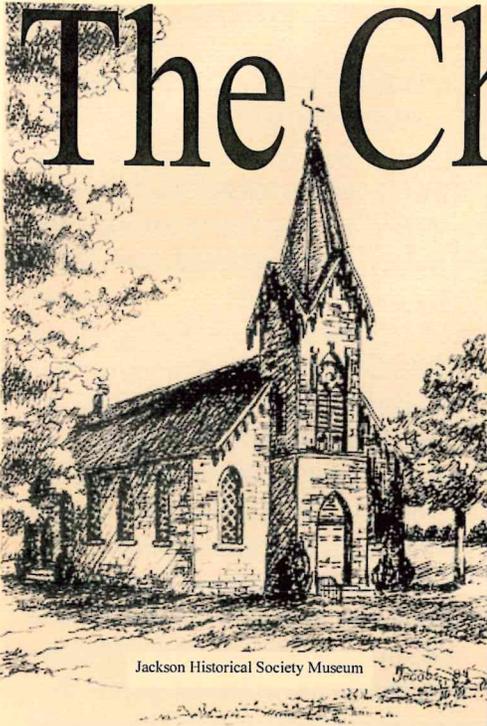


The Church Mouse



Jackson Historical Society Museum

Volume 32 Issue 1 Jackson Historical Society April 2024

THE RAILROAD CENTURY 1800's & early 1900's

When you examine how people and goods moved to or from or in the developing United States during its early settlement, it was often by water in boats or ships. On land, movement was by riding an animal, usually a horse, or by animal(s), usually horse or oxen, pulling a wagon, etc., or by walking. It was effective but slow. Variations were tried like plank roads which resulted in higher cost and maintenance and minimal gain.

The development of the Wisconsin Territory in 1836 and the Jackson Township in 1846, and the State of Wisconsin in 1848 all happened under these old methods of travel. The Village of Jackson was incorporated in 1912 with an advantage, a railroad and depot had been added to the Town of Jackson in the 1870's and growth had followed. The rules for traveling had been amended. The railroad age had arrived.

WHY DID THE RAILROAD CHOOSE JACKSON?

In the mid 1800's, Reisville was one of a number of small unincorporated hamlets in the Town of Jackson serving the farm economy. In fact, the Village of Jackson was not yet a village, and, was not yet called Jackson. That would come later. It was called Reisville, sometimes spelled *Riceville* to aid pronunciation, and was named after a Prussian farmer, Franz Reis.

Franz Reis had emigrated to the growing United States in the 1840's, settled in the Town of Jackson, worked hard, and used his earnings to buy farmland. Over time, he was able to accumulate many acres. What was needed to separate Reisville from the other Town of Jackson hamlets, was an event, and that event was the coming of the railroad.

About 1872, the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad was seeking to build a railroad from Milwaukee to Fond du Lac and was looking to purchase the land necessary to do so. As a major landowner in the area, Franz Reis sold the C & NW Railroad the necessary land, and then made a very important decision. He gave the railroad land for a depot. With the railroad not only passing through the area, but stopping at the depot, Reisville began to grow. Franz Reis built a large general store and a grain elevator. Other businesses followed. The coming of the railroad was the event that separated Reisville from the other hamlets and resulted in it becoming the Village of Jackson in 1912.



MEMBERSHIP DUES

Your annual \$20 dues cover a calendar year starting in January. The current year for your membership is shown on The Church Mouse address label.

Your dues help us preserve our historic site, Jackson history, and include The Church Mouse.

JHS MEETINGS TIMES

The Jackson Historical Society meets the 3rd Monday of every other month, Jan/Mar/May/Jul/Sep/Nov, at 7:00pm.

May/Jul/Sep held at 1860 Mill Rd., Jackson, in our restored, log home. Nov/Jan/Mar held in Jackson Town Hall.

jhsheritage.wi@gmail.com
Send mail to P.O. Box 197
Jackson, WI 53037

JHS OFFICERS

Clif Koeller—President
Russ Hanson—Vice President
Lenore Kloehn—Treasurer
Doris Koeller—Secretary

BOARD MEMBERS

JHS Officers, Elmer Kloehn,
Gordon Ziemann, Royal Natzke



EARLY ATTEMPTS TO BRING RAILROADS TO WISCONSIN

In 1836, the Wisconsin Territory was created and Governor Henry Dodge chose Belmont in the western lead mining area as the seat of government. With record lead production and lead prices high, transportation of lead to market remained a problem. In the fall of 1836, the new territorial government began granting railroad charters.

