

popular history of Spanish activities in the Southwest in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries.

—Alan M. Schroder
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History of the Illinois Central Railroad, by John F. Stover. New York: Macmillan, 1975. pp. xiv, 575. \$15.00.

Many railroads played important roles in the early and rapid development of Iowa. One of these was the Illinois Central. A predecessor company, the Dubuque & Pacific, implied the commercial aspirations of certain Dubuque merchants as well as significant long-range purposes. Dreams of reaching the Pacific Ocean with these rails passed rather quickly and, indeed, so did the D&P itself. Nevertheless, the Illinois Central, its successor, ultimately completed a main line in Iowa linking Dubuque, Waterloo, Fort Dodge, and Sioux City. It also completed secondary main lines from Tara to Omaha, Nebraska, and Waterloo to Glenville, Minnesota (near Albert Lea), in addition to important branch lines from Manchester to Cedar Rapids, Cherokee to Sioux Falls, S.D., Cherokee to Onawa, and Stacyville Junction to Stacyville.

Yet these Iowa lines have been something of a contradiction for the Illinois Central. The road's name underscored its original purpose—to serve as a rail artery for central Illinois by way of a main gut built parallel to the long axis of the state with a connecting branch to Chicago. These lines were eventually extended to link Memphis and New Orleans among other aspiring southern localities. As a result, the IC became a vertical, a north-south, or as some said, a “wrong way” railroad. Its Iowa lines, to the contrary, ran the “right way”—east and west.

The record of this important company, itself nicknamed the “Main Line of Mid-America,” is told in a readable style by John F. Stover, an eminent railroad historian, in his new *History of the Illinois Central Railroad*, a volume in Macmillan's *Railroads of America* series. Especially impressive is Stover's keen talent for placing the history of the IC in proper regional and even national perspective. Also impressive is Stover's ability to integrate information gleaned from original source materials (many from the holdings of Chicago's Newberry Library) with data obtained from standard secondary sources. However, Iowa readers will be disappointed at the short shrift which Stover has given the IC's western operations. Perhaps this merely points up the difficulty in distilling the long record of a major company into a single volume. Many Iowa readers and others as well will quarrel with certain of the author's conclusions, especially his assessments of recent managements and

the decision of the current one to opt for diversification, which resulted in what a writer for *Forbes* has called a "so-so conglomerate."

In any event, Stover's is a good book—one in which both the author and the publisher can take pride. It is a must for serious scholars of transportation history, rail buffs, and Iowa libraries.

—Donovan L. Hofsommer
Wayland College

A Primer for Local Historical Societies, by Dorothy Weyer Creigh. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1976.

Strong threads of common sense, practicality, and experience run through this book and tie it together into a cohesive whole. It is obvious that the author is drawing upon the pleasures and pains of personal experience in the local historical society field when she describes the various programs. In addition to these characteristics, the material is presented with a wit that makes even the most dogmatic directions seem palatable.

Such a guide book as this is a much-needed item. The renewed interest in state and local history, spurred on by the Bicentennial celebration, has produced a burgeoning number of small historical societies, many with museums connected. Current trends in preservation of historic buildings have added to this number. Obviously all of the people involved in these activities are well-meaning and able. But they frequently need specific sorts of advice, particularly during the initial steps of organizing a society or beginning a major project. This book will be a constant companion for them, guiding their steps through the intricacies of such activities so as to avoid the more obvious pitfalls.

The book has some weaknesses. There is an unevenness in the quality of advice given on the various topics. This may be explained quite easily, because anyone is more familiar with some matters than with others. A greater flaw is in the appendices. A quick spot check shows that the information given for the State Historical Society in Iowa, on page 130, is erroneous, as is that for the State Historic Preservation Officer for Iowa, on page 146. Granted that the organizational network of historical agencies in the various states is unbelievably complex. In such instances, it might be better to leave these lists out completely, than to have wrong information included.

The strongest chapters are those on initial organization, on tours, on oral history, and on museums. A few quotations from the book will illustrate this.

"Museums tend to be the attics of communities."

"You must decide in the beginning what you want, or you will soon look like a garage sale."

"Arranging a display is far different from packing a suitcase, . . ."

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