

## CHAPTER VI

*The So-Called Burleigh Movement Initiated.*

It certainly did for the time being look dark for the future of Aroostook. The trouble was that up to that time Aroostook had made no mark for itself whatever, as a region of special promise. The County was unknown outside its own borders, and one had to go no farther than Bangor to find the average person utterly ignorant of Aroostook, its needs, resources and possibilities. It was remote and isolated, and from the point of view of the capital which was flowing into railroad building investments, there were hundreds of seemingly more attractive ventures in that line, all of which had scores of men more powerful in money centers than Aroostook had to vouch for their merit, and to push them to the front. So, whenever Aroostook tried to raise her voice to get the ear of capital, and secure relief, it was the proverbial "voice in the wilderness," and went unheeded.

At that time we recall but one man outside Aroostook of ability and influence, who had given attention enough to the subject to become aware that our County really existed and had any claims to attention on the score of development. That man was Hon. Fred Atwood, of Winterport. Mr. Atwood must have been a man of vision, for as early as the time of the Direct Line Railroad agitation, he had become aware of the fact that Aroostook not only occupied a big place geographically on the map of Maine, but that it was a section of the State which more than any other needed development, and would richly reward whoever came forward with the millions of capital required to open it up.

Early in the year 1888 Mr. Atwood conceived the idea of, in a sort of figurative way, carrying Aroostook bodily to Boston and placing her on exhibition. He accordingly arranged for a public meeting to be held under the auspices of the New England Agricultural Society, and such a meeting was held in March of that year in the Ploughman Building. He did his whole duty in planning and working for the affair, and the result was that when the date set for the meeting arrived there were in attendance not only scores of leading men from Aroostook, but men of note in business and agricultural circles in Boston and Massachusetts. Among those whom Mr. Atwood induced to go and represent Maine and speak for Aroostook were Gov. Bodwell and Hon. Z. A. Gilbert, then Secretary of the State Board of

Agriculture. On the part of Massachusetts the Aroostook outfit was welcomed by Hon, Daniel Needham, Secretary of the New England Board of Agriculture, a man of ability, culture and breadth of knowledge. Mr. Atwood had seen to it that reporters of the Globe, the Herald and other Boston dailies, were in attendance. The incident of their attendance afforded the writer, who was present at the meeting, striking evidence of the then benighted condition of Aroostook. When the scribes had sat down at the table assigned them, and were engaged leafing over copies of the Aroostook Pioneer, which had been chosen as one of the Aroostook exhibits, possibly on account of the flamboyant pictorial heading Brother Gilman then carried at the top of his front page, one of them was overheard remarking to a fellow reporter: "What's all this fuss about Aroostook being made for? There's nothing but bears and Indians up there, anyway."

Hon. Daniel Needham, who delivered the address of welcome, was more complimentary and far better informed than the reporters of the Boston dailies. He referred to Aroostook as "the great capital county of Maine, which had been brought down to the great capital city of Boston," to be brought to the attention of business men and capitalists as worthy of their serious attention as a region of great future promise. But Mr. Needham's words did not carry much beyond the range of his voice. The reporters of the big dailies were so well satisfied in their own minds that "bears and Indians" told the whole story of Aroostook that they relegated their short report of the meeting to a back page, and in the din and tumult of the big city, this handful of people in the Ploughman Building meeting speaking for Aroostook was a very small voice. It was a well organized and most sincerely well meant scheme of publicity, but so far as really penetrating to the business and financial circles which had to be moved before Aroostook development could begin, the Atwood Aroostook Publicity meeting in Boston in March 1888 created about as much stir as a pebble thrown into the ocean.

At this old-time meeting which sought to bring Aroostook to the front, Mr. Needham was able to single out as two illustrations of the sound and substantial prosperity of New England and of Maine two things, which today have fallen to a low estate compared with those days. "On this point," (New England prosperity) he said: "Look at our system of railroads. Look at our Boston & Maine Railroad, through which the population of Maine finds an outlet and which centers in the city of Boston.

