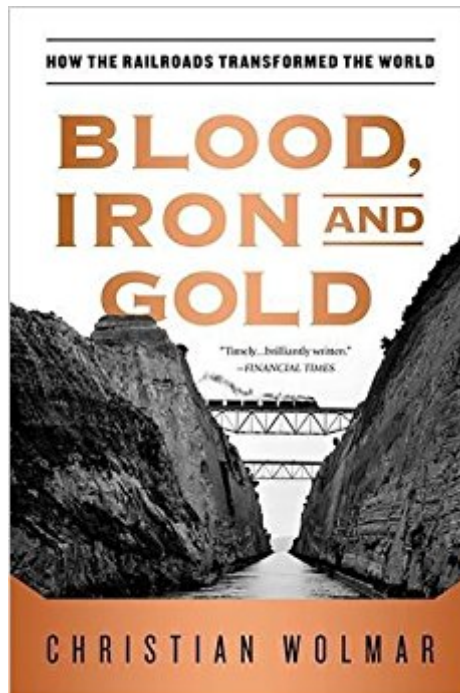




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Blood, Iron, And Gold: How The Railroads Transformed The World



Synopsis

The opening of the world's first railroad in Britain and America in 1830 marked the dawn of a new age. Within the course of a decade, tracks were being laid as far afield as Australia and Cuba, and by the outbreak of World War I, the United States alone boasted over a quarter of a million miles. With unrelenting determination, architectural innovation, and under gruesome labor conditions, a global railroad network was built that forever changed the way people lived. From Panama to Punjab, from Tasmania to Turin, Christian Wolmar shows how cultures were enriched, and destroyed, by one of the greatest global transport revolutions of our time, and celebrates the visionaries and laborers responsible for its creation.

Book Information

Paperback: 432 pages

Publisher: PublicAffairs; Reprint edition (March 1, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1586489496

ISBN-13: 978-1586489496

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 1.2 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 24 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #585,994 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #139 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Civil & Environmental > Transportation #157 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Transportation > History > Railroads #271 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Transportation > Railroads

Customer Reviews

This spirited, dramatic history of the most important invention of the second millennium celebrates railroads as the central innovation of the industrial revolution, releasing economic and social energies on a stupendous scale. Historian Wolmar (*The Great Railway Disaster*) chronicles the heroic age of railroad construction in the 19th century, with its mix of epic engineering and horrible exploitation. (The death toll on the trans-Panamanian railroad project included a mass suicide by Chinese workers.) Riding the early railroads, he notes, was almost as harrowing as building them, as passengers braved engine cinders that set their clothes on fire "and sometimes had to get out and push underpowered locomotives up steep grades. The railroads' social impact was equally breathtaking, in Wolmar's telling: it brought city folk fresh milk, out-of-season produce, and

commutes to the suburbs; spawned monopolies and spectacular corruption scandals; and played a crucial role in enabling the world wars and the Holocaust. Wolmar explores this fertile subject with a blend of lucid exposition and engaging historical narrative. The result is a fascinating study not just of a transportation system, but of the Promethean spirit of the modern age. 16 pages of color illus.; maps. (Mar. 2) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

CHOICE Magazine, January 2011 • The book is gracefully written, incorporates leading secondary sources, and includes intelligently selected illustrations. Highly recommended. •

This engaging book is a valuable find for history buffs who have an interest in railroads but don't have time to explore the extensive literature on this topic. Wolmar takes the reader from the early 19th century to the present and explores the emergence and development of rail all across the world, and manages to do all this in just under 340 pages. (Notes, bibliography, and index add another 40 pages, and there are two sections of photo pages.) The narrative focuses on the economic, political, and societal aspects of rail development in a wide variety of environments. Much less is said about the nuts and bolts of the trains, although there is substantial discussion of competing track gauges, efforts to overcome challenging geography, and the evolution of passenger accommodations as sophistication and competition increased. Along the way we meet innovative technical and business people, learn of the changes wrought by the railroads everywhere they went, and marvel at the amount of death and suffering experienced in the early construction and operation of rail systems. Readers may find a couple of passages to be a bit slow as they describe numerous new lines coming into service from Point A to Point B, but a good knowledge of world geography makes these more interesting as they set the stage for the rest of the story. That story includes a sober look at decline in the 20th century as automobiles, trucks, and airlines came to dominate the transportation market. But the book ends on a positive note, projecting a railway renaissance of high-speed passenger trains and a strong freight business. Highly recommended, especially for those who are new to railroad history or plan to read only a small amount on the subject.

An excellent 1-volume history of the world's railways. Wolmar writes in a typically British style but in no way inhibits his vast understanding of how the railroad came to be the most influential and important invention of the industrial age. Any fan of the railway would increase his or her

appreciation & understanding immensely by reading (or listening!) to this book. Highly recommended.

This unique, superb book is an overview of the history of railroads - across the world - from the early 19th century to our present age. The author - Christian Wolmar - has done a fine job of taking a vast amount of research and information about railroads - and synthesizing this into an engaging description of how railroads were first developed, evolved over time, and how they have dramatically influenced economic, political, and social history throughout much of the world. The book includes a number of informative maps and many color and black and white plates. Highly recommended.

this is an excellent general history of the origins of the world's railways. unfortunately, not all areas referred in the text are covered by the maps, but the maps provided are good if one is at all familiar with the subject.

for rail aficionados

Interesting read.

Haven't gotten bored yet and I'm halfway through, I don't need to know much more for you to know it's good.

Prompt arrival. A gift for hubby.

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