

33d Iowa at its best and worst. The 33d Iowa campaigned in the western and trans-Mississippi theaters, mainly in Arkansas. It fought most notably in the Battle of Helena and participated in the Arkansas portion of the disastrous Red River Campaign.

Sperry served the duration of the war with the 33d Iowa as regimental fifer, then chief musician. His depiction of the drabness of army life, the harsh treatment southern civilians sometimes received, and the cruelties generated by guerrilla warfare all resonate with the reader. The Urwins' lavish endnotes and appendixes make this an excellent addition to published primary sources of Civil War and Iowa history.

Iowa Railroads: The Essays of Frank P. Donovan, Jr., edited by H. Roger Grant. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000. 330 pp. Illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. \$44.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

Reviewer John Lauritz Larson is professor of history at Purdue University. He is the author of *Bonds of Enterprise: John Murray Forbes and Western Development in America's Railway Age* (reprinted by the University of Iowa Press in 2001) and *Internal Improvement: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

Frank P. Donovan Jr. wrote history for a living without the security and benefits of an academic sinecure. (These days not even Roger Grant, an extraordinarily prolific author of 19 books and editor of this volume, works "without a net" the way Donovan did.) In the 1950s and 1960s Donovan produced a series of popular essays on Iowa railroads for *The Palimpsest*, a glossy monthly publication of the State Historical Society of Iowa. Regardless of Donovan's desire to write on other things (which he expressed time and again), society superintendent and editor William J. "Steamboat Bill" Petersen virtually ordered him to study the railroads—and so he did. Donovan always hoped to see these pieces published in a separate volume, a hope frustrated in his lifetime by Petersen (for reasons delicately suggested by Grant). Long deferred, that collection appears at last from the University of Iowa Press. Iowa localists, rail fans, and midwestern "nostalgians" of all kinds will find much to enjoy in these reprinted essays, made all the more useful by scholarly apparatus supplied by Grant.

Donovan wrote a popular style of railroad history once familiar to all historians but now rapidly disappearing from professional journals and bookstalls. At least for the long century between 1850 and the mid-1960s, American railroads enjoyed a natural status as autonomous subjects of history—almost like small countries. Railroad histo-

rians developed a formula and technique for profiling the birth, development, maturity, and contributions of a railroad that blended conventions of biography with institutional economic history and political development. Readers could pick up a *Palimpsest* in, say, 1963 and know exactly what to find in Donovan's essay, "The Rock Island in Iowa." He never failed those readers, and with the grace of a good journalist he further rewarded his audience with quick, intimate portraits of lively characters, delicious morsels of anecdote, or satisfying glimpses of authorial judgment. In his survey of the Minneapolis & St. Louis, for example, he relates the story of a train crew bewildered by a boiler-run-dry; upon investigation, they discovered a circus elephant reaching up from the car behind, playfully siphoning water from the tender and spraying the passing landscape (39).

For readers not familiar with this popular genre, Donovan's essays offer light pencil sketches of the founding of local railroad lines and their development as business corporations, functional transportation networks, and major agents in the economic and cultural history of communities along their lines. Strategies of expansion and consolidation always mark such railroad history, as do the personalities of strong leaders (men such as A. B. Stickney of the Chicago Great Western or Charles Perkins of the Burlington). Chronicling the advent (and abandonment) of service between the country and the city (or one city to another), Donovan's essays preserve important markers in the rise and decline of landmark firms as well as the fortunes of rural Iowa itself. Lines included in this collection are the Minneapolis & St. Louis, Chicago Great Western, Illinois Central, North Western, Rock Island, Milwaukee, Wabash, Burlington, and the Great Northern-Union Pacific-Santa Fe family. A separate chapter surveys electric interurbans. Restricted to roughly 32 pages each by the iron hand of editor Petersen, Donovan's essays never approach a comprehensive treatment of the stories he was telling. Still, each railroad emerges with a face of its own.

Serious historians of railroads in Iowa will find here only *hors d'oeuvres*. They will have to turn to books by Richard Overton, John Stover, Maury Klein, and the indefatigable Roger Grant. Grant's bibliography offers a reliable guide into that literature. Historiographers will find that Grant's introduction to this volume provides a dandy glimpse of Donovan's relationship with "Steamboat Bill" and the enigmatic character of historical publishing in that time and place. But mostly, people who read history for pleasure (and there must be *lots* of them) will find in this handsome volume a personal treat, a handy gift for Iowa relatives, and a pocket guide into the weightier literature on railroads in Iowa.

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