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Building iron rails to their future: Examination of Davenport, Iowa's antebellum relationship with the Rock Island Line and Mississippi and Missouri railroads

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**Building iron rails to their future: Examination of Davenport,
Iowa's antebellum relationship with the Rock Island Line and
Mississippi and Missouri railroads**

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Program of Study Committee:
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Iowa State University

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis in loving memory of my grandparents Roger and Opal Lenz. I miss you both terribly. I would also like to thank my family. It was their faith in my endeavor that supported me when my own spirit flagged.

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Introduction

Traditionally, historians have focused on two major periods in America's nineteenth century railroad history. The first was the initial state of railroad construction as typified by the 1820s efforts of Baltimore building of the Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road to extend its commercial and banking reach eastward. The second was the concentrated push following the Civil War to establish a true trans-continental railroad to link the western coast of the nation with the eastern half and to standardize rail transportation connecting North and South. In most cases, historians place railroad-connected communities in one of two camps related to the periods covered. This narrow categorization interprets communities as either well established and building railroads to expand their already broad commercial reach to other markets or as largely fledgling municipalities established to either service the railroads themselves as they built to the west or markets established from railroad land grants to provide raw materials to fill the train cars heading back eastward.

Davenport, Iowa however, is a member of a rather unique group of municipalities largely located around the upper Mississippi valley in both Illinois and Iowa. Neither wholly established before undertaking the creation of railroads, nor beholden to railroads for their existence, these communities exerted influence on early nineteenth century railroad development far beyond what population and economic power would have otherwise predicted. Diving into the effort whole-heartedly, Davenport spearheaded a local and national drive to

bridge the Mississippi River and link old eastern states to new western territories. These railroad efforts also entangled Davenport in the grand sectional and economic tensions wracking the nation prior to the Civil War. What should have been a simple congressional effort to acquire railroad land grants spawned a four-year long convoluted navigation of local politics, North-South issues brought on by the economic possibilities of the first trans-Mississippi River bridge, and a simmering east vs. west economic conflict, which would erupt into land grant debates and help shape precedents over state sovereignty. By the end of the Civil War, a tired, broke, and largely disillusioned Davenport would cease to tie its whole future to railroads largely outside of its own control, and instead concentrate on finding its next road to prosperity.

Local and regional historians have examined Davenport's involvement in all these events, but largely only in passing. John Larson briefly goes over Davenport's part in Iowa's legacy of railroad law in his essay "Iowa's Struggle for State Railroad Control" in Marvin Bergman's *Iowa History Reader*. Davenport's part in the essay is however minimal as it concentrates on the much later Granger and Populist periods of the struggle. Even the prolific and incredibly talented Iowa railroad historian Frank P. Donovan minimizes Davenport's efforts to attract, build, and fund the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad and the Rock Island Line Railroad, instead focusing his attention on the relationships between the railroad companies themselves. These scholarly interpretations are not willful oversights, but are typical of the place given to Davenport in subjects of much

broader scope. Authors generally focus on the railroads themselves or wrap Davenport's efforts into the larger history of the region. This focus has caused the voice of the city at a pivotal point in its history to be drowned out. This is unfortunate, as Davenport has left a rather substantial, if admittedly somewhat narrow, base of records for the period. An early and prolific series of newspapers, relatively intact city records, and preserved internal documents from the president's offices of both railroads have provided a voice for city relatively rare in an area largely considered the frontier until after the Civil War.¹

This examination owes a great deal of debt to three other works only indirectly connected to its topics. Shelton Stromquist's "Town Development, Social Structure, and Industrial Control," again in the *Iowa History Reader*, highlights as one of its examples Burlington, a town tied into much of Davenport's early railroad history and mirrors in many ways the social trajectory of town/railroad co-influence that occurs in Davenport. Both cities had just enough development time prior to bringing a railroad into town that their commercial and social elites had time to independently establish themselves before railroad money and interests overwhelmed them. In many ways, this time allowed both groups to set the terms of their initial involvement, but also limited the railroads' investment in the community thus making it easier to redirect investments to cities where they did have more control. On the economic end, Timothy R. Mahoney's "Urban History in a Regional Context: River Towns on the Upper

¹ John L. Larson, "Iowa's Struggle for State Railroad Control" in *Iowa History Reader*, ed. Robert Bergman (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 2008), 159-198; Roger H. Grant, ed, *Iowa Railroads*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 168-202;

Mississippi, 1840-1860” in the *Journal of American History* helps to answer where much of the business before, during, and after the railroad’s construction flowed from and to. He finds the Upper Mississippi towns in Iowa unique as well, poised to take advantage of transient opportunities to forge themselves into business centers far quicker than the general population of the area would account for, but also leaving themselves open to reduced importance as the frontier line of the nation moved past the Mississippi. Finally, this examination also owes a debt to the pioneering work of Robert W. Fogel’s *Railroads and American Economic Growth*. His thorough analysis of the economics that were driving, or more accurately not driving, the expansion of railroads in the early nineteenth century opens up the question of why Americans built these railroads. If, as Fogel argues, the Iowa, Nebraska and Illinois territories would have remained largely undeveloped without the existence of the railroads, Davenport’s overwhelming desire to be Iowa’s first railroad crossing makes good historical sense.²

Historians need to examine more closely regional economic and social forces in the context of railroad construction in the buildup to the transcontinental years. Even an amazing recent work on the transcontinental railroads, Richard White’s *Railroaded*, largely neglects this early period of Midwestern railroad construction. This is surprising in that at least one of the

² Shelton Stormquist, “Town Development, Social Structure, and Industrial Conflict,” in *Iowa History Reader*, ed, Robert Bergman (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press, 2008), 159-196; Timothy R. Mahoney, “Urban History in a Region Context,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (1985), 318-339; Robert Fogel, *Railroads and American Economic Growth* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1964).

principal directors of the Union Pacific, and the Credit Mobilier Corporation that backed it, cut his teeth on railroad finance, management, and stock fraud with the Rock Island Line and the Mississippi & Missouri railroad.

If, as postulated by Fogel, construction of the railroads was not inevitable then something other than pure economics was driving their creation in Davenport. Additionally, if Davenport's railroads were not a dry run for the later successful linking of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads, as implied by White, then something unique was happening in Davenport and other Midwestern cities.

In order to address this gap, at least in the context of Davenport, this thesis looks at four general issues. It first examines why a river town in a location of very little commercial consequence rose to a position to influence rail construction in two states. Secondly, the thesis explores the influence, both financial and organizational, that small towns such as Davenport could muster in the context of railroad construction in a neighboring state. Third, it explains the state and national implications of the land grant efforts of these Midwestern railroad hotbeds, and how the conflict between cities and states over railroad issues boiled over into the brewing sectional conflict of the Civil War. Finally, it will address, at least in Davenport's case, how overwhelming economic and political issues displaced these towns from reaping, at least the level they had envisioned, the benefits from the very railroads they helped to create.

Chapter 1.

Imagining a River Crossing Town

A great many factors influenced whether frontier towns experienced success or failure in the antebellum period. While factors such as weather patterns or national scale population movements were out of their hands, others were more under control of settlers themselves. Two of the most critical were the location of a town and the ambition of its citizens to develop the city into a commercial center. The relationship between Davenport and the railroad and the history of Davenport preceding and following settlement must be examined to understand how it came into being and transformed into a frontier hotbed of railroad building. Taking this long view allows the historian to take note of factors that encouraged and shaped development. Of particular interest is the pre-settlement role the future site of Davenport played in shaping the character of the city. Likewise, the people and events of the first decade of the city's life influenced the city's future economic and political relationships in substantial ways for decades to come. Each, location and people, deserves our attention in turn.

Location

If viewed by a traveler prior to 1830, Davenport's site would be largely unremarkable and simply another scenic point on Upper Mississippi River Valley. Sailing up river, after passing the somewhat ramshackle town of Keokuk, our

traveler would have come upon a long stretch of mostly uninhabited riverfront. As the river meandered in short jaunts east and west, the occasional Native American village would have been interspaced with tall bluffs and wooded patches. Eventually, the river would have taken a long east to west course where our traveler would pass not one but two logical locations for towns. The first of these was located just before the east-west jog in the river, the eventual site of Muscatine, and the second where a midsized island, close to the eastern shore, interrupted the river. The island itself would have shown signs of habitation in a manner comfortable to our fictitious traveler. A small, but active, farm on the island sat in the shadow of a military fort. Fort Armstrong, established following the War of 1812 to control the upper Mississippi, passed its usefulness in the previous decade and had been allowed to decay into a mere shadow of itself. On the eastern shore lay a Sauk Indian village in various states of habitation depending on when our traveler would have sailed. A rather non-descript flood plain with bluffs rising rapidly to the north and a much more gentle grade the west occupied the western shore of the river. For the astute observer, however, one notable feature of the river here would have stood out. Here was a point where the mighty Mississippi could be crossed with relative ease, at least compared too much of the river to the south. With the island breaking up both the flow of the river and providing a midpoint resting place, it was relatively simple to canoe across the expanse of the river. Depending on the season, other advantages also became apparent. The cold winters here often afforded travelers a relatively safe ice passage across, and dry summers even occasionally allowed a passible,

if somewhat treacherous, foot crossing. It was in fact this domination of the river by the island, and the ease of controlling river crossings at this point, which attracted the U.S. government in the wake of the war of 1812, and led it to construct Fort Armstrong on Rock Island itself in 1815. Even then, the fort only garrisoned a maximum of 200 soldiers, usually considerably less. With no white settlement on the Illinois bank until 1828, there was little to protect. Beyond this strategic point, however, little perked the interest of the federal government. No legitimate American settlements yet existed for hundreds of miles north or south along the river and even parts of the Illinois territory to the east remained in Native American hands. The western bank of the Upper Mississippi at this location, besides acting as gateway into Native American held lands for pelt traders, had little to draw American's attention, legitimate or otherwise, to the area.³

Until 1830, settlers lacked interest in the upper west bank of the Mississippi River. Confusing Indian claims complicated land titles, shifting European claims of ownership and influence, and the difficulties in crossing the Mississippi all produced an isolated frontier in the Upper Mississippi River Valley unattractive to all but the most self-sufficient of settlers. An initial burst of trading settlements had shot up the river from New Orleans to St. Louis, encouraged by the succession of European claimants to the area, prior to the American Revolution. However, past this point, both in space and time, very little non-

³ D. W. Flagler, *A history of the Rock Island Arsenal from its establishment in 1836 to December 1876* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1877), 18-22.

native settlement proceeded. The United States' acquisition of the area did little to accelerate settlement. In fact, by the time Missouri gained statehood in 1830, only approximately 140,455 white settlers called the entire Upper Mississippi River Valley home, and the vast majority of this non-native settlement was located along the lower Mississippi and Missouri rivers, from New Orleans to around what would become Kansas City. Settlement up river beyond St. Louis had reached at its furthest point where the Des Moines River joined the Mississippi. What little American and European settlement existed concentrated around the unofficial American settlement of Keokuk. Settled by U.S. army frontier officers unwilling to abandon their Native American wives after a general order from the War Department in the 1820s, Keokuk was an American settlement in name only. The eastern bank of the Mississippi did not fare much better. Settlement of the area had just barely begun, with Illinois becoming a U.S. state in 1818, and the majority of American interest in settling the region concentrated the more accessible lower Mississippi and to a lesser extent, those access ways that connected to the Great Lakes. Even by the 1830s, the Illinois bank of the Mississippi River had only managed to average a non-native settlement rate of two people per square mile.⁴

⁴ One notable exception to the lack of previous interest to the Upper Mississippi Valley was the settlement of Dubuque, which had attracted Europeans at various times due to the ease of mining lead deposits at this location. Greg A. Ludvigson and James A. Dockal, *Iowa Department of Natural Resources*, "Lead and Zinc Mining in the Dubuque Area", accessed June 29, 1830,1 <http://www.iowadnr.gov/portals/idnr/uploads/geology/LeadZincMiningDubuqueArea.pdf>; William J. Petersen, "To the Land of Black Hawk," *The Palimpsest*, February 1933: 55-57.

This lack of settlement did not mean the area, particularly Davenport's future home, was completely unnoted by Americans prior to 1830. The Pikes Peak expedition had briefly encamped at the location following its crossing of the river on its way west. Settlers and western boosters had also eyed the interruption of the river by the island as a potential crossing point. A particular brand of American visionary was always pushing the nation's population to move unsettled locations, such as the future site of Davenport, far ahead of the realistic possibility of people doing so. William C. Redfield, one such booster, went as far to publish a travel book describing the location as a logical point for a railroad crossing in 1828. His foresight for this use of the area is remarkable because the Baltimore and Ohio, one of the earliest eastern railroad lines built in America, was only in the planning stages at this time, and would not begin construction for nearly another two years. Even before settlement began, Davenport gathered the weight of a future behind it. First, however, the United States would need a right and reason to lay claim to area. Tragically, one would soon present itself.⁵

The Black Hawk War and the Acquisition of Iowa

The Black Hawk War between the United States and Chief Blackhawk's tribe did not begin over the territory that would eventually make up the eastern portion of Iowa, and by all rights should not have occurred. Chief Black Hawk, reacting to outright theft of lands in Illinois still settled by his people during the hunting season, initiated a raid into western Illinois in reprisal. The government,

⁵ Judy Norris, "Where Railroads Began," *The Sunday Dispatch*, Sept 27, 1987.

and the settlers of the Illinois territory, reacted brutally. After a small number of largely one-sided engagements in the Americans' favor, Army forces cornered and attacked Black Hawk's troop, including their encamped women and children them with no pretense of diplomacy, crushing both their fighting ability and moral and ending the conflict. Wishing to complete and legitimize its claim to the lands east of the Mississippi and begin the process opening the lands to west for settlement, the government made token remuneration to the tribes involved, both friendly and hostile. In exchange for their claim to lands on both the eastern and western sides of the river, the federal government paid \$655,000 in cash, broken out into yearly stipends over the next decade to the Sauk, Meskwaki, and Ho-Chunk and various other participant nations. This worked out to only around fourteen cents an acre. As further compensation, the treaty granted many of the tribes in the area land just outside of this swath, to which most of the tribes removed. Thanks to the conflict, the federal government settled Native American claims on the eastern shore of the river and gained legal access to a vast new territory encompassing nearly the entire eastern border of the state of Iowa to a depth of 50 miles. Stretching down nearly to Keokuk and northward to nearly to what would become the Wisconsin border, this new land opened the paths to the west. Only the logistics of fulfilling the treaty proved troublesome. Providing the tribes with the yearly cash and goods stipend from the eastern side of the Mississippi River, or distant Keokuk, would have been problematic. Quickly,

however, the new town of Davenport provided a ready solution for disbursing the treaty obligations.⁶

Establishing Davenport

Davenport, in many ways, is a city where all of the right forces came together to make settlement nearly inevitable in a location with no overtly compelling feature. Separately, any one of these forces might have produced a minor settlement or even a small trade town, but taken together they provided a much stronger push for Davenport to develop faster and more aggressively into a regional market center. Each deserves a brief examination in turn.

