

Railroad



Train at Depot.

In 1881, a civil engineer with his teams and tents, chain carriers, stake drivers, pole carriers and assistants came across southern Marshall County. They were running a survey for the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad Company in advance of building the line from Marion across Iowa to Council Bluffs under the management of Alexander Mitchell. It was completed and in operation in 1882.

Edenville, later called Rhodes and Melbourne were the only towns on the line. The towns of Dunbar, Ferguson, Haverhill and Van Cleve became established communities on the new line. C.B. Rhodes sold 26 acres of land for one dollar to the C.M. and St. Paul Railroad Company. In turn the railroad company named the depot in honor of him. The depot contained a waiting room, office and a large freight room. A pot-bellied stove heated the waiting room and office. The second floor provided living quarters for the agent.

Stockyards were constructed a few yards east of the depot. Through the years many head of livestock was shipped to Chicago and Omaha from Rhodes.

By August of 1882, the Milwaukee Railroad ran seven regular trains each way daily, besides several extras. There was need for a lot of upkeep on the road. A section foreman's house was built northeast of the stockyards. He was in charge of a crew to work on the track.

In 1896 the Milwaukee Midnight Flyer's brought mail to Rhodes from the east and west. Also at this time, when the movement of settlers from the eastern states was to western Minnesota, South and North Dakota, the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad reduced its carload rates for emigrant moveables so the farmers who had purchased land could take all their belongings to their new home at little expense.

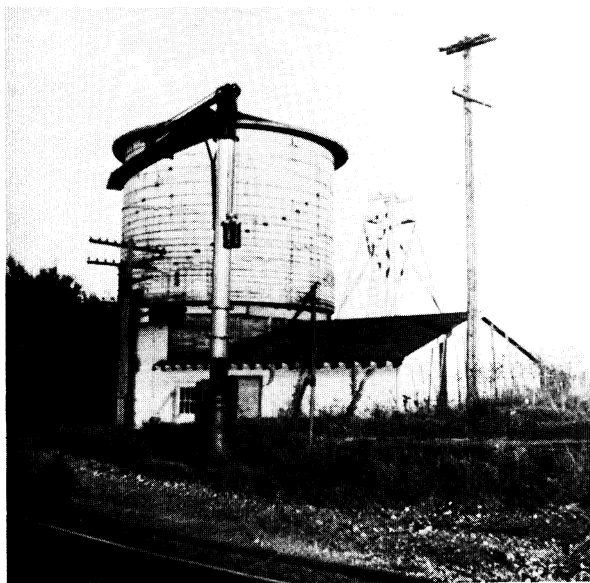
In 1899, the section men were notified of a raise in wages from \$1.10 to \$1.25 per day.

Prior to 1900, a pond or reservoir was built by the railroad in a valley across from the depot in the southeast part of Rhodes. The pond was fed by three or four springs on the north end. Its initial purpose was to provide water for the locomotives. In later years the springs died out and the dam was allowed to deteriorate and finally washed out sometime after



Rhodes Pond and Railroad Reservoir

1950. A pump powered by a steam boiler pumped water into a storage tank. The community made use of the pond for recreation. It was used by boys and girls for years as a swimming hole. It also provided some good fishing. A Mr. Johnson, who was a druggist, purchased gold fish in the hopes of selling them.

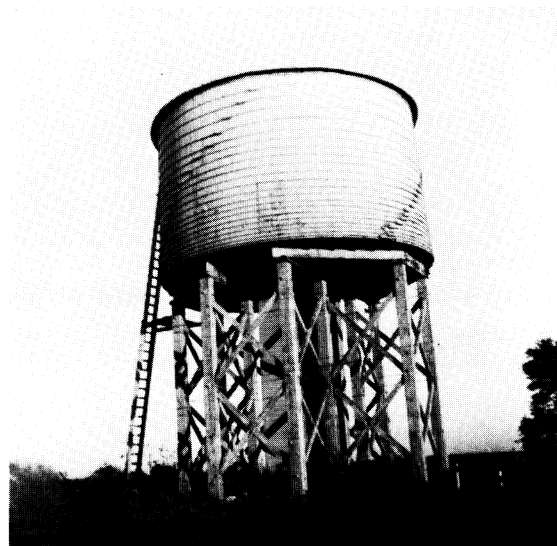


Pump House by Depot in 1956



Goldfish from the Rhodes Pond in 1929, held by, from the left; Vic Elliott and Willard Thursby.

