



Explore the Road to Itasca...
and Beyond

BYWAY BUZZ

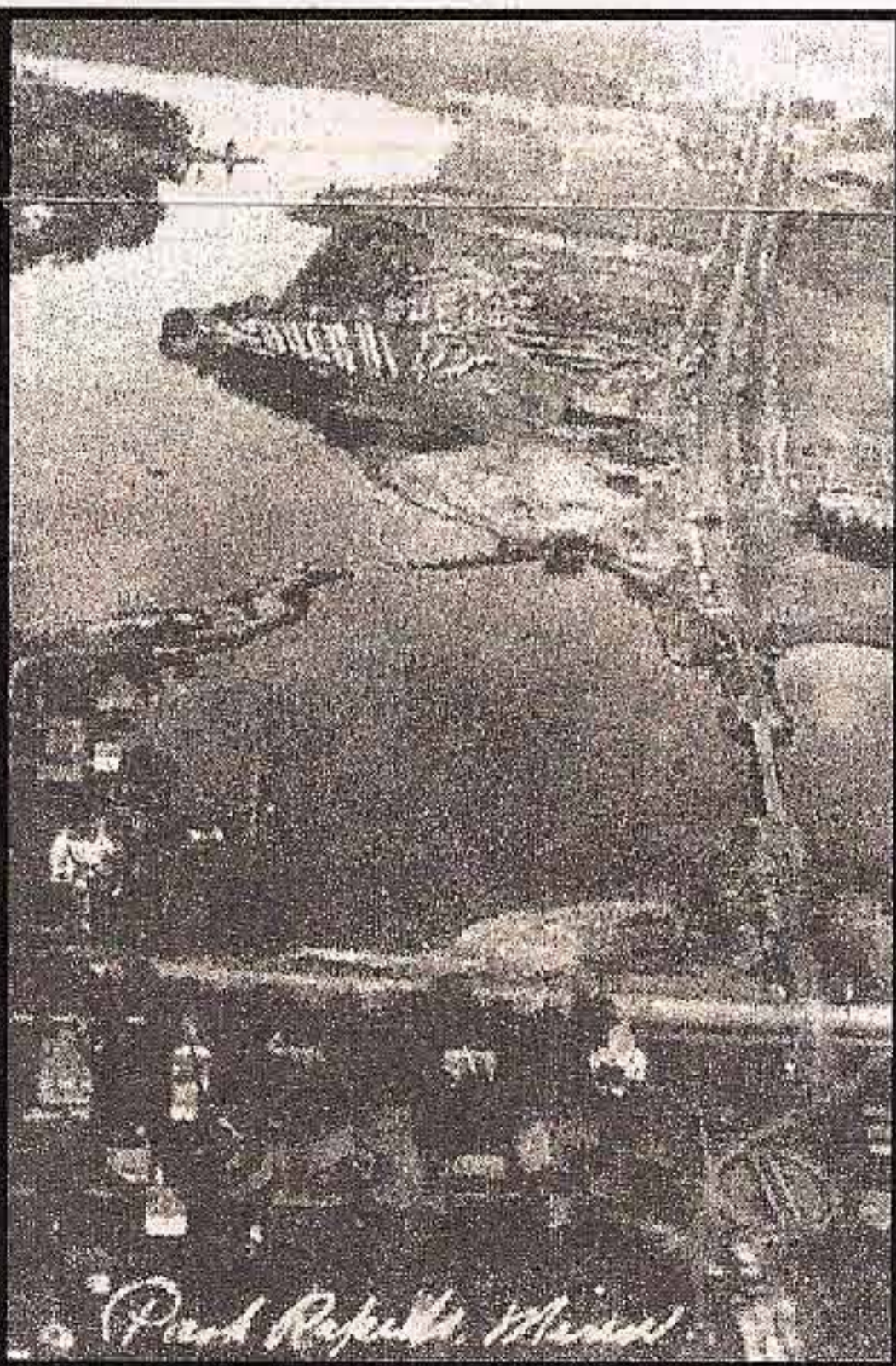
LAKE COUNTRY SCENIC BYWAY NEWSLETTER

January 2005

Hubbard County Railroads

Railroads were an important factor in settling the vast expanse of prairies and forests in northern Minnesota. Every town and settlement hoped for rail service for their community. Many towns either thrived or died due to the route of the railroad.

