

This manuscript could have benefitted greatly if Whitaker had related its data to the major themes of the era by utilizing the work of Thomas Cochran and Alfred Chandler. As it stands, *Feedlot Empire* is a padded book of questionable worth.

—Jerome O. Steffen
University of Oklahoma

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Prairie Oasis: The Railroads, Steamboats and Resorts of Iowa's Spirit Lake Country, by Donovan L. Hofsommer. Des Moines: Waukon & Mississippi Press, 1975.

Prairie Oasis is a popular account of the development and growth of the resort industry along the shores of the Iowa Great Lakes. Since the impetus for transforming the lakes of Dickinson County, Iowa into a primer resort came from the railroads, this work logically focuses on the roles played by various lines. Two roads, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul, and the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Northern, spearheaded development of the region in the 1880s. After building lines into the lake country, the companies constructed resort hotels and actively publicized the area. The summer resort business quickly boomed. And other railroads, too, became involved in the region. Moreover, eager entrepreneurs soon introduced lake steamers on Lake Okoboji and Spirit Lake; for years they symbolized the vitality of the "prairie oasis."

By the 1930s a major change was occurring at the resorts. The automobile steadily replaced the "steamcars" as the principal means of entry into the Spirit Lake country. Thus rail passenger service decreased; steamboats disappeared (boats were no longer needed to meet the trains); and the old wooden hotels gave way to tourist cabins and motor inns. Yet the resort industry flourished.

Prairie Oasis is an attractive book; the layout and graphics are both pleasing. The book, moreover, is obviously a labor of love. The author, a professional historian, is not only a former resident of northwest Iowa but a dedicated railfan as well. This work, however, is marred in several places. The footnote numbers have been inadvertently omitted; there are several major typographical

errors; and the illustrations on page 115 are without captions. Furthermore, the author fails to relate other resort and spa areas to his Iowa case study. (This reviewer, for example, would like to know if the history of the Iowa Great Lakes is unique.) It would have been well, too, to have had comments on vacationing habits of Americans during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Finally, the author could have strengthened his narrative by providing more descriptive passages of the lakes themselves, preferably in the first part of the book. The reader must wait until page 93 before any description of the lakes is found.

Those interested in local history should find the book of value and worth the \$4.95 list price. Local libraries throughout Iowa, southern Minnesota and eastern South Dakota will want to add this volume to their holdings.

—H. Roger Grant
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Iowa Trolleys, by Norman Carlson (ed.). Chicago: Central Electric Railfans' Association (P.O. Box 503, Chicago, Illinois 60690). 1975, pp. 304. \$25.00.

The Central Electric Railfans' Association was formed in 1938 to encourage study of the history, equipment, and operation of suburban, interurban, and main line electric railways. One of its important functions is the publication of these studies. *Iowa Trolleys* is the 114th such publication.

This book is a nostalgic return to the electric railways's of Iowa's past—railways which in yesteryear connected city neighborhoods, rural communities, and even cities. The Iowa lines earned a special place with railfans and regular riders alike. As the editor points out, the street railways and the interurbans both operated in traditional fashion until the very end.

Brief narrative passages as well as bounteous illustrations are devoted to each of the many streetcar and interurban lines of Hawkeyeland. The narrative portions are of varying literary and historical merit; the illustrations are of remarkably fine quality.

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