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Article Title: The Great Union Pacific Excursion, 1866

Full Citation: Silas Seymour, "The Great Union Pacific Excursion, 1866," *Nebraska History* 50 (1969): 27-53

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1969UPExcursion.pdf>

Date: 9/30/2015

Article Summary: Seymour, a consulting engineer, traveled on an 1866 publicity trip to the end of the Union Pacific Railroad line just beyond Cozad. Pawnee Indians provided special entertainment and travelers had overnight accommodations in tent camps. (This article reprints a chapter from Seymour's 1867 book about the railroad.)

Cataloging Information:

Names: Silas Seymour, Thomas C Durant, J Carbutt, G M Dodge, H M Hoxie, Alvin Saunders, George M Pullman

Nebraska Place Names: Omaha, Cozad, Kearny

Keywords: Union Pacific Railroad, Elkhorn Club, Herndon House, *Denver*, Silas Seymour, G M Dodge, Thomas C Durant, J Carbutt

Photographs by J. Carbutt: Thomas C Durant and department heads of Union Pacific shown visiting the Omaha shops; a guest on the excursion posing with Pawnee Indians beside the train near Columbus; members of the party photographed informally in "Platte City," October 25, 1866; track-laying in Nebraska

THE GREAT UNION PACIFIC EXCURSION, 1866

By SILAS SEYMOUR

EDITORIAL NOTE—Congress required that the Union Pacific Railroad be built as far west as the One Hundredth Meridian near present Cozad by December, 1867. In a great construction feat, however, the rails were laid past that point on October 5, 1866, a year ahead of schedule. To gain publicity for the rapidly extending line, the directors of the railroad sponsored a grand excursion to the end of track. They played host to members of Congress, territorial officials, financiers, society figures, and a scattering of European nobility.

The majority of the excursionists traveled by train to St. Joseph, Missouri; and then traveled by steamboat to Omaha. A few more hardy souls traveled overland across Iowa by stagecoach. The following account by Silas Seymour was originally published in the *New York Times*. The following year, 1867, it appeared as a chapter in Seymour's book, *Western Incidents Connected with the Union Pacific Railroad* [cover title].¹

During this centennial year of the Union Pacific, we republish that portion of the book describing the excursion.

The night before the departure of the special train, a grand ball was held in Omaha. Our account begins with the events of the following day.

Omaha, Nebraska, Nov. 5, 1866

The elegant entertainment given by the citizens of Nebraska and Omaha to the excursionists the previous evening, did not prevent them from being astir at a reasonably early hour on Tuesday morning, October 23. Nearly all the gentlemen interested or curious in such matters, visited the extensive depots and machine shops of the Union Pacific Railroad, and expressed their astonishment and delight at the magnitude and adaptation of the works, the construction of which had only been commenced within a year from the present time.

It was a source of very general regret, that Mr. Samuel B. Reed, the efficient General Superintendent of the Road, and Engineer in Charge of Construction, was prevented, by severe illness, from showing any attention to the excursionists at Omaha, and also from accompanying them over the road. His place, however, was admirably filled by Mr. Webster Snyder, his principal assistant, aided by Mr. G. W. Frost, Major L. S. Bent, General Casement, Mr. A. A. Bean, Mr. Congdon, Mr. Gambol, and the other heads of departments.

The Chief Engineer, Gen. G. M. Dodge, who had returned from the mountains during the previous week, rendered every assistance in his power; and the Consulting Engineer, by his timely presence, was enabled to relieve the others from much, if not all the *heavy standing around*.

The excursion train consisted of nine cars drawn by two of the Company's powerful locomotives. The magnificent Directors' car, constructed by the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago Railroad Company for this road, was placed in the rear, and devoted to members of Congress, and other distinguished guests, who felt desirous of making

a critical examination of the road and adjacent country, which they now visited for the first, and possibly the last time.

The next car forward, was the celebrated Government, or Lincoln car, the private property of Mr. Durant, and was therefore devoted principally to his own personal friends and their families.²

In front of this, were four fine passenger coaches, put up at the Company's car-shops at Omaha. These were devoted to the excursionists generally. One of which, however, was occupied almost exclusively by the Elkhorn Club.³

Next in order, came the mess, or cooking car, constructed also at the Fort Wayne shops, and designed as a tender, or companion to the Directors' car. In front of



Thomas C. Durant and department heads of Union Pacific shown visiting the Omaha shops. The photographs used to illustrate this article, most of them previously unpublished, were taken by J. Carbutt. They are published with permission of the Union Pacific.

this was a mail, or express car, conveniently fitted up as a refreshment saloon. And in front of all, or next to the engine, was the baggage and supply car. The engines were profusely decked with flags, and appropriate mottoes; and the whole outfit presented a most imposing appearance, as it left the Missouri Valley, and steamed away towards the Rocky Mountains.

It had been announced by Mr. Durant that the excursion train would start westward at ten in the morning. But the difficulty and delay attending the gathering together of the excursionists, prevented our departure till about twelve, when the entire party, enlarged by the civil and military authorities, members of Congress, etc., of the Territory, with their families, started westward in high spirits, to view, most of them for the first time, the great, and almost uninhabited Platte Valley, extending, as it does, in an almost direct westerly course from the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains, a distance of six hundred miles.

The train had been supplied by Mr. Hoxie⁴ with every comfort and even luxury that the heart could wish; and soon after starting, the guests were invited to partake of an excellent lunch, served through the cars by the attentive waiters.