In the early 1880's the Great Northern had built a line from Sauk Centre to Eagle Bend. Quoting from Dr. Wallings writings, "It was a long and tedious job to get a railroad built to the Shell Prairies. In 1884 a company known as the Wadena and Park Rapids Railroad Company was organized and preliminary survey was run between the



Notice turntable in lower right hand corner.

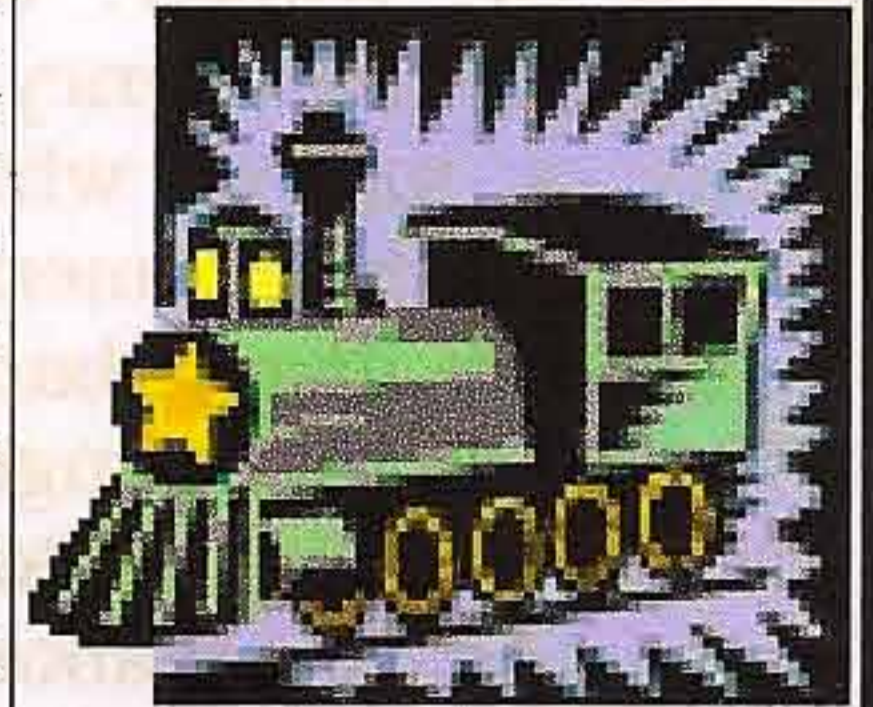
two towns." It was several years later when the Great Northern began work on extending the line to Park Rapids. It was on that long awaited day of August 1, 1891 when the tracks had all been laid and the first excursion train arrived at 10 A.M. in Park Rapids. The first trains were scheduled to run as far as Eagle Bend there days a week and return on alternate days. The train left Park Rapids at 6 A.M. and returned anywhere from 6 P.M. to 11 P.M.

Since this was the end of the line for a number of years, a turntable was built close to where the Great Northern Café is now. This of course was used to turn the engine around for it's return trip. The engine and tender were run onto the turntable in such a way that they were perfectly balanced over the ball bearing, then turned by hand. In the bottom of the pit a track was laid around the outside for support wheels on the turntable to run on. The only purpose of this was to support the turntable bridge as the locomotive entered or exited the turntable. An engine house or round house was built

close by with one or two sets of tracks into it for the purpose of running the engine in for maintenance or repairs. The only operable turntable in Minnesota is a 70 foot long one at Currie, MN. This is located at "End-O-Line Railroad Park" in Currie and is open to the public.

