys a month. Despite "exhausting 12 to 18 hour shifts" volunteers had demonstrated that South Dakota cared for the soldier boys. One soldier according to the Milwaukee Magazine for July 1945 declared: "This was the best canteen in the country. Best sandwiches I ever ate. Puts Aberdeen on the map."

#### POST WAR MILWAUKEE

Reorganized once again after a decade of bankruptcy protection the Milwaukee by 1947 featured streamlined trains between Chicago and Seattle to compete with the newly streamlined Great Northern Empire Builder and Northern Pacific North Coast Limited. Thus, 2 trains a day passed through Aberdeen at the scheduled times of the previous Olympian.

#### SAVE THE MILWAUKEE!

The gradual decline in main line service during the 1950s and 1960s generated public outcry through press, hearings and even music. Don Drobeck and Jerry Berens' words and music from a Montana perspective surfaced in the Mill Town record "Save the Milwaukee". This song's first two verses symbolized popular attitudes in these declining years:

"Have you heard the latest word,/we might lose our train!

The money isn't big enough to move them off the plains.

In the middle of the nation we feed the nation.

In the middle of the nation between the east and west we are the best." +++++

" We take one step forward and then take two steps back.

That's what we'll be doing if we take them off the tracks.

Let's say they spend a billion to bring it to an end

Someday they will spend it all to start up again.

From beautiful Montana and east to St. Paul

That lonesome midnight whistle will not be heard at all.

So all of us who are concerned must rally for all to see

To people as productive we must keep the Milwaukee."

The 1950s saw cutbacks in service west of Aberdeen. By January 1955 the Columbian (Trains # 17 and 18) offered only coach service between Minneapolis and Avery, Idaho. Then Marmarth, ND became the western terminus and by May 22, 1955 service ceased between Marmarth and Aberdeen. Railroad trucks took over the express, milk and cream business. Post Office Star Routes with mobile post offices brought the mail to and from the western towns. These trucks still visited the Milwaukee depot to meet trains #5 and #6 from the Twin Cities. People who desired to travel west of Aberdeen must travel on the New Olympian.

Two years after termination of service west of Aberdeen, the daily afternoon run of the Columbians #17 and #18 between Aberdeen and Minneapolis ended

on Sunday February 18, 1957. This impacted mail delivery schedules delaying night connections in Minneapolis with trains moving east and caused PO box distribution in Aberdeen to be moved from 4 p.m. to 4 a.m. The postmaster suggested patrons look into air mail.

This termination of #17 and #18 left the depot to service local mail-express trains #5 and #6 between Aberdeen and the Twin Cities as well as the through main line train, Olympian Hiawatha until May 26, 1961 when passenger service ended on the Milwaukee's transcontinental route west of Deer Lodge, Montana. The Interstate Commerce Commission ordered continued passenger service with Milwaukee trains #15 and #16 between Minneapolis and Deer Lodge.

Effective on Feb. 2, 1964 the ICC ruled that #15 and #16 could operate only as far as Aberdeen and cease operating as far west as Deer Lodge, Montana. Aberdeen became a western terminus as it was before 1883. Aberdeen had no existing bus service to the west to replace the train.

Accordingly Aberdeen Milwaukee station hours were cut in May 1964. Tickets could be purchased only between 7 pm. and 4 a.m. daily except Tuesday when the depot closed all night. The rationale given was "very little passenger business on Tuesday". Passengers who traveled Tuesday nights were to buy tickets from the conductor. This left one passenger train daily arriving and departing at the Aberdeen station. That train arrived at 1:10 a.m. and left at 2 a.m. arriving in Minneapolis at 6:35 a.m.

Five years later passenger service ended for Aberdeen's Milwaukee depot. After a series of hearings in January 1969, the ICC approved discontinuance of trains #15 and #16. Train #15 arrived on Thursday morning April 17, 1969 as the last passenger train.

## The Last Train!

Aberdeen American-News April 15, 1969 Tuesday

### Passenger Service To Hub Ends

That morning the crew deadheaded back to the Twin Cities on a non-revenue run. Decreased patronage and revenue had been the justification for the demise of those trains. Freights continued to run. In late 1977 the Milwaukee filed for bankruptcy again and sought reorganization with help from the state for track rehabilitation. By April 1, 1980 the Milwaukee serviced one freight route westward to Miles City with trackage rights as far as Billings Montana. On March 31, 1982 the final east bound freight train from Miles City stopped at Aberdeen. Thereafter, the Burlington Northern assumed operations.

The state legislature voted to save rail service by appropriating \$25 million through a statewide sales tax. On October 14, 1980 the Railroad Authority approved purchase of 760.5 miles of Milwaukee lines including the Mitchell to Aberdeen route. Other purchases in southeastern South Dakota followed in 1981. On July 6, 1981 the Railroad Authority and the Burlington Northern agreed to resumption of service on the core line with state funding track rehabilitation. In September 1981 to assure

freight service, a special session of the legislature approved purchase of the Ortonville to Miles City line, the Milwaukee's northern main line. On July 20, 1982 that purchase was finalized for \$3,000,000. Who would operate and maintain these lines? what would be the fate of Aberdeen's passenger depot?

### THE CHICAGO & NORTHWESTERN 1900-1985



The depot of the 1880s remained in its First Avenue location until after October 1910 when it was moved to Crandon and a driveway on the west side of the new depot extended over the site formerly occupied by the 1880's depot. The east, track-side brick platform of the new passenger station was also extended northward toward First Avenue. The new station arose south of the former depot site. A roofed canopy, 250' long and 10' wide, sheltered a portion of this block-long brick platform. No other Aberdeen depot possessed such a lengthy sheltered space for its patrons and employees.

City directories and published time schedules now gave the depot's address as Second Avenue instead of First Avenue as was the case for the former depot. In the fall of 1909 the railroad had requested the city to close Second Avenue between Pennsylvania and Dakota Streets and pave the street leading to the depot, their reason being that the depot entrance would directly face Second Avenue. The C&NW contributed \$5,000 toward this

paving and the city vacated part of Second Avenue and began paving.

Between June 1909 and May 1910 C&NW's locational plans changed for the new depot. Initially it was to be situated on the corner of Second Avenue facing Pennsylvania Avenue, one block west of the First Avenue depot. Connecting grades and tracks would then have to be built a block westward. Later plans positioned the depot on Dakota street, a block further east and nearer the established trackage thus avoiding the expense of grading and tracks to the more westward site. By May 10 new station foundations appeared south of the old depot.

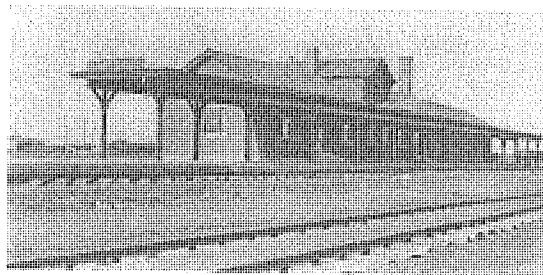
The Weekly American asked on May 26, 1910 shortly after foundation work had started in early May: "Is the Railroad Keeping Faith?" It appeared that the new depot was being built next to the old one and that it would not be seen as an architectural sight by persons further west looking toward the east end of Second Avenue. Ruffled by the railroad's refusal to give details on the new building, the paper suspected the depot might be too small to handle increased business.

During the summer of 1910 the C&NW focused attention on their site through music. The Daily News of June 26 observed: "The Northwestern Dago quartet attracts great crowds by their fine singing and instrumental music, the concerts being given on the Northwestern right of way near the station. It is said by musical critics, the tenor who appears with this troupe is a second Caruso and is well worth hearing. The men are

employed as laborers on the C& NW, and having the natural Italian musical temperament, they are able to produce music that is far above the average rural production."

In summer and fall the press reported building progress. Upon completion in October 1910 a traveler mounted four steps to a roofed porch entry. Walking on tiled, art marble floors, he looks right and left noting lavatories (7'x10') on each side of the lobby entrance. Proceeding forward into the depot's interior, he sees the east side ticket office (15'8"x13'13").

Astride that central work place with its full bay window trackside, were two waiting rooms for the weary traveler. To the south was the women's waiting room (40' x 22') and to the north was a similar sized men's waiting room. Turning northward from the ticket office and the men's waiting room, the visitor walks through an arched, marbled passageway toward a baggage room (30'8" x 19') and from there to the building's north end, the express room (21' x 19') with its wood floor in contrast to waiting room floors.



C&NW DEPOT 1917-18 VIEW:

After December 1910 and through 1922 street railway tracks passed that way making the depot more accessible to

the traveling public. A depot that had been on the eastern margin of the city now became somewhat more centralized although not so much as the Great Northern which in 1906 had built closer to downtown.

The new one-story, freight depot, separated by an 8' park area from the passenger depot, possessed an impressive, 10' wide and 254' long platform trackside. Second Avenue southeast in a way became freight avenue due to the proximity of the C&NW freight house. Further south at Dakota and Fifth a roundhouse of several stalls serviced C&NW locomotives.

With landscaping and the inviting macadam driveway leading from Second Avenue to the depot and the 5' wide concrete sidewalks and curbing, the Aberdeen Daily News called these developments "of 1910 one of the surprises of the year".

#### THE CIRCUS TRADITION

On July 18, 1907 The Barnum and Bailey Circus arrived by way of the C&NW and set up show grounds "near the Northwestern Depot" Billed as the "Greatest Show on Earth", it boasted 5 trains of cars. The circus scheduled a 2 and 8 p.m. show. The Daily American July 19 claimed 22,000 persons saw this circus. The Great Northern and the Milwaukee benefited by scheduling excursion trains which brought in over 3100 people. Apparently the C&NW did not have such excursions probably because their tracks were clogged by the circus trains.

Curious crowds awaited the trains as the cars arrived from Mitchell in the early morning

of July 18 and watched wagon load after wagon load and some 500 horses move to the nearby grounds where 1200 workers set up acres of tents. A 6 a.m. breakfast for these workers was a sight to remember by those Aberdonians hardy enough to rise so early. Later between 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. streams of fans crowded Second and First avenues as they headed toward the circus passing the nearby depot grounds, not realizing that in 3 years a new depot would arise near the old depot of 1883. In later decades while the circus unloaded at the C&NW depot area, they moved to show grounds down Eighth Avenue across the road south of present Lee Golf Course.

The new depot of 1910 continued the tradition of circus arrivals on C&NW tracks. Even as late as the early and mid 1930s other big shows such as Tom Mix's cowboy show arrived and departed on the Northwestern.

#### PRESIDENTIAL TREATMENT

President Taft's special train arrived at the new C&NW depot at 5:30 p.m. Monday October 23, 1911. A special platform had been built at Second avenue where his private car was detached from the train. A mounted military escort and many automobiles awaited to join in a procession from the station to the normal school and later to downtown.

The C&NW had distributed 20,000 circulars advertising it's special trains for Taft Day. A C&NW special departed Oakes, ND at 3 p.m. and arrived in Aberdeen shortly before 5 p.m. with a return trip scheduled at 11 p.m.

As previously described, Taft left by way of the Milwaukee.

Not until August 1936 did another President arrive on the C&NW tracks. Franklin D. Roosevelt, unlike Taft, also departed on the C&NW tracks as he was headed for Pierre and Rapid City which the C&NW served. A special train carrying the president's car, "Pioneer" arrived in the late afternoon at the Northwestern station. The regularly scheduled C&NW passenger train had preceded this special as a safety measure. The special included a diner and lounge car, sleepers, a baggage car and compartment cars for secret service, White House staff and the press.

FDR from the rear platform of The Pioneer spoke brief, upbeat words after being introduced by the state's democratic governor Tom Berry. Upon alighting from the train he entered an open touring vehicle. A 16-car caravan escorted the presidential party through city streets. An estimated 40,000 people lined the streets to see the president.

Competing with its chief rival the Milwaukee, Agent Dickson of the Northwestern offered a reduced rate of a fare and one third for the democratic state convention held in Aberdeen July 2, 1910.

By May 1916 the Northwestern had contributed considerably to the train traffic and supporting the Hub City image. However, the C&NW's three passengers, two freights and two weekly extras seemed small compared to the rival Milwaukee's 20 passenger trains and 21 freights. In the years

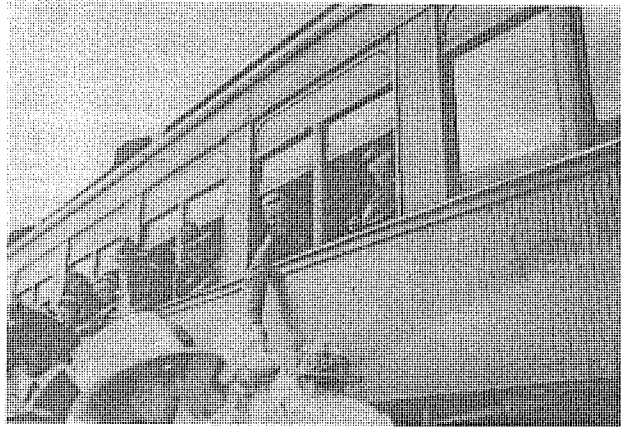
to come the C&NW assumed a significant role in servicing soldiers.

#### PLATFORM WELCOMES & FAREWELLS AT C&NW

Before America's involvement in the Great European War the Northwestern had transported some military personnel.

After receiving a sendoff at the depot platform on Sunday morning July 14, 1912 Company L of the state militia returned to that same platform at noon July 25 after attending a two-week, annual encampment at Sparta, Wisconsin.

There were a number of Departure Days in 1917 and 1918. The Milwaukee depot platform saw its share of goodbyes as seen in the following photo:



TROOP TRAIN 1918

Not all farewells were at the Milwaukee depot. On August 17, 1917 Aberdeen gave a royal farewell to 105 men of Company K as they boarded the 3 Northwestern sleepers for Demning, New Mexico. This group included 12 Groton boys.

Estimated by Groton's Carol Streeter a crowd of about eight



thousand paraded on foot and in automobiles about noon from the armory and court house through Main Street and up Second Avenue to the Northwestern depot. The Aberdeen band headed the column playing "Marching through Georgia". Cameras clicked and handkerchiefs waved. The troop passed through a line of old soldiers--the boys of 1861 and 1898--and under an arch of flags held by veterans. To the alternate tunes of the Star Spangled Banner and Auld Lang Syne, the train departed southward for a 5-day journey.

The Groton Independent described the departure thus: "the boys entrained and waved their last good-byes from the car windows. A blast of the whistle warned friends from the cars." The Aberdeen Daily News of August 17, 1917 observed:

"It was at the station that the spirit of it bulked big. It seemed as if all Aberdeen was there to say goodbye. The column halted on the north side of the waiting train, civilian heads were bared and the military stood at attention while the band played the Star Spangled Banner. The khaki-clad lads boarded the train. Troopers on the platform and leaning from the windows gave a hurried handclasp to friends, a more affectionate farewell to mother, wife, sister and sweetheart. When the band struck up Auld Land Syne, big bronzed soldiers strove manfully to smile and hold back the tears, to make it less hard for those they were leaving. The conductor gave the parting signal, the band again struck up the Star Spangled Banner and amid the cheers and the waving of handkerchiefs they were off to the southland."

A poem "Only a Volunteer" in the Groton Independent of

December 27, 1917 reflects the role the depot and the train played on Departure Day: The volunteer complains that he didn't get as good a send-off as those who were drafted and that volunteer service wasn't appreciated. The versifier speaks: "Why didn't I wait to be drafted,/ And be led to the train by a band../Nobody gave me a banquet, nobody said a kind word,\ The puff of the engine, the grind of the wheels,\ Was all the goodbye I heard."

In 1918 more drafted boys received group sendoffs. At midnight on Friday Liberty Day April 26, 1918, 108 draftees, some from neighboring counties, along with 36 men from Brown county boarded the Northwestern for Camp Funston.

