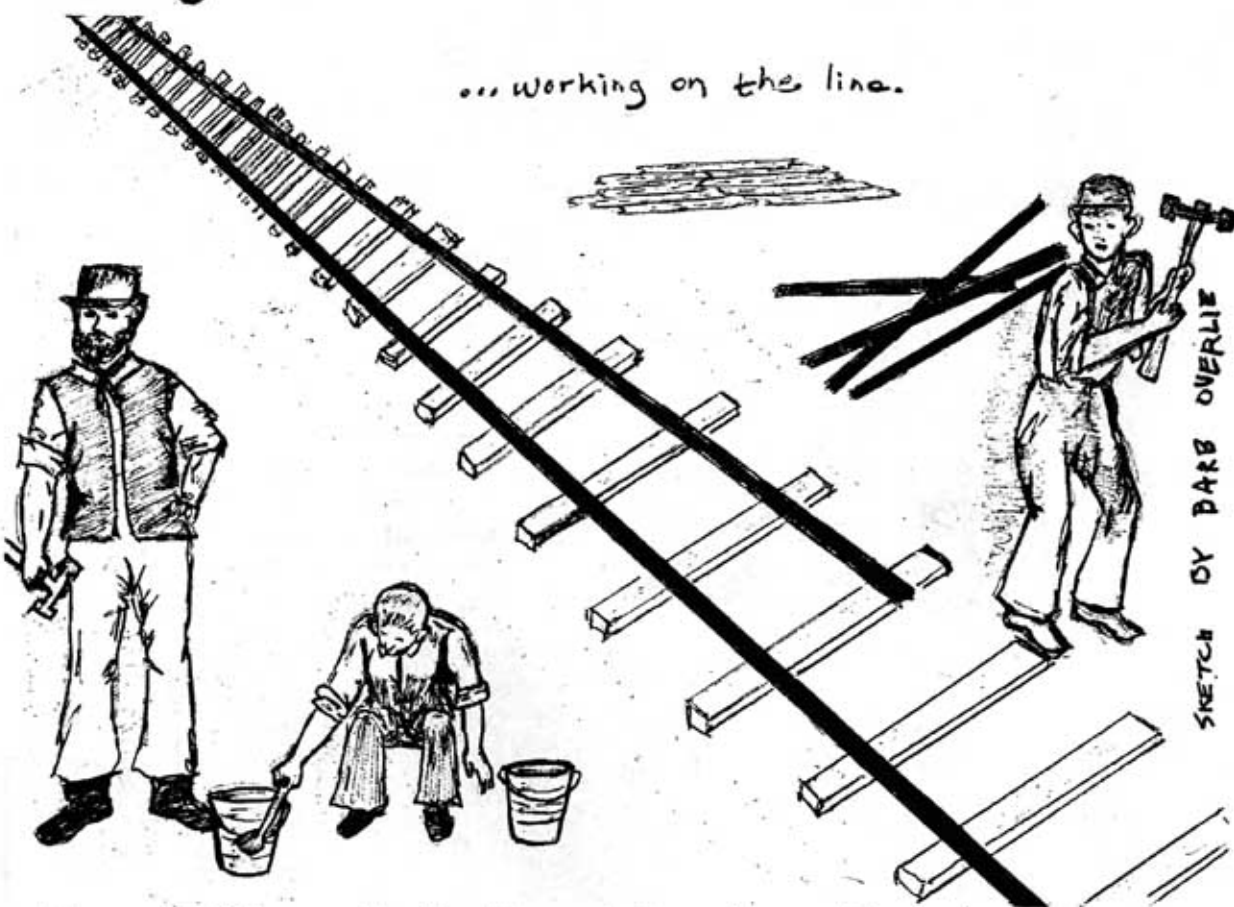


Backgrounds



In Ellendale's Early Days, Railroad Was "All Important"

The location for a new town is not always easy to find. Most often, new communities were organized around the coming of the railroad—as was the case with the founding of Ellendale, N.D. The following is an excerpt from "A History of Dickey County," written by the Dickey County Historical Society:

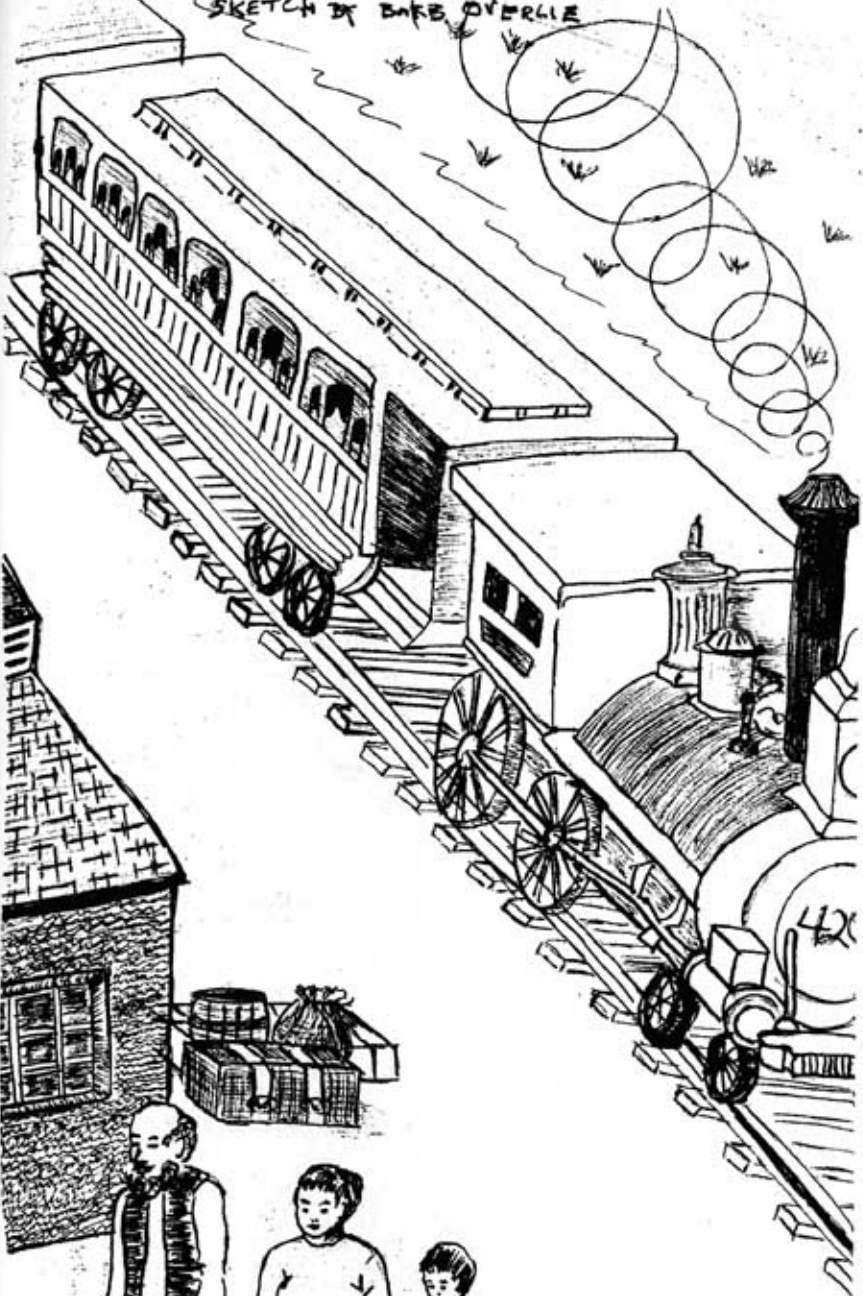
The North Western Line was headed up the James River Valley, but the Milwaukee was grading west, and on July 4, 1881, laid its rails to the place which afterwards became the city of Aberdeen. It had been determined to run a line from this place northward towards Jamestown and the construction was well under way. Somebody, known perhaps in the records of the

railroad, had scouted out the course and had been followed by the surveying party. These in turn were followed by the graders and track layers. W.H. Ellis, then a boy of only sixteen, had been employed by the track layers on the line into Aberdeen as a waterboy, and in the following year was serving in that capacity when the track was ironed to a point three miles north of Ellendale in the fall of 1881. John Nelson, who afterwards located in Hudson township and later bought the old relay station on Bear Creek, was probably the first citizen of the county to work within its boundaries, as he was a member of the grading crew in 1881 which built the grade from Frederick into the present county.