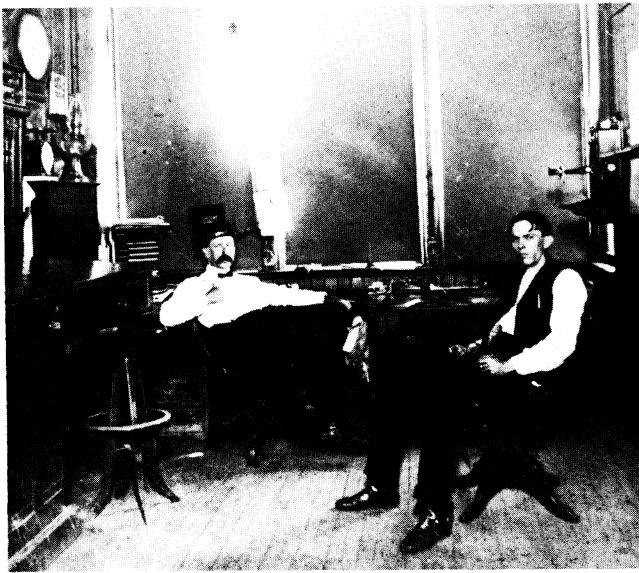
However, when he couldn't sell them, he dumped them in the pond. The goldfish seemed to flourish and apparently mixed with other fish as there were eventually fish of many colors. Ice skating also took place during the winter.



Railroad water tank in 1956.



The two Milwaukee Midnight flyers now bring mail to Rhodes from east and west.



Inside railroad depot, from the left; Depot Agent - Frank E. Bentley and Mr. Dean.

Ice was cut from the pond during the winter. Individuals cut ice for their own use. There was one large ice house, behind what is currently Bev's Beehive, which supplied other ice houses in town with ice to be sold. The ice was packed in sawdust to keep it from melting.

Memories January 13, 1887

The C.M. and St. P. Railroad Company are shipping ten carloads of ice daily from their reservoir at Rhodes.



Rhodes Depot in the early days.

In 1902, a train of 15 coaches passed through town carrying people from Michigan going to western Nebraska to make their homes. The railroad helped in the settlement of our country.

There were train derailments and accidents during these years. One being in 1902.



Grading of the C.M. and St. Paul Railroad east of Rhodes.



Railroad overpass east of town.

In 1903, the Overland Limited made the distance from Maxwell to Rhodes, 11.7 miles in ten minutes, a speed better than 70 miles an hour.

Due to increasing traffic over the years, the Milwaukee Road deemed it necessary to make its double track in 1912-1914. John M. Herbert of

Marshalltown was the grading contractor in charge. The railroad engineer in Perry said when the second line was laid across the state in some areas the first track was sometimes abandoned and two new tracks were built in a more desirable location, as was the case near Rhodes. This also necessitated the moving of the depot to a new location. It was moved a few hundred feet to the west to make room for the double track.



Frank Bentley, Depot Agent, standing on the ground.

Wayne Hildreth recalls the laying of the second track. There were the gandy dancers, mostly Mexicans, who helped build the track, along with much local help. There were many teams of horses and mules used to move the slips of earth when making the grade. He believes there were about 100 gandies here, who slept and ate in railroad cars. He remembers them collecting straw which had been threshed by nearby farmers, putting it in a tick and using it to cushion their wooden bunks. The dancers were not to be fooled around with as there were frequent fights and the Spanish words flew and no one knew just what it was all about.

On various Mexican holidays they usually cooked a goat, the best meat they could afford. They would dig a hole in the ground, let the pit fire burn down and then take turns all night rotating the animal. Wayne could obtain goats at \$2 each and sell them to the gandy dancers for \$2.50, a tidy profit in those days.

When the grading was finished, the men came and spread ballast along the route, put in the ties, laid the rails and bolted them together. The distance between the parallel rails was carefully measured so the wheels of the railroad cars would fit just right. It took 16 to 18 men to carry a rail. The concrete bridge (Hoy) was built at this time. (see history)



Extra railroad gang hired when they went back to a single track in the early 1930's.



Railroad employees (about 1928) from the left; Howard Richeson, Raymond Freland, Foreman - Ben Twissleton, Elzia DeVault, Otto Richeson and Ed Barber.



