

The Fort Dodge Line: Iowa's Feisty Interurban

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century platform culture and history in order to keep track of the various threads of the narrative.

The Elocutionists would be of interest to scholars of midwestern culture in general and Iowa in particular. Kimber's discussion of Delsarte centers on Iowa and addresses not only Delsarte and elocution but also the performance venues (public and private), training institutions, and leading figures of chautauqua and other closely related (and largely midwestern) phenomena.

The Fort Dodge Line: Iowa's Feisty Interurban, by Don L. Hofsommer. Central Electric Railfans' Association Bulletin 149. Chicago: Central Electric Railfans' Association, 2018. 188 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes. \$65.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Simon Cordery is professor of history and chair of the Department of History at Iowa State University. He is the author of *The Iron Road in the Prairie State: The Story of Illinois Railroading* (2016).

Interurban railroads developed at the end of the nineteenth century by connecting two or more urban areas, often running electric-powered equipment. Don Hofsommer's latest book chronicles the development and decline of one such line linking the capital of the Hawkeye State with Fort Dodge, 84 miles to the northwest. The book relies heavily on contemporary newspapers, government publications, and the extensive secondary literature on Iowa railroading, much of it produced by Hofsommer himself. Arranged chronologically, it fits the Fort Dodge, Des Moines & Southern line (FDDM&S) into the larger picture of state and national developments.

Hofsommer has, with his customary panache, written a fine summary of the corporate life of the FDDM&S. He opens with a brief account of riding the line to Des Moines, admitting his "affection" for it (3). Its origins were far from romantic, however, as he explains. The FDDM&S emerged in the wake of a failed attempt to mine coal in central Iowa for the railroads of James J. Hill, the "Empire Builder." Hill-backed entrepreneur Hamilton Browne, "genetically enthusiastic and chronically optimistic," moved to Newton and, in 1902, created the Newton & Northwestern, a "most improbable route" (14, 17). It grew slowly and, in 1905, collapsed quickly. Boston investors purchased it and installed Homer Loring as president. Loring shifted the focus to a Des Moines to Fort Dodge artery with an Ames branch. The new line operated electrified passenger service alongside steam-hauled freight, giving it a "dual personality" (32).

Decline began immediately. The original Newton line proved unprofitable and was abandoned. The “automobile craze” was in full swing by 1907, and competition from cars, trucks, and buses cut into profits (43). Government-funded road-building projects and injurious regulations pushed the FDDM&S to take dire measures, including operating its own bus service. The Great Depression thrust it back into receivership as its bonds fell from \$24 in 1930 to 25¢ in 1932 (89). World War II papered over the cracks. The FDDM&S turned a profit in 1944 and 1945, but by 1955 passenger service had ended and, after it was purchased by a New York syndicate, diesel equipment replaced electricity on the now freight-only system. In 1968 the Chicago & North Western bought the FDDM&S and, viewing it as a competitor, slowly extinguished it until, in 1983, the FDDM&S vanished except for an extant and vibrant preservation line, the Boone & Scenic Valley Railroad.

For historians of transportation and for anyone interested in Iowa history this book is a mine of useful information and insight. The growth of Iowa interurbans, beginning in 1894 with the Tama & Toledo, is explained where appropriate, as are the multiple problems railroading faced after World War II. A final chapter summarizes freight and passenger operations followed by an equipment roster and a section of color plates. One glaring weakness is the author’s evident dislike of politics, which appears only as a *bête noire* constraining capitalists or encouraging other modes of transportation. Regardless, this is a detailed and enjoyable book marked by excellent and plentiful illustrations.

Cultivating Citizens: The Regional Work of Art in the New Deal Era, by Lauren Kroiz. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018. xvi, 292 pp. Illustrations (many in color), notes, bibliography, index. \$65 hardcover.

Reviewer Breanne Robertson is an art historian with the Marine Corps History Division. She has published two articles in the *Annals of Iowa* (2011 and 2015) about New Deal murals.

Art historian H. W. Janson’s postwar pronouncement that American Regionalism constituted “bad art” has left an indelible mark on the scholarly trajectory of American art history. The influential critic and author of the best-selling *History of Art* textbook, first published in 1962, deemed Regionalist painting deficient in both a social and a technical sense. By associating Regionalist landscapes with those of Nazi realism and by omitting the American movement from his textbook, Jansen condemned his former university colleague Grant Wood and other Regionalist artists to cultural obscurity for nearly half a century. Lauren Kroiz’s *Cultivating Citizens* represents the latest scholarly contribution to a growing