



THE RAILROAD STATION: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

PHILIP H. LEWIS

THE "A Personal Perspective" portion of the title connotes certain inclusions and omissions in this paper. I will include my personal observations and recite personal experiences. Philosophical reflections of the author will be reported. The paper is not designed to be an exhaustive historical account. Events and occurrences beyond the author's personal experiences will be utilized principally for background and stage setting.

"The Railroad Station" in the title is arguably mislabeling. After the title was announced, Arthur J. Stanley, Jr., a former president of the Society, emphatically suggested that the proper name for the subject was "depot" and not "station." He was about 60 percent correct. Historically, the railroad station building in most Kansas towns was more often referred to as the "depot" than as the

With declining use of the railroad for passengers and less-than-carload shipments, railroad companies sought to close some of their stations. Depots like this one at Dorrance are no longer busy gateways to local communities, but they remain a symbol of earlier days and in some places have been given to communities for use as museums. Note the square bay window projecting toward the tracks from the center of the building from which the agent could watch trains approaching and departing, and the baggage truck in the foreground. Both were typical features of the stations.

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"station." Historically the presence of the depot or station building evidenced the availability of agency service in the community. If there were no depot building, no local agency service was provided. This is no longer correct.

Most references in this paper will be to depots. There is a technical distinction between "depot" and "station" which is relevant to philosophical reflections of more recent origin. Discussion of technical distinctions will be delayed to the latter part of this dissertation.

For historical background, we go back to 1825 and the first steam public railroad. This was the Stockton and Darlington Railway in England. Steam was the basic power source used by railroads until the much more recent development of the diesel locomotive. This early railway in England was developed through the engineering leadership of George Stephenson. Earlier, "railroads" had served individual industries. They ran on "tram roads" instead of rails or utilized horses for pulling power.

Peter Cooper's famous "Tom Thumb" inaugurated steam railroading in the United States with its 13-mile run in 1830. The mere fact that a horse pulling a "railroad" car had bested the Tom Thumb in a race did not deter the rapid

development of steam railroading (with increasing power and speed) in the United States.

Before the Tom Thumb made its historic run, great geographic expansion of our young nation had occurred. A vast territory had been added beyond the Missouri river by the Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803. The northern portion of this vast unexplored area had been penetrated shortly thereafter by the Lewis and Clark explorations fostered by far-seeing Pres. Thomas Jefferson. This expedition reached the mouth of the Columbia river using the Missouri river as its initial and primary route.

Shortly before and after the Tom Thumb episode, traders and trader wagon trains crossed the more central and southern portions of the Louisiana Purchase area on land routes which became known as the Santa Fe and the Oregon-California trails. Portions of both trails crossed through Kansas. The Oregon trail route generally followed the Kansas river (often called Canzes or Kansa) and Blue rivers into Nebraska and to the Platte river valley. The Santa Fe trail diagonally crossed Kansas following the Kansas and Arkansas rivers enroute to Santa Fe, the historic city in the then Mexican lands. The southwest corner of present Kansas was still part of Mexico. The 1830's were active years for the fur traders and trappers and the famed mountain men. Using the Platte river as a primary highway as well as a water route, they roamed the upper Rocky mountain region and trapped the streams in the surrounding areas. Their means of locomotion remained the ox-drawn covered wagon, horses, boats, or their legs.

In 1846 another vast geographic expansion occurred. The earlier breaking away of Texas from Mexico and the subsequent Mexican War resulted in the addition of most of the rest of present day western United States. Only 63 years after the successful conclusion of the Revolutionary War, the youthful United States now stretched from the original colonies on the shores of the Atlantic ocean to the Pacific ocean lapping the shores of California recently wrestled from Mexico. The California transition was eased through the prior influx of emigrants from the United States into California. Many of these emigrants into California had traveled via the Oregon trail but turning off to cross the

Sierra mountains into California. For our background purposes, the geographic borders of the United States had been formed by 1846 but only limited explorations had penetrated these vast territories.

Three years after California became part of the United States, gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill. This was followed by other discoveries of gold, silver, and other precious metals in the far western outreaches of the trans-Missouri region. The importance of this newly acquired territory was self-evident.

About a quarter of a century before the 1846 expansion, the area now comprising Kansas had been part of the lands which Stephen Long called the "Great American Desert." Many believed these plains were unfit for civilization. Efforts were made to use the plains lands for occupation by Indians, thereby freeing other areas from Indian occupancy. While later and more favorable information came out of explorations and travels along trails transversing Kansas, there were very few permanent settlers on present Kansas lands in 1846. Aside from military posts and missions the nomadic or seminomadic Indian people were the principal occupants.