The fine valleys of Mud Creek, and the Papillion, were passed successively, and at about two P.M., the Great Platte Valley opened to the view, and elicited an exclamation of wonder and admiration from all who now saw it for the first time.

The train—which had been ordered by Mr. Durant to proceed at a slow rate of speed, so that the excursionists could obtain a satisfactory view, not only of the surrounding beautiful country, but of the road and structures, as they passed—after halting at the fine bridge structures over the Papillion and Elkhorn Rivers, stopped a short time at the Fremont and North Bend stations, in order to give the guests an opportunity of examining the commodious depot buildings, water stations, etc., which had been con-

structed by the Company at intervals of fifteen or twenty miles along the line.

The train finally reached Columbus, the proposed end of the first day's journey, a little after night-fall, and here a new surprise awaited the party.

The train was halted immediately in front of a brilliantly illuminated encampment, which covered several acres of beautiful ground situated a few rods northward of the Columbus station buildings, and so arranged as to afford comfortable accommodations for all who wished to leave the cars and enjoy the novelty of a night's sleep in camp.

Soon after our arrival, supper was announced by the ubiquitous Hoxie, and the party found themselves comfortably seated in a large tent, and urged to partake of substantial and luxuries, which might well have vied with those found upon the tables of our Eastern hotels.

The irrepressible Elkhorns were seen and heard everywhere, adding life and exhilaration to the scene; and thus an hour or two were passed in social intercourse until the evening's entertainment was announced.

This entertainment consisted of a war-dance, at a short distance from the encampment, executed by a large delegation of Pawnee braves, under the immediate supervision of that celebrated *Indianist*, Professor Taylor, who had most kindly volunteered his valuable services for the occasion; and of all the wild and hideous yells, grotesque shapes and contortions that have ever been witnessed by a civilized assemblage in the night-time upon the plains this was most certainly the climax. The light of the moon, aided slightly by that of a dim camp fire, was barely sufficient to enable the spectators to distinguish the features and grotesque costumes of the savage performers; and the congregation of lady and gentlemen spectators were only too glad to know that the Indians were entirely friendly, and catering only for the amusement of the company, instead of being enemies, dancing and gloating over their scalpless

bodies. This amusement being ended, the waning moon and camp fires admonished the excursionists that the hour for retirement and rest had arrived.

Each individual, family, and party, found comfortable tents allotted to them, well stored with soft hay mattresses, buffalo robes, and blankets. Without the least disorder or confusion, therefore, all were soon dreaming of the wondrous novelty of the situation; and nothing but the howling of the distant wolf, or the subdued mutterings from the Indian camp, broke the stillness of this first night on the plains.

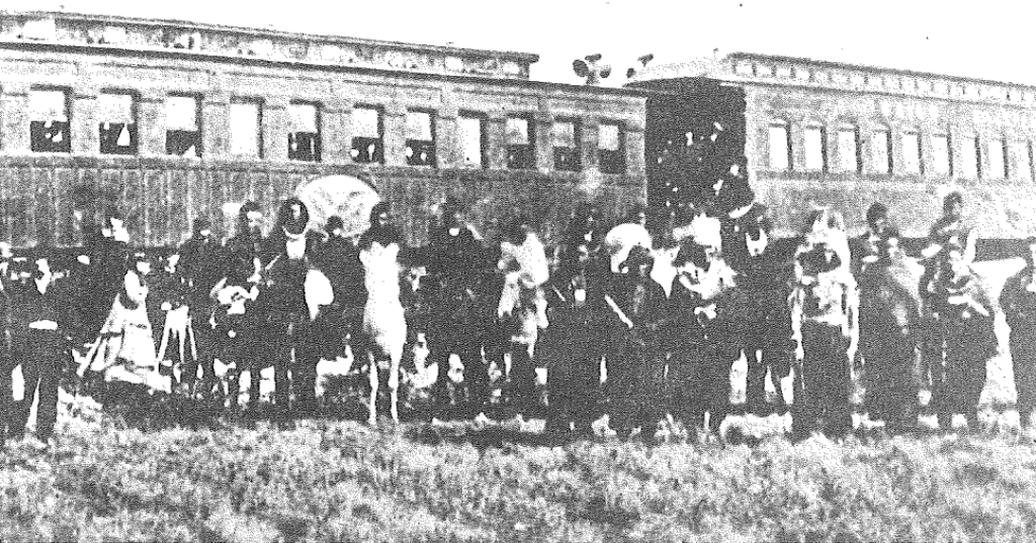
Before daylight, however, the more timid of the party were startled from their slumbers by the most unearthly whoops and yells of the Indians, who were tramping about among the camp fires in front of the tents; and many disordered heads, with anxious and inquiring countenances, were to be seen protruding through the apertures of the tents, to ascertain whether they were to be immediately roasted alive, or allowed a short time in which to say their prayers, and write a few parting words to their distant friends.

All was soon explained however, when it became known that Mr. Durant himself, assisted by General Dodge, Secretary Paddock, and a partially standing, but more generally reclining committee of Elkhorns, had these wild denizens of the plains, under the most complete control; and were only making them dance and perform this most unique and savage morning serenade for their own particular amusement.

Quiet was therefore soon restored, and, after a refreshing morning nap, the party was invited to partake of a sumptuous breakfast before again starting westward.

This goodly town of Columbus should, however, have more than a passing notice.