Two months later, on June 27, 1918 at 7:30 a.m. 242 Brown County selectees boarded a special train for Camp Funston. Hundreds of friends and relatives cheered them at the C&NW depot. The Aberdeen Weekly News of June 27, 1918 described the scene: "Led by the Aberdeen band, the selectees started for the Northwestern Station at 7 o'clock. County and city people followed in automobiles and on foot to the station where they were given another opportunity to greet the draftees. As the train pulled out from the station shouts of "Wait until Pershing Sees Us!", "Don't tell the Germans we are coming, we don't want the war to end", and "How far is it to France?" were mingled with the sobs of mothers and dear ones."

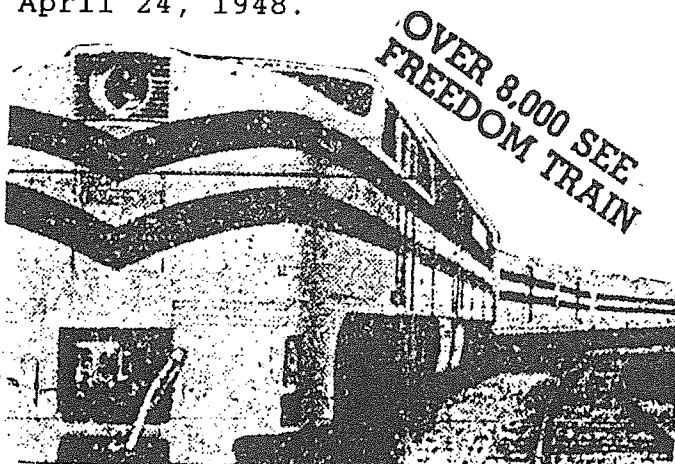
In July 26, 1919 about 4 p.m. a reception committee constituting members of the Aberdeen Retail Association and the Commercial Club gathered at the Northwestern depot to meet a special train carrying 71 St. Paul boosters, wholesale

merchants and manufacturers. representing 56 firms. This Victory Trade Tour, the 21st such annual trip, linked by rail Aberdeen retailers and St. Paul jobbers.

After being dined and entertained by the Aberdeen band, the visitors shared ideas about the business climate and ways to counter the non-partisan league of North Dakota. While doing so their train was switched to the Milwaukee depot from which they would return to St. Paul that evening.

#### C&NW DEPOT AS PATRIOTIC CENTER

Unlike the Milwaukee main east-west line, the Aberdeen Depot, as a link in the north to south branch line with a east-west connection point at Huron, did not have as much troop train experience in the Second World War years. The towns served along its route sent individual or small groups of recruits to Aberdeen for shipment out on the Milwaukee. However, in the post war years for a brief moment it was visited by thousands when the Freedom Train arrived Saturday April 24, 1948.



SPIRIT OF 1776;FREEDOM TRAIN

From ten in the morning to ten at night the train parked at the Northwestern station. Teachers brought their students from towns on the Milwaukee and other railroads to see this special train. Many came on the C&NW from North Dakota. A red Cross unit set up in the depot to handle any health problems of those standing in block-long lines. 5000 attended by 6 p.m. At closing time 8,359 had viewed the historic documents within the train. A late afternoon rain caused some people to remain in the train longer than usual cutting down the number that could enter.

The C&NW in the 1950s experienced competition of trucking and automobiles as did the other railroads. In order to cut operating costs the system adopted diesel-powered locomotives in 1955. Oil replaced the more expensive coal and the caution to engineers "Watch the Smoke" was no longer necessary.

The last mixed train freight (with passenger car or two hooked on behind) rolled through Aberdeen on June 30, 1960. Freight line service continued into the 1980s; however, C&NW offices at Hecla and Groton in Brown County were discontinued and administered from Aberdeen.

The C&NW expanded to buy out the remnants of the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad on November 1, 1960. In the late 1960s they leased that depot and later sold it in 1977. In 1970 they relinquished 24 miles of track from Doland to Verdon and 14 plus miles from Verdon to Groton. The C&NW also abandoned the Stratford-to-Aberdeen line in that year

and in 1977 the Stratford-to-Watertown route. In 1979 they abandoned 87 miles of track from Ordway Jct. to Ordway in Brown County. Abandonments of branch lines and towns accelerated especially with passage of the national law deregulating railroads in 1981. This hurt small, short line rail companies.

The C&NW asked the Interstate Commerce Commission to abandon the 51.7 miles from Aberdeen to Oakes, North Dakota. Such action impacted the stations, as well as, the grain and farm traffic, at Ordway, Columbia, Houghton, Hecla in Brown County and Ludden, North Dakota. The railroad credited poor track conditions, limited train speed and weight as factors in its decision. To improve tracks was too expensive for the low level of traffic. Columbia shippers of fertilizer to Hecla responded in January 1985 "What we have is better than none at all." Farmers complained about grain car shortages due to poor tracks. Hundred car trains could not traverse poor tracks.

Opponents argued that without rail transportation the increased speedy and overweight truck traffic would ruin country roads. The American News of July 18, 1985 judged: "That piece of track is a mess." In response to the question "Whether it is worth it?" the paper asserted "Sure the line serves only small towns between Oakes and Aberdeen but we do not consider them dying towns."

This was a unique short haul line because it connected with east-west outlets by means of the Burlington Northern and the Soo.

Investigation revealed the C&NW had made a profit of \$179,044 in 1984 and had serviced 1,249 cars on that line in 1984. Temporarily the railroad withdrew its abandonment petition.

One option was to sell the line. The Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railroad acquired those tracks and then abandoned the line in 1993. Aberdeen considered buying seven miles of right-of-way as far as Ordway for a bike and hiking trail but rural landowners opposed and acquired some of that land from the Dakota Minnesota and Eastern Railroad.

In September 1986 the C&NW sold trackage in central South Dakota to the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad. In June 1994 private contractors dug up C&NW rails of 1880s between 8th Ave. NE and Hecla for scrap. As he viewed oily ties and bent rails littering the grade R. C. Lathrop, BN railroad conductor, sadly viewed the scene thinking of all the work section men had put into placement of that track. Another spoke of the Hub City vanished but the Hub City image lives on.



GREAT NORTHERN STATION  
TO 1982

TRAIN SERVICE TO TACOMA PARK

Since 1887 the Manitoba depot serviced northbound traffic to Minnesota and North Dakota railroad connections. Its trains permitted many picnickers and fisherman to disembark at the Manitoba crossing of the James River where future Tacoma Park developed. After its name

change from the Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba in 1889-90, the Great Northern reinforced its reputation in the 1890s as a competitor of the C&NW and the Milwaukee. In the eyes of the local public its excursion trains to Tacoma Park in 1898 and 1899 became visible symbols of its presence. This late 19th century train service receives brief treatment in the later section on Brown County Depots outside of Aberdeen.

Two years-- 1898 and 1899-- had established a summer chatauqua season at Tacoma Park northeast of Aberdeen. From 1900 to 1922 GN train service increased as Tacoma Park became a popular resort. Until 1910 excursionists left from the GN depot on the east edge of Aberdeen. During the ensuing decade they departed from the new Court Street station across from the 1904 court house.

A roundtrip ticket cost fifty cents and the travel time was about a half hour to the Park. On July 4, 1915 one GN train carried 1400 people who upon arrival noticed hundreds of autos filling the parking spaces.

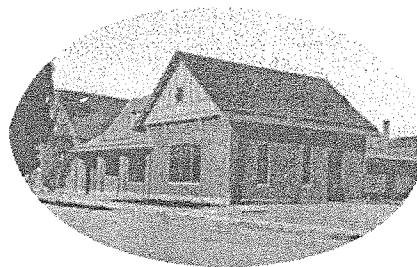
The era of the automobile was approaching. Aberdonians owned 615 out of 1584 cars in the county as of May 7, 1916. Over 2300 cars were parked on the grounds July 4, 1919. In that year the state highway system was authorized. The automobile revolution loomed ahead as in the 1920s and 1930s improved road surfaces evolved from dirt to gravel to asphalt and the train's advantage over muddy roads lessened.

#### THE STATION OF 1906

In March 1906 Robert A. Kirk, owner and proprietor of the Park Place Hotel, sold the site to the Minneapolis, St. Paul and Manitoba Railroad, a division of the Great Northern. Its property value had been contested in court in a condemnation proceedings. The jury on February 17 set the value at \$17,000 which the railroad accepted.

While Aberdonians had long considered this popular hotel a pioneer landmark, they recognized the importance of having a new station in the heart of downtown, 2 blocks east of Main street and across from the new county court house.

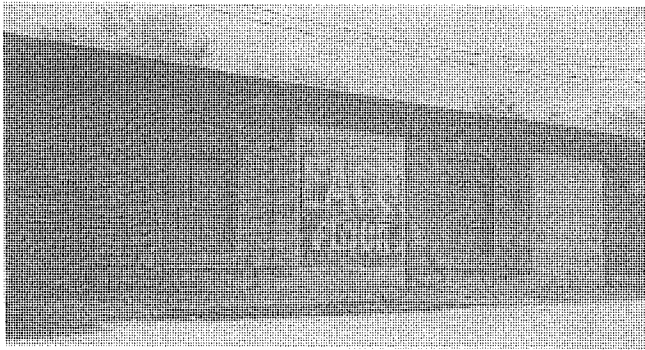
GN surveyors arrived on the morning of February 21 to survey the area for depot and tracks. Intending to move the hotel to another site, Kirk held a public auction of hotel equipment on March 23, 1906. Thereafter, he moved the hotel section by section elsewhere in the city for apartment rentals.



GN DEPOT OF 1906 -1918 VIEW

Implementing architect Samuel Bartlett's design, workers completed a combined passenger and freight depot by early 1907. The freight house extended along the Industrial

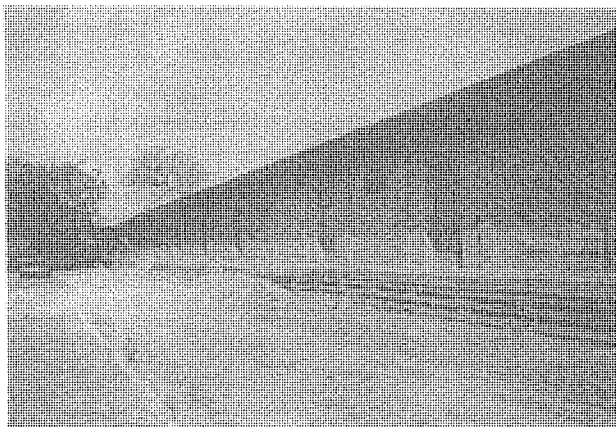
District's Railroad Avenue so that drays and teams could load and unload from that avenue. Below is a photo of 2002 showing that side.



RAILROAD AVE. UNLOADING AREA

Gradually fading, painted advertising signs are still readable on the north side of the freight depot.

Southward on track side a lengthy platform awaited the freight trains. Below is a recent photo with an eastward looking view of the platform, much the same as in 1906 except the tracks and passenger platform has been removed.



GN FREIGHT DEPOT PLATFORM: 2002

Fronting the court house across the street with tracks

in the rear the passenger depot made an attractive architectural addition to this court street site. A one-story, L-shaped, brick structure resting on a cut-stone foundation, the depot featured a central loft area over the recessed entrance which separated a north and south wing. A ladies retiring room, now serving as a law library, constituted the southwest corner while a ticket office faced southward toward the general waiting room. A baggage room occupied the building's southeastern side. Wired for electricity and piped for gas, the depot provided rest rooms adjoining the waiting room.

The Great Northern sometimes ran specials from Minneapolis to conventions in Aberdeen. Such was the case in March 1912 when 125 Minnesota boosters and businessmen stepped off the eleven-car special at 8:30 a.m. to attend the State Builders' meeting where they would mingle with hundreds of business people from the many small and large South Dakota towns.

The Daily News noted the fact that Aberdeen's depots in May 1916 had one train passing through every 18 minutes. Great Northern's two passengers and two freights contributed toward this figure. In the published time cards the GN schedule seemed somewhat shorter than that of the other railroads. Two trains originated in Aberdeen--#192 the Breckenridge local leaving at 7:40 p.m. and arriving from Breckenridge at 7:50 a.m. and a mixed local freight and passenger daily except Sunday for Breckenridge departing at 5 a.m. arriving from Breckenridge at 11:20 p.m.

These trains provided connections with trains taking travelers east to Duluth and the Twin Cities and beyond or into North Dakota and westward. Due to the fewer trains and directions involved the Great Northern did not receive as much press attention over the years as the Milwaukee and Northwestern both of which had state southbound connections. The Great Northern did not.

As did other railroads, the GN advertised special excursion fares to the Twin Cities offering one fare for the round trip for specific occasions. The GN had blockage problems during wintry weather causing schedule changes from time to time.

A March 1958 schedule recognizes stops at towns along the line which GN's successor the BN abandoned for a time in March 2000. In 2001 South Dakota Rail Authority authorized by the 2001 legislature took control of the 53.6 mile line for repair and resumption of freight traffic. Past passenger service was a thing of the past.

Mixed passenger train #326--the 4:30 p.m. GN train leaving Aberdeen daily except Sunday--made flag stops prior to stopping at Claremont at 5:40 p.m., arriving in Breckenridge at 11 p.m.--a 6 1/2 hour trip from Aberdeen. At Breckenridge the traveler could leave that depot at 11:30 p.m. and arrive in Minneapolis at 6:05 a.m. daily except Monday.

Freight service, as on most railroads, was the primary revenue producer. Shipments to and from the Twin Cities were key links within the trade territory. Therefore, it is not

surprising that GN added another refrigerator car to its freight service for perishable goods in the warm summer of 1921.

Refrigerator cars loaded in the Twin Cities on Friday and Saturday arrived in Aberdeen Monday afternoon; Wednesday and Thursday loadings arrived here on Friday afternoon. Shippers and receivers appreciated the additional refrigerator schedule as the Minneapolis and St. Louis in July terminated its two refrigerator cars a week for less than carloads.

As can be seen by the 1958 schedule for train #326 previously referred to, Great Northern's passenger service in Aberdeen constituted a lone day coach stuck at the end of a freight train subjected to long delays while freight cars were switched on and off at stops along the way. In December 1965 the Interstate Commerce Commission granted GN's request to end passenger service. The Burlington Northern absorbed the Great Northern, continued the freight route until 2000 but sold the depot in 1982 to lawyers who renovated the building for non-railroad use.

#### THE MINNEAPOLIS & ST. LOUIS



Since 1906 the M&St.L branch tracks reached Aberdeen in Brown County and Leola in McPherson County, Watertown was the main line, base terminal in eastern South Dakota and connection point to the Twin Cities. Conde became the junction for a branch line southward to Aberdeen and Leola while a main line moved westward toward the Missouri.

Between 1906-07 and 1960 the M&StL provided passenger and freight service over 114.13 track miles from Watertown to Leola and between 1929 and 1940 to Long Lake--19.02 miles north of Leola.

The railroad's first task in establishing a base in Aberdeen was to secure a right of way by private negotiation with landowners and securing a financial guarantee that such costs would not exceed \$55,000. If costs were discovered to be too much an optional route was under consideration by way of Groton and Columbia to Leola. By February 21, 1906 businessmen secured pledges for at least \$94,000 to cover any right of way costs over \$55,000. By March 1906 routes had been determined. Entrance to the city came west of the Normal School and Lincoln Street with depot sites between 11th and 12 Avenues. This South main street site isolated the M&StL depots from the two downtown depots and the C&NW at Aberdeen's eastern edge.

Condemnation proceedings were initiated in order to determine fair value for right-of-way land as many owners would not accept the railroad's offer. Amongst these reluctant owners were many of Aberdeen's most prestigious businessmen including Sam Hedger and Charles Howard. Once settled M&StL stockholders approved the railroad's extension from Watertown to Le Beau with a branch from Conde to Leola under the charter of the Minnesota, Dakota & Pacific company.

By Monday November 12, 1906 track layers reached the depot site where large crowds watched

the tracklaying machine. At noon an engine moved across Main street. About 75 tracklayers displayed their skills; 12 men put rails in place, two men bolted the rails together with fish plates, a gang of spikers followed.

