CHAPTER V.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

Before a single white settler had made his habitation within the present confines of the county of Manitowoc it was traversed from north to south by many a pioneer. This was true because of an Indian trail, which existed as early as the twenties from the Milwaukee trading post to Green Bay. Later, when a regular mail carrier was placed on the Green Bay route, at times the Manitowoc road was used and sometimes that west of Lake Winnebago. With the influx of settlement this trail was more and more utilized and naturally it occurred to the settlers that the road should be improved. It was by this way that the Conroes secured their men and supplies from Green Bay. The condition of the thoroughfare in 1837 is described by a traveler in the Collections of the Wisconsin Historical Society as being most crude and unsatisfactory. For military reasons it was deemed advisable for a United States road to be built and reports were ordered from the government engineers as to the practicability of the improvement, upon resolution from Delegate Jones in Congress on December 26, 1836. Captain Cram in his report of January 30, 1840 recommended the continuance of the project, then already begun. He described the trail as the principal mail route east and south from Green Bay and told how the mail was carried on foot three times a week from that place to Milwaukee, a distance of 114 miles, remarking that it took four days to carry it from Green Bay to the southern boundary of the state. Fifteen thousand dollars was appropriated for the project in 1838, but it was not drawn upon until the next year due to difficulty experienced in surveying the route. Said Captain Cram in his report of 1840; "This road has been located nearly all the way through the greater part of its length,
construction has commenced and it is expected that the contracts for cutting and clearing the road will be completed by the first of January next (1841)". The original estimated cost of the road entire from Milwaukee to Green Bay was $48,381, that of the section between Sheboygan Falls and Manitowoc Rapids, twenty nine miles in length, including the building of 67 bridges and culverts, being $5941.85, while that of the section between Manitowoc Rapids and Green Bay, thirty-four miles in length and necessitating 34 bridges and culverts was $6774.71. At first there was no settlement between these two points and it was impossible before the road was improved to drive a two-wheeled vehicle north of Milwaukee. When completed the road was the principal means of communication by land to the outside world and upon it all mails were carried. It was not a pretentious highway, being but four rods wide and banked in the middle to the width of but one rod. Due to mismanagement much work was wasted, planks lying on the side of the road rotting, when they should have been used in the road itself. The bridges, too, were not completed as required by the estimates. Settlement gradually spread along the thoroughfare but at first it was slow, as late as 1846 the only stops on the section between Rapids and Green Bay being a little tavern at French Creek and two taverns, kept by Joseph Alle and Clifford King about half way on the route.

This government enterprise, important as it was, could not meet the local needs of the settlers and even before it was built the latter had taken steps towards securing lines of communication. The territorial legislature in December of 1838 passed a bill, whose object it was to lay out and establish a road "from the town of Manitowoc on Lake Michigan to Manitowoc Rapids, thence to Thayer’s mills on the best and most direct route", and thence to Clifton on Lake Winnebago, B. Jones, Pliny Pierce and Horace Conroe being chosen commissioners to lay it out. Although a rough trail connected the first two places, the county board also took up the matter at its first meeting; and on March 15, 1839, it appointed John Watson, Horace Conroe and J. G. Conroe commissioners to
survey the route. The road was soon built as far as Murphy's Mills above the Rapids, being constructed north of the river, it now being known as the River Road. In the same year a road was being considered by the board, from Manitowoc to Two Rivers, but was not built for some months. At the legislative session of 1839, three territorial roads were mapped out, the first being from the mouth of the Manitowoc River to Green Bay, B. Jones, P. Pierce and J. G. Knapp being chosen commissioners; the second from Manitowoc Rapids to Sheboygan Falls, David Giddings and Charles Cole of Sheboygan and Hiram McAllister of Rapids being appointed commissioners, and the third from Rapids to the Fox River, Horace Conroe being one of the commissioners. The first two were made unnecessary by the U. S. Road soon after built, although the road was not chopped through to Sheboygan until 1843, Joseph La Counte being the contractor. The third project never advanced beyond an incipient stage. In 1839 J. W. Conroe had been appointed county road superintendent, but at the January meeting of the board the county was divided into three districts, the first under S. C. Chase, the second under D. S. Munger and H. McAllister and the third under J. G. Conroe. A few months later it was decided to build a county road from Two Rivers to Neshoto, thence to connect with the United States road, and it was constructed under the guidance of R. M. Eberts, S. C. Chase and A. Richardson. Roads between Manitowoc and Two Rivers and from Manitowoc to the United States road were also built in 1841.