RAILROAD CHARTERS

Charters were necessary for any group wanting to build a railroad in the territory. They were a prize worthy of securing.

A charter is a grant of special rights and privileges given by a sovereign power to an individual or a company. A railroad charter granted the holder rights to build a public railroad across privately owned land. In the United States, charters were given by states or territories. The charter permitted companies to be formed and shares in the company to be sold to investors to help build the railroad.

Building a railroad was a costly venture and these early companies found it difficult to raise the necessary capital required to complete the charter agreement in the time allotted in the charter. The need for railroads was there, the money to construct them was not readily available.

One of the first charters issued by the new territorial government was for the Belmont and Dubuque Railroad to transport lead from the smelters to the Mississippi River and then by boat to St. Louis and New Orleans. This 23 mile railroad was to run parallel to a wagon road. An additional branch was to be built from Belmont to Mineral Point. Good idea, but the railroad was not built.

Another charter was issued for the La Fontaine Railroad. This railroad was to run some sixteen miles from the Village of La Fontaine at the foot of rapids on the Fox-Wisconsin River route to Winnebago City on the Northern shore of Lake Winnebago to eliminate a river portage. The railroad was not built.

In Kilbourntown (Milwaukee's west side) a charter was requested for the Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad. No charter was issued.

Subsequently, additional railroad charters were issued by Governor Dodge and the Territorial Legislature. Among the groups receiving charters was the Root River Rail Road Company for a railroad from Ball's Mill on the Root River to the head of the river's lower rapids with a privilege of extending the line to Racine, the Michigan and Rock River Railroad Company to build a railroad from Rock River at the Illinois State Line (Beloit) to a point on Lake Michigan at Southport (Kenosha), the Pekatonica and Mississippi Railroad Company for a railroad from Mineral Point to a point on the Mississippi River in Grant County. None of these railroads would be built. So ended initial attempts to develop railroads in Wisconsin.

Despite additional citizen petitions for railroad charters, this would be the last charter issued for the next eight years. Success would have to wait for statehood.

However, railroad building nationally remained active, including the Transcontinental rail link to the west coast.

WHEAT BECOMES MORE VALUABLE THAN LEAD

By 1843, wheat production had grown to exceed lead production in value in the Wisconsin Territory. The time finally seemed right for railroads.

In the years leading up to Wisconsin becoming a state, the Territorial Legislature issued four more railroad charters. Among them was The Sheboygan and Fond du Lac Railroad, The Lake Michigan and Mississippi Railroad, The Fond du Lac and Beaver Dam Railroad, and The Milwaukee and Waukesha Railroad (formerly the Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad). Even though many charters had been issued prior to these charters, the state still did not have an operating railroad. Only the Milwaukee and Waukesha would be developed into a railroad for Wisconsin. In fact, during the last session of the territorial legislature prior to statehood, its charter was amended to extend the railroad through Madison to the Mississippi River. The Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Mississippi Railroad finally had its charter and was ready to build.

Construction on the Milwaukee, Waukesha, and Mississippi Railroad began late in 1849 and laid its first tracks in 1850, the first railroad to lay tracks in the new State of Wisconsin.

Wisconsin had at long last, entered the railroad century.

CALIFORNIA HERE WE COME!

**Building the Transcontinental
Railroad**

East and West get connected.

Read on!



LINCOLN & THE TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD

Extending the railroad to the west.

Although President Abraham Lincoln is recognized for the north's victory in the Civil War, his success in shepherding the building of the Transcontinental Railroad was instrumental in the building of our nation.

Abraham Lincoln, the self educated, "backwoods" lawyer, early in his career was involved in many legal cases concerning our nation's transportation system including our growing railroad system.

One such famous case was a lawsuit concerning the first railroad bridge across the Mississippi River. The bridge, three years in the building and completed in 1856, connected Rock Island, Illinois and Davenport, Iowa, and was a major breakthrough for western travel and commerce. Riverboat operators previously had a monopoly on the movement of passengers and goods, and had tried unsuccessfully to block construction of the railroad bridge.