In 1897 the line was extended from Park Rapids to Akeley, to Walker in 1898 and onto Cass Lake in 1899.

After the Railroad was extended to Cass Lake, a passenger train nicknamed "The Blueberry Special" was begun. This was a daily train which ran Cass Lake to Minneapolis. This continued until the passenger was discontinued on January 15, 1952. The freight service continued for freight and pulpwood. The last freight train left Park Rapids on February 11, 1984. This was the Burlington Northern as conductor Robert Wenz and brakeman Pat Knettel waved a final goodbye, putting an end to an important part of history of railroads in Hubbard County.



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- Allen & Sharon Friedman
- Archie & Helen Henderson
- James Keller
- Mary Luetgers
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- Frank Mitchell
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A Big Scare - Frank J. Mitchell

It was June of 1893. Word came to Park Rapids that there would possibly be an uprising at the Indian Agency at Leech Lake.

It all started on Sunday night when Dr. Walker, who was in charge of the agency had taken away a jug of whiskey from some Native Americans and refused to give it back to them. This made them angry and they attacked Dr. Walker with a club. As Dr. Walker retreated around a wagon he tripped and the revolver he had drawn for protection accidentally discharged hitting a Native in the face and neck. This aroused the Native Americans who surrounded Dr. Walker's residence that night. As they waited to learn the fate of their wounded companion, sheriff Moran was summoned. Several Citizens joined with sheriff Moran in calling the Governor to send troops to Leech Lake. The troops were dispatched on Tuesday evening going through Brainerd then on foot or in wagons to Leech Lake.

Heavy drinking had been

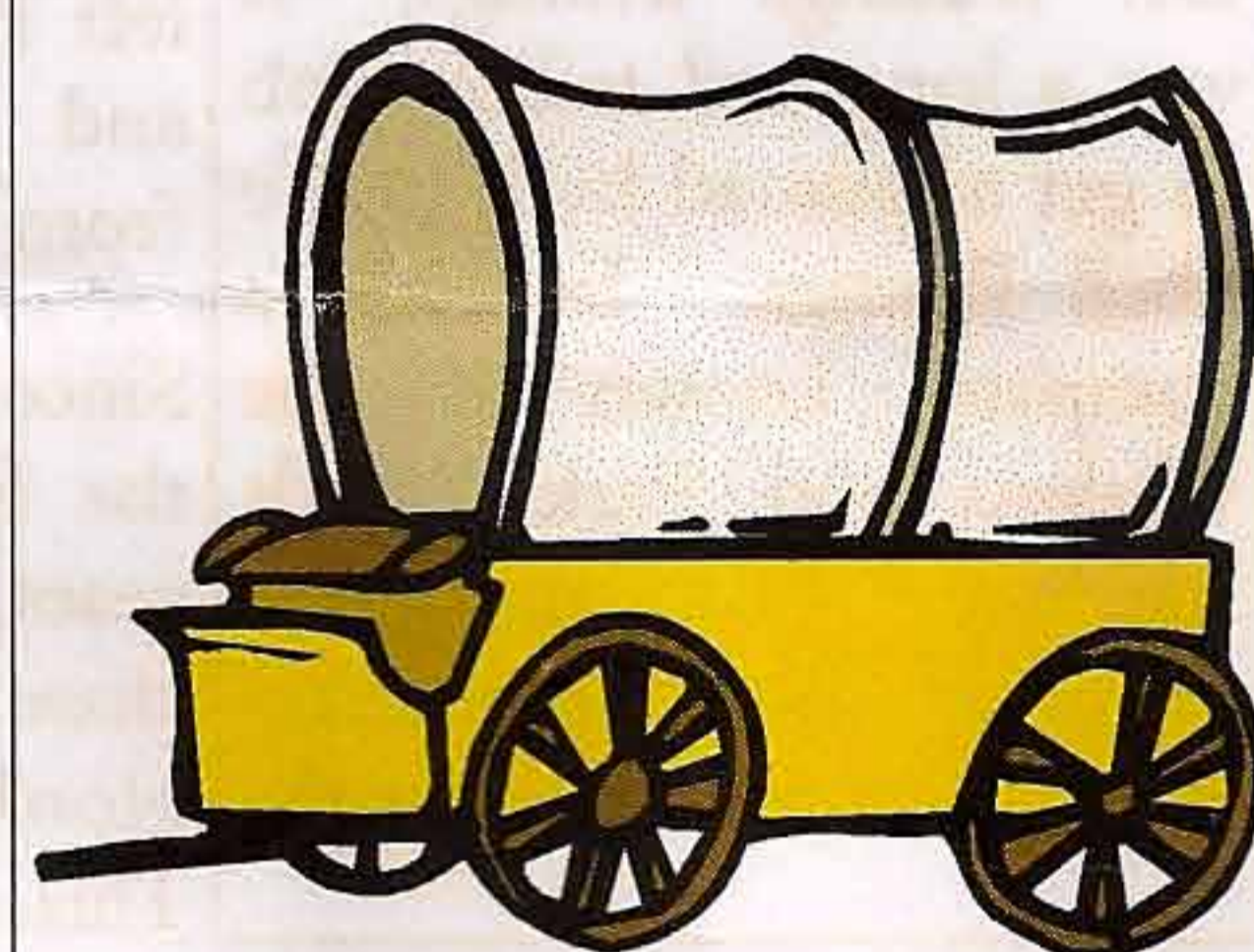
reported on Sunday evening when the trouble started. In the meantime Dr. Cutler of Park Rapids volunteered to go to Leech Lake to save the life of the victim and do what he could to prevent further consequences. When Dr. Cutler returned to Park Rapids Wednesday morning he reported that things looked pretty bad at first but since the wounded man was not as seriously wounded as at first appeared and with the troops arriving at the agency the Native Americans had quieted down.

