don Jr. Occasionally the author makes minor factual errors and questionable generalizations. He claims, for example, that John D. Farrington, who headed the company for several decades in the mid-twentieth century, made the Rock Island into the "strongest of Midwestern railroads" (1).

Still, *The Great Rock Island Route* holds considerable value. Gaertner has conducted extensive research, especially with newspaper coverage, of the multiple construction and acquisitions in the Rock Island's complex corporate history. Furthermore, the book is blessed with exceptionally good and frequently detailed maps. Other illustrations are generally good and appropriate. And throughout the work, the author presents his material in a pleasant writing style. This book complements other monographic studies of what was at least in song a "Mighty Good Road."

Crossroads of a Continent: Missouri Railroads, 1851–1921, by Peter A. Hansen, Don L. Hofsommer, and Carlos Arnaldo Schwantes. Railroads Past and Present. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021. xiv, 378 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. $55 hardcover.

Reviewer Simon Cordery is Chair of the History Department at Iowa State University. He is currently writing a biography of Albert Benton Pullman and is the author of *The Iron Road in the Prairie State: The Story of Illinois Railroading* (Indiana, 2016).

This is an excellent introduction to the railroads of Missouri. It is comprehensive, well-illustrated, and places the Show-Me state in a wider regional context. Despite the book's title, it does not claim any special place for the state in the firmament of American railroading history, necessarily paying attention to St. Louis's unwinnable rivalry with Chicago and the slow growth of rails across the state. The book bears the marks of being written by three separate authors, but is nonetheless readable and illuminating.

Let's begin with that title. Many places, at many times, have claimed the mantle of America's crossroads. Indiana calls itself The Crossroads of America, as does Vandalia, Ohio. Wentzville, Missouri, brands itself the Crossroads of the Nation, which at least brings us to the Show-Me State. To call Missouri the "crossroads of a continent" is a grand claim, one the authors do not try to justify. They do assert that "all of the state's major railroads served as linchpins in a complex web of regional and national spatial relationships" (3–4). It is not entirely clear what this means or how it gives Missouri special standing in the

history of the industry, given that every state could make the same claim.

Despite weaknesses in the framing of the book, the story told is interesting. It opens with the importance of river transportation in Missouri and moves onto the earliest attempts to construct iron roads. In the zero-sum game of infrastructure development, Missouri lost out to Illinois because slavery, rivers, the Ozarks, and the Civil War stunted railroad growth. Missouri's relatively slow start was not for want of effort. As early as 1849 a St. Louis railroad convention proposed a transcontinental railroad along the thirty-eighth parallel to San Francisco. This line failed to attain its western target, setting the tone for much of Missouri's subsequent railroad development. The first lines were aspirational, stymied by a lack of capital. The Pacific Railroad of Missouri laid 37 miles in its first four years, which, at an average of nine miles a year, meant it would have reached the west coast by 2023. Bankrupted by the Panic of 1873, it reorganized as the Missouri Pacific and reached the Rocky Mountains. The Pacific Ocean remained as out of reach for that line as it did for another Missouri road, the St. Louis & San Francisco (the fabled Frisco), which built into the Texas Panhandle but fell "1,500 miles short of the Bay Area" (81).

The cruel truth is that Missouri was not particularly important to railroading in the United States. Unable to reach the West Coast, its lines reoriented toward the less economically powerful Southwest. Competition between St Louis and Kansas City is also a feature of the book, with excellent coverage of both cities. Eads Bridge was an engineering marvel, important rolling-stock manufacturers were located in and around St. Louis, and the Union Stations in Kansas City and St. Louis were and remain impressive architectural achievements, but the state was a bit player in the growth of railroads. Neighboring Iowa, which sent many tentacles into Missouri and boasted the eastern terminus of the first transcontinental, had a greater impact on American railroading.

Despite excellent coverage of virtually every aspect of Missouri's railroad history, labor gets short shrift. There are moments of discontinuity, as, for example, when the chapter on St. Louis Union Station concludes with a perfect transition to the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair (214), only for an intervening chapter on two Missouri-based entrepreneurs to interrupt the flow. Most of the writing is accessible to the general reader, though chapter six provides a dense unfolding of individual railroad growth aimed at the enthusiast. The book concludes with the end of federal control of the railroads in 1920, after which a planned

second volume will take up the story. This is not a hard-and-fast chronological division, however, with Missouri passenger trains covered into the 1960s (see pages 274–81 and 321–22), for example.

Anyone interested in the history of railroading will find this book worth reading. It tells a good story—placing it in the appropriate historical context—and is unafraid to acknowledge Missouri's secondary (at best) role in the American rail network. It is an excellent tribute to co-author Peter Hansen, a well-respected historian and long-time editor of the journal *Railroad History* who sadly died during the final stages of the book's production. This reviewer awaits the second volume with eager anticipation.

The Plains Political Tradition: Essays on South Dakota Political Culture, Volume 4, edited by Jon K. Lauck and Paula M. Nelson. Pierre, SD: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2022. 277 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. $29.95 paperback.

Reviewer Cory Haala is Assistant Professor of History at University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He researches twentieth-century midwestern political history and is the author of the forthcoming manuscript *How Democrats Won the Heartland: Progressive Populism in the Age of Reagan, 1978–1992.*

In their fourth volume of *The Plains Political Tradition*, editors Jon K. Lauck and Paula M. Nelson have assembled an intriguing set of ten chapters that explore new facets of South Dakota's political culture while raising questions of what nooks and crannies of the state's history have not yet been plumbed.

Michael Card, in his chapter on the budget process in South Dakota, concludes, provocatively, that South Dakota, with no income tax, has bent away from its moralistic political tradition toward an individualism that relies on federal funds and imposes a tax burden disproportionately on poorer residents (228, 242–43). Paul Wilson's chapter on an understudied figure, Gov. George S. Mickelson, also breaks new ground in South Dakota's connection to modern conservatism. Mickelson's fiscal conservatism, combined with door-to-door campaigning, helped South Dakota Republicans in 1986 overcome a lean year. This effort was also aided by reaching across the aisle, quoting Tom Daschle in campaign literature, and working with *Lakota Times* publisher Tim Giago to propose a reconciliation year for Natives and Whites (195–97). Nevertheless, Democrats held two of South Dakota's three congressional seats from 1987 to 2011, a majority on the Public Utilities Commission from 1983 to 2003, and took the state senate in 1992.