Railroad employees (about 1928), from the left; Howard Richeson, Ben Twissleton, Ed Barber, Willard Thursby, Les Gilson, Raymond Freland and Harlan Faris.



Rhodes west section crew for the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, from the left, front row: Wilbur Williams, Elzia DeVault, Dale Anway, Lewis Cowan and Travis DeVault; Second row: Harvey DeVault, Marion Backous and Lafe Overman.

In the late 1920's a well was drilled to replace the pond. A water treatment plant was constructed to make the water suitable for the locomotives. The plant was then run by electricity. The men who operated the plant were: George Dewey in the 1920's; Todd Sanders in the 1930's; Claud Sanders, Ben Overman in the early 1940's and the last man to work there, Willard Thursby from 1951 to 1954.

In 1932, other forms of transportation were used extensively so the railroad management decided to change back to a single track. Wilbur Williams was hired as a foreman to put in the new switches and other changes needed. He worked from Marion to Madrid. About every man and boy in Rhodes who wanted to work was hired. The company provided cabooses for living quarters with men furnishing their own bedding. The wage received was 25¢ an hour for a 8 hour day, six days a week.

Residents remember twice when a President of the United States went through Rhodes. President Taft came through, the train stopped and the president spoke to the residents of the community. School was dismissed so all could see and hear him. In 1932 the train bearing President Hoover and party from Des Moines to Chicago was routed over the Milwaukee Road and passed through at an early hour in the morning.

On December 7, 1940, the Hiawatha fleet of passenger trains was put into service. These trains made a few local stops and ran from Omaha to Chicago in about eight hours. These were discontinued April 8, 1956.

In the early days mail was brought in and taken out by various locals that stopped. The fast mail, as they called it, was put in a bag and hung on a mail hook. As the non-stop trains came through, an arm would come out, hook the mail, pull it onto the train and throw a bag of mail off. When the Hiawatha Streamliner, started making its run through Rhodes, many hours were spent by young and old watching this procedure. But with the blinking of the eye you could miss the whole thing. George "Peg" Chamberlain, Charles Elliott Sr. and Lawrence "Fat" Elliott were some of the men who carried the mail to the tracks to be hung on the hook.

In 1955 the Union Pacific terminated its agreement with the Northwestern and switched its fleet of fast passenger trains to the Milwaukee Road. These were the City of Los Angeles, City of Denver and several others.

Slowly in the 1950's the railroad introduced the diesel engine. The last operation of a steam locomotive here was in the spring of 1959. The last train to go through was in March of 1979.

Men who have worked on the section here many years have been: Wilbur Williams, 42 years; Willard Thursby, 45 years; Ben Overman, 26 years; Travis DeVault, 14 years; Ed Barber, Lafe Overman and others also had many years of service. Depot agents who spent time here listening to the clicking of the telegraph, selling tickets and posting the train arrival board were; Frank Bentley, Charles Kassel and the last one, Joe Koester started in 1951. He combined with Melbourne in 1958 working both stations.

Every train had its own distinctive character. The great steam and super-powered steam locomotives were exciting, be it the whistle, the exhaust, the bell or

clanking rods. When the locomotive stopped, the fireman would grab the water spout with a long hook and fill the locomotive. The engineer would build up a head of steam and be off, whistling at every crossing.