The Blackhawk Treaty was one of these forces, and essentially enabled all of the others. Treaty agreements at the conclusion of the Black Hawk War allowed Native American tribes to grant title to land in limited amounts to American citizens to settle debts or express gratitude for prior friendship. This would prove critical to the founding of Davenport. Antoine LeClaire, a frontier trader and interpreter for the U.S. government, his wife Marguerite, a Dr. Spence, and a Mr. McCloud benefitted from a land cession by Chief Keokuk of the Sauk along the eastern bank of the Mississippi. One stipulation of this grant was critically important. As a condition to take possession of the land granted to his

⁶ Charles J. Kipper, "Treaty with the Sauk and Foxes," *Indian Treaties, 1778-1883* (New York: Hinterland Publishing, 1970), 253-255; For a full account of the Black Hawk War and its repercussions, see Patrick J. Jung's, *The Black Hawk War of 1832*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008). Additionally, in spite of claims the work is heavily influenced by its editor's voice, the autobiography of Black Hawk, *The Life of Black Hawk*, (Chicago: Donnelley & Sons, 1916) is a must read for anyone wishing to understand the Sauk side of the conflict; Petersen, "To the Land of Black Hawk," 53.

wife Marguerite, LeClaire was required to build a treaty house on the site of the negotiations and reside in it. LeClaire promptly built the treaty house and shortly thereafter bought out the claims of Dr. Spencer and Mr. McCloud for one hundred and fifty dollars after a quarrel threatened to cripple headway on consolidating the claim and clearing the titles for future sale. Thus, the future site for the city of Davenport was promptly in private hands and had already taken on minor commercial importance from the moment the land came fully into American possession.⁷

The obligations imposed on the United State government by Black Hawk War were a compounding factor for accelerating initial settlement of future site of Davenport. The yearly stipends, consisting of not only cash but solid goods and rations as well, to the Native Americans needed a common point for disbursement, and no truly satisfactory location was available at hand. The U.S. Army had largely abandoned Fort Armstrong on Rock Island prior even to the Black Hawk War and had allowed it to decay nearly uselessness. Only a small token military force of 80 men had remained on the island. The only civilian settlement was George Davenport, its former quartermaster and one of the founding settlers of Rock Island, IL just across the river, who had remained on the island following release from the Army to maintain his farm and work as a trader for the American Fur Company. Having noted his previous experience at the fort, the Army re-commissioned George Davenport at the rank of coronel into service as quartermaster and interpreter for the government's forces during the

⁷ Franc B. Wilkie, *Davenport Past and Present* (Davenport: Luse, Lane & Co., 1858), 32.

Black Hawk War, after which he had become a vocal critic of the Army's tactics in the conflict. The treaty granted him a small land allotment of his own on what would become the Iowa side, and he looked to advance his interests there. Negotiations and shared interests led Davenport and LeClaire into forming a business relationship to fulfill treaty obligations and sell supplies at the city of Davenport to Native American bands. This relationship remained until Col. Davenport's murder in 1844, and then continued as a family connection by his son.⁸

Davenport's initial settlement was, however, problematic. The location was for the most part wholly unremarkable for American settlement beyond the presence of the Treaty House. Without a ready resource for extraction and much easier access overall to water transportation into the interior of the territory available in other locations, the only significant feature available was the ease of crossing the river. To facilitate access to the area, LeClaire established one of the first regular ferry services across the Mississippi in what would become Iowa in 1834, connecting the yet unnamed town of Davenport with the newly established town of Stephenson, IL, the precursor town of Rock Island. In addition to the ease of access provided by both the natural course of Mississippi and ferry service to the Iowa side, relatively clear titles available for much of the land involved should have been more attractive than they initially were. By 1835, in anticipation of the advantages of the location being enough to attract settlers,

⁸ Antoine LeClaire, Keo Kuck & Band Due to Antoine Le Claire, August 24, 1836, LeClaire Collection: Financial Records 1836-1838, Putnam Museum, Davenport; Several of the earliest papers show joint purchases and sales of typical goods sold to Native American.

LeClaire, Davenport, and other partners formed a land company and laid out the plots for Davenport. Perhaps fearing that his non-Anglican name would put off potential buyers, LeClaire sold the initial settlement site to the company for \$1,750 and a one-eighth interest in the location as a whole. This initial land sale did not go as well as hoped. The auction itself only attracted a small number of potential buyers, with the majority of them being land speculators from St. Louis. All told, only about 60 of the available 300 lots sold, most of them below the asking price to speculators and not settlers. Those few plots that did sell were land primarily owned outright by LeClaire, where risk of a muddied title was insignificant. Davenport, LeClaire, and the rest of the company were left holding far more land than planned after the sale. In order profit from it, they would have to develop a town on their own to increase interest. To that end, LeClaire and the rest of the company plotted and named the city of Davenport in May of 1836.⁹

Growing Davenport

Creating a town from scratch in Iowa, even during the rapid westward expansion years of 1835-1840, was no easy feat. Simply attracting settlers was a challenge as LeClaire, Davenport, and their settlement company had discovered. More established western states possessed plenty of available room and were more attractive to second wave settlers not looking for a pure frontier experience. Iowa was not alone in this problem. The semi-settled Illinois hinterlands, even aided by the explosive growth of Chicago, had only gained 318,738 people.

⁹ Wilkie, *Davenport Past and Present*, 32-34.

Missouri, much of whose territory was more of frontier settling similar to Iowa, increased by fewer than 250,000 people even with the advantage of the city of St. Louis. Iowa, initially part of the Wisconsin Territory, was closed to white settlement prior to 1833, and possessed no official white population outside of Keokuk prior to this. By the first census taken in 1836, Iowa only had 11,491 Americans residing in the state, most of which were located in Des Moines County. Even by 1840, the population of the state had grown only to 43,112 people, of which a mere 396 lived in Scott County, spread among the towns of Davenport, Rockingham, and LeClaire.¹⁰

LeClaire was determined to make something of his holdings even if the land did not sell immediately. In order to attract business from St. Louis, he established the LeClaire House, which served as a hotel and retreat from mosquito borne diseases that seasonally plagued the Missouri city. With its geography of bluffs and non-swampy flood plains, Davenport was ideal for preventing large-scale mosquito borne disease outbreaks. Interestingly, Davenport constructed his hotel far above the size and apparent needs of the area, even considering the potential tourism draw. However, LeClaire's connections in St. Louis allowed him to promote successfully the location as a summer retreat from the malarial season. Such vacationing, trade with the Native

¹⁰ "1836 Census of Iowa," accessed January 14, 2012, USGenWeb, <http://iagenweb.org/census/1836/#totals>. Note, in the 1836 census Iowa only had two counties, Des Moines and Du Buque(sp), roughly encompassing the upper and lower halves of the Iowa portion of the Wisconsin Territory; "Scott, IA 1840 Federal Census," accessed January 14, 2012, IAGenWeb, <http://files.usgwarchives.net/ia/scott/census/1840/index.txt>.

American bands still in the area, and a smattering of early farming settlers, provided Davenport with a basic economy on which to build.¹¹

Becoming the center

One key to ensuring the success of a town in the frontier of was establishing it as the center of local governmental services. Even small state government agencies, such as county seats and courthouses, tended to focus regional population on a town and in turn drew both industry and commerce to serve this concentrated population. The founders of every town realized the advantages of such an arrangement and competed fiercely in contests of varying types to secure their town as host to these services. The state of Iowa favored using elections to determine the placement of its county seats between towns roughly in the geographic center of counties, reasoning that the town able to muster the most population to vote was already the natural center. These elections often drew towns into questionable alliances, even reaching across proposed county lines, and led to some of the more colorful early political contests in the state.

The first such contest Davenport involved itself in was in fact outside its own immediate proposed county area. The U.S. government largely left the formation of county boundaries up to local governments and the territorial congresses that oversaw them, under the assumption that locals would be more

¹¹ Ambrose Cowperthwaite Fulton, *A Life's Voyage* (New York: Ambrose Cowperthwaite Fulton, 1898), 446.

apt to identify logical natural or political boundaries for services. This presented politically connected and well-organized communities with opportunities to seize the trade that simply hosting court functions could bring. However, unless particularly politically powerful municipality was already in place there were a few conditions that perspective county seats needed to fulfill. Where possible state politicians situated county seats near the geographic center of the county itself and used natural boundaries to set a county's shape. Additionally state officials tended to select larger population centers for courthouses in areas without firm boundaries, the county drawn out around them if possible. This meant that the size and shape of a neighboring county, and the location of its courthouse, could have a great deal of influence on adjoining ones, influencing which towns were considered to be in the geographic center. In the case of Cedar County, the city of Tipton wished to become the county seat. The Davenport city fathers realized fixing the geographic bounds of Cedar county around Tipton placed Davenport near the center of the proposed Scott County and lent all due support to Tipton's ambitions. Tipton's efforts prevailed and leading commissioners drew the county lines in the manner that shaped Scott County to favor Davenport as its seat. However, there proved to be another community who wished to become the seat of the county. Rockingham was a sister community to Davenport, established by many of their own eminent settlers, and heavily contested the county seat that Davenport sought with a tenacity that proved problematic.

In February of 1838, the territorial government held an election to determine the location for Scott County's courthouse and seat. Un-coincidentally, the political efforts for both sides would involve most of the primary organizers involved in the future railroad efforts, although on differing sides. Davenport's rival for the courthouse was the town of Rockingham located just a few miles south. Davenport claimed its position at the center of the county's shore along the Mississippi river edge gave it the natural lead in being the logical location for governmental services in. Rockingham, championed by Ebenezer Cook, William Barrows, and George Sargent, claimed it had a greater transportation advantage, as it was located across the Mississippi from the Illinois mouth of the Rock River, granting navigable access into the adjoining state. With the stakes potentially as high as the long-term survival of either town, both sides looked for any advantage they could muster in the upcoming election. Typical of territorial elections in the fluid population of the American frontier, both side quickly realized by importing additional temporary "residents" in for the election, they might be able to sway the vote enough to ensure victory. Davenport proponents sent men up river to the mining camps of Dubuque for "eligible" voters, while Rockingham reached deep into Cedar County's lumber camps, with both cities mustering what allies they could across the river in Illinois. Davenport alone spent \$3000 on acquiring its "voters." An expectedly chaotic election occurred, with both sides' "voters" treating it like an alcohol-fueled festival. Following a count of the votes cast, Davenport appeared to have won the contest, which surprised the larger Rockingham, which lead them to protest the entire election to the territorial

governor. After examining the election, state officials declared the election invalid, having determined that both sides had illegally inflated their eligible voter numbers. While this outcome nominally produced a draw, Rockingham ended up ahead in this initial conflict. The territorial legislature selected Rockingham as the location of the county commissioner's election in absence of an established county seat. This meant that government services would begin originating from that town, at least on a temporary basis.¹²

Matters of location, especially in governance, could not be left unsettled however. In the summer of 1838, Davenport and Rockingham again clashed over the issue of gaining the county seat. On guard for population puffing, and knowing that the other community watched them just as hard as they were watching their rival, both towns resorted to legitimate means for increasing voter numbers in their town. City boosters with land holdings deeply discounted land plots for sale, or gave them away entirely, to attract settlers to the towns. As was typical of such close and heated elections, propaganda and character attacks began in earnest between the two towns, each decrying the disadvantages of the other. Into the center of this political melee stepped the county's first printer, Mr. A. Logan. Foreshadowing Davenport's thirst for internal improvements, the city made lucrative concessions to attract Mr. Logan to their town. The newly established *Davenport and Rock Island* newspaper quickly went on to espouse the advantages of Davenport as the center of the county. Despite this seeming

¹² Wilke, *Davenport Past and Present*, 54-56; J. D. Burrows, *Fifty Years in Iowa* (Davenport: Glass & Company, 1888), 13-15.

advantage, Rockingham won the next round of voting by 15 votes. A last ditch investigatory effort by Davenport's supporters proved fraud on twenty of the votes, casting the issue back into question. This resulted in a two-year long legal battle over the location of the county commissioners and seat.¹³

While this display of tenacity by Davenport is fascinating, and useful to understanding the underlying drives that eventually allowed it to build railroads, far more enlightening is the manner in how the contest ended. By 1840, both the city of Rockingham and Davenport had tired of the contest, but in differing manners. Rockingham had largely failed to grow over preceding two years, due to persistent flooding hampering development. Davenport, however, decided to end the contest more decisively, and offered to absorb the expense of constructing the county courthouse in exchange for being the county seat's permanent location. Rockingham, having reached the limits of its political will and no longer in possession of an economic base able to match that of Davenport, agreed to drop its claim. It is one of the first instances of Davenport's citizens being willing to marshal local resources in the face of regional hesitation, self-funding and completing a large internal improvement project for only tenuous future returns. The potentially largest of these, the construction of two railroads, and the bridge across the Mississippi that bound them, would soon enter the picture.¹⁴

¹³ Wilke, *Davenport Past and Present*, 60-61.

¹⁴ Wilke, *Davenport Past and Present*, 61.

Chapter 2.

Davenport Reaches East: The Rock Island Line

A Brief History of the Name of the Rock Island Line

Shakespeare famously wrote, "... a rose by any other name would smell just as sweet." This quote is quite apropos when dealing with rail lines, because these companies had many names over their lifetimes. Typically the beginning and terminus of the line, with important stops in the middle sometimes listed, determined a railroad company's title. As a railroad grew, its name would often evolve, incorporating cities or regions that it connected to, making for confusing switches of terminology and complicating sourcing of documents. "The Rock," as its came to be known was no different. For our purposes the "Rock Island & LaSalle," "Rock Island & Chicago" (1854), and the "Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific" (1866) railroads are all synonyms for the same incorporated railroad. These are all titles the road, and its tributaries, held over the period examined. For the curious, further names include the "Chicago, Rock Island, and Texas Railway Company" (1893), "The Rock Island" (1902) and again "The Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad Company" (1948) ,also known simply as "The Rock", until its dissolution in 1980. To ease identification, the term "Rock Island Line" will most commonly identify the line.¹⁵

¹⁵ "A Brief Historical Overview of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad," accessed February 20, 2012, Rock Island Technical Society, <http://www.rits.org/www/histories/RIHistory.html>.

Davenport's Transportation Worries

As the first decade of settlement closed, Davenport's founders looked at a world changing around them and feared for the future of their city. Winning the county seat had ensured the town prosperity simply due to the local trade and traffic but only a modest one. River business, both steamboats along the Mississippi and cross-river ferry, was light in nature and mostly consisted of high value goods coming into the city mostly from St. Louis, with grain crops of modest value and lumber sold down river. Indian trade, which sustained several local merchants, slowly faded out due to government efforts to extinguish Native American land claims via new treaties. As more tribes relocated across the Mississippi, Davenport merchants could no longer count on their purchases to boost profits. Even new settlers were slow to immigrate to the city. Most immigrants stopped in Illinois before they reached the Mississippi River, if coming west, or in Missouri, if coming from the South. Local industry was slowly building, a series of steam flour mills primarily, but not nearly as quickly as in the rival city of Burlington down the Mississippi to the south. These worries nagged at Davenport's businessmen even as the city enjoyed modest growth over the decade.

By 1845, it was clear relying on river transportation for trade was not bringing the growth the city of Davenport desired. Lucrative steamships and other river transportation often failed the city in months when it needed goods the most. The Mississippi regularly froze over from December to February,

depending on the intensity of the winter, making large-scale transportation difficult. Ice typically locked boats, and any good they were carrying at the time, in the last port they managed to reach. Typically, several boats in a season would get ice locked on the river itself, while attempting one last run. Summer traffic was just as unreliable. Water levels at the height of summer occasionally dropped to points only the shallowest drafted flatboats could manage, which confined heavy steamships to the better-fed lower Mississippi. Davenport did not see these problems as insurmountable, simply frustrating. City and regional boosters made many attempts to interest the Federal government in making improvements on the Mississippi, particularly the rapids just north of Davenport. A general disinterest in national involvement in most internal improvements, however, prevented any real traction on the issue. Davenport also worried heavily about inland traffic issues. Despite possessing rather favorable terrain for urban growth and river trade, their potential was somewhat stymied. Lacking any waterway into the inland of Iowa, or capital to build an improved road inland, growth towards the interior was slow. Rival cities Keokuk, Burlington, and, to a lesser extent, Muscatine all possessed ready access to rivers cutting into the interior of the state. These cities counted on upriver settlement to draw settlers towards them, promising an outlet for their crops to St. Louis markets even if they did not settle in the city proper.¹⁶

¹⁶ Alfred Sanders, "The Rapids Convention," *The Davenport Gazette*, September 18, 1849, Davenport, Iowa; Sanders, "River Opened," *The Davenport Gazette*, February 21, 1850; Wheeler and Eagal, "Brief," *The Democratic Banner*, March 5, 1852, Davenport, Iowa; note- while these citations postdate the meeting at Col. Davenport's, they are typical of river conditions.