Fifteen days after the bridge's gala opening, a steamboat, the Effie Afton, struck one of its piers. A stove on the boat overturned, and the Effie Afton burned to the waterline. The bridge then caught fire and suffered extensive damage. The owners of the steamboat sued the railroad company that built the bridge, saying it was a hazard to navigation and should be dismantled.

The lawsuit would be a crucial test between the established river traffic forces and the upstart railroads. Springfield lawyer Abraham Lincoln was on the legal team defending the Rock Island Bridge Co. Lincoln handled the summation for the defense team. He displayed an impressive mastery of the pertinent data, and was able to demonstrate that the accident occurred not because the bridge was a hazard but because the Effie Afton's starboard paddle wheel failed. He also stressed the vital importance of allowing railroads to span the Mississippi. He said that east-to-west travel was "growing larger and larger, building up new areas with a rapidity never before seen in the history of the world." The trial resulted in a hung jury, which allowed the bridge to stand.

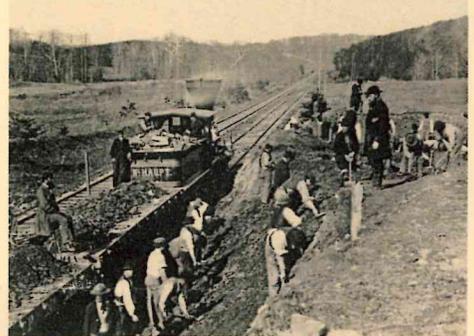
In 1857 and in 1859, Lincoln represented the Illinois Central Railroad in various legal matters. Handling these cases, Lincoln recognized the importance to the nation of continued expansion and development of the railroads.

After Lincoln's election as President, there was much discussion in congress concerning the building of a railroad link to the west coast. Two routes were proposed, a central route through Nebraska supported by Lincoln and the government and a southern route through Texas, supported by southern legislators.

In California, Theodore D. Judah, an engineer with the Sacramento Valley Railroad, convinced Leland Stanford, Collis P. Huntington, Mark Hopkins, and Charles Crocker, leading Sacramento merchants, to incorporate the Central Pacific Railroad Company as the western link for the central route preferred by President Lincoln.

Action to develop the Transcontinental Railroad was finally taken with the passage of the Pacific Railroad Act of 1862.

So, with the Civil War raging, the Lincoln administration began the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. This monumental task would link the developed rail network of the East with



rapidly developing California.

The construction of this great rail line extended past the



1865 end of the Civil War. In fact, in the later 1860's, many of the workers were discharged Union and Confederate soldiers.

On May 10th, 1869, with the driving in of the golden spike at Promontory Summit, Utah, construction of the railroad ended.

President Abraham Lincoln not only secured the Union victory in the Civil War, he also assured continued expansion and economic growth for the nation by promoting and seeing through the building of the Transcontinental Railroad.

Author Stephen Ambrose's book "*Nothing Like it in the World*" provides a more complete story on building the Transcontinental Railroad.



FREE PROGRAM
Thursday, March 11th, 2010

WORK'N ON THE RAILROAD

THE CHICAGO & NORTH WESTERN'S **AIR LINE** SUBDIVISION



BY JAMES H. YANKE

Jim Yanke joined us 14 years ago for our FREE Spring Program, a very interesting presentation on the state of railroading in our area. 2 years earlier, JHS had provided additional detail for his new book, the *C & NW'S Airline Subdivision*, with which he served his railroading career.

The Chicago and North Western Railroad operated their *AIR LINE Subdivision* from Milwaukee to Fond du Lac through Rockfield, Jackson, and West Bend. The railroad, begun in 1872, greatly affected the development of communities along the line, most certainly the Village of Jackson.

Join long time railroader, railroad historian, and author, James H. Yanke, for a conversation and photographic slide presentation on area railroad history.

The program was enjoyed by our large audience.

THE AIRLINE RAILROAD

About 16 years ago, the Jackson Historical Society was contacted by James Yanke about a book he was authoring on the Milwaukee to Fond du Lac, Chicago & North Western's Railroad that served Jackson. Jim, a long-time conductor on the line was looking for historical information that could assist him with the book. We were able to help, which was duly noted in the book. JHS was gifted a copy after publication and the book is also available at the West Bend Library.

