

IOWA HISTORY



(Photo Courtesy Library of Congress)

Marquis of Lorne was governor general of Ottawa, Canada

Cattle Derail Queen's Son-in-law

"Is there danger?" Marquis of Lorne demanded of his servants.

"We're slaughtered!" he predicted.

The Marquis of Lorne believed he was being attacked by Irish Republican anti-British government agitators as he rode the *Sioux City & Pacific Railroad* in October 1881. But it was just a herd of Iowa cattle.

The Marquis was serving as governor general of the city of Ottawa in Canada. The son-in-law of Queen Victoria of England, was married to her daughter, Princess Louise. Fortunately, the princess was not on the train as she was home recovering from a sleigh accident. (An early snow that year?) It's unclear why the Marquis was in Iowa, but he was headed to St. Paul, Minn.

Just after midnight on October 6 in a heavy timber near Thompson's Creek four miles east of Sioux City, the train carrying the Marquis came across some cattle on the tracks. The engineer, David Douglass, applied the air brakes; but the train was running faster than usual because it was behind schedule. Douglass could not stop the train. It struck a steer carrying the animal down the track and hitting a second steer. The baggage car was thrown off the track. The smoking car and ladies' car were derailed too. Steam and hot air poured out of the engine. The Marquis' car was the last in the train. He was in his sleeping berth at the time of the accident. Luckily, his car was not damaged.

Just before going to sleep that night the Marquis had mentioned to members of his party that he'd learned several "hot-headed" agitators from Ireland had arrived in New York. So when he awoke to the chaos of the train crash, he naturally thought it was caused by those

troublemakers who had somehow made their way to Iowa. His servants quickly jumped from the train to learn that the crash had been caused by Iowa cattle, not hot-headed Irishmen.

The Marquis immediately dispatched two servants to Sargent's Bluffs and Sioux City to send telegrams to his wife and the queen letting them know he was fine. He then went back to bed, sleeping until morning.

Although the Marquis' car had not been disturbed, the train's engine had toppled into a ditch. Engineer Douglass lay on the track beside one of the dead steers. Partly covered by one of the cars, his back and head were obviously injured. His face was buried in the ground. Witnesses believed the engineer was dead.

The train men and some of the passengers dug the engineer out from under the car that covered him. Everyone was happy to discover Douglass was not dead. By noon that day the wreck was cleared from the tracks.

The Marquis' car was taken to Sioux City, where it awaited another engine which would take him to St. Paul. When he got to Minnesota he "declined" to stop for any length of time. He was eager to get over the border into Winnipeg, Canada, as quickly as possible; so officers of the *St. Paul & Manitoba Road* arranged to have his car immediately transferred to one of their engines. He managed to stay "only a few moments" before setting out for Winnipeg.

No doubt he was happy to reach the safety of Canada after his harrowing encounter with those Iowa cattle.

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Sources

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