This changed about eight years after the conclusion of the Mexican War. In 1854 the Kansas-Nebraska bill created the Kansas territory and opened it to settlers. The act left open to a vote of the settlers whether the resulting state would be a "free" or a "slave" state. The issue of slavery was the emotionally dominant issue in the entire country. The exporting of settlers into Kansas to influence the issue was akin to a crusade. Approximately seven turbulent years intervened before Kansas entered the United States as a free state on January 29, 1861. This event was after Lincoln's election and shortly before his inauguration as President. Less than three months later the "Civil War" or "War Between the States" began. All of these developments set the stage for the coming of the railroads into Kansas.

In the three decades following the 13-mile run of Peter Cooper's Tom Thumb, a network of railroads had spread over the eastern part of the United States extending westerly to the Missouri river. During the 1850's and prior to the Civil War, a number of railroad corporations had been legislatively incorporated in Kansas. Five had been legislatively incor-

porated by the first Kansas Territory Legislative Assembly in 1855. However, little actual development had occurred.

Only the Elwood and Marysville Railroad, incorporated in 1857, had actually undertaken any construction during this period. It built five miles of line westerly from Elwood (across the Missouri river from St. Joseph) to Wathena. The Leavenworth, Pawnee & Western had been incorporated by the 1855 territorial assembly, but it had only done a little grading in the vicinity of Leavenworth. It had not begun to lay any rails. The Atchison and Topeka had been created as a corporation in 1859 but it would be nine years before its construction would begin.

Just as the Kansas-Nebraska act stimulated settlement in Kansas, the Civil War stimulated railroad construction into and across the state. By 1862 war was in progress and gaining in fury. The Union and the Confederacy wanted and needed the vast Western areas and their valuable resources. Particularly inviting were the mineral-rich lands on the Pacific coast and between the Rocky mountains and the West coast.

For the Union, it was important to bind the vastly expanded nation together by facilitating transportation of people and property. This vast trans-Missouri river area was still only traversed by trails and primitive roads—such as the Santa Fe and Oregon-California trails and the military roads between forts plus overland routes used by stage coaches. The major door opener was the Pacific Railroad act of July 1, 1862.

This act provided for the construction of rail lines from the Missouri river to the San Francisco bay area in California. There were amendatory acts in 1864, 1866, 1869, but references to the 1862 act will suffice for purposes of this paper.

The principal line was to begin at the San Francisco bay area on the West coast and in the east at the 100th meridian in Nebraska. East of the 100th meridian several railroads were to build links to the Missouri river. As it turned out only one did and Omaha served as the eastern terminus. The two ends of the line were to be joined into a continuous line connecting the Pacific ocean and the Missouri river. These two "ends" were the Central Pacific and the

Union Pacific railroads which eventually met at Promontory Point in Utah on May 10, 1869.

Of the other lines which the act authorized to build from the Missouri river one was to begin at the confluence of the Missouri and Kansas rivers where Kansas City, Kan., is now located. It would then extend westerly along the Kansas river valley and (after some amendatory alterations) would eventually tie into the line running westerly from Omaha, via the Denver Pacific, into the main line of the Union Pacific at Cheyenne, Wyo. This is the present Union Pacific line extending westerly from Kansas City across the length of Kansas to Denver and beyond.

As additional background, the construction of this Kansas river valley rail line began in 1863. The Kansas town at the junction of the Kansas and Missouri rivers was at that time known as Wyandotte. Construction was necessarily slow. Most of the materials and equipment came from the east across Missouri on the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad, thence down to Wyandotte via the Missouri river. The railroad entity which undertook this project was the Leavenworth, Pawnee and Western. It had been legislatively created in 1855 but had not gone into construction or operation. Just before construction started the railroad changed its name to Union Pacific Railway Company, Eastern Division. Late in 1864 the line was open to Lawrence. On the first day of 1866, a passenger train reached Topeka. Late in 1866 the line reached Junction City at the junction of the Smoky Hill and Republican rivers.

West of Junction City the line followed the Smoky Hill river valley enroute to its western destination. By the end of 1867, the line had progressed to approximately the present location of Collyer, where the temporary "winter terminus" town of Coyote ran out its brief existence. In the summer of 1868, construction had progressed to another temporary end-of-the-line town. This inevitable temporary frontier village was named Sheridan, reputed to be the toughest town (a hard claim to make) in the West. The halt at this location (near present-day McAllaster) was to await further congressional action to make western extension feasible. In 1869 the congressional action was forthcoming. The railroad's name was changed to Kansas Pacific Railway Company and the

way cleared for the westward extension to Denver. Early in 1870 the western line of Kansas had been crossed and the connection with the Denver Pacific line made in Denver on August 15, 1870. Later it became part of the Union Pacific Railroad system as it is today, 110 years later.