The city of Davenport clearly needed an advantage that would allow growth to accelerate dramatically. According to local lore, a momentous meeting took place in 1845 on the farm of Col. Davenport. Leading members of the town, including A.C. Fulton, Antoine LeClaire, and James Grant, along with a number of individuals from Illinois, such as civil engineer Richard Morgan, gathered at Col. Davenport's house on Rock Island to plan Davenport's future. Judge Grant opened the meeting, regaling those gathered with his vision of Davenport as a gateway to the West, saying, "It falls to our lot to forge an important link in the great chain across the continent...These railroads that are projecting their lines across the continent from the East are even now looking for an outlet to this vast waterway..." This grand plan was to tie the economic futures of Davenport and Rock Island together by leveraging the capital and energy of both their cities to build not one, but two railroads and a bridge to link them across the Mississippi. The hopes and dreams of two cities rested on these words. The ambitions of Davenport and Rock Island lay bare.¹⁷

Why a rail line and not some other mean of commerce, such as an improved ferry or enhanced local steamship service? Simply put, Davenport did not trust its future in the hands of others or in movable improvements. Ownership of the ferry monopoly operating between Rock Island and Davenport had quickly becoming an issue. Both cities maneuvered to keep ownership, and therefore influence the rates charge for transport on it, of the ferry located in their respective city. Additionally, Iowans in general had sought a cross-river railway

¹⁷ F. J. Nevins, *Seventy Years of Service* (Rock Island: Rock Island Publishing, 1922), 1-2.

connection and Davenport wished to be the first. In many ways, a race was on between the emerging major river cities to secure a rail connection eastward. Citizens of Dubuque petitioned the federal government to assist in building a railroad bridge at their location as early as 1837. Davenport had either to act immediately or face losing the bridge and traffic to another city. Dubuque maneuvered to take the bridge location, on the strength of the Galena Line under construction on the opposite shore. Other cities, such as Burlington organized to find engineering solutions, which would allow bridging of the river as well. Chicago railroads were conflicted on the location where the Mississippi should be crossed, and agreed only that one of them must cross it quickly. Chicago was in their own race to ensure control of the east / west railroad traffic against more established eastern cities and lines. Further, Chicago wished to bite into the control of the river traffic exerted by St. Louis steamboat cartels.¹⁸

Both cities planned to tie their future to a railroad that did not exist yet, one they would have to build. Or, more accurately two railroads, the eventual Chicago & Rock Island and Mississippi & Missouri Railroads. While conceived as one continuous route, it was broken into two separate companies for financing and construction. The planners did so because acquiring a charter for a single line across both states was much more complex than two separate lines linked by

¹⁸ Davenport City Council, "Davenport City Council Minutes: 04/16/1839 to 12/02/1858," Dec 12, 1850 [Hereafter cited as Davenport City Council Minutes]; Mildred J. Sharp, "The M. and M. Railroad," *The Palimpsest* (January 1922), 1; Sanders, "What Others Think of it," *The Davenport Gazette*, February 14, 1850; Sanders, "Rock Island and LaSalle Railroad," *The Davenport Gazette*, December 13, 1849.

ownership and based in each respective state. While less directly connected to Davenport, an examination Rock Island Line will proceed first as the Mississippi and Missouri Line is much less significant without its sister railroad.

The Birth of the Chicago & Rock Island Line

As the 1840s proceeded, it was increasingly clear that Chicago was becoming a railroad hub. Access to New York via the Great Lakes, a connection to the Mississippi River via the planned Chicago & Galena Line, and a web of planned railroads reaching from the east ensured its place as a mercantile center. There was still the issue, however, of reaching past the Mississippi. The logical point, where a rail line was nearly complete, was the Galena, IL and Dubuque, IA crossing in upper Iowa. The Galena crossing had a problem, however, insurmountable at the time, the sheer breadth of the Mississippi. Nearly 1800 feet in width at that point, engineers considered the river unbridgeable without unreasonable costs. To the south, however, there was an alternative both within an acceptable distance of Chicago and much more easily bridgeable. The Rock Island, IL and Davenport, IA crossing had a width of less than 1,580 ft., and an island to provide mid river footings. This was a much brighter prospect engineering-wise as a bridge location. There were also local executives and politicians set to ease a railroad into existence as well. However, conceiving of a railroad and actually constructing one were two completely different endeavors. The later took quite a bit more effort.

Building the Rock Island Line immediately ran into several problems. The first was a lack of interest from the Illinois state government. Illinois had participated enthusiastically in the canal frenzy of the 1830s, building a state owned canal from just outside of Chicago to the city of LaSalle. This complicated the plans for the railroad. To reach Chicago along the route with the best grade, the railroad had to follow the canal's route. Doing so competed directly with the state-owned improvement. Furthermore, Illinois was protective of its canal investment and wary of anything that might diminish their return. Funding this canal had not been a smooth endeavor. The panic of 1837 caused canal construction to require more funding than provided by federal land grant profits by a considerable margin. This left the state of Illinois to pick up the remainder, or have a near worthless half-completed canal on its hands. Heavily laden with bonds used to cover the construction overruns, Illinois lawmakers counted on canal receipts to refill the state's coffers. As it stood, the canal was mildly successful at attracting cargo, and produced steady profits. The prospect of a railroad in competition with the improvement limited the government's enthusiasm for backing the Rock Island & LaSalle, regardless of its merits. When the rail line wished to incorporate in 1847, the Illinois legislature forced the Rock Island and LaSalle to agree to a series of concessions before it approved the charter. Most were relatively minor. Despite railroad efforts, one clause was potentially backbreaking to the new line, however. It required the railroad pay to the canal company a surcharge equal to the canal freight rate for all non-livestock goods carried any length that the canal also served or up to twenty

miles west of its terminus. This surcharge was designed to prevent the Rock Island Line from syphoning potential business from the canal by driving up the cost past that of the canal, or failing that, to compensate the state if goods carried on the railroad. Legislatures were aware of how heavy handed this appeared. As a concession, the state allowed the railroad to subtract any such surcharges from state taxes at the end of the fiscal year. This anti-competition clause in its charter rendered the railroad much less attractive to investors, but even worse, this restriction was potentially financially backbreaking. As the main line of the railroad expected to follow the canal's length, all traffic would be subject to this penalty regardless of the point of origin or destination. Luckily, for the Rock Island line, the canal executives' own animosity towards the railroad helped remove the clause by the time the railroad opened, so it only retarded initial investment.¹⁹

With a charter in hand, the Rock Island Line executive committee selected James Grant of Davenport as president of the incorporated Rock Island and LaSalle Railroad during its formative year. They hoped his widespread connections in both Illinois and Iowa would serve to shore up both public and government confidence in the project and ease finding investors. Importantly, it is indicative of the influence the city of Davenport wielded over the fledgling railroad. Although based in Chicago, an Iowa resident sat at the corporation's head, possessing nearly sole power to shape the line as he wished. Celebration

¹⁹ Nevins, *Seventy Years of Service*, 3-4;

of this accomplishment was somewhat premature, however. Work could not proceed until railroad subscriptions sold and began funding labor and iron.²⁰

Funding the Railroad

By 1847, funding efforts for the Rock Island and LaSalle had begun in earnest, after suffering from a rough start. It was imperative, however, that these efforts accelerated. Another clause built into its charter by Illinois legislators, wary of another paper railroad, required the railroad to produce stock subscriptions totaling \$150,000 within a year's time or face revocation of its charter and the full \$300,000 before they could begin construction. Confident that they could make this deadline, the executive board sought funds, using all of standard railroad methods. They petitioned the U.S. government for a land grant; approached the state of Illinois for funding; sought out private investors, both on the East Coast and in Chicago, for capital; and offered subscriptions to the citizens of Illinois towns on or near the Rock Island Line's path. However finding funding proved difficult.²¹

The state of Illinois was unenthusiastic about providing the railroad with any funds. As discussed earlier, cost overruns and construction complications of the canal soured the state on providing funding for improvement projects. There was also the issue of a number of 'paper railroads' in the state. Legislators had already provided for numerous railroads in the eastern section of the state. Many

²⁰ Sanders, "The Railroad," *The Davenport Gazette*, April 18, 1850; Nevins, *Seventy Years of Service*, 3; John Ely Brigg, "The Rock Island Comes," *The Palimpsest* (August 1933) 286.

²¹ Sanders, "Petition," *The Davenport Gazette*, February 4, 1847.

such rail lines proved to be largely worthless, existing only on paper or falling far short of their promised routes. All told, the state invested and largely lost \$10,000,000 over the course of the 1830s and early 1840. This had placed significant strain on the growing state' finances and threatened its ability to borrow in case of a calamity. When the Rock Island Line sought funds, it found itself rebuffed. The Illinois government had little appetite for more iron horse adventures.²²

Finding investment at the municipal level was just as difficult. As a local railroad would greatly boost the economy of a town, typically those along planned routes were excited and willing to invest. The executives anticipated it would be simple to sell the Rock Island Line to the people of Illinois, particularly the communities most likely to benefit the most. However, the majority of Illinois' citizens either seemed willing to wait for the railroad without risking their own money, or already had subscribed to one of the many of the railroads slowly creeping their way across the state and unable to finance the stock of another road. Even when community leaders seemed willing, they often hedged their bets against committing funds. Henry County, the area standing to gain the most out of the Rock Island Line, initially backed the rail-line with a \$25,000 subscription promise. The county supervisors complicated the commitment, however, with a referendum clause, which required a vote to affirm the county residents supported the action. When the vote failed, the Rock Island Line rapidly reacted. R.P. Morgan, chief engineer of the railroad, personally held a meeting to shore

²² Nevins, *Seventy Years of Service*, 3-4.

up support in Henry County, noting that the while east to west rail lines were going to be built regardless of Henry County's support, there was no guarantee that railroads lines other than the Rock Island would build nearby. Other lines could simply follow along the Great Lakes or go further south in Illinois. While these efforts did not change the overall vote, the Rock Island Line executives did manage to raise private subscriptions in the county equal to the originally proposed amount. The county level was not the only complicating factor. Even towns along the proposed route, whose investment in the railroad was assured, could destabilize the entire effort via local political conflict. A collection of smaller communities in LaSalle County, IL attempted to divert the rail line completely from Peru, IL under the pretense that their proposed route was shorter. The railroad recognized that while this was true the grade of the altered route was much less friendly to construction. With the counties and cities of Illinois bickering and hedging, the Rock Island Line could not count on strong support from Illinois interests outside of Rock Island itself.²³

Acquiring funding for the railroad from eastern capitalists proved to be just as problematic as it was from Illinois. Eastern bankers were more than willing to fund further railroads in Illinois, provided they connected with Chicago. The Rock Island line in its original charter did not, again partially to assuage canal interests. The Rock Island reproached the Illinois legislature with the proposal, which by 1852 was much friendlier to the idea. Illinois lawmakers believed that the canal

²³ Nevins, *Seventy Years of Service*, 3-4; Briggs, "The Rock Island Comes," 286; Sanders, "Address of R.P. Morgan, Esq.," *The Davenport Gazette*, May 15, 1850; Sanders, "Rock Island and LeSalle Railroad," *The Davenport Gazette*, July 4, 1850.

surcharge would be enough to deter the railroad from competing with the canal regardless of how their routes mimicked each other. The directors of the Rock Island Line were to catch a lucky break on this issue. As part of the charter agreement for the Rock Island Line, the canal's directors had to approve finalized arrangements for the railroad to pay the surcharge and, once approved, provide unused public land near the canal to facilitate railroad construction. The canal initially favored this arrangement because the railroad would serve the area beyond its reach, between the Mississippi and Illinois River, and feed business to it. When the Illinois legislature amended the railroad charter to allow direct connection to Chicago, however, canal directors schemed to crush the upstart rail line before its construction even began. Part of the agreement required the Rock Island Line to seek approval from canal directors for the rate agreement, and canal land the railroad sought for construction of the line. So in order to stop the railroad, all they needed to do was deny them the land to build. A mistaken interpretation of eminent domain led canal executives to believe the Rock Island Line could not apply it to public lands. As the canal frontage was all public lands, under their interpretation, all they would need to do was stall answering the railroad and it would wither and die. Things did not turn out as the canal directors had planned. When the deadline for the canal directors to approve the agreement passed, Rock Island Line lawyers went to work. The railroad was able to condemn public land adjacent to the canal for their right of way while avoiding the surcharge previously connected to the approval. By 1854, at least on paper,

the Rock Island Line had a connection to Chicago and eastern capitalists opened their wallets to the railroad.²⁴

Davenport Fills the Gap

Illinois state and municipal interests lagged behind in funding the Rock Island Line because they did not see urgency in its construction. Time and natural progress seemed to be on their side. With a number of railroads slowly building across the state, it seemed inevitable one would eventually connect to the cities along the proposed Rock Island Line. Why spend money accelerate what was going to happen regardless? The view from the other side of the Mississippi was not as sure. The people of Davenport perceived that they did not have this luxury. An Illinois railroad needed to line up to cross the Mississippi river at Rock Island for any benefit to occur to Davenport. Instead of gambling, the city of Davenport put all effort into ensuring that the line built from Chicago terminated in Rock Island.

Although possessed of enthusiasm, Davenport's earliest efforts seemed to flounder. Iowa suffered from a lack of cohesive leadership and statesmanship, leading regional efforts to drum up support for rail construction to flounder. At a regional railroad convention held in St. Louis during 1849, Iowa's delegation seemed to do more harm than good to the state's railroad plans as a whole. Newspapers reported that speakers from Iowa were enthusiastic but inarticulate,

²⁴ William James Putnam, *The Illinois and Michigan Canal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1917), 109-110; James Grant, Letter from S.B. Judd to James Grant, August 31, 1852, James Grant Collection, Putnam Museum.

long-winded, and generally unhelpful to the cause of generating support for construction of cross-river railroads in the state. Likewise, subscription efforts in Iowa were equally unpromising. While assuring that stock subscriptions were coming along in a timely manner, *The Davenport Gazette* reported that Iowans outside of Davenport had taken up only about \$2000 dollars in subscription, split nearly evenly between the Scott County city of Hickory Grove and Cedar County in general. The editors urged it was imperative for Davenport to get the citizens of Iowa City and Muscatine to support the Illinois line. To do so, boosters would need to show how linked an Iowa railroad proposal and the Illinois line were. Without the Rock Island line to tie M. & M. railroad to the forming national network, Gazette editors continued, the proposed M. & M. railroad was unlikely. Therefore, Iowa's financial support of the Rock Island was critical to getting the central Iowa line built as proposed. As 1850 opened, was clear to the Davenport city leaders that stronger efforts to raise subscriptions and ensure construction of the line needed taken. They would need to lead by example. The city council began allocating money from the city budget to fund promotion of the Rock Island Line and Davenport as the logical rail point to connect the East and West.²⁵

Davenport did much more than simply promote the railroad, and put forth strong financial support for a city of their size. An observer could have viewed this simply protecting an investment. Several members of the initial board of directors were from, or had strong ties to, the city. Even in Davenport, however,

²⁵ Sanders, "Iowa at the Railroad Convention," *The Davenport Gazette*, November 1, 1849; Sanders, "Rock Island and LeSalle Railroad," *The Davenport Gazette*, December 20, 1849; Davenport City Council Minutes, January 21, 1850.

support for the Rock Island Line was not unanimous at this time. Initially subscribing only \$10,000 towards the railroad in January of 1850, still a hefty sum for a community its size, this commitment met with moderate resistance from a few members of the city council. They proposed putting subscription issue to a public vote and letting the wider community decide. The majority of the council rejected this, and favored instead keeping city financial decisions within the city council itself. Realistically however, Davenport had not taken on an abnormal amount of debt in support of the Rock Island at this time. Davenport had invested no more than any other community, and much less than some. As an example, Rock Island, IL made an initial investment of \$42,000 one week after Davenport. Commitment from Illinois also trended upwards. After James Grant's fund-pumping trip along the proposed route in November of 1850, subscriptions reached the \$300,000 dollars minimum to open the Rock Island Line's construction and everyone's wallet began to open. No longer simply a paper railroad, with the minimum reached it could become reality. The city of Davenport's support did not diminish even as the railroad reached the funding milestone. Davenport's city council voted to increase its subscribed amount several times over the course of the next year. This total would eventually rise to about \$75,000, three-fifths of the total subscriptions from Scott County and nearly 1/3 of the original \$300,000 total. Nor had Davenport simply committed merely on paper. In December of 1850, the city council petitioned the state legislature for permission to alter its city charter to allow establishment of an account to hold tax revenues for the future subscription payments. The city's standing charter

prohibited such a long-term account. Additionally, as subscriptions came due, Davenport was prompt with its promised funds.²⁶

Countering local resistance

While Davenport was largely enthusiastic about the Rock Island line, this was by no means the general attitude of the state. Iowans, even close neighbors of Davenport itself, were by no means willing to support unconditionally Davenport's railroad building efforts. Many Iowans, and their municipal governments, objected to expenditure of local funds in support of a rail line in another state entirely. In addition, other Mississippi river cities in Iowa saw themselves as logical river crossing points in direct competition with Davenport. While their claims were usually deficient in some way—difficulty of bridging the river at that point by current technology, grade problems building away from the town, or terrain hazards complicating construction--these locations firmly believed if given the chance they could serve as the crossing point. At stake was the chance to be the epicenter of railroad bound trade in Iowa.