Passenger and freight depots and roundhouse were built in spring and summer of 1907. Officials boasted: "The building will be larger and better finished than the present Milwaukee passenger depot." The passenger depot was opened for passengers to board the first train departing Sunday evening September 1, 1907. A large crowd was present to see the train which had new cars out of the factory--baggage car, mail car, smoker, and electrically lighted chair car, and Pullman sleeper. The travel rate was two cents a mile, \$6.20 for a 310 mile trip.

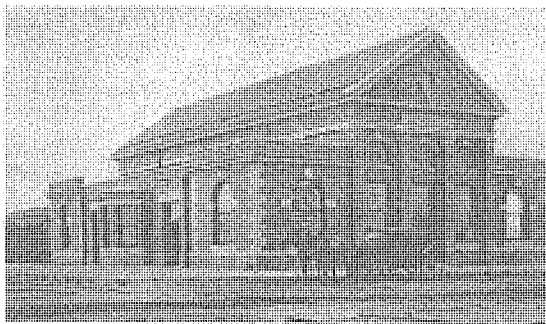
Travelers could arrive in St. Paul to attend the opening of the state fair that Monday. There had been strong demand for sleepers on that night train which departed at 8:15 p.m. and arrived at 7 a.m. in Minneapolis and at 7:50 a.m. in St. Paul. For both the eastbound and westbound trips evening departures and early morning arrivals at the Twin Cities and at Aberdeen made this overnight schedule popular.

The Conde-Leola train began service September 2 with an Aberdeen coach attached to a freight when it arrived from Conde at 8 a.m. This local reached Leola at 11 a.m. a two-hour ride from the Hub City.

The dimensions of M&StL's Aberdeen passenger station were 61'x79'. Inside stood an attractive grill room, lobby

and ticket office, a general waiting room and a men's waiting room, toilet rooms and a large baggage room. A boiler room provided heat.

Thirty seven electric lights helped create a pleasant atmosphere as did decorated plaster squares on the waiting room ceiling. Oak veneered woodwork, doors and furniture, foot-square sections of red-and-white tile flooring, and white enamel brick five feet upward from the floor contributed to interior appeal. Flooring in the baggage room differed in that it featured creosote blocks similar to those on city streets. Four large gas lights lighted the station platform.

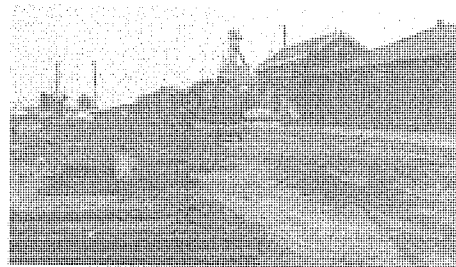


M&STL PASSENGER DEPOT 1907

This early depot photo reveals the track across Main street, the raised brick platform, the trackside bay window so typical of depots. Also featured are the one-story, south and north wings astride a rectangular one-and-a-half story, temple structure with a east-to-west red tile

roof and a classic triangular pediment above the front entrance. The 3 rounded arches separated by columns add to the eye catching Main street facade. These classic features distinguished this depot from all others in the Hub City including the new Milwaukee depot of 1911. This imposing depot increased this end of South Main's stature as a "street of distinction".

The freight depot, 121 feet long and 32 feet wide, stood across Main street with a central scale room in the mid section and an east-end office. It featured steel rolling doors as a fire safety measure. Its open interior facilitated movement of freight. Street side it had a 12 foot platform of paved brick and track side a 300' long by 25' wide loading and unloading platform.



FREIGHT DEPOT AT TIME OF TRACK REMOVAL: EAST OF MAIN STREET

After depot construction an ice house arose behind the freight depot at Lincoln street and Twelfth Avenue. The Daily American reported on September 3, 1907 that "just beyond the (passenger) station, a short distance from the Milwaukee tracks, is a new



round house built of brick, able to store about eight engines." Railroader R.C. Lathrop recalls the round house was located at Twelfth Avenue Southwest and Fifth Street. In 1921 a wind storm wrecked part of the roundhouse.

The M&StL traversed a longer route by Watertown to Chicago than the Milwaukee but made up for it in speed and efficiency. On June 22, 1912 about 400 local Elks boarded a special sleeper, excursion train to Watertown for an Elks' convention. While there the sidetracked train served as Elks headquarters. The rail fare was \$3.50. By May 1916 the depot supervised runs of 4 passenger trains & 2 freights.

M&StL trains eastward bound developed a reputation for speed and class. The local press rendered a compliment: "The St. Louis is obliged to compete with the Milwaukee road for the Aberdeen business, and it is going after business in proper form, running trains on almost the same schedule, although a greater distance and making better time."

In June 1921 the M&StL received a loan of \$400,000 with approval of the ICC for new equipment such as engines and box cars. However, in July 1921 the railroad terminated ice service for less than carload perishables shipped out of Aberdeen. Local fruit and vegetable jobbers protested to the state railroad commission that they missed the two cars a week previously scheduled: "our fruit and vegetable jobbers must have iced car service or go out of business. It is impossible to ship perishable commodities in common box cars during the hot weather." In that same month a wind storm

damaged portions of the M&StL roundhouse.

This action perhaps was associated with financial troubles which surfaced in 1923 when the M&StL went into receivership which lasted until 1943. As part of the reorganization by L. C. Sprague operating head, one unit of the company operated lines into western Minnesota and South Dakota while the other took the territory south of Minneapolis into Illinois.

Changes occurred at the Aberdeen station. Since passenger service had declined, the waiting room was converted in 1949 into storage space. The more lucrative freight business continued. Since 1944 diesels were used on the Watertown to Aberdeen run. In summer 1949 the passenger depot's west end was converted to house a diesel engine. Steam locomotives continued to be used on the weekly Aberdeen-to-Leola run until track repairs made it viable for diesels to move on improved track.

The Chicago Northwestern purchased the M&StL road in November 1960 and maintained the freight business. The C&NW first leased, then sold the Aberdeen depot to private persons who put the depot to alternative uses which are described elsewhere in Part IV.

STOP! LOOK! AND LISTEN!

Having detailed the role of four railroads in the building of a railroad civilization in Brown County it is appropriate to deal with two issues common to all the railroads based in Aberdeen and important to the citizens of Aberdeen. While the railroads were major employers

and taxpayers, contributed to city progress, and received praise for improving Aberdeen's image as the Hub City, the railroads and the city faced several public relations and safety issues.

The music of the song "Save the Milwaukee" refers to missing the "lonely midnight whistle" of the Milwaukee trains as one result of main line abandonment. However, in past decades train whistles became an issue because of the numerous trains which passed through the city. Before the 1940s and 1950s when the diesel with its horn replaced the steam locomotive with its whistle and bell, the safety whistle became a noise nuisance especially toward bedtime.

In nostalgic memory the locomotive whistle triggers images of past trains speeding along the countryside and through a community; in reality they were too noisy for many who lived in those days. In 1923 the whistle issue received headline attention. At every crossing most switch engine engineers as well as those who manned passing trains practiced safety by whistling their approach. These day and night sounds disturbed enough people to become a public issue.

From the railroad's perspective safety was essential as in the past accident victims had sued because they claimed no warning whistle had been heard. Thus, Milwaukee engineers had been ordered "to sound the whistle" at every Aberdeen crossing. Therefore, one can appreciate the engineer "holding on to the whistle cord". The Aberdeen Daily News of July 24, 1923

observed:

"Anyone who has been at the station when the Olympian comes in will testify that the whistle blows so that everyone in town must know of it." An observer of "fully grown whistles" wrote that whistle blasts heard every 24 hours might be compared to the hairs on the head of the most hairy man--almost impossible to count.

The C&NW passenger trains from the south were also subject to whistle blowing. That shrieking, blast alarm at 10:30 p.m. awakened those recently retiring and also hospital patients. With mathematical thoroughness a news article entitled "Echoes have no rest in Aberdeen" supported the anti-noise position on July 25, 1923. A survey about 24-hour whistle blowing within the city limits amazed some readers.

The Northwestern passenger and freight trains from the south whistled about 11 p.m. for 8 street crossings within the city until arrival at the C&NW station. The Milwaukee whistled 4 times in leaving the city for the east and again entering from the east, in addition to whistling for one crossing of another railroad's tracks. Twenty Milwaukee trains plus specials entered the city from four directions. Trains from the south crossed every street from First to Eighth in entering or leaving the city. The M&StL leaving for the east & entering from that direction as well as the entry of the GN from the north contributed to the problem. By August 1923 railroad officials and city commission worked out a solution.

They agreed to blow whistles at street crossings only in emergencies based on the engineer's judgment. In September an ordinance decreed signals might be given by ringing the bell on approach to a crossing. Where no watchmen were present at a street crossing, whistling was permitted at those crossings.

Safety at railroad crossings took another dimension. Other than being alert to the locomotive whistle, how to protect those who travel streets which cross the tracks and also how to avoid long waits and traffic pileups at those crossings? The Milwaukee in 1910 desired three of its industrial tracks to cross city streets along the path of the Soo right-of-way which the Milwaukee had purchased. They argued that trackage was important in locating new industries. Some opposed this on the grounds that further congestion at those crossings was not desirable. In response Milwaukee Superintendent Gillick promised to do more to protect crossings.

In addition to placement of traditional warning signposts and to act as a substitute for gate crossings, signals with flashing lights and a target with the word "Stop" appeared. Railroad publicity announced:

"When no train is at the crossing the target is in line to allow vehicle movement, while when the train reaches the crossing the target turns to "Stop" and the lights alternate. Stationary lights are also provided to improve visibility at night."

The Milwaukee's Main

street crossing became the focus of negotiations from time to time. The railroad protested a four-block Main street pavement project using the excuse they planned to build an underground crossing which would be done another year. This was a factor in defeating that project to replace wood block pavement in 1927.

In September 1930 the Milwaukee Main street crossing was blocked for 10 days in connection with the paving of Main. In lieu of crossing gates flashing light, safety signals controlled by a watchman were installed.

Today at Main street and other crossings we have the benefit of safety gates lowering upon the approach of a train. While there are not so many trains in 2002, the occasional freight train does tie up traffic for perhaps 15 minutes.

During the Sixth Avenue construction in 2002 which allowed only two lane traffic, pileups were more noticeable so that a recent headline asserted "Long trains clog Sixth Avenue Traffic".

Earlier in November 1989 one letter to the editor announced a different view from those expressed in 1923 and even more recently regarding railroad crossings and safety:

That writer was thankful that we had freight trains serving the state.

"I myself enjoy watching the colorful locomotives and long strings of grain and coal cars pass through and I do not get upset if I have to wait a few extras minutes at a railroad crossing."

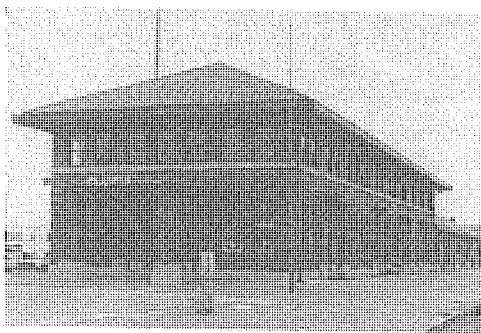
PART IV: LEGACIES & SURVIVALS:  
ALTERNATIVE REUSE OF  
ABERDEEN RAILROAD DEPOTS

Throughout the nation a few major urban railroad depots have been saved from demolition through adaptive reuse. Such renovation is expensive even though demolition costs are avoided. However, the rewards of having a functionally useful building with historical identity has been satisfying and over time profitable especially with tax benefits.

New York's Union Station, Kansas City's station and even more regionally Minneapolis' Milwaukee station of 1899 and its steel train shed illustrate effective and satisfying adaptations which maintain these legacies of a railroad civilization.

In Northeast South Dakota Webster and Redfield have been involved in depot preservation. How effective have the citizens of Aberdeen, with its history as a railroad hub, been in depot preservation and showing appreciation of the legacy which depots represent?

BURLINGTON NORTHERN SANTA FE  
(RE:MILWAUKEE) DEPOT 1982-2002



BNSF (MILWAUKEE) DEPOT 2002

Placed on the National Register of Historic Places on September 20, 1977, it no longer served passenger trains by 1970 but continued to service freight trains until the Milwaukee abandoned its track and the state arranged for the Burlington Northern to handle such traffic after track improvements were made. This depot became property of the BNSF and the story of alternative uses focuses on that company. Of the four major Aberdeen depots this continues to house railroad functions as well as other uses. It serves as a main line BN division point as of 1982.

Its placement on the National Register of Historic Places is based both on its historic significance and its architectural features. The depot's low pitch hip roof covered with red brick tile attract the eye. The concrete string-course encircling the depot beneath the second story windows, the extended eaves and those windows contribute to its horizontal orientation characteristic of Prairie style architecture. Its port-cochere over the east entrance reminds one of that which forms the east entrance of Central High School which also dates from 1911 and is illustrative of Prairie style architecture.

The BNSF offices in Aberdeen currently monitor the tracks and freight business between Appelton, Minnesota in the east and Hettinger, ND to the west and north, also southward from Aberdeen to Mitchell, SD. Their freights carry grain, coal and other bulk items within this area.

They have maintained crossing signals at road crossings within the city such as the 5th St and Melgaard road crossing.

The BN contributed to the Aberdeen Centennial of 1981 and the state centennial of 1989. In December 1986 the BN decorated the depot for arrival of the Santa Train. On Friday November 28 at 7 p.m. an estimated crowd of 4000 people gathered to see Santa arrive by train in a special rail car. The BNSF have recently agreed to sell the depot to Blackstone Development corporation which has renovation plans for that structure. The BNSF personnel will lease space in the old baggage/freight area to the west of the depot proper.

Except for several years when the James Valley Model Railroad Association occupied a few rooms, the second floor of the BN depot has been unoccupied since former legal counsels for the Milwaukee moved to the remodeled Great Northern (BN) depot on Court Street in 1983. The James Valley Model Railroad Association held its annual open house Saturday May 6, 1995 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Organized in 1987-1988 this group moved permanently into the former Milwaukee depot expanding to 5 rooms on the second floor. However, danger of asbestos in occupied rooms forced dismantling of the model city of Aberdeen and its relocation to downstairs where the association developed a 35' x25' U shaped layout with 3 main tracks powered by DCC controls.

For years the remainder of the west end of the first floor has been occupied by BN offices and personnel. In the future

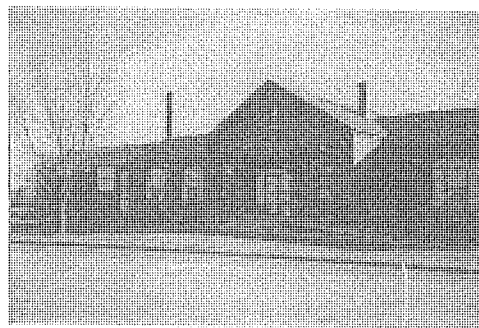
with those offices will move to the westward baggage/freight area and the entire depot will serve community purposes after renovation.

The BN continues as a major freight line serving Brown County and beyond. In March 1993 trainmaster Bill Kissner described the work of rail and tie repair over the 28,000 miles of track. He mentioned the role of technology in reducing the size of work crews. He commented:

"BN employs 40 track workers, 55 train and engine workers, 15 mechanics, 3 supervisors and 8 office people in Aberdeen. The railroad's Aberdeen terminal is an important one because crews change here. A standard crew consists of an engineer, a conductor and 2 breakemen. About 2 trains a day pass through the city, usually carrying grain or coal."

The Hub City looks forward to the renovation of this historic passenger depot so that it continues to serve a useful life and becomes a civic, cultural and business center --a living legacy of a railroad civilization changed by auto & airplane revolution.

