



Link and Pin couplers were used on the logging cars and "Old Van" of the Upham railroad, called the Marshfield & Texas. This 1888 photo shows the train at a landing in the woods, possibly on the "Clark County" railroad, with the woods gang posing for the camera. *Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Roy L. Martin collection.*

The Clark County Extension

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MARSHFIELD-GREENWOOD BRANCH

by **LARRY E. EASTON**

Part I

The history of the Marshfield-Greenwood line of the Soo Line is not complicated. However, the underlying reasons for its construction (and not being completed as planned) are more complex. The "Clark County Extension," as it was called in the early days, became the "Marshfield Branch" and, finally, the "Greenwood Branch" that Laird Ross knew so well. Before the actual construction and operation of the branch is examined in more detail, it is necessary that the circumstances and events leading up to this step in its history first be clearly understood. And, since the history of the railroad cannot be separated from the communities and personalities of the day, these will also receive appropriate attention.

Late in the afternoon on June 2, 1877, General Manager Phillips, of the Wisconsin Central, invited Hon. Asaph Whittlesy to drive the final spike in place. Whittlesy, before he completed the task, claimed it was, "the successful completion of a mighty enterprise."¹

The Wisconsin Central was completed and Ashland was united by rail to the rest of the world! When the first train arrived at Ashland around ten o'clock that evening, it was greeted by at least three hundred citizens and huge bonfires illuminating the scene?

While the joy was great in Ashland, the atmosphere at the general offices in Milwaukee must have been much more somber. The land grant offered as the prize for completion of the line had been greatly reduced. The original terms of the land grant stated that the railroad would receive "every alternate section of public land, designated by odd numbers, for ten sections in width on each side of the road."³ This was to extend from Menasha or Portage to Lake Superior. However, between 1864, when Congress authorized the land grant, and 1869, when the lands along the line were first withdrawn from the market by the General Land Office, the best lands and a larger part of the grant were taken up by speculators.⁴

The original estimate of the grant was 2,387,000 acres.

By 1870, the General Land Office formally certified only 1,370,000 acres, which was later reduced to 800,000 acres. And, by the time the final spike was driven and the railroad completed, President Charles L. Colby reported that only 577,035 acres had been certified⁵

One of the reasons for this great loss of land was due to the insistence of the Wisconsin Legislature that "the company building said railroad should receive patents for their lands as fast as they completed each twenty conclusive miles of road."⁶ During the four years that the Wisconsin Central lay uncompleted, many acres were claimed by others, such as Cornell University. Ultimately, the Central was awarded approximately 888,288 acres⁷ — a far cry from the original prize dangled by the Government to get the railroad built.

The Phillips and Colby Construction Company, builders and operators of the railroad until it was completed, did not formally deliver the property to the Wisconsin Central until December 17, 1877⁸

And what did the Company receive for its 21 million dollar investment? There were 327 miles of track from Menasha and Portage to Ashland, shops at Stevens Point (including a machine shop, a blacksmith shop, a ten-stall roundhouse, a paint shop, two turntables and a transfer table), rolling stock (including leased stock of the Milwaukee & Northern) comprising 24 locomotives, 18 passenger coaches, business car, pay-car with safe, 6 baggage cars, 9 cabooses, 292 boxcars, 10 stock cars, 266 flat cars and 30 gravel cars⁹ and local structures along the line.

As the year 1878 arrived, the Wisconsin Central was finally on its own. Earnings were steadily increasing and the little railroad had more business than its limited equipment could handle!¹⁰

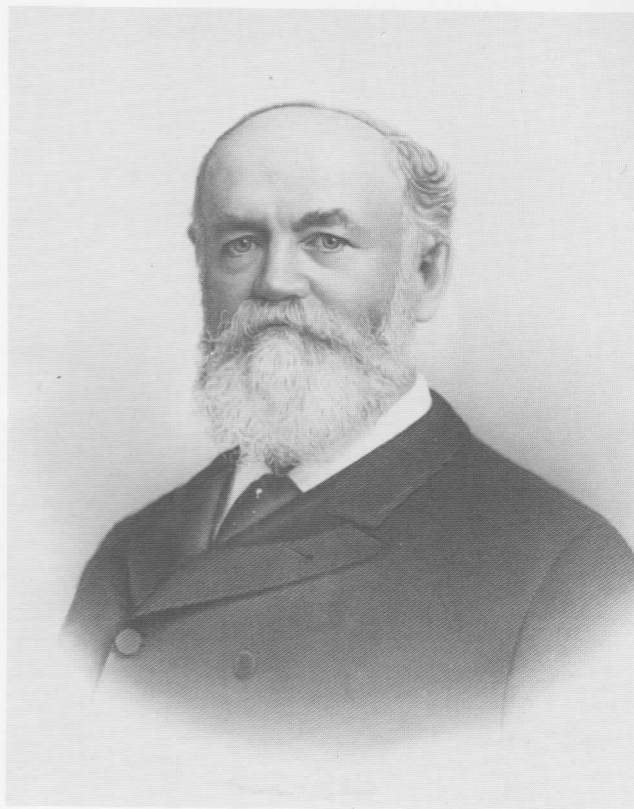
In his report to the stockholders for 1878, Pres. Colby commented:

"That part of the road north of Stevens Point is growing rapidly. New business is constantly being developed. When the construction of this part of the railroad was begun, there were practically no inhabitants in that part of the state, but it is estimated that there are now over 20,000 people within carrying distance of this part of our line, whose business is tributary to it. Thirty-five manufacturing establishments have been built, and three or four more are being constructed. Around these mills, and factories and stations upon the road, villages have sprung up; the forest is being cleared away; hundreds of farms are in cultivation, and yielding good returns to their owners. Eight years ago, there was not a house within ten to fifteen miles from where now stand the thriving villages of Junction City, Auburndale, Milladore, Mannville, Marshfield, Spencer, Unity, Colby, Dorchester, Stetsonville, Medford, Westboro, Ogema, Phillips, Fifield, Butternut and Chippewa."¹¹

In the same report it is interesting to note that the earnings for the Mannville station (\$32,334.96) were exceeded only by Milwaukee and Stevens Point! Marshfield produced only \$12,125.87 in earnings for 1878!¹²

MANNVILLE

Horatio Gilbert obtained the land where Mannville was located from the Government through land warrants. From him it passed into the hands of E. S. Stone, who sold it to the Mann brothers, after whom the village was named. In 1877, Curtis Mann, formerly of Manitowoc, directed the building of a sawmill and store before becoming insolvent two or three years later!¹³ The property next came into the possession of C. J. Kershaw, a wheat speculator from Milwaukee. Then came Tyson & Pierce and they were succeeded by Henry Hewitt's Menasha Chair Company!¹⁴ In the meantime, Buckstaff Bros. & Chase, of Oshkosh, built a shingle mill!¹⁵ Henry Sherry, of Neenah, consolidated all operations when he purchased the mills in May 1885. M. J. Powers was



CHARLES L. COLBY

Treasurer of Phillips & Colby Construction Company, 1870-1874, Vice-President of the Wisconsin Central, 1874-1878, President and Treasurer, 1878-1890. *State Historical Society of Wisconsin collection, negative WHi(D484)12134.*

put in charge of the business and operated it successfully until his sudden death under the wheels of a Wisconsin Central passenger train at the Marshfield depot. Charles Rust replaced him before departing for northern Wisconsin to form a lumber company of his own. The saw mill was finally closed in June 1891 and the following summer the planing mill finished the last of the lumber. Mannville was essentially a sawmill town, every building being owned by Henry Sherry. The timber supply had come mainly from the north although in later years it had been obtained at Greenwood and Spokeville!¹⁶

In August 1893 fire struck the little community, burning the mills, 800,000 ft. of lumber, all of the houses and the WC depot. Nothing of value was left!¹⁷ Mannville's only claim to existence ultimately rested on the fact that it was the junction point for the WC's logging branch to McMillan and its claim to fame was the tragic wreck of Train No. 4, the southbound "Limited" on May 30, 1894!¹⁸

Mannville was the exception; most communities along the WC had better roots and survive today.

MARSHFIELD

In 1878, about a year after the completion of the Wisconsin Central and the Mann brother's sawmill starting up less than two miles away, the village of Marshfield began to develop. And this came about because of one man, William Henry Upham.

W. H. Upham was born in Westminster, Mass., May 3, 1842. His father, Alvin Upham, died in 1851 and the family moved to Racine, Wisconsin. He received his education in



WILLIAM H. UPHAM

President, Upham Manufacturing Co.; Mayor of Marshfield, 1886-1894; Governor of Wisconsin, 1895-1896; President, Marshfield Land and Lumber Co., 1899-1906; President, Marshfield Water, Electric Light and Power Co., 1892-1904; built the Marshfield & Texas Railroad. *Courtesy William H. Upham, Jr. collection.*

Racine. In April 1861, at the age of twenty, he enlisted in Company F of the 2nd Wisconsin Infantry, "was badly wounded (shot through the left lung) at the first battle of Bull Run, July 21, 1861; was taken prisoner and confined in the old tobacco-factory prison at Richmond, until January, 1862"¹⁹ when he was released. Upon being discharged in Washington, Senator Doolittle of Wisconsin asked him if he would like to meet President Lincoln. The invitation was accepted and after the visit he wrote to his mother, describing the events in detail²⁰

In June 1862 President Lincoln nominated him as an "At Large" appointment to West Point. Upham was the first "volunteer" soldier appointed to the Academy. After a successful education (he finished 25th in a class of 41) he graduated on June 18, 1866 and was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant in the 5th Artillery. His first official duty as a member of the regular army was to take his turn as guard over Jefferson Davis. Thus, at the age of twenty-five he had personally met and talked to two of the great American leaders of that period in our history²¹

Anticipating that the peace-time army offered no prospects for promotion and career growth, he resigned his commission November 18, 1869. He and his wife (he had married Mary Kelly of Racine in December 1867) returned to Racine where he chose the lumber business as a profession. His reasons for choosing this career can probably be explained by the fact that his father-in-law owned several lumber mills and sailing vessels for transporting lumber on the Great Lakes. Also, his brother, Charles, was in the lumber business. Lumbering, especially in Wisconsin at that time, offered

great opportunities for economic achievement.

Upham first worked for the Slossum-Grimer Lumber Company of Kewaunee, Wisconsin for about a year. In 1871 he joined with his brother Charles in building a sawmill at Angelica, midway between Shawano and Green Bay, Wisconsin. Little has been recorded of his life during the period 1869-1878, but it is assumed it was a period of intense work and hardship²²

By 1878 the brothers were ready to expand their enterprise and cast about for timber land to purchase. Probably for a variety of reasons, they chose the Marshfield area.

