

Iron Road to the West: American Railroads in the 1850s. By John F. Stover. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978. Pp. xii, 266. Illustrations, tables, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$14.95.)

In this latest book from a dean of United States railroad historians, John F. Stover has set out to describe the growth of the American railroad business in the 1850s. This was, he reminds the reader, an important decade in economic history, a decade that saw trackage grow from nine thousand to thirty thousand miles. The expansion did not result in a fully integrated new transportation system—the development of standard time and a standard gauge awaited the postbellum years—but it did produce a new east-west axis of trade and travel that, politically, helped bind the West to the Northeast when the Union divided in 1861 and that greatly stimulated the growth of American agriculture and manufacture.

Stover's descriptive material in this book provides little new insight into his topic. He organized the data regionally—with separate chapters on the East, West, and South—to describe the relative growth of rail mileage on a firm by firm basis in each state. He compared miles of track laid to population, land area, and capital invested per mile. Although the boom in railroad construction was national, the South lagged while the West was rapidly catching up to eastern standards. The information provided may be useful to scholars who seek to sort out the complexities created by the histories of hundreds of firms, for they will find here brief accounts of each small company that first started to construct track and its growth or absorption by other firms. The book includes information about the financing—including governmental subsidies—of the lines and a brief account of the changing technologies employed in railroad building.

The author, unfortunately, does not range far beyond such descriptive matters. Although he does not do so directly, Stover clearly disputes Robert Fogel's counterfactual argument that a canal and water system, if fully developed, could have provided the transportation links necessary for the industrial revolution. He points out, for example, Americans' preferences for the cheaper capital costs, shorter distances, greater speed, and greater reliability of the "iron road" over waterways. He shows that, because of those preferences, by the end of the 1850s the economic importance of interior water transportation was in relative decline to the railroads. For most historians this is not

an especially new interpretation, but it is convenient to have it succinctly stated.

There is much that is missing from this account of the railroad business of the 1850s. It does have brief vignettes of actual travels, comparing, for instance, Abraham Lincoln's east-west trips of 1849 and 1861. For the most part, however, people and the problems they confronted do not come alive in these pages. There is no description of the development of modern business management in American railroad firms, a development which began during the decade of the 1850s. Nor is there a discussion of the opposition that railroads encountered from persons who feared their impact on social customs or on established avenues of trade. (The author does explain, however, that initially train operation on Sundays was much disputed.) Thus, in terms of the establishment of firms and the laying of track, the book appears definitive for the decade it discusses; but for some important human aspects of the story, readers will have to look elsewhere.

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Finley Peter Dunne & Mr. Dooley: The Chicago Years. By Charles Fanning. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1978. Pp. x, 286. End maps, illustrations, appendix, notes, index. \$14.50.)

The author focuses his study upon the over three hundred dialect pieces that Dunne published in the 1890s in Chicago newspapers about his mythical Irish folk hero, Mr. Dooley, a philosopher-barkeeper on Archer Avenue in Bridgeport. The book treats thematically four topics that underlie Mr. Dooley's wit: daily living in Chicago's Irish community; the problems in that community as the Irish adapted to American life; the workers' views from an Irish ward in Chicago's political arena in the 1890s; and Irish nationalism as it manifested itself in the American Irish. In addition to creating the weekly Mr. Dooley articles, Dunne wrote daily editorials, often on the same subjects. Fanning's comparisons, which include numerous quotations, prove his argument that Dunne's opinions as editor were usually more conservative than the views of Mr. Dooley, his wittier social critic.

One of the values of this book is the skillful way in which Fanning traces events in Dunne's life and relates the way in