THE FOREGOING is material to the author's "personal perspective." This perspective has been formed and shaped by four decades of professional association with a law firm representing Union Pacific. While the firm's clientele and scope of legal activity have expanded over the years, the tradition of railroad representation has remained. The author has matured professionally in that tradition.

I moved from being a law clerk to a federal judge to being the third member in the law firm representing the Union Pacific Railroad Company. I was quickly indoctrinated into the railroad tradition. The tracing of "Roots" is now popular and widely practiced. It was also practiced in 1935. I learned that the firm's beginnings traced back to John Palmer Usher, who had served Abraham Lincoln as Secretary of the Interior. In 1865, he moved west and became general solicitor for the Union Pacific Railway Company, Eastern Division. By that time the line had reached Lawrence; but had not as yet gotten to Topeka. Usher located in Lawrence and formed a law partnership with A. L. Williams. In due time the legal office of the railroad was moved to Topeka, the capital of the young state of Kansas.

I was quickly informed that the partnership association and the railroad representation had been in continuous and uninterrupted succession. It is not surprising that an understanding of the railroad's history was an essential part of my professional orientation.

By the time I came on the scene, transportation monopoly by railroads had already topped out. The primitive intercity roads had been replaced by paved highways. Only remnants of the old trails were still visible. Historical trail locations were ascertainable only through markers and by references to physical landmarks recorded in history. Intercity highways were being traveled by motor vehicles of various descriptions. They had superceded the animal-drawn carriages and wagons formerly

used for the transportation of persons and property over the trails and primitive roads.

The railroad depots had already been constructed. During the six and a half decades after the 1870 railroad junction at Denver, almost all of the Kansas rail lines had been laid. Railroad depots were built and located at each community located along the rail lines. There were very few communities which had not located on a rail line.

During the first four decades, almost all property and passenger traffic had moved over the railroad lines and much of the traffic had funneled through the depots. The dual developments of improved highways and of motor vehicles had occurred during the next 25 years. This quarter century of change and development had preceded the beginning of my professional career. In addition we were in the middle of "The Great Depression."

These facts set the stage for much of my personal involvement with railroad stations and depots. We were in an era of contraction and elimination. During my past 40 years of professional involvement, I have personally participated in the elimination of some 67 depot buildings from the Union Pacific system in Kansas. This has played a major role in the development of my personal perspective.

I have used the words "stations" and "depots." In common practice, the terms were used interchangeably and this longstanding practice is hard to break. The most recent edition of Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary* gives "station" as an equivalent of "depot." Technically the depot is the building structure at the shipping point. The latter is the "station."

In 1909 it was assumed that there would be a depot at every shipping or travel point. In fact the law assumed that every travel point would be on a railroad and required each railroad to provide a suitable facility or "depot" at each of its travel points. The 1909 *General Statutes of Kansas* included two sections specifically dealing with railroad depots/stations:

§7229. Duty to maintain depots. §252. It shall be the duty of every railroad company to provide and maintain adequate depots and depot buildings at its regular stations for the accommodation of passengers, and said depots and depot buildings shall be kept clean, well lighted and warmed, and open to the ingress and egress of all passengers a reasonable time before the arrival and departure of its regular passenger trains carrying passengers on its railroads, for the comfort and accommodation of the trav-

eling public; and also to provide and maintain adequate stations, or other structures, where it generally takes on or lets off passengers, for the comfort and accommodation of the traveling public: Provided, That this act is supplemental to and in aid of existing laws, and shall not repeal any existing law on the subject. [L. 1909, ch. 187, §1; March 30.]

§7230. Change site. §253. It shall be the duty of every railroad company to change the site or location of a depot or depot building and station or structure required in §1 hereof, in order to promote the security, convenience, welfare and accommodation of the public. [*Id.*, §2.]

These statutes have been continued in our state laws, now appearing as K.S.A. 66-242 and 66-243. Recently the end of rail passenger service has made the statutes largely obsolete.

Since the Public Utility act of 1911, the state regulatory agency (now State Corporation Commission) having jurisdiction over railroads has made the administrative decision as to whether a railroad station or station building is to be provided and maintained. A statute provides that a hearing must be held in the community whenever the "closing of a railroad station" is requested. For many years no effort was made to distinguish between the station and the station facility. The statute was construed to apply when and if a railroad desired to eliminate the building whether it was called a depot or referred to as a station building. This was logical. At that time, customer service in a community depended upon a railroad agent being in local "residence" and having a depot. The depot was where he did business. This was the situation when I began my professional involvement with the Union Pacific and with the communities served by the railroad.

