

Epic of Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad

Geddes, including Wagner, Lake Andes and Platte, later Dante and Ravinia, were towns laid out by the railroad in 1900. The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad Company planned and promoted their towns and inserted influence in naming the streets, lot sizes and plats. Every street was parallel or perpendicular to the railroad. The town was laid out from one to nine plats - streets ran east and west, and avenues north and south. Business building lots were 25 feet wide to 156 feet long.

Avenues and streets were named for Presidents of the United States; animals such as deer, antelope; trees - Elm, Oak, Maple, and Pine; and for relatives and friends. Towns were named for statesmen, politicians, lakes, or Russian name such as "Volga". One town had a statue of Jesus Christ in the middle of the street directing traffic. The track right-of-way, warehouse and depot lots were platted when the railroad built through as well as lots for grain elevators, stock yards, and warehouses along the tracks.

In January and February 1900, the towns of Geddes, Platte and Wagner were platted and the sale of lots by the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad Company were held in Armour, South Dakota. The sale dates were Wednesday 21, for Geddes; Thursday, March 22 for Platte; and Friday, March 23 for Wagner. For the event, the Milwaukee railroad ran three sleepers to Armour and stayed there during the sale of the lots.

Promptly at 3:30, Wednesday afternoon, C. A. Padley, the townsite agent of the Milwaukee Road, stepped upon the

platform at the courthouse in Armour and, facing a crowd of about five hundred men, announced that the sale of lots in the new towns of the extension of the road into Charles Mix County was about to commence and that the first town to be sold was Geddes. Six lots on Main Street were reserved from the sale-four of which were for a \$6,000. hotel for which the railroad had closed a contract for construction, and two were for the offices of the townsite company. He then stated that the terms of the sale would be as follows: \$200 for corner lots on main street and \$150 for inside lots; \$100 for corner resident lots and \$75 for inside lots. The choice of lots were to be sold at auction and the bonus added to the cost of the lots. A 10% discount was given for cash and those desiring to buy on time would be compelled to pay one-third down and one year's time would be given on the balance at six percent interest.

With this brief statement, Mr. Padley introduced the auctioneer. The honor of buying the first lot went to James Hanskutt of Armour, who ran the bonus up to \$140 before it was sold to him. Adding this to the price of the lot, Mr. Hanskutt paid \$340 for the corner lot. The total sales of lots at Geddes amounted to \$10,020.

The lot sales of Geddes, Platte and Wagner were termed as a complete success according to the railroad officials. Shortly after the sale, several loads of railroad graders arrived in Armour for work on the railroad extension going to the new towns.

The sale of lots for the town of Lake Andes took place on

May 18, 1904 at Lake Andes.

The first depot agent for the town of Geddes was William Bowers; in 1911 the section boss was Peter Smith. The stage coach driver was Charles Kreitlow who brought mail and passengers in from distant towns to the railroad depots and who had carried passengers and mail, before the arrival of the Milwaukee Railroad, into Charles Mix County. Succeeding depot agents were L. C. Convey, W. E. Beck October 17, 1907, Bill Vandervoort, George Cole, Paul Gorman, Jerry Riley, and Frank Gorman who was the last agent when the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad ceased its runs.

The first railbed through Charles Mix County was built from Napa to Wagner and continued through Lake Andes, Geddes and Platte in 1900. Since there was no roundhouse built at Platte, plans were evidently made to continue further on to Chamberlain, but this did not transpire as time has confirmed. The length of the railroad in Charles Mix County was 82.2 miles.

May 5, 1979 the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad discontinued its run from Napa to Platte, South Dakota, passengers service had ceased in 1950. November 6, 1985 the Dakota Southern line began its maiden run into Charles Mix County with stops at Lake Andes and Platte (November 9) for planned welcoming ceremonies at both towns. Alex Huff, originally of Carthage, Texas is the owner and operator of the Dakota Southern. His runs will be subject to call for freight, grain and livestock. Mr. Huff will reside in Lake Andes, South Dakota.

THE RAILROAD DREAM

"The highways of Nations are the measure of their civilization":

Many grotesque and extravagant notions concerning a railway to the Pacific characterized the early years of its history. Notable among these was Carver's ideas concerning the prodigious cars of 200 feet in length which he proposed to run; to build arches over the rivers after the manner of the Roman's; and to have a rail gauge of eight feet wide. Mr. Perham suggested that a million men take \$100 worth of stock in the road which would then secure the \$100,000,000. necessary to build it. Another idea was to have a system of European immigration that should buy the land for work upon the railroad, thus securing the building of the railroad as the land was settled. Also excavations through the mountains would secure enough gold and silver to pay for the road.

Delegate Garfield of Congress, portrayed the mild climate of the country in glowing colors. He declared, "The winds from the Japanese current would follow the building of the road and make a banana belt from Puget Sound to Lake Superior."

Three routes were proposed -- one terminating at San Diego; the middle one at San Francisco; and the northern at the Strait of San Juan de Fuca on Puget Sound.

In 1854 Edwin F. Johnson of Connecticut published a book with a map, advocating the claim of the "Northern Route" to the Pacific. Under his careful hand, the project no longer seemed visionary and he served as Chief Engineer of the Enterprise.