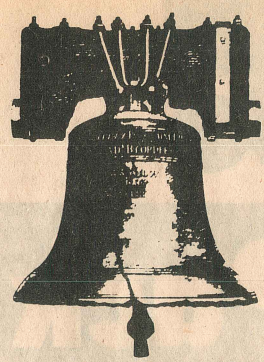


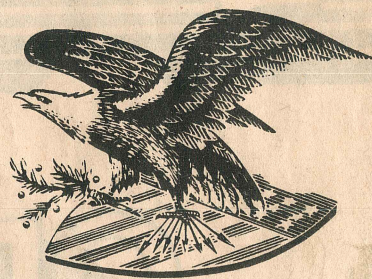
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AREA



BICENTENNIAL

1776-1976



"Remembrances of Days Gone By"



This is an overall view of construction work that was done on the double gauge track when construction work began back in April of 1912. The track was 3000 ft. long and 165 feet high. This photo was furnished by E. S. Wheeler, who was a mascot on the working crew.

History of Milwaukee Railroad Bridge

An old landmark died and a new one was born at 4:47 p.m. on Wednesday, October 24, 1973 as the first Milwaukee Railroad train crossed the new high rise railroad bridge.

This is the third generation of the railroad bridge as the original dates back to 1882 and takes its name from the contractor, a man named Brickley, who finished the grade between it and the west end of the Des Moines River Bridge. Builder of the narrow gauge bridge was the St. Louis, Des Moines and Northern Railroad. The dimensions of the bridge showed it half mile long and over 100 feet high. The grading and cutting of the hollows and hills was washed out more than one time during its construction between Woodward and the Des Moines River.

All the long pilings for the original railroad bridge and all the 10 x 12 inch square pine timbers were hauled from Woodward by a horse-drawn wagon. The west half mile of the bridge to the highland on the west was built with piling. The piling was driven in the ground as long as the wood, which had to be driven in the ground a predetermined number of feet and was done by raising a 1500 pound hammer and dropping it on the pile head. Then the piling was sawed off to a level for the first cross timber because the bent was placed with the proper number of uprights. Then the upper cross ties were supported with stringers from bent to bent. They supported the cross ties for the rail iron track to rest on. This part of the pile bridge was 1/2 mile long beside the span bridge across the main stream.

Narrow trains would be a curious novelty today but were definitely not then. In that time period, trains provided a major means of transportation to the north and south. It was a full day's undertaking to go to the county seat by spring wagon or horseback. But the trains remedied that situation. Traveling at breath-taking speeds of 20 and 30 miles per hour, the same

trip to Boone was accomplished in about 45 minutes while Des Moines could be reached in 75 minutes, a true marvel in those days.

Although the entire line covered only a distance of 40 miles, it's services were welcomed by the communities it passed through. Several small communities sprung up along the way and smaller towns began to prosper.

Because the line had to cross a river, a bridge of this type was inevitable. A village sprung up around the bridge and it became the official destination on the

railroad time schedule.

In places, the valley under the bridge was more than a mile wide and the floor of the valley was almost two hundred feet below the surrounding area.

In 1881 the Milwaukee Road built an east-west line that crossed the river between Madrid and Woodward. The railroad track curved down two little valleys that were roughly perpendicular to the Des Moines river valley and crossed on a low wooden structure that rested on wooden pilings. This stretch of railroad was one of many financed by Frederick M. Hubbell of Des Moines throughout the state.

The stretch however, was not of top efficiency. It was somewhat of a bottleneck on the line because of the depth of the valley.

The trains had to be broken into several small parts on one side of the river and reconnected on the other side.