Then followed a long period of inaction, which the stationary condition of the county's population necessitated. It was in 1846 that the next action was taken, which commenced the history of the second important thoroughfare of the county, the Calumet Road. The legislature in February of that year appointed Paul Champlin, E. L. Abbott and P. Pierce to lay out a territorial road from the town of Manitowoc "to intersect at such point or place as such commissioners may select or determine, the U. S. road leading from Green Bay to Fond du Lac". The survey took place in the fall, Perry Smith acting as one of the party. As a public road the pro-
ject was not pushed, although Stockbridge was fixed as the western terminus. In 1850 the legislature incorporated a company to carry out the project, known as the Calumet Plank Road Company with $100,000 capital, among the incorporators being H. H. Champlin, A. McNulty, O. C. Hubbard and P. Pierce. On February 12, 1851, a public meeting was held at the Merchants Exchange Hotel and the next month the stock books were opened for subscriptions. Although a mail carrier was placed on the proposed route during the summer, the work of construction was delayed. It was, however, partially built during that year and A. Baensch, A. McNulty and C. Eaton were chosen commissioners to improve it in 1852. The legislature of the next year amended the charter so as to permit the towns along the route to assist in building the road, and in 1855 the time of completion was extended two years, and S. A. Wood, C. W. Fitch, W. Bach and J. Lueps were added to the list of commissioners. Chilton residents were interested in the project and meetings were held there as well as in Manitowoc during the succeeding years. Finally in 1856 a fresh incorporation took place, K. K. Jones, G. Kremers, T. Clark, H. Berners, and W. Bach representing the county and in a few years the latter assumed charge of the thoroughfare.

Another project was launched February 11, 1847, when the legislature appointed Evander M. Soper, Loyal H. Jones and James D. Doty to lay out a territorial road from Manitowoc to Winnebago Rapids, later known as Menasha. This, too, as a state enterprise, lapsed, and the next year the Neenah and Manitowoc Plankroad Company was organized by Harrison Reed. George W. Lawe, Charles Doty and Cornelius Northrup of Neenah and E. M. Soper of Manitowoc as incorporators. The capital stock was fixed at $200,000, made up of ten dollar shares and a board of directors were to be chosen annually. In that year and again in 1850 Congress was appealed to for aid and books were opened for public subscriptions early in the latter year. By the end of that year five miles of the Manitowoc end had been completed, although the whole distance was forty miles. A state road was also
projected to Menasha, via Stockbridge, in 1850 and D. B. Knapp, D. W. Halstead and D. H. Whitney were chosen commissioners but the plan did not materialize sufficiently to militate against the private enterprise. George Reed was made secretary of the latter company and work was pushed late into the winter of 1850-1851. The Evening Wisconsin of June 10, 1852 contained the following item, "G. Reed, Esq., passed through this city Saturday, on his return from the east, where he has successfully negotiated the funds of the Manitowoc and Menasha Plank Road Company. The road will be completed forthwith." It was not, however, although towns which it was purposed to traverse were given authorization to vote aid to the company, and forty men were placed at work, a steam mill being erected to furnish the planks. The project clashed somewhat with the Manitowoc and Mississippi Railroad and George Reed's interest in it was one of the reasons leading to discord in the railway management. Annual elections were held by the road company, H. McAllister being president for some time, but the highway was not pushed much beyond the McAllister farm, near the intersection with the Green Bay road, although the way opened was made a toll road. The thoroughfare, however, was completed during the latter fifties by the county through Branch Cato and Reedsville, touching several important mills, and from time to time commissioners were appointed to see to its maintenance, while later a state road from Maple Grove to Appleton was made to connect with it. In 1862 the legislature reduced the number of directors to three and three years later authority to lease or sell the property of the company was given. Daniel S. Conley purchased its rights in 1866, and maintained the piece of road for many years, but in 1899 the county board bought the thoroughfare for $4,000, this being one of the last toll roads in the county to be purchased.