FIRST, I will describe briefly the typical railroad station or depot. The 67 depot buildings, with which I became personally involved, were quite uniform in construction and layout. Usually they were of wood construction. The length of the building paralleled the railroad track or tracks. The building was traditionally divided into three major areas—the waiting room, the agent's work area or office and the baggage room. The central portion or middle room was the station agent's office and work area. Often it was narrower than the other two rooms. It typically had a bay-type window on the end adjacent to the railroad tracks. This could be either rounded or squared, but almost always extended out from the station building

towards the tracks. This enabled the station agent or agents to look down or up the tracks and observe approaching and departing trains.

The bay-window area was fitted with a built-in desk or table. The agent traditionally was located here for his operational duties. On the desk or table was telegraph equipment by which the agent transmitted and received telegraphic messages. The almost constant clacking of the telegraphic equipment in the depot is a vivid recollection of my school boy days.

By the time I came along professionally, the telephone was beginning to replace the telegraph in railroad communication. In the days of railroad expansion, the extension of the telegraph wires and the extension of the railroad lines were concurrent events. The railroad telegrapher-agent was the town's conduit for the forwarding and receiving of telegrams and telegraphic messages. In the smaller towns, you went to the railroad station to send or pick up your telegraphic communication.

Also in the bay-window area were the levers operating the semaphore located outside the station and alongside the tracks. The activated semaphore conveyed operating instructions to the engineers of trains approaching or passing the station. This was of great importance prior to the enroute electronic transmission of train orders and instructions.

On one side of the agent's office was located the passenger waiting room. The office and waiting room were connected by a door—seldom used—and by a much-used partially barred window. This window had a broad sill or base and was the agent's sales desk for selling tickets. The waiting room was usually substantial in size and related to the size of the town. The walls were lined with wooden benches. These benches were divided into individual seating areas by iron armrests. Historically, the armrests deterred use of the waiting room benches as "sleeping" locations by hoboes or drifters. In the pre-hitchhiker era, the "men of the road" often used railroad tracks or freight cars for unpermitted intercity travel.

Mary Liz Montgomery of Junction City in her newspaper column in the Junction City *Union* a few years ago referred to the wooden benches in the passenger waiting room as being "shaped to fit the bottoms of waiting passengers mesmerized by the telegrapher's clackety-clack." A very picturesque descrip-

tion. In the type of depot to which I am now referring, there usually were no benches in the center of the room although central benches would be found in the larger terminal stations. In smaller stations or depots, a pot-bellied stove was centrally located in the room to keep waiting passengers warm when it was wintery outside. Sometimes a rotary fan was installed for cooling purposes in hot weather. Limited cross-ventilation in the summer was provided by an open window and by opening the door leading towards the railroad tracks. This was usually the only door other than the one connecting with the agent's office.

At some place in the station, usually on the passenger waiting room side of the agent's room, was located a bulletin board or train indicator. This was required by law. The bulletin board gave the arrival and departure times of the trains. This information was often chalked onto the board and changed as train arrival and departure times changed while the trains were enroute.

On the other side of the agent's office area was a more barn-like room. This was commonly known as the "baggage room." It served as the receiving area for and temporary storage of passenger baggage which had been carried in the baggage car. It was also used for railway express shipments, for the milk and cream cans, for bags or pouches of mail and for miscellaneous items of less than carload freight. Ready access was needed between the baggage room and the loading and unloading area alongside of the tracks. Hand-pulled baggage trucks facilitated the transfer from the railroad cars to the baggage storage room or vice versa.

Most persons historically interested in railroading will remember well the rather heavy looking, four-wheeled, hand-pulled baggage trucks. The bed of the truck matched the height of the decks of baggage or express cars on the trains. Before the train arrived, the agent would load the truck or trucks with whatever was to move out on the train when it departed. When the train arrived, baggage and other incoming items would be loaded out of the cars onto a baggage truck for pulling or pushing into the baggage room to be picked up or temporarily stored. In those days, trunks were commonly used by travelers planning to be gone or to stay for extended periods. Particularly interesting were the frequently large

trunks of the "drummers" or traveling salesmen when the railroad was the usual means of intercity travel.

For those familiar with current railroad transportation, the failure to mention carload shipments will be noticeable. Carloads were and are picked up and delivered on the shipper's or receiver's siding. They were not forwarded from or delivered to the depot. The depot was only involved when the customer needed to see the agent. It was the less-than-carload freight and the passenger traffic which made material use of the depot or station building.