Marshfield was located at Section 32 (32 miles west of Stevens Point) on the railroad. In 1872 Section 32 was nothing more than a small clearing in the woods along the tracks of the new railroad. One member of the section crew, Louis Rivers, decided to clear some land, build a cabin and settle there. When the Uphams arrived in Marshfield they found a store, a saloon and Louis River's house which served as an inn. "There were less than a dozen families. The social climate of Marshfield appeared to be as wild as the surrounding forest."²³ Stretching for miles, east, west, north and south, were large tracts of hardwood timber — an almost inexhaustible supply of raw material. And there was also some pine mixed in with the hardwoods.

Marshfield derives its name from John J. Marsh, who at one time owned all the valuable timber in the vicinity through his Fox River Land Company. From him directly, the Uphams purchased their immense body of timber and land upon which they located their plant²⁴

Under the name of C. H. Upham & Bro. a sawmill and small store were built. William managed the new plant while Charles remained in Angelica to take care of the old operations. The original sawmill had a capacity of 12,000,000 feet per annum. After a few years a large furniture factory and a flour mill were added. In 1883 a new corporation, the "Upham Manufacturing Company," replaced the original organization. The business had developed phenomenally, and each year saw improved trade and strength²⁵

STEWART AND ABBOT, TRUSTEES

While the Uphams had Marshfield on the way to becoming an important community on the railroad, the Wisconsin Central was having problems of its own. While business was brisk, earnings were not enough to keep the stockholders happy. On January 4, 1879 John A. Stewart and Edwin H. Abbot, trustees under the first mortgage of the Wisconsin Central Railroad Company, assumed control of the railroad. President Colby was appointed Agent for the trustees, but more importantly, Frederick N. Finney, who was to guide the railroad for the next ten years, was appointed General Manager. This signaled the beginning of a period of rehabilitation and advancement in the life of the Central.

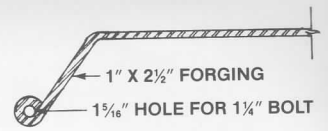
The trustees and management of the railroad realized that the portion of the line beyond Stevens Point would not produce a sizable increase in business for the immediate future. The actual and potential tonnage from the lumber industry was just not enough to support the railroad. Until the northern portion of the state was settled, the meager population and commercial activity would not provide the volume of business needed to keep the railroad a viable industry. And while the Penoquee iron range potentially held hope for increased traffic, that was far in the future. The

This unidentified Wisconsin Central depot was typical of the early construction used in the 1870's. WCL flat car 1715 was built by Barney & Smith in February 1884. The cars all have link and pin couplers and appear to be in logging service. *Courtesy North Wood County Historical Society collection.*

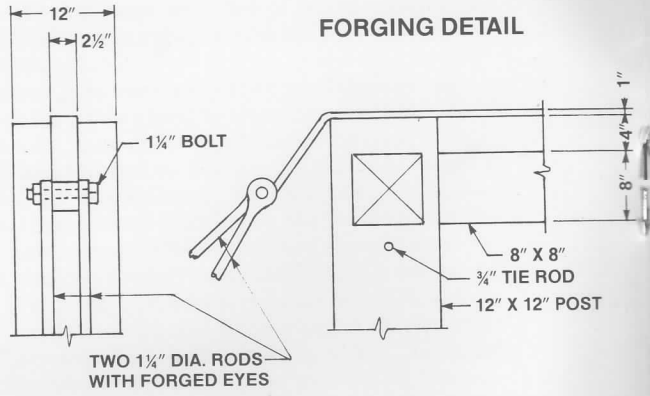


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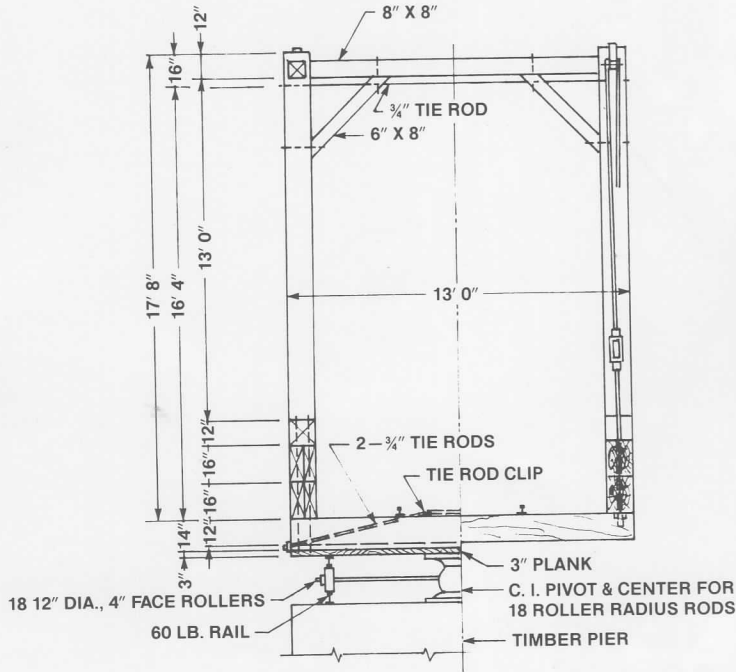
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FORGING DETAIL

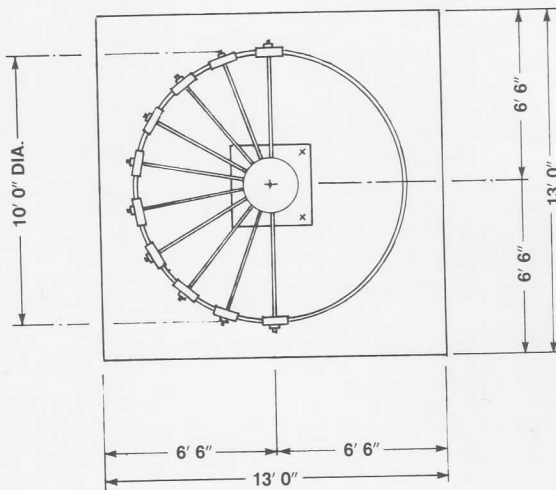
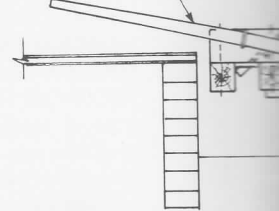


TOWER TOP DETAILS

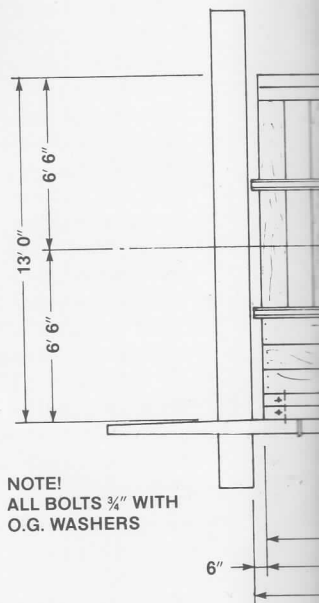


HALF CROSS SECTION HALF END ELEVATION

TWO 6" X 6" X 18' LEVERS EACH WITH TWO 3/4" U BOLTS



CENTER PIER PLAN





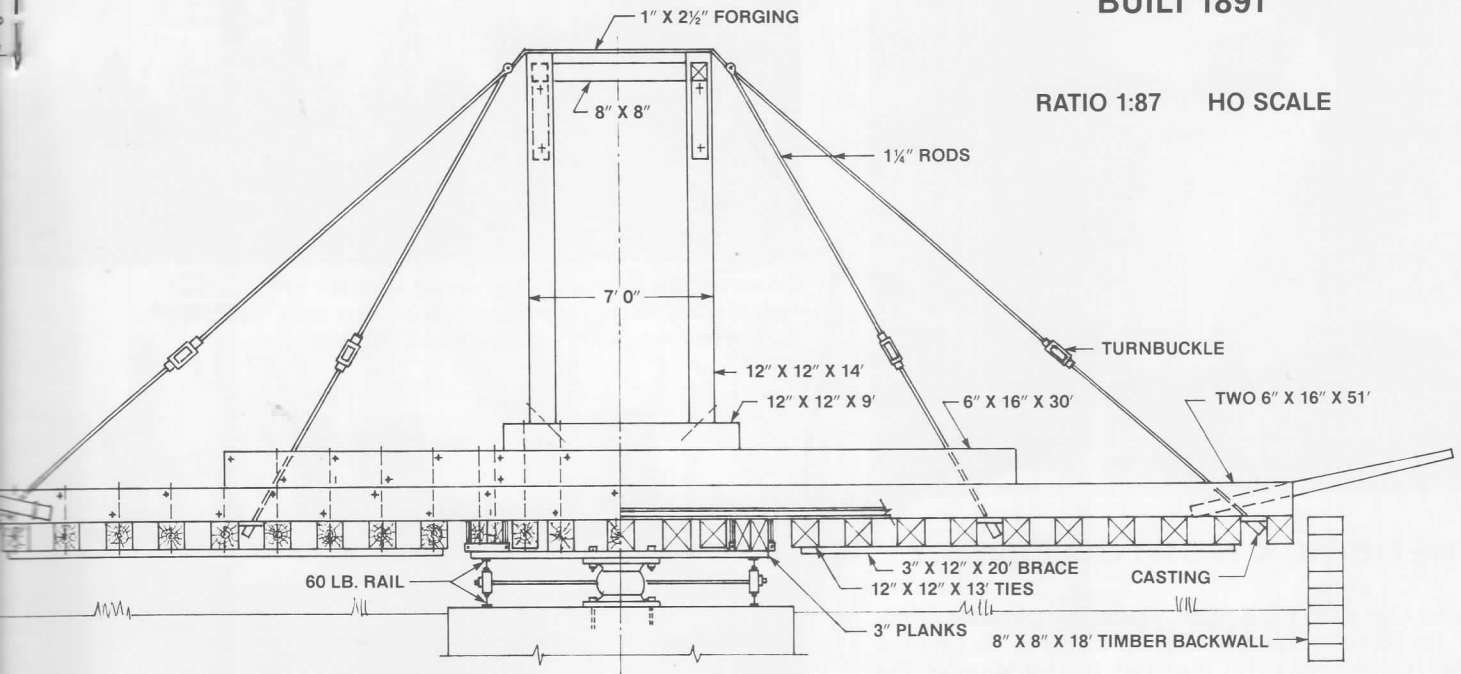
WISCONSIN CENTRAL RY.

