

Courtesy Dale Jones Collection www.railroads-of-montana.com

traversed the densest and most productive timber district in the world. This road is built over the very line surveyed by Governor Stevens.

The Northern Pacific Railroad Company, I believe, would have adopted this same route had it not been for the fact that 358 miles of the route, between Fort Buford and the Teton River in Montana, at the time their charter was granted, was owned and occupied by several tribes of Indians, whose country was protected by treaty stipulations with the United States, so that the land could not be granted to any railroad company. So they took the Yellowstone route, and, fortunately for us, this secured two continental competing roads across Montana.

As it was, Congress had to pass an act to even allow the Manitoba company to buy their right of way through Indian reservations north of the Missouri, and have since, by treaty, extinguished the Indian title to nearly this whole country from Fort Buford to the summit of the Rocky Mountains, and from the Missouri River north to the British boundary, and thrown open to settlement nearly 18,000,000 acres of land, where thousands are to-day finding homes along the line of the Manitoba Railroad, thus adding vastly to the population and wealth of the soon-to-be new State of Manitoba. To the foresight and energy of this company we owe the diminution of the great Indian reservation north of the Missouri.

THE MONTANA CENTRAL RAILWAY.

The histories of the construction of the Manitoba and Montana Central railways are so intimately connected that they must be written together, for they are almost one in ownership and closely connected in management. The able coadjutors of President Hill, of the Manitoba Railway in Montana, were and are still Col. C. A. Broadwater, president of the Montana Central, and Hon. Paris Gibson, the founder of the city of Great Falls, on the Missouri River; and here it will be necessary to diverge a little from the history of railroad building in Montana to give the reasons that caused these roads to be built at all when they were, and the part these gentlemen took in the business.

The Northern Pacific and the Canadian Pacific railroads had been completed before 1886. The consequence was that one or the other did all of the freighting and passenger traffic of Montana north of Helena, except the little that was done by way of the Missouri River.

There was little market for the agricultural products of northern Montana, for the great wagon trains that had transported all the freights from Fort Benton to Helena for distribution all over the Territory, amounting to many thousands of tons a year, and all the return freights to Fort Benton, and which had done all the freighting from Missouri River points to all the military forts and Indian agencies and trading posts since 1864, were disbanded and the horses and mules sold and the oxen turned out to fatten on the rich grasses of the prairies, and they did not longer require the oats or hay of the farmer.

The great "Diamond R Company," of which Colonel Broadwater was a member, used 1,200 head of oxen, and many mules and horses, and there were many smaller companies and individual freighters. Thus were the markets of the farmers destroyed, the railroads buying but little of them. This was a dark time for the people of northern Montana. The merchants and farmers suffered alike. There was, however, a redeeming feature which kept the country alive. Many people had engaged in the business of raising cattle, horses, and sheep, and these and the wool produced sold for ready cash. The surplus was shipped from Fort Benton by river to a market. Their sale brought money into the country, and farmers engaged more in stock raising. So they suffered only for a time.

At this time everybody felt that there was a necessity for railroad connections with the East either by Helena and the Northern Pacific or by a road north of the Missouri. The question was how to get them. They were not able to furnish the means. But relief was at hand.

Some years before, Hon. Paris Gibson, who had owned large woolen mills in Minneapolis, and was thoroughly experienced in the use of water-power, in operating machinery, and knew its economic value, had settled in Fort Benton. In the summer of 1879 he was prevailed upon to go and examine them. He was astonished at the vast power that was available, since estimated by the best hydraulic engineers in the country to be over 1,000,000 horse-power. He also found that what had been told him was true: that the whole country on both sides of the river, from the mouth of Sun River, half a mile above the first rapid down to below the Great Falls, a distance of over 12 miles, was unsurveyed and unoccupied government land. So in the winter of 1882 and 1883 he visited St. Paul and Minneapolis and conferred with capitalists there, who knew that the water-power at the Falls of St. Anthony had been the principal means of the building up of two great cities.