The existence of a depot in a community evidenced a number of continuing expenditures. One would be the cost of repairs and maintenance. Another was the type of expenses lumped under the heading of utility costs. More significant was the compensatory costs associated with the agent, including all of the accompanying fringe items imposed by law or by employment contracts. As the years passed, the compensatory and fringe items escalated while noncarload revenues frequently dwindled toward insignificant levels. As the public turned to other modes of transportation and travel, the agent became less occupied although increasingly expensive. The natural result was that the railroads sought to eliminate the little-used depots and the jobs of seldom used agents. At that early stage there was little or no attempt to distinguish between the depot and the station. They had been too closely interrelated. The elimination of the agent and the depot was a "station closing."

Until recent years, the union employment contracts prohibited territorial traveling by a station agent. The agent and the depot either stayed in the community or the station was closed. This was the situation when my professional involvement began.

The legal procedure was initiated by filing an application to close the station with the regulatory body. This body or agency has been State Corporation Commission for many years. The commission would set the application for hearing in the station building in the community involved. The statute required a hearing in the local community. The station depot was the traditional location designated for the hearing.

With the advent of all-weather highways and widespread use of automobiles and trucks, the

amount of passenger traffic and less-than-carload transportation had dwindled to a trickle when I came on the professional scene. Most communities made little use of the railroad for anything other than carload traffic. Even so, an application to close a railroad station touched the raw nerves of a community.

The decision to file an application was made in the upper echelons of management. The application was usually prepared by one of the senior members of the law firm. The assignment as to who was to represent the railroad at the hearing was also made by a senior member. However, the assignment to present the application in the community usually went to the newest or one of the newest associates or a very junior partner. The atmosphere surrounding the hearing in the community was uniformly hostile. The representatives of the railroad were the "bad guys." The hearing was conducted by personnel of a state agency which was politically sensitive to the community and public feelings. Some of the most vivid experiences coloring my early personal perspective occurred at these hearings in the hostile atmosphere of the local communities.

Almost without exception, these hearings

had to be transferred from the railroad station or depot to some facility providing greater seating space. The hearing was a major event in the community. The attendance would be many times the number of persons appearing on the railroad's records as users of its services during the preceding year. Usually the only facility affording the desired space was the school auditorium or gymnasium. Churches were seldom utilized. Perhaps the hostile atmosphere was not compatible with a church setting.

Often the hearing served as a civics demonstration for the school's students. The hearing provided a forum for those politically involved in or around the community. Customarily political figures would take the stand and make community spirited statements. Usually these statements were unrelated to the use or lack of use of the railroad, its agent, or its station facilities. They were heavy with declarations of the railroad's duty to serve. Often the only chance to close the station was when the gross revenues for all in and out traffic were less than the agent's salary and direct station expenses. The fact that it cost money to move the traffic was disregarded generally in these impas-

Most railroad depots were uniform in construction and layout. This view of the Quinter depot taken in 1912 shows the interior of the typical office and work area for the station agent. Among the agent's duties were selling tickets, operating the semaphore on the tracks and transmitting and receiving telegraph messages. As the public turned to other modes of transportation and shipping, the agent became less occupied although increasingly expensive. Now a new concept, the mobile agency, allows the agent to serve more than one community, and all he needs is an office, which does not have to be located in the depot. Photograph courtesy of Union Pacific Historical Museum, Omaha, Neb.



sioned speeches. Little attention was paid to whether the agent's time and the station facilities were being usefully utilized.

A few personal experiences may illustrate the atmosphere in which the hearings were held. I recall one instance where the schoolhouse was the transferred hearing site. Almost the entire community was present. The women in the community prepared and provided a luncheon in the gymnasium for all of those in attendance. I do not recall if we (the railroad representatives) were invited or just not excluded. It was early in my legal career. It had not been too long since I had been attending school. One of the wives in the community had been a former schoolmate. Naturally, I engaged her in conversation during the luncheon recess. While she seemed to enjoy the opportunity of renewing our acquaintance, it was obvious that she was apprehensive. Finally, she broke off the conversation, explaining that the other members of the community were eyeing her critically. She had better not talk to me any longer. I was the enemy. Association with me was not approved.

This and similar experiences gave me a realization of the depth of the community feeling. I did not possess the philosophical understanding later acquired but I did recognize and respect the strong community feelings. I carefully avoided expressing anger toward the community spokesmen and witnesses even when they were unreasonable, which was often. Perhaps this was more for self protection than because of graciousness of spirit.

