world, as on page 70, where he avers that most early railroad leaders "believed that they were furthering the national, state, or municipal good first and foremost; they considered any personal returns in such a speculative security as lagniappe." The letters of Erastus Corning, John Murray Forbes, and other shareholders in the first railroads prove that those early investors sought personal profit as avidly as later ones. Similarly, Ward's claim that early railroad promoters "positively blanched at any mention that their projects might be weapons designed for use in urban commercial wars" (p. 15) would certainly have been modified by a more extensive appeal to local sources, including newspapers and merchants' correspondence.

More damaging to acceptance of Ward's thesis that there was a distinct change in the myth-making of railroad promoters in the 1850s is the author's switch from chief dependence upon promotional literature before that decade to a wider survey of sources, including company records and the correspondence of railroad executives, from that time onward. Was early railroad imagery markedly different from that of later decades? Doubtless it was, but is Ward's perceived difference a valid one, or, rather, does it reflect the limitations of his sources? This question remains unanswered.

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History of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. By John F. Stover. (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1987. Pp. xiv, 419. Tables, illustrations, maps, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. $29.50.)

A statement on the dust jacket of this volume serves as a succinct but accurate summary of what is inside: "John F. Stover packs this narrative history with careful scholarship and colorful description which will appeal to the railroad buff and the professional historian, as well as to any reader who wishes to travel with the 'Mother of Railroads' through an exciting period in United States History." Such, of course, is to be expected of a writer with the credentials of Stover, professor emeritus of American history at Purdue University and one of the foremost American railroad historians. As an experienced practitioner of the art of culling through mountains of data to distill the essence, Stover knows how to find something of interest to each of his several "audiences," and at the same time how to come forth with a presentation that has the ring of authority.

Without doubt, the Baltimore and Ohio has been one of the great American railroads. About 10 percent of its trackage crisscrossed the state of Indiana. Its long history has so many themes and subthemes that any writer dealing with it is obliged to make delicate choices as to how to make best use of the four hundred or so pages allotted to the finished product. Stover pretty well sticks to a chronological format, generally compartmentalizing his narrative around the two dozen presidencies of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company since its inception in 1827. Such a commitment to chronology might have its drawbacks because it can give a uniform blandness to all elements of a long and diversified story. But the history of the B&O Railroad is replete with the sort of information that in the right hands can be moulded into engaging tales. Examples of this are Stover's depiction of the landmark steps during the B&O's infancy, the unique role this railroad was obliged to play during the American Civil War, its perennial competition with other major trunk lines heading westward, its status under the federal government's developing regulatory policies, the tapering off of business during the 1930s and the World War II resurgence, and the B&O's eventual absorption in 1964 by the "Chessie System." Inherent in such episodes are drama, paradox, elation, and sometimes a note of sadness.

An important feature of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad story is its effective leadership—presidents and other top officials who typically were selected on the basis of the most needed managerial requirements at any given time. Thus in the course of a century and a half the company was headed by pioneer entrepreneurs, capable engineers, insightful traffic managers, outstanding financiers, and, almost always, superior promoters. It may, in fact, have been this variety and quality of leadership that made the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad the unusual enterprise it became. When to extend or refurbish the line, when to replace rolling stock, when to encourage and when to curtail certain forms of hauling business, when to pay stock dividends: these are the kinds of questions that railroad executives have routinely had to deal with, and, as Stover's account strongly suggests, those identified with the B&O over a period of many decades had unusual success in these matters.

Stover has had access to the major Baltimore and Ohio Railroad manuscript collections, including a complete set of the company's annual reports. His narrative, notes, and appendixes reflect the extensive use of these important primary sources, as well as a wide variety of secondary materials. Throughout the book Stover has inserted a series of traffic and financial tables based on contemporary statistical information; these not only help convey the story of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad but are useful for comparisons with other railroads. Appendixes provide listings of B&O presidents, the road's mileage by year (13 miles in 1830; 5,201 miles in

1980), annual figures on passenger and freight revenue, operating ratio and dividends, rolling stock, and employee data (numbers and compensation). There are several maps, properly placed to show the development of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad system. Finally, there are about a hundred photos illustrating evolutionary trends in locomotives, freight and passenger cars, stations, bridges, and other elements of the railroad's massive operations. Pictures of most of the presidents are included—demonstrating that hairstyles, beards, mustaches, etc., of railroad executives over the years altered about as much as did the appearance of the railroad's equipment.

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The Eagle's Nest: Natural History and American Ideas, 1812–1842. By Charlotte M. Porter. (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1986. Pp. xii, 251. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. $24.95.)

Contemporary historians of American natural history traditionally exhibit a parochialism that typified students of American flora and fauna more than a century and a half ago. Where nineteenth-century students once reflected a patriotic zeal to enhance the natural possessions of a new nation exploring the interior of a new continent, contemporary scholars often incline to national or regional glorification in a catalog of heroic figures and deeds. What with a philosopher president who challenged the theories of the great Buffon in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*; with a William Bartram, a farmer's son, captivating the literati with his adventures to Florida; with a John James Audubon, a frontiersman, instructing the world with his paintbrush, and with that naively optimistic "boatload of knowledge" disembarking on the Wabash, there are stories enough to isolate naturalists and historians from the general trends that are the real stuff of history.

Charlotte Porter, author of *The Eagle's Nest*, is exceptionally well versed in the local events, figures, and publications in American natural history between the Revolution and the 1840s. By the end of her account a general pattern emerges of the dozens of scientific explorers who collected, published, and painted their way across the Appalachians, into the Old Northwest, and up the Missouri River to the Columbia basin. The book takes its primary title from an observation written by Titian Ramsey Peale when he accompanied Thomas Say on an expedition to the Missouri. It reflects the nationalistic sentiments in Peale's day and perhaps