In the later forties and early fifties other roads were also projected and the county built bridges at Two Rivers, Manitowoc and Manitowoc Rapids. Among the former projects was the territorial road, authorized in 1848 from Port Wash-
ington to Manitowoc, of which E. M. Soper was chosen a commissioner, but it was not built at that time. On February 9, 1850, the Manitowoc and Manitowoc Rapids Plankroad Company was organized with a capital stock of $10,000, the incorporators being Alden Clark, P. Pierce, O. C. Hubbard, T. A. H. Edwards, E. H. Ellis, R. Klingholz, T. A. Baker, Martin Heywood, T. Fenton and M. S. Morse. During the next two years this company constructed a plank road on the south side of the river, known as the South River Road, it being completed in the summer of 1852 and thus affording a second means of communication between the two villages. It later became a county road. In the same year, 1850, the Two Rivers and Green Bay Plankroad Company was formed by H. H. Smith, C. P. Daggett, H. C. Hamilton, of Two Rivers, D. Smith of Mishicot and four Green Bay men, with a capital stock of $100,000. This was considered an urgent necessity, although some dispute arose as to where it should connect with the U. S. road. The subscription books for this project were opened July 15, 1851 and by August 1852 nearly $14,000 had been subscribed, but although a mail line was established between the termini, the company was not successful in its projects. In 1850 Assemblyman Malmaros had presented petitions for a state road between Manitowoc and Two Rivers, but this not being forthcoming, a private corporation was organized two years later and a charter secured. The promoters were C. W. Fitch, J. H. W. Colby, C. Esslinger, J. Edwards, S. A. Wood, R. E. Glover, P. P. Smith, W. Rahr, and P. Glover of Manitowoc and C. Kuehn, H. H. Smith, V. Kaufmann, A. Lamere and H. C. Hamilton of Two Rivers, the capital stock being fixed at $5,000. A toll road was built and maintained, albeit not as well as it might have been, until 1876 when the legislature authorized its purchase by the two towns of Manitowoc and Two Rivers, upon the payment of $800. The inroads made by the lake in the nineties upon this road, where it crossed the Little Manitowoc, occasioned much trouble, the town authorities being obliged to build a breakwater. Four years after the incorporation of the road three of its promoters, P. Glover, H. H. Smith and H. C.
Hamilton joined with Chauncey Gilbert, W. Boot, Alfred Smith, Daniel Smith, L. S. House and R. Klingholz in forming the Two Rivers and Mishicott Plankroad Company with a capital of $10,000, which was maintained as a private enterprise for some years. The year 1852 also witnessed the incorporation of the Manitowoc and Green Bay Plankroad Company by James Bennett, A. W. Preston, A. Baensch, O. Koch, J. E. Platt, G. Othersoll, J. H. Jerome, G. Bennett, J. Spencer, J. C. Leist, H. Riley, J. Praquin, J. Alle and Clifford King of Manitowoc County and H. S. Baird, A. G. Ellis and John Day of Green Bay. The purpose was to connect with the old U. S. road and to repair the latter, and the capital was fixed at $100,000, which led to the construction of the Town Line road. A second corporation of the same name was chartered in 1870, among the promoters being Richard Klingholz of Manitowoc. The charter was repealed, however, three years later, this being the last enterprise of the kind organized in the county.