Even Davenport's immediate neighbors, who were likely to see ancillary benefits of a railroad based in that city, were not completely convinced of the wisdom of taking up Rock Island Line subscriptions. Davenport's sister city in

²⁶ Davenport City Council Minutes, February 7, 1850; Davenport City Council Minutes, March 7, 1850; Sanders, "Railroad Meeting in Rock Island," *The Davenport Gazette*, February 14, 1850; Sanders, "Rock Island & LeSalle Railroad," *The Davenport Gazette*, January 31, 1850; Davenport City Council Minutes, September 5, 1850; Davenport City Council Minutes, November 7, 1850; Davenport City Council Minutes, April 3, 1851; Davenport City Council Minutes, February 7, 1850; Dwight L. Agnew, "Beginning of the Rock Island Lines," *Illinois State Historical Society* (Winter, 1853), 410; Davenport City Council Minutes, December 5, 1850; Davenport City Council Minutes, November 6, 1851.

Iowa, LeClaire possessed a considerable faction convinced that any commitment by any Iowa government to the support of an Illinois railroad was foolish. Doubt circled about the returns that such a railroad investment would have, if any. They also questioned some of the information on the railroad put forth by unnamed boosters. Many believed that these Rock Island Line supporters were far too optimistic on the returns the railroad would earn, some of which were as high as 32%. They also question the necessity of their involvement and cash. If the profits from the line were such a sure thing, why was the Rock Island Line unable to rely just on Illinois capitalists and desperately in need of Iowans' help? Why should they support a railroad when it would only "likely" help the communities of Iowa? Besides, if railroad interests in Illinois were already committed to building railroad lines, all Iowa needed to do was patiently wait for them to reach the river. Additionally, even if the Rock Island Line reached across the Mississippi, it did not mean it would be useful to Iowa for very long. Nothing would stop other railroads from building to the river and stealing the traffic away from the Rock Island Line, leaving a dead weight of a railroad and worthless investments. Iowa should build her own railroads at locations convenient for the state, critics argued, and rely on short route steamboats, or ferries, to bring goods to and from the Illinois bank of the river if these did not match up with those across the river. Illinois had a railroad connection to Galena already under construction and was set to handle just that sort of traffic. Once the Chicago and Galena Line

completed, lowans would no longer need the Rock Island Line and a bridge in Davenport.²⁷

Rock Island Line supporters rallied to answer these charges. Boosters pointed out they had never provided unrealistic figures for returns, let alone an outrageous amount like 32%. Supporters had based true estimates of around 8 to 18 percent returns on similar successful eastern railroads or those already in operation in Illinois. In answer to common the question of ‘why worry about where the Illinois line is built?’ Davenport supporters replied that it concerned the entirety of Scott County greatly. The county could not afford to let another city in Illinois, or even worse another state on the river, claim the crown of possessing the East to West crossing point for the nation. If this happened, goods would route to this point and away from Scott county and any less reliable river shipment points. Building the Rock Island Line quickly, in conjunction with building a railroad in Davenport, prevented this occurrence. Being the first crossing point would put Davenport in the best position to become the strongest crossing point. Not only would Davenport prosper, but all nearby communities as well. Once the bridge was established, branch lines would naturally spread out from the railroad, inevitably sharing all the benefits of the railroad to Scott County and beyond. However, this meant insuring the construction of the Rock Island Line proceeded in a manner beneficial to the Rock Island Line and Davenport. Although there was mistrust of having the Rock Island Line based in Illinois and

²⁷ Sanders, “Railroad meeting at LeClaire,” *The Davenport Gazette*, January 1, 1850; Sanders, “Letter to the Editor,” *The Davenport Gazette*, January 31, 1849; Sanders, “Reply to LeClaire Handbill,” *The Davenport Gazette*, March 28, 1850.

outside of Iowa's control, seeking to place laborious construction clauses would only doom the line. That a few cities withheld their support unless the charter stipulated the Rock Island Line started building from both Chicago and Rock Island, along with constructing the bridge simultaneously, bull headed and simply unworkable. Davenport boosters argued that there was no reason to start on the bridge until Iowa had managed to begin construction of its own railroad. Moreover, the construction of the railroad needed to proceed in a manner that allowed operations as soon as possible, so it could generate revenue to support itself. This meant building from Chicago and beginning operation as the line completed track. Iowans needed to invest to make this happen, but also needed the patience to allow their investment to mature.²⁸

In the short term, Davenport convinced voters of Scott County to support its vision of the railroad. However, this support quickly wavered under very real concerns of taxation. By early 1852, voters put pressure on the county to divest its self of the subscriptions or repudiate them. Unwilling to let this happen, but unable to convince others nearby to take up the burden, the city of Davenport decided to increase its commitment. The city council resolved to take on the remaining subscription burden, and the bonds involved, of the county in exchange for their entire interest in the railroad. This approximately \$25,000 in subscription bonds represented a significant amount of debt. Davenport again

²⁸ Sanders, "Branch Railroads," *The Davenport Gazette*, February 14, 1850; Sanders, "To the Voters of Scott County," *The Davenport Gazette*, March 28, 1850; Sanders, "Rock Island and LeSalle Railroad," *The Davenport Gazette*, May 30, 1850; Wheeler and Eagle, "Sympathy Thrown Away," *Democratic Banner*, February 20, 1852.

amended its charter to allow for such a debt load. By June 1, 1851, the process of transferring the bonds was complete. This left the city of Davenport one of the single largest non-bank investors in the railroad, and removed from outlying communities the tax burden they feared. Anticipating the increased outlay necessary to pay railroad bonds, Davenport began to sell bonds secured by city tax revenues on the New York market. This process continued into 1854.

Construction of the Rock Island Line

With the issue of funding taken care of, directors of the Rock Island Line turned their attention to beginning construction. This was not without Iowa / Illinois tension in its own right. In October of 1851, Rock Island Line directors had concerns about having enough labor to build the rail line swiftly. Part of this was the rapidly approaching construction Missouri and Mississippi railroad. Even if they largely shared boards and interests, both rail lines would be in competition for workers. Thus, labors in Illinois needed to be locked into contracts before work on their sister railroad syphoned them across the river and drove up the construction costs on the Rock Island Line. Additionally, executives of the Rock Island Line had become concerned at the speed other railways were building across Illinois toward Rock Island. Construction of the line needed to begin to insure that a local line, meaning one controlled by Chicago, Davenport, and Rock Island interests, possessed the river crossing. This worry was not unwarranted, as reports were coming in that eastern railways hoped to entangle Rock Island Line in their influence. This process had already begun as the Northern Indiana

Line connected to the partially completed Rock Island Line in January of 1852. The Rock Island Line accelerated construction. By that October, the partially completed railroad began regular operation of its own engines.²⁹

Railroad construction continued apace, reaching La Salle, Illinois in March of 1853 and the city of Peru shortly thereafter. Cash problems and repairs required due to spring flooding forced a delay in construction of several months to allow operations to bring in needed funds. Charging fares to secure operating revenue was more difficult than anticipated, however, simply because of a lack of currency in the Midwest. Many of the earliest fares on the route, either passenger or freight, were conducted in exchange for goods rather than species. While this prevented empty loads, it also placed additional pressure on subscribers to produce payments on time or even in advance. This likely contributed to Scott County's decision to transfer its Rock Island Line bonds to Davenport. Finally, in early 1854, the city of Davenport's efforts finally paid off. The Rock Island Line completed construction to Rock Island, IL on February 22, 1854, just hours ahead of the first train scheduled to arrive. Locals held a large celebration in both Rock Island and Davenport to commemorate the achievement of building the rail line. Railroad executives conducted a much larger, nationally focused,

²⁹ Nevins, *Seventy Years of Service*, 10-12; Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Company, *Annual Report of the Directors to the Stock Holders of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad Company, April 1, 1877*, (Chicago: Reno, McNancy & Co., 1877); Wheeler and Eagal, "Railroad from Philadelphia to Rock Island," *Democratic Banner*, January 15, 1852; Wheeler and Eagal, "Col. Morgan's Opinion of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad," *Democratic Banner*, January 15, 1852.

celebration of rail lines connecting the East Coast with the Mississippi on June 5, 1854 with former president Millard Fillmore and other notables in attendance.³⁰

Davenport's Will for a Railroad

While by no means the sole source of support for the Rock Island Line, Davenport provided the steadiest bastion in Iowa. Why would Davenport put so much money and effort into the creation of a line in another state? Simply put, Davenport envisioned itself as a gateway to the American West. In order to realize this vision, the city needed the Rock Island Line to complement the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad and connect it to the larger economic web of the nation. Davenport's boosters could not assure construction of a Mississippi river crossing at their city, no matter how favorable it was a construction site, without having a railroad in Illinois at least partially under their control. Any number of other Iowa cities, such as Burlington and Dubuque had already shown their desire for a railroad crossing. Relatedly, without a connection across the river, the Mississippi and Missouri railroad would decline rapidly in importance. Traffic would have flowed to rail lines that did cross the river, leaving Davenport merely a trunk line on the network they had labored so hard to bring into being. Finally, Davenport saw the investment in the Rock Island Line as a favorable money making enterprise. Chicago was rapidly becoming an economic hub connecting the West with New York, and railroads connecting to it such as the Galena and

³⁰ Briggs, "The Rock Island Comes," 298; "The Celebration, Opening of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad," *The Republican*, Rock Island, IL, March 1, 1854; For a complete description of the Grand Excursion see Steven James Keillor, *Grand Excursion: Antebellum America discovers the Upper Mississippi* (Afton: Afton Historical Society Press, 2004).

Northern Illinois line were proving to have lucrative returns. Investing heavily in the rail did not seem to pose a strong risk, and could turn into a mighty gain for the city. All Davenport needed to do was ensure the M. & M. Railroad built across Iowa and the railroad bridge across the Mississippi operated smoothly. Both seemed like simple enough endeavors.

CHAPTER 3.

Bringing the Railroad to Iowa

In many ways, planning the M. & M. railroad was far more complex than planning for the Rock Island Line, simply due to location. A railroad in Illinois had many things already going for it: a quickly growing market and population to serve, connections to the east via the Great Lakes to bring over both materials and goods, and increasing amounts of native capital willing to fund such endeavors. A railroad in Iowa, however, presented a seemingly insurmountable pile of hindrances. The barely settled land caused investors to question the need, any pre-existing markets were largely orientated south to St. Louis instead of east to New York, and anything that required national input, such as land grants, proved increasingly problematic as sectionalism built to a crescendo prior to the Civil War. For a town of under 5000 people to have contemplated successfully organizing not one, but two, railroads seemed absurd. Nevertheless, several factors worked in Davenport's favor. First, while settlement in the state was sparse, its pattern was important. When the state territory officially opened to Americans, Iowans built along the navigable rivers, such as the Des Moines, Missouri, and of course the Mississippi, and quickly developed a patchwork of settlement along the outside of the state waiting to fill in from either side. This of course assumed that some form of reliable transportation, not necessarily a railroad, crossed the state from east to west. Second, eastern railroads increasingly looked for a way across the Mississippi to access the West. Iowa

was right in the path of most of the logical routes to construct a transcontinental railroad to the West. Third, the vast majority of Americans, and Iowans in particular, were in love with the concept of the railroad and the economic bounties they believed it could bring. This made Iowans willing to invest far more heavily in railroad construction than might have been prudent.

Planning for the Missouri and Mississippi

As discussed in the previous chapter, the 1844 meeting at George Davenport's house led to the creation of two railroads. Nearly concurrently with the chartering and formation of the Rock Island Line in Illinois, Davenport residents petitioned the state government of Iowa for permission to build a railroad of their own. On October 25, 1847, the first version of the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad came in to being, at least on paper. This initial charter only had three executive members, Antoine LeClaire, G. C. B. Mitchell, and James Grant. Ambitiously, the railroad had a capital stock cap of two million dollars, compared to the initial cap of the Rock Island Line of one million. In order to entice the Federal Government to assist in construction of the road, another provision indicated that in exchange for a land grant, the railroad would obligate itself to carry both mail and military goods free of charge. Finally, keeping with the general distaste that Iowans seemed to have for corporations, a provision also stated that the railroad would exist for twenty years and then have its continuance rest on the good graces of the Iowa Assembly. This particular charter, while not used in 1853, was indicative of the ambitious nature of

Davenport's railroad designs and the mood of Iowa towards railroads as a whole. The planned capitalization was especially bold considering the low settlement numbers for the city and state at the time. Population figures for Davenport in 1847 are not available, but even if taken out to 1850, the census estimated the city's population at less than 2000 residents. Even though Davenport was one of the largest cities in Iowa and expected to spread this capitalization across the rest of Iowa and bankers out east, this investment represented a potential planned commitment of \$1000 per resident of the city. Even allowing that Davenport did not plan to self-fund the railroad and was going to fall back on the state government of Iowa for capital, the amount was still daunting. If the entire incorporated population of Iowa as a whole in 1850 each contributed, the per capita amount would still be just under \$100. These figures made self-capitalization of the M. & M. by Davenport or even the State of Iowa unlikely. Funding the M. & M. required city leaders to locate a diverse set of resources and convince them to build in what was largely a frontier. Davenport had to reach out to the rest of the state and beyond to bring Iowa's first railroad to life.³¹

Convincing Iowans to support the construction of a railroad inside Iowa proved much easier than convincing them to help fund the Rock Island Line in Illinois. Iowa's citizens generally agreed that that a railroad would greatly help to connect and settle the state, and having one constructed with all haste was the

³¹ "Articles of Incorporation for the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad", October 25, 1847, *James Grant Collection*, Putnam Museum, Davenport; "Total Population for Iowa's Incorporated Places: 1850-2010," State Library of Iowa, State Data Center Program, accessed March 17, 2012, <http://www.iowadatacenter.org/archive/2011/02/citypop.pdf>.

wisest course of action. The route along where this railroad built, and which cities would be included, was the issue. Luckily, for Davenport, the city had advantage over many other of the communities. Davenport's previous experience at railroad boosterism and its connections to railroad interests in Illinois allowed it an early lead in the endeavor, which allowed it to shape similar efforts in Iowa favorably. As early as January 1848, the General Assembly of Iowa passed a resolution that called on the state's Congressional members to use all of their power and influence to procure a land grant to aid in the construction of a railroad from Davenport, via Iowa City, to a location somewhere near Council Bluffs. While an east to west railroad crossing across Iowa that was based in Davenport was not the only route championed, it held advantages from the state's point of view and led to it taking the lead in efforts to procure federal grants to that state. Primarily, Iowans assumed that a trans-state east to west rail line would provide the most benefit to the state overall and by having planned its construction in the center of the state, that intrastate sectional wrangling could keep to a minimum.³²