52' WOOD TURNTABLE

GREENWOOD, WISCONSIN

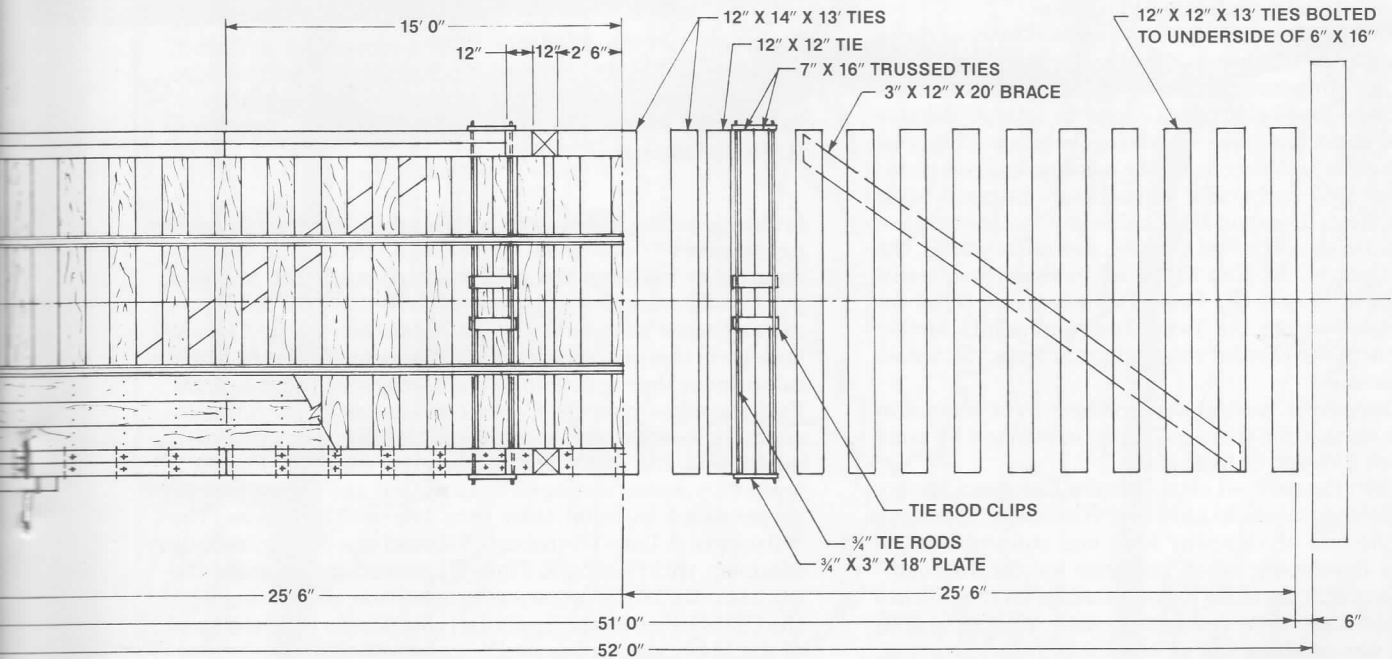
BUILT 1891

RATIO 1:87 HO SCALE



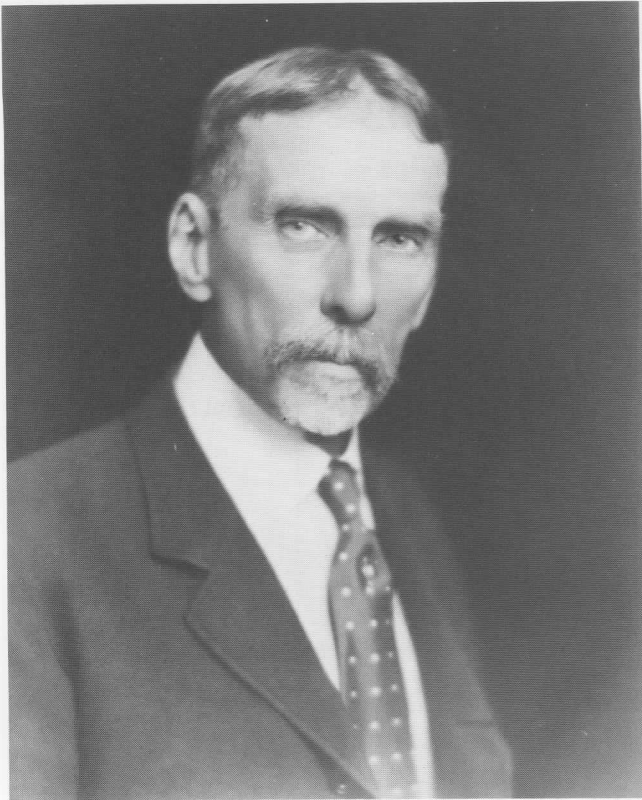
HALF LONGITUDINAL PLAN

HALF ELEVATION



HALF PLAN

HALF TIE PLAN



FREDERICK NORTON FINNEY

General Manager, 1878-1886, Managing Director, 1886-1887. In partnership with Charles L. Colby as Colby & Finney, Contractors, he directed the building of the Chicago, Wisconsin & Minnesota Railroad (the name used to construct the Central's line from Schleisingerville to Altenheim). *State Historical Society of Wisconsin collection, negative WHI(D484)12135.*

immediate solution lay in further expansion.

On March 5, 1880 a contract was awarded to construct a line from Colby to Chippewa Falls, under the name of the Wisconsin & Minnesota Railroad. At Chippewa Falls a connection was made with the Chippewa Falls & Western Railroad, a short-line then operating between Chippewa Falls and Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The new line was completed in December 1880 and traffic immediately began flowing toward the West. Demand for lumber out on the treeless plains was being satisfied by the sawmills along the Wisconsin Central. At Eau Claire all business was transferred to the Chicago, St. Paul & Minneapolis (now the Omaha) for delivery in the Twin Cities and points further west. In return, the Central received grain from Minnesota and the Dakotas:²⁶

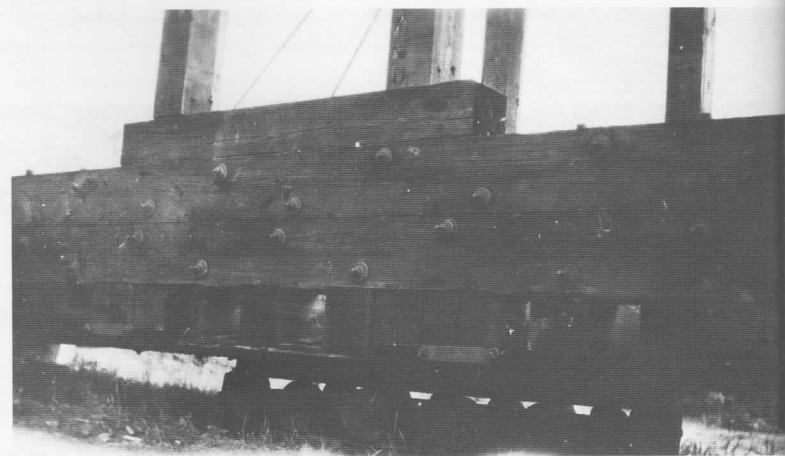
The lumbermen of central and northern Wisconsin now had a good market for their products, unaffected by competition from Chicago or Michigan.

During 1880 the railroad established a European agency to encourage emigration to northern Wisconsin, hoping to stimulate the sale of company land and cutover land, in the process developing more business for the railroad?²⁷ Mannville was still the third highest station on the railroad as far as earnings were concerned, with \$51,520.94, but Marshfield was catching up, at \$42,416.03!²⁸

Since 1873 the Central had leased the Milwaukee & Northern Railway from Menasha to Schwartzburg (nine miles north of Milwaukee) and from Hilbert Junction to Green Bay, Wisconsin. The terms of the lease were most



Greenwood's first turntable was a wooden affair, with a center pivot resting on rollers and circular rails. *Courtesy Jack Hedlund, Soo Line Railroad Company.*



Eighteen 12-inch diameter rollers moved on a 10-foot diameter rail at the base of the turntable. Locomotives had to be carefully balanced on the turntable for it to operate easily. *Courtesy Jack Hedlund, Soo Line Railroad Company.*

favorable to the M&N: 40% of the gross earnings in rent, payment of 8% interest on bonds and all taxes. The WC was required to maintain the road in good repair; the M&N to pay for all permanent improvements. By 1880 the M&N was earning more than twice as much per mile as the Central because of this generous lease arrangement. When the M&N came under the ownership of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul the same year, the Central management tried, unsuccessfully, to negotiate a more favorable lease. They proposed purchasing the M&N and again were rebuffed. Finally a temporary lease was agreed upon, but the Central made preparations to build their own line to Milwaukee. The Milwaukee & Lake Winnebago Railroad was the contracting company, with "Colby & Finney, Contractors" awarded the contract. By 1882 the line was in operation, connecting with the CM&StP at Schlesingerville (now Slinger) and the lease of the M&N was terminated:²⁹

Through the Central Car Company (owned by the same interests as the Central) Finney was able to provide his railroad with new locomotives and modern passenger equipment. The WC began offering "deluxe" passenger service,

Map of the CENTRAL LINE and Connections.

Matthews, Northrup & Co., Engravers & Printers, Buffalo, N. Y.



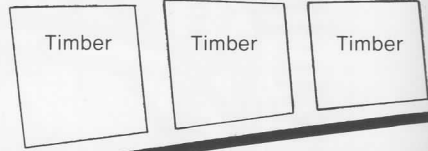
State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Roy L. Martin collection.