In 1855 H. F. Belitz of Kiel was one of the commissioners to lay out a state road from the town of Herman, Sheboygan county, to Menasha, touching the southwestern part of this county. At about the same time S. Blake, R. Wheeler, A. Buchanan, Jr., and J. M. Sherwood, were authorized to lay out a state road from Depere to Manitowoc and a similar line of travel from De Pere to Two Rivers was proposed. A year later the North River Road which was extended to Clarks Mills was in need of repair and D. B. Knapp, T. C. Cunningham and C. Gustaveson were chosen by the legislature to superintend the reconstruction. As early as 1851 a memorial had been presented to that body for a state road from Two Rivers to the Door Peninsula and six years later one was authorized to be built to Big Sturgeon Bay, S. B. Sherwood and F. Walsh representing Manitowoc county. In 1859 another route was authorized from Mishicott to Ah:nappee, Manitowoc being represented on the board of commissioners by J. N. Struthers and J. Killen. H. Schlichting of Kiel was a commissioner of a state project for connection between Kiel and Fond du Lac at about the same time. During the sixties road
building was chiefly directed to schemes in the southwesterly portion of the county. On April 15, 1861 the Chilton and Manitowoc Plankroad Company was organized by Calumet county men with a capital of $200,000 and townships were authorized to aid the project. Immediately after the war a state road was ordered laid out between Kiel and Manitowoc, W. Bach, A. Krieger and P. P. Fuessenich acting as commissioners and another from Manitowoc to Taychedah, via Kiel, H. F. Belitz being one of the incorporators. It was the failure of the latter project that caused the incorporation of a private company in 1870, the Manitowoc and Kiel Plankroad Company by J. Schuette, T. Windiate, R. H. Hoes, H. Berners, C. Gustaveson, S. Samuelson, A. Schad and E. B. Treat, with a capital stock of $30,000. The days of plank roads and private enterprises were soon over, however, and one by one these were incorporated by county or township, both these units now having full charge and maintenance of all the thoroughfares of the county. The Kiel and Sheboygan turnpike was the last to be made free, the event occurring in 1900.

Closely connected with road building as a means of communication was the development of the postal service and mail routes. As was said before the old Green Bay trail was the first mail route in the county. Before 1840 J. G. Conroe and later T. Baker were postmasters at the Rapids, then the only office in the county. Their successors being P. Pierce, O. C. Hubbard, J. P. Champlain, E. H. Ellis and E. D. Beardsley, who held office during the forties and fifties. In nine months of 1840 the total income of the Manitowoc postoffice was only $57.56, of which half went as compensation to the postmaster. In 1847 the Manitowoc postoffice was established, J. H. Colby being appointed postmaster. Francis Flinn and Henry Edwards carried the mail from the south during these early days, trudging the weary distance to Green Bay on foot. When night overtook Flinn he would pursue his lonely journey with a lighted lantern swinging from side to side, and once he made the trip from Rapids to Green Bay and return without sleep. He passed away February 22, 1855 at the age of fifty-
six years, one of the picturesque figures of pioneer days. For many years there were but three postoffices in the county, Manitowoc, Manitowoc Rapids and Two Rivers. Among the first postmasters in the forties at the last named place were Andrew J. Vieau and H. H. Smith. One Oscar Burdicke carried the mail in 1846 from Manitowoc to Two Rivers, his compensation being the revenue of the route. In 1846 Meeme was added with Henry B. Edson as its first postmaster and later in the year Cooperstown also, A. A. Cooper being the first official at the office, which was at that time in Brown county. With the addition of these two new offices new mail routes were made necessary and were accordingly put in operation. In 1851 routes from Manitowoc to Green Bay via Two Rivers and Mishicott and from Manitowoc to Stockbridge were added, while the next summer daily mails were instituted by boat from Chicago to Manitowoc. At about the same time the government was memorialized to change the Green Bay route back to the original road through Francis Creek and the line was later re-established. The anxiety of the inhabitants for mail facilities was manifested by frequent petitions sent Congress during the next year, including requests for lines from DePere to Manitowoc, by way of Morrison, Brown County, from Chilton to Manitowoc, from Sheboygan to Chilton by way of Schleswig and from Mishicott to Door county. In the course of time all of these lines and many others were established.