The city of Davenport had a ready answer to the state's desire for a railroad and re-incorporated the dormant Mississippi and Missouri Rail Road, this time with an executive board that largely mirrored the recently organized Rock Island Line. This rail line proposed to follow almost exactly the same route as proposed in the earlier resolution from the Iowa assembly, which was admittedly

³² Sanders, "Davenport and Council Bluffs Railroad," *The Davenport Gazette*, December 20, 1849; Huen, Beukast(sp), Fragment of Letter to James Grant, undated, James Grant Collection, Putnam Museum, Davenport. While lacking a date, it talks about the M. & M. railroad in the future tense.

vague. Additionally, a line starting at Davenport provided a convenient potential connection across the Mississippi for rail eastward once the Rock Island Line finished construction. Moreover, while Illinois legislators had yet to approve formally a railroad bridge across the Mississippi, the potential for, and advantages of, a railroad bridge at Davenport gave the location an early lead on other sites. This did not mean, however, that Davenport was a forgone conclusion for the trans-Mississippi River railroad bridge. While backing for the Mississippi & Missouri was building, it was only one of a number of potential routes. The other major population centers of Iowa also wanted a rail line, particularly one following the Mississippi, and each of them wished it to include their city. Nevertheless, Davenport did possess a clear advantage. By the 1849 railroad convention in Iowa City, Iowa's support for the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad seemed largely locked in, with a few caveats. First, the convention had resisted any attempt to incorporate a city name into the railroad. This left open the possibility that nearly any east-west route might be chosen. Secondly, convention resolutions largely mirrored previous ones from the Iowa legislature, but also added support for a north to south line stretching from Keokuk to Dubuque via Davenport. This meant that any forthcoming land grant would have to focus on two rail lines instead of simply one. Finally, the language of the memorial had also become more confrontational, stating that Congress was duty bound to extend to Iowa the privilege of land grants for railroad construction just as had been done for Ohio and Indiana. This aggressive tone to Iowa's request of the national government foreshadowed many of complications to come in

acquiring the grant. In any case, by early 1850, the majority of the state apparatus supported the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad, and to a lesser extent, the Rock Island Line, and saw it as a natural step to connecting the state to a national railroad network which was slowly coming into being.³³

This did not mean that Davenport railroad interests could rest. First, they needed to find a way to help fund both railroads. Davenport's city council continued to evolve their charter to grow the city large enough to support the impending costs of its stumping and railroad subscriptions. Additionally, until assured of the completion of the Mississippi and Missouri, Davenport's citizens spent the next several years busily attending, and funding the attendance to, the various railroad conventions in the state. A.C. Fulton, James Grant, and many others redoubled their personal efforts to keep the support of the plan for a railroad built from Davenport had gained in the state. This culminated in the December 1850 Iowa City railroad convention, in which Davenport sent fifty-nine delegates and authorized \$50 to help defray expenses. After the convention, everything seemed in order. The city council thanked A. C. Fulton for his services, notably his oration and efforts at keeping the event focused on the Davenport line. The M. & M. proponents hoped this convention had lain to rest the opposition inside of Iowa against the M. & M. Unfortunately, opposition, both

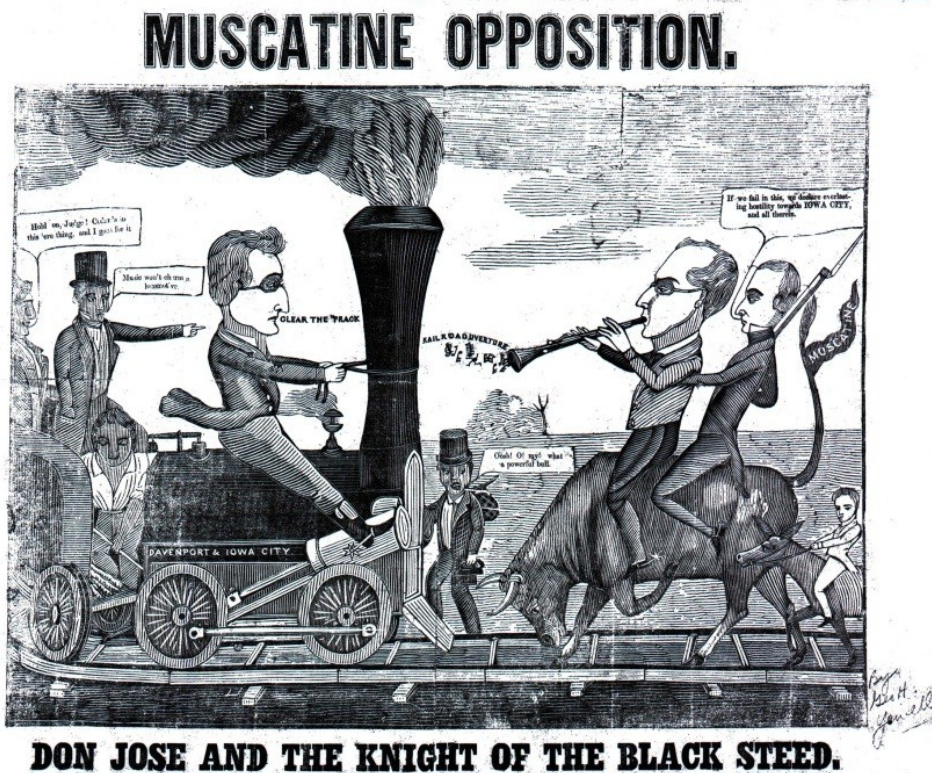
³³ Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Company, *Annual Report of the Directors to the Stock Holders of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Company*, April 1, 1877; Nevins, *Seventy Years of Service*, 9; Sanders, "Railroad Convention," *The Davenport Gazette*, November 8, 1949; Sanders, "Davenport & Council Bluffs Railroad Convention," *The Davenport Gazette*, November 8, 1949.

internal to Iowa and at a national level, would dog the construction of the M. & M. until after the Civil War.³⁴

Keeping the cities of Iowa behind Davenport's railroad plans, even with the general support of the state government proved difficult. Several other communities had grown during the 1840s into locations of business significance that outstripped Davenport. These towns, such as Keokuk and Burlington, were twice or more the size of Davenport and regional centers in their own right for cross and on river trade. Further, the business and civic leaders of these communities saw themselves as the natural right holders to a railroad, particularly a trans-Mississippi line, and the benefits it could provide. Each contested Davenport's call for a railroad with their own proposals, either for a line crossing at their location, or for the M. & M.'s route to divert to include their city. Particularly troublesome was the City of Muscatine. While the M. & M.'s route as proposed would almost certainly include them, they were not about to leave it to chance. Their delegation attempted to insert Muscatine as a required stopping point for the line at the last moment into the Mississippi & Missouri resolution under draft for delivery to Congress at the 1850 convention. This nearly sidetracked the entire railroad convention, as it implied that the route was still under discussion. It was here that A.C. Fulton's efforts to keep matters on track earned him his city's gratitude. Fulton managed to convince the convention delegates that the meeting's mandate was not to change the memorandum, only

³⁴ Davenport City Council Minutes, November 30, 1850; Davenport City Council Minutes, January 2, 1851.

to approve or disapprove of it. Defeated, Muscatine's delegation denigrated Fulton and other Davenport delegates in the newspapers. This was not the only time Muscatine railed against any internal improvement not including them as a benefactor. Muscatine's prolific and very selective anti-railroad rhetoric spurred a political cartoon of some of their leading residents riding a bull charging an oncoming locomotive. Davenport was clearly not the only city that believed a railroad was its destiny.³⁵



"Muscatine Opposition" by George H. Yewell, courtesy State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

³⁵ "Total Population for Iowa's Incorporated Places: 1850-2010," State Library of Iowa, State Data Center Program, Accessed March 17, 2012, <http://www.iowadatacenter.org/archive/2011/02/citypop.pdf>; Sanders, "Davenport vs. Muscatine," *The Davenport Gazette*, February 14, 1850; George Yewell, "Muscatine Opposition Art," Iowa City Historical Library Manuscripts A-91, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, used with permission.

The potential for sharp rises in land values along proposed lines particularly drew out the venom. The City of Burlington's paper, *The Burlington Hawkeye*, followed this line of reasoning and argued that the M. & M. rail line would impoverish the state by making the government land too expensive to buy and therefore deprive the state of needed revenue. Davenport's newspaper, *The Davenport Gazette*, fired back that improvement nearly always brought prosperity to a region, not impoverishment; simply looking at states to the east could prove that. Additionally, holding down the price of the government land would produce revenue for the state, as the railroad's presence would ensure the land along their grant sold and therefore be put into use. Thus, the advantages of having a railroad far outweighed any dangers of rising prices. Reasons for Burlington's attempt to stymie Davenport's railroad efforts are not particularly difficult to fathom. In 1850, the city of Burlington one of the most successful of Iowa's Mississippi River towns and a direct competitor for a trans-river rail crossing as well. Burlington leaders saw the rail lines moving across Illinois, just as Davenport did, and pronounced that they would soon build a trans-river bridge in their city. Their prediction proved true, as the Burlington crossing was only slightly more of an engineering challenge than the Davenport one. However, it would take until after the Civil War for Burlington to achieve its goal.³⁶

³⁶ Sanders, "Iowa Railroads," *The Davenport Gazette*, July 25, 1850; Sanders, "Editorial," *The Davenport Gazette*, October 3, 1850.

The competing interests of Iowa's cities complicated even submitting land grant proposals to Congress. Davenport's measure fell under attack in Washington by Burlington interests wanting to scuttle Davenport's efforts and redirect the grant to a Burlington crossing, despite severe complications in access and topography with the Illinois side of the crossing. Dubuque's delegation was also poised to launch competing legislation in Congress, proposing a trans-Iowa railroad to the Missouri via the mouth of the Big Sioux River. Dubuque's opposition to Davenport's grant was particularly dangerous because of Dubuque's position across the Mississippi from the Galena, IL railroad line, which had completed building to Chicago, IL by 1852 and was already in full operation. However, the extreme northward position of the city meant that any rail bridge at Dubuque would be of limited benefit to all but the northern most portion of the state and therefore curtailed the rest of Iowa's enthusiasm for it.³⁷

By the State of Iowa railroad convention in February of 1852, Davenport realized that the internal fighting among the cities of Iowa jeopardized the already fragile chances of its land grant bill in Congress. The competing voices of Burlington, Dubuque, and Keokuk in Congress threatened to either derail the bill in favor of their interests or kill any chance of a land grant altogether. They needed to forge a coalition. Davenport representatives therefore reached out to Dubuque and Keokuk and offered to couple the grant for the M. & M. line with the north to

³⁷ Wheeler and Eagal, "Burlington and the Railroad Grants," *Democratic Banner*, January 15, 1852; Wheeler and Eagal, "Rock Island and Chicago Railroad," *Democratic Banner*, January 28, 1852.

south route those cities proposed, so long as their rail line also included Davenport. Both the Keokuk and Dubuque delegates agreed to this compromise. Iowa City's delegation also naturally supported it as Iowa City, as the capital of the state, was already a planned stopping point for the M. & M. With the support of four of the largest cities in Iowa behind the bill, it quickly dominated the convention. With the Burlington railroad faction marginalized, the new railroad coalition rallied the support of the state again behind their congressional efforts. Iowans also made plans in case Congress chose to deny the memorial entirely. The convention's delegates agreed to provisions for the State of Iowa to purchase and set aside required land if Congress refused the grant. With a completed memorandum in their hands, and provisions for if the request failed in agreement, it seemed that the M. & M. effort had settled all internal conflict in Iowa over the issue. Following the 1852 convention and a plea from Davenport to rally the state together to push the land grant measure through resistance in the House, most other communities gave up or scaled back their railroad grant efforts. Unfortunately, this did not prove the end of intra-state interference in congress for the land grant. Burlington proved a particularly tenacious opponent, enlisting Galena, IL interests to attack the bill in Congress, and harass Mississippi and Missouri railroad grants even after their approval. Iowans attempting to stop the grant proved to be the least of their worries however.³⁸

³⁸ Wheeler and Eagal, "State Railroad Convention," *Democratic Banner*, February 20, 1852; Wheeler and Eagal, "From Washington," *Democratic Banner*, March 5, 1852; John F. Tracy, Telegram to T.C. Durant, July 2, 1864, MsC 159 Levi O. Leonard Railroad Collection Box 43,

Caught in the Sectional Contest

Increasing tensions in the 1850s entangled Iowa's railroad land grant bill in issues much larger than an intra-state conflict. With Northern and Southern legislators forming sectional factions, accomplishing anything in Congress during the 1850s was largely impossible. The stinging betrayal felt in the North with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska and Fugitive Slave Acts, and the following electoral rebukes that killed the Whig party, ensured that anything even remotely resembling national cooperation unraveled. Northern and Southern legislators largely could not politically stand to be seen working with even members of the same party from the rival section. Even bills that should have received wide national support, or were typical bills only of concern local interests and had routinely passed, were embroiled in amendment after amendment. However, this North-South tension was not the only sectionalism that hampered the Iowa bill. Whigs and Democrats in congress blocked each other's bills based party principles. Democrats were largely in favor of improvement legislation, while Whigs were largely against such "loco-foco" government initiatives and favored instead to focus on purely national concerns. Beyond even party politics, however, there was a growing rivalry between the eastern and western states. Older eastern states looked on with envy at the vast capital investment potential that the expansive lands of the west represented, while western states chafed at eastern calls to delay improvements until the western population naturally grew

University of Iowa, Iowa City; Wheeler and Eagal, "Report of the President," *Democratic Banner*, April 4, 1852.

to require the services these projects provided. It was into this sectional political storm the Iowa railroad land grant bill sailed, and it would take several long stormy years for it to return to the state's shores with its bounty. The difficulty their proposal encountered was a surprise to the people of Davenport. While Davenport was not blind to the sectional implications and complications its railroad grant would entail, city leaders had simply believed them to be mostly economic, would come from the riverboats, and be easily overcome by an appeal to eastern lawmakers allied in with the railroads. Iowans also firmly believed their railroad land grant requested no more than any other state in recent memory had asked for. Iowa had only asked for enough land for a pair of railroads, the Mississippi & Missouri and the Keokuk & Dubuque, which paled in comparison to the amounts of land granted for the numerous railroads and canal projects in Ohio or neighboring Illinois. Davenport believed Iowa's memorandum would swiftly pass through congress, and were somewhat unprepared for the difficulties arrayed against it.³⁹

The first complication came from an even more unexpected quarter, one of Iowa's own senators. In the middle of sectional tension produced while Congress grappled over the admission of California into the United States, Iowa's Senator Augustus Dodge introduced legislation for the Mississippi and Missouri railroad, almost exactly as specified by the request of the state. He had made only one small change, the omission of exactly where this railroad was to start.

³⁹ Sanders, "Railroads," *The Davenport Gazette*, September 27, 1850; Sanders, "Railroad Meeting," *The Davenport Gazette*, February 14, 1850; Sanders, "Railroad Convention," *The Davenport Gazette*, January 31, 1850.