#### THE FORMER C&NW DEPOT



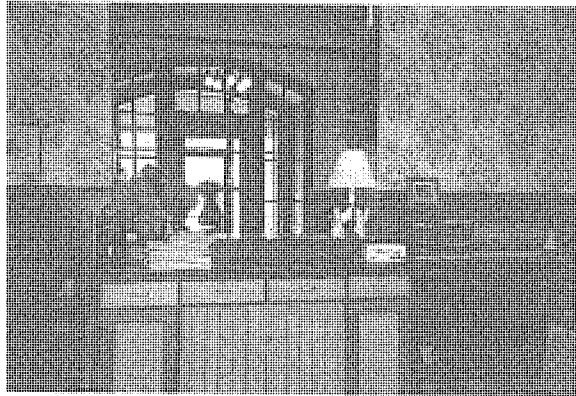
DAKOTA ST VIEW OF DEPOT: 2002

The depot of 1906-2002 at the foot of 2nd St. closed in August 1984. The last mixed train had passed through Aberdeen June 30, 1960 although irregular freight line service continued until complete closure in the 1980s. The 1982 Polk city directory no longer listed the vacant depot in the 200 block of Dakota Street.

In the 1980s a Dakota street improvement project involving the state transportation department resulted in preservation of the depot which remained unoccupied until the 1990s. In May 1889 the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad, which had absorbed the Chicago & Northwestern, transferred ownership to Aberdeen's Kesslers store which may have used it for storage purposes and eventually leased it to varied businesses. In July 1994 workers cleaned up and painted the building. From 1995 to 1997 the Polk city directory listed the 200 block of Dakota street as vacant. However in the years 1998 and 1999 Livestock Specialists farm supplies occupied the south portion of the depot while the remainder of the depot area housed a business using the term depot as part of its logo.

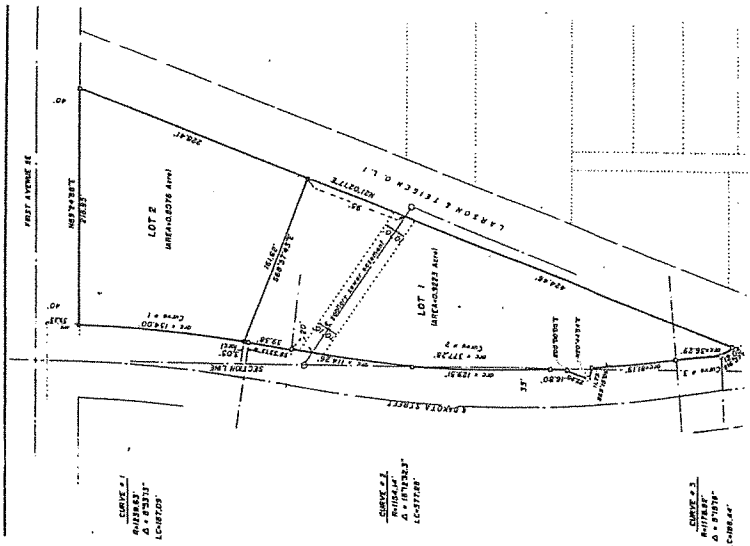
In May 1997 the Design Depot opened in the former depot at 203 South Dakota St. After considerable interior remodeling the proprietors, Kim Geary and Mary Murdy, held an open house in August 1997. The Design Depot operated until December 1998 when it was moved to Main street.

Their store featured fabrics, flooring, wall coverings and furnishings rarely seen in the Aberdeen area.



INTERIOR VIEW OF ENTRY:  
DESIGN DEPOT OPEN HOUSE

In June 1999 Kesslers sold Lot 1, the depot site, to Avera Health Care who remodeled the depot interior for offices. This included sheetrocking, air conditioning and some inside wall changes. Kessler's Lot 2 remains empty as of 2002. Below is a state transportation department sketch of the land at the time of Dakota street's restructuring. By Curving around the depot it was saved from destruction.

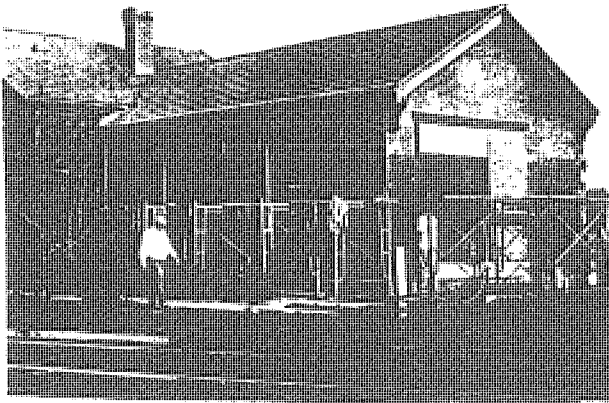


C&NW DEPOT SITE: LOT 1

The evolving changes in the depot's south end can be seen through photographs in the county assessor's office which show the south window's replacement by an overhead door authorized in January 1969. The first photograph shows the depot with tracks still intact and the second photo shows construction of the overhead door. The Credit Union has replaced that overhead door more recently with a glass door entryway.



VIEW OF SOUTH END WINDOW

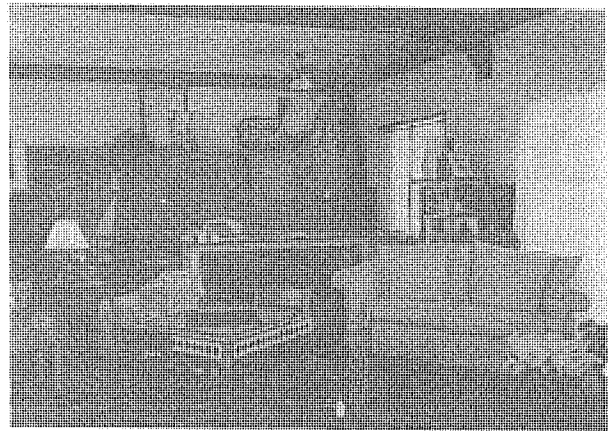


SOUTH END OVERHEAD DOOR

Interior comparisons between remodelling of the Design Depot and the Avera Health Credit Union reflects the interior design sensitivity and

imagination of the former proprietors who created a more homey atmosphere and the more business-like, efficiency oriented, compartmentalized space characterizing the credit union business.

Note the sofa, upholstered chairs, lamps and wall-papered walls symbolic of a family living room compared to the office-lined hallway to the left of the credit union's reception desk.



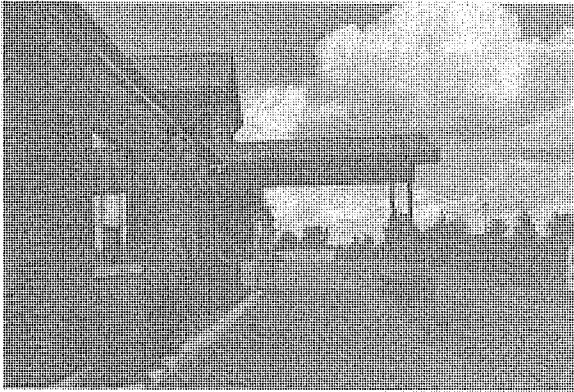
DESIGN DEPOT INTERIOR



CREDIT UNION INTERIOR

A recent addition to the east side of the Credit Union is an overhead shelter for the bay window/auto service area which is partly reminiscent of

the depot as viewed in 1918 with its more elongated, overhead shelter for those boarding trains.



C&NW: EAST SIDE VIEW: 2002

#### GREAT NORTHERN/BURLINGTON NORTHERN DEPOT

In December 1965 the Interstate Commerce Commission permitted the Great Northern to drop passenger service. What would be the fate of their passenger stations?

Located at One Court Street eastward across from the Brown County Court House, this former depot is the home of Court Street Partners, a law firm. Their conversion of the depot into law offices is an outstanding example of effective alternative uses of railroad depots. A headline in the Aberdeen American News January 30, 1983 says it all:

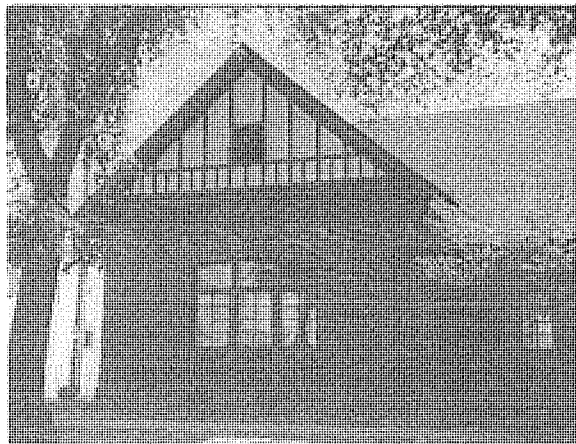
#### "DEPOT COMING TO LIFE AGAIN"

Prior to spring 1984 and as early as the mid 1950s key members of the future firm had served as Milwaukee railroad lawyers. Their law office was on the 2nd floor of that depot.

In January 1982 Court Street Partners requested the Aberdeen city commission to

issue \$400,000 in industrial revenue bonds to purchase and remodel this building for new offices. Such a bond issue is sold in the city's name while the developer repays the bonds. During the time the bonds are outstanding, the property is deeded to the city so they could sell the property to pay off the bonds in case of default by the developers.

### Lawyers try to restore aged beauty of depot



Reconstruction began in September 1982. In January 1983 construction foreman Tarrel Ellestad observed:

"This type of structure is something you just don't see anymore. For instance, most walls of buildings are spaced with 2-by-4 inch studs. But in this depot, all the area between the studs is fitted solid with brick."



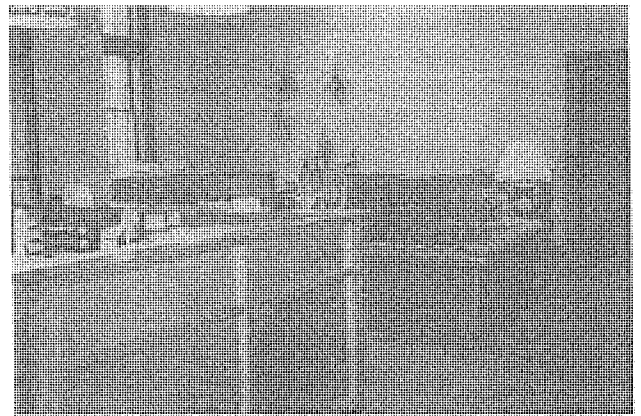
He noticed hand-fashioned, plaster moldings surrounding edges of 14' high ceilings rather than wooden pieces nailed to the corners. Another "oddity" was rare, imported gum wood.

Attorney partner Roy Wise observed; "All the woodwork will remain of the same in the depot and it will be restrained and refinished to restore its old glory. Also on the inside the baggage window will be left intact and restored and some of the old "terrazzo" granite chip floor section will be left uncovered. On the building's exterior "the loading docks formerly used for passengers and freight, will be restored and covered with a redwood surface...We want to leave things as close to the original as possible --to retain some of the character of the structure."

On December 4, 1982 the state review board of Cultural Preservation approved the nomination application of this passenger and freight depot and forwarded it to Washington DC for placement on the National Register of Historic Places. This is the federal government's official list of historic properties worthy of preservation. National legislation permitted favorable tax benefits for rehabilitation and discouraged demolition of historic structures. A cost recovery period acts as an incentive to encourage expenditures for renovation. The depot received National Register status on January 27, 1983 and a plaque to that effect is situated on a pillar at the depot's front entrance.

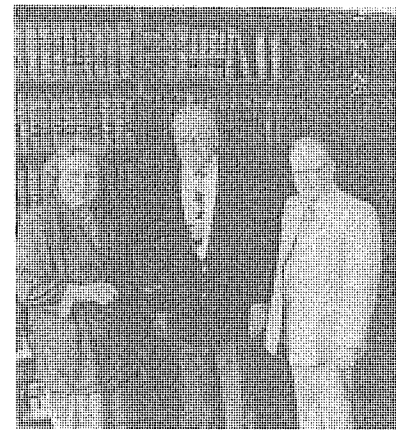
The law firm moved in October 1983. On Sunday July 15, 1984 from 2p.m. to 5p.m. the Landmarks Commission and the law partners held an open

house at the depot. On entering the former waiting room area, now the foyer with reception desk and seating pictured below, visitors note the north wall where the old, barred ticket window reminds one of the depot's past.



FOYER: FORMER WAITING ROOM

Law offices occupy the old baggage room to the south and a law library provides a passageway into a hall with additional offices and a conference room to the east. The photo below shows Landmarks Commission members Peg Lamont and Dr. Art Buntin in the library presenting the National Register of Historic Places plaque to law partner Lloyd C. Richardson.



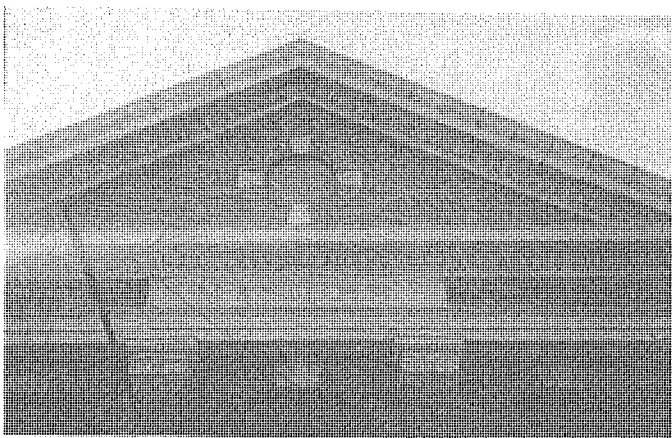
RECOGNITION OF COURT STREET PARTNERS

With the exception of a front southside office, all offices provide window views of the park-like courtyard. In the summer of 1984 the rear court yard was completed as was the surfaced parking lot to the south. Today tree growth obscures the depot's south wall and contributes to the privacy of the court yard. In July 2001 Troy Mcquillen, who has a keen eye for architectural design, considered this "one of the best looking depots in town".

East of the depot section lies the freight house with doors and platform on the south for servicing the train and doors on railroad avenue to the north servicing wagons and later trucks. A recent photo of this area was included in the previous section on the Great Northern (page 73).

The law firm left the west side freight house for future renovation and rental. In 2002 Voigt Sign Service occupies the eastern-most section of the freight depot. The length of the loading and unloading platform close to the former track area and the rear courtyard park may be seen in Part III on the Great Northern.

THE M&StL DEPOT: 1108 S. MAIN



PEDIMENT ABOVE MAIN ENTRY

The Chicago & Northwestern purchased Minneapolis and St. Louis railroad regional property on November 1, 1960. Could alternative uses be found to the unique temple-like M&StL depot on Aberdeen's South Main street?

The C&NW leased and later sold the M&StL property which was put to functional, but non-railroad, use. Ownership changed several times in the 1980s and 1990s.

In the late 1960s college-age youth complained that Aberdeen lacked youth activity centers. This clamor provided justification for conversion of the M&StL depot to a night club serving youth over 18. Perhaps, after decades of use closure in 1968 of the Tacoma Park Dance Hall northeast of Aberdeen influenced the depot's conversion into a dance and drinking center. Proprietors of the new depot club had an interest in the Tacoma Park Dance Hall of 1953 which they rebuilt after snow had caved in the roof in March 1953.

**Depot Club**

**THE DEPOT CLUB**



**Tops In  
Midwest Rock Entertainment**  
Wednesday thru Friday — 9:00 to 1:00  
Come In and Enjoy Our Delicious  
Pizza and Chislic.

**THE DEPOT IMAGE**

A series of night clubs with varied names maintained the depot's image as a social center and prolonged the depot image through retention of the name depot or its equivalent--the Station. For 5 years from

March 1968 through March 1973 the former passenger station became known as the "Depot Club". Located on south Main about 2 blocks from Northern State College, the club advertised in the college newspaper, the Exponent.

During the school year and some summers the Depot Club offered dancing to live bands and featured singers from 8 to 12 p.m. on Friday and Saturday nights. There were Wednesday night events also. Friday afternoon between 3 and 5 were designated as Happy Hour. A cover charge, except on Sunday, helped pay expenses. By 1973 the Depot Club advertised pizza as did the Station House in 1976. Hours changed to Wednesday through Friday 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. as dorm hours became more liberal. Some students wore T shirts bearing the depot Club logo.

