

The bibliography contains only two references that specifically relate to the period since 1970. While this work has *some* fairly good chapters (two and eight) and makes *some* useful points as it goes along, anyone interested in learning much about American railroads, especially in Iowa, will be well advised to look elsewhere.

*Great American Post Offices*, by James H. Bruns. New York: James Wiley & Sons, 1998. xiv, 274 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$24.95 paper.

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In the first part of this two-part book, the "great" post offices are the historically important ones. The buildings, however, are secondary to the author's real topic: the social history of the United States postal service, our first information superhighway. In the book's second part, a guidebook organized geographically, the "great" post offices are 250 chosen from those extant. The buildings are the author's topic here. He gives the location, dates, architect's name, and interesting descriptive and historical information about each post office. In both parts of the book, the numerous photographs, engravings, and other pictures play a valuable role.

How would midwesterners use this book? Interested in social history, we might browse through some of the topical essays that make up the first part of the book, such as "Postal Offices across a Young Nation," "The Expanding System," or "Postal Service in the Civil War Years." Reading the essays successively, however, we may find their historical continuity unclear. Beginning with East Coast origins, the history follows the growth of the postal service across the continent, through the Midwest and beyond. Interested in the historic buildings in our own town or city, or in places we might visit, we would consult the second part of the book. It is organized by national regions and of course includes the Midwest. Doubtless drawing from his experience as a founding director of the National Postal Museum at the Smithsonian Institution, James H. Bruns has written a book that will appeal to a broad spectrum of thoughtful readers.

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