Unfortunately, no firm reason survives for why Senator Dodge made this change, but examining his background might shed some light on his motives. In the late 1830s, Dodge had moved to the Iowa Territory to take up the post of Register of the U. S. Land Office, which was located in Burlington, Iowa. Dodge also had a rapid rise through the Democratic Party apparatus of Burlington. He was elected alderman of the city and the Iowa territory delegate to Congress in 1840 and as full Senator in 1848 after Iowa achieved statehood. Dodge might have felt beholden to the City of Burlington, Davenport's longest and strongest competitor for a railroad crossing. With Dodge's such strong ties to Burlington, deducing that the omission of Davenport as the agreed upon starting point for the railroad was intentional is possible. With this omission, Dodge potentially attempted to win for Burlington in the national arena the fight they had lost on the state level.⁴⁰

Unfortunately, for all Iowa parties, the lack of a clear starting point for the railroad in the Iowa bill opened it to the mercy of an increasingly sectional Congress. As Iowa was a border state in this conflict, both Northern and Southern partisans made efforts to move the railroad either further north to Dubuque, or south to Keokuk. By doing so, they hoped to deny any secondary benefits to the other section. As the political tug of war commenced over its request, an alarmed Davenport city council funded sending a delegation to Washington in an attempt to put the bill back on track. They met with very limited success. Iowa's Congressional delegations received mixed signals from the

⁴⁰ Sanders, "Senator Dodge's Bill," *The Davenport Gazette*, March 28, 1850; Rick L. Woten, "Dodge, Augustus Caesar," *The Biographical Dictionary of Iowa*, accessed: March 19, 2012, <http://uiopress.lib.uiowa.edu/bdi/DetailsPage.aspx?id=97>

competing interests in their state and therefore were more interested in what sectional and party goals they could accomplish with the bill. Further, Davenport had little hope that they could make that the rest of the state see reason. It already felt betrayed for having to link their land grant request to a Keokuk and Dubuque line. The skirmish breaking out in Congress over the land grant only made their opinion of their fellow lowans that much worse. Davenport felt nearly abandoned as northern and southern sections of the state attempted to hijack the bill. By July 1850, a version of the bill unpalatable to Davenport seemed likely to pass. While Davenport was again the starting point of the railroads, the bill contained several problems. First, the language of the bill called the grant land grant a “donation.” lowans bristled, as they saw the land grant as a natural right due to it as a state of the Republic. Secondly, the bill required the M. & M. railroad to start construction at both Davenport and Council Bluffs simultaneously. This was problematic because it almost ensured failure for the railroad. Any line built west to east from Council Bluffs would have sat unused, and therefore would be unable to help fund further construction, until it reached Des Moines. Third, the bill required the railroad to be a public road, not a corporation, resting its operations costs and maintenance on the state. Finally, the unused or unsold portions of the land grant were to revert to the U.S. government in ten years. Hoping to change the bill back to a form more palatable, Davenport elected James Grant to go to Washington and protect the city’s interests there. While Grant was largely unable to accomplish the city of Davenport’s goals in Washington, while he was there the bill as proposed failed

to move forward. The Iowa bill languished in political torpor for nearly the next two years, only to see a different sort of sectionalism threaten to kill it completely.⁴¹

Hope brewed for the Iowa land grant in late 1851 and Representative Clark of Iowa proposed a version of the Iowa railroad land grant bill in the House that was close to the original Davenport proposal. At the same time, a nearly identical version of the bill enjoyed fair support in the Senate as well. As debate on the bill dragged on into 1852, however, the land grant encountered its next challenge, the older eastern states. While the onset of the Civil War has rightfully occupied the majority of historians' attention, the American political landscape of the 1850s was more complex than simply being a conflict between the states over slavery. Sectional tensions did command the majority of the nation's political attention, but eastern states also looked on with jealousy as western states used grants of public land to fund railroad construction. During the previous two decades, eastern states had exhausted their own land grants to build canals and toll ways, and now wished to build railroads. The absence of federal land grants forced these states to self-fund much more of the construction costs of their rail lines in the 1840s and 50s. Additionally, eastern states were fearful that the rapid improvements would accelerate the immigration of their population to the western

⁴¹ Sanders, "A Railroad Delegation to Washington," *The Davenport Gazette*, June 6, 1850; Davenport City Council Minutes, July 11, 1850; Davenport City Council Minutes, August 10, 1850.

states. To counter these concerns, these eastern states worked to slow or stop land grant legislation that would benefit the west.⁴²

Senator Underwood from Kentucky conceived of a method for winning eastern approval of the land grants that the western states so dearly wanted. He proposed an amendment to the Iowa bill that would share the western land bounty with the eastern states by giving them title to a proportion of it. Granting ownership of land to a state different than the one in which the parcel resided was not unprecedented. Congress had previously settled a border dispute between Kentucky and Tennessee in this manner, having granted one monetary and tax control of section while giving the other political enfranchisement. This solution appalled most western states and Davenport's supporters. The editors of the newspaper *The Democratic Banner* in Davenport feared that this would allow eastern states to retard the growth of their western counterparts by withholding their land grants from sale or development and choke the western states of tax revenue. While this amendment died in both the House and the Senate, momentum was building at the state level to settle the western land grant practices in general. This created a political vise that squeezed the main opponents of federal land grants, the Whig party. Whigs were largely against such "loco-foco" improvements that required the largesse of the federal

⁴² John Bell Sanborn, "Congressional Grants of Land in Aid of Railways," PhD Dis (University of Wisconsin), 43.

government, but those in western states found the issue increasingly politically unpalatable and were tired of fighting the issue.⁴³

This set the stage for the final major act of the east vs. west conflict over land grants. In April of 1852, Senator Henn of Iowa attacked the entire debate process miring the Iowa land grant bill and others like it, denouncing any objection to the land grants as self-serving and false. The most common eastern objection was based on potential loss of federal revenue. The federal government would lose revenue, opponents argued, as settlers bought up the land grant land near the improvements instead of federally held lands. Henn declared any opposition to the land grants on this basis to be a sham. He argued that nearby government lands that were not part the grant would more than double in value from the nearby improvements. Railroad land grants were an investment, not a drain. While this argument may or may not have been completely compelling, the spectacle of it did seem to give western Whigs the political out they required. By late 1852, Iowa won approval for its land grant, if more from having exhausted the opposition than having built a strong base of approval. With the land grant in hand, the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad finally began to take shape.⁴⁴

One thing had become abundantly clear to the railroad interests in Davenport during their efforts to encourage Iowans to invest in the construction

⁴³ Wheeler and Eagal, "The Railroad Grant- Mr. Underwood's amendment," Democratic Banner, February 27, 1852; Wheeler and Eagal, "The Whig State Address," Democratic Banner, March 26, 1852.

⁴⁴ Wheeler and Eagal, "Remarks of Mr. Henn, of Iowa," Democratic Banner, May 14, 1852.

of the Rock Island Line, that there was limited funding available in Iowa for railroad construction. Additionally, Davenport had been too successful in touting the M. & M. as a future link in an intercontinental rail line. Railroad proponents from other Iowa cities believed that a rail line serving such an obvious national interest would receive bountiful federal land grants and outside funding. These cities wished to direct native Iowa capital to more “local” projects. While Davenport proponents such as A.C. Fulton stated that Davenport was willing to “go it alone” on building a railroad, such a sentiment was mostly bravado. The city of Davenport, while it had grown and developing quickly, by 1850, only possessed a municipal income of \$10,000 a year. In order to fund the M. & M., Davenport would have to both grow their tax base and keep other Iowans focused on investment in the M. & M. railroad.⁴⁵

The City of Davenport’s primary plan to handle the increasing debt load brought on by railroad commitments was simply to grow. The city’s expansion efforts included the absorption of several smaller satellite communities, smaller towns that had sprung up around Davenport in the early 1840s. These towns included the closely connected North and West Davenports and the remains of their old rival city, Rockingham. These municipal land grabs, coupled with natural growth of the city population and continued immigration, increased Davenport from a population of 1,848 in 1850, to 3,500 in 1852. By 1854, Davenport had reached 6,000 people, tripling in size in just four years, all prior to the railroads’

⁴⁵ Sanders, “Rock Island & LaSalle, Davenport & Council Bluffs Railroad,” *The Davenport Gazette*, January 21, 1850.

construction. This near doubling of population every two years made the city council confident in its ability make good on the substantial debt load from the railroad subscriptions. In an effort to avoid the uncertainty that occurred when Rock Island's municipal government hesitated to invest in the Rock Island Line, Davenport's council proposed to subscribe \$75,000 in M. & M. railroad stock. Unlike the previous investment in the Rock Island Line, however, the city council felt that the voting public of the city should approve such a substantial investment. They had little cause to worry. During a ballot on July 8, 1853, voters overwhelmingly approved of the proposal, passing the initiative with only a single vote against it. History unfortunately does not record who cast the lone negative vote. Such strong support emboldened the city council. In July of 1854, they repeated their acquisition of railroad stock from Story County at large, and took on the M. & M. bonds just as they had bonds from the Rock Island Line. They were, of course, not alone in Iowa in investing in the M. & M. Railroad. Nearly every major community with a stake route of the railroad had substantially subscribed to its stock by 1855. A few of note include Muscatine (\$63,000), Iowa City (\$45,000), and the State of Iowa itself (\$54,000), which is interesting considering Iowa's distaste for state involvement in railroads. Iowans private and municipal investment in the railroad was prolific enough that the board of the railroad balanced in 1855, beholden nearly equally to eastern and western interests, with Ebenezer Cook of Davenport holding the position of president.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Davenport City Council Minutes, January 2, 1853 to February 17, 1853; Davenport City Council Minutes, July 20, 1853; Davenport City Council Minutes, July 21, 1853; Davenport City Council

After over a decade of effort, Davenport was about to get the railroad it had fought so hard for. With charter, land grant, and subscription funding in hand, the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad was prepared to blaze an iron trail across the state and connect the land between two rivers both internally and to the world at large. In short order, however, that vision of an iron road across the state, along with its construction, ground to a slow halt until long after the Civil War.

Construction

Davenport anticipated swift construction of the M. & M. Railroad following the approval of the Federal land grant in 1852, and hired an engineer to survey and grade the Fifth Street route the line was to take. Unfortunately, this early enthusiasm was somewhat misplaced. The directors of the Rock Island Line and the M. & M. Railroad, largely the same individuals, decided to delay construction of the M. & M. until the completion of the Rock Island Line. The willingness of M. & M. to hold off on construction made sense for several reasons. As discussed earlier, Rock Island Line executives were concerned about both railroads drawing from the same labor pool, thus driving up the construction costs of both lines. Additionally, until the Rock Island Line was completed, a railroad line in Davenport would only encourage commercial concentration in the city unconnected to the Rock Island Line. With no cross-river outlet, the only real benefactors to this concentration brought on by the M. & M., besides municipal

Minutes, July 9, 1853; Davenport City Council Minutes, July 25, 1854; Unknown, "M. & M. Railroad Executive Meeting Minutes," 1855, MsC 159 Levi O. Leonard Railroad Collection Box 42, University of Iowa, Iowa City.

Davenport, would be steamboat shippers affiliated with St. Louis or the competing Galena line via up-river shipment. This would have encouraged the growth of competitors to the Rock Island line in the long term and cut into railroad business. The potential to harm the city's substantial investment in both lines might have served as strong enough discouragement to convince Davenport interests to support the delay. In any case, with a makeup of executives so closely mirroring each other, neither railroad was going to take an action that would damage the other.⁴⁷

Once railroad crews began construction, the M. & M. Railroad line surged across Iowa at a rapid pace. In late June of 1855, workers laid the first track in Davenport and proceeded to race outwards from the town with the goal of reaching Iowa City via a slight detour. Muscatine's relentless opposition to any route not including it finally paid off and the railroad directed construction through that city, reaching it by November. With this detour completed, the M. & M.'s construction crews quickly built westward, even as the Iowa winter threatened to block construction. Part of the driving haste of this construction was a bounty offered by Iowa City. If the M. & M. completed the line from Davenport to Iowa City by Dec 31, 1855, then Iowa City would reward the railroad with a \$50,000 in cash premium. Like most monetary incentives, this prompted herculean efforts from the railroad and construction continued into the winter months. Cold, snow, and other weather slowed construction, however, and in the final week of building it did not appear that the railroad would reach the city in time. As night fell and

⁴⁷ Davenport City Council Minutes, October 8, 1853.

New Year's Eve approached, crews had the train tracks within 1000 feet of an already constructed depot. Upon seeing the rail so close to reaching its goal, the residents of Iowa City turned out in force and pitched in to assist the crew in laying the final tracks of the line, despite minus 30 degree Fahrenheit weather and being able to avoid the bounty if the rail line did not reach the city that night. As midnight approached, the rail line was within 200 feet of the depot with a train engine slowly creeping up the track, when the steam engine froze up from the cold. Unwilling to accept defeat the citizens and workers used pry bars to move the engine into town. The combined citizen and worker crew hastily laid temporary tracks into the city and wedged the engine up to the depot to complete the requirements of the bounty. Iowa City and Davenport celebrated the completion of this link, and looked forward to reaching Des Moines and then the Missouri, dreaming of being part of a transcontinental railroad.⁴⁸

Davenport had been a significant part of successfully bringing two railroads into existence and looked forward to the swift completion of the railroad bridge and to the prosperity brought by business tied to the railroads and returns on investments into their stock. However, a number of internal and external factors slowed the M. & M.'s construction, realigned the interests of the Rock Island Line, and caused Davenport to reassess its relationship with the railroads.

⁴⁸ Nevins, *Seventy Years of Service*, 20-22; Sanders & Davis, "Speech," Davenport Daily Gazette, January 5-6, 1856.

Chapter 4.

Complications in the Railroad Relationships

By 1855, after long and costly effort, the City of Davenport had seemingly managed to accomplish all of its transportation goals. Having overcome the reluctance of not only Iowa but Illinois as well, the city had helped create the Rock Island Line. Quickly linked to other rail lines reaching both east and south, the Rock Island Line had become part of a national chain of railroads. Davenport had also already completed construction of its own railroad on the Iowa side, the Mississippi & Missouri Line. Here also the town had overcome strong objections, rivalries, and financial complications to ensure that the line had not only been started, but in a manner beneficial to the city. All that seemingly remained to cement Davenport's position as the gateway to the West was to build the long envisioned railroad bridge across the Mississippi and then sit back and reap the bounty as both the goods of the East and the bounty of Iowa and beyond flowed through the city. However, problems of a scope and manner that Davenport could not handle loomed over the horizon. These problems would stunt the railroads benefits for the city.

The first potential obstacle was the railroad bridge itself. Overall, compared to building two railroads, securing construction of the bridge was a relatively easy affair. The federal government had legislated that the territory of states with rivers as borders extended to the midpoint of the waterway. This meant that in order to build a bridge across the Mississippi River at Davenport, a

company would have to deal with both the Iowa and Illinois state governments. Permission to do so was already partially accomplished due to some forethought by proponents of the M. & M. As part of the M. & M.'s charter, the Iowa Legislature had built in authorization to bridge the Mississippi River at Davenport. There had not been as much foresight with the Rock Island Line, given the piecemeal approval and extension of its charter, but securing permission from the state of Illinois also proved straightforward. This left only the details of paying for and managing the structure. In January of 1854, with permissions in hand from both states, the Rock Island Line and the M. & M. Railroad finally struck on a workable arrangement to fund and manage the structure. The Railroad Bridge would form its own company, jointly owned by both railroads, with a mortgage divided evenly between the two. In the event that either was unable to fulfill its requirements for funding the bridge's operation and maintenance, the other railroad would assume full control of the bridge along with its costs. The largely overlapping executive boards no doubt aided reaching this arrangement. By March, construction of the bridge was underway by contractors Lou, Warner and Company and Stone and Boomer.⁴⁹

Like most aspects of the Davenport's railroad quest, the bridge project was by no means simple and quickly became caught up in the sectional issues of the 1850s. River interests, spearheaded by St. Louis cartels, which largely

⁴⁹ Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Company, *Annual Report of the Directors to the Stock Holders of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Company, April 1, 1877*; "The Celebration, opening of the Chicago and Rock Island Rail Road." *The Republican*, March 1, 1854, Rock Island.

controlled the riverboat traffic on the Mississippi, looked at the bridge with increasing trepidation. Not only was this bridge an economic competitor, but also the structure made steamboat navigation on the waterway hazardous. However as the bridge had a charter from both Iowa and Illinois, the only avenue left to attack was at the Federal level. Moreover, the railroads had left their opponent an easy opening to do so. The bridge company had largely ignored asking the Federal government if its use of abandoned military land on Rock Island was legal, so the steamboat interest turned to a powerful ally in the War Department. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, already championing a plan to build a trans-Mississippi Railroad in either Missouri or further south, agreed with his Southern colleagues, and ordered construction halted on April 19, 1854 under the presumption that it violated the military preserve of the abandoned Fort Armstrong. The bridge builders promptly ignored this order and sued the government in court over the issue while building the bridge, reasoning it would be much harder for a judge to order the removal of a completed bridge. Legal battles over the bridge's right to exist would drag on until the late 1870s, well after the Civil War had stomped back sectional fires. In spite of the bureaucratic obstacles, on April 23 of 1856, workers completed the bridge. That evening the first train from the East crossed the bridge loaded with ten boxcars of consumer goods bound for Davenport and Iowa City. The following morning an engine with a single passenger car transported to Iowa its first travelers by rail as well.