Favorite bands with eye-catching names were booked; several advertised as "one of the midwest's top bands". In October 1968 the "7 Sons" were billed as "number 1 Rock and Show band in the entire midwest." Variety was the name of the game. Names such as "The Pilgrims", "The Trippers", "Military Pickle", "Sunny Blue Trio", "Natural Gas", "The Fogg", the "Chateau" and "The South Forty" reflect the musical imagination so different from the Laurence Welk music menu of many older adults.

With the beginning of the school year in September 1975 the former Depot Club opened as the "Station House" with offers of Thursday free admission for girls and Tuesday for guys and with live entertainment.

With delivery and take-out service, the Station House featured in April 1976 the Pizza Room within the Station House.

Apparently live entertainment became too expensive or was too difficult to book; therefore, successor night club experiments focused on disco dancing. Abandoning the railroad names, proprietors called the former "Depot Club" and "Station House" "The Dance Machine" which opened in late October or early November 1977.

**THE DANCE MACHINE**

**SOON-TO-OPEN**  
will take applications  
for the following positions:  
**BARTENDERS**  
**WAITRESSES**  
**DOOR MEN**  
Beginning October 26  
between 2-4 pm  
CALL 229-5204; 225-4700  
for appointment  
Great Working Conditions! No Better Way To Meet People!

#### DANCE MACHINE EMPLOYMENT AD

Aberdeen Steel in December 1977 purchased the property from the C&NW. Site dimensions were 300' depth x 208.72' frontage. This purchase included vacated south 1st street between specific points. A photo of the depot in the county assessor's office displays the dance machine sign fronting Main street on the building's south side.

During 1978-79 the depot continued as an over-18 youth center under the designation of "The Dance Machine" referring to disco music rather than live bands. Name change came on September 18, 1979 when the depot reopened as "The Rail Station" returning to the old


railroad logo with two time periods--Happy Hour 4:30 to 8 p.m. followed by disco dancing. An alliterative logo: "Beef, Booze, Boogie" emphasized three features: food, drinks, dance music. Advertising was extended to the American News whereas former advertising had been in the college paper.

## OPENING TONIGHT

**HAPPY HOUR**  
4:30 to 8:00

**TIME CLOCK SPECIAL**  
The Earlier You  
Punch In The  
More You Save  
On Your Drinks.

THE



**BEEF/BOOZE/BOOGIE**

A LIQUOR ESTABLISHMENT  
FORMERLY  
The Dance Machine

Located - 1100 South Main Aberdeen  
AMPLE PARKING SOUTH OF BLDG.

**DISCO DANCING**  
Starts  
At  
8:00 P.M.  
NIGHTLY

The Polk City Directory lists the depot site at 1100 south Main as vacant in 1980.

In 1982, 1992 and 1994 that site was not listed at all. The Janitor Supply Company occupied the frontal area 1996-2001 before moving elsewhere. "Heirlooms at the Depot", a collectibles and antiques store, occupied the south portion of the depot in 1999 and does so currently in 2002.



"AT THE DEPOT ANTIQUES"

In 2002 the Main Street front (1108 S.Main) remains unoccupied and a large storage-available sign is visible on the depot's north side. The depot's future is uncertain as the present owner Randell Grote desires to sell the building. It is hoped that this unique structure will be preserved and alternative uses be found. On September 28, 1976 it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### ALTERNATIVE USES OF RELOCATED WOOD FRAME DEPOTS IN ABERDEEN

In recent years our neighbor city Webster in Day County has imported the Bristol wood-frame depot for use as a museum. Earlier in the 1990s Aberdeen groups set a precedent for other Brown County towns by importing depots for use in Aberdeen. In both cases importation and restoration aimed to educate people about our railroad heritage.

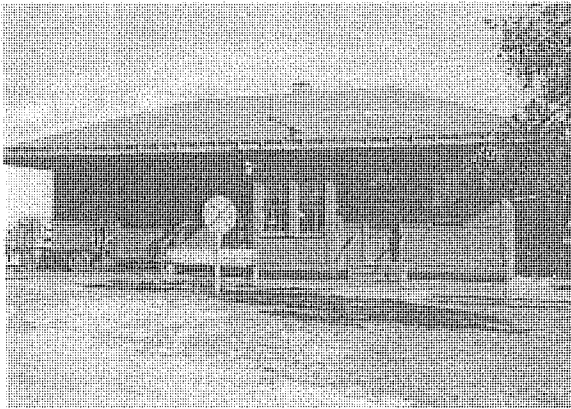
### CENTENNIAL VILLAGE'S "LASTING LEGACY DEPOT"

The first such relocation was the MSt&L depot from Nahon, 7 miles southeast of Aberdeen. Robert Perry, a historic preservation enthusiast and promoter in earlier decades of Fort Sisseton restoration, secured this depot as a feature of Aberdeen's 1981 Centennial.

In the afternoon of April 28, 1990 state governor George Mickelson and others dedicated the structure as "the Lasting Legacy Depot" in Centennial Village located on the Brown County Fairgrounds. Pioneer village had developed during Aberdeen's centennial in 1981.

Painted kelly green, as were most M&StL depots, it is located at the southeast corner of the village.

Burlington Northern railroad officials were present along with city officials and centennial committee members. The BN donated a 28-ton caboos from Kansas City. The caboos rests on a gravel road bed with ties and rails donated by Paul Mardian Co. Within the depot the James Valley Model Railroad placed railroad exhibits.



VILLAGE DEPOT

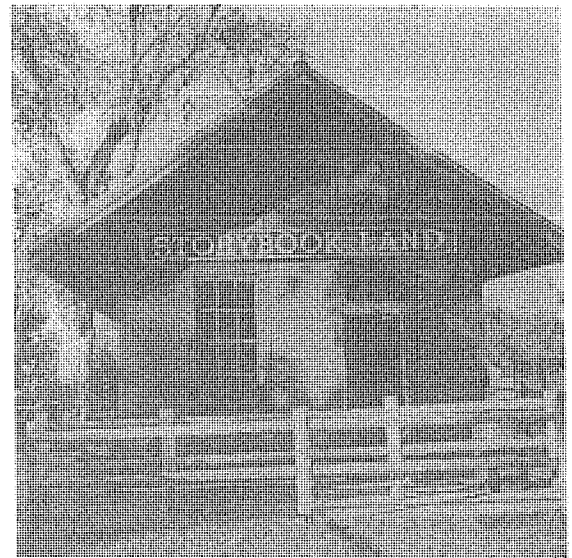
The depot contained three sections. Upon entering, one encounters a waiting room with a telegraph /ticket compartment encompassing the bay window which so many depots used to view incoming and departing trains. To the east the baggage room contained a mail delivery buggy symbolizing the depot's importance to the postal system and news-starved citizens.

The Centennial Village brochure of 2002 describes a depot's importance to small towns and villages and to surrounding rural areas: "It's waiting room was a community center. Men gathered in the smoking room,

women in the ladies' parlor if one was available. Here newcomers and old timers met. Church services and funerals might be held there when no church was available. Merchandise, baggage and mail were placed on sturdy baggage wagons. Dairy milk cans were shipped out. Young and old came to watch trains arrive and depart. It's ticket and telegraph office was a nerve center for the town and its service area."

The caboos symbolizes the more profitable freight traffic and the era of mixed trains in which a passenger car and/or a caboos positioned at the end of a line of freight cars served branch lines and country stations.

STORYBOOK LAND DEPOT



THE RELOCATED DEPOT

In summer or late fall 2001 the wood frame C&NW depot which had served two communities--Rudolph and Columbia--was trucked in for positioning in Wylie Park's Storybook Land. Interior restoration evolved over time.

## THE TICKET WINDOW



Partitioned into three sections, the depot features a passenger waiting room containing two benches with C&NW initials on each end, and potbelly stove and photo murals on the north wall. The east wall of this room features a ticket office window with the C&NW logo above it.



TICKET OFFICE STAFF

Eastward stands a ticket/telegraph office in the central bay window section and at the far east end stands the cargo or freight room. The waiting room and the cargo room are connected by a passage way which provides window viewing of the center ticket office interior. A life-style manequin depicting a ticket agent staffs the ticket area.

## LEARNING SESSION ABOUT WHISTLES, LAMPS AND SIGNALS



Interpretative panels 25" x 43' line the cargo room. Milk cans, crates and a kerosene lantern add reality to the site. A video viewing site surrounding by seating occupies the southeast corner.

The Storybook Depot financed by the city promotion fund and supervised by the Aberdeen Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department, is the jump off point for a park tour aboard a miniature train pulled by a 1863 replica locomotive.

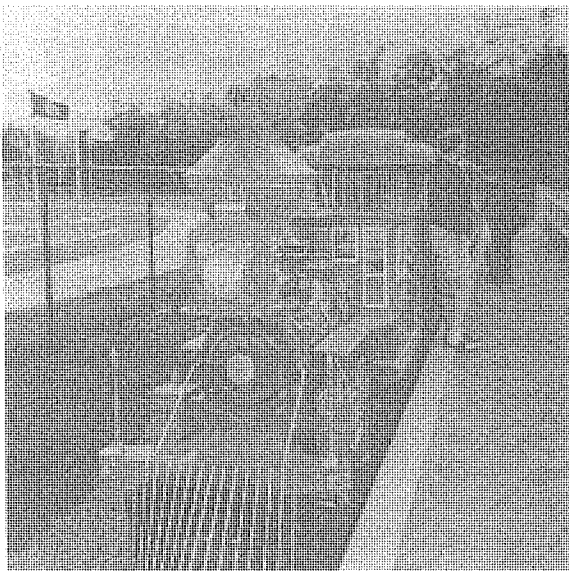


The depot was moved to Storybook Land in the fall of 1999. It is an authentic depot built in the 1880's and recently renovated.

This is an excellent example of a wood frame building's survival through alternative uses. Originally this C&NW depot served Rudolph until 1925 when it was moved to Columbia which had lost its original depot by fire. In 1967 Edwin Karlen purchased the building from the C&NW, moved it to his farm and used it as a garage. Two rooms were kept as they originally were but the freight area wall space became a large door for vehicle entry.

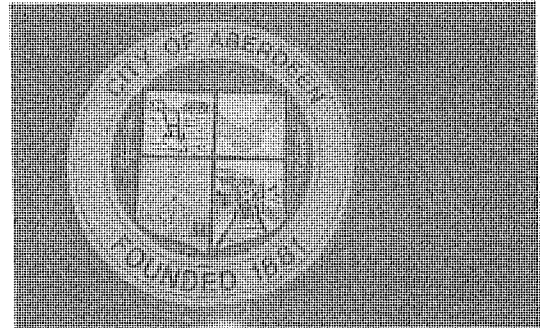
In memory of Edwin, Mrs. Rhea Karlin in 1998 donated the structure to Aberdeen Storybook Land.

#### REPLICA 1863 LOCOMOTIVE



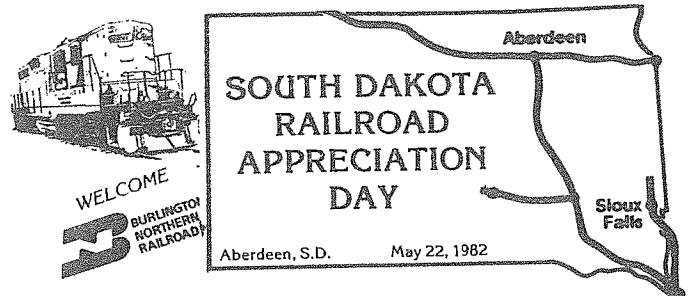
As part of the Train Depot project begun in 1998 a replica locomotive from the 1860's arrived in June 1999. It is called the "Storybook Land Express". This engine plus three cars and rails are part of the half million dollar project still in progress.

#### ABERDEEN CITY FLAG

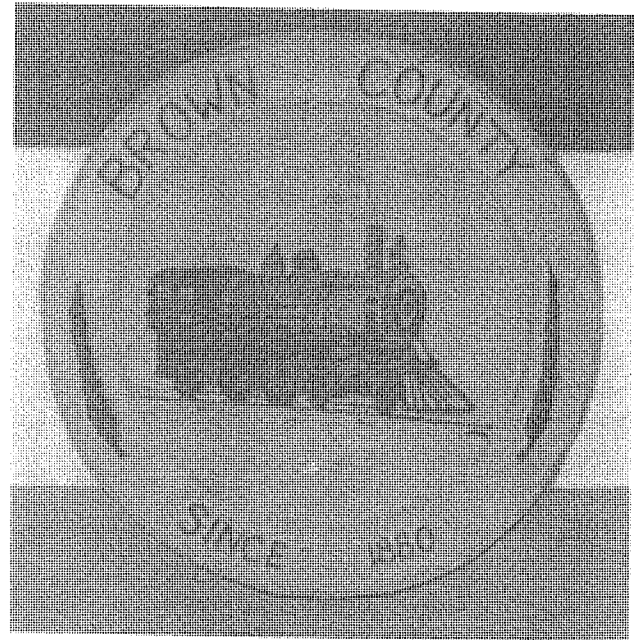
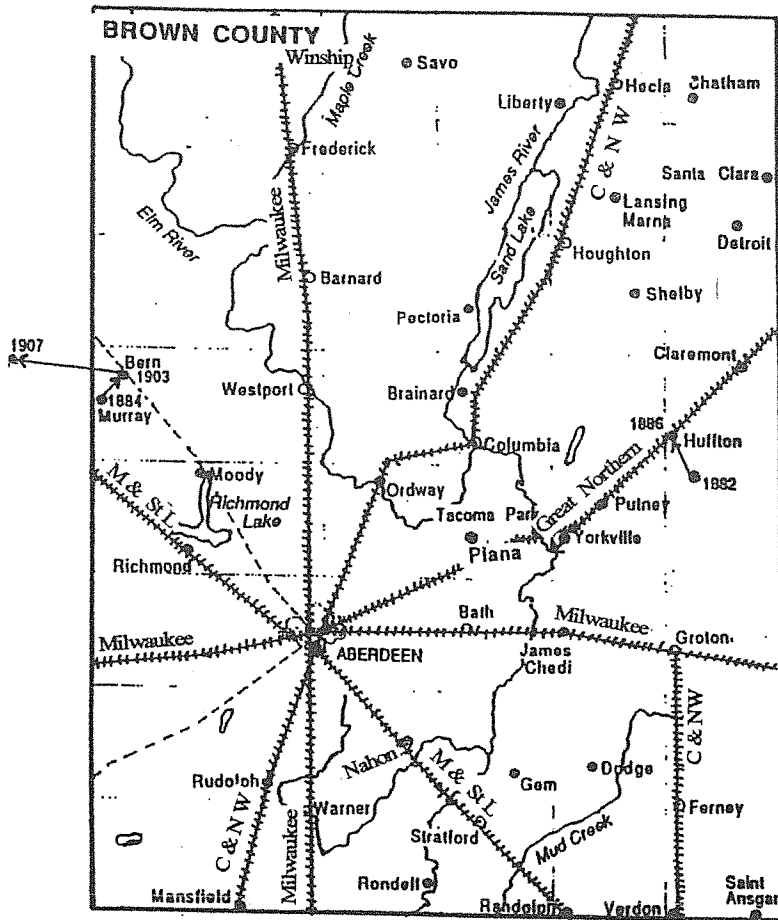


This flag displayed on the Municipal Building's second floor symbolizes four factors in Hub City history and progress: cooperative effort of it's citizens represented by the handshakes; agricultural productivity and influence represented by the plow; the court house representing its county seat location; and the railroad symbolized by the locomotive at the station.

In May 1982 the Hub City and South Dakota recognized the Burlington Northern (now BNSF) for its role in operating the former Milwaukee main line for future freight traffic in cooperation with the state of South Dakota.



## PART V BROWN COUNTY DEPOTS OUTSIDE ABERDEEN



## *New flag delivered*

The Brown County map above locates 25 villages and towns served by railroads. They form the county spokes of the Aberdeen Hub where tracks of four railroads reached outward in four directions: east, west, north and south. Despite the decline of rail transport in the 1960s and 1970s, most endure today; a few have become ghosttowns.

