

canals, particularly the Wabash and Erie, were essential to the state's economic growth.

The volume's final essay by John F. Stover is a statistical and descriptive account of railroad building in the Old Northwest.

Although this book adequately summarizes historical knowledge about internal improvements in the Old Northwest and in several places suggests new research directions, no comprehensive picture of transportation emerges. Even though the symposium was never intended to present a definitive view of early transportation, the book would have benefited from more than the single essay on railroads, a paper describing the toll road system, and an analysis of travel by foot and horseback, which were important, though neglected, parts of the transportation network. Despite these minor criticisms, this book is an informative and well-written introduction to the transportation history of the Old Northwest.

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*The American Small Town: Twentieth-Century Place Images.*  
By John A. Jakle. (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1982.  
Pp. 195. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index.  
\$25.00.)

Deceptively simple and appealing, the small town has attracted an array of writers purporting to gauge its heartbeat and assess its soul. American fiction of the early twentieth century often treated the small town not simply as a stage but as an essential part of character and plot development. Midwestern writers, including Hoosiers Booth Tarkington and Meredith Nicholson, were especially inclined to write about small towns, often infusing them with bucolic qualities. More recently, social scientists have analytically dissected small-town life and institutions, while historians such as Lewis Atherton, Page Smith, and Richard Lingeman have attempted to describe their central features and explain how they changed. John A. Jakle makes good use of all this work and adds to it from two important sources. He draws meaning from photographs of small-town scenes, particularly snapshots and postcard photographs, which appear on nearly every page and are integrated skillfully with the text; and he uses his geographer's perspective to focus his analysis on the image of small towns as places. The combination of photographic evidence and

a geographer's eye makes this book an important contribution to the literature of small-town America.

Jakle studies towns of between 5,000 and 10,000 residents in the period 1900-1960, with particular emphasis on the Midwest. In the first six chapters the author considers commerce, society, and public and private life in the period before the automobile. Jakle asserts a strong sense of community as evident in attachments to images of Main Street, with its opera house, bank, saloon, barbershop, lodge hall, and hotel, and to images of the courthouse, railroad depot, and family home. All, as his illustrations so poignantly show, were symbols and icons of small-town America, constituting the images of place that reflected a sense of community, an inwardness and a centralization of social relationships. With the arrival of the automobile the landscape changed. Main Street as a space for pedestrians became a space for automobiles, and the major highway through the town spread business and other activities away from the few blocks near the courthouse. In this and other ways the automobile changed the landscape: the sense of community declined, as individual self-interest and an apeing of big city ways came to dominate and to be reflected in the landscape.

Like most good books, Jakle's raises many questions and some doubts. Community historians will wish that the work of such scholars as Robert Wiebe and Thomas Bender had figured in his approach, for their studies of community suggest different ways of thinking about community "breakdown" and a different timing of change. Certainly Jakle overstates the role of the automobile in the changes he postulates, in part because these changes were underway prior to 1920 and even 1900. Jakle also tends toward sweeping generalizations not supported by his evidence. He particularly eschews statistical evidence and analysis, sticking closely to symbols rather than realities, and it is mildly disappointing that so many of his excellent photographs and captions do not identify the towns pictured. But the strengths of this book are many, and they are impressive. No one should write, give a lecture, mount a museum exhibit, collect source materials, or undertake an oral history project about small towns before reading this book. For the Midwest especially, where the small town flourished, Jakle's photographs and geographer's insights have made a major contribution to twentieth-century community history.

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