Several people came up over this line to look over the new country in the fall of 1881, although regular train service was not run north of Frederick until 1882.

It was thought that a town could be located at the end of the track, and a Mrs. Mary Bishop came over from Mapleton and made homestead entry on the southeast quarter of Section 26-130-63. Early in March of 1882 people began to flock in and settle near the end of the track in great numbers. A Mr. J.S. Lanney opened a lumber yard, Bill Matthews operated a tent saloon, and Mrs. Bishop started a hotel. But Mrs. Bishop was unable to get a townsite located there, or perhaps was not skillful in dealing with the townsite

SKETCH BY BABS OVERLIE

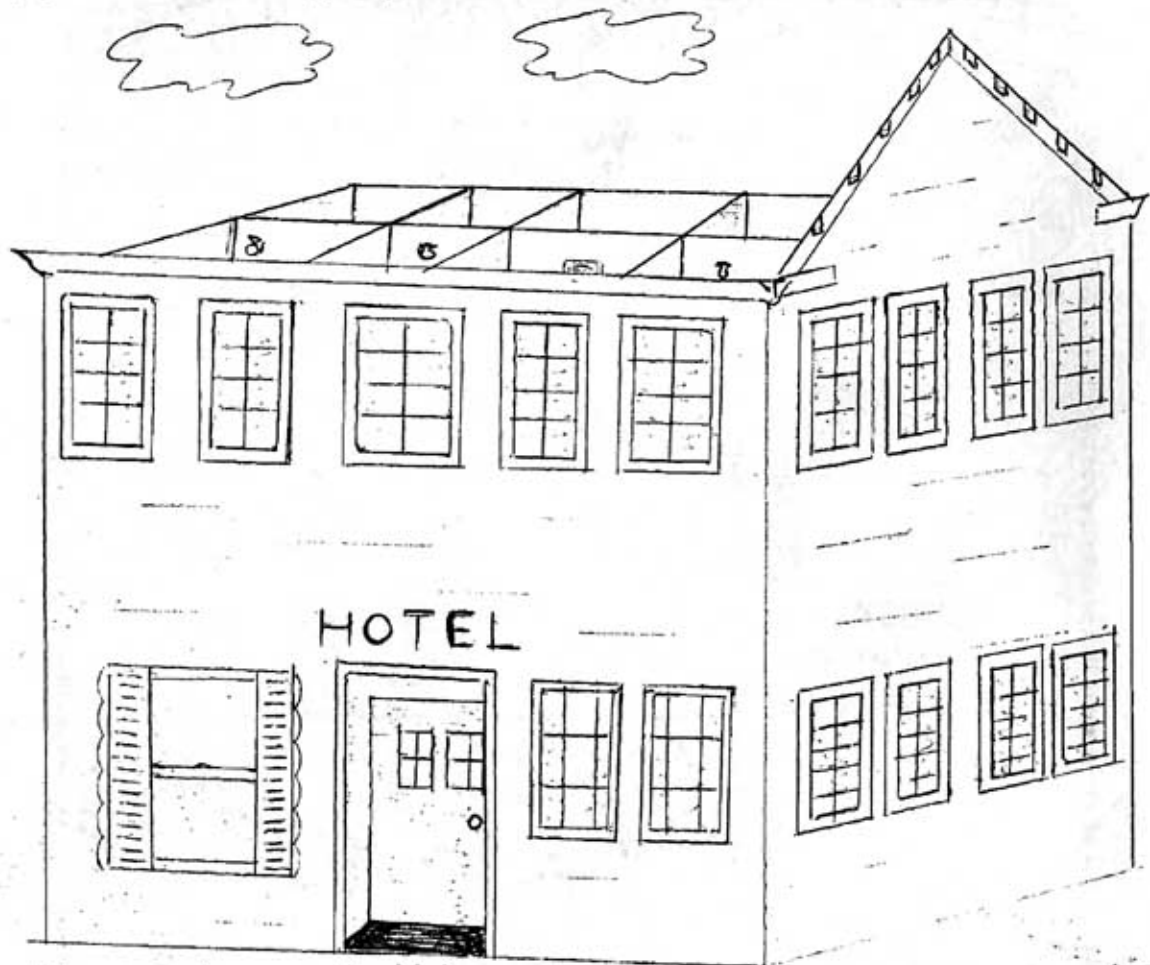


settlers arriving by train.