Davenport had completed its vision and joined the great iron web swiftly knitting America together.⁵⁰

Despite sporadic difficulties keeping the bridge in operation due to its wooden construction, with occasional accidents and fires closing the bridge for periods, the bridge was everything Davenport hoped it would be. The city's connection to the east thrived in ways both local and beyond. Formerly, crossing the Mississippi simply to do business or visit Rock Island in Illinois had required either a ferry trip during most of the year, or a dangerous ice crossing in winter. For such local traffic, the bridge was more than adequate. Large amounts of foot traffic, to the point where 836 people a week were using it in December of 1860, crossed the Mississippi on a regular basis. The true gain, however, for Davenport was in trainloads of food shipments back to eastern markets. At the dawn of the Civil War, Davenport already was shipping nearly 3000 barrels of flour east, along with 2000 bushels of corn and 195 dressed hogs. Only a month later these numbers soured to almost 7000 barrels of flour, 17 thousand bushels of corn, and 373 dressed hogs. Davenport had quickly become the processing center for the agricultural bounty of Iowa bound for hungry eastern cities and the armies of the Union. The editor of *The Davenport Gazette* heralded Davenport as the largest city in the state in 1860, with a population of 15,000, and possessor of the only railroad bridge across the Mississippi. By 1865, bridge traffic had greatly

⁵⁰ Nevins, *Seventy Years of Service*, 17; Rock Island Morning Argus, "Bridge Complete," April 23, 1856; For an in-depth discussion of the national social, political, and legal issues surrounding the Railroad Bridge, see Larry A. Riney, *Hell Gate of the Mississippi* (Santa Barbara: Talesman Press, 2007).

eclipsed riverboat traffic, as Davenport's railroad boosters had surmised it would. That year, over 300 metric tons of goods crossed over the bridge, about 55% of it produce and raw materials headed east. Multiple trains daily made the trek to and from both Iowa City and Chicago via the city. In comparison, only 860 vessels of any variety headed up and down the river from Davenport that same year. The citizens of Davenport saw the Railroad Bridge as nothing but a boon to the city, assuming they did not have extensive ties to steamboat interests. The city's municipal relationship with its railroads was much rockier, particularly with the Rock Island Line. Soon, the Panic of 1857 would stress these relationships to the breaking point, effectively ending one railroad and greatly diminishing Davenport's hold on the other. This panic would not only fundamentally change the city's relationship with its railroads, but also the relationship of the Rock Island Line and M. & M. railroad with each other.⁵¹

The damage caused in Iowa by the Panic of 1857 was partially of the state's own doing. In the years following settlement, the state of Iowa had resisted the creation of banks in the state. Seeing banks as inherently unstable and usurious, hard money Democrats succeeded in inserting anti-bank language into the Iowa Constitution, which effectively banned them from the state. The lack of official banking institutions facilitated the growth of several "lending houses,"

⁵¹ Sanders & Brother, "Bridge Report," *The Davenport Gazette*, December 12, 1860; Sanders & Brother, "Bridge Report" *The Davenport Gazette*, February 19, 1860; Sanders & Brother, "Produce Shipments," *The Davenport Gazette*, December 12, 1860; Sanders & Brother, "Product Shipments," *The Davenport Gazette*, January 15, 1861; Sanders & Brother, "Davenport as Seen by a Stranger," *The Davenport Gazette*, December 12, 1860; "The Railroad Bridge at this Point," *Rock Island Union*, June 21, 1865.

basically large merchants, law firms, and banking agencies with both the influence and capital to make long term private loans using personal script. Cook & Sergeant (C & S) and Burrows & Pettyman (B & P), both based in Davenport, had become two of the largest in the state. By 1857, both C & S and B & P business script effectively acted as cash throughout the state. There was so much demand for its banking services that C & S had grown to include several branches throughout the state. These firms had ties with “wildcat” banks chartered in states nearby, such as Nebraska and Tennessee, which were much friendlier to unregulated banking than Iowa. By tying their script to the bank notes issued by these outside banks, the lending houses added legitimacy to their notes and allowed them to trade in a wider market. Unfortunately this link would also come back to haunt them. In 1857, a financial panic exploded out of the New York banking markets due to a large-scale withdrawal of hard currency from the U.S. by European investors and caused an immediate and catastrophic stress on these wildcat banks. Built largely on good will, economic exuberance, and future faith, these institutions rapidly failed in the face of economic uncertainty and took weaker traditional banks down as well. With two of the larger Iowa victims of this panic headquartered in their city, Davenport was at the epicenter of this financial crisis. Davenport hoped, however, that its investment in two railroads would be enough to see its devastated economy through the crisis.⁵²

⁵² Erickson, “Money and Banking in a ‘Bankless’ State: Iowa 1846-1857,” *The Business History Review* Vol. 43, No. 2 (Summer, 1969): 174-175, 182-184, 187-189.

Davenport's initial faith in the Rock Island line was not unfounded. The railroad had contributed greatly to the growth of the city. Additionally, the city's help in the financing of the Rock Island Line had provided a large number of indirect municipal benefits. Settlement around Davenport had vastly accelerated, and Davenport's temporal "proximity" to the larger economic and political markets of Chicago, New York, and other eastern cities had greatly improved. The city had also received tangible economic benefits as well. The regular and well-timed trains brought national mail to the city and allowed Davenport merchants to react quickly to changes in the New York and Chicago markets. The eastern connection also directly created several local industries, such as thriving flour milling operations and hog dressing houses. Anticipating a long and fruitful relationship, Davenport had went as far as to construct the coal and wood yards required ahead of completion of the railroads to help cement their depot as a refueling stop. As the M. & M. was the Rock Island Line's planned outlet to the West, and this arrangement made sense initially for the railroad. Davenport had financial reasons to be confident as well. The Rock Island Line had proven well managed, and the city looked forward to the prospect of eight to thirteen percent returns conservatively estimated from the \$75,000 they had invested in the Rock Island Line.⁵³

The Panic of 1857 caused severe stress lines to develop in the relationship between Davenport and the Rock Island Line almost immediately, however. Rock Island Line directors responded to the combination of suddenly

⁵³ Davenport City Council Minutes, March 3, 1853.

contracted money markets in New York, and damage caused by a rash of bad spring flooding, by suspending all dividend payments on railroad stock to ensure the line would be able to meet capital requirements and bond payments. During the same period, Davenport was looking to dividends from its stock holdings in the Rock Island Line and the M. & M. railroad to help it weather the crisis. When Davenport pressed for at least some dividend on stock, the railroad refused. This was also not the first time Davenport and the Rock Island Line's directors had struggled over financial issues. Chicago and eastern interests concerned with the overall health of the Rock Island Line were already wary of the influence the City of the Davenport had on the line. As recently as the stockholders meeting of 1856, Davenport's Ebenezer Cook had managed to take control of the meeting and keep the railroad focused on building westward into Iowa. During the 1857 crisis, eastern bankers were determined the Davenport would not be able to seize control of the meeting again. The Rock Island Line directors wanted to focus on the profitable routes between Illinois and the East, not the money-losing venture that Iowa was becoming. The condition of the M. & M. railroad's financials fueled much of the issue. A string of bond and construction issues caused the M. & M. to rely more and more on its sister railroad. As the M. & M. became increasingly reliant on funding from its Illinois sibling in the years following 1857 for operating and expansion capital, the Rock Island Line management came to view the M. & M. merely as a branch line instead of an independent sister rail line. The Rock Island Line was willing to provide to the M. & M. the funds necessary to reach Des Moines, Iowa and pay half of the

construction costs to do so. However, there was also the understanding that the needs and interests of the Rock Island Line would take precedence over those of other stakeholders in the M. & M., including Davenport.⁵⁴

Withholding of dividends and a general disinterest in Davenport's input into the operational affairs of the Rock Island Line were not the only indications the city that Davenport's relationship with the Rock Island Line was souring. The railroad had begun wielding its economic might to make money at the city's detriment. The Rock Island Line had set up the Coal Valley Company in early 1859 in order to mine a coal seam near Davenport and provide fuel for both their and the M. & M.'s locomotives. Davenport had actually enjoyed a rather competitive coal market up to this point, with merchants from up and down the Mississippi as well as nearby mines in Illinois jockeying for sales in the city. However, in December 1860, the Coal Valley Company moved to corner the Davenport coal market, slashing its prices to eight cents per bushel. The citizens of Davenport had hesitantly approved of the move, as it would lessen their coal costs, and accepted promises that once the railroad company achieved monopoly it would not profiteer. Davenport was somewhat assured because the Railroad had done something similar in Henry County, IL and had not abused its position there. By 1862, however, the fears of the editors of *The Davenport*

⁵⁴ A.C. Flagg, "Extract from the Records of the Chicago & Rock Island RR, Oct 1, 1857", MsC 159 Levi O. Leonard Railroad Collection Box 42- Stanton, Edward, M., University of Iowa, Iowa City; Henry Farnham, "Private letter," March 1856, MsC 159 Levi O. Leonard Railroad Collection Box 42- Stanton, Edward, University of Iowa, Iowa City; Committee, "Suggestion of Terms for extending the M. & M. from Grinnell to Des Moines," 1859, Leonard Railroad Collection Box 43- Stocks and Bonds- Miss & Misso R.R. 1859-1864, University of Iowa, Iowa City.

Gazette held true. The Coal Valley Company in that year alone had increased the cost four cents a bushel for coal shipping less than thirteen miles to the city, prompting the paper to call for tis readers to send wagons instead.⁵⁵

Other benefits Davenport had enjoyed from its close relationship with the Rock Island Line also fell by the wayside. Previously favorable timetables and frequent train stops in the city, both easterly and westerly, slowly transitioned to mail arriving much later in the day and many goods deliveries and non-passenger trains bypassing a stop in Davenport entirely. A change in schedule of U.S. Mail trains to and from Davenport was a particular worry for the city's merchants. Before 1860, mail trains typically left Davenport at 6:55 a.m. and arrived in from Chicago at 6:25 p.m. Both times were well within merchants' hours and allowed the flexibility to send a letter or purchase order to Chicago by noon, receive critical mail shortly after the close of business, and take shipment of goods potentially the next day. This schedule also allowed a commodity broker or merchant to make an offer in the morning and receive confirmation of sale in the same day. The timetables in 1861 were nowhere near as favorable. Trains left to and from Chicago much later in the day, with mail train arriving at 8:30 p.m. Merchants had to be a day behind on their mail or work late into the night after receiving it. As the Rock Island Lines' interest in maintaining favorable relations with Davenport declined, so did its interest in economically supporting the city.

⁵⁵ Sanders & Brother, "Coal Monopoly," *The Davenport Gazette*, December 5, 1860; Sanders & Brother, "Another Rise in Coal," *The Davenport Gazette*, October 15, 1862.

This led to a removal from Davenport of both the wood and coal yards and the jobs and tax revenue they represented.⁵⁶

Davenport's issues with the Rock Island Line developed due to lucrative easterly and southern traffic having dominated the railroad's attention. While the Rock Island Line considered its connection to both Davenport and the M. & M. line from Iowa an investment worth maintaining, the Rock Island Line would give Davenport, or other Iowa interests, special preference in its business as it had in the past.

Davenport had no more luck keeping control of the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad. If anything, the problems with the Mississippi and Missouri, while related to the Rock Island Line's, were more dire. During the first few years of operation, the M. & M. Railroad seemed to be the economic engine the City of Davenport and State of Iowa had hoped. Products from farms in eastern Iowa flowed profitably to hungry markets in Chicago and further east while manufactured goods and settlers flowed westward into the state. At a nearly breakneck speed, the railroad pushed hard to its initial destinations of Muscatine, Grinnell, and Iowa City by 1856. Then progress slowly stopped. The M. & M. took almost another decade to reach Des Moines and would never, as an independent railroad, complete its promised trek to Council Bluffs. Why did the M. & M. fail, when its initial push was so strong? Certainly, the panic of 1857 played a part but there were also other forces at play. A cool-to-hostile state government,

⁵⁶ Sanders & Brother, "Railroads," *The Davenport Gazette*, December 20, 1860; Sanders & Brother, "Time Tables of the C. & R.I.R.R.," *The Davenport Gazette*, February 19, 1861.

increasing friction with the City of Davenport itself, stock manipulation, and a Rock Island Line determined not to lose hold of its investment, all conspired to drain the independence, and eventually the identity, out of the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad.

While the state government of Iowa had been more than willing to wage a decade long push in congress for federal land grants to bring the M. & M. railroad into existence, the state believed its responsibility ended there. Iowa legislators were not willing to use state power and funds to enable the creation of private enterprise, and were traditionally leery of private corporations in general. Iowa's general incorporation law in 1847 was one of the first such state laws in the nation and tailored to hinder the growth of corporations in general, and banks in particular. Even further, in 1855 Iowa passed a state law prohibiting county level governments from issuing bonds to fund railroads. This legislation had the effect of cutting off the M. & M. railroad from additional funding except for municipal bonds, which all came with significant string attached. Nearly all such bonds came with the restriction that any funds derived from the bond was only to usable in the construction of rail line to that city. This prevented the M. & M. from selling such funds to construct its main line, become profitable, and then go back and build branch lines.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Riegel, "Trans-Mississippi Railroads During the Fifties," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (1923): 153-172; "M. & M. Bond Restrictions Internal letter," 1859, MsC 159 Levi O. Leonard Railroad Collection Box 43- Stocks and Bonds- Miss & Misso R.R. 1859-1864, University of Iowa, Iowa City; Sharp, "The M. and M. Railroad," 14.

By 1860, the lack of faith in the M. & M. completing its obligations to Davenport and other Iowa municipalities was not unwarranted. Despite having completed building its rails to Iowa City and Marengo, the construction of the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad ground to halt between 1857 and 1860. Lacking significant continuing investment from sources both internal and external to Iowa and without significant revenue streams, the cash strapped M. & M. made only sporadic progress in reaching the center of the state and the city of Des Moines until 1865. The slow pace of construction was troubling to cities already along the M. & M., as the state capital had moved to Des Moines in 1857. Previously, cities along the M. & M. enjoyed a particularly close connection to the state government due to a direct rail line to Iowa City and were loath to lose that advantage. Economically more worrisome for the M. & M. and its investors was the simple fact that several other railroad lines were already making plans to converge on Des Moines and being a late comer would mean loss of lucrative early contracts. Still, Davenport did see the advantage of its connection to the M. & M. even if it was unhappy with the speed at which its trans-Iowa line built.⁵⁸

Closer to home for Davenport however, was the M. & M.'s inability to fund the maintenance and upkeep of streets occupied by its track in the city itself. As part of the agreement for use of Fifth Street by the M. & M. line, the railroad had agreed to surface and maintain the road in a state comparable to the other roads

⁵⁸ John F. Tracy, "Question of Opening the M. & M. RR. To Victor," December 29, 1861, Levi O. Leonard Railroad Collection Box 43- Tracy, John F., 1856-1866, Supt-Chicago & Rock Island R.R, University of Iowa, Iowa City; Sanders & Brother, "M. & M. Railroad," *The Davenport Gazette*, August 8, 1860; Sanders & Brother, "The M. & M. Railroad," *The Davenport Gazette*, September 10, 1860.

in town. Almost immediately, this agreement ran into problems. Whether simply unable to spare the work force or match the expectations of the city, the M. & M. was unable to fulfill its end of the bargain. The railroad, in an attempt to head off further problems over the state of the road, reached an agreement with Davenport to give the city \$50,000 in stock in the yet uncompleted western section of the line in exchange for release from any future obligations of road maintenance. Unfortunately, this meant that in order for the stock to be profitable enough to provide for the road, the railroad line needed completed to Des Moines. As it became increasingly apparent that the M. & M. would not reach the capital before the 1860s, Davenport felt that it had been deliberately misled as to the value of the stock.⁵⁹

The aftermath of the 1857 financial crisis only compounded complications over Fifth Street. This brought the simmering issue of Fifth Street to a head. The city council, now nearly completely Republican following a political purge of Democrats in a state-mandated special election in April of 1858, turned its eye to the railroad's property in the city to cover municipal debts. This occurred for two reasons. First, Davenport eyed the potential tax value of the M. & M.'s holding to replenish its depleted coffers. Secondly, it considered previous agreements over the use and maintenance of Fifth Street as highly questionable from a legal standpoint. After reviewing the issue, the council became convinced that the all

⁵⁹ Davenport City Council, *Journal of the Proceedings of the City Council of the City of Davenport* (Davenport: Daily Democrat & News Printing House, 1862), 112-119.

previous agreements with the M. & M. having to do with even the use of the road, let alone maintenance, had been beyond the power of the city council to make. However, Davenport's mayor at this time, Ebenezer Cook, recognized that even if the relationship with the railroad was unsatisfactory, the city still had obligations to fulfill concerning until legally released from them. This touched off a legal battle in the Iowa courts, which left the issue largely unresolved until the post-Civil War period. However, it would be another factor that spurred the Davenport City Council to divest itself of shares in railroads it no longer felt had its best interests at heart over the course of the late 1850s and early 1860s.⁶⁰

The M. & M. also had another factor working against its survival, Thomas Clark Durant. A friend and financing partner of the Chief Engineer of the Rock Island Line, Henry Farnham, Durant had risen to prominence in the Rock Island Line and M. & M. by providing a funding connection back to his father's firm in New York City. Durant's insider position allowed him in 1859 to arrange the purchase of \$500,000 of the M. & M.'s land grant bonds at the favorable rate of \$100 per month, with the option to double his investment if he wished at the same terms. Durant leveraged this option and became one of the major stockholders of the M. & M. line as the Civil War gripped the nation. As the M. & M. neared insolvency in 1862, Durant sued the railroad for even more control. The end effect of the lawsuit was that by 1863 Durant was effectively the chief officer of the M. & M. line. Durant, who would later go on to found the Credit

⁶⁰ Davenport City Council, *Journal of the Proceedings of the City Council of the City of Davenport*, 6-8, 43, 140-141.