J. H. Colby, Manitowoc’s first postmaster was succeeded by James L. Kyle, a Whig appointee, the office being located in the store of J. E. Platt at the corner of North Seventh and Commercial streets. James Bennett was Kyle’s successor and he in turn gave way to S. A. Wood who surrendered the place in 1857 to A. Wittmann, President Buchanan’s appointee. During Wood’s administration the office was at the corner of Franklin and Eighth streets, but later was removed to the present site of the Victoria Hotel. From 1854 the establishment of postoffices in the county was rapid. In June of that year P. M. Falrich was appointed the first postmaster at Mishicott; in August the Maple Grove post office was opened
with Joseph H. Cheney as postmaster and in October Branch P. O. at McAllister's Mills, W. R. Williams being the first postmaster. In August 1855 Newton P. O. was established, John Meyer being appointed to the place, followed by that at Oslo the same year and in January 1856 by the offices at Eaton, Niles, Francis Creek and Centerville. In the next ten years offices were opened also at Larrabee, Paquette, Clarks Mills, Hika, Kasson, Kiel, Mosfield, Neshoto, Reedsville, Rosecrans and Two Creeks. The postoffice at Oslo was abolished in 1860 but re-established ten years later. Among the early postmasters at Two Rivers were B. J. Van Valkenburgh, C. P. Daggett, P. Phillipps and A. Bemis. William Conine became postmaster in 1870 and remained so until his death in 1885. At Manitowoc Charles Esslinger was appointed in 1861 to succeed Wittmann and held the office twenty-five years. At first the office was at the corner of South Seventh and Franklin Streets but in 1866 a small building was erected on South Eighth street near the bridge for its occupancy, in which it remained until the new brick structure it now occupies was finished in 1891. As to mail facilities many were the complaints in the latter fifties and early sixties. Particularly was this true in the winter, when the stoppage of lake navigation well nigh shut Manitowoc out of the world. Even as late as 1866 but three mails a week were received from Milwaukee, one from Menasha and three from Appleton, stage lines carrying them. A new line was placed in operation to Menasha in 1863 by Thomas Windiate, while Davis and More operated the lake shore stage for many years.

In the latter sixties the postoffices of East Gibson, Mann's Landing, Elk, Nero, Prag and Wayside were established, three of which, Prag, Elk and Mann's Landing were in later years discontinued, as was also Mosfield P. O. In the early seventies the building of the M. L. S. & W. greatly increased mail facilities, the route being at first to Milwaukee via Appleton. The growth of the newer portions of the county also called for the establishment of new offices, including Cato, King's Bridge, Northeim, Kellnersville, Millhome and later Grimms, Greenstreet, Steinthal, Tisch Mills,
Osman, Louis Corners, St. Wendel, School Hill, Timothy, Rangeline, Taus and others, some of which were abolished after a few years of existence. In 1885 under a Democratic administration, A. Pieing became postmaster at Manitowoc succeeding Esslinger and U. Niquette succeeded Mr. Conine at Two Rivers. Postmaster Pieing in turn gave way to Judge R. D. Smart, a Republican, in 1890, but that gentleman died in June, his wife remaining in charge of the office until 1894. At Two Rivers W. Hurst followed Postmaster Niquette, giving way to George Wehausen in 1894, who in turn resigned in favor of Frank Riley four years later. Free delivery was instituted in Manitowoc on March 15, 1893, three carriers being utilized, the number being later increased by three. Henry Vits became postmaster in 1894 and after four years was succeeded by H. G. Kress. The growth of the local business was very rapid during this later period, having increased from $7809.79 in 1889 to $14,326.92 in 1899. Among the new offices established in the county during this decade were Collins, Eastwin, Zander, Melnik, Stark, Cleveland, Valders, Whitelaw, Wells, Menchalville, Clover, Rief, Quarry and Bleser. On March 15, 1900, the first rural mail delivery in the county was established with John Houghton as carrier, the route being westerly from the city and south of the river. Six other lines were planned and instituted within a few months, three diverging from Manitowoc, one from Kiel, one from Valders and one from Cleveland.