Fortunately he succeeded in interesting J. J. Hill, of St. Paul, in buying up the lands on both sides of the Missouri, from the mouth of Sun River to the foot of the Great

Falls. Mr. Hill did not do this, however, until his Montana friend, Col. C. A. Broadwater, who personally knew the whole country tributary to Great Falls, and the vast resources in which it abounded, had advised him that there was hardly such another opportunity on earth to make so safe and profitable an investment.

In May, 1884, Col. J. T. Dodge, an able and accomplished engineer, who had superintended the construction of the Rocky Mountain division of the Northern Pacific from Livingston, on the Yellowstone, to Garrison of the Hell Gate River, made a boat survey of the Missouri River, from a point opposite Helena to the Great Falls, to ascertain the practicability of following the shore of the river with a grade for a road. This he found perfectly practicable from the mouth of the Little Prickly Pear, a point 40 miles north of Helena. This involved three short tunnels, and the grade was no greater than the natural fall of the river the whole way to the Falls. It also avoided the terrific grades and much longer line across the Dearborn range.

At Great Falls Colonel Dodge met Mr. J. J. Hill and Colonel Broadwater. They visited all the rapids and falls of the Missouri and explored all the work that had been done in opening the veins of coal along the noted Sand Coulee coal mines, and also observed the surrounding country and the rich Sun River valley on the way to Helena. From here they visited the mines at Marysville and around Helena and made a very satisfactory examination of the great silver and copper mines at and around Butte. Mr. Hill and Colonel Broadwater returned to St. Paul, and the people of Montana could only surmise for a long time what had been decided upon.

Meantime the town site of Great Falls had been surveyed and platted and lots were offered for sale. Messrs. Hill & Co. during all of 1884 and 1885 had many prospectors at work exploring for coal at Sand Coulee, near the Great Falls, and several thousand acres were filed on in the United States Land Office for patent.

The Red Mountain Branch from Helena to Rimini, 15.7 miles in length, was located by Engineer E. H. Beckler in January, and the grading was completed in April, 1886, but it has not yet been ironed. Col. J. T. Dodge had made a preliminary survey of the line in September, 1885.

In January, 1886, a small party of engineers, under the charge of E. H. Beckler, went out to make a preliminary survey between Helena and the mouth of the Prickly Pear. On the 24th of January Colonel Dodge, with a well-equipped party, left Helena, and that evening, in a severe snow-storm, camped at the upper end of the Prickly Pear Canyon and rapidly surveyed and located a line through it to the Missouri, 40 miles from Helena, and thus took possession of it.

It was given out in the papers that a railroad was to be built as quickly as possible to the Sand Coulee coal fields to supply Helena, Butte, and Wickes, and many smelters with coal. Nothing was said or known about the continuation of the Manitoba Road from Minot to Montana, and the Northern Pacific people seemed well satisfied that the Montana Central would be a valuable feeder to it.

During the season of 1886 a good deal of grading was done on the line and tunnel work was prosecuted all the next winter, so that it was sure that the line could be completed in the year 1887. It was understood that an agreement had been made with the Northern Pacific Company by which they were to bring all the rails needed for the Montana Central from Duluth to Helena for \$15 per ton.

Before the winter was over it was said that owing to a disagreement between the Northern Pacific Railroad and the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway about a rumored extension of the latter road towards Montana, thus invading the territory claimed by the Northern Pacific Railroad Company, that the rails for the Montana Central Railway would not be brought from Duluth at less than \$33 or \$35 per ton. This proved true. Colonel Broadwater went to St. Paul and conferred with Mr. Hill.

It was decided then and there to build the Manitoba road into Montana, and to bring the rails over it for the Montana Central, and thus the wonderful feat of building 648 miles of railroad in one season (except some grading on the Montana Central Railway), so graphically described by Mr. Hill in his speech before quoted, was accomplished, and the people of northern Montana have the choice of two competing routes to the East.