The stock of that railroad is a barometer of value and prosperity, and for what is it selling? Yesterday it was selling on the stock market of Boston at \$223, leading the van of railroad enterprises in the United States in market value. Look at our Maine Central. Why, when we took our pleasant Aroostook trip Maine Central stock was selling at 106, an enormous price, and I said to myself: "Can it be possible that this stock of a railroad in Maine can be worth \$106 a share?" And for what is it selling today? In less than six months the physical development in the State of Maine has been so great that you cannot buy Maine Central stock for \$165, an advance of over \$50 a share."

Hon. Z. A. Gilbert, Secretary of the Maine Board of Agriculture, followed Mr. Needham, and spoke of the great potential wealth of Aroostook. Speaking of its soil, he said: "Aroostook is a section peculiar to itself, differing geologically from any other section of New England. Drained chiefly into the St. John River, it has a soil peculiarly characteristic. In all of the vast expanse of soil so drained we find this peculiarity, a soil which lies on a vertical bedrock, which gives natural drainage. We have thus a soil not only fertile, but one which offers to the husbandman the ready conditions for responding with the very best results to the intelligent application of labor. The bed-rock underlying the soil of Aroostook County, while near the surface, is very rarely found cropping out into those ledges, and other uninviting conformations which are found along the sea coast. It is, moreover, always in process of decomposition, a fact which enables the soil of Aroostook to sustain a magnificent forest growth in its primitive state, and also to yield the most bountiful crops when brought under cultivation. It extends over broad areas in a practically unbroken condition, a fact which is always particularly agreeable to the husbandman, who wishes for broad fields on which to carry on his farm operations. It is similar to the rolling prairies of the West, with the sloughs and under-drained portions of this section of the country left out, leaving it all arable land after being tilled."

Mr. Gilbert went on to say that there was an impression that Aroostook was a wilderness and nothing more. That idea he proceeded to correct, describing the already advanced condition of its agriculture, and the intelligence, refinement and enterprise of its people. He concluded by saying he was glad this Aroostook meeting had been called to Boston—the heart of New England—as he hoped it would be the means of introducing

Aroostook to the capital of that great city, and of turning the attention of the investment wealth centered there to the opening of this great section whose resources were as yet lying dormant, and paying little tribute to the rest of the State and New England.

This Boston meeting is interesting as showing how utterly Aroostook was unthought of outside its own borders at that time, and how far it was outside the ken of capitalistic investment. It was in fact a terra incognita, and it took a great struggle, in which some valiant soldiers fighting for Aroostook development had to wage a long and strenuous campaign, before she was given railroad transportation, and came into her own in the way of development and prosperity.

So far as the Direct Line railroad movement of which we have been writing is concerned, it was a generally recognized failure long before the fact was admitted by its immediate backers and sponsors. Indeed, we do not know that they ever in so many words admitted it to be so. Other projects began to be broached and discussed as alternative schemes to bring railroad relief for Aroostook, and in the midst of the agitation every now and then the old Direct Line, apparently dead, would regain vitality enough to set up a feeble and half hearted claim that it was not dead, but merely in a condition of suspended animation. No one who knows the railroad history of Aroostook will deny that it was an indirect factor in bringing about the ultimate end of securing a railroad for the County, but for a long period it persisted in claiming that it was alive, when it was to all intents and purposes entirely dead.

The first intimation we find of serious activity in railroad agitation following the reaction which succeeded the Direct Line movement collapse, is an editorial published in the Star-Herald, Sept. 11, 1890. That editorial said:

"It was predicted when the Direct Line Railroad agitation was in progress that if that project miscarried, it would entirely discourage any similar movement in future, and that the reaction would be utterly discouraging to the County. Well, the Direct Line movement is laid on the shelf, at least for the time being, but there has never been a time when the necessity for a railroad was more keenly felt than now, or a stronger determination to renew the struggle to secure one. The County is in fact thoroughly alive on this vital question.

