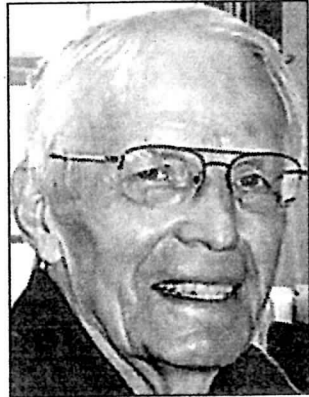


The Iron Horse arrive at the Bay ¹⁸² 2

Part II

Construction of The Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railroad into Wisconsin from St. Paul began in Hudson in 1871. Progress was slow and the line did not reach Trego until 1880. At Trego the railroad branched: one line continued north to Superior, completed in November 1882, while a second turned northeast toward Chequamegon Bay. By November 1880 the railroad had reached Long Lake (Lake Owen), near Cable. Beyond were two possible alternative routes. One possibility was to continue north into the Bayfield peninsula and then turn east into Bayfield, by-passing the Washburn site. The second possibility was to continue northeast toward the head of Chequamegon Bay, then follow the coast of the bay to Bayfield. In November 1880, with the track at Cable, crews were surveying the coast route. The track reached the head of the bay in the winter of 1882. By early May 1882, construction work had passed the end of Chequamegon Bay on the route to Bayfield.

In mid-January 1883 the roadbed was prepared to within nine miles of Bayfield, and in March piles were driven for bridges at Sioux River, Onion River, and Pike's Creek. By early June track laying was within 15 miles of Bayfield. In early August the roadbed was prepared for rails to within a mile of Bayfield, and the line was



Lars Larson ^{CJ} 12/6/12

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being graded within the village. But then a crisis arose. The railroad had petitioned the Bayfield County Circuit Court for condemnation of the land in the village, which it needed for a depot and other facilities, and for the appointment of commissioners to ascertain fair compensation to the owners of the land. But the owners demanded higher prices than the company was willing to pay. The railroad suspended construction work, giving as the reason a possible change in grade outside of the village. A rumor circulated, no doubt floated by the company, that the line would bypass Bayfield and the lake terminal would be constructed at Roy's Point, a promontory about a mile and one half northeast of Bayfield. True or not, the rumor galvanized the citizens of Bayfield to action. A meeting was held, the outcome of which was that the railroad was offered the property it needed for \$5,825, a proposition it immedi-

ately accepted. Finally, on October 12th the last mile or so of track was laid to the newly erected depot under the watchful eye of a crowd of Bayfielders, and at 4:04P the construction train reached the depot. There was no formal ceremony, but this is how the Press described the scene: "As the hands of the clock pointed to the hour, 4:04, the train halted in front of the depot, the star spangled banner was flung to the breeze, the old brass cannon belched forth flame and smoke, the whistles of the various steam vessels in the harbor united with those of the locomotive and the bells of churches and schools in one prolonged salute that echoed and re-echoed from hill-top to hill-top, while from the throats of the excited throng pealed cheer after cheer."

But for the second time, Bayfield's dream of becoming a major "inland sea port" had "gone-a glimmering." It was generally assumed that the Chequamegon Bay terminal of the Omaha would be at Bayfield, as provided in the 1856 Federal land grant act. But rumors began to circulate in May 1883 that as the Ashland Weekly Press reported, "The Omaha Company has decided to build their docks across the bay opposite Ashland, at the point between Vanderverter's Creek and McClellan." Rumor soon turned to fact, when the Press reported the following week that a "corps of engineers" had arrived "to take charge

of the work of building the coal docks" of the Omaha at that location. There was much speculation during these early years as to why the Omaha selected Vanderverter Bay rather than Bayfield as the site for its lake terminal. The answer is simply stated in the annual report for the company for 1882: "At Washburn where it is expected the principal transfer between rail and lake will take place, ample ground for tracks and building are secured, and a substantial dock 150x500 will be ready for use at the opening of navigation this coming season. The natural advantages of this point are its comparatively protected situation, uniformly sufficient depth of water without dredging, and a shore line readily adapted to a convenient track system, while it is reached from the south by a line limited for more than 150 miles to a maximum grade of eight-tenths and curvature of three degrees. Between Washburn and Bayfield, 13 miles, there are two grades of 80 feet to the mile, over which heavy freight traffic is not for the present anticipated."