It is situated near the confluence of the Loup Fork River with the Platte, and is surrounded by one of the



Excursionist and Pawnee Indians pose beside the train near Columbus. Note the emblem on the "Lincoln" car.

finest agricultural countries in the world. Being near the centre of the Territory, it bids fair soon to become the Capital of this embryo State. The large and valuable Pawnee reservation is situated only a few miles from the town, in the Valley of Loup Fork.

The *Credit-Foncier of America* has invested largely in town and suburban property, and promises, through its far-seeing and enterprising managers, to add much to its future growth and prosperity.

The tents were soon struck, and the pioneer train was to be seen steaming far away in the distance; after which, our excursionists leisurely resumed their places in the cars, ready for new surprises and adventures.

Many of them little dreamed, however, that one, most rare and novel in its character, was so soon to be realized.

The train halted upon a high embankment, in front of the Indian encampment, near the east end of the beautiful bridge which spans the Loup Fork river.

The Indians, fully dressed and adorned in the war costume of the Pawnees, were in council, many of them

evidently in a high state of excitement, gesticulating, whooping and yelling, in the most frantic and unearthly manner. Twenty or thirty horses stood near, ready to be mounted.

Soon a band of about thirty mounted Sioux warriors were to be seen emerging stealthily from a thicket, some distance down the river, and making their way cautiously in a circuit, as if to surround the Pawnee camp.

Our Pawnees were instantly mounted, and following their stalwart chief, with shrieks and cries of vengeance, to the attack. The shock of meeting was grand and terrific. Horses reared and plunged against each other. Indian grappled Indian, and both fell to the ground in deadly embrace. Rifles, revolvers and arrows were discharged apparently with deadly effect. Riderless horses, and horseless riders were to be seen roaming wildly over the plain. And all was confusion and intense excitement, until at length the victorious Pawnees brought their vanquished enemies into camp, amid the most tempestuous shouts of triumph and exultation.

All this had been but a *sham* Indian fight, between a party of Pawnee warriors, dressed in the costume of the Sioux, and an equal number of their own tribe. What then must be the terrible reality, when these ever hostile tribes meet, as they often do, in deadly conflict?

After the battle had ended, Mr. Durant distributed several hundred dollars' worth of presents among the Indians and their squaws. And it was most amusing to see these greedy savages exercise all the arts and *indianity* of which the most civilized mind is capable, for the purpose of obtaining more than their just and proper share of the spoils. The squaws, too, were most curious in their observation of the peculiar construction of the hoop-skirts and elegant balmorals worn by our lady excursionists; and also tried by every means in their power to enlist the sympathies of these kind-hearted ladies in behalf of the young papooses hanging upon their backs.



Elegant members of the party are photographed informally in "Platte City", October 25, 1866. George Francis Train is seated in front of Mrs. Train and Thomas C. Durant.

Perhaps no better illustration could have been given of the extremes of civilized and savage life, standing face to face with each other, than the one now before us. On the one side was the track of the Union Pacific Railroad, upon which stood that great civilizer, the locomotive and train, looking westward over the Loup-Fork bridge, fifteen hundred feet in length; and in the foreground stood the group of excursionists, composed of beauty, intelligence and refinement; while, on the other hand, were grouped these uncouth savages, many of them almost in their normal state, except for the profuse display of feathers and trinkets which bedecked their persons; low and brutal in their habits, and mentally elevated but slightly, if at all, above the level of the beasts that inhabit this vast and beautiful country with them.

But the laws of civilization are such that it must press forward; and it is in vain that these poor ignorant creatures attempt to stay its progress by resisting inch by inch, and foot by foot, its onward march over these lovely plains, where but a few years since, they were "monarchs of all they surveyed."

The locomotive must go onward until it reaches the Rocky Mountains, the Laramie Plains, the great Salt Lake, the Sierra Nevada, and the Pacific Ocean. Lateral roads must also be built, extending in all directions from the main line, as veins from an artery, and penetrating the hunting-grounds of these worse than useless Indian tribes, until they are either driven from the face of the earth; or forced to look for safety in the adoption of that very civilization and humanity, which they now so savagely ignore and despise.

When this most interesting exhibition of savage life and customs was ended, the excursion train started again on its westward course, passing successively the embryo towns of Silver Creek, Lone Tree, Grand Island, Wood River, Kearny, Elm Creek, Plum Creek, and Willow Island. Soon after which, and at about eight P.M., it arrived at the termination of the second day's journey, a distance of two hundred and seventy-nine miles west of Omaha.

Here, as at Columbus, on the previous evening, a large and brilliantly illuminated encampment had been prepared for the reception of the guests.

A military encampment had also been established during the previous day by Colonel [John Kemp] Mizner, in command of Fort McPherson on the opposite side of the Platte, so near the excursionists' camp as to preclude any fear from roaming bands of Indians, which were said to infest this portion of the country.

Comfortable quarters were immediately assigned to each one of the party, and very soon thereafter an elegant supper was announced, and partaken of with a gusto,

known only to a party whose only sustenance for hours had been the pure bracing air of the illimitable plains.

When the excursion party left New York, it was understood that it would overtake the western end of the Union Pacific Railroad track, at or about the one hundredth meridian of longitude, some two hundred and forty-seven miles west of Omaha; and that then and there the great celebration would come off, as per invitation and programme. But here we now were, more than thirty miles west of the one hundredth meridian, and no end of track yet visible. Nothing remained for the excursionists, therefore, but to take another night's rest, and endeavor by an early start on the following morning, to overtake this long-sought-for goal, which to many of the party seemed only a myth, or most perplexing illusion.