"At Fort Kent there is a remarkable stir and activity in railroad development, the issue and outcome of which are not

entirely understood, and we have the novel change in the situation of more than a possibility that Aroostook's long needed railroad relief may come from the northernmost point of the State, southwardly through the County, instead of from the other direction. Indeed, so far has the Fort Kent project taken shape that an intention is expressed of applying to the next Legislature for a charter to build to Caribou, and there is the merit behind the movement of very lively steps up that way in railroad extension. In this connection there is the difference in our favor over four years ago of Caribou being thoroughly waked up by the acquisition of a magnificent water power, which she cannot utilize without a short line railroad, and Houlton, dormant and indifferent four years, now thoroughly alive to its interests in this direction, and at present provoked beyond endurance by the imperfect service which is being rendered that thriving town by the new railroad management.

"Growing out of this condition of things suggestions for relief are numerous. Caribou clamors for a monster mass meeting to consider taking steps to construct a narrow gauge road to Houlton, and the suggestion is made from another quarter that steps be taken to enable the County to loan its credit to the extent of five per cent of its valuation in aid of a railroad."

So far as we know this latter suggestion, which emanated from the late Hon. Albert A. Burleigh, and resulted later on in the successful Bangor & Aroostook Railroad development, is referred to in the above editorial for the first time publicly. The editorial then continues: "In addition to all the other projects we still have the old Direct Line project, and the chance, a remote possibility, to be sure, that its promoters may succeed in getting it on its feet, and come in on the home stretch all right."

In the Star-Herald of Oct. 9, 1890, under the head "Railroad Gossip," an article is quoted from the Lewiston Journal, which states more specifically what the Fort Kent agitation for a road from Northern Maine southerly through the County referred to. This article says: "It looks now as if Aroostook had a chance of getting a railroad through the rivalry of the Grand Trunk and the C. P. R. The latter's short line across Maine has had the effect of robbing the Grand Trunk of through freight from the West, and in its desire to regain this, it may build down through Aroostook to tide water at St. Andrews. It is quite likely that the Grand Trunk would strain a point to take in Aroostook in any effort it made to reach the seaboard. The business present and prospective, of the great County of Aroostook, is well worth

such an effort, and it would seem as if in securing it the Grand Trunk would pretty effectually cripple a branch of its rival of some real value and importance to it. This it could do by building down through Aroostook, and it is to be hoped that it may do so, for Aroostook is in dire need of a railroad outlet. Aside from this glimmer of hope which is remote and wholly speculative, the railroad prospect in Aroostook is far from bright at the present time.

"The good behavior of the Canadian Pacific is of the utmost importance to the Boston & Maine, and the great County of Aroostook, which the Canadian Pacific depends upon to feed its New Brunswick branch, seems to be held by the Boston & Maine simply as a vantage ground or in a sense as a hostage to insure that good behavior."

The foregoing extract from the Lewiston Journal is in line with the prevalent public suspicion of the time that the Boston & Maine was the hidden hand responsible for keeping the Direct Line movement marking time for nearly five years. During this time, in the opinion of many, it did nothing except to hold the key to the railroad door into Aroostook, and purely for reasons of railroad strategy made a point of unlocking the door and pulling it ajar in a show of preparations to build a railroad into Aroostook. When it had secured the traffic concessions it was manouversing for, it left the project to die out like the smouldering embers of a fire.

Among the suggestions which were offered after the collapse of the Direct Line scheme, was that of State aid to an Aroostook railroad, and to other lines, the building of which was needful to Maine's development and prosperity. In the Kennebec Journal, in November 1890, Hon. Jos. H. Manly, of Augusta, advocated legislation to enable the State to extend its aid to needed railroads within its borders. "The great need of Maine today," said Mr. Manly, "is more railroad, especially a line to tap the immense resources of fertile Aroostook, and one into Washington County, with its magnificent seacoast." Mr. Manly's judgment was correct and his heart was in the right place, but he overlooked the Maine constitution which, as another prominent Maine man, commenting on his well meant suggestion, pointed out, stood in the way of such grants of railroad aid. This writer said, "Of course, there is a poor chance for agitation or argument with the constitution squarely on the other side, but we do not think there is a man in Aroostook or any other section of Maine which is in crying need of a railroad, but will affirm

his belief that in this respect at least, Maine has a mighty unfortunate constitution."