MARSHFIELD

WOOD COUNTY, WISCONSIN

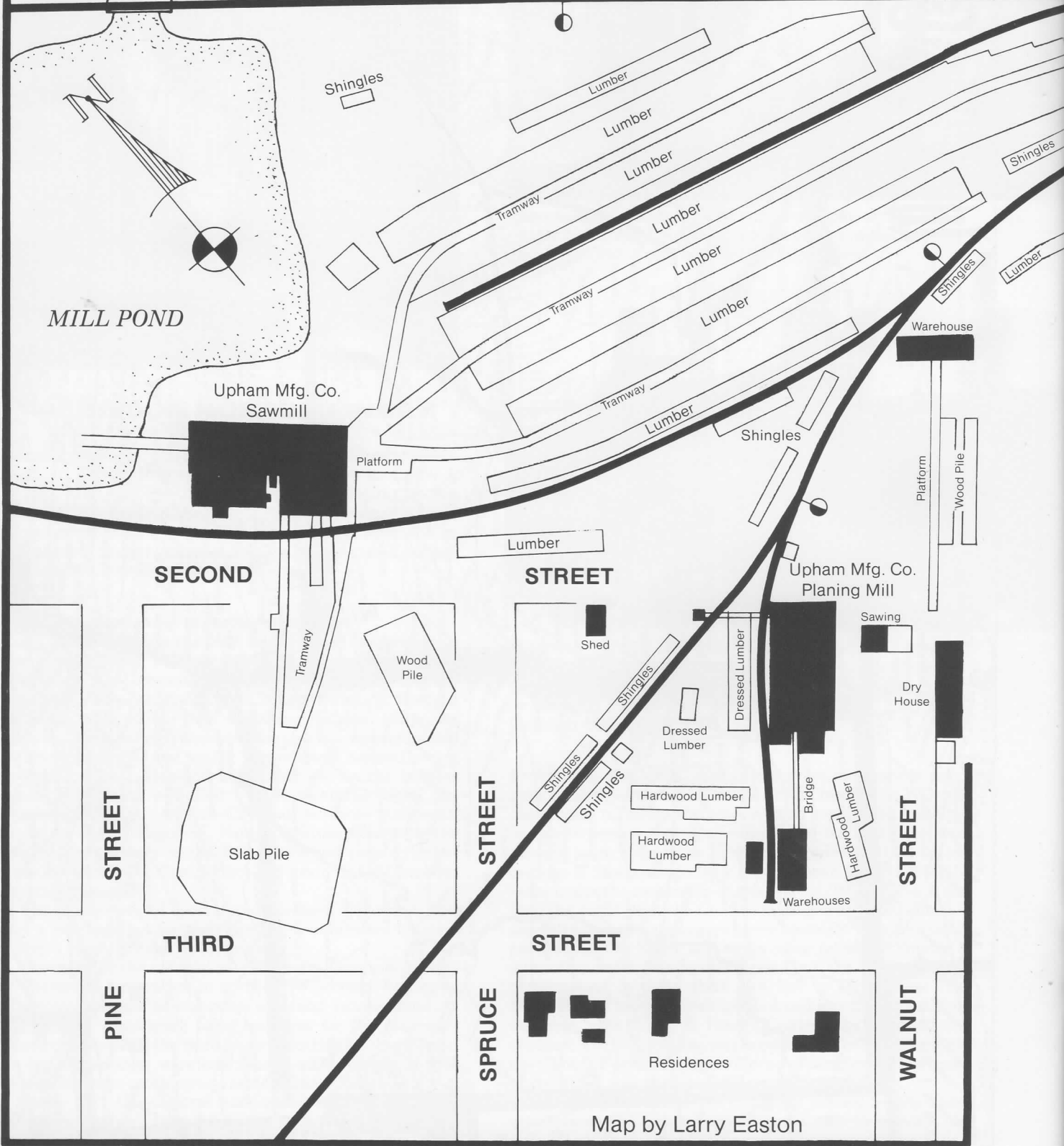
1884

NORTH

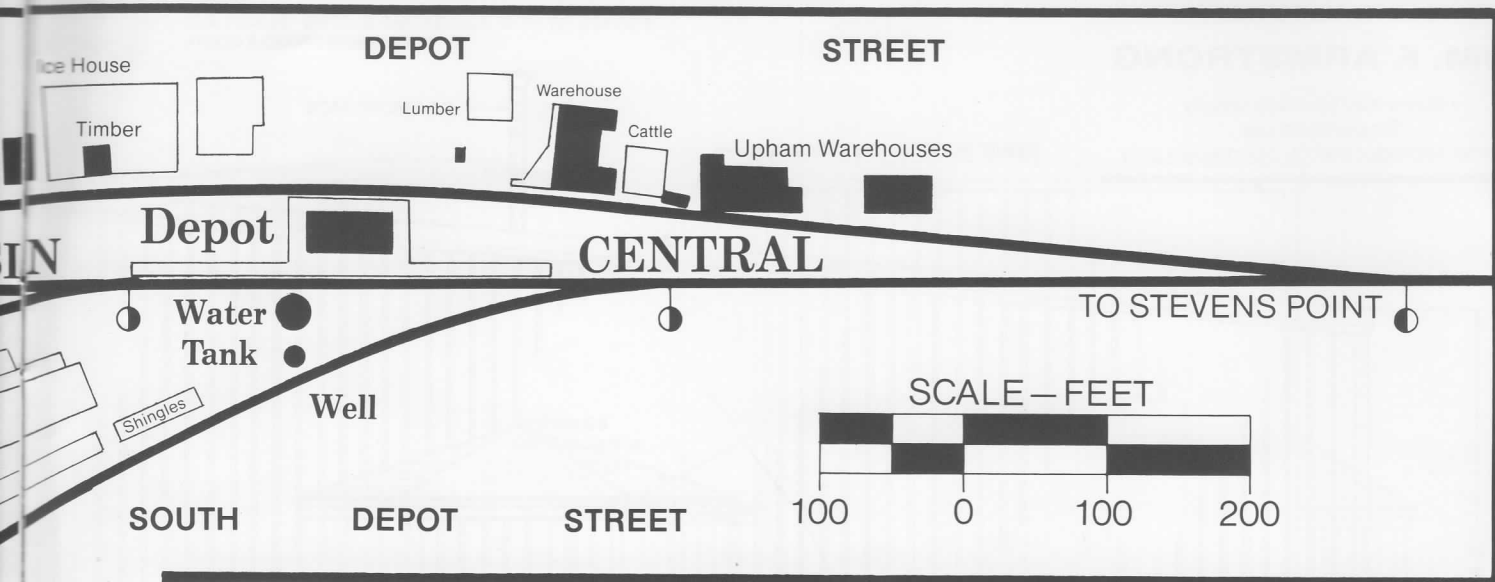


TO COLBY

WISCONSIN



Map by Larry Easton



including modern sleepers, from St. Paul to Chicago with trackage rights over the Omaha on the west end, and from Slinger to Chicago over the St. Paul road.

WC trains were passed directly to Milwaukee without delay at Slinger. Southbound sleepers were attached to CM&StP trains for Chicago delivery, and returned in a like manner. However, by 1883, with new equipment, better rail and a shortened schedule between Chippewa Falls and Slinger, the Central began to challenge the competition.

In retaliation the CM&StP and the Omaha began a systematic effort to obstruct and resist the Central's progress. After a series of threats, canceled service and law suits, the Central finally determined to build its own line to Chicago.³⁰

The Northern Pacific was always friendly to the Central and was seeking an "arrangement" to gain access to the Chicago market. Because of financial trouble, its plans to construct a line from St. Paul to Chippewa Falls could not be completed.³¹ The Central undertook to construct its own line from Chippewa Falls to St. Paul in order to make a direct connection with the NP and other western roads. The Minnesota, St. Croix & Wisconsin Railroad was completed on December 28, 1884 and became part of the Wisconsin Central "system."

This new construction was evidently too much for the CM&StP, as the Necedah *Republican* observed in February

1885:

"War has broken out between the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul and Wisconsin Central railroads. The latter of which has just opened a through line to St. Paul, using the former's track for some thirty miles north of Milwaukee. It commenced by cutting sleeping car rates to \$1.50, whereupon the St. Paul company refused to allow its sleepers to leave Milwaukee. It is thought the war will be long and bitter."³²

In April 1885 the CM&StP finally prevented the Central's sleepers from going out over their line. A month later the CM&StP submitted to the demands of the Central and allowed traffic to proceed as before. New negotiations dragged on until July, with no results. Giving up all expectations of reaching an amicable agreement, the WC began building its own line to Chicago. Incorporated as the Chicago, Wisconsin & Minnesota Railroad, it was controlled by the same interests that owned the WC.³³ The contractors were again Colby & Finney, but most of the work was sub-contracted to Harrison & Green, Milwaukee.³⁴ In February 1886 the mainline to Chicago was completed.

The Wisconsin Central was now ready to compete with the CM&StP and the C&NW for the Chicago-Minneapolis passenger trade. And, it had a ready ally in the Northern Pacific, anxious to have access to Chicago and eastern connections.

LOCAL RAILROAD ACTIVITY

At the time of the Wisconsin Central's greatest expansion, other railroads were being planned, organized, incorporated and funded. Some were actually built! For many years the WC had been all alone in the northern half of Wisconsin, but gradually other lines began to "invade" its territory. The first was the CM&StP in 1873, crossing the WC at Junction City, a few miles west of Stevens Point. The West Wisconsin Railway (Omaha) had arrived in Eau Claire a few years earlier and in 1881 the Omaha pushed a line to Neillsville, in southern Clark County.

Meanwhile, in Wood County, George Hiles, a colorful lumberman from Dexterville, built a logging line, the Wisconsin, Pittsville & Superior Railway, from Babcock to Pittsville in 1883. A branch also extended from Pittsville Junction (just south of Pittsville) to Vesper, Wisconsin. Lumbermen in Wisconsin Rapids were also talking of building a railroad to reach their timber in Wood and Clark Counties.

In his seminar paper, Harlan W. Hein, Jr. commented on the situation at Marshfield and Upham's roll in its development:

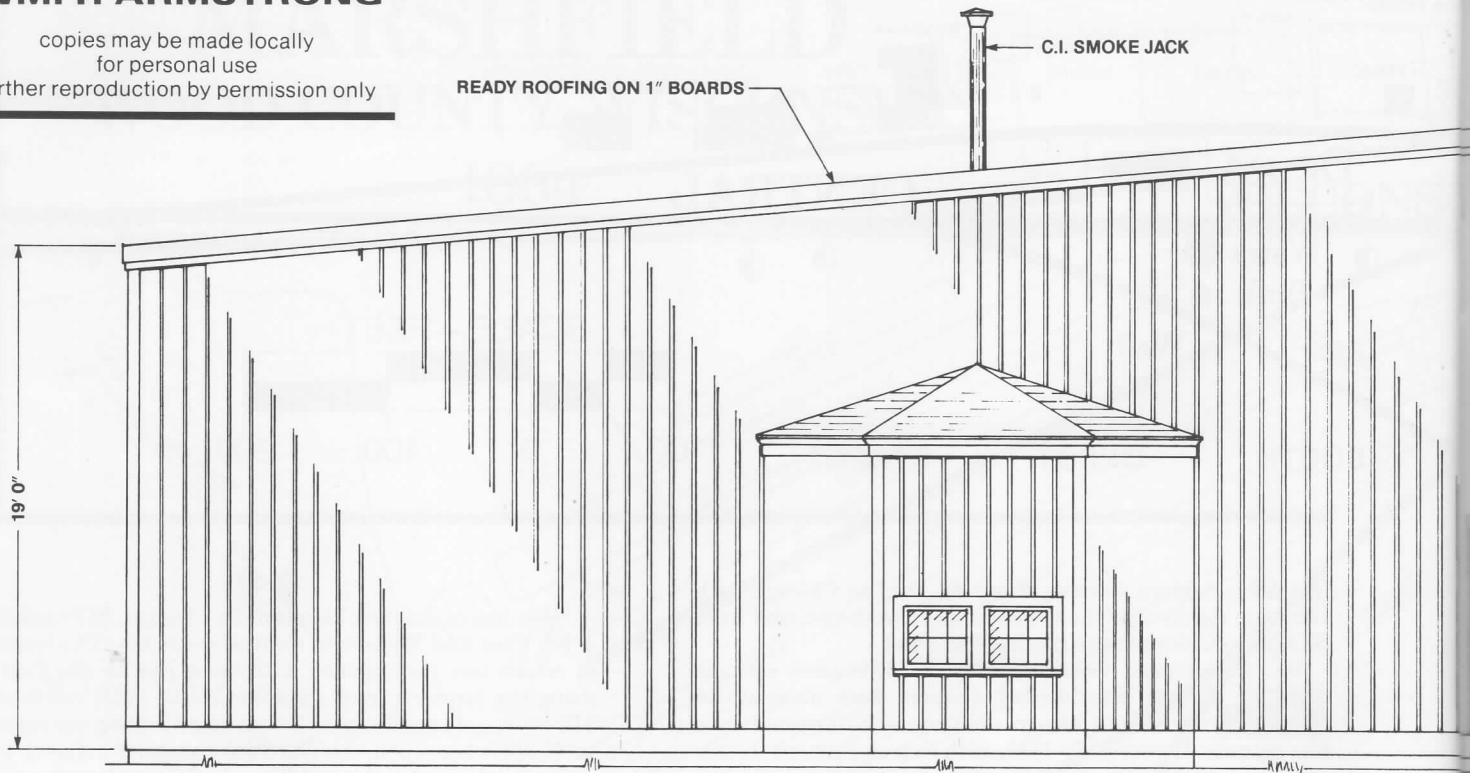


The Greenwood enginehouse, ca. 1916. Courtesy Jack Hedlund, Soo Line Railroad Company.

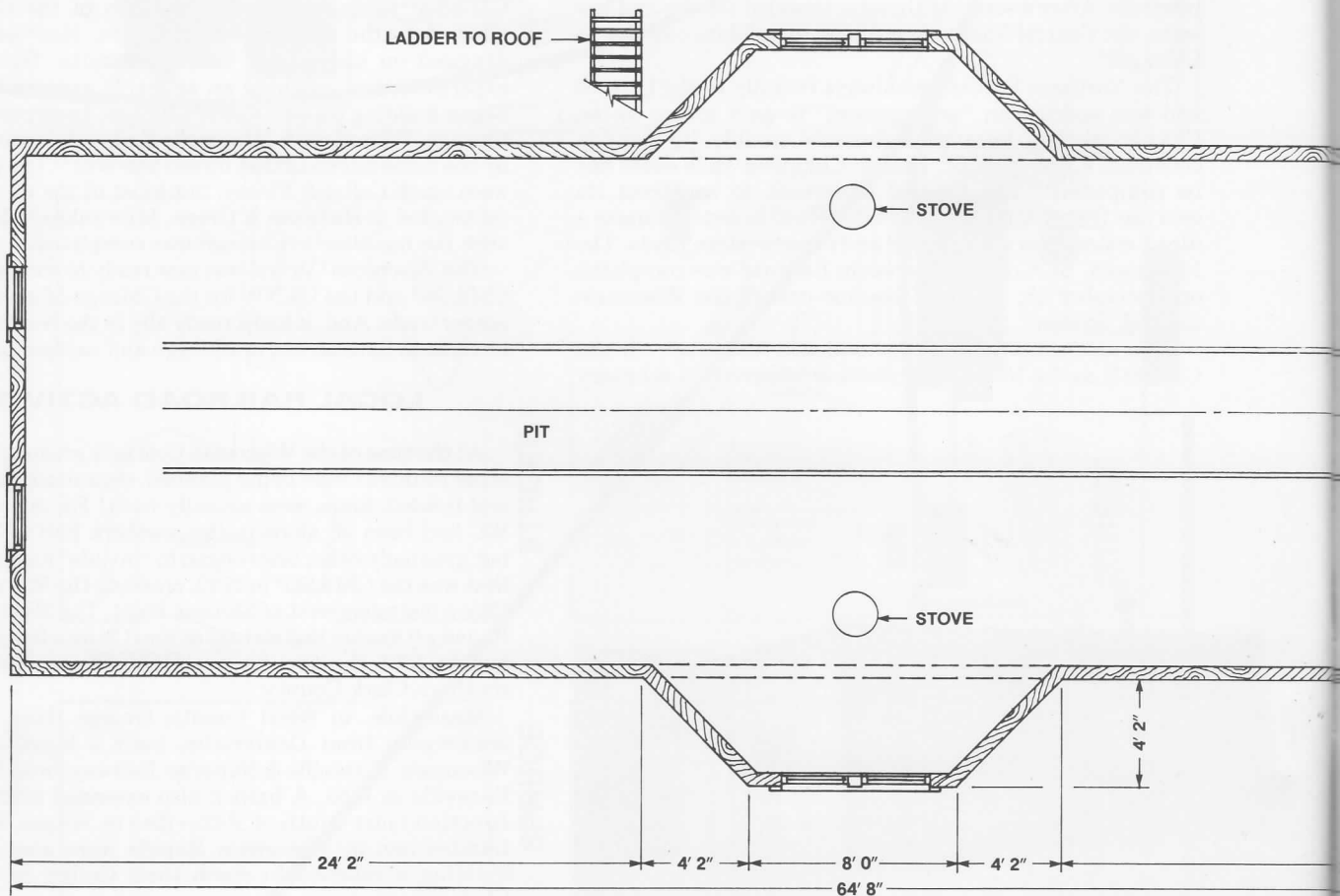
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SIDE ELEVATION

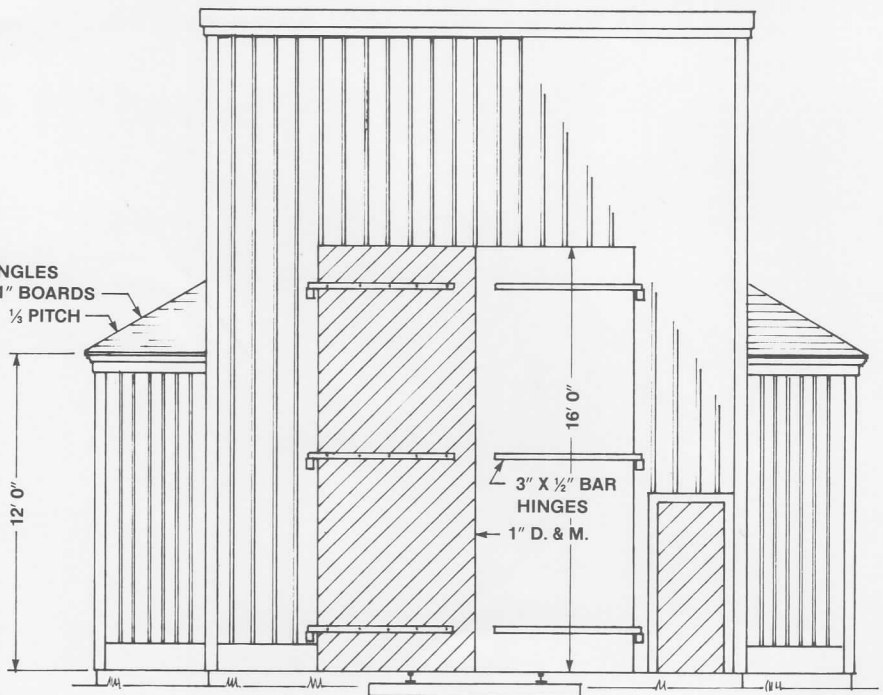


FLOOR PLAN

C.S. ROE 20" ENGINE SMOKEJACK WITH TELESCOPE HOOD & COUNTERWEIGHTS

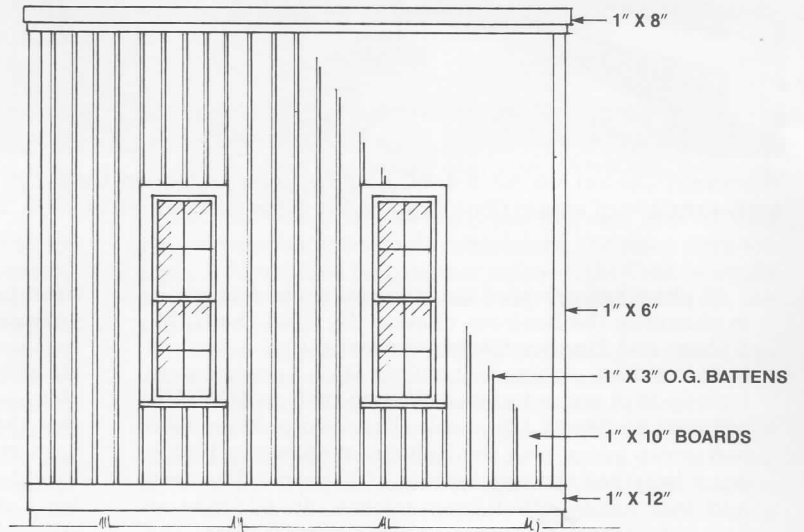
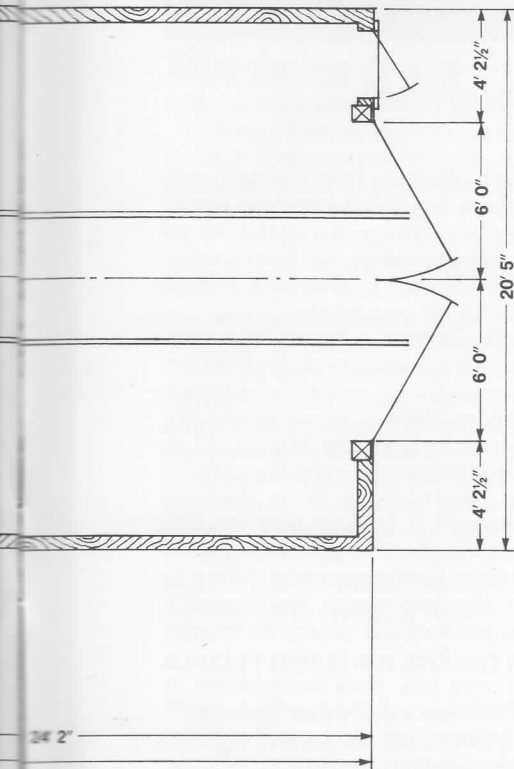


SHINGLES ON 1" BOARDS
1/2 PITCH



FRONT ELEVATION

RATIO 1:87 HO SCALE



REAR ELEVATION

**WISCONSIN CENTRAL RY.
ENGINEHOUSE
GREENWOOD, WISCONSIN
BUILT 1899**



Wisconsin Central No. 52, a 4-4-0 built by Schenectady in 1884, C/n 1896, is pulling a two-car passenger train in this early example of action photography. No. 52 was scrapped in 1905. *Courtesy Jerry Lopas collection.*