Adjacent to the map is the first-ever Brown County flag designed by Central high school student Jason Keeton in 1987 and adopted by the county commission as the official flag in 1988. It's central symbol--a locomotive -- recognizes the

county's railroad tradition. How did the railroad, its stations and associated facilities impact their lives?

Railroad depot architecture was often based on a standard pattern and thus relatively inexpensive. The exception might be those stations which were viewed as great revenue producers and have long-term survival value. Thus, the small village or town depots of Brown County were usually one-story, wood-frame, rectangular, structures. Minimal spacial arrangements included a waiting room/ticket office section and a baggage/freight section. In a larger city such as Aberdeen



freight depots were separate entities from passenger depots. Most depots featured a bay window on the track side so that the telegrapher/operator might view passing, incoming and outgoing trains and act appropriately.

In some communities the depot was two-storied. The second story provided housing for the agent and his family. This may be seen in the upcoming photos of Milwaukee depots in Bath, Frederick, Groton and Warner, the C&NW depot at Plana and the Minneapolis and St. Louis depot at Randolph. Great Northern's Huffton depot of 1887 was two-storied but reduced to one story later as was the case for Frederick's and Groton's later depots.

Justification for two stories in some cases may have been the lack of other housing in an extremely isolated village or even in a larger town such as Groton. Work responsibilities and the need for the agent to be nearby were most likely factors in building a two-story depot.

Proximity to the depot and tracks were factors in location of many bulk-shipment businesses on the railroad right-of way: lumber yards, stockyards, mills, grain elevators and machinery outlets.

Depots could often be located from afar by viewing the grain elevators which loomed skyward as they lay scattered along the tracks in proximity to rural depots. They were quite often situated across the tracks from the depot such as at Mansfield.

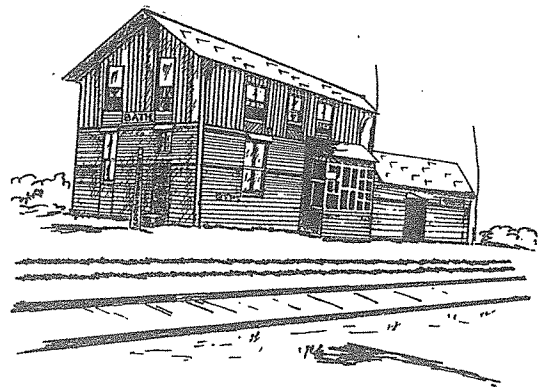
In these rural communities

population trends and the activity level of a depot complex often relate to the number of elevators present nearby. As elevator numbers decline, services of local rail freight traffic decline also. Therefore, in relating information about each of the following Brown County depots elevators and population receive attention.

In recent years the era of 40-car freight trains and numerous rural elevators has given way to the more economical 100-car freight trains serving fewer but larger elevators and coal users.

Those communities fortunate to fund a centennial history feature railroads as cover features symbolic of the past. Brown county histories highlight importance of the railroad to their communities by inclusion of railroad tracks, locomotives and/or depots on their covers or in prominent sections of the book. Five such covers conclude this introduction.

The cover of the Bath Centennial History (1981) features their Milwaukee depot and nearby tracks.



BATH HISTORY COVER: A DEPOT

The Groton Centennial History of 1981 includes two symbols: a man with two horses plowing the land with a grain elevator in the distance and in the foreground a locomotive and a one-story depot. This affirms the close association of farmer, grain elevator and railroad.



GROTON HISTORY COVER: PLOWING FARMER, DEPOT & LOCOMOTIVE

Frederick's Centennial history of 1982 includes a locomotive and track sharing the cover with other symbolic drawings of Simmons Park, agricultural land, a school and Indian tepee.



FREDERICK HISTORY COVER: LOCOMOTIVE ON TRACK

Houghton's Centennial History book of 1985 includes cover sketches of geese flying over grain shafts symbolizing importance of agriculture and nearby Sand Lake bird refuge. Below that encircled sketch is an artistic drawing of a water tank and the Houghton depot symbolizing the railroad's importance. Five people view an approaching train. Cream cans and other items await loading.



HOUGHTON HISTORY COVER: DEPOT, WATER TANK, TRAIN, & CARGO

Claremont claimed one main street across from the Great Northern railroad tracks and depot. This image of Main street's proximity to the depot is shown on 100th anniversary booklet logo illustrated below:



CLAREMONT HISTORY COVER: GN DEPOT, TRACKS & MAIN STREET

## THE STATION REMEMBERED

Utilization of the term railroad station implies a broader concept than the word depot. Station includes all railroad facilities in the community which may include side and main tracks, coal sheds, elevators, stockyards, water tanks and other structures. Various individuals in newspaper and local history accounts have reflected on the significance of the railroad station in their lives. Those who lived in the community as well as rural folks who visited the station on their daily or weekly visits remembered those experiences. They all agreed that the railroad and its visible station strengthened ties with the outside world.

In the earliest years of railroad arrival when other building space was scarce, the station proved useful for community meetings. In January 1882 at the Bath depot people met to organize Bath School township. In the early months before they built their own church in 1886 the Methodist church used the depot as one of their church sites.

In the early 1880s Groton citizens used the Milwaukee depot for non-railroad functions. For Sunday services Presbyterians used the waiting room for two years from September 1881 into 1883 when they occupied their own church. In March 1884 the depot served as a voting place in a township election.

The depot and its platform served as a social center in which strangers and locals mingled giving welcomes and farewells. Bath's pioneer

people gathered to meet the first immigrant train arriving at the Milwaukee station. Rev. William Hickman awaited his wife, child and his sister-in-law Lena Wenz who wrote that they rode in "an ordinary caboose" from Milbank as there was no passenger train. She recalled "there were thirty people who got off the train at Bath and we made lasting friends that day. The whole population turned out to meet the train. The first man I met was Jacob Scharif whom I married in 1885."

To some communities the arrival of the railroad with its depot nerve center which included the telegraph meant an end to wagon transport of goods from a distant town and the saving of time involved in such trips. With the entry of the C&NW into Verdon in 1887 the residents welcomed it on two grounds at least: the end of long wagon trips to Aberdeen to secure supplies and a means to secure the latest grain prices by means of the telegraph. Dave Meyer of Hecla affirmed this service:

"The station also handled Western Union telegrams. Not everyone had telephones in those years and there were daily market reports for the elevators, so there were a few telegrams each day."

At Winship and Frederick along the Milwaukee north branch locals were thankful for grocery deliveries. People came to the tracks to unload. The Frederick Centennial History of 1982 affirms the Winship experience: "on school days the kids with empty arms and the store cart carried all the groceries from the tracks to the store. For a reward they received a big sack of candy."

Mail delivery by rail became very important to both

townsfolk and those in the countryside. David Meyer, son of agent Frank Meyer, emphasized the importance of mail and newspaper delivery by train. When the train whistle alerted the local mail delivery man, he drove his wagon toward the depot.

"Number 1, the northbound mixed that everyone depended on for their mail and newspapers was due shortly after noon but might arrive at any time between 4 p.m. and midnight. The Aberdeen paper was an afternoon paper and by the time Hecla received it the next day, it was 24 hours old. The telephone in the depot rang incessantly all afternoon, not from any customers, but just from people wanting to know when their mail and papers would arrive."

Meyer further depicted the train's role in Hecla life:

"The trains also handled Railway Express packages; usually bulkier than those that moved by mail. And during the hunting season pheasants were shipped by the thousands. The cold storage locker would bring pickup loads of birds with tags, statements (for the boxed frozen birds) and billing all to be matched by 1:30 p.m. train time. Then there was the sour cream business in 5, 8 and 10 gallon cans that many farms shipped to creameries as far away as Lakeville, Minnesota."

In 1917 the Aberdeen newspaper advertised in Groton that the Milwaukee schedule permitted delivery of their paper at a reasonable time and residents should be alerted accordingly.

The GN trains were Claremont's link with the outside world. In the Groton Independent the Claremont correspondent's remarks of April 15, 1904 testify to this:

"On a Friday morning the train

had been "stuck" near Putney, "There was no mail delivery until the following Monday when there was so much it took about two hours to distribute it. May we live to be a hundred before we have to wait so long for news from the outside world again."

Claremont folks recognized the Great Northern's conquest of distance and its favorable early morning commuting schedule. The GN north branch allowed locals to ship perishable produce to Aberdeen stores and to shop and conduct business at the county seat without an overnight stay.

The station and neighboring stockyards, coal sheds and elevators became intriguing play sites for local youth. Robert Strachan of Barnard remembered the town as it was around 1920. He recalled his youth:

Barnard youths found the depot an exciting place to visit:

"Where the road crossed the railroad tracks and on the other side of the tracks--the west side--was the depot. One of the highlights of our day was to go over and watch the train come in...Those days everything was steam engines and it was a big deal to see the steam blowing out and black smoke as they came down...from Frederick, coming back in the evening. We called the train "the daily effort" because it went up in the morning and made an effort to come back the same day."

Stock pens and box cars fascinated Strachan and his friends:

"We climbed all over the things and watched whenever they loaded cattle, pigs or sheep."

The unloading of boxcars at the several coal sheds along the siding tracks attracted

their attention: "They sold coal and had 3-4 sheds along the railroad siding close enough so you could lay a grain door in the box car with the coal, haul it with a wheelbarrow and dump it into the coal shed."

Loading of grain into box cars also lingered in memory. "This siding when it was full and the grain was coming into the elevator, practically 100% by horse and wagon, they would run the grain into the elevator and then out a pipe into these box cars."

During Columbia's years as county seat prior to 1889 the C&NW trains increased the hotel and livery businesses as numerous lawyers and others disembarked at the depot for overnight stays to conduct business at the court house.

In the horse and buggy era potential encounters with steam engines posed safety issues. In Westport the Milwaukee railroad crossing near the depot and at the end of the main business street became a safety concern occasioning the locomotive engineer to warn the city of his approach by means of blasts on the whistle. On one occasion this startled two colts attached to an unloaded grain wagon. They broke loose from their moorings at a local elevator and crossed the tracks where the locomotive plowed into both horse and the empty grain wagon. This event became the talk of the town and depot personnel.

Farmer Myron Mincke of Westport, driver of a horse-drawn school bus, recalled an unexpected encounter with the so called "Westport Cannonball". This was a steam locomotive pulling varied freight cars and a combination caboose and passenger car which usually

arrived at an earlier time. That morning both bus and train arrived at the same time.

The gallant engineer stopped even with the depot and motioned for the bus to cross. As Mincke crossed, depot agent Case rushed out, stood in front of the horses to berate the driver but permitted a speedy crossing. For Mincke's crossing in front of the train, depot agent Case demanded the school board fire the bus driver. Fortunately for the driver the children on the bus testified that he crossed with permission of the engineer. This event illustrates the early safety concerns about railroad crossings by school buses.

While this account deals more with the station after freight and passenger arrival, it seems appropriate to include a memory of a ride on a mixed train. Many experienced such rides on branch lines even in more recent decades.

David Meyer 's image of what it was like to ride a coach in a mixed train mostly hauling freight cars registers with the 21st century reader:

"some brave soul even rode the coach that rattled along behind 50 assorted freight cars. On a summer day it was a real treat to ride with the windows open..the steam engine throwing smoke and cinders back along the train, and as many as 20 or 30 cars of hogs and cattle just ahead of the coach."

From 1898 to 1922 the half hour passenger train rides between Aberdeen and Tacoma Park were memorable events. While not comparable to many county towns, this resort area developed a residential community with a general store depot and platform.

## TACOMA PARK

Located where the Manitoba/Great Northern crossed the James River, this site became a recreational rendezvous for fishermen and picnickers in the years after the railroad penetrated the James River valley. Prior to that Tom James had homesteaded the acres and named the site Tacoma Park after Tacoma, Washington.

With the railroad's coming Aberdonians especially used the train to the Manitoba crossing and to Tacoma Park. Fishermen and picnickers came on the morning train and returned on the afternoon train.

From June 20 to July 3, 1895 the Aberdeen District of the Methodist Episcopal Church held a camp meeting in the natural setting of Tacoma Park. The Great Northern built a sizeable platform for the passengers leaving or entering the train. Fifty cents was the standard cost for a round trip ticket.

In 1898 the Industrial Association chose the site for a permanent Chautauqua grounds and eventual residential community. From a limited train schedule in 1898 the Great Northern's excursion service continued on a growing scale through 1922. While many came by horse drawn transportation and later by auto, hundreds came by train to hear oratory, to dance, to swim and boat, to play or watch baseball games.

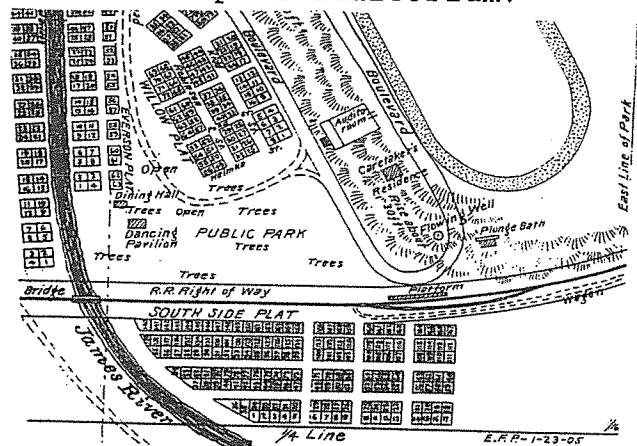
In 1899 publicity promised three round trips by train each day. A 5 p.m. and 11 p.m. train serviced return trips to Aberdeen. William J. Bryan appeared June 30, 1899. A special train bringing people from Rutland and Ellendale, North Dakota arrived in time to

swell Bryan' audience. Train specials filled to capacity augmented the 2000 rigs parked there. One can imagine the crowded depot platform in Aberdeen and the swirl of activity upon leaving the train at Tacoma Park.



PASSENGERS ARRIVE TACOMA PARK

A commercial and residential section emerged near the railroad tracks. A water tower serviced train and residents. The Great Northern took notice of increased human traffic when on July 4, 1902 an estimated 7,000 people were on the Park grounds. In 1902 the railroad constructed a new platform and added in 1903 a large ticket and telegraph office. The 1905 plat shows the platform just south of the upland which housed the park auditorium.



LOWER PART PARK PLAT MAP 1905

Through park Week of 1922 the Great Northern's steam train service from Aberdeen proved a prime factor in the attendance and profitability of the resort. By 1908 there were three trains in service with the last return trip at midnight. Later, real nightowls could board the regular freight train at 2:20 a.m.

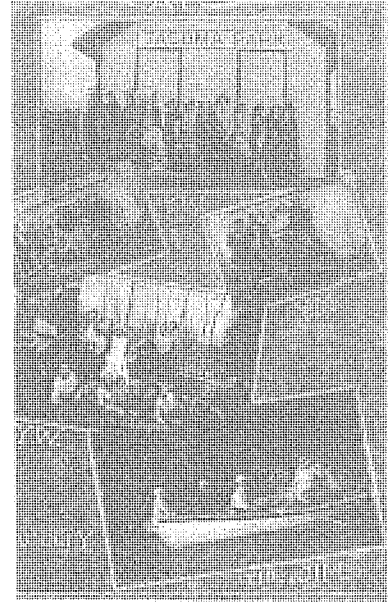
Newspapers reported aisle-filled cars, four, five, nine and twelve coach trains and occasionally several hundred patrons left at the Aberdeen station for lack of room. Motoring to the park became more customary by 1916 and continued until the 1960s as the means to escape to this entertainment center. However, through 1922 the trains contributed to the crowd attracted to this prairie paradise shaded by trees and cooled by river waters.

On July 4, 1904 the Great Northern sold 2000 train tickets to the Park. Criticism arose as to inadequate space and cars to carry all the passengers. Those who wished to return often had to get a seat and hold that seat for an hour before the last train left.

In 1913 the Daily American described a July 4th train ride:

"People crowded the aisles, making them absolutely impassable, ladies and children were compelled to stand in the doors and even on the steps, where at any moment they might have been thrown or crowded off the moving train."

