

History of Transportation, Henry County, Iowa

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History of Transportation, Henry County, Iowa. Mount Pleasant: Henry County Historic Preservation Commission, 2015. 273 pp. Illustrations, maps, index. \$29.00 paperback.

Reviewer H. Roger Grant is Kathryn and Calhoun Lemon Professor and Centennial Professor of history at Clemson University. A prolific author of books and articles about railroad and transportation history, his most recent books are *Railroaders without Borders: A History of the Railroad Development Corporation* (2015), and *Electric Interurbans and the American People* (2016).

The Henry County Historic Preservation Commission, sponsor of *Abandoned Towns of Henry County* and *Unincorporated Towns of Henry County*, has created a third title that deals with the history of this southeastern Iowa county, specifically its transportation history, covering four core areas: water, roads, railroads, and aviation. This product of the collective efforts of the Henry County organization is a charming review of its countywide transportation past. Although coverage is a mishmash of original documents, remembrances, and commentaries and not always structured chronologically, the book offers a good picture of how residents shattered the tyranny of distance, providing a microcosm of Hawkeye State transport history.

Water never became a practical local option. The only stream of importance was the Skunk River, a shallow waterway that emptied into the Mississippi River near Burlington. Yet during the frontier period discussions took place about making this stream navigable for steamboat traffic. But it would require the costly construction of a slack-water canal system, something that had been successful on several other mid-western streams.

Roads became the sensible response. Prior to the Good Roads movement after 1900, public roads were almost universally poor. Still, the county in the 1850s claimed an all-weather plank road that linked Mount Pleasant with Burlington. Although area enthusiasts proposed similar wooden roads, they never became much more than paper projects due to their high construction and maintenance costs. Then, as automobile and truck ownership expanded, better roads appeared. Not only were the principal routes marked, but in the 1920s some were paved, including a bizarre privately financed highway known as the Coleman Road. Ultimately, much better highways served the county, highlighted by the recent upgrading of U.S. 218, the "Avenue of the Saints." As major roads improved, county residents also benefited from intercity bus operations, mostly between the 1930s and 1950s.

The Railway Age did not miss Henry County. By the end of the nineteenth century, steel rails served virtually every community. The Chicago, Burlington & Quincy eventually dominated, with its historic

main line slicing through the county on an east-west axis. The Peoria, Illinois, stem of the Minneapolis & St. Louis also served the northern part of the county. But as early as the 1930s line abandonments began, resulting from increasing highway competition, eventually leaving only the high-density Burlington main line to serve the county with freight and Amtrak service.

Resembling water transport, aviation never gained much local importance. There were early balloon ascensions and aerial "barnstormers," entertainment that morphed into pleasure flights and commercial agricultural services. Landing strips appeared, the most notable being development of a small, modern airport in Mount Pleasant after World War II.

The historic preservation commission has created an unusual type of localized transportation work. Readers should enjoy its efforts. Perhaps this approach will inspire others to consider a similar study of their county's transportation heritage.

The Iron Road in the Prairie State: The Story of Illinois Railroading, by Simon Cordery. Railroads Past and Present Series. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016. xvii, 216 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$60.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Scott E. Randolph is assistant professor of business administration at the University of Redlands in southern California. His research and writing have focused on railroads during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era.

Much like its prairie neighbors to the west, railroads made Illinois. Chicago remains the most important railroad hub in North America, and the railroads that traversed the state provided the critical infrastructure that linked the commodity crops of the Great Plains; the coal, dairy, and manufacturing of the Midwest; the timber and international trade of the Pacific Coast; and the cotton and timber of the South with the markets, specialty manufacturing, ports, and capital of the Northeast and New England. Simon Cordery chronicles this relationship from the 1830s to the present with an emphasis on the period prior to 1945. Readers familiar with the two volumes on Iowa railroads in the Railroads Past and Present series produced by Indiana University Press will find much to enjoy in this volume on railroading in Illinois. Like other books in the series, *The Iron Road in the Prairie State* is intended for railroad enthusiasts and general readers rather than for an academic audience. The book is well documented, but the author does not attempt to break new ground in his analysis, concentrating instead on providing a concise and eminently readable survey of the topic.