Mobilier Corporation with helped instigate the largest railroad scandal in the nineteenth century, used his power with the M. & M. railroad to amass a personal fortune. By leaking false information that the M. & M. would connect to a planned transcontinental line, such as the Union Pacific, and then selling his personal stock before the market realized that the news was false, Durant siphoned nearly five million dollars at the expense of the reputation of the M. & M. as an investment or going concern.⁶¹

Davenport and other Iowa communities were not the only ones who had become concerned with the M. & M.'s weakening condition. As the M. & M. became weaker, the Rock Island Line attempted to stave off its complete failure to protect its already considerable investment in its sister railroad. Even before Durant set his manipulations into motion, the major stockholders of the Rock Island Line intervened in attempts to fund and preserve the M. & M. line. Joseph Earl Sheffield, one of the founding investors and partners in both the M. & M. and Rock Island Line, urged fellow shareholders to join him in surrendering bond coupons to allow the rail line operating funds to stay afloat. However, by July of 1862, the M. & M. line essentially was without its own funds and required

⁶¹ Lloyd J. Mercer, "Durant, Thomas Clark", *American National Biography Online*, accessed June 17, 2012, <http://www.anb.org/articles/10/10-00479.html>; T.C. Durant, "Agreement to subscribe to M. & M. Land Grant Bonds," August 25, 1859, MsC 159 Levi O. Leonard Railroad Collection Box 4- Stocks and Bonds- Miss & Misso R.R. 1859-1864, University of Iowa, Iowa City; John F. Tracy, "Letter to T.C. Durant about M. & M. Operating Funds," July 6, 1862, MsC 159 Levi O. Leonard Railroad Collection Box 43- Tracy, John F., 1856-1866, Supt- Chicago & Rock Island R.R., University of Iowa, Iowa City; John F. Tracy, "Notice of Examination sent by T.C. Durant," March 23, 1863, MsC 159 Levi O. Leonard Railroad Collection Box 43- Tracy, John F., 1856-1866, Supt- Chicago & Rock Island R.R., University of Iowa, Iowa City; W.B. Shaw, "Broker's Message," April 8, 1864, MsC 159 Levi O. Leonard Railroad Collection Box 42- Shaw W.B., University of Iowa, Iowa City.

assistance, about \$7000, from the Rock Island Line to complete laying track to Grinnell. This effectively was the death knell of any independence the M. & M. possessed apart from the Rock Island Line's direction. Early in 1864, the Rock Island Line and the M. & M. make a twenty-year operating arrangement in exchange for \$500,000 more in construction funds for the M. & M. and essentially allowing the Rock Island Line free use of the M. & M.'s rails in Iowa. Finally, in 1865, the Rock Island Line foreclosed on the bonds that the M. & M. owed and officially absorbed the line in 1866. Interestingly, the now "Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad Company" reincorporated in Iowa instead of Illinois, but any pretense of local control by Iowa stakeholders, including Davenport, was gone.⁶²

⁶² Grant, *Iowa Railroads: The Essays of Frank P. Donovan, Jr.*, 163-173; Joseph Earl Sheffield, "Plea to save M. & M. Railroad," April 1, 1862, MsC 159 Levi O. Leonard Railroad Collection Box 42- Sheffield & Farnam, 1852-186?, University of Iowa, Iowa City; John F. Tracy, "Letter to T.C. Durant about M. & M. operating funds," July 6, 1862, MsC 159 Levi O. Leonard Railroad Collection Box 43- Tracy, John F, 1856-1866, Supt- Chicago & Rock Island R.R., University of Iowa, Iowa City; Chicago and Rock Island Rail Road Company, *Annual Report of the President and Directors to the Stock Holders of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad Company, April 1st, 1864* (New York: L. H. Biglow, 1864); *Annual Report of the President and Directors to the Stock Holders of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad Company April 1st, 1866* (New York: L. H. Biglow, 1866); F.H. Tows, "Notice of Consolidation and Stock Exchange", August 28, 1866, MsC 159 Levi O. Leonard Railroad Collection Box 43- Tows, F.H.- Secretary C. & R.I. R.R.> 1855-1870, University of Iowa, Iowa City; Chicago and Rock Island Rail Road Company, *Annual Report of the President and Directors to the Stock Holders of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad Company, April 1st, 1867* (New York: L. H. Biglow, 1866).

Conclusion

With the Rock Island Line's focus on more national railroad concerns and the dissolution of the M. & M. line's independence, the saga of Davenport's wholesale involvement in railroad construction largely ended. This was not, of course, because railroad building ceased. Davenport seemed to come to terms with the fact that it would not be the next Chicago of the Midwest, and had largely soured on the political and legal complications of railroad finance and control. Nor did the railroads simply vanish or cease operation in the city. The now merged Rock Island and M. & M. lines would continue to be an important part of Davenport's political and economic character. Davenport and the railroad simply settled into a relationship more typical of most Midwestern market towns.

Davenport's rise from a river crossing on the border of America was marked by utilization of the few much less tangible advantages that the city did possess. Antoine LeClaire's recognition of the location as perfect not only for a trading center with the displaced Native American tribes, but also as a haven for the wealthy of St. Louis to escape the malaria season. This initial commerce, when coupled with the straightforward ownership titles on land, provided enough of a draw to attract settlement away from its more economically advantageous resource extractive neighbors. Though the city never quite met its lofty commercial aspirations, in the end, Davenport had much to show for its efforts. Over the course of forty years, a combination of forward vision, political determination, and sheer tenaciousness turned a largely unremarkable crossing

point on the Mississippi River into a small vacation town, a local market center, and then into one of the largest municipalities on the Upper Mississippi during the antebellum and early post-bellum period. For a community of its size, Davenport's effort and planning were astounding. Against all odds, the city managed to facilitate the construction of two railroads in two states, with the Rock Island line coming to be one of the signature railroads of the nation until its dissolution in the 1980s.

Davenport's efforts relied on more than simply maximizing its locational advantage however. James Grant, A.C. Fulton, Ebenezer Cook, and other leading citizens recognized that Davenport possessed a potential in the context of the railroad, but that railroad building at a regional level would need conscious and aggressive shaping to realize it. The long-term efforts initiated by Davenport were potent for such a small community. Not simply content to wait, the city utilized the connections of many of its citizens and reached out into Illinois to ensure that the rail line it required was not left to chance. Further, Davenport's efforts to create and shape the destiny of the Rock Island Line put it in cooperation, and eventually conflict, with national railroad investment interests. Moreover, until the financial collapse of 1857 Davenport managed to keep the railroad focused on westward expansion, even in the face of the opposition of eastern backers who saw no profit in doing so.

Interestingly enough, Davenport's more local effort managed to put it into conflict on a much larger national stage. The M. & M. Railroad's creation involved

navigation of not only labyrinthine local politics, but also the tensions involving old and new states and the increasing pressure of the buildup to the Civil War. Davenport's nearly half decade long effort to obtain a simple railroad land grant exposes an America comprised of more than just a North versus South divide, but of additional increasingly antagonistic eastern and western sections. While the obvious national North versus South conflict understandably overshadows most other considerations for historians, just as critical was the effect Davenport's river crossing efforts had on shaping the interaction of states in land grant matters. The Underwood amendment, and the debate it spurred, showed a nation that also had the potential to fracture along an East – West axis, at least politically and economically, if not in the catastrophic manner which the Civil War would entail.

Finally, the loss of control and the conflict with the railroads in the city was emblematic of a process that the entire nation was going through. America increasingly had focused on national issues, national culture, and national commerce during this period. Events such as the Panic of 1857, the Civil War, and the increasingly transnational nature of the railroads themselves, worked to strip the isolation and primacy of local interests from what was arguably still the American frontier in near record time. Unable to maintain the focus on their town as eastern bankers and commerce increasingly dominated the railroads, Davenport's citizens began a legal and financial retreat from reliance on the lines. Davenport came to recognize that, at least on transportation matters,

national forces far beyond its control were selecting winners and losers. Davenport instead focused on making the best of a lesser relationship with the railroads while it adapted and expanded the already extensive cooperation with its sister city Rock Island to keep its prosperity.

Historians should not overlook the collective effect civic efforts in places like Davenport had on shaping regional and national events. This work has been only one-step in what may prove a long process to integrate local and regional history into the broader national narrative.

Appendix: Davenport City Fathers

It is prudent to make a brief examination of several of the individuals who are central to Davenport's efforts. Claiming that a few prime decision makers shape history is on its face patently false. However, it is equally false to claim that the choices of individuals, particularly those who find themselves in positions of influence, have no bearing on history. Davenport's relationship with the railroads was far from inevitable, nor was it drug kicking and screaming into existence by men of will. A complex combination of social pressures, frontier enthusiasm, and leadership brought this relationship into being in its early stages. It is fair to say, however, that each of these individuals did shape, and benefit, from this process.

Antoine LeClaire

Antoine LeClaire was born in 1797. The son of a French Canadian trader married to a granddaughter of a Sac chief, he largely followed his father's example and established trading relations in the Milwaukee territory while becoming fluent in a large number of Native American languages. His trading business gained him several connections to both Fort Dobson, the future location of Chicago, and St. Louis. By the Blackhawk War, he was working as interpreter for the both government and several of the tribes involved in the conflict. His heritage and connections afforded him several benefits as the conflict concluded, including land in the Half-Breed Tract from Chief Keokuk and a concurrent gift to his wife in the Davenport area. Honoring the terms of the gift to his wife, Antoine

LeClaire built a treaty house at the location of Davenport and effectively founded the town. While staying largely out of politics, LeClaire later leveraged his substantial land wealth to promote Davenport civic initiatives, including land to establish the county courthouse, and later donated his original treaty house to server as the first depot of the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad. Sadly, a broader insight into the man is difficult to ascertain as the family kept and destroyed most of his private, non-business, records.⁶³

George Davenport

Born in England in 1783, George Davenport apprenticed to an uncle at age seventeen to become a sea merchant and traveled the world rather extensively. Settling in America in 1804, after breaking his leg during a successful rescue of a fellow drowning sailor, he shortly after joined the American military. The early 1800s saw him dealing extensively with Indian matters in both the South and the then western part of the nation. Davenport traveled much of the breath of the United States while in under military service before settling near the location of Fort Armstrong in the employ of the American Fur Company. Commissioned back into the military for the Black Hawk War as quartermaster, he was highly critical of General Henry Atkinson's escalation of the conflict and its conclusion. His efforts in conducting the treaty negotiations at

⁶³ Wilke, 167-169; "Antoine LeClaire," Davenport Public Library, Accessed February 30, 2012, <http://www.qcmemory.org/genealogy-and-history/local-history-info/the-people/antoine-leclaire/>; as per conversations with the special collections librarians at the Richardson-Sloane Special Collections Center, Davenport Public Library, and Eunice J. Schlichting, Vice President of Preservation at the Putnam Museum, where they have a substantial collection of his business papers.

least somewhat amicably for the Sauk earned him land gifts in both Illinois and the Blackhawk Purchase. After joining his claim to the town company and helping to organize its initial layout, Antoine LeClaire titled the city after him, both to honor his friend and to provide a more English sounding name to the town to encourage settlement and development. Much like LeClaire, Davenport concentrated primarily on business and civic matters. Davenport did not have extensive involvement with the politics of the city, and focused primarily on developing his business and land interests in both Davenport and Rock Island in Illinois. In July of 1845, a band of at least six robbers broke into his home on Rock Island, murdering him. Even with his death quite early in the process of railroad development in the city bearing his name, Davenport's central place in both the earliest planning and development stages makes his inclusion necessary.⁶⁴

James Grant

James Grant was born in North Carolina in 1812 and moved to Chicago, IL in 1834, where he practiced law and developed ties with the nascent railroad interests in that city. He moved to Iowa in 1836, farming in the Davenport area until 1841, until his election to the Iowa Territorial House, and later served in both 1844 and 1846 constitutional conventions. By 1853, he had largely retired from

⁶⁴ Wilke, *Davenport Past and Present*, 145-164; "George Davenport," Davenport Public Library, accessed July 7, 2012, <http://www.qcmemory.org/genealogy-and-history/local-history-info/the-people/george-davenport/>; as per conversations with the special collections librarians at the Richardson-Sloane Special Collections Center, Davenport Public Library and Eunice J. Schlichting, Vice President of Preservation at the Putnam Museum, where they have a substantial collection of his business papers.

political life to focus on his legal practice as a judge and attorney until retirement in 1864. Interestingly, after retirement he attended engineering college and took up mining in Colorado until his death in 1891. He was instrumental in setting up both the Chicago and Rock Island and Missouri and Mississippi Railroads, serving on the boards of both and as the first president of the C & RI. Grant also used his considerable influence in Iowa and Illinois legal circles to Davenport's advantage, advancing its causes such as mail routes, land grant legislation, and providing legal assistance to the city.⁶⁵

Ambrose Cowperthwaite Fulton

Ambrose Cowperthwaite Fulton, born in England in 1811, moved to Davenport in 1842 and quickly made a name for his self, for good and ill. A serial entrepreneur, Fulton was involved in a large number of industries and land deals in the city, including dry mercantile, produce shipping on the river, and land speculation, often at odds with other leading men of the city. Fulton quickly became one of the chief agitators for railroad construction in Davenport and eventually the state. Self-promotional to a fault, Fulton earned himself as many enemies as friends in his endeavor and largely failed to gain any lasting power or benefit for his work on behalf of the C & RI and M & M Railroads. He did however eventually sit on the board of several smaller rail lines in Iowa. While

⁶⁵ Charles F Ritter, et al, *American Legislative Leaders, 1850-1910*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 269-270; letters, James Grant Collection, 1843-1864, Putnam Museum, Davenport Iowa.

questionable in some regards, his autobiography is a wonderful source of early Iowa lore.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Fulton, *A Life's Voyage*, 120-133, 432-455.

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