



The barn, at Eagle, Wis., as it appears today.

they were standing. However, the parcels of land offered were far too swampy to seem of much value, so they moved westward and settled at what is now Eagle. The crew of the Milwaukee

THE STORY OF A BARN

AS might be expected, the celebration of The Milwaukee Road's 90th Anniversary has produced a highly interesting piece of historical sidelighting.

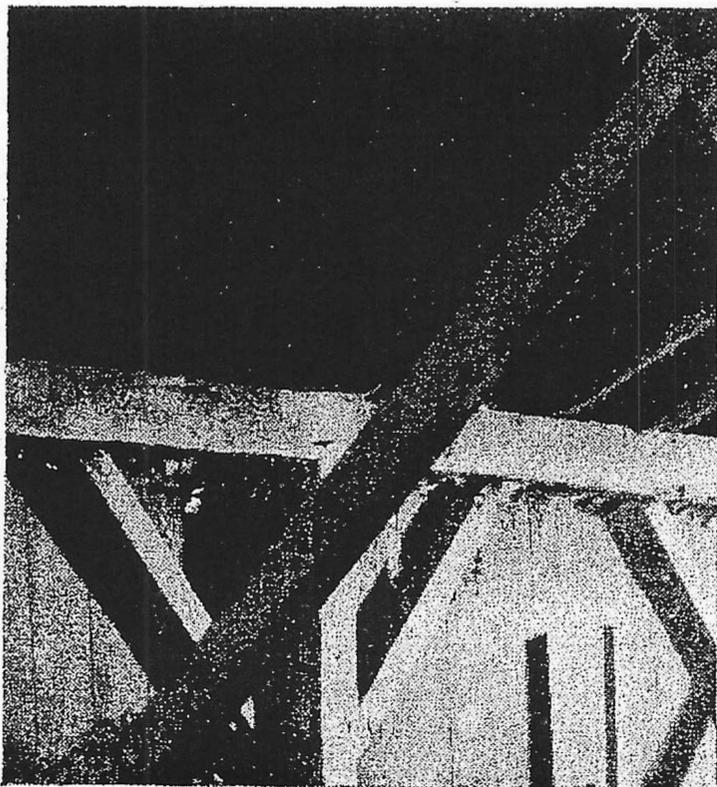
In a letter to the Milwaukee Journal recently, Mrs. Betts Burdon, of Milwaukee, had the following to say:

"The first bill of lumber sent over that run (the line that extended from Milwaukee through Waukesha) was consigned to my paternal grandfather, Jonathan Betts, to build a barn near Eagle, Wis., although that village was not officially named until about one year later. Grandpa Jonathan had to wait on the right-of-way to flag the train to a stop. The barn still stands, square and true, on the Betts homestead, its hand-hewn frame held together entirely by oaken pegs."

With that enticing piece of information as a lead, The Milwaukee Magazine did a bit of sniffing around the Betts homestead and came away with a few more interesting facts.

Jonathan Betts moved from New York to Eagle in 1835—on foot, dressed in the year's fashionable buckskins. With a companion he hesitated a while at Chicago, tempted by a real estate salesman's assurance that some day a huge metropolis would be built where

These timbers are part of the first shipment of lumber carried by the Milwaukee Road.



Eight

and Mississippi Railroad Co. (predecessor of The Milwaukee Road), breaking ground for the laying of the steel, gave the locality the nickname of "Shirt Tail Bend."

Mr. Betts purchased the farm land from the government for \$1.25 an acre. Mrs. Luella M. Betts, daughter-in-law of the old settler, and present owner and operator of the farm, still has the two deeds conveying title to the property. One is signed by President Tyler and the other by President Polk.

It is interesting to know that when the homestead was first established, most of the family's provisions had to be fetched by ox cart from Milwaukee, which was then a trading post run by Solomon Juneau.

The barn was remodeled in 1912, and the outside was covered with newer lumber. However, many of the original timbers are still to be seen on the inside.

And that is the story of the first load of lumber hauled over the tracks of the first railroad in Wisconsin.