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Review of *Gateway to the Northern Plains: Railroads and the Birth of Fargo and Moorhead* by Carroll Engelhardt

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Gateway to the Northern Plains: Railroads and the Birth of Fargo and Moorhead. By Carroll Engelhardt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007. xx + 366 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95.

One worries about the editorial staff at the University of Minnesota Press in determining to accept the manuscript for *Gateway to the Northern Plains*. You can almost see them scratching their heads, frustrated with the job of marketing a volume that could belong in

every section of every bookstore and could find an appropriate home on the shelf of any scholar of the American experience. Indeed, that is the delightful challenge of Carroll Engelhardt's labor of love. Engelhardt, an emeritus professor of history at Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota, clearly devoted years of research and writing to the preparation of this worthy book.

In approximately 300 pages of text, Engelhardt has managed to address issues related to urban history, rural history, industrial history, local history, national history, political history, and business history, and most probably other areas of historical inquiry as well. Engelhardt's vehicle, no pun truly intended, is the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad to the mid-Red River Valley of the North, and the towns, most specifically Fargo, North Dakota, and Moorhead that arose as a consequence. As he notes in his fine introduction, the railroads set the tone for the development and viability of the twin cities of the north. Specifically, he observes, "The railroads brought wheat farmers who settled the hinterland and created opportunities for businessmen. . . . Trains carried the materials for constructing homes, businesses, churches, schools, and urban improvements. They brought the goods for establishing genteel culture. They transported harvest hands and purveyors of vice that challenged middle-class moral order. They connected civic leaders with eastern technologies and methods for creating good municipal government." The blessings of the railroads were not, however, without their burdens. They also fostered a sense of economic, political, and cultural dependence. Covering these subjects, and doing so in fine fashion, makes Engelhardt's tale a diverse and a well-developed one.

Engelhardt's text is richly illustrated with period photographs, drawings, and maps. These not only significantly enhance the book, but also serve to make the volume more readily accessible to the lay reader, the one who is more casually interested in history. That said, any reader interested in any of a plethora

of subjects will find something of value in *Gateway to the Northern Plains*.

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