

Book Notices

From the Lakes to the Gulf: The Illinois Central Railroad Story, by Alan R. Lind. Park Forest, IL: Transport History Press, 1993. 384 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, charts, bibliography. \$48.50 cloth.

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Among railroad enterprises of the American heartland, the Illinois Central (IC) was unusual in its route structure. Rather than the typical east-to-west axis, it offered a north-to-south configuration designed to link northern and central Illinois with water highways to the Gulf of Mexico. Eventually the IC reached from Lake Michigan to Lake Pontchartrain. A western arm from Chicago through northern Illinois led to a large hand with fingers extended to serve Cedar Rapids, Waterloo, Albert Lea, Fort Dodge, Sioux City, Omaha, Onawa, and Sioux Falls. In all, IC operated 722 route miles in Iowa in 1940—about 8 percent of total rail mileage for the state in that year.

As an early and prominent player on the nation's rail landscape, the IC has predictably attracted attention by historians and others anxious to examine the company's rich experience. The most recent offering is *From the Lakes to the Gulf: The Illinois Central Railroad Story*. Since much of IC's corporate and financial history has been recited elsewhere, Alan Lind determined to focus instead "on the geography, traffic, and operations of the railroad" (2). He is only marginally successful. In fact, what he has provided are sketches of line segments for the entire railroad seasoned by incidental bits of historical and other information supplemented with condensed profiles from IC's engineering department. Some of the information is incorrect. For example, the IC did not have an agreement with any other railroad for trackage rights between Fort Dodge and Omaha (103), and the Minneapolis and St. Louis (not Chicago Great Western) used IC's passenger station at Fort Dodge (105). The segment of the book on IC's Chicago commuter operation is quite good, and many of the illustrations are very fine. An index is not part of the work, sad to say; thus its potential as a reference tool is limited. Its utility will be mostly for those persons with a particular interest in the Illinois Central.

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