

bution through poles to which were connected crossarms bearing insulators and messenger and high-voltage transmission (132,000 volts) wires over the tracks contacted with a pantograph on the locomotive. Wheel arrangements were another hazard when high speeds produced oscillation that wore down the track at an alarming rate. Improved chassis and provision of motors coupled to the wheels to reduce damage and injury to train personnel had to be invented. All this took time and money. Yet progress was made. Through electric service between New York and Washington was facilitated by a PWA loan with the full blessing of Harold L. Ickes in 1935. Improved locomotives, motors, and couplings kept the technological pace, but the geographical limits and financial feasibility of electrification had been reached. Diesels provided the answer for the line's other needs after World War II.

Bezilla is at his best in discussing technical questions and presenting projected cost estimates, savings, and motive power expenses. However, he is less informative when it comes to dealing with the operating expenses of electric transmission and distribution facilities. For the later years more might have been said about the damaging competition of trucks and airlines and how the railroad industry as a whole failed to rationalize its technical system and failed to maintain the quality of its passenger service. Calculations of adequate rates of return normally related to investment should have been presented. These are not, however, intended as serious criticisms to an essentially first-rate work.

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Erie: Chronicle of a Great Lakes City. By EDWARD WELLEJUS.
(Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1980.
Pp. vii, 144. Acknowledgments, photographs, bibliography, index.
\$17.95.)

Erie, Pennsylvania, has had a turbulent history. From its beginnings as a frontier outpost it was a point of contention in the Anglo-French conflicts for North America in the mid-eighteenth century. The American Revolution brought it under yet another flag, although

for several decades it was known more as an area of boundary disputes than as a thriving settlement. Not until the early nineteenth century did the town become incorporated, and by 1810 the county's population was still less than four thousand. For some time after it remained essentially a frontier community. The War of 1812 and American naval victories on the Great Lakes brought the area wider recognition, and by Lafayette's visit to Erie in 1825 the town had begun to grow. Still largely rural, Erie, nonetheless, expanded its liquor and salt trades to fuel a diversified economy. The development of the steamboat, coupled with the town's location as a lake port, ensured a long-term growth throughout the remainder of the century.

This growth continued into the twentieth century and was marked by the rise of local political machines, a surge in immigration from southern and eastern Europe, and an economy increasingly susceptible to outside pressures. By the late 1950s Erie was typical of most older American cities, with a decaying inner city, some racial problems, local political corruption, and a determination that extensive urban renewal would resolve these problems. This trust seemed well placed for by the 1970s Erie had regained its economic vitality. The cost of this revitalization, however, is not assessed here, and that failure reveals some of the book's problems for historians.

This is a heavily illustrated coffee-table production sponsored by the Erie Chamber of Commerce. As such, it is well done. But a prevailing spirit of local boosterism and the lack of critical analysis make this a volume that professional historians should pass up. On the other hand, residents of Erie interested in a well-illustrated synopsis of their area's history will find this an interesting and informative volume. Amid a host of period photographs are many tidbits of local history. Virtually every religious and ethnic group gets its due (although there is little about blacks), and almost every industry of note has its place as well. In addition there is a good bibliography for those who find their appetites whetted.

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