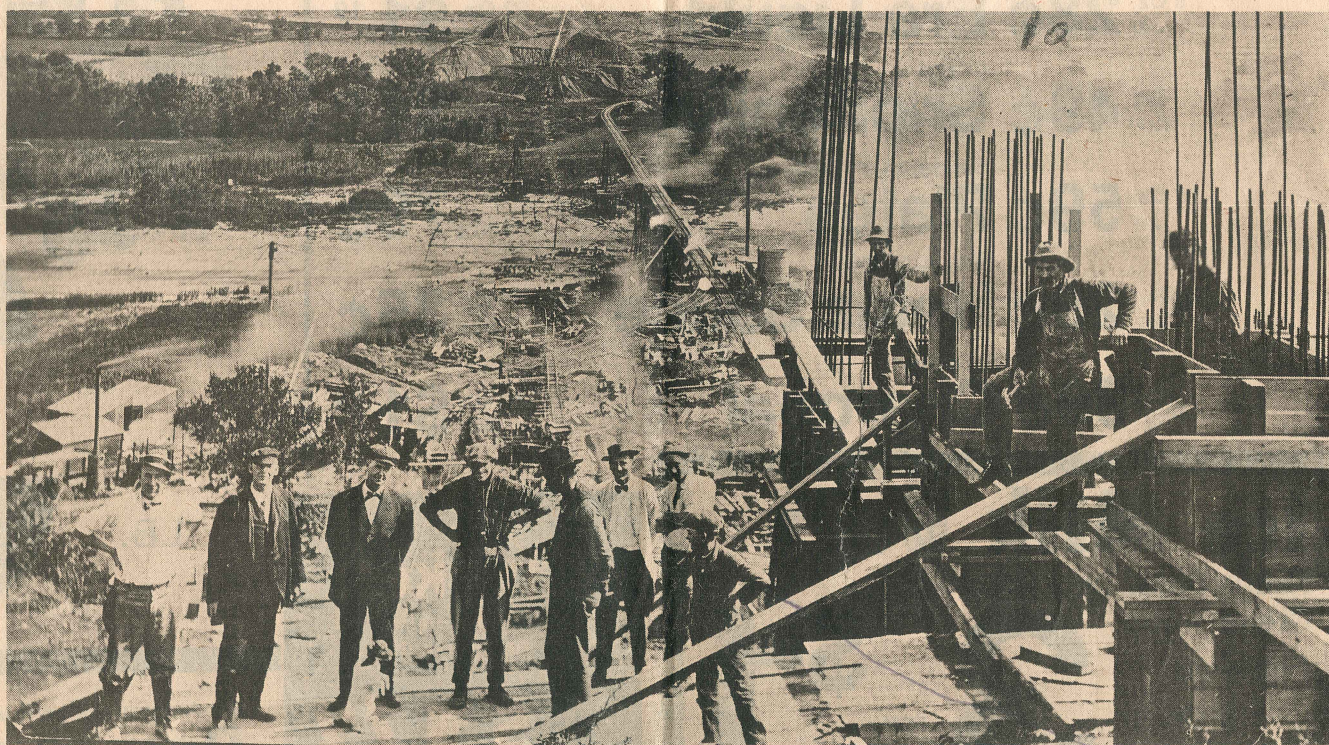
Even though this railroad was inefficient, it had a great effect on this particular area. A town named Zenia was on the west side of the river but being only a mile from the river it was too close to the valley for trains to stop and hook on more cars. The casual observer would never notice that a town once existed at this site.

Coal was mined in the valleys and brought out by a special double locomotive set-up. The Milwaukee Road shipped the coal to the industrial centers in the east. A substantial coal industry developed in the area and the community prospered in Woodward.