Sometimes luck or bad luck played a part. Once a hearing was held at Lillis. The locale had been moved from the station because of the crowd. It was held in an outdoor area. Planks over stacks of shingles provided the seating. To reach the hearing location, it was necessary to leave the paved highway. The road was neither paved nor well graveled at that time. Earlier there had been heavy rains and the road was rutted by those arriving early. The automobile carrying the hearing examiner came over this road just before the hearing was scheduled to begin. It bogged down and became stuck prior to reaching the hearing location. Plenty of persons in the audience willingly provided aid in extracting the automobile from its mud-bound condition; but the occurrence did not enhance the railroad's position in

requesting that the station be closed and railroad service to the town be terminated. It was not surprising that the application was denied shortly after the hearing was concluded.

Sometimes the hearing would be held in the station or depot building with multiple folding chairs supplementing the old waiting room benches. When this occurred, there was usually a suspicion that the agent may have encouraged opposition to the application. When I approached a station (where a hearing was scheduled) and spotted a truck or trucks delivering folding chairs, I knew we were headed for trouble. Seldom was I mistaken in my conclusion.

One common characteristic of these hearings was audible participation by the community audience—not from the witness stand but from the audience itself. In school auditorium setups, the attending community filled the auditorium. The hearing examiner, the attorneys for the commission, and myself, as attorney for the railroad, were on stage. Not uncommonly we faced the audience. Occasionally either the attorney for the commission or I would interpose an objection. This required the hearing examiner to announce a ruling. If the ruling was adverse to the commission's attorney (who sought to expose any weaknesses in our case) the audience would groan. If my objection was overruled, clapping and applause was promptly forthcoming. I was never too confident that the civic lessons gleaned by the attending students were of the highest educational quality.

Another characteristic was the strong and audible audience approval of statements made by witnesses adverse to the railroad. Witnesses for the railroad were not verbally abused; but their testimony was received in stoney silence. The testimony of community witnesses was often vigorously applauded. The relevance of the testimony was unimportant. If the witness opposed the station closing, the audience was for him and cheered his statement. A clever phrase was particularly applauded. While the hearing examiner sought to tone down such audience participation, it was impossible to prevent. It was a natural part of the proceedings.

One logical result of universal audience approval of statements made against the

railroad's application, was the frequent appearance of persons in politics. Appearance at a hearing gave favorable public exposure to a state legislator or senator. Seldom were they residents of the community, but the community was within their district. Technically they were witnesses; but rarely was their testimony factually relevant to the issues. Almost without exception they spoke eloquently, albeit in generalities, on the responsibilities of a railroad and the rights of a community. Their public appearance and their statements met with enthusiastic community approval. One of the most vigorously delivered and enthusiastically received flag-waving speeches I recall was delivered at an early station closing hearing at Ogallah by the state senator of the district. The factual issues relevant to the hearing were not mentioned, but I interposed no objection to the senator's speech. One did not object to a legislator's statement on the ground that it was not relevant.

I do not want to convey the impression that our applications were never granted. Many were granted. However, this usually took place after one or two denials and the business increase predicted by community witnesses had not materialized. Usually the statistical evidence of limited use of the railroad would be attributed to bad crops or unusual conditions. Often the denying order referred to the community testimony and left the door open for a new application at some future time, if the optimistic predictions failed to materialize. Often the later closing came with final public acceptance of the fact that the public need simply wasn't enough to justify an agent-manned depot.

EVENTUALLY I had served my tour of duty on station closing assignments. These assignments then were passed off to newer associates. The experiences had been frustrating but not totally unrewarding. Nevertheless I did not begrudge these assignments going to others.

Some 10 years ago I assumed the responsibility of supervision of work assignments on railroad related matters. The more visible and eagerly sought assignments involved litigation in the courts. Among the myriad of other matters requiring attention were those related to the stations and the communities served by the

railroad. However, the situation had changed in these areas since my early station closing experiences.

One major change was in the contractual arrangement with the agents. Telegraphy was gone. Also gone was the contractual prohibition against an agent serving customers in more than one community. Now the agent could move from one community to another in performing services for shipping customers.

Concurrently with assumption of the new role, a program for modernizing the use of an agent's time evolved. It was the mobile agency concept. The idea was simple. An agent was only occasionally needed in the less populous communities. The agent could be headquartered in one locality and be reached via telephone on a cost-free basis by customers from several communities. Utilizing an automobile, a van, or other mobile highway equipment, the agent would drive to the customer's place of business if needed. The agent was not required to spend eight hours a day in the solitude of a little-used station. He could serve customers in communities where the stations had earlier been closed. A depot was not needed. All the agent needed was an office.

