



Module 8 Talking Points

- If we look at Mr. Canfield's map and find the number 7 we see an area with a lot of lines with black dashes criss-crossing each other. Do you know what these lines represent?
- They are railroad tracks. There are also other things noted like depots, machine shops and a roundhouse. This area was called the "rail yard."
- It was where work was done on train engines and train cars and where freight was loaded and unloaded onto trains. It was also where people got onto and off trains.
- If we look at the same area today from a satellite view we can see that most of the railroad tracks are gone. There are some buildings in the same place.
- Trains still come through Baraboo carrying freight like crushed stone from Rock Springs and taking metal parts to Reedsburg.
- Today, the trains coming through Baraboo no longer carry passengers.
- In the past though, as many as 16 passenger trains filled with thousands of people came through Baraboo every day.
- When the first dams and mills were built in Baraboo it was hoped that a railroad would be built and make it easier to get goods and people to and from Baraboo.
- Until a railroad came, everything coming into and going out of Baraboo had to be moved by wagons pulled by oxen or horses. Roads were not paved in those days and were often muddy and rocky.
- The Baraboo River provided water power for things to be made in Baraboo like lumber, furniture, wool cloth and barrels of wheat, but in order to ship them out to big cities where they could be sold, they had to be hauled many miles to the nearest railroad depot.
- This was expensive and time consuming and limited how much could be produced.
- Not having a railroad also meant that it was more expensive to bring things to Baraboo for people to buy.
- The people of Baraboo had to wait over thirty years for a railroad to come to town.
- It is easiest to build railroads on flat ground where there are not a lot of hills.



- The Baraboo bluffs were a big barrier that would make it expensive but not impossible to build a railroad to Baraboo.
- Trains cannot climb steep hills so railroad tracks had to be built to either go around hills and mountains or through them in tunnels. Tunnels are expensive to build.
- Finally in 1871 a railroad was built to Baraboo. A way was found through the Baraboo bluffs by going through the Devil's Lake area. A track was laid at the base of the east bluff extending the railroad from Madison.
- The name of the railroad company was the Chicago and North Western railroad.
- When the first train engine arrived in Baraboo in September of 1871 it was a big day. Everyone took the day off from school and work and had a big party to welcome the train.
- After reaching Baraboo the railroad continued to be built to the northwest connecting Baraboo to Reedsburg and LaValle and eventually to LaCrosse. The railroad also went through the villages of North Freedom and Rock Springs.
- A passenger depot was built in Baraboo so that people could buy tickets to ride the train or wait for people to arrive.
- With the new railroad people could now take a ride to Madison that would take only a few hours. Before the railroad it could take days to walk or ride a horse from Baraboo to Madison.
- All of the things that were made in Baraboo could also now be shipped much easier by train.
- The railroad made it much easier and less expensive to sell things that were made in Baraboo and easier and less expensive to get things to Baraboo so that people could buy them.
- The new railroad meant that Baraboo was connected to much bigger cities and much of the rest of the United States.
- When a railroad was built through a village, a depot was built to accommodate passengers and freight. Baraboo had a depot but also was chosen to become the headquarters for a stretch or division of the railroad that measured over 200 miles long.
- This was known as the Madison Division even though the headquarters were in Baraboo.



- This meant that all decisions about this stretch of railroad were carried out in Baraboo and that many railroad jobs were available in Baraboo after the railroad arrived.
- A roundhouse with eight stalls was built at the Baraboo rail yard. A roundhouse was a garage for train engines. Train engines could be taken inside and serviced or repaired.
- The inside of the roundhouse was where train engines could be taken apart and fixed or cleaned. The roundhouse provided many jobs in Baraboo which other communities did not have.
- The roundhouse was eventually enlarged to include 28 stalls for train engines.
- To put an engine into the right stall it was moved onto a giant turntable which would turn and line the engine up with a set of tracks that would go into a stall of the roundhouse.
- The railroad also built an office building at Baraboo where railroad managers, dispatchers and clerks worked to keep everything running smoothly.
- This is where decisions were made about how the trains would run, when they would run and where they would run.
- It was important to make sure that every train was on time and where it was supposed to be so that trains did not run into each other.
- The trains were operated by conductors and engineers. The conductor was the person in charge of saying when a train could stop and go and the engineer was the person who drove the train from the cab of the train engine.
- Jobs on the train included the brakemen who helped hook and unhook cars and apply the brakes on train cars and firemen who stoked the fire in the train engine which provided the heat to make the steam engine move.
- Because Baraboo was the division headquarters many of the railroad employees lived in Baraboo.
- At the passenger depot, jobs included being the station agent who was in charge of the depot and its employees, other jobs included being a clerk who sold tickets and being a porter who helped move luggage for people getting on and off the train.
- In all, the railroad brought tremendous change to Baraboo. It connected Baraboo to the bigger cities and also provided hundreds of jobs.