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Gateway to the Northern Plains: Railroads and the Birth of Fargo and Moorhead

Eric J. Morser
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in that, when compared to the “savagery” of Indians of the historical period, they challenged the notions of linear progress that underpinned American notions of history. To address this problem, experts peopled the Americas with a “lost race” — which both inspired feelings of pride in America’s ancient past and justified treatment of contemporary Native people. But once archaeologists applied scientific principles and rigor to their work, amateurs were excluded from the conversation, mound builders were recognized as fabrications, and Indians came to be viewed as belonging to a separate (and less interesting) historical trajectory than those who studied them.

As fascinating as this book is, it has some problems. Chief among these is Conn’s selection of examples. He effectively demonstrates his points, but he does so by idiosyncratically selecting those works that best fit his premise. Any art historian could cite works that confound his schema, and most linguists, archaeologists, historians, and anthropologists could provide dissonant examples from their own disciplines. Conn also fails to include Native scholars who operate within the fields he describes — and who, by their very presence, complicate this story of removal.

Nonetheless, Conn’s work is important. Despite exceptions, his premise rings true: For all the gains that have been made, Native people remain marginal to most historians and other scholars — and to most Americans as well. Conn’s work helps explain why and how this happened. Understanding this problem is the first step toward addressing it.

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. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, index. \$29.95 cloth.

Reviewer Eric J. Morser teaches history at the University of Florida. His research and writing have focused on the relationship between business and government in nineteenth-century LaCrosse, Wisconsin.

In this thoroughly researched and panoramic book, historian Carroll Engelhardt explores the influence of railroads on North Dakota’s Twin Cities, Moorhead and Fargo, during the nineteenth century. In the book’s first half, Engelhardt examines how local boosters and railroad corporations, most notably the Northern Pacific, helped make the two cities commercial hubs on the Great Plains. Early boosters, such as Thomas Hawley Canfield of Moorhead and James B. Power of Fargo, realized that attracting railroads was key to urban prosperity. To that end, they negotiated with politicians, business leaders, and railroad managers to attract lines, which helped each city take root and blos-

som in the 1870s. Railroads also shaped the competition between Moorhead and Fargo to become the gateway to the northern plains. While Moorhead's boosters tried and failed to develop home industries, Fargo's three railroads drew in wholesalers eager to pay lower shipping rates. Thus, the economic origins of both cities were inseparable from the history of railroads. In the author's words, big railroads "put Moorhead and Fargo on the map" (280).

Engelhardt's argument about the railroads' overarching impact on the Twin Cities takes a fascinating turn in the book's second half. Moving beyond boosters' dreams and economic questions, he explores how railroads shaped the social and cultural worlds of Moorhead and Fargo residents well after the first trains steamed into town. He traces how rails remade the ethnic character of each community when they transported a wide range of settlers, from Yankee merchants to Scandinavian farmers to eastern European Jews, to the Dakotas. The iron horse set the stage for other changes. By paving the way for local commercial success, railroads laid a foundation for a new middle class devoted to a Protestant moral order that celebrated domesticity and traditional gender norms. By carrying migrant workers west, railroads sparked labor activism and class strife in both cities before 1900. Finally, railroads created a powerful booster ethos that encouraged municipal leaders to invest in public works, such as water plants, electric lights, and city railways, that altered the physical geography of the cities. While the railroads fundamentally determined Moorhead and Fargo's economic success, they were just as essential to the cultural, political, and social development of the two neighboring communities.

Engelhardt is at his best when he maps out how railroads shaped the social history of the cities. He highlights, for example, how rail lines fostered middle-class culture when they donated land for churches and public schools. In this and other instances, he makes a persuasive case that scholars of the American West need to pay even greater attention to railroads in order to understand how the cultural and physical geography of frontier cities took shape before 1900. At times, however, the book seems less a narrative of railroads directly framing the lives of city residents and more a story of plains folk who lived in towns served by trains. It is not always clear, for example, how big railroad companies continued to shape domesticity in the two communities or how iron rails may have influenced local calls for good government during the 1890s. Engelhardt does well to pinpoint links between railroads and city building. Yet he could shed greater light on these important connections to make his compelling argument even more convincing.

Ultimately, Engelhardt has much to offer professional scholars, genealogists, and general readers. His book is exhaustively researched, crisply written, and packed with arresting maps and photographs that help cement his dual urban saga in a distinct time and place. It should appeal to anyone who cares about railroads and the growth of cities on the Great Plains and elsewhere in the nineteenth-century West.

Frontiers: A Short History of the American West, by Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher. Lamar Series in Western History. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. vii, 248 pp. Illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. \$28.00 cloth.

Reviewer Mark R. Scherer is associate professor of history at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He is the author of *Imperfect Victories: The Legal Tenacity of the Omaha Tribe, 1945–1995* (1999).

Frontiers: A Short History of the American West is an abridged edition of Robert Hine and John Mack Faragher's narrative survey text titled *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (2000). In the eight years since its publication, Hine and Faragher's text has become one of the standards in the field, widely used by teachers and highly praised by reviewers for its graceful narrative flow and its deft fusion of traditional analytical approaches with the revisionist perspectives of the "New Western History." Here the authors have condensed and updated their original work, seeking to make it more accessible to "the general reader" (vii). That goal is admirable on its face (anything that brings more readers to history is, by definition, a good thing), but one wonders in this particular case whether the result is worth the effort—not because the new book isn't well done, but because the original was already attractive to both academic and general readers.

Like the larger work from which it is derived, *Frontiers* presents western American history as "the story of where and how cultures meet" (5). To the extent that Hine and Faragher use—and overtly adopt as their title—this notion of a "frontier process" as the unifying theme for their narrative, they are consciously resurrecting Frederick Jackson Turner's familiar (and now somewhat tarnished) analytical model. Their contribution to what remains of the debate over Turnerian theory is to demonstrate that Turner's frontier paradigm, despite its well-recognized deficiencies, remains a useful organizational concept for analyzing western history. The multiple stories of cultural interaction that the authors describe do not produce uniform results, nor do they occur within neatly defined geographical or chronological boundaries. Some result in triumphant and uniquely American success stories; oth-