

The Man Who Wrecked 146 Locomotives: The Story of "Head-On Joe" Connolly

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pact that this loss had on the black Republican women of Illinois, who subsequently determined that because their efforts to get as many newly enfranchised women to the polls as possible in 1920 and 1922 elections did not lead to policy change in the federal government's commitment to protect black citizens' rights, they needed to establish a formal organization dedicated solely to that purpose. Consequently, the CWRCI was established in 1924 and remained active and influential in Illinois GOP politics throughout the next decade.

In her conclusion, Materson highlights the irony of the experience of black GOP women in Illinois; she notes that "just as they had built up effective Republican organizations, forces beyond their control drew black voters toward the Democratic Party" (239) in the early years of the New Deal response to the Great Depression. Nonetheless, as the author argues, black Republican women played a crucial role in keeping alive within their party during these decades a commitment to black civil rights during the turn-of-the-century nadir in American race relations.

The Man Who Wrecked 146 Locomotives: The Story of "Head-On Joe" Connolly, by James J. Reisdorff. David City, NE: South Platte Press, 2009. 48 pp. Illustrations, bibliography. \$19.95 paper.

Reviewer Chris Rasmussen is associate professor of history at Fairleigh Dickinson University. In "Progress and Catastrophe: Public History at the Iowa State Fair, 1854-1946" (*Annals of Iowa*, 2004), he wrote about staged train wrecks and other staged catastrophes at the Iowa State Fair.

In 1896 tens of thousands of spectators paid to gape as two 60-ton locomotives collided head-on in front of the grandstand at the Iowa State Fair. The engines' earth-shaking collision launched the singular career of Joseph S. Connolly, who staged 73 train wrecks at fairgrounds across the nation between 1896 and 1932. James J. Reisdorff has done a remarkable job of tracing Connolly's exploits, from his small-town Iowa boyhood to his final train wreck at the 1932 Iowa State Fair. Reisdorff has unearthed hard-to-find accounts of Connolly's staged train wrecks, and his book contains dozens of photographs, sketches, and advertisements depicting these destructive spectacles.

Reisdorff's book is not merely a collection of historical curiosities, but attempts to explain the psychological and social factors that made staged train wrecks so popular. "Head-On Joe" Connolly probably never read Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, but he intuitively understood his audience, observing that "somewhere in the makeup of every normal person there lurks the suppressed desire to smash things up" (9).

Train wrecks not only stirred a deep psychological response in viewers but also suggested that America's rapid and sweeping industrialization in the late nineteenth century had not been achieved without considerable costs. In the mid-nineteenth century, locomotives became the embodiment of speed, power, and technological progress. Yet that progress exacted a ghastly price, as thousands of Americans were injured or killed annually in railroad and industrial accidents. The popularity of harrowing newspaper accounts of accidents and stage plays about historic disasters attest to many Americans' morbid fascination with catastrophe. Connolly went the journalists and dramatists one better, offering his audience the sight and sound of two locomotives actually hurtling into one another, resulting in a mass of crumpled steel.

Reisdorff attributes the waning popularity of staged train wrecks to several causes. When Connolly staged his 73rd and final collision at the 1932 Iowa State Fair, Americans were still reeling from the "great crash," and the spectacle of gratuitous destruction seemed grotesquely wasteful in a nation in which one of four workers was unemployed. Americans' fascination with destruction had not entirely evaporated, but was now satisfied by newer technologies, such as automobile and airplane daredevils and motion pictures. In an era of rapidly advancing technology and streamlined design, mighty steam locomotives were no longer the emblem of technological progress but had become obsolete, and their final stop was the scrap heap. Yet, even at the outset of the twenty-first century, their legacy endures, and we still sigh that a needless political, social, or personal disaster is, of course, a train wreck.

Horse-Drawn Days: A Century of Farming with Horses, by Jerry Apps. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2010. xii, 199 pp. Illustrations (many in color), appendixes, notes, index. \$24.95 paper.

Reviewer Pamela Riney-Kehrberg is professor and chair of history at Iowa State University. She is the author of *Childhood on the Farm: Work, Play, and Coming of Age in the Midwest* (2005).

Jerry Apps grew up in central Wisconsin, farming with horses. In this colorful, highly illustrated book, he has brought together a wealth of information about farming before the tractor. Part one, titled "A Time for Horses," tackles a number of important issues, such as a history of horses, draft horses, and draft-horse equipment, the relation of horses to people, and the current use of draft horses. In part two, "A Horse Farming Year," he follows the use of horses throughout the agricultural calendar, detailing their use at each time of the year. He inter-