

histories. To build this map, Blevins relies on a preexisting dataset of US post offices, which records information about 166,140 post offices from 1639 to 2000. He uses the Geographic Names Information System to geocode each post office and locate it on his map. Pivotaly, Blevins integrates these results with shapefiles of Indigenous land cessions and government reservations. By overlaying these datasets, viewers can see federal post offices replace Indigenous communities—literally watching the dots move thanks to his geocoding. This dynamic map is freely available on gossamernetwork.com, and the code that Blevins wrote to accomplish this remarkable feat is available on Github. Overall, this methodological innovation illustrates how the expansion of a powerful American state contributed to the dispossession of Indigenous communities in the West.

Paper Trails transforms postal historiography geographically, methodologically, and—I argue—irrevocably. Blevins builds on a quarter century of postal scholarship that has transitioned from institutional histories like Richard John’s *Spreading the News* (1995) and David Henkin’s *The Postal Age* (2006), which synthesized early and mid-nineteenth century American postal history to illuminate the rise of a modern state. More recently, Winifred Gallagher’s *How the Post Office Created America* (2016) reiterated that the Post Office matters, and Joseph Adelman’s *Revolutionary Networks* (2019) inaugurated the “new postal history.” Now Blevins transforms the new postal history geographically by centering the story on the West and Indigenous communities, methodologically through digital techniques such as coding and maps, which he makes accessible on his website, and irrevocably by altering what is possible in the study of US post offices. And following an election year and pandemic that elevated USPS discourse, broad audiences seem eager to consume postal history.

A Mighty Fine Road: A History of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Company, by H. Roger Grant. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020. xiii, 325 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$30.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Jeff Schramm is an associate professor of history at Missouri University of Science and Technology. He is a historian of modern industrial technology, including twentieth-century railroads. He is the author of *Out of Steam: Dieselization and American Railroads, 1920–60* (2010).

The Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific, known as the Rock Island or “the Rock” for short was a major midwestern railroad from the mid-1800s to its final bankruptcy and dismemberment in 1980. While it never reached

the Pacific like its name suggested, it covered the Midwest and Southwest with a web of lines—from Chicago and St. Louis in the east to Denver and Colorado Springs in the west, from Minneapolis to Houston and Memphis to Santa Rosa, New Mexico. The heart of the Rock Island was in Iowa where its east-west mainline from Davenport to Council Bluffs served many Iowa communities including Iowa City and Des Moines.

Iowa native H. Roger Grant, the dean of railroad historians, has tackled the entire history of the Rock Island in this well-researched and readable work. Beginning in the 1840s, citizens and boosters of Davenport and Rock Island sought an eastern connection to Chicago and a western route across Iowa to the Missouri River. To connect the two lines a bridge across the Mississippi River was needed. This monumental undertaking caused national concern with steamboat interests strongly opposed and southern politicians worried about the impact the bridge would have on the expansion of free states in the northern Midwest. Thanks perhaps to legal representation from a young Abraham Lincoln, railroad interests prevailed over the those of steamboats and a young Jefferson Davis. The bridge was built and successfully connected the trans-Mississippi west to the rapidly developing railroad networks of the east.

The Rock Island continued to grow after the Civil War by both building and purchasing lines. By the turn of the twentieth century, it was one of several so-called Granger roads that stretched west from Chicago and served agricultural producers. It joined railroads like the Chicago and North Western, Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific, and Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy in serving the vast midwestern agricultural hinterlands. Grant has done a good job with this aspect of the Rock's history. All too often the financial machinations of railroad development are dry and difficult to comprehend. Grant's writing is easy to understand and does not overly dwell on the Wall Street consequences of late nineteenth-century railroad construction.

Unlike an earlier generation of railroad history books which focus primarily on the nineteenth century, most of Grant's analysis is of the twentieth. The dawn of a new century found a well-performing Rock Island railroad under the control of financiers, the Reid-Moore syndicate, who would greatly expand the southern lines of the Rock but also drive it into bankruptcy by 1915. After the challenges of WWI and government control of the nation's railroads, the Rock Island emerged from bankruptcy in 1920 to a vastly different regulatory and traffic environment. The trials of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl were too much for the Rock, and it again entered bankruptcy. A dynamic new

chief operating official, John D. Farrington, brought a new life to the Rock and together with WWII traffic booms, turned things around, for a time. The 1950s saw shiny new diesel streamlined passenger trains called "Rockets" polishing the rails. More importantly for the bottom line were the hundreds of freight diesels and significant right of way improvements of the era. By the late 1950s the Rock Island was a well-run and reasonably prosperous railroad. But dark clouds were on the horizon.

A stillborn merger with the Union Pacific in the mid-1960s along with increasing competition from other railroads and highways led the Rock Island to its final bankruptcy in the mid-1970s. This time there would be no traffic boom to save the Rock. Despite the best efforts of management including a new bright blue and white paint scheme on its locomotives, the Rock Island railroad effectively ceased to exist in January 1980. But while the Rock Island name is gone, many of its rail lines still exist and still see trains. Grant does a good job summarizing this long decline and fall of the Rock Island, but those interested in a more detailed and thorough examination are directed to Gregory L. Schneider's *Rock Island Requiem: The Collapse of a Mighty Fine Line*.

A good selection of maps, photos, and other black and white illustrations add significantly to the book. It is completed by ample endnotes and an index. Grant's *Mighty Fine Road* should appeal to business and railroad historians and those interested in midwestern and Iowa history.

Upon the Altar of Work: Child Labor and the Rise of a New American Sectionalism, by Betsy Wood. *The Working Class in American History*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020. xi, 256 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$28.00 paperback.

Reviewer Jennifer Robin Terry is a historian with a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. Her manuscript, "A Century of Denial: Agrarianism and Child Farm Labor in America," analyzes the role that national myths have played in shaping social mores and labor law.

Betsy Wood's *Upon the Altar of Work: Child Labor and the Rise of a New American Sectionalism* offers a bold interpretation for why sectionalism continued long after the Civil War. Tracing the evolution of ideas surrounding children and their labor, Wood argues that the debates over Progressive Era child labor reform broke down over conflicting North/South sectional ideologies, resulting in a new imaginary Mason-Dixon line within modern capitalist society. *Upon the Altar of Work* draws together several important episodes in the history of child labor reform, includ-