AIRLINE RAILROAD?

We all know that trains can't fly! In fact, when the Airline term was first used with trains, about the main thing in the sky were birds. So how come the term was used with trains to describe a rail lines routing. If a railroad's route was "as the crow flies," straightest to the destination with no obstacles, it could be called an Airline Railroad. All it faced ahead was



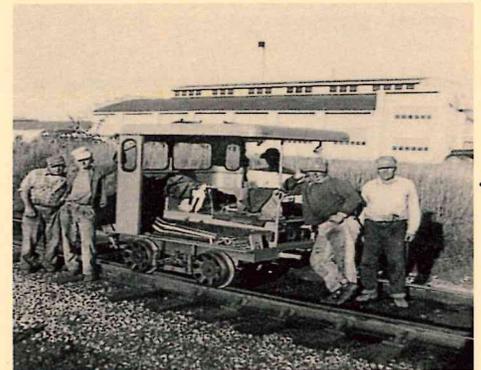
air! The Chicago and Northwestern line from Milwaukee to Fond du Lac qualified for the Airline designation, although it was the C&NW Subdivision that used the Airline title.

I REMEMBER WHEN

By Bill Lutz

Bill Lutz was a young boy growing up in Jackson who lived next to the railroad tracks across from the Jackson Cannery. In his own words, this is his story.

For years Dad worked for the Chicago & North Western Railroad as a section foreman with a crew of four or five men.



Living next to the railroad, I can remember the big black coal burning engines with all the heavy black smoke. Then came the fast running super powered passenger Streamliners going through Jackson at a fast rate of speed. After these, came the new style diesel engines that replaced all of the older styles.

In the cold of winter, dad and his work crew had to clean the track switches so the trains could switch tracks, and shovel the snow on the Jackson Depot platform. It was hard work in all kinds of winter weather. To clean snow from the tracks the railroad used a snow plow or when we had a extra heavy snowfall, a large snow blower. At these times, dad and his crew often worked for 24 to 48 hours straight.

At Christmas time during the 1940's and 1950's, round red wreaths with a red electric candle in the middle were hung in passenger car windows to wish everyone a

(Bill Lutz continued on page 6)



Helen Keller

A Life Nearly Lost

Presented by Jessica Michna

"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt within the heart."

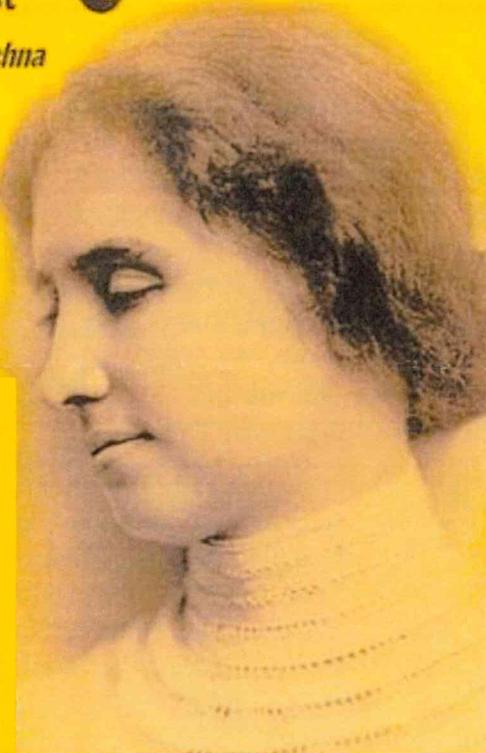
Thursday, May 23rd

Jackson Town Hall

Program 7:00 pm

Doors Open 6:30 pm

**Refreshments served
after program**



HELEN KELLER 1880-1968

In the late nineteenth century, a little girl struggled out of the depths of fear. At the age of two, Helen Keller experienced a life threatening illness. She was plunged into a dark, silent world, becoming blind and deaf. For several years it seemed as though Helen's life would never improve. Then, Ann Sullivan, in 1887, a determined young teacher, would find the key to unlock Helen's prison. Through Anne's diligence and perseverance, Helen would become a world renowned speaker and advocate for the disabled.

