

It must have been difficult to write Stanley's biography, even for so professional a journalist and writer as Ros Jensen. The straight-arrow, Eagle Scout type of man about whom there is not a whisper of scandal or even very much anecdotal humor to find with which to enliven the story always presents a challenge to the biographer. Most writers—and readers, as well—will prefer a Richard Nixon over a John Quincy Adams for consideration. Jensen has presented a fair and objective portrayal of his protagonist, but what little criticism he can offer is largely obtained by mere allusion given in passing by some of the very personal acquaintances of Stanley whom Jensen interviewed. The reader does learn that Stanley was authoritarian in his managerial style, that he did not welcome criticism from even his most trusted associates, and that he seldom admitted an error in judgment, but these are very blunted barbs.

The sharp image that does emerge from these pages, however, is that of an exceedingly able, compassionate, and effective pragmatist and idealist. "Peace with freedom and justice" was his motto, and for him this was no pious statement to be hung as stitchery on the parlor wall, but a vigorous call for action to which he responded with money and energy in establishing the Stanley Foundation. Here was an Iowan whose life made a beneficial difference to his profession and his community, which encompassed Muscatine, Iowa, the United States, and the world. His biography is a needed antidote to the poison that currently laces the concoctions offered up to us by today's business and politics.

*Transportation in Iowa: A Historical Summary*, by William H. Thompson. Ames: Iowa Department of Transportation, 1989. xiv, 315 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, graphs, notes, index. \$25.00 cloth.

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Iowa, more than some states, possesses a rich transportation heritage. For that reason the Iowa Department of Transportation commissioned William H. Thompson, a retired professor of transportation economics at Iowa State University, to chronicle this long and complex story. In encyclopedic fashion, Thompson examines pioneer roadways, river improvements, railroads (steam and electric), the good-roads movement, interstate-highway projects, and modern commercial transport, including aviation. If there is a thesis to this massive study, it is that Iowans historically have sought to shatter their isolation through improved transportation. Early on they recognized the importance of commercial agriculture and related industrial enterprises. Indeed,

what happened in Iowa mirrored national patterns in transportation development with one major exception. The Hawkeye state, unlike states in the East and part of the Old Northwest, namely Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, never participated in canal building, although as Thompson indicates, Iowans did consider some "ditch-digging" projects and "slack-water" river schemes. Fortunately, they embraced the iron horse, and did so with great enthusiasm. By the time of World War I, a network of steel rail crisscrossed the state. No place lay more than eight miles from railroad service. While the state failed to become the heartland of the electric interurban—Ohio and Indiana could make that claim—its 489 miles gave it the greatest mileage in any state west of the Mississippi River aside from Texas and California. Similarly, Iowa launched an extensive road-building program once the motor car established its reliability. Although funding was initially difficult and politically bothersome, residents eventually lifted themselves out of the mud and dust. By the 1930s, Iowa's body of all-weather roads covered the state even more extensively than did its steam and interurban railways.

Clearly the leading theme in the story of Iowa transport involves change. Thompson ably shows that this has been ongoing and particularly pronounced during the past half-century. Since 1970 there has been first a steady and then a dramatic decline in railroad service. Competition from larger, more reliable trucks that operated over ever-better highways promoted the abandonment of hundreds of miles of rail line. Some of this reduction also stemmed from the "merger madness" of the 1960s and later. The Chicago & North Western Railway (C&NW), for example, acquired the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway (M&StL) in 1960 and the Chicago Great Western Railway (CGW) eight years later. The C&NW did not need the maze of lines owned by these two major Iowa carriers, so it steadily reduced its mileage on former M&StL and CGW routes. Indeed, by the mid-1980s nearly all of the CGW in Iowa and elsewhere had disappeared, including its once heavily used mainline from St. Paul through Oelwein and Dubuque to Chicago.

There is much that is good about *Transportation in Iowa*. Most of all, Thompson's coverage is amazingly comprehensive. His description of Granger-inspired railroad regulation during the 1870s, for instance, is thorough without being too copious. Yet gaps exist. Thompson largely ignores the rise and fall of intercity bus operations in the state, thus missing an opportunity to show the relationship between competing forms of transport. Railroad companies throughout the Middle West encouraged bus operations in the 1920s, largely to convince regulatory bodies to permit abandonment of money-

losing branchline and mainline local passenger trains. At least two Iowa railroads operated affiliated bus firms during the 1930s: the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy controlled Burlington Transportation Company and the Chicago & North Western owned Chicago & North Western Stages. Both of these bus companies conducted extensive operations in Iowa.

In addition to the often encyclopedic coverage, Thompson's book contains a large collection of illustrations, including photographs (some of which have never been published), charts, and maps. The latter are marvelous. One insert map, "Iowa Registered Highway Routes, 1914-1925," measuring 36x24 inches, is multicolored and so attractive that buyers of the book may want to frame it.

Thompson's research is also impressive. For the non-highway-related topics, though, he relies heavily upon secondary sources. Perhaps this is just as well, for when he focuses on the highway commission, for example, and includes primary materials, he tends to provide excessive detail.

The major problem with *Transportation in Iowa* is a pervasive sloppiness. There are numerous annoying minor errors. For instance, it is the Association of American Railroads, not the "American Association of Railroads"; it is Tara, not "Tura," Iowa; it is Donovan L. Hofsommer, not "Donald Hofsommer"; and H. Roger Grant, not "Roger W. Grant," once wrote a *Palimpsest* article, "Electric Traction Promotion in the South Iowa Coalfields [not Corn Fields]." Perhaps neither an outside reader nor a professional copyeditor examined the original manuscript. Furthermore, the text is badly written in places; the author's choppy style damages the narrative.

Similarly, Thompson's discussions of topics at times fail to highlight or include obvious material. For instance, when he discusses local electric traction companies, he surprisingly misses Ottumwa's electric street railway and Albia's interurban system, the Albia Interurban Railway and its durable successor (as a power company), the Albia Light & Railway Company. An outside reader likely would have caught such omissions.

It is unlikely that anyone in the foreseeable future will need to produce a general study of transportation in Iowa. William H. Thompson's efforts make such a work largely unnecessary. Sadly, though, he has been delinquent about some materials and has made troublesome errors. Yet the book's wonderful collection of illustrations seemingly compensates for the many little glitches.

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