

Book Reviews

Rock Island Motive Power, 1933-1955, by Lloyd E. Stagner. Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company, 1980. pp. vi, 207. Photographs, maps, notes. \$24.95.

Huddie "Leadbelly" Leadbetter properly defined the Rock Island: It was a "mighty fine line." The inception, construction, and even the eventual collapse of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific, as the railroad was officially known, were all dramatic. Iowa was particularly important for the Rock Island and the railroad was of equal importance to the Hawkeye State. No other railroad so thoroughly sprawled itself over Iowa; no other carrier was so important to the state's capital city. A strong symbiotic relationship was the natural result.

Small wonder, then, that the collapse of the company in 1979 has resulted in a great thirst for knowledge of the road's history. Lloyd Stagner has addressed a single aspect—the company's motive power from the Great Depression through dieselization in the mid-1950s. He does not deal with corporate strategy nor does he attempt analysis. The incidental materials, recollections, and locomotive assignment data are the most important historical elements of the book. The work is heavily illustrated but the layout is uninspired. Moreover, there is no balance in the geographic origins of photographs; only 22 of the book's nearly 350 views are from Iowa—the hub of the CRI&P.

Rock Island Motive Power will not slake our thirst for knowledge of the "mighty fine line." However, rail buffs, modelers, and many of the general reading public will find this book of interest.

Don L. Hofsommer
Wayland College
Plainview, TX

Small Town America: A Narrative History, 1620-The Present, by Richard Lingeman. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1980. pp. 547. Bibliography, index. \$15.95.

Richard Lingeman's book is a superb addition to scholarship on the American small town and deserves to be placed alongside such noted volumes as Lewis Atherton's *Main Street on the Middle Border* and Page Smith's *As a City Upon a Hill*. Indeed, broader in scope than either of those earlier studies, *Small Town America* is an encyclopedic social history that is the most valuable work in its field.

THE ANNALS OF IOWA

Starting with the covenanted community of New England Puritanism, the author defines, describes, and discusses the small town in our country during its 350-year history. In the process, he reflects a wide variety of previous sociological and historical studies, as well as pertinent essays, autobiographies, and literary works. The result is a social history that offers the coherence of a chronological narrative and the penetration of a multi-faceted commentary.

Lingeman's encyclopedic approach presents essential concepts, revealing statistics, memorable character sketches, extensive details, and vivid description—all of which is blended together in a style that is consistently clear and never tiring. He handles old topics with insight (Yankees versus southerners on the frontier, repressive small-town morality) and new ones with ease and authority (the impact of agribusiness, the recent small-town revival). Generalizations are frequently followed by details that vividly recreate some aspect of small-town life—as in the following sentence: "The depot area might be the town's alternate vital center, where hotels for traveling men, with their flashy sophistication, were located—a secondary hub, a link with the outside world, a place of dreams of distant places and banshee train whistles in the night, the steady roar and clicking of the wheels, the pistons chanting 'You are missing something missing something missing something . . . something . . . something. Out there'" (p. 298).

Of particular interest is the author's sensitive use of literary insights to reveal the variety and complexity of America's small-town experience. He quotes from dozens of writers throughout the book, devotes an entire chapter to "the revolt from the village" in early twentieth-century literature, and provides a first-person epilogue about his visits to the home towns of Sinclair Lewis, Edgar W. Howe, Mark Twain, Edgar Lee Masters, and Sherwood Anderson. This also reveals something about the book's focus: the midwestern small town receives more attention than communities in other regions of the United States—perhaps unavoidably so, since literature and scholarship alike have repeatedly dealt with the towns of our region.

Anyone familiar with small-town studies will recognize that Lingeman owes an enormous debt to Atherton's *Main Street on the Middle Border*. In fact, one might view *Small Town America* as an expansion of that earlier work, covering our entire national experience with small communities. Like Atherton, the author focuses extensively on shifting community values and offers penetrating analyses of small-town cultural phenomena (general stores, opera houses, Memorial Day celebrations, etc.). But this is just another mark of

Lingeman's success; he has been able to deal with a classic of scholarship by absorbing it, expanding upon it, and, ultimately, going beyond it.

Small Town America is well annotated and has a very useful bibliography that reflects the author's fusion of historical, sociological, and literary sources. More important, perhaps, it has an index that not only lists the vast number of people and places which are referred to, but such topics as "automobiles," "clubs," "fundamentalism," "immigrants," "saloons," and "vigilantism." For this reason, too, *Small Town America* should be the standard work in its field for some time to come.

John E. Hallwas
Western Illinois University
Macomb, IL

The Quapaw Indians: A History of the Downstream People, by W. David Baird. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980. pp. xiv, 290. Illustrations, maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. \$19.95.

At some unknown time, according to tradition, a band of Siouan speaking Indians migrated down the Ohio from the East. Coming to the Mississippi, they divided. One group went north and were called Omahas, upstream people. The other went south and were called Quapaws, downstream people. So they are called throughout this book.

When DeSoto found them, they were a populous tribe living around the mouth of the Arkansas River, and when the first French visitors, Father Marquette and Louis Joliet, reached them in 1673, they were still in that neighborhood. By these and other Frenchmen the Quapaws were called Akansea, from a native term meaning "south wind people," from which came the name of Arkansas River and the future state. One-hundred and sixty years after Marquette's visit, the tribe, then reduced to fewer than five hundred people, was forced from the region it had occupied for centuries and relocated on a small tract in northeastern Oklahoma.

Professor Baird provides a detailed account of the relations of this neglected tribe with the French, Spanish, and Americans. They tried their best to remain friendly toward all Europeans, and their few hostile encounters were with other Indians, sometimes at the behest of

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.