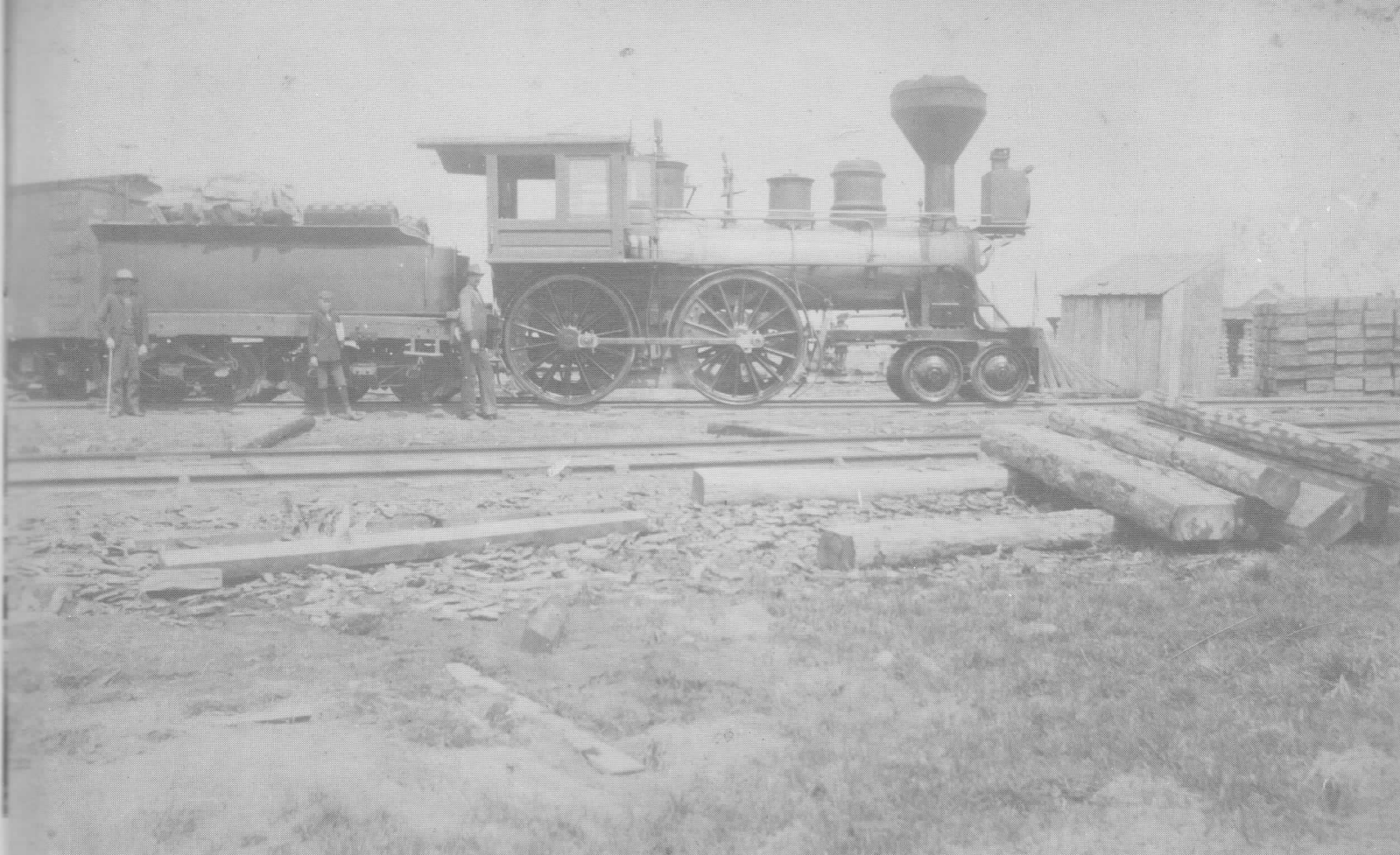
“Upham had provided the maturation and leadership in changing the business climate. By 1882 the C. M. Upham and Brother Company consisted of a sawmill built in 1878, a planing mill built in 1879, a general store built in 1878 and a furniture factory built in 1882. His company employed 125 people. The town of Marshfield had grown apace with the Upham Company. In 1882 it was a busy and thriving town of 1,500 people. The town had four hotels and fifteen saloons. In addition to Upham’s store there were five other general stores and many other specialty stores. The manufacturers included a stave mill, an alcohol factory and a machine shop... The fact that he did perceive the importance of the farmer in the development of his enterprise and the growth of Marshfield was evidenced by his building of a flour and grist mill in 1886... Thus, by 1882 Upham had produced the first evidence of success in his business enterprises. During the following five years he would become increasingly involved with community affairs also.”³⁵

The Upham Company was growing, but not without difficulties. Unfortunately, Marshfield was situated in an area devoid of major rivers or streams suitable for the transportation of logs. When the timber supply was nearby, getting the logs to the mill was not a problem. Upham had dug a mill pond for the storage of logs and had plenty of

room for storage nearby. As the distance from woods to mill grew greater every year, Upham concluded a railroad would best serve his needs. A spur of the Wisconsin Central served his mill and some logs already arrived by rail from timber plots located along the right-of-way. It was only logical that the concept be adopted for his own needs.

In 1882 Upham hired J. B. Grieves, a logger, to survey a right-of-way from the mill yard in a southeasterly direction for a distance of approximately 2½ miles.³⁶ Upham’s railroad was to be called the Marshfield & Texas. At various times the newspapers referred to it as the Marshfield & Southeastern, the Texas & Southeastern or the Marshfield, Texas & Southeastern, but *Marshfield & Texas Railroad Company* was its official name.³⁷ It is likely that the WC furnished the rail and accessories for this spur because, as Roy L. Martin wrote: “Wherever there appeared a chance to push a spur or branch into the deep woods, the Central’s exchequer seldom failed to produce the means to finance the project.”³⁸

The WC purchased two very old, used locomotives in 1882 from the New York, Providence & Boston Railroad.³⁹ (*This writer contends the locomotives were purchased for the specific purpose of resale to loggers operating along the WC, although they were not well-suited for this type of duty because of their high drivers.*) On the Central they



Old "Vanderbilt" was the pride of the Upham Mfg. Co. logging railroad crew. The inside-connected 4-4-0 was built in 1847 and lasted on the rails until 1898, when the boiler was installed in one of the Upham buildings as a heating plant. *Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin collection.*

were numbered 46 and 47. Upham may have purchased the 47 in 1883 because the *Marshfield Times* reported in May 1883 that "The logging train of the Upham Mfg. Co. commenced to run last week."⁴⁰ And, the Annual Report for 1884 does not show the 47 on the roster.⁴¹

Upham's first locomotive was built December 1, 1847, by Taunton Locomotive Manufacturing Company, Taunton, Massachusetts, C/n 7, with 16 x 20 cylinders and 60" drivers. She was numbered 1 and carried the name *Oregon*. No. 1 was rebuilt and renamed *Cornelius Vanderbilt* before being sold to the WC.⁴² On Upham's road she was affectionately called *Old Vanderbilt* or *Old Van*. She was unique in that she had a copper firebox and was inside-connected (meaning the drive rods from the pistons were inside the frame and were attached to the crank-axle on the first set of drivers.) The drive rods were secured to the axle by "straps" which were constantly in need of adjustment or repair. And, because everything was inside the frame, repairs had to be done from below. This was a major drawback to crank-axle locomotives. Otherwise, she was as fancy a 4-4-0 as the citizens of Marshfield had seen.

Edward Herbert Upham, a distant relative of W. H. Upham, left the MK&T Railway in Missouri to become the engineer on the logging train.⁴³

ANOTHER RAILROAD FOR MARSHFIELD

Thirteen years after the Wisconsin Central was built through Section 32, the city of Marshfield had been established,⁴⁴ incorporated and was growing at a prosperous rate, largely due to the civic efforts of W. H. Upham. Hein wrote: "Upham's drive, energy and leadership had by 1886 enabled

Marshfield to grow and prosper and become the admiration of visitors arriving on the Wisconsin Central Railroad."⁴⁵ In 1886 Upham was elected Mayor of Marshfield, receiving 455 out of 480 votes cast.

But Marshfield still had only one railroad. The WC had no competition and people complained the rates were too high. If Marshfield had another railroad, the Central would have to lower its rates to meet the competition—so the argument went...

Another railroad for Marshfield became a priority. It was the topic of conversation—some have called it "railroad fever." Anyway, Marshfield wanted another railroad!

In April 1885, it was announced in the *Marshfield Times and Gazette* that Wood County was to have a new railroad. Incorporation papers had been filed for the Grand Rapids, Centralia and Marshfield Railroad Company. Capital stock was \$500,000. The incorporators were J. D. Witter, John Arpin, Geo. R. Gardner, R. A. Farrish, John Farrish, L. M. Nash, G. J. Jackson and W. H. Upham. The road was to run from Centralia via Vesper to the city of Marshfield and on to Lake Superior.⁴⁶ Unfortunately for Marshfield, this was the first and last that was heard of the scheme. It never made it to the drawing board.