The spacious headquarters tents, which had been hung about with transparencies, and elegantly decorated with flags for the occasion, were therefore soon bereft of their occupants, who had sought the greater retiracy of the more private quarters assigned to them; and after the establishment of a telegraph, and printing office, by means of which to communicate with the outer world, the encampment soon became as still as solitude itself, except the measured tramp of the guard or distant sentinel, whose duty it was to see that we were not molested either by friends within or foes from without.

On the following morning the camp showed signs of early life. Individuals and parties were to be seen looking about for the means of ablution and renovation.

The famous Elkhorn Club formed in line in front of their quarters, with President Dunlap and Vice-President Smith as its head, and followed in proper order by its professional *speechists*, *singists*, *cheerists*, *punists*, *jokeists*, *eatists*, *drinkists*, etc., etc., marched in a body to the banks of the Platte River, where each member underwent the pleasant operation of a wholesome *outward* application of an element to which the inner man had, from the force

of circumstances, become a comparative stranger during the few preceding days.

After a hearty breakfast, the inquiry became quite general as to the programme of operations for the day. A bulletin board was therefore placed in front of headquarters, upon which the following printed announcements and orders were soon posted for general information:

Camp No. 2, U.P.R.R., Buffalo Co. Nebr.)
)
Thursday, October 25, 1866.)

SPECIAL NOTICE.

“Colonel N. A. Gestner is announced as Officer-of-the-Day. Office at headquarters tent.

Chiefs of all working and fatigue parties will immediately report to him for orders.”

By Order.

CITY ORGANIZATION.

“A meeting of citizens will be held this day at the Music Stand in the Public Square, at 9 A.M., for the purpose of locating a city, the election of a Mayor, City Council, and the transaction of such other business as may be presented.

“Let there be a full attendance.”

By Order.

TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRESS.

“The Representatives of the Press are requested to meet at the Press headquarters (left wing of the dining hall), at 10 o'clock this morning.”

“AN EXCURSION TRAIN will leave for the End of the Track, at 11 A.M.”

THE BUFFALO HUNT.

“Gentlemen wishing to go on a buffalo or antelope hunt will please report to Captain Hollins, at headquarters. Captain H., with an experienced hunter, will accompany the party. Buffalo are said to be in abundance on the Republican, and antelope nearer camp. The party will be absent about four days. Horses and ponies will be provided.”

Very much to the disappointment and regret of all parties, a large number of the officers, professors, and

leading spirits of the Elkhorn Club were obliged to leave soon after breakfast, in a special train for the east. Professor Ayer, the *goutist* of the Club, remained however, and added very much to the hilarity of the party by riding about in an old one-horse wagon, driven by Major Bent; this method of locomotion being rendered necessary, as he remarked, by the unmanageableness of his *stuttering* feet.

The following dispatch was received from the Elkhorn party during the day:—

“Kearny, October 25, 1866.

“Dr. T. C. DURANT—

“Our eyes are filled with unaccustomed tears; and our hearts are bowed with grief. The Elkhorns mourn for their Fawns.

“ELKHORNS.”

The following reply was immediately sent:—

TO THE DEPARTED ELKHORNS

“The better half of all our joys
 Departed with the Elkhorn boys;
 To their memory we'll light the lamp,
 And dance around our prairie camp.

“FAWNS.”

The first number of the *Railway Pioneer* was issued from the press during the morning, and contained, among a large variety of interesting and amusing matter, the following:

LIST OF NAMES OF THE EXCURSION PARTY—
 GUESTS OF THE U. P. R. R.

Excursion Camp, October 25, 1866.

DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS OF THE U. P. R. R. COMPANY.

Thomas C. Durant, New York, Vice-President,	} <i>Directors.</i>
E. Cook, Iowa,	
Sidney Dillon, New York,	
C. A. Lambard, Massachusetts,	
John Duff, Massachusetts,	
Hon. C. T. Sherman, Ohio, Government Director.	

General J. H. Simpson, Washington, }
 General S. R. Curtis, Iowa, } *Government Commissioners.*
 Hon. W. H. White, Connecticut. }
 Gen. G. M. Dodge, Iowa, Chief Engineer.
 Col. Silas Seymour, New York, Consulting Engineer.
 W. Snyder, Assistant Superintendent and General Freight and
 Ticket Agent.

ATTACHES:

H. M. Hoxie, in charge of steamboats.
 B. F. Bunker, N. A. Gesner, in charge of special train.
 G. W. Frost, Purchasing Agent.
 Maj. L. S. Bent, Burnetizer, General and Daniel Casement, in charge
 of track.
 J. Carbutt, Photographer; Mr. Hein, Assistant Photographer.
 Great Western Light Guard Band of Chicago—A. J. Vaas, Leader.
 Rosenblatt's Band of St. Joseph—H. Rosenblatt, Leader.

INVITED GUESTS.

