
Indiana once could claim to be the heartland of the electric intercity railway. Only Ohio’s network of 2,798 miles exceeded the Hoosier state’s total of 1,825 miles. While Indianapolis enjoyed being the “hub” of the Indiana interurban system, with lines radiating to every major central Indiana community except Bloomington, Fort Wayne, too, boasted a highly developed network. Trackage went north to Kendallville and Waterloo; east to Lima, Ohio; southeast to Decatur; south to Bluffton; and west to Wabash, Peru, Logansport, and Lafayette. These southern and western routes connected with most of the state’s other interurban lines.

George K. Bradley examines the Fort Wayne interurbans in considerable detail. He shows how a number of small carriers early in the twentieth century came into the orbit of the Schoepf-McGowen traction syndicate and how later the utility magnate Samuel Insull acquired control of these properties. Indeed, Insull interests eventually dominated every major interurban in northern and central Indiana except for two roads. The author also focuses on urban transport. He looks at how in the late nineteenth century the region’s isolated animal-powered car lines, particularly in Fort Wayne, evolved into trolley operations and how these companies regularly became associated with electric intercity carriers.

The interurban and urban trolley craze in Fort Wayne and the Wabash River region reached a climax shortly before World War I. In the 1920s, however, the triumph of the good roads movement and the rapid increase in usage of the automobile, motor truck, and bus hastened the decline of these earlier transit forms. Although the stronger interurban routes attempted to meet the challenges posed by competitors, the hard times of the 1930s caused their collapse. Yet, a few urban transit systems remained using electric power. After World War II the ubiquitous bus replaced the trolley, and the Fort Wayne area’s longtime association with electric traction became history.

Fort Wayne and Wabash Valley Trolleys is designed for a popular audience, especially traction enthusiasts. In fact, its publisher, the Central Electric Railfans’ Association, has had a long tradition of producing this type of detailed and richly illustrated
volume. Bradley has done a marvelous job of research; the "nuts and bolts" story of these electric railways is told in an amazing completeness, and he has included more than four hundred photographs and illustrations. The only obvious weakness is his failure to discuss fully corporate strategies and finances. Also, the book badly needs an index even though it contains a valuable appendix of equipment rosters, car and bus diagrams, and specialized maps.

If anyone later attempts to produce a definitive history of the electric railroad in Indiana, the Bradley book will be a must source. And there are thousands of readers who will find Bradley's efforts immediately rewarding, if only to grasp a faded chapter of the state's transportation past.

The University of Akron, Akron, Ohio

H. Roger Grant


The California gold rush has been the subject of many diaries and accounts of personal experiences; yet, there is always room for another. Especially noteworthy is this one from Charles H. Harvey, an everyday person from Trumbull County, Ohio, who made the 162-day voyage, via Cape Horn in the clipper ship Grecian, to California only four years after gold was discovered.

Accidentally found in 1976 in Muncie, Indiana, Harvey's letterbook was delivered to Edmund F. Ball, an executive of the Ball Corporation and a person with an avid interest in history. By itself the diary would have been mostly a dull recounting of weather, latitude and longitude, and distances. Harvey was not given to explanation, but Ball and Douglas E. Clanin have greatly enriched the original document with extensive and intensive historical research and full descriptions of people, places, events, and background.

The result is an interesting, informative account of a twenty-seven-year-old argonaut who sailed from New York to San Francisco, subsequently failed to find his fortune, and evidently returned to Ohio by 1857. The first five chapters relate the account of the voyage with its perils, sickness of passengers (including Harvey), and en route visits to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Talcahuano, Chile. Chapter 6 describes Harvey's unsuccessful ven-