On May 19, 1885, a delegation of Marshfielders, headed by W. H. Upham went to Dexterville to confer with George Hiles and the directors of the Wisconsin, Pittsville & Superior Railroad. Would the railroad be interested in extending its line from Pittsville to Marshfield? It was agreed that a survey would be run between the two cities, a distance of about thirty-two miles.⁴⁷

On June 4th a surveying party, directed by Jas. Hiles, set out from Marshfield towards Pittsville. The starting

point was near the southwest corner of section 8 (near Wildwood Park).⁴⁸

Hiles, never one to shun an opportunity, submitted a proposal to Upham in July. Hiles would build the line if Marshfield would sell bonds in the amount of \$160,000 (\$10,000 per mile), furnish the right-of-way through the towns of Marshfield and Richfield and aid the project with \$5,000 in bonds of the city! Marshfield wanted the railroad, but not at that price.⁴⁹ In August Hiles announced he was going to sell his railroad:

"I intend to go out of the railroad business entirely," said Geo. Hiles, of Dexterville, yesterday, as he sat enjoying the warmth which came from the big stove in the Kirby House office. "My other enterprises occupy all my time, and I have decided to sell out my railroad, known as the Wisconsin, Pittsville & Superior, running from Dexterville Junction to Vesper. I have already received two offers for my line and will accept one or the other of the offers within a short time. The Wisconsin, Pittsville & Superior Railroad has connections at present with the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul at Dexterville Junction, and with the Green Bay, Winona & St. Paul at Dexterville, and will soon be connected with the Wisconsin Central at Sherry. Several lumbermen who have large interests at the latter place are building a spur track from Sherry to Vesper, which will make Sherry a competing point and give them good rates for their lumber shipments. My road is twenty-two miles in length, and has an equipment of four engines and eleven cars. The road is worth \$300,000. The work on the extension of the road northward was not discontinued because of the high prices charged for the right-of-way, as was stated, but because I intend selling out."⁵⁰

The Wood County Railroad, owned by Jas. Cameron, Charles Willard, Norman Willard and Henry Sherry, built a line from Sherry Station, on the WC, to Vesper, connecting with the WP&S. A short branch was built in a northwesterly direction to Arpin. The *Times*, in June 1886, opined that, "with a slight deviation...it would reach this city by an extension of about fourteen miles, and would pass directly through a large tract of timber owned by our home manufacturers...and would be a connecting link between this city and...the C.M.&St.P."⁵¹

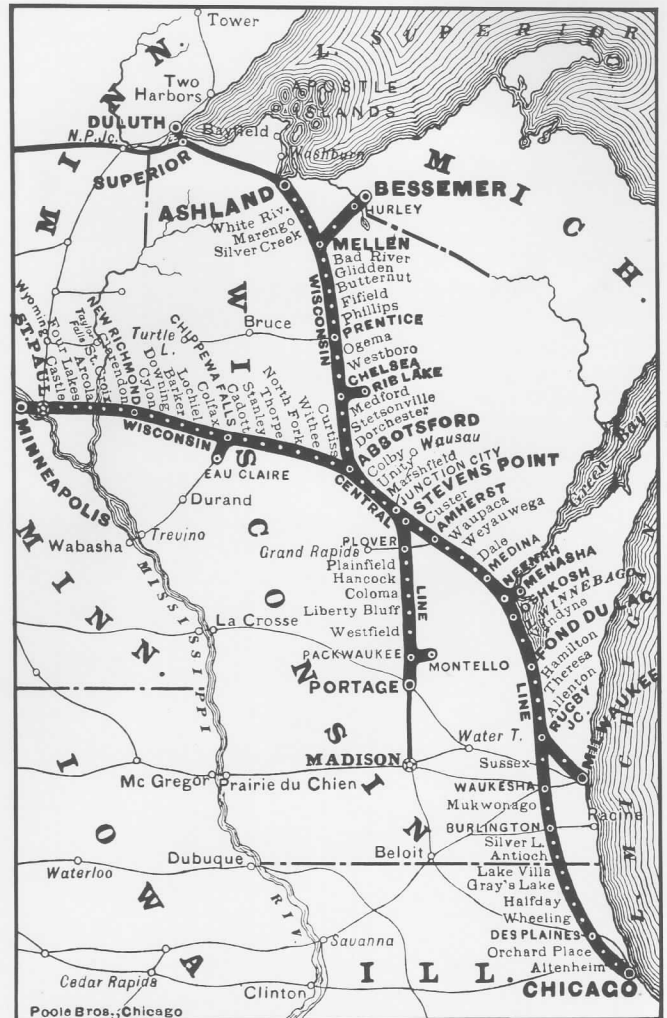
On June 2, 1886, George Hiles was back with another scheme. His new railroad, the Milwaukee, Dexterville & Northern, was building north and west out of Dexterville. If the city would furnish the right-of-way and grade the roadbed ready for receiving ties and iron, and furnish ten acres of land in the city for a depot site, he would complete the track and operate the railroad from Marshfield to a point on his railroad, about eleven miles in a southwesterly direction.⁵²

All of the above proposals received their share of discussion, but little action was forthcoming. Evidently each side was waiting for the other to make a move. Meanwhile the Central was the target of much displeasure because of its old dilapidated depot, built in the early 1870's. Marshfield wanted more and felt it deserved it.

SOME GOOD NEWS

When the Wisconsin Central decided to compete with the other major railroads for the Chicago-Minneapolis traffic, it was at a disadvantage in several respects, chief of which was that its line was the longest one between the two cities. With over 440 miles of mainline to cover, much of it hills and curves, the WC could not meet the timetables of the CM&StP or the C&NW. Increasing speeds to compensate was dangerous and the equipment and roadbed were not yet ready for such operation.

A much more reasonable alternative would be to shorten the route. Several schemes were tried out on the public, perhaps to see how much local support they could raise in



Ashland Press, April 23, 1887.

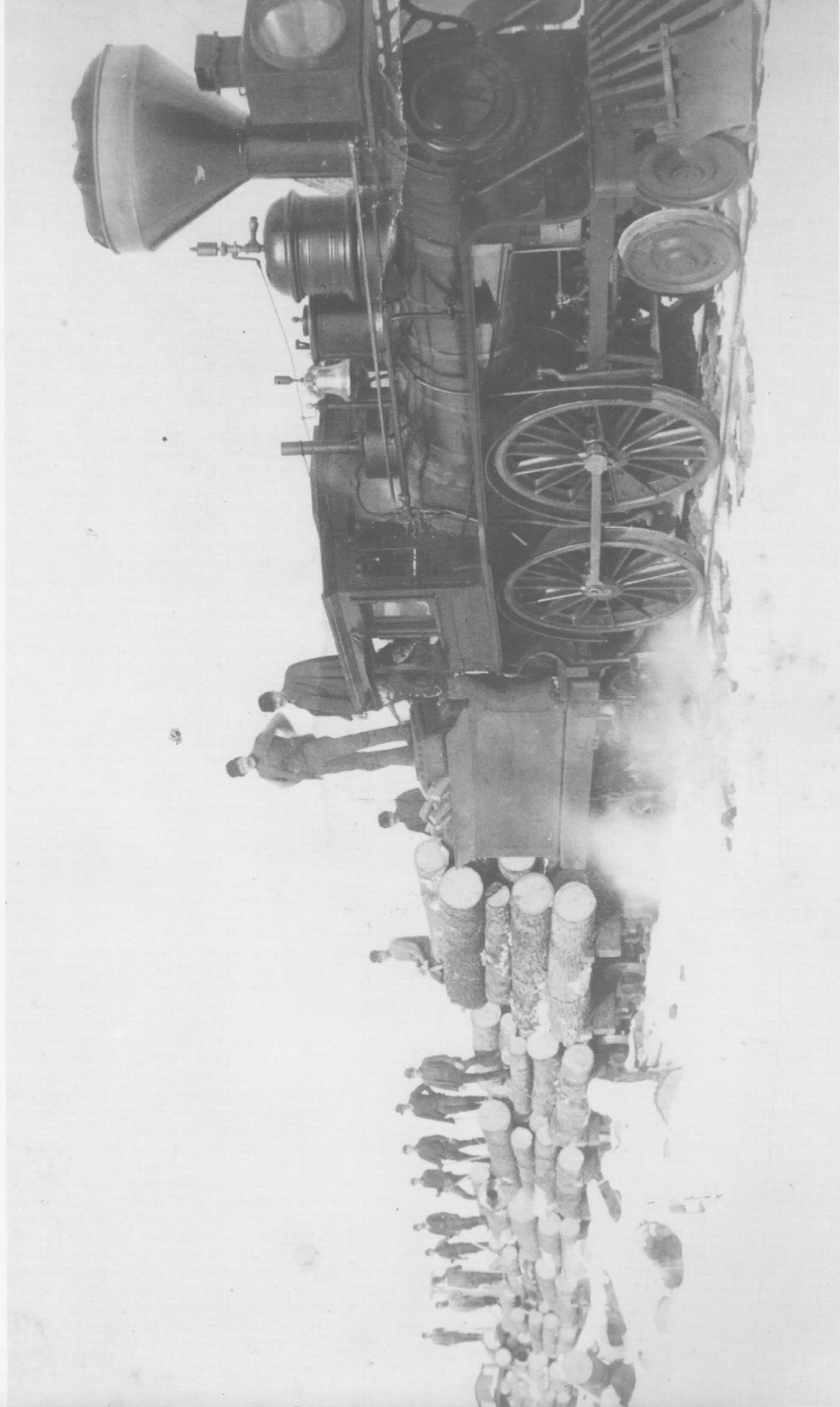
the way of finances. The *Necedah Republican* for June 25, 1886 announced, "it is the Wisconsin Central company who are to build a line from some point between Burlington and Schleisingerville on the mainline to Chippewa Falls, which will shorten their line between Chicago and St. Paul considerably."⁵³ Packwaukee and Montello were mentioned as possible intermediate points.

Another plan would have the WC building from Burlington, through Lake Geneva, to Portage and over the Portage Branch to Stevens Point.

While none of the early plans were adopted, the *idea* was firmly implanted that a shorter route was needed. The NP was starting to exert considerable influence on the WC and changes were in the wind.

In June 1887 the Wisconsin Central Company was incorporated to take over all of the various Wisconsin Central railroad properties and operate them as one. Charles L. Colby, Edwin H. Abbot and Colgate Hoyt held all of the stock of the new company.⁵⁴

A major change in leadership occurred in October 1886 when F. N. Finney was promoted to Managing Director. William S. Mellen, of the Milwaukee, Lake Shore & Western, was appointed General Manager. Mellen remained in charge of the WC until July 1, 1889 when he became General Manager of the NP. Samuel R. Ainslie, Assistant General Manager of the NP, took his place on the Central. It is of interest that at this time Colby, Abbot and Hoyt were also directors of the NP. The build-up for the eventual lease of the WC by the NP is obvious from these moves. As early as 1884, Colby "appeared to be seeking asylum in the N.P.,



Old "Vanderbilt" was pulling a logging train for the Upham Mfg. Co. in 1890 near Marshfield, Wisconsin. The cylinders and drive rods were inside the frame on this 1847 product of the Taunton Locomotive Works. Ed Upham was the engineer and Frank Welch was the fireman. Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Roy L. Martin collection, negative no. WHi M302 11 or WHi M304 96.

then making an approach for the ultimate control of the Central."⁵⁵

Marshfield's railroad fever was reaching epidemic proportions. Finally, in a burst of enthusiasm, fifty of the city's leading businessmen and property owners petitioned for a public meeting to discuss the "building of another railroad, to connect the city with one of the trunk lines of the country."⁵⁶ The meeting was scheduled for May 3, 1887, at the roller rink. At the meeting, "The sentiment expressed was largely in favor of a line to connect with the Wisconsin, Pittsville & Superior Railroad at Pittsville."⁵⁷ Thos. S. Norton offered the following resolution:

WHEREAS it appears to the property owners and freight payers of Marshfield and vicinity, both out-going and in-coming, are unjustly discriminated against in the matter of freight rates on account of its not being a competitive point, as is evidenced by the fact of shippers and freight payers at points having the advantage of two or more competing lines of transportation receiving much better shipping facilities and a lower rate of freight, and

WHEREAS it appears to be utterly impossible to induce further manufacturing interests to locate in our midst for the same reason, and believing that the advent of a new railroad builded to this city, connecting with another of the trunk lines of the country, will tend to largely increase the population and wealth of the city, develop and improve the country contiguous thereto, induce new manufacturing interests to locate in our midst and increase the capacity of manufactories already established, thereby giving employment to more laborers. Now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that it is the sense of this meeting, that all honorable measures should be used to induce and encourage the building of another railroad to this city and to this end we pledge our hearty cooperation and support."⁵⁸

The resolution was unanimously adopted and a committee of five was appointed to coordinate efforts in securing another railroad.

