

"Council Bluffs & Saint Joseph Railroad - Letter from M. Jeff Thompson, of St. Joseph," May 22, 1858

Council Bluffs & Saint Joseph Railroad--Letter from M. Jeff. Thompson, of St. Joseph.

The following communication explains itself. It was sent to us by a gentleman of St. Joseph, with a request that we would hand the same to the President of the Convention. Owing to the misunderstanding on the part of the writer, in regard to the time of holding the Convention, the letter did not reach us in time, for us to make the disposal as requested. The Convention met on the 17th instead of the 19th--hence the failure of connection. Under these circumstances, we came to the conclusion that we could subserve the purposes of the writer in no better way, than by giving publicity to his letter. We ask for it a careful and cordial perusal--it is pregnant with practical information and well-timed suggestions:

To the Hon. President of the St. Joseph and Sioux City Rail Road [sic] Convention, Council Bluffs City, May 19th, 1858.

DEAR SIR: We have received invitations during this week, to meet the representatives of the various counties interested in a Missouri Valley Railroad, in a Convention to be held in Bluffs City, on the 19th inst., but from various untoward circumstances, our City and County will not be represented as it should be, and I take the liberty to address you this communication, so that you can assure the friends of the road, that we are alive to its importance, and anxious for its speedy commencement and completion.

Those who have not an accurate knowledge of the geography of our country, and who do not know the geographical requisites which are necessary to build large cities and thriving communities, may think that a connection between Council Bluffs City and St. Joseph, may conduce to the injury of one place or the other, and that the whole energy of the people should be concentrated upon the Eastern routes. This, for the time-being, may seem good policy, but any one who fully understands our position, and can see but a few years into the future, must know that in a short time, the current of our heavy business and trade will be changed, and the communications running North and South will be of equal, if not more importance than those running East and West.

The Missouri Valley, from the mouth of the Kansas, to the mouth of the Sioux presents geographical and physical advantages, which has no equal in the World. A man may search the Globe from pole to pole, and can find no valley, and no district of country with equal natural advantages with this, our great and unparalalled [sic] country. We have a soil of inexhaustible fertility, and of an unbroken continuity for hundreds of miles--a climate, which though

changeable, is yet healthy and invigorating; a population composed of the most intelligent, enterprising and energetic men collected from all the States and nations of the earth, with a future before us, more glorious than the palmy days of the Pharaoh's.

This portion of the Missouri River which I have mentioned, has entirely tributary to it, a country for a thousand miles West, North-West and South-West, which in another generation, will contain millions of people, who must seek and find their market on the Missouri River and in the limits I have prescribed. There is an [area] of country between us and the Rocky Mountains, as vast as that between us and the Alleghanies [sic]. 'Tis true 'tis not so fertile or so diversified, but if our country, with six millions of people could drive back the hordes of savages, cut down the immense forests, and fill the great valley of the Mississippi, with the millions of people, the hundreds of cities and thousands of towns, in two generations, what should we now expect, when thirty millions of intelligent freemen, with all the blessings that steamboats and railroads can yield, in their grasp, are following the setting sun in the march of destiny? Is not the future as fraught with progress, as the past? Will not two more generations find the Anglo-Saxon herding his cattle and sheep on the slopes of the Rocky Mountains? And will not the steam-horse, as it rushes over its iron track, be laden with the manufactures made on the Missouri River, and return with the Beef, the Wool, and the Golden Corn of Nebraska, Utah, Kansas, New Mexico and Arizonia [sic]?

The intelligent man knowing these things, must also know that in the Missouri Valley, and between the points I have named, will be several large and flourishing cities, and nature has so distinctly marked their localities, that it is useless almost, to point them out. Kansas City upon the extreme South-West; St. Joseph in the heart of the Platte Purchase, with her railroad nearly finished, and her great start in Manufactures, &c., claims, and will get the trade of Northern Kansas and Southern Nebraska to the base of the Rocky Mountains.

Council Bluffs City being above the mouth of the Platte, will get the trade of that vast country on the Northern side of this lengthy river, and Sioux city being on the great North-East Bend of the Missouri, commands a trade, we might say, the North Pole.--These four great cities will not be rivals, but sisters, nurtured by the same mother--the Missouri; whose head, being in the frigid fountains of the North, and her mouth in the Torrid Seas, will bear upon her bosom, such treasures in Cotton, Sugar, Rice, Tobacco, Hemp, Iron, Wheat, Bacon and Corn that she will enrich her four daughters, and place them above small feelings of envy or jealousy.

Our Section of this great road, is called the Platte Country Railroad, and begins at a point opposite Kansas City, passes through St. Joseph, and continues to the Iowa line. This company is fully organized, has been assisted by the State of Missouri by a loan of \$700,000 which is to be expended one-half above St. Joseph and one-half below St. Joseph. The owners of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad have taken \$2,000,000 stock in this road, and all that is now needed to insure its speedy commencement and completion to the Iowa line, is a demonstration on the part of Atchison, Holt and Andrew Counties, towards taking stock, giving the right of way &c., all of which, I think will be done this season.

That portion of the road from the mouth of the Little Tarkio to Council Bluffs City, being in a beautiful level river bottom, not subject to overflow, will present the cheapest and best section of Railroad of the same length in the world. There will not be a cut or fill of three feet in depth in this one hundred miles, and the grade will not be on any part of it over one foot per mile. There will not be a curve in this distance, of greater deflection than 1-2 degree, and no change or bearing greater than 10 degrees. The freights upon such a road, will be as cheap as water carriage, and the river bottom through which it passes, when fully in cultivation, will produce enough (even should there not be a pound of through freight) to support the road.

I hope that your convention will resolve to do something tangible, and you will find us ready, willing and able to push the matter through our State, and shake hands with you across the line. Then the time will not be far distant, when the millions between us and the Pacific slope will seek our markets, to exchange their Beef, their Wool, their Wheat and their Gold, for the Cotton, the Sugar, the Hemp of the Sunny South, and the manufactures made by our own thrifty citizens. "So mote it be."

Respectfully, Your Ob't Serv't,

M. JEFF. THOMPSON.

St. Joseph, Mo., May 15th, 1858.