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Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene. John R. Stilgoe, New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 1983. Pp xiii + 397, ill., index, endnotes, bibliography

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The image of the history of technology has not caught up with recent developments in the field, which is now far broader than many scholars seem to believe. Perhaps no area in the history of technology has more of an image problem than railway history. One of the reviewer's friends is a self-employed historical researcher and planning consultant who rarely tells clients of his extensive knowledge of railway history; he says it would be bad for business. In too many circles, railway history is equated with bad remaindered books and buffs who seem to gauge themselves by the number of seemingly unrelated facts and mechanical genealogies that can be crammed into one monologue masqueraded as a conversation. The colour and data bases of the born-to-be-remaindered books and the buffs are impressive in their own way but lack the elements of judgment and perspective which separates historians from antiquarians and chroniclers. Railway history's bad

press is understandable but exceedingly regretable. First, railways have been so important that their history and impact should be understood by those claiming historical competence. Second, the mounds of historical railway literature contain some excellent works, such as the two reviewed here, which should be read, digested and allowed to influence further research.

E.J. Hart, *The Selling of Canada: The CPR and The Beginning of Canadian Tourism* adds an important element to the literature of Canadian studies, the history of technology and railway history. The Canadian Pacific Railway was desperately short of customers when it became fully operational in 1886. The resulting relationship between western settlement and the CPR is well known. Another response to the lack of customers is almost unknown. The mountains which had so plagued construction were spectacularly beautiful and Cornelius William Van Horne decided to 'capitalize the scenery' (p 22) and promote Canadian tourism, particularly in the Rockies. What follows is brilliant in both conception and execution. From Van Horne's declaration 'If we can't export the scenery, we'll import the tourists' grew the CPR's 'overwhelming presence in Canadian tourism. By the 1920s, its tourist operations embraced Canada from coast to coast and spanned the world. For several decades its tourist advertising delineated the view of Canada, both at home and around the world. Its view of Canada as a place of scenic wonders and cultural diversity prevails even to this day.' (p 7.)

The Selling of Canada examines 'CPR's tourist operations, its well-orchestrated tourist advertising campaigns, its tourist facilities and the tourists themselves, from the beginnings of transcontinental service in 1886 to the coming of the automobile and the flowering of the Canadian Pacific's steamships services in the 1920s.' (p 7). Chapter 1, *Preparing the Way* (pp 11-20) covers the creation of the necessary infrastructure which ranged from CPR-owned, Horne-designed sleeping cars, restaurants and the building of hotels and connecting ocean passenger steam lines. In the next chapter, *The Selling of Canada* (pp 21-30), the CPR is wooing tourists through the 'generation and distribution of promotional material' (p 22). Very sophisticated marketing capitalized on 'Man's creations as well as God's' (p 24). A proper love affair with technology allowed 'the company's engineering feats' to be 'noted as attractions in themselves: the Loop, where the line was described as doubling back upon itself within a biscuit's toss; the Stoney Creek bridge, 'one of the loftiest railway bridges in the world; the square-timbered snowsheds that 'bid defiance to the most terrific avalanche;' and, at Albert Canyon, the 'solidly built balconies which enable passengers to safely look into the boiling cauldron below.' (p 24)

Many of the beautiful illustrations in *The Selling of Canada* were originally commissioned by the CPR for advertising and promotion. The Railway Art School (pp 31-40) shows how commercial needs 'turned the CPR and its chief officers into leading patrons of Canadian art' (p

31). It is unusually refreshing to see Canadian art discussed in terms of the influence of Canadian technology and commercial development.

No matter how clever the ideas, marketing and management, it helps if one is selling a product whose time has come. The Class That Travels (pp 41-54) demonstrates that other events made Canada a likely spot for the burgeoning late Victorian and early Edwardian tourist industry. Again, there is an emphasis on technology, this time as the agent which assisted in creating the upward mobility needed to spawn the demand for tourism and then produce the transportation network needed to make it possible. New products are generally first visualized in terms of the old and with Fifty Switzerlands in One (pp 55-68) one sees Canada's West marketed as a better Switzerland. Again, infrastructure was needed. Whether for mountain climbers or Kodakers, CPR had to continue providing services and support networks as part of the courting of tourists.

The sea was a logical adjunct to the rail network and the CPR took to it with the same enthusiasm and creative flair that it had brought to the mountains. Chapter 6, The Imperial Highway (pp 69-80), is a short but insightful account of CPR's entry into the ranks of global carriers.

By 1889 when Thomas G. Shaughnessy replaced Van Horne as President, the basic structure of Canadian Pacific's rail, and sea, tourist network had been set out. Nonetheless, the company continued to grow and change; The Canadian Pacific Rockies (pp 81-96) and See This World Before The Next (pp 97-109) cover a twenty-year period of continuing expansion and increasing sophistication, particularly in marketing and image making.