On July Fourth 1915 1400 people boarded one train to the Park. Depot and platform activity differed vastly from that of the flag stops of Huffton or Plana.



YWCA GIRLS AT PARK STATION

#### GROTON: TWO RAILROADS & TWO DEPOTS

Railroad land agent C. Prior in November 1880 had purchased land at the future town site of Groton. However, the Milwaukee's main east-west line tracks reached Groton on June 18, 1881. Winter snows and spring floods had delayed track work between Webster & Groton.

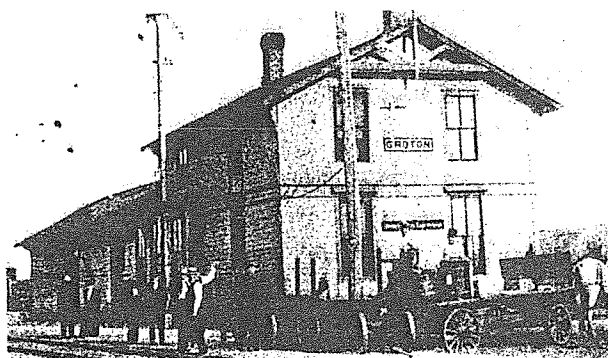
Preparing for next winter the Milwaukee built a coal house near the tracks and began work on a one story-depot which the train crew completed on September 23, 1881. While well digging occurred, the railroad brought a tank of water daily from the James River for locomotive use. Until winter daily trains continued but during winter were reduced to one each alternate day according to early Groton newspaper reports.

By 1883 Groton's population reached 410. Trains brought a continual stream of land-seekers. By 1911 the Polk

Directory listed Groton's population at 1300 but by 1928-31 that figure had grown to 1625. Thereafter, decline is noticeable with about 1000 in 1940 and 1950 followed by some growth to 1200 by 1964.

By 1910 3 lumber yards, 7 grain elevators and 3 farm implement dealers utilized railroad service for their bulk products. These grain elevators were along the Milwaukee tracks and after 1887, along the C&NW tracks. After 1890 wheat crop failures slowed shipments. Until then Groton claimed to be the leading wheat market of the world. Farmers hauled wheat as far as 40 miles to Groton, sometimes waiting a day or two to unload. Over time Groton's grain elevators declined in number. With a peak of 9 elevators in 1913 listed in Polk Brown County directory, the number decreased to 4 by 1940 to 1950 and 3 by 1964.

By 1900 photos testify that a two-story addition had been added to the previous one-story depot. The agent's family utilized the second story. The original one-story west-end then served as a freight office while the lower floor of the east-end contained the main waiting room, office, restrooms.

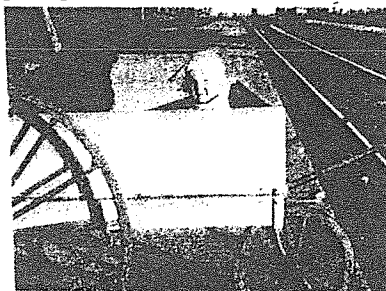


GROTON MILWAUKEE DEPOT

With the extension of the Milwaukee to the west coast, after 1909 passenger and freight traffic increased. Four passenger trains--the Olympian passed through Groton in each direction from May 1911 and June 1941 and the Columbia into the 1930s. A streamlined Olympian Hiawatha operated between 1947 and 1961. An overnight train between Minneapolis and Mobridge operated every day along with Minneapolis-Aberdeen local trains--#5 and #6--which were discontinued in 1968. Thus, the Groton passenger depot and platform before the 1960s were frequently used in addition to heavy freight traffic.

In the late summer of 1918 the Board of Railroad Commissioners ordered a shelter be built to protect passengers waiting for the eastbound train. Workers built a shelter and shed to the south of the south track. Workers moved a small building and placed it in the center of the shelter with a shed extending about 40 to 50 feet in both directions. Wiring the shed provided a comfortable waiting place for those who boarded or departed from the east bound trains.

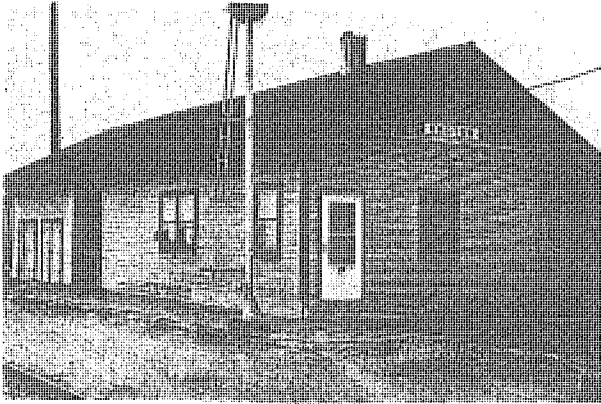
The photo below testifies to the extensive platform and the importance of the train in bringing mail to Groton:



MAIL CART WITH KATHRYN JIRA & DOG ON DEPOT PLATFORM: 1920S



In 1959 Harvey Fliehs bought the east, two-story depot section and moved it to a farm site southwest of Groton. The former freight office section was remodeled to contain the freight office in the west end and the agent's office and restrooms on the east. Below is a photo of the remodeled depot:



REMODELED ONE-STORY DEPOT

Groton Milwaukee depot operations ended June 30, 1980 and James Higgins, the last depot agent, departed for Iowa in July, 1980. The automobile, and trucking age became the primary supply source as Groton lost both C&NW and Milwaukee depots. The Burlington Northern provides some freight service into the 21st century. A reminder of depot days may be found in Groton city park as one of the depot platform canopies now serves as a picnic shelter. A further reminder is the designation of railroad street which stretches north to south at the end of Groton's Main Street.

#### GROTON'S C&NW DEPOT

On November 5, 1887 the CNW reached Groton which had been served by the Milwaukee since

1881. Reaching that site required grading, ironing both main track and side tracks, installing switches and digging a well. Groton and Verdon were then connected by telegraph wires as well as by rails. The depot was 22 feet wide and 104 feet long. Curious residents gathered there to greet the first train.



GROTON'S C&NW DEPOT

The CNW constructed a round house and turn table--located north of the depot and positioned north of the engine house a windmill-operated water tank. South of and across the tracks from the depot workers constructed a 100'-long coal shed to service locomotives. After 1955 the C&NW replaced steam, coal-fired locomotives with deisel engines. The C&NW regular train arrived at Groton at 7 p.m. and departed southward at 5:30 a.m. the next day.

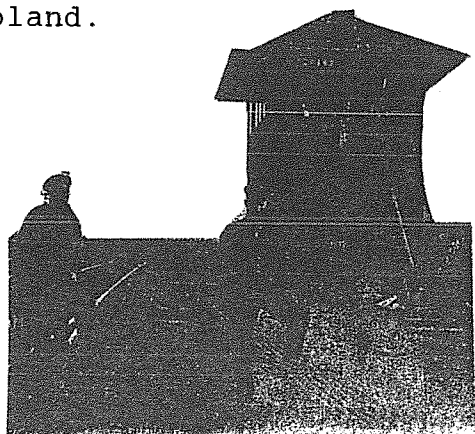
In 1887 the C&NW's entrance into Groton triggered a rush of people just as when the Milwaukee entered Groton in 1881. More hotels and boarding houses were needed. As of May 1889 the three story 27 room Brunswick hotel registered 3500 guests over ten months.

Since Groton was the center of a huge grain trade, grain freights left loaded.

Competition of the C&NW with the Milwaukee improved the wheat prices that farmers received, perhaps ten cents a bushell. Elevators soon appeared along the C&NW tracks.

To handle cattle shipments the C&NW constructed near the crossing two new stockyards each 48' by 48'. In time thousands of cattle passed through the feed yards. In 1895 and 1899 grain, seed and coal advertisements in the Groton paper indicated those businesses could be contacted at the C&NW depot.

Later when locomotives became larger and could not fit the turntable, the roundhouse fell into disuse and was finally removed in January 1941. With no useable turntable the C&NW trains ran backward to Doland.



The Lever Tower with an operator on duty 24 hours a day. Signalman, Frank Jiran to the right.

#### GROTON SIGNAL TOWER

With the tracks of the two rival railroads intersecting a signal tower to regulate train movement was essential. Erected on 50' blocks, a signal tower was built north of the intersection of the 2 sets of tracks. It contained 3 rows of

levers to move the rails when a C&NW train crossed the Milwaukee tracks. At the peak of traffic the tower was in service 24 hours a day. In the early 1930s Mary and Charles Gabert started a service station on Highway 37 using this old signal house. This testifies to a decline in grain car traffic on the C&NW during the depression years.

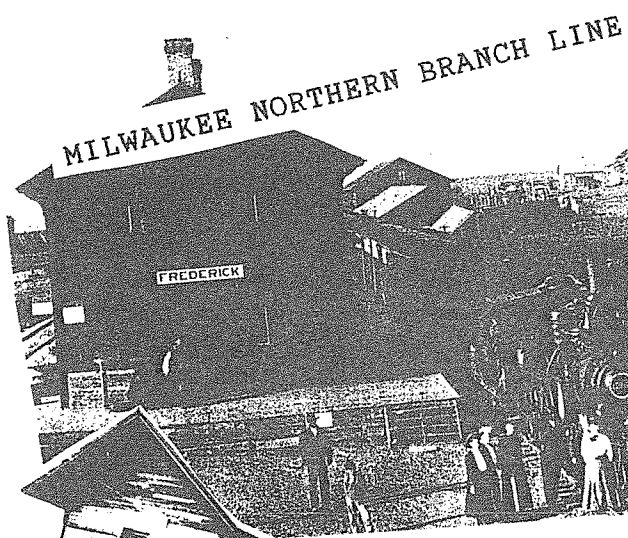
Some C&NW agents served for many years such as C. E. Mower from 1898 to 1906 and Louis W. Mitchell from 1921 to at least 1941. The depot was gone by the 1950s Daily trains no longer operated; a freight came only on Wednesdays. Mail from Doland in the south now reverted to star route status with delivery by auto. Grotonites would have to depend on the Milwaukee, but during the earlier years the C&NW branch line had been quite competitive with its Milwaukee, main line rival.

#### OLD PHOTOS OF SELECTED DEPOTS

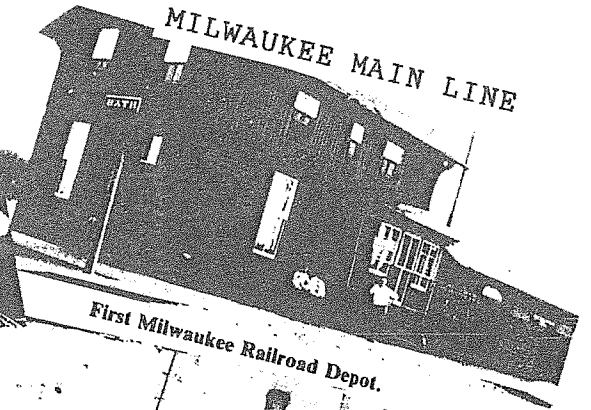
The following photos of Brown County depots portray a time when the passenger depot and its platform area were heavily utilized. An undated photo of "The Band at Train Field Day" reveals a crowd at Columbia's train station before the fire of 1925 destroyed that station.



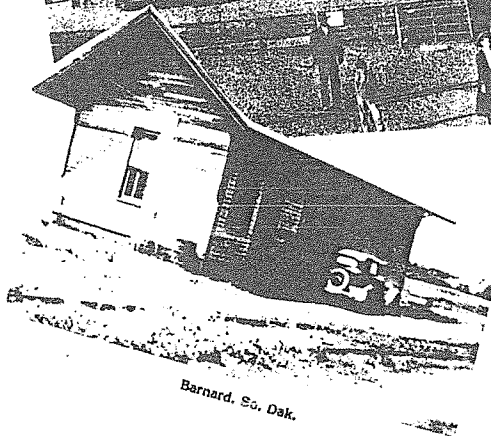
# Depots in Brown County



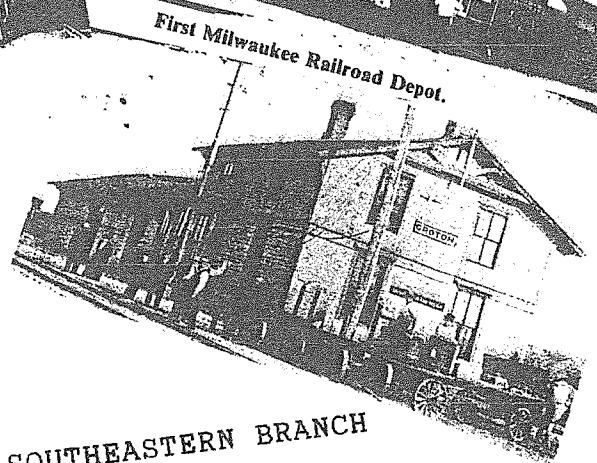
MILWAUKEE NORTHERN BRANCH LINE



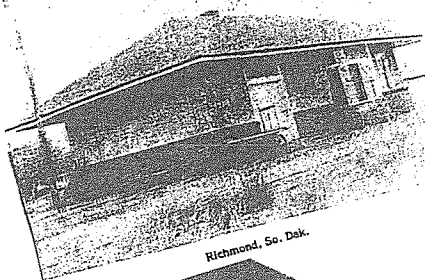
MILWAUKEE MAIN LINE



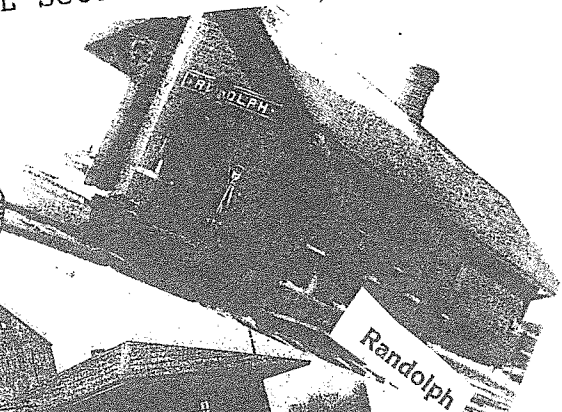
Barnard, So. Dak.



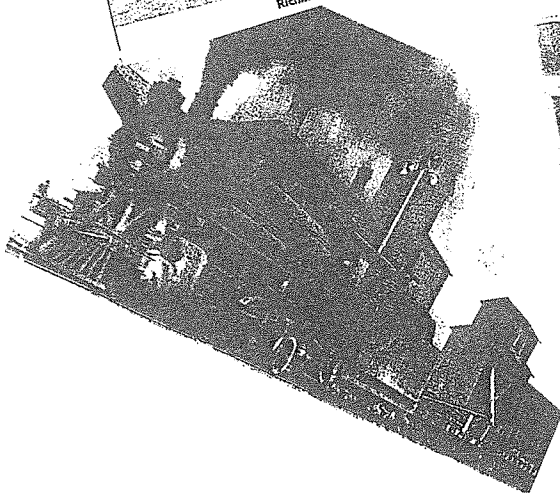
M&STL SOUTHEASTERN BRANCH



Richmond, So. Dak.



Randolph



Stratford, So. Dak.