It is interesting to note that in the same paper, the editor had a lengthy report of his trip over the WP&S and the Milwaukee, Dexterville & Northern on the Saturday prior to the meeting. His closing comments were: "It will stand the citizens and business men of this city to study well the situations and the advantages that would accrue from a branch line extending from this city to connect with one of these roads, either at Pittsville or at Newtown."⁵⁹

THE CLARK COUNTY RAILROAD

On May 20th, the editor of the *Times* reported: "So far the railroad committee have received no correspondence or propositions that warrants the calling of another general meeting of the citizens."⁶⁰ He was optimistic, however, predicting the proceedings had "opened a ball, which in the near future will result in another railroad to the city."⁶¹

The very same day, the Central's official car, No. 47, arrived in Marshfield. On board were General Manager William S. Mellen, several other officials of the railroad, and a civil engineer who set to work making a map of the grounds "for the purpose of locating new tracks for the accommodation of the company, and the building of a new passenger depot."⁶²

Two weeks later, on June 9th, a "party of surveyors, with a car of paraphernalia, arrived in this city... and took quarters in the Tremont House. The party are very reticent, and all attempts to interview them as to their intentions, and who they represent, has so far proved unavailing. Speculation was rife in the city yesterday as to their intention, but so far nothing has been ascertained. It is certain however, that they are here for a purpose."⁶³ Everyone was still guessing the following week as the *Times* reported:

"The surveying party mentioned as having arrived in the city, in the last issue of the *Times*, left the city on Thursday afternoon, setting their first stake near the wagon road crossing, on the west side. The headquarters of the party is still at the Tremont, and the line of survey so far, is nearly due west from the city. Rumors are still floating in the air, as to their intentions. The latest being that Maj. Upham has organized a scheme to build a road west and north-west from the city, through the large tracts of timber owned by the Upham Mfg. Co. in the west part of Marathon and east part of Clark counties, with a possibility of the road being extended to Loyal and Greenwood. Mr. Spaulding (Edmund M. Spaulding, Milwaukee), the engineer in charge of all of the employees on the survey, still declines to give information as to their intentions, and the Maj. smiles and gives the Irishman's evasive answer. — Don't you see what a fine town Marshfield is for three or four roads to center into."⁶⁴

PURIFIED BY FIRE!

MARSHFIELD IN ASHES! Upham Mfg. Co.'s Plant Wiped out of Existence! Over 250 Buildings Burned! These were the headlines of the July 1, 1887 edition of the *Times*. All speculation on the intentions of the surveyors was quickly forgotten. On the morning of Monday, June 27, 1887, Marshfield burned to the ground. The *Times* gave a detailed description of the unfortunate turn of events: "At 11:49 A.M. Monday, fire was discovered in the lumber yard of the Upham Mfg. Co. The department quickly responded, and within six minutes had three streams of water playing on the flames... but, it became evident that no power on earth could save the immense piles of lumber... Slowly but surely the flames crept back... northward to the W.C.'s water tank and depot, the beer ware houses..."⁶⁵ The WC also lost 12 cars and "2,500 feet of track... was bent and twisted into all shapes."⁶⁶

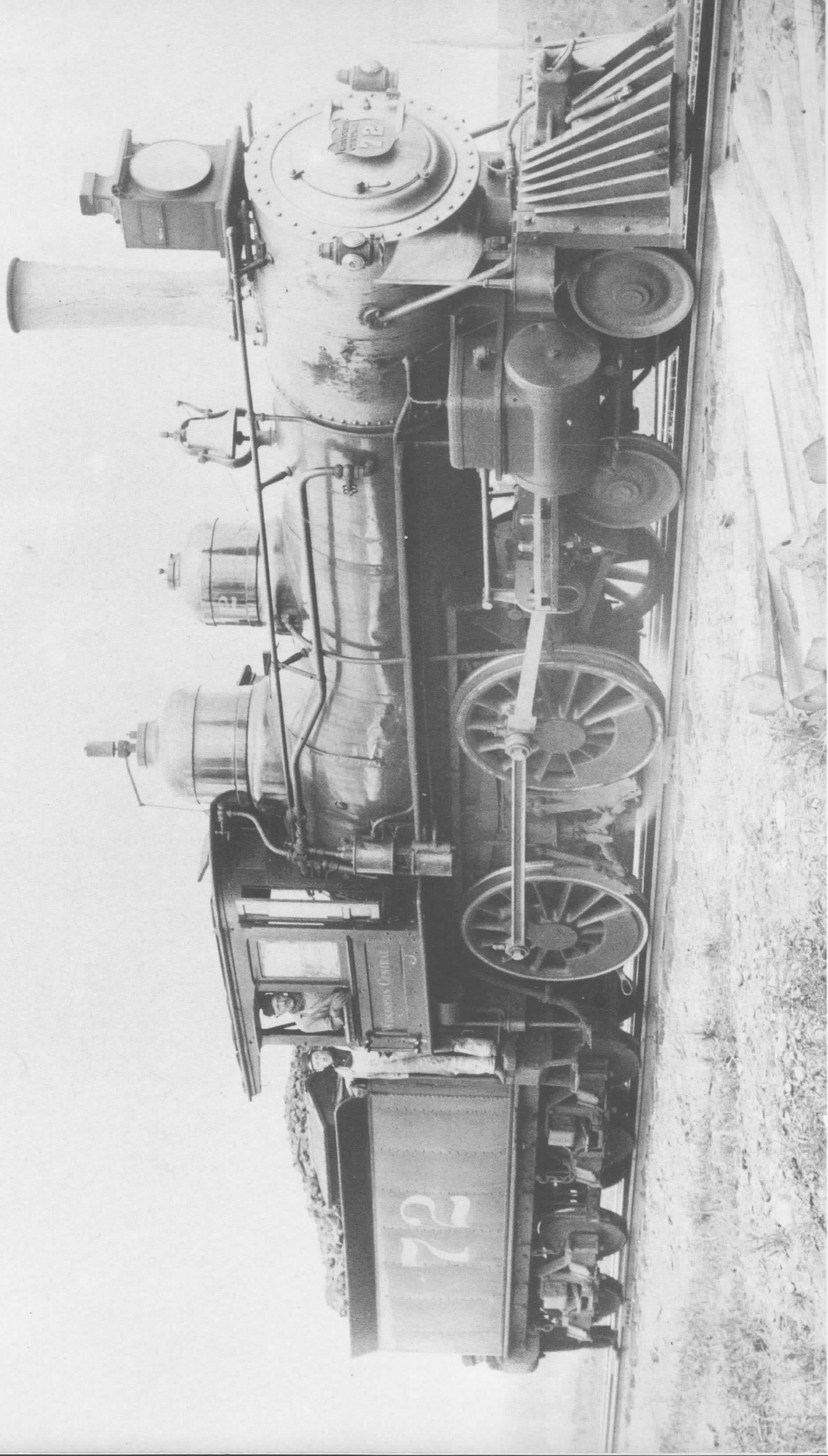
The next morning, promptly at 6 A.M., the stars and stripes were raised on Upham's flag pole, which meant that he would rebuild as soon as possible. He reported that he would have the mill running in 90 days. Some claimed that it was sparks from "Old Vanderbilt" that started the fire, while others blamed an engine on the Wisconsin Central.⁶⁷

Within a week of the fire, WC officials were in Marshfield looking over the grounds. It was decided to rebuild the depot on the south side of the tracks near Central Avenue. On July 7th the Upham logging train made a run to Spencer to move the F. F. Damon sawmill to Marshfield for use in sawing lumber to rebuild the mill.⁶⁸ And so, Marshfield was on its way back, determined to be stronger and better than before. Brick became the material for building the new stores and factories. The "Fire Demon" was not going to have its way again!

In November E. M. Spaulding, the engineer in charge of the surveying party that located the line of the "Clark County" railroad, was back in Marshfield. He was accompanied by his wife and they were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Upham.⁶⁹ The purpose of their visit was not disclosed at the time and, in all probability, Marshfielders were too busy rebuilding to be concerned.

However, the next spring, the news was out! The *Times*, of March 2, 1888, reported enthusiastically:

"A contract for the building of fifteen miles of the Clark County railroad, has been let to W. H. Upham. Nearly all of the right of way has been secured. With but a few exceptions no trouble has been had. Property owners generally seeing the future advantages to be derived from the road, have been very reasonable in their demands. In a few instances, and we are sorry to relate, within the city limits, exorbitant prices have been asked. In these few cases condemnation proceedings have been



Wisconsin Central No. 72 ran on the Marshfield Branch in the late 1890's. Shown here at Abbotsford, Wisconsin in 1904, she was renumbered 2014 in 1909. Courtesy State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Roy L. Martin collection, negative no. WHi (X3) 27257.



The five-man crew and one well dressed gentleman posed for the photographer with No. 2018, ex-Wisconsin Central 83. The five-car train is carrying white flags, suggesting it is an extra. The 4-4-0 was scrapped in 1913. Courtesy Dean T. Keding collection.

commenced, and the award will be made on the merits of the case. Sub-contracts for the clearing of six miles of the road have been let, J. R. Baxter having one mile, "Curley" Couture one section and P. Cranmer one. The first ground was broken this week. It is the intention of the Company to have the right of way cleared and everything ready for the graders as soon as the snow has vanished. The graders will be followed closely by the iron layers. This new line while being directly a feeder for the Wisconsin Central, will open up for this city a trade which it has never before enjoyed, the reason that heretofore there has been no means of reaching us. The line as projected will reach close to Heathville, and pass the whole distance through the richest of countries, both as to pine and hardwood timber, and as a farming country. Eventually the line will be extended to the Loyal and Greenwood sections, which when done will place this city in direct communication with the very best portion of Clark County. A continuation of the line to Chippewa Falls, and made a part of the Central system, would shorten their Chicago to St. Paul line by about twenty-five miles, and place them in fine shape to compete for the best fast train service, between those points."⁷⁰

This brief history of the "Clark County Extension" will be continued in part two, when the construction and operation of the railroad will be featured.

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