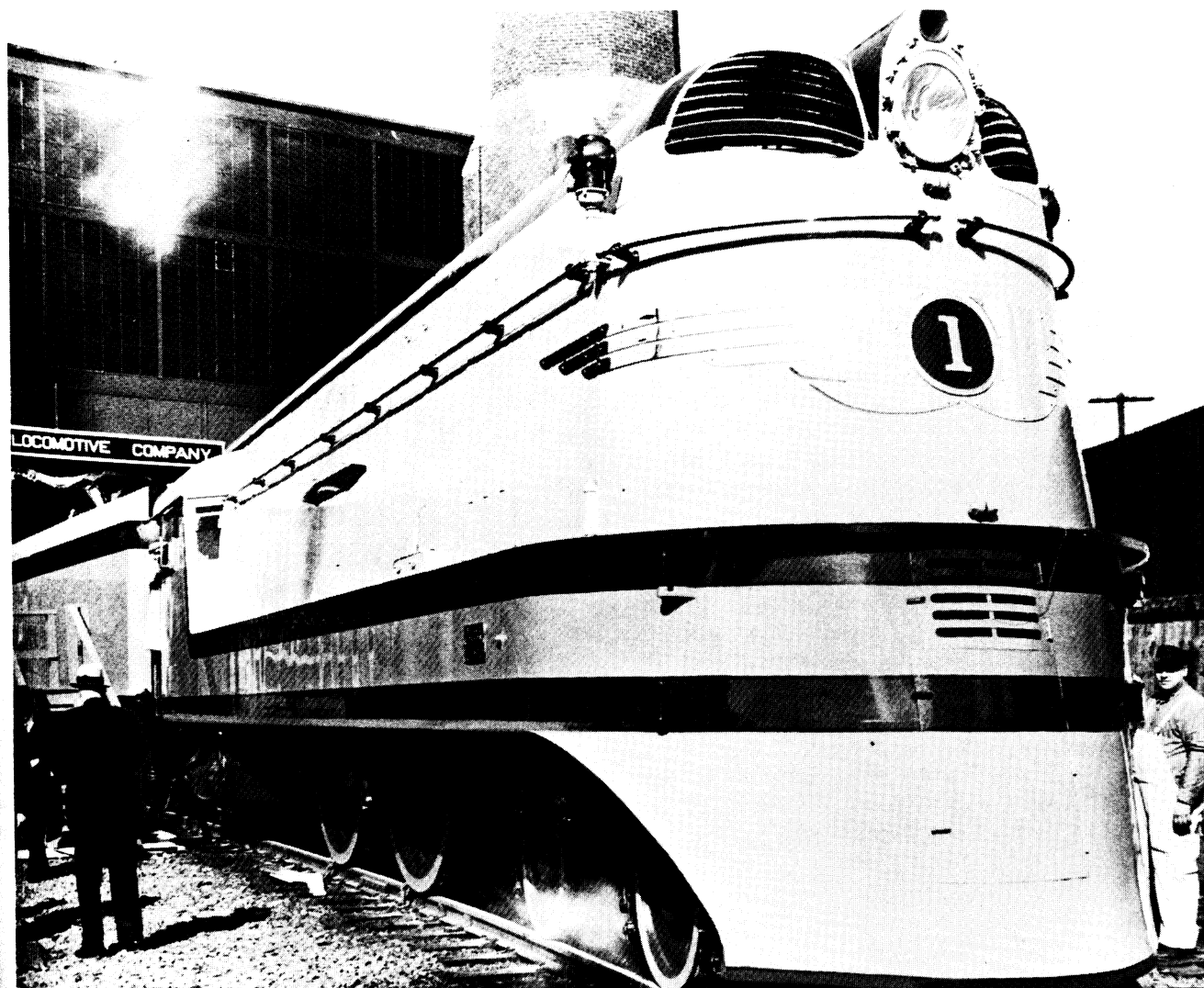
Without the steam locomotive something was missing. On a crisp winter day you could see the steam engine in its beauty. When you saw a train steaming down the track, who would have thought it would come to an end here. It did so much in the building of our community. The railroad however, is but a memory having ceased going through our town in 1979.

The local material for this article was furnished by Harvey DeVault and Willard Thusby.