Hon. B. F. Wade, U. S. Senator; Hon. J. W. Patterson, U. S. Sena-
 tor; Hon. M. Welker; Hon. W. Lawrence; Hon. J. B. Alley and wife;
 Miss Emma Alley; Hon. R. B. Buckland; Hon. I. T. Rogers; Hon.
 R. B. Hays; Hon. B. M. Boyer and wife; Hon. S. E. Ancona; Hon.
 J. H. Farquar and wife; LeGrand Lockwood; Henry B. Lockwood;
 Earl of Arlie, England; M. O'Dillon Barrot, Secretary French Lega-
 tion; Marquis Chambrun; Mr. and Mrs. J. T. McCobb; Miss A. M.
 Williams; Horace Williams; Wm. Leighton; Mrs. J. H. Simpson;
 Miss Minnie Simpson; Miss Graff; J. T. Tuttle, M. D.; J. E. Sher-
 man; Miss M. H. Sherman; Rev. Dr. G. F. Wisnell and wife; B. D.
 Stewart; Miss H. R. Stewart; J. R. Duff; Miss Duff; Miss Hall;
 Rev. I. H. Tuttle, D.D., and wife; Col. E. D. Taylor; Miss Kate
 Offley; S. J. Jones, Surgeon, U.S.N.; Gen. J. H. Bates; Hon. August-
 us Schell; Rev. W. R. Brown; John Crerar; Mr. and Mrs. George
 Francis Train and maid; Mrs. George T. M. Davis; Miss Sallie Clark;
 Mrs. J. S. Polhemus; Miss M. S. Dodge; Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Bail-
 hache; Hon. Thomas F. Plunkett; Hon. G. B. Senter; G. A. Benedict;
 Col. Thomas Dimmick; Ezra H. Baker; Miss E. H. Baker; Miss
 Bugbee; Dr. F. Plummer; Isaac S. Waterman; Mr. and Mrs. J. H.
 Connelly; H. M. Smith; Col. William Osborn; Mrs. R. A. Park; Mrs.
 A. P. Clark; Capt. St. Albe; S. R. Wells; H. M. Kinsley; Dr. and Mrs.
 S. L. Sprague; J. A. Gliden; E. T. Watkins; Wm. Hilton; Joseph
 Medill; Col. A. W. Johnson; John Potts; J. H. Bowen; R. M. Mc-
 Henry; T. W. Fabens; Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Painter; C. F. Atkinson;
 Josiah Hastings; F. H. Hall; C. B. Hazeltine; B. P. Hazeltine; Perry
 H. Smith, Jr.; Col. B. H. Jenks; Dr. H. B. VanDeventer; R. D. Hicks;
 E. Reily; W. G. Mendenhall; Mr. and Mrs. D. W. Kilbourne; George

E. Kilbourne; Mr. and Mrs. R. Harris; Ira P. Bowen; F. S. Lathrop; A. N. Allen, M.D.; F. W. Hinsdale; Mrs. S. Seymour; J. M. Seymour; Franklin C. White; Thomas H. Cuthell; S. P. Holmes; Luther Kountze; J. W. Miller; William L. Woods; Major Hennings; Mr. Winter; Capt. John B. Turner; W. H. Ferry; Perry H. Smith; George L. Dunlap E. B. Talcott; Col. J. H. Howe; John C. Gault; Isaac B. Howe; John V. Ayer; George M. Pullman; Hiram Wheeler; Charles H. Hapgood; Robert T. Lincoln; Norman Williams; John M. Rountree; Hon. H. B. Curtis; Henry L. Curtis; Dr. J. M. Buckingham; Charles T. Sherman, Jr.; Dr. R. D. Hicks; S. Lathrop; Miss Hattie V. Lathrop; A. Winton; Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Balch; C. F. Atkinson; Rev. W. R. Brown; T. R. Montgomery; L. L. Harman; George R. Smith, P.M., Omaha; Gen. G. M. O'Brien and lady; Dr. Alexander, Medical Director; St. A. D. Balcombe and lady; Major Bird; George L. Miller; E. B. Taylor; F. M. McDonough; Judge C. Baldwin; H. C. Nutt, Esq., and lady; Mrs. Gen. Dodge and daughter; Miss Dodge; Mrs. H. M. Hoxie; Mrs. G. W. Frost; Miss C. M. Frost; Miss A. J. Shaw; Mrs. D. T. Casement; John Jones; Hon. A. Saunders, Governor of Nebraska; Hon. J. M. Thayer and lady, and Hon. T. W. Tipton, U. S. Senators elect; Hon. William Kellogg, Chief Justice of Nebraska; Major-General Phillip St. George Cooke (commanding Department of the Platte) and Staff; Hon. A. S. Paddock, and lady, Secretary of Nebraska; Major Cushing, Chief Commissary of the Platte; Col. J. K. Mizner, (Fort McPherson), lady and sister; Lieut. Yates, Second Cavalry, United States Army; Lieut. A. S. Adams, Second Cavalry, U.S.A; C. L. Jenkins, in charge *Railway Pioneer* Printing Establishment; J. Shepherd, Superintendent United States Express Company; "Giles," Editor *Bugle*, Council Bluffs, Iowa; W. F. Burke, Editor *Nonpareil*, Council Bluffs, Iowa.

The following account of a public meeting held in the hollow square, in the centre of the encampment, is also taken from the *Railway Pioneer*:—

PUBLIC MEETING:

"A public meeting was held in the square this A.M., pursuant to notice. Hon. Alvin Saunders, of Nebraska, was called to the chair, and appointed secretary.

"Brief and appropriate addresses were made by Senators Wade of Ohio, Patterson of New Hampshire, Tipton of Nebraska, Hon. Mr. Lawrence of Ohio, Hon. John B. Alley of Mass., Dr. Wisewell, and others.