Another means of communication, which is of importance is the telephone and telegraph. Early in the sixties a telegraph line to Green Bay had been proposed and partly established but was later abandoned. In December 1864, however, the poles and wires for a line to Milwaukee were put in by the United States Telegraph Company and the connection was made February 1865. The first message was sent by Editor Crowley of the Pilot to Editor Robinson of the Green Bay Advocate in the following words: “The Pilot’s compliments to the Advocate and is happy to be connected by telegraph.” To which a reply was made: “Here is to you by telegraph. Let the old Advocate and Pilot have a social
bumper together. The world moves." Later telegraph lines followed the extension of the railroads and soon also telephone lines were placed in operation, the first being the Wisconsin Telephone Company. When the Bell patents expired, however, independent companies were possible and in the nineties a system of connections were made, touching nearly every village and hamlet in the county, The Manitowoc and Western Telephone Company, being particularly energetic in this regard.

Allied to the movements, whose object it was to extend means of communication, were those which aimed to reclaim the waste swamp lands in the western part of the county. These lands were largely in the towns of Eaton, Liberty, Franklin, Rockland and Maple Grove. Much of it was sold in the fifties and made tillable by private enterprise but it was seen that this was not a rapid or a profitable method so the state took a hand. Certain sums were set apart by it from the proceeds of swamp land sales as a drainage fund. In 1859 this fund amounted to $1575 for the county and the average per year was about that sum. The legislature in 1860 passed an act for the disposal of the fund in the repairing of roads and bridges under the direction of the county supervisors. Two years later drainage commissioners were authorized to be appointed for Calumet and Manitowoc counties and the funds to be used for draining certain lands designated. A year later the swamp lands were granted to the county and the supervisors were directed to elect a commissioner to hold office for four years. he, with the Calumet county commissioner, to superintend the expenditure of the drainage fund. In 1865 this act was repealed and a joint board of commissioners from the two counties provided for. Another alteration took place in 1866, the legislature granting fresh lands to the counties, M. Mahoney and J. C. Eggers being selected to represent Manitowoc county and W. Watrous Calumet county. The committee met at Clark's Mills on July 11, but refused to accept the grant from the state, although it was found that about 21,000 acres, worth then only 40 cents
an acre, might become areable at a small expense. A year later D. B. Knapp, L. Faulhaber and P. Brennan were created trustees of the land in question, together with O. R. Potter and A. Watrous of Calumet county, by whom the lands were administered until 1870. Mr. Potter was very active in the work and devised extensive plans for the utilization of the swamp along the course of the river. At about this time a dam was placed in the river at Cato and this raised the water so much that much of the reclaimed land was damaged greatly. The farmers under the lead of Captain Potter tore out the dam and this proceeding, oft repeated, finally induced the owners to secure an injunction against them. After some years, in which unsuccessful efforts were made to buy the water power out, a bill passed the legislature authorizing the removal of the obstruction. In 1873 W. Carey succeeded P. Brennan as a trustee from Manitowoc county and T. Kerstens of Calumet and A. Piening of Manitowoc were added. New commissioners were chosen in 1874, those from Manitowoc being J. Behnke, J. Franz and Ira Clark, Behnke being succeeded by J. Halloran three years later and J. Stephenson being added in 1878. In 1883 the trust created in the commissioners was terminated by the legislature and the lands left undisposed of were authorized to be drained and sold, power being given to the commissioners to carry out the provisions of the act. Since this did not prove an altogether successful means of disposing of the subject eight years later a bill was enacted, under which those land owners who might be benefited by the drainage of lands, could borrow money from the trust funds of the state, the act being applied to residents of the towns of Eaton, Cato and Rockland. Finally in 1893 it was provided that whenever twenty-five owners petitioned for the appointment of a drainage commissioner such an officer should be appointed by the circuit judge. This drainage movement meant much in the development of the western part of the county and there are still funds in the state treasury, ready to be devoted to this purpose.