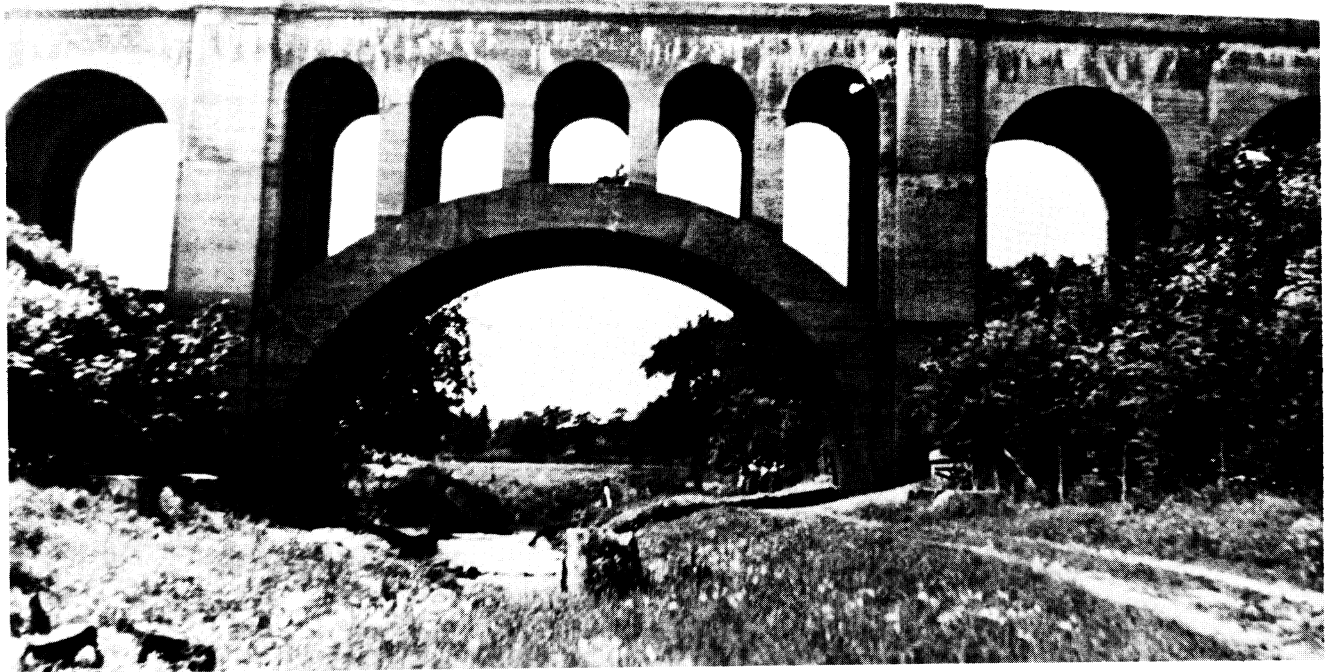
CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE, ST. PAUL AND PACIFIC			
RAILROAD COMPANY			
TRIP PASS	(SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS ON BACK OF RETURN TRIP COUPON)		No. B
PASS	Willard W. Thursby - - - -		
ACCOUNT	Sec. Labr.		
TO	Tacoma, Wash.	FROM	Ellensburg, Wash.
ISSUED	Dec. 22, 1933.	EXPIRES	March 23, 1934.
ADDRESS	Rhodes, Ia.	REQUESTED BY	AJE
VOID IF DETACHED ISSUED BY THE PRESIDENT			

The MILWAUKEE ROAD	
CHICAGO, MILWAUKEE, ST. PAUL AND PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY	
9300336	12556
PASS W. Williams & 25 Men-----	
Extra Gang Foreman & Laborers	
Betw. Marion & Manilla, Iowa**	
November 1, 1935	
BETWEEN ALL STATIONS UNTIL DECEMBER 31, 1936, UNLESS OTHERWISE ORDERED AND SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS ON BACK	
VALID WHEN COUNTERSIGNED BY W. E. TYLER, E. M. PETERSON OR	
COUNTERSIGNED	AJE
	PRESIDENT

Hiawatha Streamliner that sped through Rhodes.



Milwaukee Railroad Bridge



Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad bridge built in 1912 is known in this area as the Hoy Bridge.

Known locally as Hoy Bridge

The Hoy Bridge is braced between two hills west of Rhodes. According to the Milwaukee office this bridge was one of the few elaborate bridges built on their lines. The Roads Engineering department in Chicago indicated the construction began April 30, 1912 and was completed June 19, 1913.

The entire concrete bridge weighs approximately 6,000 tons. The concrete was machine mixed at the site by H.E. Dudley and his crew of between twenty and thirty men. The water for the concrete was taken from the creek flowing under the bridge. Land was obtained from Henry Pester for grading on both ends of the hills before the structure was started. The workers excavated 1,730 cubic yards of earth before driving the piles and pouring the footings. There are 370 timber piles driven under the fourteen concrete footings which support the arch.

The bridge is 212 feet long, approximately 55 feet above the water level and extends another eight feet below that to the bottom of the footings. The structure



Construction of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Bridge west of Rhodes.

contains 2,894 cubic yards of concrete as well as 205,209 pounds of steel reinforcement bars in the concrete.

A single main footing for the arch is 33 feet long, 19 feet 6 inches wide, 12 feet deep, and weighs approximately 560 tons according to railroad records.

It is indeed an elaborate bridge with arches giving a Cathedral appearance.



Swimming hole below Hoy Bridge in 1939.

The "Hoy Bridge," as it is called, due to the fact that a family named Hoy lived near by, is indeed an elaborate bridge with arches giving a Cathedral appearance.