Mr. Lawrence of Ohio, offered the following resolutions which were unanimously adopted:

“Whereas, An excursion party of ladies and gentlemen from various places in both hemispheres, started from New York City on the evening of October 15th, 1866, to visit the Union Pacific Railroad so far as finished, to a point west of the hundredth meridian of west longitude; and

“Whereas, Said excursionists, with many others who have joined them on the route, have this day reached said destination, at a point on said railroad two hundred and seventy-nine miles west of Omaha; and

“Whereas, Said excursionists have passed over all or parts of the following railways, and lines of travel, to-wit:—the New Jersey Central Railroad; the Allentown Railroad; the Pennsylvania Central Railroad; the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago Railroad; the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad; the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad; the Des Moines Valley Railroad; the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad; the steamers Denver and Colorado from St. Joseph to Omaha; and the Union Pacific Railroad.

“And Whereas, This excursion was designed to celebrate the formal opening of the Union Pacific Railroad—so far as finished—for travel and the transportation of commerce to and from the great interior of, and across, the North American continent, with its vast agricultural and mineral resources.

“Resolved, That this excursion party here assembled in the centre of this vast continent, now offer up our heartfelt gratitude and thanks to Almighty God for His manifold blessings, among which we enumerate that country subject to the jurisdiction of the United States of America, republican institutions, civil and religious liberty, the freedom of speech and the press, a Union unbroken and indestructible, with all the material resources necessary for the comfort of mankind in a high and rapidly advancing state of development; and with a vast net-work of railroads and telegraphs essential not only to our national prosperity and the interests of all our people; but also to the civilization and commerce of the world, including among the most important of them all, that vast work—THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD.

“Resolved, That it is the deliberate opinion of this excursion party that our nation and the world have abundant reason to rejoice that the Union Pacific Railroad was projected, and is in successful progress to completion, and

we congratulate mankind at the success of this magnificent enterprise.

“Resolved, That our thanks are due and are hereby tendered to the Union Pacific Railroad Company for their energy and enterprise in the rapid construction of their railroad, as well as for their excursion, celebrating thus far the opening of their railroad.

“Resolved, That Thomas C. Durant, the Vice-President and General Manager of the Union Pacific Railroad Company, and his subordinates in its direction, deserve and have our sincere thanks for this excursion and for the energy and enterprise they have displayed in organizing and conducting it; and for the splendid and unsurpassed accommodations provided for the convenience and comfort of the excursionists.

“Resolved, That our thanks are due and hereby tendered to the Central Transportation Company for the splendid ‘Palace Sleeping Cars,’ so generously furnished by them for this Excursion.

“Resolved, That our thanks are due and are hereby tendered to George M. Pullman, Esq., of Chicago, for his liberal hospitality and generosity in furnishing the magnificent train of ‘Palace Sleeping Cars,’ for our party over the Chicago and Quincy Railroad, and for the sumptuous entertainment provided at his instance by the prince of caterers, ‘Kinsley,’ of Chicago.

“Resolved, That our thanks are due and hereby tendered to Governor Alvin Saunders of Nebraska, for the cordial welcome to this Territory which he extended to our party at Omaha; and to the Mayor and Council of Omaha, and to the people of that city for the hospitalities and the splendid entertainment given us during our stay at that flourishing capital.

“Resolved, That our thanks are in like manner extended to the several Railroad Companies of the lines of road over which we have passed, and to the officers and crews of the steamers ‘Denver,’ and ‘Colorado,’ on the Missouri River, for the excellent accommodations and safe and speedy transportation furnished by them each and all for our large party.

HON. WM. LAWRENCE, of Ohio.
HON. E. H. BAKER, Mass.
HON. A. C. SCHELL, New York.

HON. JOHN H. FARQUAR, Indiana.
COL. R. H. JENKS, Penn.
JOSEPH MEDILL, Illinois.
GEN. J. M. THAYER, Nebraska."

At eleven o'clock the party started, as per announcement, in the train for the end of the track, which was finally found some eight or ten miles still farther west.

On the way to the end of the track, we met one of Mr. Durant's foraging parties, on horseback, laden with antelope and other game for the table. This party reported that the party which had previously been sent out to hunt for buffalo, had been quite successful, but unfortunately, as they were returning to camp, they met with a strong party of Indians, who took their buffaloes from them, and spared their lives only on condition that they should never be found again upon their hunting-grounds.

Some hours were spent by the party in the vicinity of the end of the track, in observing the process adopted by those great *trackists*, General [Jack] and Daniel Casement, in laying the track, substituting their men, distributing materials, etc. Photographic pictures were also taken by the celebrated *viewist*, Professor Carbutt of Chicago, of the construction train; and also various groupings of the officers of the road and excursionists. The *shootists* of the party amused themselves by firing at marks, or other objects on the distant bluffs and river. Senator Wade of Ohio, distinguished himself by making several fine shots with the little Ballard rifle, which had recently done such excellent execution among the elk and antelope of the Rocky Mountains; and he finally became so much attached to the rifle, that he would not allow his photograph to be taken without holding it in his hand. A general *abandon* seemed to pervade the entire party; and every one appeared inclined to yield to the influence of the quiet and majestic repose, which reigned supreme over all the vast plains.