Later on the Maine Central Railroad got into the spotlight as an enemy to Maine railroad development, and in this connection the late Hon. Herbert M. Heath warned people who were then working for what was known as the Shore Line Railroad, and asking for a "People's Charter" to build such a line, that to let the Maine Central get control of the charter would be suicide. He said: "The Maine Central, and Boston & Maine are hand in glove with the Canadian Pacific." Mr. Heath gave warning to committees interested that they would have to "fight a powerful and well organized lobby" of the Maine Central to secure their rights, adding that the Maine Central was also evidently holding Aroostook as a make-weight in its plans, negotiations and traffic arrangements with the Canadian Pacific, and that therefore neither the Shore Line nor a line into Aroostook had anything to hope for from the Maine Central or the Boston & Maine.

In November 1890 a movement was started to secure legislation for a "People's Charter" for a railroad into Aroostook, the feeling being particularly strong in Houlton. This was urged as a good move as it would bring the Northern Maine or Direct Line project up "for investigation into its doubtful and unsatisfactory status. This investigation would require it to give a good and sufficient guarantee of its ability and intention to build a railroad." Referring to this the Star-Herald, in an editorial in its issue of Nov. 21, 1890, said: "The people have a right to inquire whether the Northern Maine Railroad is indeed the germ of early development into a railroad, or whether it is in the nature of a mere obstruction and hindrance to Aroostook's interests. If it is the former, let it come in and vindicate itself in the public confidence, and give such a guarantee as would warrant the privilege it holds being extended. If it cannot do this it should be brushed out of the way, and its charter turned over to the people of Aroostook to control the right of way into the County. The people of Aroostook are certainly entitled to know the exact status of the matter, and to have the charter set aside if the existing one is not held in their interest."

In December, 1890 things began to come to a head in a legislative way. Indications at that time pointed to a movement to apply for a charter from some point on the Bangor & Piscataquis line to Patten and Ashland, with a branch to Houlton and Presque Isle. The argument for this was that it would give

Bangor an independent line, and by drawing the freight of productive Aroostook to the Bangor & Piscataquis Railroad, would vitalize that then struggling road, and build it up to profit and importance. It would at the same time give Aroostook the boon of competition and lower freight rates.

Another company, consisting of Geo. I. Tricky, Caribou, Ira B. Gardner, Patter, Frank Gilman and others, proposed asking for a charter from some point in the town of Mattawamkeag to some point in the town of Medway, thence to some point on the Aroostook River in the County of Aroostook.

In addition, the Grand Trunk, as before stated, was supposed to have a scheme to build down through Aroostook to tidewater. But all these had the ever watchful Maine Central and Boston & Maine standing ready to nip any such schemes in the bud.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### *The First Publicity Given Burleigh Plan.*

The first publicity given to the so-called "Burleigh Railroad Plan" was in the Star-Herald, December 18, 1890. The Burleigh plan, as then published, was to ask the Legislature for a charter for a road to start from Van Buren and extend to some point on the Maine Central, with branches to Fort Fairfield and Ashland. The editorial in the Star-Herald on this proposition was as follows: "An act of Legislature will be asked for the coming session to enable the County to issue bonds to the extent of five per cent of its valuation, amounting to \$500,000, to be taken in stock. After this it is proposed to issue \$400,000 more stock, giving the people of Aroostook the preference as subscribers thereto, and then to issue first mortgage bonds to complete the construction of the road. At 5 per cent the interest on the \$500,000 would be \$25,000, two-fifths of which would be borne by the wild land owners.

"All railroad men agree that the line would be a paying one from the start, so that the County would not be called upon to pay either principal or interest. It is claimed by good judges that in ten years the already large freight traffic would be doubled, and that the increase in property value along the line of the road would be more than the stock taken by the County.

"At a meeting of Pomona Grange held in Caribou last Saturday, Mr. Burleigh presented and explained his plan, which was favorably received. It was then voted by that body to petition