

Urban History Review

Condit, Carl W. *The Port of New York: A History of the Rail and Terminal System from the Beginnings to Pennsylvania Station*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. Pp. xvii, 456. Tables, figures, maps, illustrations. \$29-95

Norbert MacDonald

Volume 10, Number 1, June 1981

URI: id.erudit.org/iderudit/1019163ar

DOI: [10.7202/1019163ar](https://doi.org/10.7202/1019163ar)

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN 0703-0428 (print)
1918-5138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

MacDonald, N. (1981). Condit, Carl W. *The Port of New York: A History of the Rail and Terminal System from the Beginnings to Pennsylvania Station*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. Pp. xvii, 456. Tables, figures, maps, illustrations. \$29-95. *Urban History Review*, 10(1), 60–61. doi:10.7202/1019163ar

All Rights Reserved © Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine, 1981

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online. [<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>]



This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research. www.erudit.org

have long since become middle-class suburbanites? How, in sum, did Richard J. Daley, who appeared as such a backward Neanderthal Man on the television screens of America during the 1968 Democratic National Convention, enjoy such political invincibility in Chicago up until his death in 1976? Were Chicagoans simply more corrupt or more easily deceived than most Americans?

It is questions such as these which Thomas M. Guterbock addresses in his book *Machine Politics in Transition*. As a young man, Guterbock had been active in anti-machine, independent politics in Chicago; but when he began to pursue graduate studies in sociology at the University of Chicago, he decided to switch sides and study the Daley machine from the inside as a participant-observer. From 1972 to 1975, he resided in a machine ward on the North Side of Chicago and worked as part-time political assistant to an alderman. Besides gathering random impressions of the machine's operations, Guterbock also conducted interviews with 160 ward residents, trying to discover how widespread the machine's "jobs and favors" were and what effect these material incentives had on voter behaviour. The result was a doctoral dissertation completed for Morris Janowitz in 1976, and now this book in Janowitz's *Studies of Urban Society* series.

Guterbock found that the Chicago machine did, indeed, spend a great deal of time and effort trying to do favours and provide services for the voters. At least one-third of the ward's residents in his random sample had at some time requested aid from the ward organization. Yet, surprisingly, Guterbock found that the recipients of these services were not generally impoverished, lower-class residents. Nor did use of the machine's services correlate very highly with voting behaviour and Democratic party loyalty. Though patronage jobs and economic self-interest clearly motivated the party leaders in the ward, such material incentives did not provide the primary motive for machine supporters (the voters). Thus Guterbock concludes that a "material exchange model" (voters trade their votes for material favours) does not adequately explain machine success. Similarly, he finds an "affectual exchange model" (voters support the machine out of close ethnic ties with the boss) unsatisfactory. In the ward he studied, the political leaders were nearly all Jewish whereas the voters were largely Catholic and Protestant. Ward residents did not consider the machine leaders as friends or close associates. Thus, neither of the traditional explanations of machine loyalty – material favours or bonds of sympathy – explain very much in Guterbock's case study.

The author offers as an alternative explanation what he calls a "commitment model" of machine-voter support. The machine gains votes by appeals to dearly held value commitments of the voters. The lower-class residents of Guterbock's ward vote largely out of an unthinking Democratic party loyalty – based either on ethnic or class attachments. But more sophisticated voters in the ward support the machine because they perceive it as a bulwark of their local community. Machine leaders employ a complex strategy of symbolic and substantive actions which appeal to voters with localistic attachments. In this view, the famous jobs and favours of machine lore have more importance as symbols than as actual material inducements. Those who use the machine's services tend to be homeowners and long-time residents of the ward. Though they may not "need" such services as much as the lower-class proletariat, they value them more

highly. The fact that the machine still provides services for voters is important as proof of interest in local community welfare. The Chicago machine emerges then, from Guterbock's study, as the personification of local civic pride. The ward boss identifies with the neighbourhood, Daley identified with Chicago; and voters supported them on that basis. To attack either was to attack the voter's neighbourhood and city.

Guterbock's conclusions are not altogether novel to anyone who has observed the Chicago machine. Chicagoans have long known that the outsider's view of the machine as a corrupt engine of vote buying was distorted. The average Chicagoan recognized that Daley and his minions somehow personified Chicago, just as Jean Drapeau somehow personifies and enhances "la gloire de Montréal." *Machine Politics in Transition*, though based on a single ward, provides interesting and persuasive evidence for this point of view. Unfortunately, the book will probably not reach a wide audience, for it is expensive and is written in a mechanical, hypothesis-testing style. Nevertheless, Guterbock's book deserves the attention of anyone interested in machine politics.

Edward R. Kantowicz
Department of History
Carleton University

Condit, Carl W. *The Port of New York: A History of the Rail and Terminal System from the Beginnings to Pennsylvania Station*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. Pp.xvii, 456. Tables, figures, maps, illustrations. \$29.95.

By 1870 New York was firmly established as America's largest and most significant city. It had a population of some 900,000 and was served by numerous street railways, ferry boats, and trans-oceanic steamers. The population density averaged two hundred persons per acre. Eighteen different railway companies brought passengers and freight from a cluster of eastern states and delivered the city's goods to much of the nation. Over the next fifty years New York continued to surge ahead as thousands of European migrants settled there. By 1920 it was approaching the 6,000,000 mark.