A sumptuous game dinner awaited the hungry excursionists on their return to the camp during the latter part of the day, as will be seen by referring to the following



A rare photograph of track-laying in Nebraska. Note that the ties are roughly-hewn, rather than planed logs.

bill of fare, a printed copy of which was found beside the plate of each guest:—

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD EXCURSION

BILL OF FARE

PLATTE CITY, NEBRASKA
HOXIE HOUSE, *October 25, 1866.*

ROAST

Beef.	Mutton. Tongue.	Lamb, with Green Peas. Maccaroni a la Italian.	Brazen Ox.
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BOILED

Mutton.	Tongue.	Ham.	Corned Beef.
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GAME.

Antelope, Roasted.	Sardine Salid [sic]. Chinese Duck.	Roman Goose.
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VEGETABLES

Peas.	Tomatoes.	Asparagus.	Mashed Potatoes.
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RELISHES.

London Club Sauce. Pickles.	Worcestershire Sauce. Pineapple Cheese.	Horrey Sauce. Swiss Cheese.
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PASTRY.

Pies.	Strawberries.	Damson.	Peach.	Cherry.
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FRUITS.

Apples.	Pineapples.
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To which should be added, as representing the principal feature of the unpublished wine list:

THE UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD

VERZENAY

Ve MAX SUTAINÉ ET CIE.

T. W. & G. D. BAYAUD,

Sole Agents for United States and Canada

The following special notices appeared in the evening edition of the *Railway Pioneer*:

SPECIAL NOTICE.

A concert will be given this evening at Bunker Hall, by the celebrated Northwestern Band of Chicago. Tickets for sale at all principal hotels, and at the door.

Doors open at 7½ o'clock; performance to commence at 8 o'clock precisely.

Seven locomotives were at the depot in this city, this morning.

Eastern papers desiring an exchange with the *Pioneer*, will be placed upon our exchange list by publishing our prospectus three times in their daily and one month in their weekly issues.

A photograph gallery and a first-class barber-shop are among the recent additions to our embryo city.

The excursion train for the end of the track left promptly at 11 A.M. The excursionists witnessed the laying of about 800 feet of track during their brief stay of half an hour. Casement's men are putting down the iron at the unprecedented rate of a mile and a half per day. So we go, on our march to the Pacific!

The principal attraction of the evening was the magnificent display of fire-works from the stand in the centre of the camp, under the immediate supervision of those distinguished pyrotechnists, *Professors Snyder and Seymour*.

Rockets, falling stars, golden rain, serpents, magazines, Roman candles, together with all sorts of eccentric wheels, and other ingenious contrivances, were to be seen and heard, shooting and whizzing through the air for more than an hour, much to the amazement, no doubt, of the distant savages and wild beasts, who might happen to be the witnesses of this first exhibition of the kind in the great Platte Valley.

Later in the evening, the grand concert at Bunker Hall came off, as per special notice. This was followed by an interesting lecture upon phrenology, delivered by that great *bumpist*, Professor Wells, which was most amusingly illustrated by a reference to the head of Mr. George Francis Train, the *humorist* of the party.

The party finally retired to rest in the best possible humor with themselves, and their hospitable entertainers.

On the following morning all was commotion at an early hour in the encampment, in consequence of the following bulletin, which had been issued by Mr. Durant:—

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD, HEADQUARTERS
CAMP NO. 2,

Friday, Oct. 26, 1866.

Special Train No. 1 will leave with the Government Commissioners at 7½ A.M. to examine thirty miles of the road.

Special Train No. 2 will leave at 8 A.M., and will unite with Train No. 1, thirty-five miles east of this camp, arriving in Omaha at 7 P.M.

Ample provisions have been made for those of the guests desiring to take the stage from Council Bluffs to the western terminus of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad. The Iowa stage ride will occupy but ten hours' time, and the trip by rail thence to Chicago will be in Pullman's magnificent sleeping-cars.

Guests desiring to remain can use their excursion tickets during the two weeks next ensuing.

Parties preferring to return via St. Joseph will please take the steamer Denver at Omaha. The tickets issued for this excursion are good for the return trip on the Hannibal and St. Joseph, the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy, and Pittsburg Fort Wayne and Chicago, and Pennsylvania Railroads by making application to Mr. Creighton at Pittsburg. Those desiring to return via Michigan Southern, Lake Shore and New York Central Railroads can do so by giving notice of their intention at Omaha.

T. C. DURANT.

Professor Carbutt was now in great demand. Everybody wanted to be taken just as they appeared at the breaking up of camp. The Professor finally succeeded in obtaining some excellent groupings, as well as camp and landscape views before the train started eastward.

At about ten A.M., the whistle of the engine gave the signal for the start homeward. Although every one seemed delighted with the trip, and satisfied to return, yet many

longing eyes could be observed looking backwards, as if, other duties permitting, they would prefer, having started the other way, not to return until they had obtained a view of the Rocky Mountains, and the fabulous mines of treasure which are hidden in their embrace.

The train was halted for nearly an hour directly opposite the monument designating the point where the line of the road crosses the one hundredth meridian of longitude, for the purpose of enabling Professor Carbutt to photograph some views representing the excursion train, with groupings of Government officers, members of Congress, Directors of the road, and excursionists, coming to this point *from the west*.

This being accomplished, and the train which had been placed at the disposal of the Government Commissioners having been attached, the excursion train sped onward again at the rate of thirty miles an hour, stopping only for wood and water, until it reached a point about four miles below Kearny.

Here the train halted for nearly two hours, for the purpose of enabling the excursionists to pay their respects to the inhabitants of by far the largest town through which they had passed since leaving Chicago. This pleasing duty had been in contemplation as the train passed westward two days previously, and was prevented only by the lateness of the hour.