Join Jessica Michna as she presents *A Life Nearly Lost*, at the **Jackson Town Hall**, on **Thursday, May 23rd** at **7pm**. **Doors open 6:30pm**. The program is **FREE**.

The **Jackson Town Hall** is located **south** of the round-about on Highway 60 (east of the Village of Jackson). **Exit the round-about South onto Division Road**. Look for the **Jackson Town Hall sign on the East side of Division Road** and turn into the drive to the parking area.

"The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision!"

"When one door closes, another opens. But we often look so regretfully upon the closed door that we don't see the one that has opened for us"

Helen Keller Quotations

JHS HAPPENINGS

Last summer I was very pleased to spend some time at our JHS historic site with Gordon Ziemer and Sherrill Cloud, long time JHS members from New Mexico. Gordon has strong family ties to our area.

Gordon's Great Aunt was Elizabeth Ziemer, wife of Carl Bruesewitz who bought Karl Groth's 80 acre farm, just west of JHS. Karl Groth bought the 80 acres from the U.S. Government and farmed the land for 18 years. Carl and Elizabeth Bruesewitz raised a family and farmed the Groth property for 23 years. JHS had the two story log home from the Groth farm moved to our site and restored. It is open by appointment.

I want to thank Gordon and Sherrill for spending a too short, but enjoyable and informative time with me at JHS. I learned a lot and hope it was shared. Our welcome mat remains out for a return visit!

Thank you for the very enjoyable visit. And thank you for your kind donation to JHS.



AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETIES COMING EVENTS

RICHFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY Art at the Mill, June 15th., 2024, Richfield Historical Park, 1896 State Rd. 164. Monthly meeting programs at the Richfield Fire Hall, *April 25, "Deaths Door: True Tales of Tragedy, Mystery, and Bravery from the Great Lakes' Most Dangerous Waters"* - Barbara Joosse; *May 23, "Dad, what did you do in the war?"* - Nancy Martin. contact richfieldhistoricalsociety.org. for event details.

GERMANTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY *50th Anniversary Biergarten Party, Saturday, July 13th, 2024, Noon—6pm.* Contact the Germantown Historical Society at germantownhistoricalsociety.org. for details.

POMMERSCHER VEREIN FREISTADT Contact Pommerscher.org. for events info.

THE TOWER HERITAGE CENTER 320 S. 5th Ave., West Bend, WI 53095. Please contact www.thetowerheritagecenter.org or call 262-353-4678 to learn about their many historic sites and scheduled events.



The Editor welcomes newsletter comments. Please mail all suggestions for articles, etc., to

***** The Church Mouse, P. O. Box 197, Jackson, WI 53037, or phone (262) 353-3641 or e-mail jhsheritage.wi@gmail.com Russ Hanson, Editor**

(Bill Lutz continued from page 4)

merry Christmas. It became a Christmas custom in our house in early December to hang a round red wreath with a red electric candle in the middle of a window on the track side of our home's living room. As many railroad men knew Dad lived in that house, it was Dad's way of wishing them all a merry Christmas.

I also remember a time when a big, long circus train rolled very slowly through Jackson.

There was a big train wreck in Jackson on April 11th, 1958. Although the wreck happened only about 200 yards from our house, it happened at night when we were all sleeping and we didn't hear a thing. Dad got a call from railroad headquarters to confirm a possible train wreck in Jackson. The wreck took a long time to clean up and get everything working again.



The railroad tracks also provided wild strawberries which mom and I used to pick by the bucketful. We also gathered wild asparagus along the tracks. We got to know all the best



spots along the way.

There were also many times I'd walk on the tracks a mile south to the trestle over Cedar Creek to fish for rock bass. I had to learn to clean the fish I caught if I wanted to go fishing.

We moved from Jackson to West Bend in 1960. Dad continued to work for the railroad in Jackson and later in West Bend. He retired from the Chicago and North Western Railroad on January 25th, 1966 with more than 35 years on the job.

Growing up in Jackson created many lasting memories.

TODAY WILL BE HISTORY TOMORROW

HELP THE JACKSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESERVE YOUR YESTERDAYS—JOIN US

VISIT YOUR HISTORY AT OUR 1860 MILL ROAD SITE—APPT. ONLY PLEASE