One can crawl upon the lower rim of the bridge, which arches over the stream and climb among the massive concrete arches. There are five arches, two on each side and three in the middle.

If one should look up, they could see rows of embedded steel rods, used for reinforcements, now exposed by the ravages of time.

Time had passed since the bridge was built, it now stands as a lonely sentinel. If it could tell the world of its thoughts it would probably remember the long hours it took to build it, the echoes of the voices of the many visitors who came to see it and the laughing of the children who swam in the swimming hole nearby.

The railroad track has now been abandoned, no longer is the quiet broken by the shrill whistle or the rumble of the trains. Memories will forever linger with the ones that had the opportunity to go and see the "Hoy Bridge".

Olden Days

July 23, 1942

One day last winter when Donald Richeson, 19, decided to go trapping on the farm which he and his widowed mother, Mrs. Eva Richeson, operate a mile east of Rhodes, he was looking for mink, but he found something much more valuable.

Donald discovered an unthought of source of scrap steel - 98 old railroad rails, made at Krupp Essen, Germany, in 1888, which had been used in constructing a culvert in a now abandoned railroad right-of-way. When he told his mother of his discovery, she promised that if Donald and his brothers, Ronald, 30, of Melbourne, Gerald, 26 of Rhodes, and Stanley 10 at home, would salvage the rails, she would give them each a defense bond bought with the money the metal would bring as scrap.

During April, May and June they spent all their spare time removing more than fifteen feet of dirt from the rails, and finally uncovered the metal. Then they discovered the rails were cemented together with bricks between and covered with native limestone. It required a great deal of work to remove the iron, but finally 96 of the 98 rails were piled a few feet away from the slough.

Wednesday, Mrs. Richeson came to Marshalltown to consult the county salvage committee to see how much the rails were worth. A scrap dealer was expected to go to Rhodes Thursday to get the metal.

Mrs. Richeson estimated there are at least 19,000 pounds of metal in the pile of rails. How long they were in the ground before Donald happened to crawl into the culvert to set a trap is not known, but the right-of-way was abandoned in 1912, when the Milwaukee railroad moved its tracks slightly south.

To move the dirt from the rails, the boys used a dirt moving outfit and shovels. Later to loosen the cement they used pickaxes.

With the money which they got from the sale of the metal, \$120.00, the Richesons planned to buy war bonds.

Depression Days

When a train would stop in town, people would hurry to the coal cars and throw off some coal for their use.



Train wreck east of Rhodes.



Train wreck east of Rhodes.

Train Accident - August 6, 1902

One of the most disastrous railroad accidents of that time occurred on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railway at 1:10 p.m., 2½ miles west of Rhodes. The engine No. 1414 of the work train ran into the engine of the way freight. The work train was stationed at Rhodes and the men, seventy-eight in number crowded on two flat cars and one way car, were going to where they were ballasting the track. Shortly before the work train left Rhodes, the way freight pulled out of Collins and proceeded slowly till it reached the well known six degree curve where the collision took place. The curve was one of the worst on the Milwaukee road.

The engines came together like the two mighty giants they were, but in the mixup the lighter and older engine of the work train got the worst of the battle. Parts of the engines were wrenched off and tossed aside like chips of wood. Two cars of the way freight were forced out off the track sideways to the north side. One had been filled with brick and the other with carpenter and other tools. The cars were torn apart. The flat cars of the work train, upon which the men sat as they were supposedly going to their afternoon's work, were folded against each other.

The first doctor to arrive at the scene was Dr. Dickey of Rhodes. Dr. Knepper and Dr. Sanders of Collins came in the baggage car of the passenger train left at Collins. Other doctors arrived from Maxwell, Cambridge, Huxley and Madrid as well as the railroad company doctors.

A large crowd gathered and helped the doctors in taking care of the wounded. It is said ladies from Rhodes went behind some bushes and took off their petticoats and tore them into bandages.

After all had been attended to, a train took them to Collins, where thirty-five of them were lodged in the Opera House which was transformed into a temporary hospital.

In the official statement issued from the information in possession of the Superintendent's office, it appeared the work train in charge of Conductor Craig started west from Rhodes without orders and with the signal set against the work train. The telegraph operator had informed Conductor Craig the freight had already left Collins.

Both engineers were killed. There were approximately sixteen killed or died shortly after.



Train wreck east of Rhodes.



Train wreck east of Rhodes.