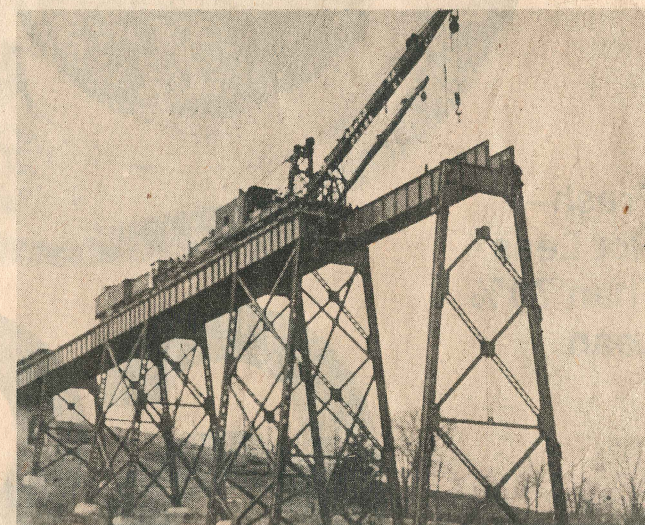
Traffic on the line was heavy and the interurban lines were the prevalent form of transportation between cities. A 1912 edition of the Woodward Enterprise listed twelve arrivals and departures to and from Perry each day. The same issue advertised a round trip ticket to Minneapolis for \$3.26.

Something had to be done about the bottleneck across the Des Moines River. In April 1912, the Milwaukee Road announced that a mammoth steel high bridge would be built across the Des Moines River and that the line would be double tracked. The bridge was to be of huge proportions and many local newspapers claimed it would be the longest bridge in the country and maybe the world.

Looking back over the years, it is a wonder how the first bridge remained as long as it did. Though the structures swayed a little when trains passed over, it never gave away. Nevertheless, the trains slowed down and it is well understood that all breathed a sigh of relief when the train once more reached terra firma.



This is the carpenter crew building the forms for the concrete abutments. Work on the piers can be seen toward the river with the mixing plant on the left. Across the river the pile driver is working and the end of the big dirt fill can be seen at the point where the supply railroad bends to the right. This photo was taken from the top of the abutment and the work going on in the valley gives you some idea how high these abutments were.



Girders are being set into place in this photo. As can be seen in the picture, the girders were very long in the structure and were set into place by use of a crane. Approximately 150-200 workers toiled on the structure that was completed in the summer of 1913.

The trains on the narrow gauge line always traveled in the summer but the adverse winter conditions of blowing winds and piling snow caused problems. As was stated in a 1956 issue of the Register-News, "Citizens are so familiar with the difficulties at this cut that they congregated on the track on Second Street when going got worse to bet on the possibilities of the train getting through, and usually those betting against it won."

This was one of the major reasons for the construction of the new steel double tracked bridge in April, 1912.

The 3000 ft. structure was to be 165 feet above the low water level. The concrete foundations were put into the ground twenty feet and below that were the pilings, a million and a half cubic yards, two hundred carloads of steel and a lot of sweat and toil from between 150 and 200 workers went into the structure. The cost of the project was unbelievable for that time.

Porter Brothers received the general contract while C. W. Marshall Construction Co. and the Lorimer and Gallagher Company had the dirt fill contracts.

Two miles upstream from the wooden bridge was the new location of the steel structure and for 200 ft. on either side, the ground was laced with railroad tracks.

The construction of this structure met with some difficulties that seemed insurmountable at the time. The Williams Cemetery posed a major problem. Many early settlers from a nearby settlement were buried in the unkept area around 1912, with the remaining tombstones telling of the hard times and epidemics.

The cemetery was located in the Dalander farm and had not been legally set aside or provided for when the land was purchased. The problem was that the area was situated just north of the right of way and the base was going to fill 50 ft. of the land and cover 30 graves.

A legal and moral question arose as the ghoul statute became a law of prosecution. This statute stated that only friends with authority or a relative could legally open a grave. The railroad wanted to move the graves to the other side of the cemetery, but this looked impossible as many graves were either unmarked or no living relative remained for those that could be identified. The local authorities apparently didn't prosecute.

Broken crane booms and the death of a worker also resulted, but the bridge was completed in the summer of 1913. The new bridge was a splendid structure for that day and very modern for its time. People drove from miles around to view the remarkable construction. It served as a popular connecting link for many main lines as 14 daily passed through Madrid. Today the once magnificent structure is no longer standing and all that remains are photos and memories.

One grows a bit nostalgic looking over the once important era and the part the railroad played in the early 20th century history.