The immediate result of the construction of these two roads was to reduce freight and passenger rates 20 per cent., which was of vast benefit to the people of Montana.

The most of the grading on the line of the Montana Central Railway was done during the summer of 1887, between Helena and Butte. But it took all of the winter of 1887-'88 and until November, 1888, to complete the great tunnel between Wickes and Boulder City. It is over 6,112 feet in length. The first train passed through the tunnel on Wednesday, October 24, 1888. On the 12th of November regular through trains commenced running between St. Paul and Butte City, Mont., thus giving that vast mining city and county the choice of three railroad routes to the East, and two to the Pacific coast. Of course this caused 20 per cent. reduction in freight and passenger rates from former prices.

From Butte a connection with the Union and Central Pacific roads has been made, so

that freights and passengers are carried as on one continuous line between St. Paul and San Francisco.

To the perfect knowledge of the northern part of Montana, of its unlimited pasture fields and rich agricultural soil, its vast mines of coal and iron, and of silver and copper, of the necessities of a numerous and increasing population, by Col. C. A. Broadwater, and of the value of the great water-power, and of the necessity of acquiring the lands to control it on both sides of the Missouri for 15 miles in length, and to a thorough practical knowledge of the rich resources of the whole of northern Montana by Paris Gibson, and to the clear perception of J. J. Hill, of all the facts reported by the gentlemen above named to him, and to his quick decision to extend his Manitoba system to the heart of Montana, we owe the speedy construction of the Manitoba and Montana Central railways.

The length of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba in Montana is 408 miles, and of the Montana Central from Great Falls to Butte City completed 171.6 miles, the Marysville branch 6.4 miles, and the Sand Coulee branch 15.7 miles, and of graded road-beds from Helena to Rimini 15.7 miles (not ironed), making the totals of the two completed roads 617.4 miles.

These companies have both failed to answer my inquiries as to the business done during the year 1888, for the simple reason that the through lines did not commence to do through business until in November, 1888.

Recapitulation of railroad mileage complete in Montana at end of 1888.

	Miles.
Union Pacific (or U. and N.) Pleasant Valley to Butte.....	140.0
Montana Union, Silver Bow to Garrison	44.0
Montana Central and branches completed.....	193.7
St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba to Great Falls.....	408.0
Northern Pacific in Montana:	
Main line.....	781.9
Branches	217.3
	999.2
Total in 1888.....	1,784.9
Add Billings and Rocky Fork road, completed in March, 1889.....	45.0
Total completed road in Montana.....	1,829.9

TELEGRAPH LINES.

Montana is well supplied with telegraph facilities.

(1) Western Union has wire in Montana—

	Miles.
On Northern Pacific Railroad and branches.....	4,504
On Manitoba, in Montana.....	785
On Union Pacific and branches	400
Total	5,689

Number of Western Union offices in Montana, 148.

Number of messages handled at Helena per month, 75,000.

(2) Rocky Mountain Telegraph Company connects with Canadian Pacific Railroad and postal lines for all principal points East and West. It has 938 miles of wire in Montana. It connects Butte and Helena with Medicine Hat, on the Canada Pacific, 625 miles, and has 163 miles of wire on the Montana Central. There are no relay messages. It has thirty-two offices in Montana. It handles 3,750 messages per month at Helena. Line is new, and commenced in spring of 1888.

TELEPHONES.

The principal towns of Montana are joined in a circuit, and are connected by 300 miles of wire. There are central offices in 20 towns, and 600 instruments in use. Inside of Helena and Butte, each have 15 miles of wire. It is in very general use, even to connect mining camps with towns and business centers.

IRRIGATION IN MONTANA.

The first water ditches constructed in Montana were for the purpose of washing the sands and gravel bearing gold along the various bars and gulches, where it was found. A great number of these ditches were built from 1862 to 1869. According to the only record