Such massive growth required a major extension of a host of urban facilities whether for housing, parks, transportation, education, lighting, water, or fire protection. Professor Condit has assumed the mammoth task of providing a detailed history of metropolitan New York's entire railway and terminal system – its birth, growth, operations, capacity, technology, and total urban consequences. The sheer magnitude of the task is intimidating, but what is most impressive is that the author has actually achieved what he set out to achieve. Whether one seeks a detailed treatment of some two dozen major railways, or a brief glance at some one hundred seventy-five others, it is available here. Similarly one will find detailed, precise, scholarly accounts of the problems encountered in the control systems, the improvement of motors, or the electrification of the Pennsylvania Railroad and its many subsidiaries. Yet the sheer abundance of factual detail tends to overwhelm the reader after he has read many, many paragraphs such as:

The Schiff group reorganized the road as the New York Ontario and Western, and in recognition of the plain fact

that a railroad extending from Middletown to Oswego would soon starve for lack of traffic, they pushed the line southeastward to Weehawken, New Jersey, in 1880-83. The segment of this extension lying between Cornwall, New York, and Weehawken, however, was immediately sold to the newly completed West Shore, and the Ontario from 1886 onward operated its trains into the Hudson River terminal by trackage rights over the West Shore property. But the entry to Weehawken, established at first without provision for handling freight and passenger traffic across the river to Manhattan, brought little additional nourishment.

The simple truth was that the Ontario belonged to the category of railroads lacking any major function, either as primary or originating carriers uniting important terminals, or as bridge routes uniting trunk lines. Oswego might at one time have suggested some promise as a lake port, but the rise of Rochester and Sodus Point guaranteed that such promise was never to materialize. Moreover, the only rail connection at the western terminal was the Rome, Watertown and Ogdensburg Railroad, another road that extended into a region where there was little traffic potential. What saved the Ontario from early extinction was the lease in 1890 of the Ontario, Carbondale and Scranton Railroad, which gave the New York company an entry into the anthracite fields and which, as a consequence, was for years the only profitable part of the system. Light traffic meant light motive power, and the Ontario relied entirely on small 4-4-0, 2-6-0, and 2-8-0 locomotives until well into the twentieth century. It was destined to be the first of the New York rail family to suffer abandonment in toto.

While the author has kept mathematical and engineering formulation to a minimum, and has relied on a more descriptive, qualitative presentation, the very nature of such material makes for heavy going for the uninitiated.

The novel feature of the B. and O. locomotives was a method of transmitting the armature torque to the axle without gears by means of what later came to be called a quill drive. In this technique the hollow drumlike armature surrounds a cylindrical sleeve known as a quill that is fitted in turn around the driving-wheel axle but is not in contact with it. At each end of the quill a plate is fixed from which projecting pins are inserted into matching openings in the solid hub of the driving wheels. The armature thus rotates the quill, and the plate at each end drives the wheels. The aim in using this driving technique which eventually became the common form for heavy-duty service, has always been to protect the armature from damage arising from the shocks caused by uneven track, but this can be fully assured only by a liberal use of cushioning gaskets and by suspending the entire motor and quill assembly from springs mounted on a framework lying in a place immediately inside the inner faces of the driving wheel. It was all an expensive protective as well as an operating device.

The range, grasp and achievement of this book is best revealed in Chapter 7, "The Pennsylvania Station and the New Civic Order." While the necessary data and technical analysis are still available, the author as engineer tends to fade into the background while the author as historian becomes much more evident. The reader is made aware of the monumental complexities of New York's transportation network, and of the interdependent nature of the entire metropolitan region. By 1900

when planning for the new terminal got underway, Manhattan still relied on some forty different ferry systems to deliver 625,000 persons every working day from the outlying districts. The problem faced by planners and architects as they struggled to co-ordinate the diverse needs of railways, subways, streetcar lines, commuters, and city residents are all clearly developed. Similarly the achievement of the architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White in creating a station that was simultaneously noble, graceful, and functional is also done skillfully.

In short this is a valuable book. If you have a background in electrical or mechanical engineering, appreciate the nature of railway technology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and are reasonably familiar with the network of cities in the New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania area, you can plunge directly in and get a great deal from it. But if you lack this background and training, you will probably treat this book as an encyclopaedia to be consulted on a specific topic. It is undoubtedly a major scholarly achievement and will be cited by many American urban historians, but I am afraid that few will read it from cover to cover.

Norbert MacDonald
Department of History
University of British Columbia

Friedrichs, Christopher R. *Urban Society in an Age of War: Nördlingen, 1580-1720*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979. Pp.xvii, 350. Tables, figures, maps, illustrations. \$22.50.

In this fine book, C.R. Friedrichs, an Associate Professor of History at U.B.C., examines Nördlingen's transition from a mediaeval society toward a modern outlook and social structure. He finds in this northern Bavarian town of about 8,000 inhabitants several broad, interrelated developments: "the breakdown of an urban monopoly on industrial production, the growth of entrepreneurial capitalism, the decline of the traditional craft system based on independent masters, and the loss of political and social status by the artisanry." No surprise, this. But as one would expect from an author who acknowledges Pierre Goubert as his methodological inspiration, the value of the book is not so much in its overall conclusions but in what the author uncovers along the way.

The recovery and skillful use of statistical data is the trademark of exponents of *histoire totale*. Readers of this journal may be astounded at the character and volume of evidence at Friedrichs' disposal. In the seventeenth-century towns, the public and private lives of a citizen virtually coincided. To become and remain a citizen, one had to submit to the prying eyes of church and government officials bent on monitoring individuals "for the good of the whole." One consequence of this "totalitarian" society has been a remarkable residue of documents: namely, detailed records of the wealth of individuals gathered by municipal authorities compelled to squeeze out of the populace the funds to "buy" local autonomy in an era when war, rather than peace, tended to be the norm; and council, court and parish records which reveal the mechanics of social control in times when the threat from outside the walls of the town was so great that deviations within could not be permitted. So complete is the public record that Friedrichs is able to sketch a reasonable por-