

the present book's difficulties are such that some other scholar must again attempt the task.

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Long Steel Rail: The Railroad in American Folksong. By Norm Cohen. Music edited by David Cohen. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981. Pp. xx, 710. Illustrations, notes, references, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$49.95.)

This is an awesome book, an exhaustive study of folk songs dealing with life on or around railroads. Norm Cohen, executive director of the John Edwards Memorial Foundation at UCLA (a major center for the study of country music) and editor of its *Quarterly*, is also an industrial chemist. The book is difficult to describe because it is so detailed, so comprehensive, so full of anecdotes and information that one wonders if there is anything left to write on the topic. The three brief opening chapters provide a history of railroads in the United States, a history of written and recorded music, and an overview of railroad songs starting with one written in 1828.

The remainder of the book is divided into topical sections: Heroes and Badmen, The Fatal Run, Working on the Railroad, In a Boxcar around the World, and the like. Within each of the nine sections anywhere from three to fifteen songs are discussed. Included are such popular tunes as "John Henry," "Casey Jones," "The Wreck of the Old 97," "The Wabash Cannonball," and "The Rock Island Line," alongside such obscurities as "The Wreck of the C&O Sportsman" and "The Railroad Boomer." Each song is discussed at length, including alternate verses and versions, historical accuracy or inaccuracy, recorded history, and a list of all printed sources and recordings which could be located. It seems as if the author has read every song book and listened to every record ever produced. Some items have only a few references, while others have dozens and even hundreds; the listing of recordings of "John Henry" runs to eleven pages.

This is more than a discussion of some railroad songs. More broadly, it is a fascinating history of folk music, which Cohen defines as music "the survival of which does not depend entirely on commercial media. Thus a song need not be old in order to qualify, but it must outlive its vogue in sheet music and records" (p. 23). Such a general definition allows him to

include what others might categorize as popular music, blues, and hillbilly music. It is therefore not surprising to find a section entitled "I've Got the Railroad Blues," with a concise discussion of the form and content of blues music.

As if all this were not enough, there are also excellent photographs and other illustrations, a list of recorded instrumental music relating to trains, a list of important albums, and a detailed bibliography. Because railroads have played such an important role in Indiana's history, much of the information Cohen has compiled will be of great interest to local historians. Railroads have held a fascination for Americans since the early nineteenth century, which explains the profusion and popularity of these songs. Today, as passenger service is disappearing, we need reminders of the crucial role trains have played in our past. U. Utah "Bruce" Phillips has written a song entitled "Daddy, What's a Train?" (which is not included in *Long Steel Rail*), a sad comment on their demise. If, eventually, we are left with nothing else, we will always have railroad songs. And thanks to Norm Cohen, we will know what they are about and where to find them. Unfortunately, the price of the book is a bit steep.

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The Melting Pot and the Altar: Marital Assimilation in Early Twentieth-Century Wisconsin. By Richard M. Bernard. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980. Pp. xxviii, 162. Tables, maps, graphs, notes, selected bibliography, index. \$17.50.)

Although marriage across nationality lines is only one of many possible indices of immigrant assimilation, the author of this small but thought-provoking monograph makes a strong case for its primacy as a "measure of the success of the American melting pot" (p. xvii). Thus, the purpose of the book is set forth clearly at the outset: "to shed new light on immigrant assimilation by centering attention on the extent, patterns, and causes of intermarriage" (p. xvi). The setting for the study is Wisconsin, and the data examined derive primarily from a sample of the state's manuscript marriage registrations. Although the treatment is, of necessity, heavily quantitative, the prose is clear, and the book's many tables are succinctly summarized and explained. Happily, the author frequently enhances his presentation with case studies of particular