This town occupies an area of about twenty-five square miles, and the railroad track passes through its centre. The visit was evidently a surprise to the vast number of its quiet and peaceful inhabitants, and no preparations had therefore been made, as at Omaha, for the reception of their distinguished guests.

Their native politeness and curiosity, however, induced many of them, soon after the arrival of the train, to peep out of their doors and chatter an incoherent welcome; but the salutation which awaited them was not of a kind calculated to encourage a protracted acquaintance of even this

unsatisfactory nature, and all civilities were therefore soon at an end.

The *huntists* of the party soon spread themselves over several acres of the town, in the hope of securing a few specimens as mere matter of curiosity. Several hundred shots were fired; and, if the accounts of our brave *huntists* may be credited, at least one half that number had been killed; but by some strange fatality or illusion, on arriving at the spot where the ball was seen to strike them, they were not there. Only one was brought to the train, and he, after being subjected to the critical examination of all the excursionists, was turned over to the cook; and the last that was seen of him, he was rapidly disappearing before the steady gaze of Professor Ayer, who protested meantime that, "it had come to a pretty pass, if this grand excursion was reduced to such a strait that its guests were obliged to subsist on *prairie-dog*."

These prairie-dog cities are a great curiosity in their way. They generally occupy the most dry and elevated table lands of the Plains. The Union Pacific Railroad passes through or near many of them.

The harmless little animals are somewhat the nature, and about one-half the size of the common ground hog or woodchuck. They burrow in the ground, and evidently subsist, without water, upon grass and roots in the near vicinity of their town, as they are never seen far away from it.

Tradition, as well as more modern authority, insists that their apartments are occupied conjointly with owls and rattlesnakes; but of the truth of this, deponent prefers remaining silent, remarking only, that he has seen, and killed prairie-dogs, owls and rattlesnakes, in the immediate vicinity of the same town.

Reaching the lower end of the Platte Valley a little after dark, the excursionists were electrified by what, to most of them, was their first view of a night-fire on the prairies.

The train was immediately halted, and time given for all to drink their fill of the sublime spectacle. The flames extended in an unbroken line a distance of from fifteen to twenty miles; and one end of the belt of fire was so near, that we could feel the heat, and distinctly hear the roaring and crackling of the devouring element, as it swept over the plains with almost railroad velocity, and shot up its forked flames into the sombre smoky sky.

“What surprise awaits us next?” “When, and where will these wonders end?” “We did not know that this was in the programme!” exclaimed the excursionists, little dreaming that Mr. Durant had given private instructions upon this very subject, as the train passed up the valley two days before.

The train arrived at Omaha at about ten in the evening. Carriages were in waiting to convey the excursionists either to the Herndon House, or the steamer “Denver,” where an excellent supper, and good quarters awaited them. And all retired to rest, “perchance to dream” of the “loved ones at home,” whose happy faces would soon be seen again; and whose ears would soon be tingling with the most romantic and improbable tales, of Indian fights and war-dances; adventures with the Elkhorns; camping-out on the great plains almost in sight of the Rocky Mountains; living on buffalo and antelope meat; prairie-dog towns; fire on the prairies in the night time, etc., etc.

On the following morning the continuity of the party was broken, after many hearty hand-shakings, and affectionate adieus, by the departure of a large number *via* the overland route, by stage and rail, for Chicago and the East, under the charge of Mr. C. A. Lambard, one of the managing Directors of the Union Pacific Railroad. There were met at the western end of the railroad track by the officers of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad Company, and a delegation from the Elkhorn Club, who accompanied them to Chicago, and entertained them on the way in the most princely style.

The balance of the party remained at Omaha till Sunday morning, and then left by the steamer Denver for St. Joseph, in charge of Mr. Hoxie and Mr. Simmonds.

Before starting, however, the crowd was called to the land side of the boat by Mr. John V. Ayer of Chicago, and invited to unite in three rousing *Elkhorn* cheers for Mr. Durant, who was just retiring from the boat, after having bid adieu to the excursionists. These were given with a hearty good will, in *loudly suppressed silence*, thus: H—sh! H—sh!! H—sh!!! *Tiger*, H—sh!!!! and then the steamer rounded to, and moved majestically down the river.

Mr. Durant remained at Omaha, and on the line of the road, several days after the departure of the excursionists; during which time he received frequent dispatches, informing him of their uninterrupted progress eastward, and safe arrival home.

Thus ended the most important and successful celebration of the kind, that has ever been attempted in the world; and it is believed, that its favorable effect upon the progress of the greatest work of the age, will be felt for many years to come.

NOTES

¹ Silas Seymour, *Incidents of a Trip Through the Great Platte Valley, to the Rocky Mountains and Laramie Plains, in the Fall of 1866, with a Synoptical Statement of the Various Pacific Railroads, and an Account of the Great Union Pacific Railroad Excursion to the One Hundreth Meridian of Longitude* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1867), 82-109.

² This coach was built especially for Abraham Lincoln, and it was purchased by Durant in 1866.

³ This club was formed on board the Union Pacific-owned steamer Elkhorn which, while in Omaha, was used as quarters by those excursionists who had traveled overland across Iowa to Nebraska rather than coming up the river from St. Joseph with the main party. Seymour, *Incidents of a Trip Through the Great Platte Valley*, 80.

⁴ H. M. Hoxie is listed as being in charge of steamboat accommodations. Seymour, *Incidents of a Trip Through the Great Platte Valley*, 94.