

We Took the Train, edited by H. Roger Grant. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1990. xxx, 175 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$29.50 cloth.

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Personal accounts of train travel can provide a more authentic flavor of American geographical mobility than the official rail schedules and oftentimes turgid prose of railroad histories and railroad journals. In this collection of travelogues, H. Roger Grant has brought together twenty-one diverse offerings ranging in time from the pioneering years of the 1830s to the 1980s. Famous travelers sampled here include the authors Charles Dickens and Robert Louis Stevenson and the journalists Freeman Hunt and Tony Hiss. Less well-known spokespersons include the "rod-rider" Erling Kildahl, the educator Linda Thayer Guilford, and the railroad conductor Milton M. Shaw.

The romance of the train is captured in the excitement of reaching new and scenic locations, the danger of winter journeys, and the luxury of Pullman and parlor cars. The dreariness of dingy branch line trains, the tedium of slow stopping trains, and the discomfort of crowded troop trains suggests a more mundane note. Older Iowa readers will doubtless respond to the accounts with a wave of nostalgia as they remember the noise and the sight of those thundering locomotives pulling their carriages through the state. Younger readers may well need the assistance of the editor's informative introductory essay and the thirty-six interesting illustrations to capture the full flavor of a journey on the "Iron Horse." Trains were certainly significant in bringing people to and through Iowa, but since the advent of the automobile for short-distance journeys and the airplane for long-distance travel, they have had a very limited role in the movement of midwesterners.

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