However there was a great deal of excitement here and with a small amount of urging a company of volunteers could have been formed and moved to Leech Lake as needed. Rumors came thick and fast and it looked like there might be serious trouble.

The editor of the Enterprise criticized the Pioneer Press for urging the Governor to send a troop to Brainerd instead of Park Rapids since Leech Lake is only 45 miles from Park

Rapids but 75 miles from Brainerd. The Pioneer had referred to poor roads from Park Rapids and the fact that wagons were not available here. The fact is that the roads were good and the wagons could have easily been found to haul the troops. The editor said that no one here had been asked and this was not the first time "that the Pioneer had gone out of it's way to deliberately tell what it knew to be a contemptible falsehood about Park Rapids."

So there was no uprising at the Leech Lake Agency and everything was settled peacefully.



The Ojibwe Legend of Leech Lake

Provided by Maude Bragg Orton in her book "Birth of a Village".

Many moons before any Ojibwe can remember, when the only people across this land were a woman and her daughter, an evil spirit came down and captured the maiden. He carried her away to a great dry plain, left her there, and returned to live in his own wigwam of solid rock.

Confined to this place of loneliness and destitution, the maiden was visited by an emissary of Hiawatha - the Supreme Deity of the Indians. He gave her a peculiar black rock and told her to make it into a spear. Then he showed her where to strike it against the rocks of the great dry plain.

The maiden did as the Great Spirit had instructed, and at once a great roaring of water gushed out and flowed rapidly over the plain. It began to fill in all the vast space, and as it did, the maiden climbed higher and higher up the rocks until she reached the top. When the waters ceased to rise, the evil spirit was imprisoned some distance away in another part of the big rock, surrounded by water and compelled to remain there for all time.

One day, the Indian maiden escaped in a canoe which floated out to her from shore. The land on which she climbed was Bear Island, and the waters are how Leech Lake was formed.