While the new concept still involved the elimination of depots, it did not terminate agency services within the community. In fact, it reestablished agency services to communities where stations had been previously closed. It more efficiently used the agent's time and provided a respectable net savings in direct expenses. These savings, when capitalized, amounted to substantial sums. I was enthusiastic about the program.

By now I had the option and responsibility of assigning work related to the railroad's legal matters. Job assignments relating to service by the mobile agent were mine to hand out. Because of my belief in the planned program, I elected to handle it personally. These "second round" experiences in recent years have provided the second phase in the development of my personal perspective as related to railroad stations.

The new concept of the mobile agency required a new look at the term "station." The Public Utility act required a hearing in the community if the station was to be closed. If the railroad provided agency services to shippers in the community, was the "station"

closed just because the depot structure was no longer used? Did the statute apply and require a hearing in the community? Of course, the regulatory commission could always require a hearing (usually at its hearing chambers) whenever it questioned the sufficiency of service or of the service facilities. This was recognized. The question was what constituted a "station closing" within the meaning of the statute.

In 1970 the Kansas supreme court considered this question. For purposes of the Public Utility act it distinguished between the station and the station building or depot. The opinion stated:

We believe the term "railroad station" as used in the act contemplates a point on the railroad line where the business of receiving and discharging freight or passenger services is conducted, and the conduct of this business within the confines of a particular building is not indispensable to constitute the place a station.

When the use of railroads for the transportation of passengers almost totally ceased, public use of the station building or depot came to an end. As long as a shipping customer could receive the services of an agent when needed, of what significance was the existence or non-existence of a depot? Of course, the mobile agent needed some type of an office to receive requests for service, to communicate with customers and other railroad personnel and as a place to handle his desk and paper work. If he served customers in several communities, he only needed one office. The office need not be a depot. Shouldn't the selection of the office be optional with the railroad?

When the mobile agency program was begun, a number of public relations techniques were used in an attempt to avoid the excessive hostility manifested at the old station closing hearings. Personal visits with customers (carload shippers and receivers), preliminary explanations to community officials and explanations to legislators reduced the buildup of hostile community opposition. Nevertheless there was continuing community objection to the physical elimination of the old depot. Why this continued and emotional resistance?

In the "mobile" operation, some town or community had to be the headquarters. Obviously, there would be rivalry among the communities as to the headquarters location. This fact was recognized and had to be met at the outset. Usually the facts supporting the head-

quarters selection were strong enough to satisfy the commission and the other communities. However, it was still difficult to reconcile the communities to the "retirement" of the depots.

I was acutely aware of many factors which should have negated community resistance. No longer was the telegrapher's "clackety-clack" heard in the depot. No Western Union messages were received or delivered through the station and by the station agent. Transportation of mail had long since left the railroads. Its loss was an early indicator of the wind down of passenger service. Express had ceased to move via railroad trains or to flow through the depot baggage room. No longer were milk and cream cans coming in by rail. No less-than-carload property and merchandise was transported by rail and temporarily stored in the depot's baggage room. The ticket sale window between the agent's room and the passenger waiting room was now permanently closed. While the benches remained in many depots, they were no longer being "shaped" through sitting by waiting passengers.

Operationally, only the central area of the depot was in use. It was merely an office for use by the agent. Its location in the depot was immaterial to the public although it might be economically beneficial to the railroad.

I recall a community where the depot had become unusable through fire and storm damage. The railroad rented an office for the agent. It was not a "depot" or "station" as that term had been historically used. However, the agent was performing his agency functions and providing the same services as if he had continued to be located in the traditional depot. Furthermore, he had better heating and cooling facilities in his rented office than he had experienced in the 100-year-old depot.

Operationally, the agent no longer operated semaphores. Train crews no longer depended upon agent-operated visual signals. Enroute directions were communicated electronically over the air waves or by electronic signals. The latter were either activated automatically or by a centrally located dispatcher. Car orders were transmitted by telephone. Computers at strategic locations did the financial accounting. Little work was transacted in the local depot.

In summary, the old depot had long since peaked in its usefulness. Most were no longer

physically attractive or efficient. The old baggage room and the waiting room areas were unused and deteriorating. The depot was no longer an important community building. Usually the depot was no longer in the more attractive areas of the community.