locators of the Milwaukee.
 C.H. Pryor of the townsite company, through George Kline the surveyor, had an arrangement with some members of the surveying crew that they should secure four claims for themselves on condition that Mr. Kline should have four forty acre tracts for a townsite. With this understanding E.J. Hermans, F.M. Dann, Herbert Wells and A.S. Jackson squatted on the four corners where the quarters met—the east quarters of Section 11 and the west quarters of Section 12, and put up their claim shanties of sod construction as nearly as they could locate the four claims from the railroad survey, and spent the winter of 1881-1882 around what afterwards came to be known as the "Center of Ellendale." This was very nearly at the junction point of the two state highways, No. 4 and No. 11. The men spent most of their time at the shack on the west side of the railroad track, and may be considered the earliest pioneers of the new town.

Early in 1882 the townsite was platted, the survey bearing the date of May 8, 1882, and the plat was filed in the Register's office on August 22, 1882, in the names of Charles H. and Delia Pryor. The original townsite consisted of twelve blocks besides a strip along the railroad west of what is now Railroad Avenue. It extended west to Third Avenue, and from First Street on the south to include Second, Main and Third Streets to Fourth Street on the north. Main Street eighty feet wide ran east and west, with twenty-five foot lots along it, the lots on the other streets being fifty feet wide. A sale of lots was held for the people who were pouring in in large numbers, and within forty-eight hours every lot on Main Street for two blocks was sold. The demand for lots was so great that the First Addition was surveyed on November 16, 1882, and the plat was filed by the Pryors on November 21, 1882. This addition was made to include the south side of First Street and two blocks east of the original townsite to Fifth Avenue and two blocks north to Sixth Street. The new town was named for Ellen Merrill, the wife of S.S. Merrill, the General Manager of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad.

The first train load of immigrants with their household goods and materials for building, arriving late in April, was taken to the end of the rails and remained there until in early May it was backed down to the new site. Judge Ellis says, "The first woman settler in Ellendale was a Mrs. Bishop. The first store was opened by Clinton McNeil. The first saloon of the dozen or



NO VACANCY

New hotel was better than tents!

more that soon followed was owned and operated by Matthews and Demming. The first hotel built by Mrs. Bishop was called the White House. The first building contractor was W.A. Scott. The first postmaster was W.A. Finch, and the first church service was held by Rev. Brown in the newly completed Demming and Matthews saloon. The first lawyer to locate in Ellendale was Mr. Perry from Wisconsin, a venerable, gifted and brilliant lawyer. The first hardware store was built and operated by Frank Dugar. During the spring of 1882, I owned and operated a large tent hotel

both at the end of the track and later in Ellendale. The first station agent was Frank Jarabak, with Ed N. Leiby as assistant, and the first bank was operated by William H. Becker. For the most part the early settlers lived in very cheaply constructed frame buildings, tents and sod houses."

Tents afforded the most quickly obtained means of shelter and at first boarding houses and hotels were kept in tents. The demand for shelter was so strong that before the roof was on Mrs. Bishop's hotel the house was full of roomers. S.B. Meacham came on the first train and was clerk for Mrs.

Bishop at the Central House for a time. He built a building on the south side of Main Street and his family came in August of that year. Mrs. Meacham taught the first school in Ellendale. The town was very crowded and after the school closed on December 15, the Meachams kept a restaurant and also had a place for lodgers upstairs. They had brought only two bedsteads so they put hay ticks on the floor as thick as they could lie and rented them for fifty cents a night. In a pinch they added more of these beds between the tables downstairs, piling the extra ticks into the back room in the morning.