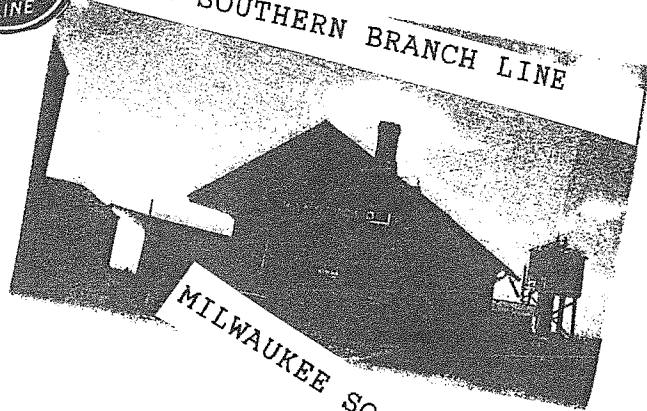
C&NW NORTHERN BRANCH LINE



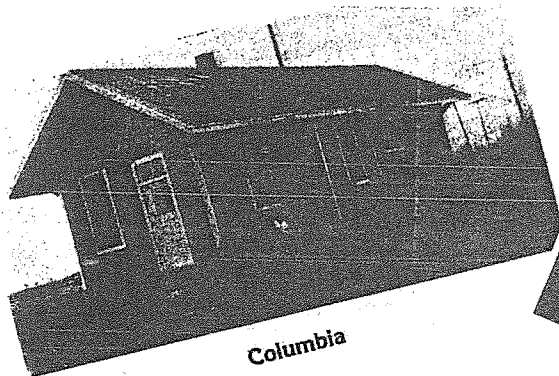
Houghton Depot and Railroad Water Tower



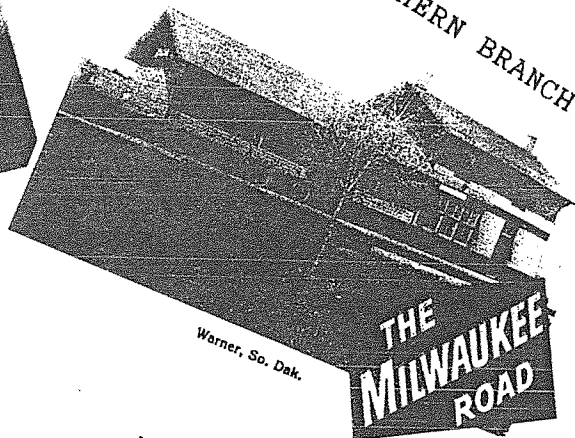
CNW SOUTHERN BRANCH LINE



MILWAUKEE SOUTHERN BRANCH LINE



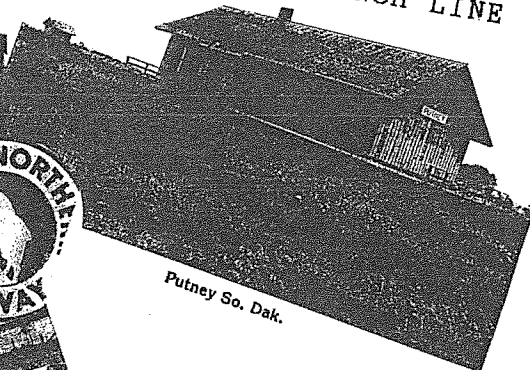
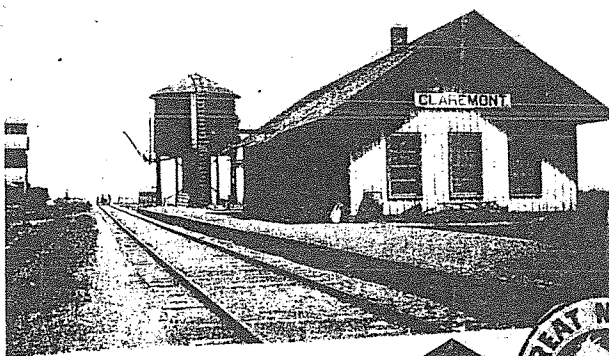
Columbia



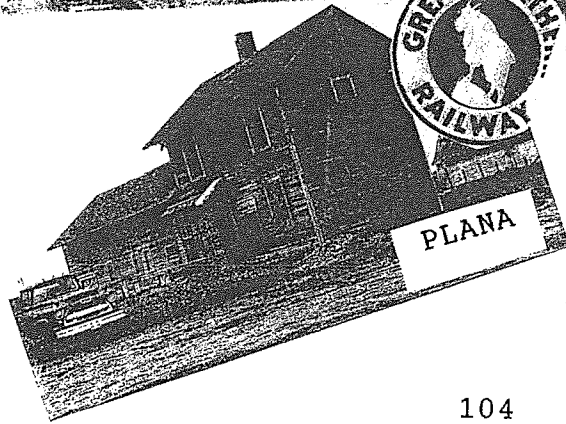
Warner, So. Dak.

THE MILWAUKEE ROAD

MANITOBA/GREAT NORTHERN  
NORTHEAST BRANCH LINE



Putney So. Dak.



PLANA

## MStL MOVES ON TO LEOLA

In 1887 construction of the Soo grade from Aberdeen to the so-called "island or inland" town of Leola in McPherson County proved to be a lifeline for grain wagons and supply wagons. Although not ironed for train travel, trains of wagons treked on that grade toward the marketing center. A Leola-Ipswich Trail provided a route southward and a trail from Leola to Eureka provided linkage between the east and west ends of McPherson County. The Westport Stage provided an avenue of travel from Leola to Aberdeen by way of Westport, a way station on the Milwaukee branch line.

Until December 30, 1906 the railroad--key to settlement--bypassed Leola and eastern McPherson County. Eureka, platted in October 1887, remained end of Milwaukee track until 1902 when a branch extended to Linton, North Dakota.

Leolaites rejoiced on December 30, 1906 when the Minneapolis and St. Louis completed laying track to the depot site. The hope of a railroad had sustained Leola for twenty years to fulfill visions of being a railroad town of the future. New life flowed into eastern McPherson with new people, new buildings, new farms.

The McPherson Herald reported February 14, 1907: "Thirty cars of lumber have been placed on the side tracks here and are being unloaded as fast as possible. This is but the beginning. There are nearly one hundred cars of building material billed for here which will be hauled in as fast as it

can be unloaded. This material will be used in erecting new buildings in the town...Watch us grow." No longer was it necessary for tedious journeys to Frederick and Ipswich for lumber with which to build and for groceries to maintain themselves during the winter! No more dependence on stage lines! The MStL had ended isolation.

Even though outside Brown County, the Leola example of becoming a MStL railroad town illustrates in detail the enthusiasm of a community awakened by the arrival of a railroad and establishment of a depot in a smaller rural town.

The disappearance in smaller settlements of physical wood-frame depot structures associated with the railroad makes it all the more imperative that in the larger city of Aberdeen the more solid, eye-catching, brick railroad depots be preserved by finding alternative uses once their original function has been outlived.

The words of Troy McQuillen, Aberdeen business man and preservation enthusiast, in July 2001 are worthy of remembrance as a concluding thought for readers of this booklet:

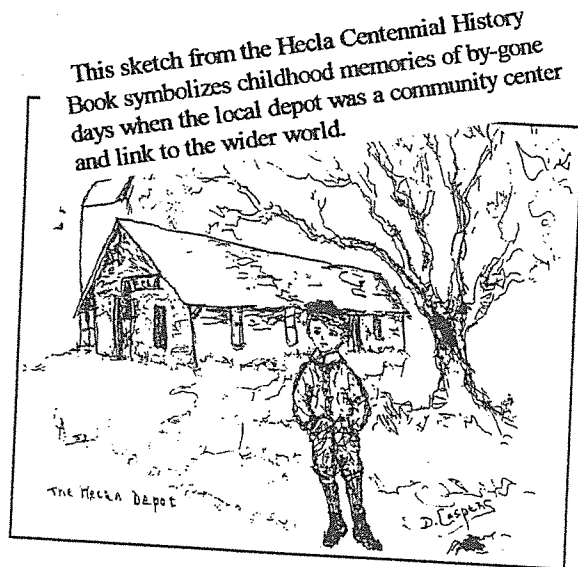
"Train depots are Aberdeen's roots. They are the last remaining relics of not only a nation-wide industrial boom, but also the birth of a community. They were transition points that connected people to points all across the county; bringing them briefly to our humble town, or dropped them permanently.

"Depots were destination points for homeward-bound servicemen and women. They were places of thousands of tearful good-byes and just as many

tearful welcome-homes. We need to keep these buildings around as long as we can as reminders of our town's pioneering spirit."

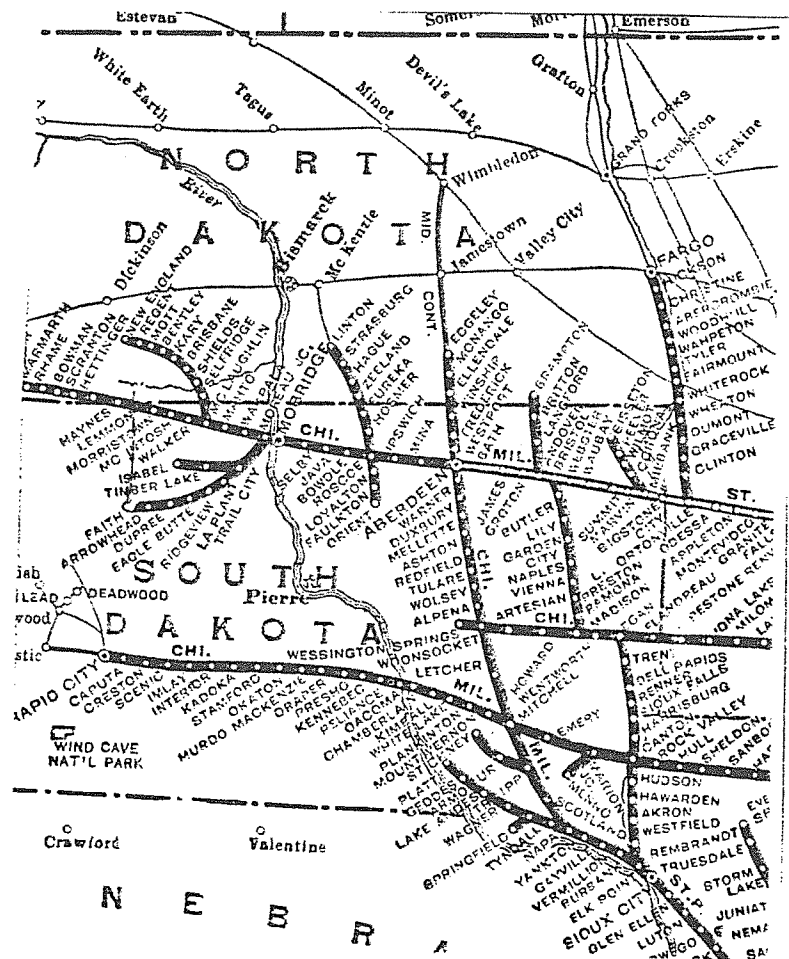
As indicated in previous sections, Aberdeen currently has been successful in finding alternative uses for the city's surviving brick depots as well as utilizing two imported wood-frame depots for educational and symbolic purposes!

Nonetheless, let us keep Troy McQuillen's comments ever in our minds and act accordingly!



The Landmarks Commission, originating in May 1978, as a subsidiary of the Brown County Historical Society, joined the National Parks Service's Certified Local Government program on 9/12/85 entitling city and county to matching federal funds for preservation education. This CLG exemplifies city and county cooperation to preserve our architectural and historical heritage.

To maintain a wider perspective and to counter a parochial viewpoint which focuses on Aberdeen as the Hub City, Brown County stations as a component of its spokes, our citizens should remember that the 4 railroads servicing our area were but a portion of a wider network which had several hub cities or railroad centers. All 4 railroads were basically midwestern. Only 2 of the 4 were successful in reaching the west coast: the great Northern via h North Dakota and the Milwaukee via South Dakota. Below is a map showing The Advance of the Milwaukee Railroad in Dakotas:





## RECOGNITIONS

The publication of this booklet has been partially financed with federal funds from the National Park Service Department of the Interior through the South Dakota State Historical Preservation Program, Pierre, SD. Funding and in-kind support from the city of Aberdeen and Brown County has contributed significantly to the research, photo reproduction and publication of this booklet.

Personnel and facilities of Aberdeen's Alexander Mitchell Library have been helpful through its microfilm collection of Brown County and Aberdeen newspapers including a special pamphlet file on railroads, its collection of city directories from 1887 to the present, and county atlases for 1905 and 1911. Newspapers used were: the Brown County Sentinel, Aberdeen Republican, Dakota Pioneer, Groton Independent, Frederick Free Press, McPherson County News, Aberdeen Daily News, Aberdeen Weekly News, Aberdeen Morning American, Aberdeen Evening News. The Northern State University library contains useful newspaper microfilm files, copies of the school newspaper, the Exponent, as well as the school yearbook. The Pasque contained photos of railroads and students utilizing them in 1916 and 1922.

Books helpful for an overview of national and regional railroad development are: Frank Donovan Jr. "Mile Posts on the Prairie: The Story of the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway" (1950); Rick W. Mills "The Milwaukee Road in Dakota" (1998); John R. Borchert's "America's Northern Heartland: An Economic and Historical Geography of the Upper Midwest" (1987). A insightful article on company design patterns before and after 1900 in the South Dakota History magazine winter 1978 pp. 1-23 is "Country Railroad Stations of the Milwaukee and the Chicago & North Western in South Dakota" by Charles W. Bohi and H. Roger Grant. Various individuals have contributed: Minneapolis architects Barbour and LaDoucer provided 1911 plans of the Milwaukee Depot as well as charting recent usage of floor space in connection with future renovation of that depot for community purposes as well as BNSF usage. Aberdeen's Troy McQuillen editorial of July 29, 2001 on "Train Depots Remind of Aberdeen's Past" contained appropriate thoughts. Richard Kline's verses on Aberdeen and its railroad associations in Northern Lights magazine of 1977 focused on the irony of the name Aberdeen applied to a prairie site compared to the more mountainous Scotland, home of Milwaukee president Alexander Mitchell. The words and music of Don Drobeck and Jerry Berens in the Mill Town record "Save the Milwaukee" symbolizes popular attitudes in that railroad's declining years. Kim Geary and Mary Murdy of the Design Depot shared photos of the C&NW depot. Ben Benson and Gene Aisenbrey provided useful material on the Chicago & Northwestern and the Storybook Land depot in Wylie Park. Aberdeen's Dacotah Prairie Museum provided architectural plans for the Milwaukee Machine Shop of 1911 and the M&StL freight warehouse of 1916 as well as many photos related to railroads of Brown County. The museum railroad depot photo display proved to be inspiring.

The edited edition by Don Artz of the 1907 booklet "A Souvenir of Aberdeen: The Railroad Hub of the Dakotas" published by the Landmarks Commission in 1992 contained useful photos and comments about the railroads and city beneficiaries. The Landmark Commission booklet of 2002 "James River Landscapes and Historic Sites of Brown County" was helpful in revealing Tacoma Park railroad activity. Mementoes of Aberdeen's centennial of 1981 and the state's centennial of 1989 have been useful: The Centennial calendar of 1989 contained many photos of county railroad depots representing the four railroads emphasized in this study. The program for South Dakota Railroad Appreciation Day of May 22, 1982 and the program of the Lasting Legacy Depot at Centennial Village April 28, 1990 are symbolic of our railroad heritage.

Community and county histories have included photos and narratives of railroad impact on their towns. These were: The Bath Community History 1881-1981; The Claremont Centennial History 1886-1986; The Hecla and Houghton Centennial History; The Frederick Centennial History 1882-1982; Groton Centennial History of 1981; the Brown County History of 1980, The Early History of Brown County South Dakota of 1965 & 1970. The South Dakota Department of Transportation Division of Railroads documents focus on abandonments and rail mileage in the state. Especially useful was "The South Dakota Railroad Industry Yesterday and Today" vol. 3 March 16, 1976. Surveyer reports of Aberdeen depots preliminary to placement on the National Register of Historic Places have provided useful architectural descriptions. The Milwaukee depot and M&StL surveys were made in 1974 and that of the GN depot in 1982.

This project receives Federal financial assistance from the National Park Service. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 the U.S. Department of Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap in its federally assisted program. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire more information please write to the office for Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior. Readers who may wish to contact the Landmarks Commission about this booklet may correspond to that Commission at the Municipal Building 123 S. Lincoln St. Aberdeen SD 57401. Dr. Art Buntin of the Aberdeen/Brown County Landmarks Commission takes full responsibility for the narrative, interpretation and format of this booklet along with any inaccuracies or omissions that might surface in a work of this magnitude.

