

Early in 1872 Phillips & Colby awarded a contract to the Hooper, Boyle & Seymour Construction Company specifying the construction of 140 miles of road west and northward from Stevens Point; a tough assignment, full of physical and financial uncertainty for the builders.

After leaving the Wisconsin river valley at Stevens Point, the right-of-way leads west over a rolling country of heavily timbered hills and hollows: "Where the tall, white pines and squatty balsams spread a mid-day twilight over the ankle-deep carpet of brown pine needles—a rare enchanting retreat for the woodsmen—an eerie, lonesome trail to intruding neophytes." Low hills and hollows—known to railroaders as knobs, humps, and sags—the bane of the freight engineer's life in the old tonnage era.

On March 18, 1872, Hooper, Boyle & Seymour began construction work at Stevens Point, moving westward, and by September of that year had reached Section 53 with 51 miles of "ready track" to their credit. Section 53 was on the site of the present town of Colby, where the main construction camp remained for two years. This end of track was named Colby in honor of Charles L. Colby.

In addition to the 51 miles of usable track laid here in 1872, the contractors completed the work of clearing, grubbing, and grading the right-of-way to Mile Post 101, about 50 miles directly north of Colby. Mile Post 101 was later named Worcester.

In October, 1872, the road was ready for inspection between Menasha and Colby, and a special train, gaily decorated, was run from Menasha for the benefit of the bigwigs and brass hats. Governor Taylor, state officers, newsmen, and prominent business men were loud in their praises of the splendid work done, and pronounced the new road one of the finest in the West. <sup>WASHBURN</sup>

Governor Taylor proclaimed the Wisconsin Central project to be "a prodigious undertaking and a stupendous enterprise, through forests so dense and impenetrable that it was necessary to transport many of the supplies into the vast wilderness on the backs of men." Mr. B. F. Atwell, prominent lumberman of Stevens Point wrote in 1872 of his travels "through the immense pinery near the Wisconsin River, then finding riches of hard wood, maple, ash and oak of giant proportions, and again into the forests of pine exceeding any previous opinion of magnitude. The face of the country from Chippewa River north is exceedingly rough, reminding me of my old New England home. Some indication of this rough terrain may be observed in the Bad River Valley where the river falls 326 feet in 5 miles—a wealth of water power."

(Near Mellen, Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Central right-of-way lies along the rocky banks of the Bad River at the bottom of Bad River Valley.

For 16 miles (Morse to Coria) the railroad closely follows the twisting, tortuous river course, crossing and recrossing the stream twenty-two times