Notwithstanding all of these changes over the last half century, why this continued resistance to the elimination of the station building? The question challenged my thinking and philosophical understanding. It rekindled my historical interest in the beginnings of the railroads in Kansas. I reread the excellent two-part historical article "When the Union and Kansas Pacific Built Through Kansas," authored by Joseph W. Snell and Robert W. Richmond and published in 1966 in *The Kansas Historical Quarterly*; and also "The Birth of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad" published two years later and authored by Joseph W. Snell and Don W. Wilson. The photographs accompanying the articles provided further insight. I reflected on pictorial portrayals of historic community life in motion pictures and in many historical publications.

My attention was caught by the frequent use of the title "station agent." Actually the "agent" was a "railroad agent." He had merely used a depot or a station as his place of work. However, the words were traditionally and uniformly coupled. This traditional "fusion" was so deeply imbedded that most people coupled the agent with the depot or station building. They did not visualize a railroad agent in an "office." The concept of the railroad station as being symbolic of the railroad and railroad service has faded very slowly.

Historically, the railroad was the entrance-way into the community after the railroad replaced the wagon train and stagecoach. Almost all people coming to the community or departing from it passed through the station. Almost all articles of merchandise and larger baggage were delivered to or picked up at the depot. The arrival of a train signaled the arrival of mail. Outgoing mail was timed for departure through the depot with the departing train. Memory recalled the agent loading his baggage cart for loading on the train and after the train left he pulled his cart into the baggage room loaded with arriving articles. All of these

memories graphically emphasized that the depot had been the historic "gateway" to the town.

At a mobile agency hearing, the newspaper publisher and editor in the community recalled that being at the station for the arrival and departure of trains was his regular "beat." Here was where the mail arrived and departed. The station was the arrival point for out-of-town newspapers. He learned at the depot who was departing from and who was arriving in town.

A newspaper editor in a Kansas town near Salina wrote a few years ago "many were the evenings some of us spent at the depot waiting for the 4:10 train from Salina with the papers for delivery and many hours were spent watching the trains unloading mail and baggage, and who was arriving and leaving. It was a Sunday afternoon gathering place for a spot to kill time and watch the action and just goof off." This had all changed but the memory lingered on.

Other memories related to restaurants located in railroad depots. These were particularly located in more populous centers. They had been of major importance when trains scheduled meal stops at the stations. Often these restaurants were the best eating places in the community. Some of the best known of the depot restaurants were the Fred Harvey restaurants in Santa Fe stations. They became renowned all along the Santa Fe line. The Rock Island restaurant at McFarland, a small community, had such a strong reputation for good food and good eating that many Topekanes drove out to McFarland for their Sunday dinners. The restaurant in the old Union Pacific station at Marysville had a reputation for being one of the better places to eat in the north-central part of Kansas.

The Marysville depot-restaurant had been dressed up by a rose garden on the station grounds. It was reported that a train taking the University of Nebraska football team back to Lincoln, after losing to Kansas State (then the Aggies), made its traditional and scheduled meal stop at the Marysville station. After the train departed, it was discovered that the rose bushes had been jerked out of the ground. Much of the silverware was missing. Bits and pieces were found along the northbound tracks. The railroad had suffered because of Nebraska's early lack of football success.

MANY KANSAS communities came into being upon the arrival of the railroad. Often the depot was the first local building and was the beginning of the community. Usually additional buildings were built in the vicinity of the station. Historically, the town developed in close proximity to the railroad station or depot.

The "community gateway" posture of the railroad station was illustrated historically by the close proximity of the hotel to the railroad station. This was logical when the railroad was the principal means of ingress and egress into and from the community. One of the early pictures of Salina shows three prominent structures. One was the railroad station. Next to it was the hotel of Mary A. "Mother" Bickerdyke, who had gained fame just a few years earlier as a nurse in the Civil War. Almost every small town had a hotel near the depot. Even in the more established towns, a hotel usually was located close by the station.

The U. S. Department of Transportation recently issued a citizen's manual on recycling

historic railroad stations. One paragraph provides a poignant summary of the historical role of the railroad depot. It reads:

Historically, railroad stations played a significant role in our nation's development. The railroad was the country's primary transportation network from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. Consequently, the local railroad station served as gateway both into and out of every town or city fortunate enough to be located along a rail line.

Even if the depot had lost most of its usefulness, I concluded it was still a symbol. It was a symbol of historical value and emotionally cherished. Many "retired" depots have been given to communities for use as museums. A museum has great value. It presents history in living dimensions. When Kansas gets its new historical museum, plans contemplate that Santa Fe's Cyrus K. Holliday engine and train unit will be a permanent and eye-catching exhibit in the new museum. Alongside of it will be a typical railroad depot of its day. Much of the activity of the typical town at one time funneled through just such a typical depot.