The Selling of Canada is a rare combination of visual beauty and worthwhile text. Numerous well-chosen illustrations integrated into the text throughout all the chapters are supplemented by an additional Portfolio (pp 110-174) in colour and black and white. One hopes that more books will deal with Canadian technology and its impact as imaginatively as Hart does in The Selling of Canada.

In their pursuit of broader approaches to the writing and visualizing of the history of technology, Canadian historians should also look to John R. Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor. Railroads And The American Scene*. Stilgoe is Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture and Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard University. The first sentence of Stilgoe's *Metropolitan Corridor* proclaims that 'in the half century following 1880, the railroad industry reshaped the American built environment and reoriented American thinking.' (p ix) The rest of the book is an extraordinarily imaginative and intellectually exciting exploration of this theme. As if this is not enough of a treat, the writing is compelling and the design by Sally Harris attractively and confidently elegant.

Pre-1880 American railways have attracted more scholarly attention than later ones. The period 1880-1930 is attracting greater scrutiny but the coverage on a moving scholarly front is inevitably uneven and 'the historian of the railroad visual environment, concatenation of space and structure that comprised so much of the metropolitan corridor, must often work without the reassuring presence of background material.' (p xi) Stilgoe's aim is quite unlike that of most railway writers. He set out to 'look as closely as possible at the physical presence of the railroad industry and its infrastructure and seek to interpret the public attitude toward them.' (p xi) The analysis and interpretation puts Metropolitan Corridor far above many other books dealing with the physicality of the railways.

Aside from his skills as a thinker and his obvious mastery of the material, it is the intellectual framework which enables Stilgoe to bring in such a staggering wealth of detail and not overwhelm, bore or lose the reader. Stilgoe sees the railway as creating an entirely new element in the American environment and way of life -- the Metropolitan Corridor:

Metropolitan Corridor designates the portion of the American built environment that evolved along railroad rights-of-way in the years between 1880 and 1935. No traditional spatial term, not urban, suburban, or rural, not cityscape or landscape, adequately identifies the space that perplexed so many turn-of-the-century observers. Reaching from the very hearts of great cities across industrial zones, suburbs, small towns, and into mountain wilderness, the metropolitan corridor objectified in its unprecedented arrangement of space and structure a wholly new lifestyle. Along it flowed the forces of modernization, announcing the character of the twentieth century, and abutting it sprouted new clusters of building. Its peculiar juxtaposition of elements attracted the scrutiny of photographers and advertising illustrators; its romance inveigled poets and novelists; its energy challenged architects, landscape architects, and urban designers. Always it resisted definition in traditional terminology. And suddenly, in the years of the Great Depression, in the ascendancy of the automobile, it vanished from the national attention. Yet the corridor remains, although now often screened by sumac and other junglelike trees and avoided by highways, still snaking from one well-known, often studied sort of space to another. (p 3)

Even though it was vitally important, the corridor's nature, characteristics and meaning received little attention. Consequently, Stilgoe has been forced to work from a very wide variety of often fragmentary sources but the major research problems encountered have greatly enriched the final product which the author most modestly labels 'an introduction to the metropolitan corridor as a visual image, an introduction to a distinctive American environment scarcely recognized in its prime and today as little frequented as the great urban railroad terminals that mark its ends.' (p 15)

The subject matter of *Metropolitan Corridor* is immense. Stilgoe begins with the railway yard and terminal as central features in American life and thought, followed by an analysis of something now long gone: elegance in railway travel. In addition, he treats topics such as the industrial aesthetic, power generation and associated technologies, structural steel and trackside ecosystems. Crossings might seem to be a severely limited subject for serious historical discourse, but Stilgoe's chapter on the subject banishes any such thoughts. Other chapters look at gardens, cinemas, villas and trolleys plus an attempt to understand the demise and possible futures for railways in the United States. In every instance Stilgoe shows the central role of railways in shaping American attitudes and most effectively questions a lot of common assumptions about hostility directed towards the idea of railways. Americans had a willing love affair with the railways and loved being in love. The most impressive and convincing aspect of Stilgoe's scholarship is that he draws his evidence, images and arguments from so many sources ranging from the usual poets and societal commentators to novels, children's stories, magazine fiction and advertisements for toys.

Metropolitan Corridor is a masterly example of the broadening of scholarship centring on technology and its impact. It is also a welcome antidote to the all-too-frequently cited literature which dwells on early -- and the reviewer believes minority -- worries over the machine's approach to the garden. The railway was one machine-based system that, if not welcomed initially, was soon invited to meet with the best and, in so doing, radically transformed those who touched or even thought about it. The term intellectual history often refers only to subjects dwelling on a higher plane than matter, but, in the final analysis, all history might be regarded as partaking of intellectual history. Stilgoe has shown that, when well done, railway history and the history of technology are intellectual history. Any of the preceding brands of historians could find both interest and profit in *Metropolitan Corridor*. It is an exceptional book and one hopes a role model for more studies, both Canadian and American.

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